

# The Spot Report



Journal of the Marine Corps Interrogator Translator Teams Association

Volume VI, Issue 1

Summer 2008

## NATO Exercise - 1976 →

Members of the 12th ITT from Camp Lejeune get ready to board the USS MOUNT WHITNEY (LCC 20) for a NATO exercise in Norway.

Front: CWO P. Sofranac; CWO C. Leslie  
 Middle: SSgt C. Legeyt; GySgt J. Solomon; UNK;  
 SSgt D. McIntyre  
 Back: SSgt Posey (?); UNK; Sgt J. Massie; UNK;  
 MSgt H. Grassfield; UNK

Anyone who can identify members of this special team is encouraged to contact the editor.

(Thanks to Paul Sofranac for these and related pictures.)



## ← "In-Country" Language Training

Eight French speaking members of the ITTs from Camp Lejeune went to Wilmington, NC to greet the French destroyer *l'EE La Bourdonnais* (D634), which visited the United States to help celebrate the bicentennial in May of 1976. The ITT Marines spent the day entertaining the French Navy and acting as their interpreters for sports events and picnics provided by the local people of North Carolina.

Pictured (in civilian clothes) with crew members are:

Front Row: SSgt B. D. Jones; MGySgt G. Simpson;  
 SSgt S. Eklund; SSgt M. Deering  
 Back Row (Left): MSgt M. Paradis; GySgt W. Hodges;  
 (Middle) SSgt J. L. Poulain.

Not pictured: WO P. Sofranac who was taking the picture.

(See NATO story on Page 12)

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Visit the MCITTA website at: [www.mcitta.org](http://www.mcitta.org)

## From the TC

In the last issue of the *Spot Report*, our historical piece highlighted the Battle for Hue City, Tet of 1968 and how that 40-year old action seemed like only yesterday. However, the historical item that drew the most attention and comment was Paul Anctil's personal report on the transition of the ITTs to the ITUs and ITPs. Well done to Paul and many thanks to all our members who responded with their own perspectives and/or corrections. Peter Halle sent in his perspective from the West Coast side. I know you will all find these accounts interesting and thought provoking. Please keep up the participation. This is what makes our organization viable.

Again in this issue three of our members reminisce about another name etched in Marine Corps history: Khe Sanh—and the ITT support provided Marine units at that remote outpost. It was forty years ago this summer that General Abrams ordered the base closed, after the Marines successfully endured a two and a half month long siege by, and close combat with an estimated 35,000 NVA soldiers. The ITTs acquitted themselves nobly and with honor in combat support to these units.

Please remember the first official mission of our charter is to record the history of the Interrogator Translator Teams. Please take pen in hand and jot down your memories and send them along to the Editor. If you don't want them published, we will follow your directions, and will simply put them in our history files; but hopefully we will be able to post them in our journal for all to read and share your memories. Don't let the memories fade away. If we don't write the history of the ITTs no one will.

Register now for our 6th Annual MCITTA Gathering being held in suburban Washington, DC this September. This year will be a "joint" reunion with active duty intelligence Marines and all four intelligence associations. It represents a real opportunity to meet with the Marines working in both Iraq and Afghanistan and to rekindle old associations with colleagues in other intelligence fields.

We are now just over three months away from our Gathering, beginning on Tuesday, September 2<sup>nd</sup>. However, the Hyatt Dulles, has extended their very reasonable room rate of \$89 to apply over the preceding

weekend. I mention this since Friday, August 29<sup>th</sup> is the season's last Evening Parade at Marine Barracks, 8<sup>th</sup> and I Streets, Washington, D.C. To be in the DC area during the summer and not attend the Friday Night Parade is truly a missed opportunity. I know of at least six of our members including spouses plan on attending the parade. Tickets are available through the Barracks website at [www.mbw.usmc.mil/](http://www.mbw.usmc.mil/) and are still available if you hurry.



We continue putting together a variety of events to please all of our members. Additionally, Don James has coordinated trips to the Marine Corps Museum at Quantico, Mount Vernon, the Vietnam, Korea and World War II Memorials, and we are working on special tours of the Pentagon and the Capitol. So, mark your calendar and please make every effort to attend this special, joint event—it's sure to be memorable.

And, if you are completely unable to make the Gathering this year, Lynne Riemer is hard at work putting together an agenda for the 7<sup>th</sup> Annual Gathering in San Diego in 2009. The 7<sup>th</sup> Gathering will highlight an amphibious exercise and an in-country language training opportunity for some of our Spanish-speaking members.

Finally, let us all be mindful of two coming dates: 26<sup>th</sup> of May, Memorial Day—a day of remembrance to honor our fallen brothers and sisters in arms. Since WW II to the Iraq and Afghanistan conflict of today, we have lost eleven fellow Marine Interrogators. Lest we forget them or the 657,330 Americans lost in all battles since 1775, let's join in a National moment of pause at 1500 local time in tribute to their noble sacrifice. Please remember our two latest MCITTA members who have recently passed away, Frank Luciano and Ron Kelley. On 14 June, Flag Day, let's remember to fly our National Ensign in honor of all our Marines.

Looking forward and hoping to see many of you this September, in Washington.

*Semper Fidelis!*  
**Jim Haskins**

## The Spot Report

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**Letters to the Editor are invited.**

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# Letters

## A Personal Chronicle...

Mitch,

I just read the Jan 2008 *Spot Report*. It is one of the best so far. I noticed you edited my article some, which of course is proper, but you added something incorrect. We were not moved from Camp Johnson, but from Camp Geiger to mainside.

I, also, made an error—I think Col Houle's first name is George, not Paul. The name Paul stuck in my head because he made such a point of it when I had dealings with him.

In any event, a very good *Spot Report*. I hope we can continue to get that kind of input from members for future issues.

*Semper Fi,  
Paul Ancil*

**Ed Note:** *Of course, I knew that! I was involved with the move to Geiger from Montford. Age is tough on the memory cells. My bust on that one, Paul..*

Mitch,

No offense to young Paul [Ancil] but I think he's walking a line that spans the chasm of personal opinion across the valley of rumor control. I'm also not entirely sure his facts are accurate. Since I was ITU OIC in the 85-86 time frame, I find myself perhaps falling under the category of chopped liver. I held the billet as a senior captain, and concurrent with my promotion to Major, was transferred to the 6th Marines as S-2. I was, nevertheless, an 0205/0250 with time in grade as a captain. What's the beef about no ITT officers in leadership in the years 1979 to 1987?

I ought to direct my questions to him and I will, perhaps this year in DC, don't know yet.

Just wanted to let you know I am still alive out here. Was really blown away to see an article by Al Loreth. In the pic of Big Al on the bridge, are those prison tats on his arms?

Hope to see you in the near future,  
*Curt Leslie*

Mitch,

Congratulations! What a lot of information in this issue. Thank you. It was really interesting.

Just a couple of comments: Good job by Capt Ancil and pretty precise. I do have a few comments which I will try to gin up in a couple of weeks—what with getting over the flu and all.

Just want to get this off so you'll know this... issue sparked a lot of interest. I'm making copies, with side notes to send to our kids; the oldest was 2 and a half when Tet happened, the other two weren't even around. I think the history would be interesting.

*Semper Fi,  
Peter Halle*

I received the *Spot Report* and as always it had some pretty good articles in it. I particularly liked Paul Ancil's historical notes; I joined ITT in early '81 and assigned to 2d ITU, 2d MarDiv under him.

Since I live in the Washington DC area, I will no doubt be at the convention this year and look forward to seeing you.

*Nick Bemish  
MSgt 0251 (Ret)*

## On the Trail of History...

Good morning, Harry,

What another nice article you wrote for *The Spot Report*. Haven't read all through it, yet, but I admire that creative skill. I'm sending a note to Jim Haskins also.

Many thanks for your continued respect for my husband Jim.

*Nancy East*

Jim and Mitch,

I received the most recent *Spot Report* a few days ago and was truly impressed. This was a great issue by any standards, but particularly from a historical point of view.

I was very interested in your uncovering of the Intelligence Specialist Teams T/O in Jim East's material. I've been doing research into the origins of these teams for several years with only minor successes. I've been to the National Archives...working with a USMCR LtCol, we reviewed available unclassified sources and found nothing of relevance. With [help] of another USMCR LtCol [from] the Archives, I'll be exploring classified holdings for [items] of interest.

Congratulations again on a tremendous *Spot Report*.

*Semper Fidelis,  
John Guenther*

Before Doug Brower retired I sent him copies of all the orders I ever had concerning the ITT's and who did what, to include the establishment of the ITT's at Pendleton in 1967, prior to their deployment. At that time, ITT stood for Interrogation Translation Team and IT stood for Interpreter Team.

*Peter Halle*

I received the *Spot Report* yesterday in the mail. Once I started reading it I could not put it down until I read it all. Jim, your retelling of the battle for Hue was outstanding (I have killed so many brain cells I have CRS about a lot of our VN experiences).

The entire magazine was simply superb and my congratulations to both of you on the best one yet.

Take care and S/F,  
*Don James*



## The Bait or the Prize?

By **Jim Haskins, USMC (Ret)**

Contributors: *Jimmie Brown, USMC (Ret)*  
*Mitchell Paradis, USMC (Ret)*

*Jim Haskins recounts some events of forty-years ago at the distant outpost of Khe Sanh from Jan to July 1968 along with Jimmie Brown and Mitch Paradis of the 17th and 3rd ITTs.*



The CH-53 banked slightly as the crew chief pointed down to a distant airstrip and a cluster of buildings, “*Khe Sanh*” he shouted above the noise of the engine. I looked down at the verdant rolling hills and wondered how this almost idyllic panorama of hills and valleys could have been the scene of such bloody, “Two-style” combat just a few months before.

During April and May of 1967, a series of hand-to-hand battles between the North Vietnamese Army and elements of the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> Marine Regiments, became known as “The Hill Fights”, relating to the three principal hill masses around Khe Sanh Combat Base: Hills 881 North; 881 South; and 861. It was one of the bloodiest battles of the war to date, with two Marine battalions facing the well-entrenched 325C NVA Division intent on destroying the Khe Sanh base. Over a period of two weeks, the Marines stormed and took the hills suffering 168 killed and 443 wounded. The NVA were well dug in, but after losing some 940 confirmed killed, they withdrew into the nearby sanctuary of their base camps in Laos. (Note: To this day I have not been able to obtain information as to whether Marine interrogators were involved in this action.)

The helicopter did another slight banking maneuver and the crew chief now pointed out Co Roc Mountain, a rock massif in Eastern Laos just inside the border from South Vietnam. “*Lots of NVA up there with heavy artillery*” he said.

As we continued our approach to Khe Sanh to establish ITT combat support at this remote outpost, I reflected back on the events that brought me to this far northwest area of South Vietnam, adjacent to the Laotian border and just fifteen miles south of the 17<sup>th</sup> Parallel, the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ).

It was just a few months before— January 1967, in Baltimore, Maryland, and I was cold. Damn it was cold!

The “hawk was out”, as some of my buds back in Detroit would say, and here I was shuffling along a dimly lighted street at Fort Holabird where I had just checked-in for the Interrogation, Prisoner of War course of instruction. It was starting to get dark and I knew I had taken too long putting my uniform together and making sure my field scarf had just the right knot, but I wanted to look good for the Army folks when I checked in. And I have to admit I looked pretty good. A single hash mark Staff Sergeant with a row of ribbons and shooting medals decked out in my Marine Corps winter green

uniform, which was warm, but it sure didn’t do much to hold out the cold, the snow and the bitter Chesapeake Bay winds in Baltimore.

After graduating from the Chinese Mandarin Course at the Defense Language Institute at Monterey, I was to report in early January 1967 to the Army Intelligence School for the IPW course. What I knew was that I was a part of a super gaggle of fellow Marines, about 30 all together, reporting in for the course starting the following Monday. My orders also gave me a newly assigned primary MOS of 0200 and said something to the effect upon successful completion of the course I was to be assigned MOS 0251, Interrogator/Translator and further transferred to the 5<sup>th</sup> Marine Division, Camp Pendleton, California awaiting further assignment— which meant, Vietnam. I found out later all of the Marines reporting for this IPW class had the same notation on their orders.

During the 8-week program we were taught the twelve basic interrogation techniques and endless hours of useless Army organization and OOB of the Soviet and Chinese forces. We finally graduated, however, and began our cross-country odyssey to the sunny west coast as freshly minted 0251 Marine Interrogators. We were just settling into a routine at Pendleton, when, after about two months, were given team assignments to the 11<sup>th</sup>, 13<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup>, and 17<sup>th</sup> Interrogation Translation Teams. All would be time-phased deployed to South Vietnam over the coming summer, joining the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> ITTs already “in-country”. I was assigned to the 17<sup>th</sup> ITT, along with GySgt Max Friedlander, and Staff Sergeants Jimmie Brown, Lee Fritchman, John Holtsinger, and Al Kent. Capt Robert Brown, a Marine Reserve on active duty and a professor at the University of Tennessee in civilian life, was our Team Commander; MSgt Manny Mancillas was the Team Chief, and we were assigned two other officers, Capt Jim Connell, an infantry officer and Vietnam veteran who spoke French, and 1<sup>st</sup>Lt Tom Yanger, an Amtrak officer.

In late April five of us were issued TAD orders to attend the short course in Vietnamese at the 1<sup>st</sup> Interrogation Translation Team language school at Kaneohe Bay, Hawaii. This was a fortuitous assignment for not only were the majority of the members of the 1<sup>st</sup> ITT Vietnam vets, the school had two Vietnamese Marine officers assigned to assist in language proficiency and they were a great help in understanding a little something about the structure and

tactics of the People's Liberation Army (PLA), the combat arm of the National Front for the Liberation of Vietnam, aka, Viet Cong insurgent guerrillas.

While in Hawaii the news coverage was all about "The Hill Fights of Khe Sanh". Sitting in Hawaii watching the news and reading the newspaper accounts of the action taking place at Khe Sanh, I got an overwhelming premonition that somehow I was destined to be involved with Khe Sanh.

In early August 1967 the 17<sup>th</sup> ITT left Pendleton destined for Vietnam. We motor marched up I-5 to MCAS, El Toro where we loaded a US Air Force C-141 bound for Da Nang, Republic of Vietnam via Yakoda Air Force Base, Japan.

Upon arriving at Da Nang and off-loading our gear, we spent the night in Air Force transit barracks. Early next morning Capt Brown went to the G-2, III MAF for an in-briefing. Upon his return he informed us the 17<sup>th</sup> Team was assigned to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Marine Division at Phu Bai. Early that afternoon we loaded two Marine Corps KC-130s and moved north to join the 3<sup>rd</sup> Marine Division, and the other assigned ITTs, the 7<sup>th</sup> and the recently detailed 15<sup>th</sup> ITT. Upon arrival at Phu Bai we were billeted in the transient barracks of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Marine Division headquarters and received our first mortar and rocket attack that evening. Suffering no damage other than to our egos for the abject fear we all felt while we hunkered down during the attack, we had received our "baptism".

The following day we joined up with members of the 7<sup>th</sup> ITT for an area brief. At the same time Capt Brown attended meetings with Maj Bob Coolidge of the Division G-2 Collections shop along with Capt Champion of the 7<sup>th</sup> ITT, and others members of the G-2 Section. At the meeting it was determined the 7<sup>th</sup> ITT would continue in direct support of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Division and relocate to the Dong Ha Combat Base along with the Division Headquarters element; the 15<sup>th</sup> ITT would support units at Cua Viet, Quang Tri, and Camp Evans; while the 17<sup>th</sup> ITT would take responsibility for the POW collection point and 3<sup>rd</sup> Medical Battalion in Phu Bai, while providing sub-teams to support Marine operations at Camp Carroll and Khe Sanh Combat Base. As if by predestined design and in fulfillment of my premonition, my sub-team of Capt Connell, GySgt Friedlander and me, would be going to Khe Sanh to support the units there.

Arrival at the combat base was

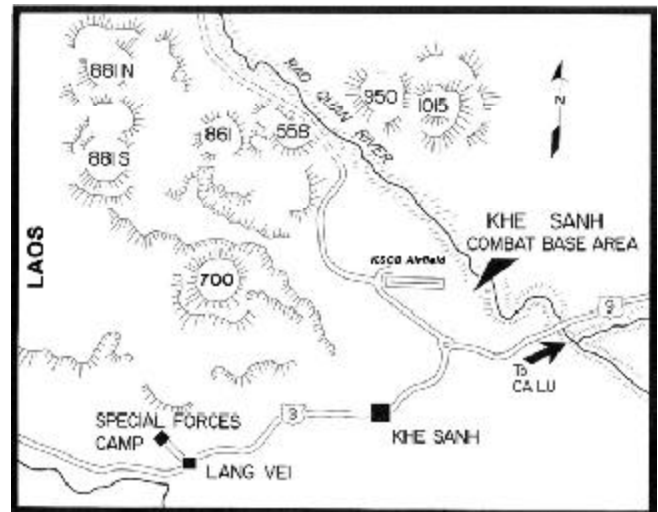
somewhat of a shock. Although I don't know what I was expecting a Marine combat outpost to look like, this was not it. Sprawling alongside a PSP runway were a series of Southeast Asia huts or "Hootches" as they were known, low silhouetted buildings with corrugated tin roofs, and some haphazardly placed out-buildings with signage above the doors: *Officer/Staff NCO Club; Mess Hall; Post Office*; and others. It reminded me of Al Capp's cartoon of *Li'l Abner* and the town of "Dogpatch".

After off-loading our jeep and trailer, tents and other gear from the CH-53, we staged the equipment on the side of the aircraft-loading apron adjacent to the runway. Asking directions to the regimental headquarters, we were told, "...it's in the old French bunker". Capt Connell led the way with GySgt Friedlander and me in tow, and reported to Colonel David Lowndes, the CO of the 26<sup>th</sup> Marine Regiment, who had also just arrived at Khe Sanh. The colonel gave us a warm welcome and was happy to have an intelligence specialist team on board with Vietnamese language skills. He personally took us deeper into the bunker complex to meet with Capt Bohr, the Regimental S-2 and his staff. After

receiving a quick overview from S-2 section we moved on to meet with the Headquarters Commandant to locate a position for the 17<sup>th</sup> ITT Sub-team. When asked where the most appropriate location should be, I replied, "Near the aid station, since the majority of prisoners will probably be wounded." The Headquarters Commandant and Capt Connell soon found a location down slope from Company C, 3<sup>rd</sup> Medical Battalion, or as hundreds of Marines and others came to call it, "Charlie Med".

For some unknown reason Capt Connell was convinced the base would be the target of a major North Vietnamese attack and he vowed that ITT would not be caught short. He began to draw up plans for a "headquarters" bunker with attached interrogation areas and an adjacent POW holding area. We soon settled into a daily routine consisting of eating chow, filling sandbags, chow, sandbags, chow and an occasional beer at the club. The ITT bunker

soon became the talk of the entire base and since everyone knew we were "those intelligence guys", they thought we had inside knowledge of some NVA intent, therefore, our need to have the "super bunker". Our proficiency at filling sandbags became even greater when Max Friedlander designed a table constructed of artillery ammo boxes with six legs and a sand chute. We would pile red, Khe Sanh dirt onto the table and hang a sandbag at the end of the chute; then using a shovel we would push the dirt down the chute into the bag. The whole thing resembled something seen in a mining camp of the late 1800s, but we were soon filling hundreds of sandbags a day, while Capt Connell would barter with Navy Sea Bees for wood timbers, plywood and two-by-fours in exchange for beer and



whiskey he had sent up from Team Headquarters at Phu Bai. Near the end of September the bunker began to take final shape. The interior was framed with a combination of plywood, two by fours, and timber from the hills around the base. It accommodated four persons quite comfortably and was outfitted with a camouflaged parachute ceiling, gratis of the aerial delivery guys. From outside the bunker resembled a badly shaped wedding cake. At the base, the sandbag walls were twelve feet thick and rose to a height of about six feet where it tapered to a thickness of eight feet for another three feet and then the overhead, which was made of alternating layers of timbers, sandbags, and air pockets. We figured the overhead could withstand direct hits by artillery and rockets as long as they were point detonating and did not have time delay fuses. Over the course of my time at Khe Sanh, followed by the Tet 1968 siege,

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and the later period, a total of nine months, I am told the bunker sustained four direct hits by NVA artillery. I can personally attest to one direct hit, a 130mm HE round that hit at the base of the outside southwest wall. Damage was minimal.

In addition to its distinctively odd shape, we covered the entire mass with a Kelley-green tarpaulin to protect from seepage during the Monsoon rains. Soon, the ITT complex became one of the more distinctive features at KSCB. We, jokingly, came to believe the NVA at the artillery battery in Co Roc were using it as an aiming stake, for it remained standing through it all and was blown in place when the Marines finally left Khe Sanh in mid-1968.

And speaking of the Monsoon, soon everything in our area (also the camp) smelled like mildew, our tents, boots, our clothing, everything. Everything mildewed because of the heavy rains and nothing ever dried completely. The earth at Khe Sanh was red; redder than any dirt I had ever seen including that of Georgia, and when the rains started it became a red clay that stuck like glue to our boots and everything else. And when it rained, the penetrating kind of rain that keeps you wet and cold, it made walking a new experience, with the red clay as slick as ice in a hockey rink. And when the weather was dry, the dust, from the rotor of the helicopters or from the constant supply flights of C-130s and C-123s fixed-wing transports, like red talc, fouled the air. Everything became red, clothes, tents, equipment, tanks, trucks, jeeps, you name it, and it was covered with red dirt. Our body hair stayed red, and with the mustache I was sprouting I soon looked like Yosemite Sam. The most fun was when we used scrub brushes just to wash our faces to get the red off, to little avail.

What I hated and loved most was the pitch-black nights when you couldn't see the hand in front of your face. Then there was the drizzle and fog combination known as "*crachin*" that would roll in from the mountains and seemed never to go away until late the next morning. But, the biggest difference

at Khe Sanh compared to anywhere else in South Vietnam was the cool temperatures, so cool at times you had to wear a field jacket; but, after the humid hot weather on the coastal plains, this was most welcome.

This was the first stage of the bunker complex, the next would be to construct interrogation cages, but for a short while that could wait. We settled into a fixed operational routine. When not working on the bunker, or not accompanying one of the daily patrols going out of the base into the surrounding hills, we would make trips to Khe Sanh village or to the Special Forces camp at Lang Vei. Occasionally we would stop along the way and spend time with Monsieur Poilane, a local French coffee farmer, at his coffee plantation. Capt Connell was a French linguist and he and Monsieur Poilane would chat about the weather, and more importantly, rumors about the continual movement of North Vietnamese down the Ho Chi Minh Trail into adjacent Laos and eventual infiltration into Vietnam. Of special intelligence significance was information on the condition of the road out of Khe Sanh to Laos along which Poilane's shipped his coffee, and the NVA would occasionally move troops.

The patrols themselves were normally nothing more than trail reconnaissance missions, looking for recent activity and on only two occasions did I hear shots fired. Both times the Marine that fired said he observed NVA activity near us, however no return fire was received. The terrain itself ranged from open brush to heavy elephant grass and was very hilly. In the ravines we encountered heavy jungle type terrain with numerous small streams. All in all, the area around Khe Sanh was a very pretty place, under different circumstances. In the low hills we would encounter elephants used to haul timber from the forest, and I heard Recon Marines talking about Bengal tigers, tiger lairs, deer and wild boar, but we never

encountered any animals other than the domesticated elephants. On occasion we would meet some of the local "montagnards" (mountain people) from the various hamlets of the Bru tribesmen, and their bare-chested women. Most Vietnamese women, including those of the Bru, had black teeth from the constant chew of betle nut in their mouth, which I have to admit was not very appealing although several members of the local Special Forces camp said this was considered quite chic and traditional. Chewing betle nut produces a mild stimulant akin to concentrated nicotine.

Mr. Poilane's coffee was excellent, and on occasion we would be joined by a local French priest, whose name I cannot recall, and a spirited rubber of bridge would be played. Looking back at those days and times life seemed quite pleasant, despite the circumstances.

In early October 1967 I was somewhat surprised to see and hear maybe fifteen to twenty black CH-34s landing two abreast at the airfield. The off-loading troops were all Asian, wearing tiger-stripe fatigues and carrying AK-47s; and, even more interesting to me was the fact the pilots were all Asian. I questioned an American with them, also wearing tiger stripes, and he told me this was an operational unit of the Military Assistance Command (Vietnam), Studies and Observation Group (MACSOG) performing a special mission under the operational name PRAIRIE FIRE. They had information the NVA were massing troops along the Laos/North Vietnam and DMZ border and they were going to recon the area. Several days later a wounded NVA soldier arrived at Charlie Med. Quickly going to the triage area I began to interrogate him. The prisoner, a North Vietnamese senior captain, was a transportation group leader from the 66<sup>th</sup> Regiment of the 304<sup>th</sup> NVA Division, which had recently moved south from Hanoi into a new base area west of the Co Roc mountains in Laos. He provided the Order of Battle of the entire 304<sup>th</sup> Division along with a couple of other previously unknown units. About this time a Master Sergeant from the Special Forces group with MACSOG came into the



Marines on Hill 881S

operating room and told me this man was their prisoner and he had orders to take him. The doctors quickly finished stabilizing the prisoner, and soon the POW, the American soldier and a black helicopter left the base. When told of the mysterious circumstances of the POW being taken away, Col Lownds and Capt Bohr seemed disappointed but not very surprised.

In November Capt Brown directed me to return to Phu Bai for a little "in the rear R&R". Leaving Khe Sanh after three months, if only for a week, was a huge relief. Little did I know it would be five months before I would return with the 3<sup>rd</sup> ITT to relieve my old teammates of the 17<sup>th</sup> after the Tet of '68 siege.

### **Jimmie Brown picks up the narrative of the 17<sup>th</sup> ITT—**

*To continue to provide support to the 26<sup>th</sup> Marines at Khe Sanh, myself, and 1<sup>st</sup> Lt Tom Yanger, assumed duties vacated by Capt Connell (who had resigned his commission in November) and Haskins, who had finally returned to Phu Bai. Max Friedlander had also returned to Khe Sanh, making a full sub-team in combat support. The regiment had a new intelligence officer, Maj Jerry Hudson followed by a most unusual officer, Capt Mizra Baig. Baig was a former enlisted of East Indian descent, and soon became the key person within the intelligence shop. He would prove to be the most astute target acquisition officer and vital in the defense of the KSCB. His part in the Khe Sanh battles is legendary and a chapter unto itself.*

*On the tactical side: The majority of our recon patrol inserts during late 1967 and early 1968 required early or emergency extraction because of unwanted contact with or sighting by the enemy; seemed the enemy was everywhere around KSCB. Sometime during this period SSgt Holtsinger, a member of the 17th ITT was sent to Khe Sanh but was assigned to the S-2 shop. To the best of my memory I was the lone on site interrogator the day the Army at Lang Vei requested interrogation support to check out a Chieu Hoi who told me the NVA planned to use tanks "that swam" in attacking the Lang Vei outpost. I could not get positive identification on the vehicles but surmised he was probably talking about the PT series of amphibians which later proved to be correct (PT 76s). I went to Lang Vei by*

*chopper because we had ceased using the roads at that point. It is truly a small world because the chopper pilot was US Army WO Jack Hathaway, who was a fellow student in the Cambodian Language course in Washington, DC during 1966. Even though brief, it was a good reunion.*

*Our recon patrols continued making numerous contacts with the enemy to the point that inserts were all but stopped. We received feints and probes on our perimeter at different times. During one of these probes, we had two enemy KIAs and an unknown number wounded without suffering losses of our own. Interesting to note here that the enemy dead were so tall that autopsies were done to determine if they were third-country combatants. They were confirmed to be Vietnamese.*

*Enter the Chieu Hoi: On the afternoon of 20 January 1968, an NVA soldier came to the main entrance of KSCB waiving a Chieu Hoi chit. Within half an hour or so I was well into the interrogation with him. The information gained seemed too good to have been handed to us so I began to send spot reports to the S-2. Maj Hudson and Capt Baig acquired these targets and were shot with beautiful results. (Early on here word of the Chieu Hoi was sent to MACV and would you believe it before sundown we had a personal visit by General Westmoreland, Commander of MACV.) Thus, the spots continued throughout the night. Sometime during the eleventh or twelfth hour of the twenty-odd hour interrogation, we heard the first eerie screams of incoming artillery. Bummer!! Those uncouth bastards sneakily began using live ammo on us, can you imagine!!!! They got our main ammo dump during the second day.*

*Thus began the infamous siege of Khe Sanh of 1968.*

*This Chieu Hoi was the only enemy who had any worthwhile information during the siege, the few other PWs were of no intelligence value.. As it turned out, Gy Friedlander went back to Phu Bai shortly after the siege began and was not replaced, making me the only interrogator at KSCB. If push had come to shove I believe the plan was to have SSgt Holtsinger temporarily assist in interrogations but we never reached saturation point with PWs.*

*The enemy units surrounding Khe Sanh Combat Base were the 325C White Horse Division (of Dien Bien Phu fame), the 324B Division, another division comprised of the 304th and 306th, and another called a division but the only organization listed in it was something called the 341st Regiment, all NVA regulars. Interesting to note these units were convinced they would hand us the same defeat and shame they gave the French forces at Dien Bien Phu in 1956. The Marines at Khe Sanh would simply say, "Sorry, Charlie. We're not French, we're Marines." It was estimated the Marines were some 5,000 strong; whereas, the NVA numbered approximately 41,000. Many of our young Marines, in the highest traditions of our beloved Corps, wanted to allow General Giap enough time to add another 9,000 troops to make the odds more even.*

*As it turned out through my interrogation of the Chieu Hoi, a senior lieutenant, the commanding officer of the 14<sup>th</sup> Antiaircraft Company of the 95-C regiment of the 325C NVA Division, who indicated the NVA were going to attack the outlying positions of the combat base that night. Colonel Lownds ordered the camp go on full alert. Later an NVA ground attack of two battalions thoroughly destroyed the Marine outpost at Hill 861 and the siege of Khe Sanh began with the base receiving over 11,000 incoming artillery, mortar, and rocket rounds between 21 January and 1 April 1968—an average of 150 rounds per day. U. S. forces fired 117,643 rounds of artillery (including 12,441 rounds of 175 mm) and flew 2,602 sorties of B-52s delivering 75,631 tons of ordnance—an average of 35 sorties and 1,022 tons a day. The air support at Khe Sanh was the greatest deluge of firepower ever unloaded on tactical targets in the history of warfare prior to Operation Desert Storm. Over three hundred close-air combat missions flew daily over Khe Sanh, and more bombs were dropped around Khe Sanh than were dropped on the German cities in all of World War II.*

*Having little to do PW-wise during the assault, I busied myself with other things. Maj Hudson put me onto a pair of 200mm ship's binoculars to enable better terrain screening from the Green*

*(Continued on Page 18)*

## Another personal chronicle of the "rise and fall" of the ITT

by Peter Halle, USMC (Ret)

In response to Paul Anctil's challenge in his "personal chronicle of the 'rise and fall' of the ITT", I submit the following: to a large extent, he is right. Perhaps in my own recollections, I can shed a little more light.

The 1978 time frame is probably important as far as the Warrant Officer program is concerned. I remember when I left the Marine Corps the first time in 1971, we had at least three captains in charge of different ITT's at Camp Pendleton. One of them, Capt Merrill Bartlett ("the Black Pen") (later succeeded by a senior Captain) was ITU Coordinator. We had all been shuffled to the big barn on the hill at Camp Las Pulgas ("out of sight, out of mind"). The conversion of officers in charge from regular to warrant officers had already begun. Some from our field made the transition.

But, I'm ahead of myself.



MSgt Peter Halle weighs in with a Westcoast perspective—

In June of 1967, and Jim Haskins of Jeff Smith should confirm this, when six ITT's stood up at Camp Pendleton, the T/O was 4/7: a Captain, designated as Team Commander, three Lieutenants as sub-team Commanders, a MGySgt or MSgt as Team Chief, and six enlisted with ranks from Sgt to GySgt, as sub-team members, two enlisted to each sub-team.

The problem was that the officer side of the house came from MOS's other than 0250 (viz. disbursing, supply). A lot of them were good and I admired them greatly (e.g. a Capt Brown [FNU] who was always thinking of the men under him. He used to fly with relief supplies to Khe Sanh when it was under siege). Some of these officers, however, were only with us on a temporary basis and they knew it. They had no concept of what it meant to be a "Team Commander" or "Officer-in-Charge." Their main concern in life was to avoid the shadow of any higher headquarters, be it battalion, regiment, or division. They wanted their tickets punched to be able to move up in their own MOS, once they got back to it. We never saw a lot of them again - the good nor the not-so-good.

It is my contention that, as a result of the above, the ITT's really had no true advocates on any level especially at HQMC,

which controlled the purse strings. I know that some of the higher enlisted were doing their best to have the ITT's recognized as a viable organization (viz. one of the GySgt's [LNU] was endeavoring to have HQMC give members the same amount of language proficiency pay as that received by Army interrogators. Nothing ever came of this effort).

So this is my first contention, that the ITT's were left to die because we had no unified, true leadership advocating our professionalism, and its maintenance and growth. When we lost our own T/O and T/E then, of course, it became a money issue and we, along with everyone else, had to fight for our share of the pot.

My second contention is that professional jealousy was a contributing factor to our demise (I know, this sounds like politics or sour grapes at best). Counterintelligence (CI) and ITT have always had a close working relationship. We would oftentimes be used as actors in some of CI's field exercises, being screened and debriefed. They would also help us out in some of our exercises.

Towards 1978-79, an undercurrent of "we do debriefings, we can certainly interrogate" kept getting pronouncedly stronger. From about the 1978-79 time frame onward this was accompanied by a wish, expressed many times by CI personnel, that they could get some of our language quotas. This was fairly obvious at Camp Hansen when I was there during the above-mentioned time frame.

If you couple this with the idea of the leadership gap that originated in the late 1960's, you can see it as a contributing factor to our having sown the seeds of our own destruction. Even the strengths of an Al Kent or Roger Bouffard couldn't stop the slide.

As far as the Surveillance Reconnaissance and Intelligence Group (SRIG) is concerned, that was a joke. The 1st SRIG was formed at Camp Pendleton in late 1988, early 1989 - memory is a terrible thing!

Paul Anctil is right. Captain, later promoted to Major, Alan Reece was a true Intelligence officer. He became the Executive Officer of Intelligence Company, 1st SRIG. The ITU inherited a captain with an Intelligence MOS, as Officer-in-Charge. He realized that he didn't belong in the Marine Corps and so I, in late 1989, as a MSgt, became the acting OIC (SNCOIC) of ITU, Intel Company, 1st SRIG. This lasted until early 1990 when 2nd Lt Aspinwall, a woman Marine with an Intelligence MOS, reported on board Intel Company and was designated OIC of ITU. Simultaneously MSgt Tom Burke reported aboard from overseas and he became the SCNOIC.

It was my experience during the tenure as acting OIC my role was that of caretaker. My part in the CO's meetings of Intel Co was, basically, to listen. If there were serious issues to be addressed concerning the ITU, I would bounce them off the OIC of CI, a captain, and he would raise these issues at our meetings.



We had some discipline issues in the ITU during this time, with one or two of inexperienced enlisted and I spent hours in consultation with this CI captain. The issues were finally resolved favorably.

Even under the SRIG organization, it was my impression the underlying current was that CI would really like to get some of our language school quotas and, I believe, the members thought since they did debriefings, they also could do interrogations.

In fact, when I learned that the 0251 MOS no longer existed, two thoughts ran through my mind. The first was really obvious that, in light of Abu Ghraib, the U.S. Administration got rid of the professional interrogators so it could do what it wanted and make its own rules.

The second thought was, "Aha! CI finally got what it wanted."

So there you have it, my own personal observation of an organization's progress into oblivion. It is my own diagnosis of what happened and I am sure there are many who would disagree, especially about my contention of CI's involvement. That's okay; I'm not trying to raise animosities here, just put my perception of history to the matter on paper.

One interesting thing I should make note of: we began to lose the power of advocacy in the early 1980's. In 1984, MGySgt William Curry was the SNCOIC of ITU at Camp Pendleton— there was no OIC.

In 1987 MGySgt Harry Sprinkle (CI MOS) was SNCOIC of the ITU at Camp Hansen— no OIC. In late 1987, early 1988, MGySgt William Sardo inherited that job— no OIC. (By the way, Bill Sardo was the finest non-native Korean linguist I ever knew.)

Somewhere in all that 1984-1990 time frame MGySgt Kalhofer was SNCOIC of the ITU at Camp Pendleton until shortly before the 1st SRIG was formed. I, also, was SNCOIC until the formation of the SRIG. We did have an OIC for a short time, Major Bob Farmer, followed by Warrant Officer Bill English. My point is exactly what Paul Ancil said, enlisted don't eat in the officer's mess.

With that I will close so I don't roam too far a field. I do recognize I didn't answer the question of when the ITT's devolved into the ITU, and I hope someone else can answer that question. In the meantime, any comments, pro or con, on these observations, are most welcome. ❖

## ***"In keeping with the highest traditions..."***

***ITT LEGACY— During their existence from September of 1958 to October of 2002, some 44 years, two wars and five combat related campaigns, Marines of the Interpreter Teams, and Marine Interrogators of the ITTs, and subsequent permutations of ITPs and ITUs, earned the respect of the Marine Corps intelligence community as vital intelligence agents.***

***During this period, Marine Interrogators and Interpreters earned a combined total of 20 Presidential Unit Citations; 2 Joint Meritorious Unit Awards; 16 Navy Unit Commendations; 28 Meritorious Unit Commendations, and 2 Unit Citations from the Republic of Vietnam. A most respectable record of recognition for extraordinary combat and meritorious service.***

***Throughout their brief history, members of the Interrogator and Translator units displayed gallantry and determination while exploiting critical tactical information sources under extremely adverse and hazardous conditions, which set them apart from other units under similar circumstances.***

***The MCITTA has pledged itself to report and record this proud legacy and to ensure the Marine Interrogators' place in Marine Corps history.***

***Send us your perspective of your Interrogator experiences. Help us record our history.***

***See more on the citation history of the ITTs, ITUs, ITPs and Interpreter Teams on our website: [www.mcitta.org](http://www.mcitta.org)***



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Again this year we rely on you to step forward with your financial support through our 2008 Annual Fund Drive to continue our MCITTA programs.

Your generous support enables the MCITTA to sponsor the **GySgt Ronald E. Baum Teamwork Award** consisting of a medallion coin and an appropriate certificate to each member of the HET with the highest demonstrated value of teamwork of the graduating MAGTAF-CI/HUMINT class at NMIC. This award honors one of our former Marine Interrogators lost in Iraq and promotes the MCITTA and our involvement with Marine Corps activities.

Also, your financial support ensures our newsletter, *The Spot Report*, continues to reach our members with newsworthy articles and historical material that is a vital part of Marine Corps history—the legacy of the Marine Interrogator.

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## Back Azimuth...

This column is dedicated to publishing news of our fellow Marine Interrogators— where are they and what are they doing now. Additionally, we'll use this space to post items in response to our "On the Shoulders of Giants" request. Please submit information of interest on yourself or your fellow Marine Interrogators. If you're looking for someone, let us know— we'll post it.



My name is Warren Smith. I served with you [Jim Haskins] from the fall of '68 to Feb of '69 [?] at the 27th Marines. Your article "40 Years and Remembering" was very interesting. I remember sitting in the ITT office with you and Tony Billups listening to your "war stories." I remember Tony showing me the bullet scar in his calf, I think. I recently learned he was killed in 1973. I liked him a lot. As a matter of fact, he used to come over to our apartment in San Clemente, cook steaks and leave all the dishes for us to wash (ha!).

By the way, my roomies were all from our ITT (the 25th right?). They were Dick Broughton, Gene McGowen and Terry Wilkinson. Other members of our team were JC Eckhardt III, SSgt Woolfolk and Bill Kysor. With the exception of Terry Wilkinson and Woolfolk we were transferred to the 27th when the unit, at least on paper, returned from RVN. I remember telling you all the "shitbirds" from the various ITTs at Pendleton were transferred to you. You laughed and told me we weren't "shitbirds," (nice try).

I was in a panic then because I had been in the Corps for over two years with no WestPAC orders. I was afraid my future kids would say "What did you do in the war, Daddy?" And I would have to say, nothing. (As it turned out they never asked.) I talked to you about this on several occasions, and put in several AA Forms requesting orders. They finally came in you were the first to tell me by yelling it out the back door of the ITT Quonset hut. Well, [40 years later] I want to thank you guys that were in the Tet Offensive for making my life easier when I got to Viet Nam. Seriously!

A quick bio: I'm married with three kids, retired social studies teacher living in New Hampshire but originally from Bridgeport, CT. I was a Sgt when I left the USMC, promoted to SSgt while in college. After college I joined the Army Reserve, eventually went to OCS, at age 30 (with a waiver) and ended my Reserve career as an LTC. From 1990 to 2001 I did a lot of duty at the DIA, the Pentagon and the Joint US/Russia Commission on POW/MIA Affairs office. I worked for Col Schlatter for 3 or 4 months. [He's mentioned in the *Spot Report*.] He was always being attacked by various MIA organizations. I'm turning 61 next month.

Once again, thanks for the good article. I can't for the life of me remember our ITT CO's name. Do you remember?

Warren Smith

I just received my copy of *The Spot Report* and was reading Paul Antcil's column. He mentioned Phil Fields. Firstly, I had not known Phil had passed away. I was sorry to hear about that. I had not seen Phil again after we served together in the 7th ITT in RVN in 1967-68. I remember the first time I saw him. He was sitting outside the hooch in the 7th's area. He was a SSgt and I a Sgt just out of IPW training. What struck me immediately was his bushy, handlebar moustache. Unfortunately, I have no photos of Phil but I tell you that moustache was a sight to behold! This was my first assignment to an ITT, and Phil helped the FNG settle in and guided me through my first, well, let's say not too stellar performances as an interrogator. I have thought about him, at times, over the years.

When I report for duty at the pearly gates, I'm sure Phil will collar me and chastise me for not being up to snuff on my OOB.

Also, in the "From the TC" section, Jim Haskins mentioned Bob Spitze. If my memory serves, Bob was a Lieutenant and the Assistant Team Commander of the 7th ITT. He really taught me how to write an interrogation report. It was my first report, and he made me write that thing at least 10 times!!! He was a demanding task master, but I really respected how he kept pushing me to do it right. I learned a great deal from him about being an interrogator and to pay attention to detail. I'm sure Bob was frustrated with trying to teach me to be a good interrogator. Whatever successes I had as an interrogator I owe to outstanding interrogators and leaders like Bob Spitze and Phil Fields. Thanks, Bob, but please don't ask me to write that thing over again!

Eugene F. Vigilante  
GySgt 0251, USMC (Ret)

Nestled in the heart of Virginia's lush farming country, approximately 100 miles SSW of Richmond, Paul and Jackie Antcil have labored for the past several years to follow their avocation and passion for fine boutique wines. The result of this inspired love and the idyllic, *terrior* of their estate in Brookneal, **Sans Soucy Vineyards** opened on the 5<sup>th</sup> of April as friends, neighbors and aficionados gathered to sample the fruits of this family's long labor.

Now into their sixth year of planting, nurturing and, finally, production of the wine, Paul and Jackie along with their grown children Naomi, Nicole and Paul, are hoping to realize their dream of producing a quality wine of some merit.



**"Once we decided on the winery as something we wanted to do, we knew we would enjoy it. It's been a long time and we are excited to finally be opening," said Jackie.**

Paul shaped the name, **Sans Soucy**, from his French language and heritage. *Sans* means "without" and *souci* is French for "trouble." A winery business *without trouble* would be a considerable misnomer; however, he took his mother's maiden name "Soucy" as a derivative and in admiration of her, with the implication that good wine is soothing and stirs one's cherished and warm memories.

Harry and Lois Todd traveled to Brookneal to help the Antcil's celebrate their first tasting and to represent the MCITTA with our encouragement and best wishes for continued success.

Ever the optimist, Paul, nonetheless, has maintained his "grown-up" job as manager of a full-service investment firm. The growing and nurturing of a producing vineyard is always tenuous and risky. We've always known Paul to hedge his bets, but to approach all his endeavors with determination and excellence. Well done, Paul and Jackie!

## 1976 – NATO Operation **Bold Guard/Bonded Item**

*By LtCol Paul Sofranac, USMC (Ret)*

It was an eventful summer for the 12<sup>th</sup> ITT back in 1976. The team was tasked to rendezvous with two French frigates that came in celebration of the US Bicentennial in Wilmington, NC. Our mission, to serve as hosts and translators for the French navy crews, was most gratifying. The French were not only generous

skills to meld into a functional, fraternal team, ready and eager to get on with the mission.

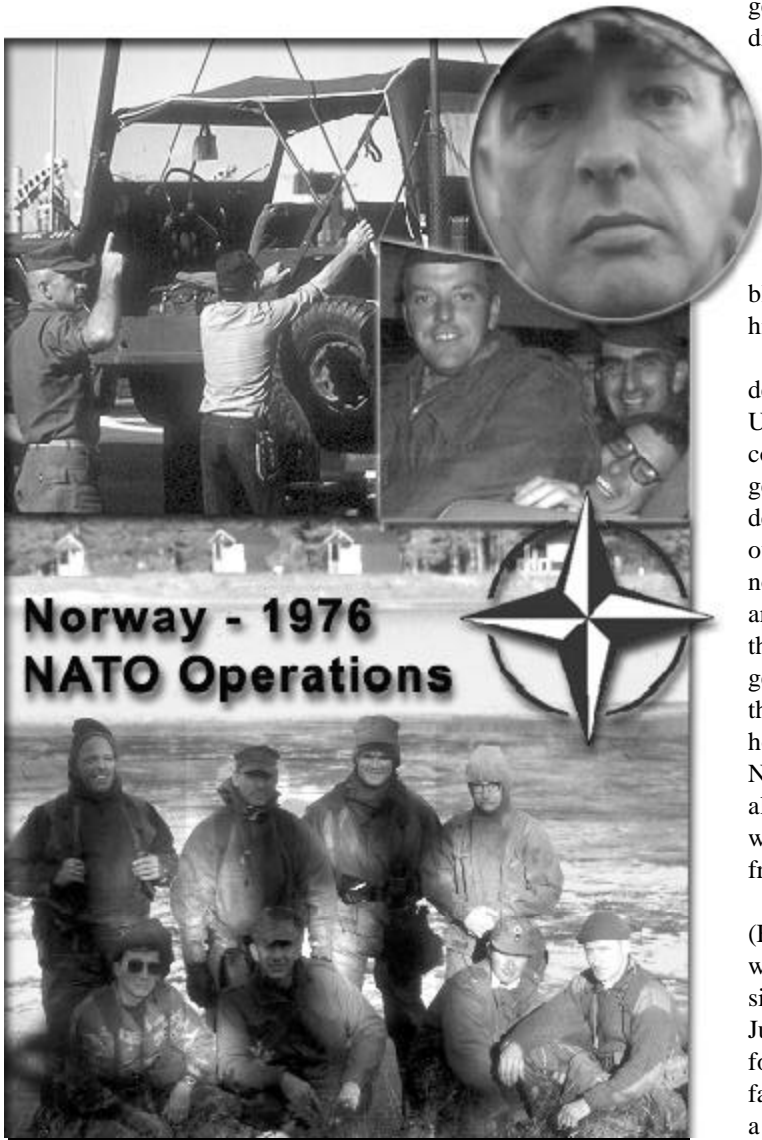
We convoyed up to the Tidewater area with our three jeeps and trailers full of team issue gear where the USS **Mount Whitney** (LCC-20) command ship was docked. We had considerable difficulty getting our gear aboard until GySgt Jim Solomon took charge and directed the embark.

Once aboard with our gear safely stowed in cargo containers, we occupied ourselves with equipment checks and reviews of NATO procedures and rules of engagement for combined operations. General Gray was quick to jump into action, with his swagger stick constantly at the carry, doing a school circle to explain how the operation was going to unfurl after the ops major was putting the troops to sleep with endless NATO line and block charts that bored even the most savvy among us. He loved his Marines and his leadership style got immediate results.

Once we arrived off the coast of Scotland, we had to cross-deck to the British Amphibious Assault Ship, HMS **Fearless** (L-10). Unfortunately, the elevators on the **Mount Whitney** were out of commission and it soon became doubtful we could retrieve our gear in time for the scheduled crossover. The G-2 left it to our decision if we wanted to remain on board Whitney or to complete our mission on foot with only our backpacks in the frozen tundra of northern Norway. The Team unflinchingly gave a nod to press on and although our Brit counterparts were sympathetic to our plight, they were tapped out, as their Landrovers were full of their own gear, with no room to spare for additional passengers. However, the interim period aboard **Fearless** and the graciousness of our hosts diverted our attention from things to come. Yes, the UK Navy has spirits aboard their ships and the beer flowed nightly along with movies and cheap pogy bait. We got to purchase real wooly-pulleys at rake bottom prices and made some lasting friendships with our British Navy and Royal Marine counterparts.

Of course, I'll never forget the first day of the NATO exercise (Bold Guard/Bonded Item). A Navy officer came looking for me with a personal message that had broken through the D-Day radio silence. The Red Cross was notifying me of the birth of my daughter Julie at the Camp Lejeune Naval Hospital. That was excuse enough for them to open the bar early and proceed to toast heartily my new family addition. Conducting an amphibious landing while nursing a gigantic hangover was memorable

The British portion of the amphibious landing went off without a hitch and we found ourselves following our UK counterparts in trace. We deployed two sub teams forward and kept one back for replacement or rear area debriefs. As the team commander, I kept busy lining up transportation, when I could, to ensure the front line UK units had our support during the whole operation. The Norwegians had given us translators to facilitate our field interrogations. Our interrogation reports were immediately dispatched to the rear, where our team chief (MSgt Grassfield) was busy flushing out line and block charts and OPFOR order of battle. General Gray had dispatched a SIGINT team in support of our NATO



with their hospitality aboard, to include fine wine and food, but extended to friendly games of rugby and soccer with cocktails parties ashore. After such a wining and dining opportunity, we should have known we had it coming.

Back at Montford Point, NC, we learned the ACoS G-2 had directed an ITT to support the 4<sup>th</sup> MAB in an upcoming NATO operation. Additionally, then BGen Al Gray, CG of the MAB, requested a second ITT in direct support of the British Royal Marines' 3d Commando Brigade. We quickly scrambled a composite team mixed with the personalities, experience level and linguistic

counterparts. This gave us the ability to quickly confirm British IDF feeds and give the lead elements actionable intelligence on OPFOR movement and intentions.



Emblem of the Royal Marines

Despite our shortfall of gear and creature comforts, we facilitated the rapid sweep of the assigned AOR by the Royal Marines who reached their objective even before the 4<sup>th</sup> MAB was able to deploy ashore. The UK brigadier was duly impressed with the US Marines' flexibility and ability to produce actionable intelligence under simulated combat conditions, in harsh weather while sleeping under the stars

without equipment, all the while maintaining a professional demeanor. Prior to the end of the operation, the British commander presented the team with a citation for exemplary service.

Our final challenge was to line up transportation back to CONUS. We managed to get a hop to a Danish air base where we found some nice accommodations and a civilized meal before "hitching" a very long ride on a Marine C-130 to Cherry Point, NC, piloted by the last USMC enlisted pilot, CWO-4 Henry "Bud" Wildfang, via Iceland and Newfoundland, Canada. Gunner Wildfang is a USMC history note all by himself. It was an honor to meet and fly with him—a true legend of Marine Corps aviation.

Once back, we began writing our voluminous after action reports while waiting for the *Mount Whitney* to land at Moorehead City. We were very much afraid, despite Curt Leslie's team being on board, our gear would suffer at the hands of the sailors in the "Gator Navy." We were not disappointed. While we managed to get our vehicles back, our team gear had vanished save one shelter-half tent pole, all pilfered by souvenir hunters. We spent the next two weeks writing lost gear reports, trying to explain and justify the loss to the G-2. The hazard of deployment.

Little if anything has been officially recorded or even recognized as the first time a US Marine intelligence unit was in direct support of a NATO counterpart. I know the deployment was a personal memorable experience and suspect that to be the case for each and every member of the composite 12<sup>th</sup> ITT during that memorable summer of 1976. ❖

## Okinawa Days...

All photos courtesy of Paul Sofranac, USMC (Ret)



### ITT Officer Cadre c.1973-74

LtoR: CWO Tom Laws; WO Paul Sofranac; WO Wayne Twilliger; CWO Jack Parker; WO H. John Lopez



### Liberty Call...

CWO J. Parker; WO P. Sofranac; MSgt G. Simpson; WO W. Twilliger; MSgt A. Beatancourt; MSgt L. Bloom



35 years ago – Cubi Point, PI – c. 1973

During those halcyon days on Okinawa in 1973, WO Sofranac took a sub-team consisting of GySgt M. Paradis and SSgt M. Zannelli to the Philippines for 30 days with a company from 3rd ReconBn for SERE training in conjunction with their jungle training in survival techniques. Paradis and Zannelli created an impressive classroom from an old Quonset hut, while WO Sofranac worked the liaison scene with support elements at Cubi Point, PI.

Following the jungle training, the sub-team constructed a POW holding area (twice, when the first attempt was pilfered by the locals), then "captured" the Recon Marines to provide a realistic POW environment and interrogation.

All was not totally smooth sailing when Paradis managed to roll the Team jeep, almost wiping out the entire sub-team. The jeep landed upside down, pinning Sofranac underneath. With adrenaline pumping, Paradis and Zannelli managed to lift the jeep enough for Sofranac to crawl out unscathed. The last week was spent with Zannelli unofficially getting the jeep repaired, which he did in true "Z" style with his glib tongue and a couple of bottles of scotch. ❖

## PERSPECTIVES ON AN INTERROGATION— *Republic of Vietnam—1967*

*By Jim Massie, USMC (Ret)*

### MSgt Francisco "Lucky" Luciano



## *In Memoriam*

The MCITTA was saddened to learn our longtime friend and fellow Marine Interrogator Lucky Luciano had passed away in November 2007 as reported in the *Memorandum for Retired Marines*, Jan-Mar 2008 Issue.

Lucky retired from the Marine Corps in October 1973 following his last tour on Okinawa. Prior to his deployment to the 3rd MarDiv, Frank taught Spanish at the Command and Staff College in Quantico.

Harry Todd recalls him as "...an excellent interrogator and we used him as a tool to "break" selected PWs." As it turned out, Frank was a dead-ringer for the R-20 VC company commander. When a new POW would see him and his dark Latino complexion, they were convinced he was their CO who had surrendered and they would readily give information.

### GySgt Ronald Lee Kelley

Ron "9-Fingers" Kelley passed away peacefully on 10 April 2008 in Tucson, AZ after a long illness with throat cancer. His family was by his side. He was 65-years old.

Ron served in the ITTs from Okinawa to Camp Lejeune. He was well liked by all who served with him. His jovial personality made him easily approachable and was always at the center of a political debate, and any other animated discussion. Ron was affectionately known as "9-Fingers" after he had an infected finger surgically removed.

GySgt Kelley was interred at the Southern Arizona Veterans Memorial Cemetery in Sierra Vista, AZ with full military honors on 18 April 2008.

Letters of condolences may be sent to Ron's son, Sean Kelley at 6515 S California Drive, Hereford, AZ 85615.



**The names of these Marine Interrogators will be added to the Last Man Log and remembered during the MCITTA Memorial Services in September 2008.**

S ometime shortly before the TET Offensive of 1967, I had the good luck to be in the Da Nang rear at 9<sup>th</sup> ITT Headquarters when SSgt D. W. James directed me to accompany him to First Medical Bn. A tactical message from the 1/7 position reported a senior enemy officer had been intercepted, wounded, and helo lifted to the hospital. Don James knew the prisoner was important. In his usual decisive manner, "DW" marshaled all available assets to coordinate the identification and potential interrogation of a valued opponent — Major Nguyen Van Lam, Commanding Officer of the R20th Main Force Battalion, sometimes referred to in the Dai Loc area as the 402d Sapper Battalion.

All 9<sup>th</sup> ITT interrogators had been given periodic EEI's to track this NVA officer. More than a few detainees and PW'S I interrogated knew of him, particularly in the Dai Loc area where 3/7 was based. The story they told was the usual: Van Lam led from the front and set an example to his men of personal bravery. Before attacking any fixed position, he would infiltrate that position by night with a notebook and depict the physical layout with attention to strong and weak points, the alertness, target suitability, etc. of the defenses. He would then return to his unit, and construct a small or large-scale model of the position to be attacked and drill his men. Naturally, he would also personally lead the assault. A later report indicated that in this particular case, Van Lam was carrying detailed drawings of 1/7's positions.

When SSgt James and I arrived at First Med, there were the usual grim scenes: heavily wounded Marines lay on their mobile beds at the entrance, bleeding away while the medical staff vigorously operated on those who could be saved. I had observed this sight before, and hated it.

In the operation room where Van Lam lay barely conscious, I saw GySgt Anderson from 3d CIT. No actual interrogation, unfortunately, took place due to the near death medical condition of the prisoner. Nonetheless, "DW" persisted, and repeatedly asked him: "Are you Major Nguyen Van Lam, Commanding Officer of the R20 Bn?" Summoning all his remaining strength, the patient answered: "I am Nguyen Van Lam"— in English, as my memory serves.

I was impressed by the prisoner's efforts to master his pain, establish his identity as a soldier, and to die with personal honor in the event. For the first time in Vietnam, I recognized a human quality in our enemy. This recognition would help me to go that extra mile in future interrogations, and help me to better estimate enemy situations. By not recognizing that human quality, I realized, in the past I had stunted my own proficiency as an interrogator by not preparing for sufficient psychological analysis of my sources. On the other hand, in my opinion, SSgt

James was a master of psychological assessment and control of sources. He knew his Order of Battle, and he had extensive field experience. He was the right man for the situation, and did not press the patient beyond his condition, and he was never carried away.

A prisoner from the R20 Bn, whom James had brought from the PW collection point, positively identified Van Lam.

It was all over quickly, but there were some lessons to be gleaned from this historic incident. Many vital elements of the operational Intelligence cycle had taken place: first, the dispatch of the PW from 1/7 was facilitated by the battalion interrogator and his interpreter who did not delay the Medevac and promptly notified 9<sup>th</sup> ITT with a Spot Report; this allowed the timely actions of SSgt James to gain access to First Med, notify 3d CIT, and arrange for a specific PW to provide positive identification; as a result, both counterintelligence and operational intelligence were available on site for potential exploitation.

While there was little operational intelligence gained in the event, a victory against a valiant enemy had been achieved, and "intell" had played the best hand it could in the process. Our new Order of Battle could eliminate the name of the most successful commander in our area. When the Tet Offensive hit shortly thereafter and we at 9<sup>th</sup> ITT were flooded with PWs from their failed offensive, I often thought that the absence of Van Lam

had certainly hurt the Main Force Viet Cong cause.

The perception of all this helped me personally to see how vital it was for all the wheels to mesh at the right times and places, and I resolved to grow as an interrogator to meet challenges ahead hopefully in the same manner.

The role of personalities in this event also played a hand. The 0251 interrogation field MOS was always staffed by colorful Marines whose paths would continuously

cross each other throughout their careers in the Corps. Sgt Howard Kahn had always helped me to "square away" during our ITT training at Fort Holabird, and would be my future sub-team commander as a GySgt at Camp Lejeune. SSgt Don James was our top tactical interrogator who would spare no hour training those who needed it; later, as an LDO Major at INTM,

HQMC, he would take intelligence training and assignments of 0251 Marine Interrogators to unprecedented levels.

Coincidentally, some 22 years into the future I would be a CWO at Navy Liaison Unit, Munich where MGySgt Andy G. Anderson of CI was the top strategic Naval debriefer. Still a consummate professional, his insights and expertise drove our debriefing operations. We often spoke of our experience with a formidable enemy— Major Nguyen Van Lam. ❖



**Major James J. Massie, USMC (Ret)** graduated from the US Army Intelligence School, Fort Holabird, MD on 1 April 1966 as a Lance Corporal, 0251 Marine Interrogator. An exceptional Russian linguist, he was frequently called upon for high level assignments, most of which were classified.

Subsequently he was selected for Warrant Officer followed by a commission as a Lieutenant. Jim retired from the Marine Corps as a Major and lives with his wife Sherry in Tucson, AZ.



Time and circumstances influence our lives on a daily basis. Not always a high priority, the MCITTA is usually the last to know of changes.

The below listed members have had changes of address and we were not informed resulting in them being out of contact with the Association and The Spot Report being returned.

Anyone knowing the whereabouts of these Marines please notify them to contact our editor or the Team Commander for a change of address. We don't want to loose them:

- Son T. Kim
- Bradley E. White
- Robert L. Trevino
- Paul Markiewicz
- Richard Quinones
- Overton K. King
- Paul Montanez
- Earl D. Davis
- John L. Zamora
- Kenneth Baldwin
- John Wolicki
- Thomas L. Laws
- Philip Gold
- Sergio E. Mejia, Jr.
- Timothy J. DiMarzio
- Salvador Rivas

# 2009

Relive the traditions  
at the 7th  
MCITTA  
Annual  
Gathering  
in San  
Diego



## Memories of In-Country Language Training

By Jim Riemer, USMC (Ret)

In 1970 I was a member of the 1<sup>st</sup> Interrogation Translation Team (ITT) supporting the 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Brigade in Kaneohe Bay, Hawaii. One of our Team officers, WO Jim Haskins, was assigned duties as Training Officer and, as such, persuaded the Brigade G-2, Captain Wayne Mason, to assist in obtaining quotas for team members to attend the Thai Language Course at the US Army Pacific Language School at Scholfield Barracks. Working with the FMFPac Language Officer and ITT Coordinator, Captain Tom Petony, Captain Mason was successful in obtaining four seats in the upcoming 3-month Thai short course. I quickly volunteered.

By the time we completed the course, the incursion of US Forces into Cambodia was in full swing and, being a Cambodian language graduate of the Defense Language Institute, East Coast, I was eager to go. Thinking the combination of Cambodian and Thai language capability would be an asset, Captain Mason arranged a six-week TAD in support of US Forces deploying into Cambodia. Although this TAD was classified as “In-Country Language Training”, it’s, however, another story for another time.

The following year the 1<sup>st</sup> ITT was successful in establishing a broad In-Country Language Training Program (ICLTP). Finally able to capitalize on my Thai language training, I requested, and received, a 60-day in-country language training set of orders to Thailand—a much anticipated adventure and welcome experience.

Once in Bangkok, every week or so I would go to the Joint US Military Advisory Group (JUSMAGTHAI) to pick up mail and eat American food of some sort, although I was more interested in the local fare. On one such visit I met Major Mizra (Harry) Baig, who was just completing a 3-year tour with the G-3 Section, JUSMAGTHAI. As a former Intel type (C.I.), he was very interested in

how I was pursuing my in-country tour. I told him my plan was to take a trip up-country every couple of weeks and then return to Bangkok for R & R. During one of our meetings, he suggested I look up his good friend at the American Consul at Udon who would vector me to some interesting places and adventures.

Armed with the Consul’s name, I proceeded to Udorn, where I presented myself at the Consulate. About one minute later the Consul General, whose name I have unfortunately forgotten, came bounding out of his office, dodged through the throng of 80-100 folks waiting to see him, and hauled me back into his office. Major Baig had



Chaing Mai Moat

mentioned me and out of respect for Baig, the Consul couldn’t do enough on my behalf.

Following his wise counsel, I then headed for Chiang Mai and established myself in a hotel for a weeklong stay. The following morning, armed with a bag of tangerines I purchased at a local market, and a few cigars, I took a series of “baht buses,” the local and inexpensive form of transportation, through the town of Fang to the Nammae Kok river, which, I believe, borders with Burma, now Myanmar. As I proceeded further North, the baht buses became smaller and more decrepit, the

countryside wilder and even more primitive looking, all the same, stunning and beautiful.

Chatting with a fellow passenger, he asked if I was afraid to be traveling through communist and bandit-infested country? I replied “No, but what about you?” His reply: “I’m getting out at the next stop,” Too late to worry about that now, I thought!

Arriving at the river (finally) I arranged passage on an outbound motorboat going down-river to Chiang Rai, my destination. My fellow passengers included a young expatriot American Buddhist monk—complete with saffron robes, three or four other suspicious-looking folks and a small menagerie of chickens, ducks and small pigs.

Using my limited Thai language to negotiate the price of a ticket, I suspect I paid the better part of their fare as well!

The water was low, progress was slow, but I was treated to the sight and sounds of wild elephants and a crocodile or two, and a brilliant array of flora, exotic birds and the pungent odors of the jungle, and the people and animals on the ferry.

The sun went down, and we were still motoring down the river, finally arriving at Chiang Rai about midnight. I was lucky to find a hotel, and, knowing Chiang Rai’s reputation as not being totally friendly, I laid low. The following morning I had a delightful Thai breakfast, did a bit of sightseeing, and then hopped a regular bus back to Chiang Mai.

The bus traveled a new, four-lane, paved highway, which traversed a land of desolation and (seeming) desecration. The landscape was scraped bare of vegetation, having been clear-cut in the worst sense of the phrase. No sign of re-forestation, agriculture or anything—a stark comparison to the lush landscape on the river.

Arriving back in Bangkok, I returned to JUSMAGTHAI to thank Major Baig for his good offices and relate my many adventures and encounters “up-north.”



A couple months later Major Baig and his family moved into the Imperial Hotel in Bangkok awaiting his transfer. Tragically, he and his family perished in a fire that totally destroyed the hotel, the circumstances of which were suspect and indications pointed to a possible assassination for his intel work with the Thais.



Maj Mizra "Harry" Baig

Only later did I learn of Major Baig's legendary exploits in the defense of Khe Sanh as the Fire Control and Target Intelligence Officer with the 26<sup>th</sup> Marines. During the 1968 siege, Major Baig gained notoriety and a Legion of Merit for his "...exceptional professionalism and imagination in planning a highly effective defense fire plan..." while on continual duty and under heavy enemy fire. A complete rendering of Major Baig's exploits at Khe Sanh by Chaplain Ray Stubbe can be found at:

<http://www.geocities.com/ksvredclay/issue-52-special-feature.htm>

My In-Country Language Training in Thailand instilled a love for this country that continues to this day. For the last several years in May, in conjunction with the joint military exercise with the Thai Army, *Cobra Gold*, I travel to Bangkok and meet with my good friend Fred Grant. We always take a few days following the exercise to enjoy this magnificent country, smoke a few cigars, drink a few Singha Beer, and play golf on the many challenging and scenic courses— always reminiscent of my first encounter with this beautiful land of the Golden Buddha.

My ICLTP experience was prescient of the program's expansion and value as an intelligence training tool, when other Marine Interrogators and linguists traveled around the world to expand their language skills and learn the customs and traditions of their studied countries. An invaluable experience 37 years ago; yet, remains vital and viable today! ❖

## Reading List

### **The Interrogators:** *The Secret War against al Qaeda in Afghanistan*

Chris Mackey & Greg Miller

Little, Brown and Company (July 19, 2004); 512 pages

This fascinating memoir reports from one of the most crucial and controversial fronts in the war on terror. The pseudonymous Mackey was an interrogator at military prisons in Afghanistan, tasked with sussing out the secrets of suspected Taliban and al-Qaeda members. The author, Mackey, enlisted in the Army reserves out of high school in 1989. Over the next few years he attended Fordham University and took employment in London with a large accounting firm, concurrently attending German and Arabic courses at Monterey, with concomitant interrogation courses at Fort Huachuca and the Strategic Debriefing School; plus, being exposed to the British approach to interrogation. Having missed the Gulf War and Kosovo, he was activated after 9/11 and joined what amounted to an *ad hoc* MI unit headed for Afghanistan. His several months in Afghanistan were split between Kandahar and Bagram, the latter being a more "developed" facility.

For Marine interrogators, there will seem to be quite a contrast between interrogation experiences in Vietnam and Mackey's in the Middle East. We were tactical interrogators, living and operating with field units. Mackey's experience seems quite "strategic", being sequestered at large holding facilities, with very structured POW handling procedures and seemingly adequate numbers of MPs.

He and journalist Miller take readers inside the prison cells and interrogation rooms, where interrogators choreograph elaborate mind games and fight epic battles of will with their often formidable captives. Their account's full of the engrossing lore and procedure of interrogation, the thrust and parry of baited queries and cagey half-truths, and the occasional dramatic breakthrough when a prisoner cracks.

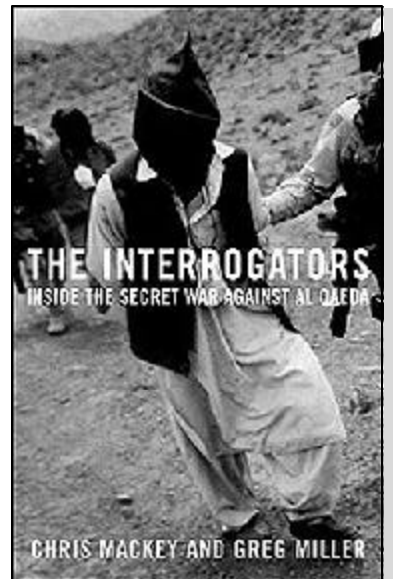
The book, which was vetted by the Pentagon, will not settle the questions surrounding American treatment of prisoners in Iraq and elsewhere. But it does give a vivid, gritty look at the pressures and compromises attendant on this unconventional war.

Before beginning, I recommend reading the chapters, "Cast of Characters", "Keys", "Introduction", "Prologue", "The War is Over", "Epilogue" and the "Appendix: Interrogating Approaches." The number of "Approach Techniques" has been enlarged to 16, from the 12 of yesteryear.

THE INTERROGATORS is a fascinating work of nonfiction that reads like the most exciting of spy novels. It is the first and only inside account into today's interrogation world the public has never been allowed and is sure to be one of the most talked about books. You will appreciate/enjoy the Army approach in contrast to what would be the Marine approach.

*Jim Riemer*

13<sup>th</sup> ITT (RVN 1967-68)



(Continued from Page 7)

Monster, the “Connell Hilton–Far East” as we had dubbed in honor of its creator.. A week or so into the fray, I managed to pick up enemy FOs moving into position on our front. (NOTE: Many of us thought and still think they were using our big green, above-ground bunker as their aiming stake.) I had two 106mm Recoilless Rifles, an ONTOS, and one tank at my disposal. Needless to say, whenever I spotted an NVA FO we did everything we could to send him on vacation—post haste, which resulted in at least a one-hour lull from the incoming.



Marine Snipers from a bunker vantage point

© Dave Powell

Our Green Monster bunker was strategically located on the perimeter of the base. This made it not only excellent as a forward observation post, but we gave permission for Marines from the Sniper Platoon to use as a firing platform because of its height and vantage point. I'm not sure if this was to our detriment or not, but we took three hits on the front edge of the bunker near the entrance; however, because of its exceptional construction, only had to replace a handful of sandbags (mud bags).

On the human side: I am sure something similar has occurred in other wars or battles at other times but I have to say we had medical and moral leadership if not unequaled, then unsurpassed. The Doctors and corpsmen of Charlie Med and the Chaplains of the 26th Marines will never be paid the praises and/or material wealth deserved.

Initially, the Doctors and Corpsmen worked inside a GP tent which was sandbagged only about three to four feet up. They worked to save our men and I never saw anyone flinch when the incoming impacted a few feet away- utterly amazing. Now I understand the phrase, “Cool under fire”. The Chaplains, Father Driscoll and Rev. Stubbe were all over the base like a pair of ghosts. This was the only time in my life I have seen a Priest conduct “home to home delivery of Confession”. Father Driscoll rode a small motorcycle (He was known as The Motorcycle Priest of Khe Sanh) to visit the units in the outer perimeter. A couple of times his vestment scarf hung out of his flak jacket and as he motored around the area with helmet, flak jacket, and scarf in the wind, some of the troops lovingly dubbed him “Wile E. Coyote”. He got a kick out of this handle and we had some much needed humor. Late in the conflict he was wounded by a pea-sized piece of shrapnel which entered his spinal area between the top of the flak jacket and

the bottom of the helmet, which left him paralyzed from the shoulder area down until he passed away in 2006. Rev. Stubbe did his all on the Protestant side but without the motorcycle. He is still very active with the Khe Sanh Veterans Association, which he helped organize.

From December 1967 through the end of April 1968, the North Vietnamese lost over 10,000 killed in the Khe Sanh area. During the actual siege of the base, despite the circumstances of constant daily bombardment, the Marine Interrogators of the 17<sup>th</sup> ITT acquitted themselves in exemplary fashion and contributed significant intelligence information to the victory.

#### **Operation Pegasus and the relief of Khe Sanh-**

In late-March, 3<sup>d</sup> ITT, now in support of the 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Regiment and back at Phu Bai following an arduous action in Hue City during the Tet '68 Offensive, returned from a hot and dirty operation along the coastal lowlands southeast of Hue City. Operation Ford was never a recorded operation and of little significance, consisted of chasing the retreating enemy from Hue City down the peninsula to the south east of Hue following the Perfume River to the sea.

Back at Phu Bai following Operation Ford, Task Force X-ray informed us the 1<sup>st</sup> Marines were moving north to the area of Vandergrift Combat Base (Later designated LZ Stud by the 1<sup>st</sup> AirCav) in the vicinity of Ca Lu, just south of the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ), as staging for the upcoming Operation Pegasus. Pegasus was a joint Army/Marine operation to sweep Route 9 into Khe Sanh to relieve the beleaguered 26<sup>th</sup> Marines. The base plan of Operation Pegasus called for the 1st Marine Regiment, with two battalions to attack west toward Khe Sanh while the 1st Cavalry Division air assaulted onto the high ground on either side of Route 9 and moved constantly west toward the base. One battalion of the 1<sup>st</sup> Marines would flank the north side of Route 9 while one battalion pushed west to the south of the road. I was assigned to support the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 3<sup>rd</sup> Marines, attached to the 1<sup>st</sup> Marines, on the south side of the road, while SSgt Mitchell Paradis and Corporal Carl Tanigawa would operate with the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 1<sup>st</sup> Marines, under command of LtCol Mike Gravel, on the north side of the highway. Paradis later related some of the events that took place with 1/1:

“We jumped off on April Fool’s Day from Ca Lu, hoping someone would call the joke. It was not to be. The battalion began moving through some pretty intense terrain as we maneuvered to our flanking position of the highway. Soon we



F-2-1 Marines sweep Rt 9 during Pegasus

came to an area hit by a B-52 Arc Light saturation bombing. I was awestruck by the devastation. I couldn't help but wonder how anything or anyone could survive such a horrific bombardment. Despite my reservations, we did come across a survivor, an NVA private who had been underground. After a few minutes it was evident he was suffering from acute shock and trauma. He was bleeding from both ears and completely incoherent. Our only recourse was to evacuate him to the rear without being able to effectively interrogate him for immediate tactical information.

"The following day we continued our sweep west. Problems soon became evident as Col Gravel tried to maintain contact with his companies on the flanks, but the terrain and triple canopied jungle made it almost impossible. Later in the afternoon, Gravel decided to simply shoot an azimuth and follow it until we intersected Route 9. Traveling "as the crow flies" proved quite the daunting task, traversing steep ravines in stifling air under a triple canopy. Ridges were so steep it was necessary to use the hanging vines to rappel down. At one point Tanigawa and I were pummeled from above with a lot crashing limbs and stones. As we looked up a young Marine came sliding down the ravine and crashed into a tree next to us. He was uninjured but didn't look very good. Cpl Tanigawa helped him up, but he was quite shaken and unsteady. We gave him some water and removed his pack and the gear he was carrying. Tanigawa took his pack while I took his two LAWs, rifle and cartridge belt and proceeded to help him down the ridge. At the bottom of the ravine Col Gravel found a creek bed and we began the long, wet trek out of that jungle maze to the highway. The Marine we had relieved of his burden stayed ahead of us as we struggled with our double load. I'm still not sure if was shaken up as bad as he made out, or was just conning us to be his mules. Nonetheless, his platoon sergeant finally found him and thanked us for our assistance."

Other than several fire fights with NVA forces providing delaying action, and being strafed by 1<sup>st</sup> AirCav Huey gunships, who mistook the Marines of 2/3 for NVA while we were crossing a stream, it was a quiet operation— hot, not much rain, heavy jungle and high hills and mountains. The day after the strafing incident MajGen Tolson, Commander of the 1<sup>st</sup> AirCav Division, flew into a hastily prepared landing zone to apologize to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 3<sup>rd</sup> Marines CO and the assembled troops. Not much success for the dead and wounded as a result of AirCav's "friendly-fire" blunder, but to most of the tired Marines at least a show of compassion and responsibility on his part.

Although the operation was mostly uneventful, it was physically and mentally demanding. We found plenty of evidence the NVA had recently occupied the area. Numerous expertly

constructed firing positions with skillful fields of fire, and smaller holes dug into the sides for quick shelter from bombs and artillery. As we moved closer to KSCB itself we came across even more evidence of the NVA occupation of the area: base camps, mostly company and battalion size, hospitals with bloody bandages, food and ammunition caches and the all-pervasive and enveloping smell of death. The NVA had dug numerous shallow burial pits or fashioned them out of bomb craters for their dead comrades. Most appeared to have been killed by B-52 air strikes, but some were tactical air as well as artillery. Our attached engineer troops filled-in



**Operation Pegasus**  
**Pegasus** began on 1 April 1968 to clear Highway 9 to Khe Sanh Combat Base to relieve the beleaguered 26th Marines. A joint Army and Marine operation with 1st AirCav (Mobile) and **Task Force Hotel** with 2/1 and 2/3 as maneuver elements.

the burial pits and carefully plotted the location of the gravesites on their maps to pass to the International Red Cross and eventually to the government in Hanoi— at least that's what I was told.

After a week of trekking through almost impassable jungle, we entered KSCB. As we made our way through the base, I couldn't help but take in the wreckage of what was once a typical military cantonment of period. Memories of the previous summer flooded back as I looked around, but it was different. After nearly three months of receiving thousands of rounds of artillery, rocket and mortar fire on a daily basis, the base had the appearance of a garbage dump with torn canvas from tents, along with torn sand bags and pieces of lumber and clothing all mixed together with pieces of destroyed equipment in the red dirt of Khe Sanh. Practically the only structure still standing above ground was the "Green Monster" of the ITT bunker. Inside we found Jimmie Brown and Lt Yanger, none the worse for wear, but affected by their experience. Happy to see us, they were anxious to get out as soon as possible.

Mitch Paradis takes up the narrative:

"Jimmie took us to the 26<sup>th</sup> Marines CP, "the French Bunker" I remembered, to introduce us to the S-2 and affect the transition from the 17<sup>th</sup> ITT to the 3<sup>rd</sup> ITT. As we made our way through the labyrinth of the CP we came to the end of a

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long corridor where a blanket hung from the wall. Jimmie moved the blanket aside to reveal a large hole cut through the concrete. He crawled inside with Haskins and me following. The tunnel emptied into a small chamber. In the dim light we could see a cot at one end with a body on it. Jimmie called out a name, and the body stirred. Clad only in skivvy drawers, "the body" swung his feet over the edge of the cot and sat up. He was completely disheveled, with a four-day growth of beard and a ponderous body odor reminiscent of some of what we just passed through on the trail. Years later, while watching the movie "Apocalypse Now" I was reminded of this scenario when Martin Sheen (Capt Willard) enters the cave to find a traumatized Marlon Brando (Col Kurtz) on his cot, clad only in his skivvies saying, "The horror." The entire scene was bizarre, to say the least.

Jimmie introduced him as the S-2 Chief who pulled out a wooden crate from under his cot. The crate, filled with excelsior, revealed a dozen or so bottles of Polish vodka wrapped in tissue paper. We found out the vodka had been "liberated" from a Russian small-arms repair van that had been captured near the Special Forces camp at Lang Vei. The S-2 Chief unwrapped one of the bottles, opened it, and poured a generous amount into a canteen cup then topped it with tomato juice from a Number 10, mess hall issue can. He passed this around as he said, "Welcome to hell." After a few belts of his vodka, we left the "hole-in-the-wall" and returned to the 17<sup>th</sup> bunker where Lt Yanger was already packed."

Colonel Lownds and the 26th Marines along with the 17<sup>th</sup> ITT departed Khe Sanh Combat Base, leaving the responsibility for the TAOR and defense of the base to the 1st Marine Regiment, having endured and survived one of the nastiest battles in Marine Corps combat history<sup>1</sup>. As the 3<sup>rd</sup> ITT moved into the KSCB I thought how ironic this was, here it was eight months later and I was moving back into the same bunker that Capt Jim Connell, GySgt Max Friedlander and I had constructed back in August when I was with the 17<sup>th</sup> ITT. We found out later the bunker had been named "Connell Hilton-Far East" by the architects of the 17th Team.

As far as the rest of the world was concerned, the siege was over and the Tet Offensive of 1968 a thing of the past. We settled in by updating area OOB with the Regimental S-2. After establishing perimeter security on the base, the battalions continued to sweep the outlying hill areas in search of NVA units. Of course every day the base itself would be the recipient of incoming rocket and artillery fire, mostly 130mm from the Co Roc area across the border in Laos; not in the same intensity of the siege, but sufficient enough to remind us the NVA were still around and hadn't forgotten about us.

The following months found the 3<sup>rd</sup> Team rotating sub-teams from Phu Bai to Khe Sanh. Although the North Vietnamese artillery continued to harass the base, to probe weakness along the perimeter, and to shell it from a distance, they had changed their basic tactics. They assumed a less aggressive posture and began waiting for the Marine patrols to come to them. By the end of April, sensors indicated mass troop movements along the Ho Chi Minh Trail. Intelligence and Marine patrols revealed a build up of fresh troops out of Hanoi and the S-2 analysts predicted a major attack on Ho's birthday, May 19<sup>th</sup>.

As predicted, the morning of May 19<sup>th</sup> found the battalions in the outlying hills in heavy contact. The ferocity of combat was

reminiscent of the siege. Soon, casualties began arriving at the medical station. In the ITT "Green Monster" bunker the EE-8 connected to the COC rang. The S-2 informed the team of an NVA POW at Charlie Med. The sub-team at that time was comprised of Capt F. J. Smith, WO Pedro Caudillo, and SSgt Mitchell Paradis. Although the base was receiving incoming from Co Roc, Paradis ran to the field med underground bunker. Above ground behind some sandbags, Paradis found the NVA POW on a stretcher with a severe head wound. He was unconscious. Paradis remembers:



Outside Charlie Med

© Dave Powell

"I went down into the med bunker and was overwhelmed with the amount of Marine wounded. They were everywhere with the doctors and corpsmen working feverishly to staunch the flow of blood and save as many lives as they could. The floor was sticky with their blood. The smell was unforgettable.

"I quickly found the head surgeon who was working on a young Marine lieutenant with a chest wound. As he worked I asked him about the POW. He told me the prisoner suffered from a severe head injury and needed to be medevac'd as soon as possible, but he was too busy with wounded Marines to tend to him. As soon as he was able, he would stabilize the NVA and call me. I thanked the doc for his cooperation, got out of his way and returned outside to search the prisoner. He had no documentation, but did carry the rank insignia of a captain, which was unusual. The POW tag indicated he was trapped in the wire while attempting to breach the battalion perimeter during a night attack when a Claymore mine detonated and dented his head. A field bandage covered his wound and as I lifted it I could see a large piece of his skull had been blown away and his brain was visible. The whistle and map indicated on the tag were not to be found.

"I returned to the ITT bunker and briefed the two officers of the situation and that I intended to return and interrogate the NVA as soon as the doctor gave me the OK. I called the S-2 and reported my findings. WO Caudillo said he would go up to the med and standby until the POW was ready. He left the bunker, took the ARVN interpreter, SSgt Nguyen Duy Hung with him and was proceeding to the med bunker when struck by an artillery round, killing both of them almost instantly.

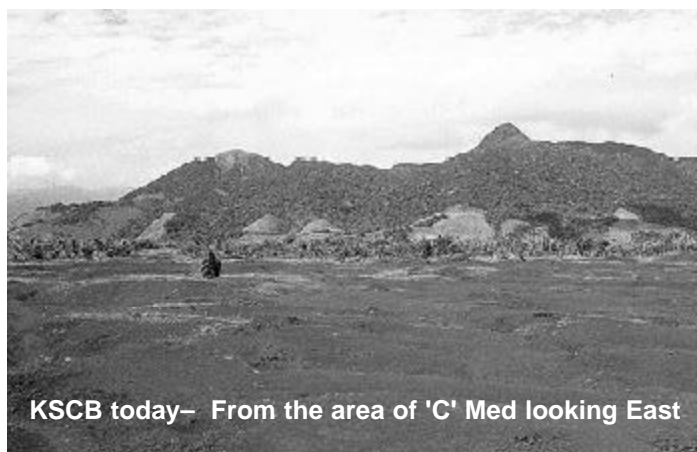
"A short while later Capt Smith managed to get on one of the few helicopters and returned to Phu Bai. WO Caudillo was evacuated to Da Nang later that day for further transfer to his home in Texas. A very sad day but circumstances precluded dwelling on the events<sup>2</sup>.

“Soon more POWs from the outlying battalions began to arrive. I “borrowed” an interpreter from the Civil Affairs office and proceeded to interrogate a total of 19 POWs throughout the day. Most were low ranking enlisted with limited information; however, as their individual reports were pieced together a picture of intelligence value was emerging.

“These prisoners confirmed that a new division of NVA had relieved the decimated 304<sup>th</sup>. The 308<sup>th</sup> Division (Rein) had traveled from Hanoi via the Ho Chi Minh trail and made a contact relief with the 304<sup>th</sup>. Their offensive plan was to overwhelm the Marine battalions on the hills and then attack KSCB and drive the Marines out. As this information was reported and the picture became clear, the base commander notified 3<sup>rd</sup> MarDiv at Dong Ha who dispatched a battalion of Marines to reinforce the perimeter of Khe Sanh in anticipation of the attack. Because of the valiant fighting of the Marines in the hills, the night attack on KSCB never happened.”

Paradis and other members of the 3<sup>rd</sup> ITT rotated in and out of Khe Sanh for the next two months. General Westmoreland, COMUSMACV, continued to demand the base be occupied and kept it so until he departed Vietnam on 11 June. His successor, General Creighton W. Abrams allowed the passage of one week before he ordered the initiation of Operation Charlie, the destruction and evacuation of KSCB. The 3<sup>rd</sup> ITT remained at the remote outpost until the very end and watched as the “Green Monster” was bulldozed down to ground level. The construction of the bunker was so complex, any attempt to dismantle it by hand was fool hearty.

The task of closing and covering the scars of war at Khe Sanh was completed on 6 July 1968. ❖



KSCB today– From the area of 'C' Med looking East

## EPILOGUE:

As the passage of time always does, Khe Sanh today, 40 years later, shows little of what transpired there. Estimates of losses on both sides vary and, perhaps, a true and accurate account of casualties will never be known. Veterans of those days who now travel back to Vietnam and Khe Sanh to, perhaps, heal old wounds, find the area to be tranquil and as stunning as I first looked at it long ago. The local people are still friendly, the Bru still curious about us, and the dirt is still vermilion red. Curious enough, at the site of the Charlie Med, not far from the 17<sup>th</sup> ITT bunker, stands an NVA monument, covered in Vietnamese graffiti, to mark the events of forty years past. As the translated text below shows, the people who build the monuments get to write the history:

**LIBERATED BASE MONUMENT**  
**THE AREA OF TACON POINT BASE BUILT BY**  
**U.S. AND SAIGON PUPPET – 1967**  
**AIR FIELD AND WELL CONSTRUCTED DEFENSE SYSTEM**  
**CO LUONG [town] DONG HA [county] QUANG TRI [province]**  
**U.S. AND ARMY PUPPETS USED TO MONITOR**  
**THE MOVEMENT AND TRIED TO STOP ASSISTANCE**  
**FROM THE NORTH INTO THE BATTLE OF INDO CHINA**  
**AFTER 170 DAYS AND NIGHTS OF ATTACK**  
**BY THE SURROUNDING LIBERATION ARMY,**  
**TACON (KHE SANH) WAS COMPLETELY LIBERATED.**  
**THE LIBERATION ARMY DESTROYED THE DEFENSE SYSTEM**  
**FOR THE BATTLE OF INDO CHINA.**  
**112,000 U.S. AND PUPPET TROOPS KILLED AND CAPTURED.**  
**197 AIRPLANES SHOT DOWN.**  
**MUCH WAR MATERIAL WAS CAPTURED AND DESTROYED.**  
**KHE SANH ALSO ANOTHER DIEN BIEN PHU FOR U.S.**



NVA monument at KSCB (See Translation)

## NOTES:

<sup>1</sup> Three members of the 17<sup>th</sup> ITT, GySgt Max Friedlander, SSgt Jimmie Brown, and 1<sup>st</sup> Lt Thomas Yanger, are authorized to wear the Presidential Unit Citation awarded to the 26<sup>th</sup> Marine Regiment and attached units for action at Khe Sanh Combat Base during the siege from 20 Jan to 1 Apr 1968.

<sup>2</sup> WO Pedro Caudillo was awarded the Bronze Star, and posthumously promoted to Chief Warrant Officer, for his action. CWO Pedro Caudillo is the only member of the 3<sup>rd</sup> ITT to be lost in combat during the Vietnam War.



# Committee for the Marine Corps Intelligence Associations



MCITTA will participate in the Second Combined Convention of the CMCIA, held in conjunction with the Fall Symposium of Marine Corps Intelligence Officers hosted by the Director of Intelligence.

This will be a wonderful opportunity to reacquaint with many of our old friends from across the Marine Corps Intelligence Field.



Executive Suite



Elements Restaurant



Pool



Fitness Center

## – The Hyatt Dulles –

Headquarters for the MCITTA 6th Annual Gathering and the 2nd Combined Convention of the CMCIA

2300 Dulles Corner Blvd., Herndon, Virginia, USA

Tel: +1 703 713 1234 – Fax: +1 703 713 3410

The Hyatt Dulles is conveniently located adjacent to Washington Dulles International Airport. The Hyatt Dulles has just completed another phase of what is now a \$6 million renovation, including a complete redesign of the restaurant, lobby and bar. This is in addition to the guestrooms, corridors, fitness center and pool, which were completed in early 2006. A very special convention and Gathering price of \$89 per room/per night has been arranged. This price is incomparable for this upscale, Three Star hotel.

The All Executive Suite property features city views from a 374-sq.-ft. suite featuring finely detailed decor. Interiors include a spacious sitting area with sofa, a granite top desk with Executive chair, and both wired and wireless high-speed Internet access and video checkout. Comfort amenities include a deluxe bath with full spa products and one king Grand Bed with ultra-plush pillows, the softest of sheeting and a thick down blanket piled upon a pillow-topped mattress.

The brand new restaurant, Elements on Level One, offers a menu derived of the freshest products from local suppliers to bring you Chef Bifano's contemporary American Cuisine.

The Lobby Bar, hosts a sophisticated atmosphere and an impressive beverage list including specialty martinis. The contemporary design features mossy green velvets, deep gold satins, rich woods, and shimmering tile work.

The expanded Fitness Center is equipped with 18 individual strength and cardiovascular pieces, each with their own touch screen flat panel monitor. The 15-meter lap pool and hot tub have been redesigned with new stonework, and complemented by new teakwood deck furniture.

### Transportation Shuttle To/From Dulles International Airport:

The Hyatt's free Airport Shuttle starts at 5:15am and ends at 12:30am. The shuttle runs every half hour, it departs the hotel a quarter before the hour and a quarter after the hour; and picks up at the airport at curb 2A or 2H on the hour and on the half hour. The 12:30am pick up at the airport is the last one of the day.

### RESERVATIONS

A special room rate of \$89 per night has been negotiated for our members.

Make your room reservations on your own by dialing the Hyatt-Dulles direct at: (703) 713-1234 or Toll Free: (888) 591-1234.

Reservations can be made on line at: [www.dulles.hyatt.com/groupbooking/dulle2008mcia](http://www.dulles.hyatt.com/groupbooking/dulle2008mcia)

Be sure to identify yourself as participating in the Marine Corps Intelligence convention and reunion to receive the special room rate.

## 1-5 September 2008 – Hyatt-Dulles Hotel – Herndon, VA

# The Marine Corps Interrogator Translator Teams Association

In conjunction with the 2nd Combined CMCIA Convention, the MCITTA will join with the Marine Corps Intelligence Association (MCIA), the Marine Corps Counterintelligence Association (MCCIA), and the Marine Corps Cryptologic Association (MCCA) to share reunion facilities and renew and expand the affiliation we have known in the past as Intelligence Marines.

Each organization will host its own event with communal events interspersed to reduce costs; i.e., the banquet, transportation, etc. All members of the four intelligence associations are extended an open invitation to visit the various Hospitality Suites to raise a glass and reminisce.

Mark your calendar to join us and share the camaraderie of old friends and acquaintances during this special event.



## Schedule of Events Times to be Determined

### **Friday to Monday (Labor Day), 29Aug–1Sep:**

Early arrival: Weekend open for sight-seeing in the greater Washington area, and to attend the Marine Barracks 8th and I Friday Evening Parade on 29 August; or just enjoying the area's numerous attractions. Hotel convention rates are in effect for the weekend. 8th & I tickets are still available if you hurry.

**Tuesday, 2 September:** Official check-in date. For those in early, a tour of Mount Vernon, home of our first president, is available. Air conditioned buses provided, and a guided tour of the historic buildings and grounds will follow.

In the evening we will have the official MCITTA Team Commander's Welcome and Reception. An open bar with heavy hors d'oeuvres will be provided for all to enjoy with awards presentations highlighting the evening. Hospitality Suite open daily.

**Wednesday, 3 September:** The MCITTA Annual Business meeting will be held at 0800. Discussion items include the 2010 Gathering; a special grant from the Marine Corps; and more.

At 1030 buses will depart for a tour of the Pentagon, lunch, and a tour of Arlington National Cemetery.

In the evening we will join with the other Marine Corps Intelligence Associations and the active duty Marines for a reception with cash bar and a light buffet.

**Thursday, 4 September:** Buses depart for Marine Corps Base, Quantico, Virginia! A tour of the new Marine Corps Intelligence Activity with briefing will be offered, followed by a tour of HMX-1, home of Marine One, the President's helicopter.

Next up, the Marine Corps Heritage Museum. A combined Memorial Service will be conducted at the Museum. Shuttle buses are available for shopping in the Marine Corps Exchange.

In the evening we will gather at the famous *Globe and Laurel* for our evening meal, and return to the hotel.

**Friday, 5 September:** In the morning buses depart for tours of the new World War II Memorial, the Korean War Memorial and the Vietnam War Memorial. Within walking distance of the war memorials are the Lincoln Memorial and the Franklin Roosevelt Memorial. The FDR Memorial is sure to be a highlight.

A lunch venue will be determined, followed by a special tour of the Nation's Capitol building.

The evening's festivities will begin with a joint intelligence associations Social Hour with the Active Duty Marine Intelligence personnel, followed by the Annual Banquet. Everyone is invited to enjoy the music and dancing at the conclusion of the dinner. The Commandant of the Marine Corps has been invited as our special guest, but has not confirmed as of this date.

**Saturday, 6 September:** The Team Commander's Breakfast will afford a last farewell to many friends for another year.

For the diehard golf addicts, this additional day has been set for the inaugural playing of the *Jim Riemer Golf Classic* at the Medal of Honor Golf Course in Quantico. Jim has been a longtime aficionado of this intricate and challenging game, and despite some severe physical setbacks, has, with great grit and determination, elevated his level of play to the envy of us all. At the first MCITTA Gathering at Nellis AFB in Las Vegas, Jim struck a hole in one, a significant achievement for anyone, let alone a man with a cane. Thus, we believe it is only fitting we name this event for him. We hope this event bearing Jim's name will stand for many years as a fitting tribute to the man, and a highlight for our Annual Gathering. Everyone is invited to participate. Whether you are a golfer or not, there will be events for fun and enjoyment for all. Of course, everyone is invited to pick up the clubs and come on out. You don't have to be a Tiger Woods, just have a desire to spend one more fun-filled day with good friends. Trophies and prizes will be awarded.

Special hotel rates still apply. Use your own clubs or rent them.

**2-6 September 2008 – Hyatt-Dulles Hotel – Herndon, VA**

# The Marine Corps Interrogator Translator Teams Association



Hosted by Don and Lynne James, the 6th Annual Gathering of the MCITTA has all the makings of an event worthy of remembering as one of the all-time greats. Don is working with key people of the three other Marine intelligence associations to capitalize on the venues and special features in the Washington area to ensure something to please everyone.

This is to be, by far, our most inexpensive Gathering. Because the majority of our events will consist of visiting National historic sites, our personal costs are minimal. Chartered bus costs will be prorated and determined when a final count of attendees is obtained.

### Make checks payable to "MCITTA"

Mail to: Don James  
4436 Airlie Way  
Annandale, VA 22003-3513  
EMail: usmc0205@aol.com

### Guest of Honor

It is our extreme pleasure and honor to have asked the 34<sup>th</sup> Commandant of the Marine Corps, General James T. Conway, to be the Guest of Honor for the 2nd Combined CMCIA Convention.

General Conway has been an exceptional Marine for the past 38 years.



**Gen James T. Conway CMC**

### 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Gathering Registration Form

First Name	MI	Last Name	
Name of Spouse Attending		Name of Guest(s)	
Mailing Address			Phone Number
City	ST	Zip + 4	Email
- Gathering Registration @ \$70 per couple – \$35 single		No.	Total \$ _____
- CMCIA Joint Banquet @ \$35 pp Please select from the following:		No.	Total \$ _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Beef		_____	
<input type="checkbox"/> Fish		_____	
<input type="checkbox"/> Chicken		_____	
2 Sep – Mt Vernon Tour @ \$15 pp		No.	Total \$ _____
– TC Welcome Reception @ \$20 pp		No.	Total \$ _____
3 Sep – Pentagon Tour & Arlington Cem		No.	(No Cost)
– <del>Joint CMCIA Reception</del>		<b>No.</b>	(Incl in Reg)
4 Sep – Marine Corps Heritage Museum		No.	(No Cost)
– Dinner at <i>Globe and Laurel</i>		No.	(No Host)
5 Sep – War Memorial Tours		No.	(No Cost)
6 Sep – <i>Jim Riemer Golf Classic</i> \$ (TBD)		No.	Total \$ (TBD)
Donations for the operation of MCITTA gratefully accepted \$ _____			
Check No _____ Payable to <b>MCITTA</b> TOTAL enclosed \$ _____			
Please indicate ETA at Hotel – Date _____ Time _____ Mode _____			
If driving, will you share a ride to events with others? <u>No</u> <u>Yes</u>			

**2-6 September 2008 – Hyatt-Dulles Hotel – Herndon, VA**