EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Title: Hue, the Mirror on the Pole View Around the Corner to Future Urban Combat

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Thesis: The United States Marine Corps has adopted Operational Maneuver From the Sea, and in conjunction with this revolutionized means of power projection, is evaluating small, highly mobile "Killer Team" organizations, heavily reliant on technology and indirect firepower, as the executor of operations ashore. The preponderance of the world's population, cities, and market centers are located on the littorals, where naval forces will find themselves engaged. This being the case, Marines must expect to fight in urban areas. An examination of the Battle for Hue in the Republic of Vietnam during the Tet Offensive of 1968, serves to illustrate that these small conceptual Killer Teams would be greatly pressed, and most likely fail in urban combat.

Discussion: The Department of the Navy's "Forward...From the Sea", coupled with the Commandant of the Marine Corps' "Operational Maneuver From the Sea", have served to highlight and make vital the capability of United States Naval Forces to rapidly project influence and power into foreign littorals. The Commandant has further directed the examination and development of conceptual units, which are small Killer Teams, vice the traditional force organizations to be incorporated into this new maneuver doctrine. These small teams will rely upon unprecedented firepower, technology, mobility, and elusiveness, to defeat an equally elusive enemy employing guerrilla tactics, in a manner "conceptually" expected to be far more successful than current Marine conventional forces.

By the year 2000, between 40 and 44 percent of the world's population is expected to be living in urban areas, with more than 17 of the world's largest 25 cities being in Third World nations. Most of these nations will not possess the ability to handle the social, infrastructure, cultural, and associated problems inherent to these cities. Though littoral represents a relatively small area, 80 percent of the World's national capitols are found there alone, and they contain an estimated 75 percent of the total population of the world. Additionally, nearly every significant world market place can be found in the littorals. This being this case, and with the link between naval forces and the littorals, United States Marines will find themselves deployed to and engaged in the cities and urban areas of the world.

Though nearly thirty years ago, the battle to recapture Hue during the Tet Offensive of 1968, in the Republic of Vietnam, was the last true military operation in an urban area the Marine Corps has been involved in. An examination of the actions of one infantry battalion during a portion of that battle offers great insight into combat in a city, and the difficult lessons learned there must play a part in the development of any future operational concept. The city offered an environment, terrain, tactical situation, and rogue enemy much like one which can be expected to arise on the littorals of present day. Further in the absence of the technological advances expected to fully support Operational Maneuver From the Sea and the conceptual Killer Teams, Marines entering Hue to recapture it in 1997, would be organized and equipped much like those who fought there in 1968. The events in Hue serve to cast great doubt over the ability of any
small independent units, regardless of the technological advances they possess to succeed in an situation such as that presented by Hue.

Conclusions: Operational Maneuver From the Sea is a flexible and dynamic doctrine that possesses great potential to serve the Marine Corps upon the littorals of the world. Likewise the small conceptual Killer Teams have great merit which must be fully explored. However, these teams, based on the lessons at Hue, would not have succeeded in regaining the city, and containing the challenges that arose there. As the Marine Corps is driven toward urban combat based on the organization’s littoral prowess and the shift of world demographics, effort and procurement must be directed toward improving the vitality of the infantry battalion in this costly and difficult type of operation. Additionally, the greatest scrutiny must be applied to limited monetary resources to ensure the application of technological advances across the full spectrum of war, on both urban and non-urban battlefields.
"Tactical doctrine stresses that urban combat operations are conducted only when required and that built-up areas are isolated and bypassed rather than risking a costly, time-consuming operation in this difficult environment."

U.S. Army Field Manual 90-10, Military Operations on Urbanized Terrain
Dated 15 August 1979

The United States Armed Forces are increasingly likely to engage in combat operations in cities. Urban warfare's characteristics of high casualty rates, short engagement ranges, denseness, and rapid ammunition consumption, coupled with the constraints to minimize non-combatant casualties and collateral damage, make it an environment avoided by commanders when at all possible. However, the potential of avoidance diminishes with each passing day, as the demographics of the world constantly change. In 1920, the only nation with more than 50 percent of its population in towns of over 20,000 was the United States. By 1993, the world had 286 cities of over one million inhabitants. Current estimates have between 40 and 44 percent of the world's population will reside in urban areas by the year 2000.\(^1\) By 1990, seven of the world's ten largest cities were in Third World, vice developed nations. Only three years later, in 1993, the number had grown so that seventeen of the twenty five most populous cities of the world were in Third World nations.\(^2\) Worst, the inability of most Third World governments to handle the social, infrastructure, cultural, and associated problems inherent to congested urban areas make them potential sources of great unrest.

As the population of the world increases and a disproportionate distribution of this growth move to urban areas, the deployment of American forces into these areas becomes very
likely. Our current national strategy centers on a theme of advancing our efforts through selective engagement and enlargement. Beyond addressing the ability to win two nearly simultaneous major regional conflicts, it specifically highlights the exercise of global leadership, as the world's premier economic and military power. Beyond the employment of Armed Forces in response to threats to American vital national interests, the strategy specifically discusses engagement when the well-being and character of our current world order is threatened, as well as action in response to humanitarian interests. This encompassing strategy is established at a time when the American government finds itself wrestling with possibly the greatest economic and budgetary challenges in the nation's history. These challenges and the end of the Cold War has forced the Armed Forces into a period of critical self-examination. Required to support the national strategy and faced with reduced resources, each service component strives for vitality in the 21st century.

The dynamics of the current national strategy, diminishing budgets, and the need for consistent operational success, call loudly for adaptable naval forces able to project power and influence across the seas into foreign waters and shores, in both war and peace. "Forward ....From the Sea," published in 1994 by the Department of the Navy specifically addresses the unique capabilities of Naval Expeditionary Forces to rapidly influence events in the littoral regions of the world. In his Planning Guidance of August 1995, the 31st Commandant of the Marine Corps, General C.C. Krulak amplified and redefined the Marine Corps' contribution to "Forward ....From the Sea," as "Operational Maneuver From the Sea," a philosophy for current, as well as future power projection ashore. This concept couples maneuver doctrine with technological advances in speed, mobility, firepower, communications, and navigation to achieve
a seamless transition from ship to shore, and rapid movement inland to exploit enemy weaknesses.\textsuperscript{7} Included in this guidance, the Commandant directed the Commanding General, Marine Corps Combat Development Command, Quantico, Virginia to develop the Operational Maneuver From the Sea concept with an orientation toward the littorals.

In June 1996, the Marine Corps concept of Operational Maneuver from the Sea was published, and has revolutionized power projection ashore. This new direction demands that the Marine Corps critically evaluate the manner in which it conducts combat operations in an urban environment. Though the littorals represent a relatively small portion of the earth's surface, over 75 percent of the world's population, more than 80 percent of the world's national capitol cities, and nearly all the market places to international trade reside there.\textsuperscript{8} Clearly, naval forces must expect to fight in the littorals. Specifically, Marines must expect to be deployed to the urban areas found there, prepared to fight and win, while minimizing non-combatant casualties and collateral damage.

In developing this concept, the Marine Corps believes that new technology providing unprecedented firepower, coupled with small, highly mobile units operating in a manner elusive of detection, will be far more successful in the urban environment than the organization and equipment of current forces. The thought being that our current mobility and fire support capabilities available to conventional forces would fail against the elusiveness of an enemy employing guerrilla tactics.\textsuperscript{9} For the purpose of this examination, these small conceptual units will be referred to as "Killer Teams."

As the Marine Corps Combat Development Command, in concert with the
Commandant's Warfighting Lab at Quantico, Virginia, develops and tests new concepts and technologies, Marines today must be able to fight in the urban areas of the littorals, organized and equipped as they currently find themselves. This in mind, an examination of the Corps' most recent combat engagement in an urban littoral is warranted. That engagement, fought nearly thirty years ago in the city of Hue, Republic of Vietnam, offers great insight into urban warfare along with several considerations and combat applications which remain as crucial today as then. The timeless illustrations of this epic battle remain constant and provide a resource which could serve to shape the development of technology and force organization, such as Killer Teams, adapted to support Operational Maneuver From the Sea. My study will focus on Marine Corps actions in the southern portion of the city of Hue, during the period 31 January 1968 to 10 February 1968, specifically focused on the experience of Second Battalion, Fifth Marines, First Marine Division. Using this battalion's actions to identify key considerations for urban combat operations, I will discuss the lessons learned, their current application, and the impact they will have on the Killer Team concept applied in future urban conflict. Because this epic battle became known as Operation Hue City, I will occasionally refer to this imperial city Hue as Hue City, throughout the paper.
Chapter One....The Lotus Flower

Located approximately fifty miles south of the 17th parallel dividing North and South Vietnam, Hue lies on the littoral roughly five miles from the South China Sea. Throughout the many years of the Vietnam War, the city had remained the intellectual and cultural center of the country. Leaders from both sides, including former Republic of Vietnam (South Vietnam) President Ngo Dinh Diem, Democratic Republic of Vietnam (North Vietnam) President Ho Chi Minh, and General Vo Nguyen Giap, had been educated in the city's famed Quoc Hoc High School. As the former imperial capitol, Hue's intellectual and religious leaders advocated local autonomy and traditional national values which led to a distrust of the Communists in the north and the centralized government supported by the United States of the south. Aloof from active participation in the War, the city's population of 140,000 lived in relative peace, while the war raged on just miles away.

As the city the war forgot, Hue was divided it into two distinct areas by the Perfume River. To the north, a medieval walled city fashioned during the Nguyen Dynasty, composed of moats, ramparts, and towers, forming a three square mile Citadel. While on the south bank of the river, the modern city of Hue thrived. Influenced by the French Colonial period, it was made up of modern facilities dominated by two to three story detached structures, and covered an area roughly half the size of the Citadel. This portion of the city was bordered to the south by the Phu Cam Canal, running from the Perfume River, and was triangular in shape, broadest to the east and narrowing to the west at the intersection of the canal and the river. Linking the old and new portions of the city across the Perfume River was the Nguyen Hoang Bridge, while the An Cuu Bridge crossed the Phu Cam Canal, and linked the city to Highway One, the coastal road.
With the exception of the 1966 Struggle Movement in protest of the government, and beyond being considered a bastion of dissent, Hue City engrossed serenity and peace amidst chaos. Its immaculate gardens and groomed streets lent truth to the Vietnamese legend that the city was symbolic of the lotus flower rising from the mud. The beauty of Hue City, despite the conflict throughout the country, was intoxicating to even the non-Vietnamese. James R. Bullington, who served in the city as the American Vice Consulate from 1965 to 1966 described Hue City as "Camelot."

Although described as it was thirty years ago, the Battle of Hue City offers an example of population, structures, political/religious climate and determined, comparably equipped enemy, employing non-conventional tactics, very similar to that which Marines will undoubtedly find themselves engaged in during any action in the current world environment.

CHAPTER TWO...THE YEAR OF THE MONKEY
To fully appreciate the situation Marines going into Hue City faced, the significance of the Lunar holiday must be examined. The Lunar holiday, or Tet, is a three week celebration, and is represented by an animal. It is the most important of all Vietnamese holidays. Transcending all levels of Vietnamese society, the new "Year of the Monkey" would commence on 30 January 1968. With Tet had commonly come truces on the part of both North and South Vietnamese forces. This adherence, at least to some limited extent, was expected to be the case for 1968.

Since 1965, the I Corps region of South Vietnam, consisting of the five northern providences, had been know as "Marine Land." III Marine Amphibious Force (III MAF) controlled all military operations in the region. Over 100,000 American service men, a quarter of all American forces in the country were deployed there. Commanded by Lieutenant General Robert E. Cushman, Jr., III MAF was spread over 220 miles of coastal plains to the east and mountain ranges to the west. It was headquartered at Da Nang. Army General William C. Westmoreland was overall commander of the American effort. Since late 1967, Westmoreland had become focused on the northern region of I Corps, concerned with the enemy's ability to infiltrate forces southward through the Demilitarized Zone. Westmoreland saw the American mission as the destruction of enemy main forces, while Cushman was focused on pacification and small unit war in the villages. In time Westmoreland grew apprehensive of the Marines ability to be successful in I Corps. However, both Generals shared a common concern as the Tet

* The Marine command entered South Vietnam in 1965 as the III Marine Expeditionary Force. To avoid comparisons to the former French Expeditionary Force, the Marines changed the name to III Marine Amphibious Force (III MAF).
holiday approached.\textsuperscript{20}

Intelligence and all other indicators at the time were of a massive enemy force build up along the Demilitarized Zone and the Laotian border.\textsuperscript{21} Enemy actions commencing on 20 January 1968 around the Marine firebase at Khe Sanh lead Westmoreland to believe the decisive battle of the war was near at hand. An enemy attack appeared to be imminent, as Khe Sanh's 6000 defenders faced an estimated 40,000 North Vietnamese. Cushman ordered the shift of forces toward Khe Sanh, reorienting against attack from the north. Westmoreland provided additional support in the form of a South Vietnamese Airborne Battalion, while a brigade of the United States Army's 1st Air Cavalry reinforced areas south of Khe Sanh as Marine units moved northward.\textsuperscript{22} As the Year of the Monkey began, Khe Sanh and the surrounding region was the absolute focus of the allied effort. On 30 January 1968, throughout South Vietnam, communist forces launched their attack, however not as expected at Khe Sanh.

In a two day period, 30-31 January 1968, the Communists sent approximately 74,000 troops into action throughout South Vietnam. Among the areas hit were 36 provincial capitols, five of the six autonomous cities, 64 of the 242 district capitols, and over 50 hamlets. Communists thrusts were primarily against South Vietnamese forces, with Saigon being the exception. The American Embassy, the Tan Son Nhat airfield complex, and the base at Long Binh were the key American facilities subjected to violent attack.\textsuperscript{23}

The North Vietnamese decision to launch the Tet Offensive was made in July 1967.\textsuperscript{24} Willing to gamble that the offensive, coupled with a general uprising of those loyalists in the south sympathetic to the communist cause would result in bringing the war to a conclusion, or
even be only partially successful, Ho Chi Minh ordered the attack. The resolution directing the offensive was founded on these simple tenants:

- Such an offensive could only occur every 1000 years
- It would likely decide the fate of the nation
- It would end the war
- It constituted the wishes of both the party and the people

Many incidents illustrate the overwhelming commitment of the Communists to the success of the offensive and general uprising. None better illustrates this determination than events at the Ba To district headquarters in Quang Ngai province. There, a 2,000 man Viet Cong guerrilla force, armed only with knives, spears and a few carbines successfully attacked the headquarters and burned the district chief's home.

Responding to the call to uprise, Viet Cong and sympathizers in the south, along with attacking regular communists forces from the north, brought in the Year of the Monkey, shocking allied forces with the size and breadth of the offensive, and the seemingly undetected build up and infiltration of forces. This significant intelligence failure on the American's part, resulted in a disoriented defensive posture and, initially, great confusion and inadequate responsive actions.

CHAPTER THREE....CHAOS IN THE LITTORALS

As the Tet holiday approached, Hue City residents characteristically prepared for the
holiday. The First Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) Division was headquartered in the Mang Cu Military Compound, located in the northwest corner of the Citadel. Comanded by Brigadier General Ngo Quang Truong, most members of the division were on holiday leave. In response to events throughout the country on 30 January 1968, Truong had canceled all leaves and placed all available units on full alert. These units composed of the division staff, headquarters company, and the division's elite Black Panther company were positioned to defend the compound and the Tac Loc airfield located within the Citadel. The American Military Assistance Command Vietnam (MACV) in Hue City was composed primarily of advisors to the 1st ARVN Division, and was located in a walled compound in the southern portion of the city.

Allied intelligence reported elements of two North Vietnamese Regiments in the Thau Thein Providence, which contains Hue, but no indications that these elements, believed to be at least 20 kilometers from the city, threaten to attack. In actuality, sappers had infiltrated well before the Tet holiday, disguised as peasants and South Vietnamese soldiers. The Sixth North Vietnamese Regiment was assigned to the northern portion of the city, with the objectives of capturing the 1st ARVN Division headquarters in the Mang Cu Compound, the Tac Loc Airfield, and the Imperial Palace, all located within the walls of the Citadel. The 4th North Vietnamese Regiment was assigned to seize the southern portion of the city, with the MACV Compound, the Provisional Capitol Building, and the Prison as their specific objectives. This was the organization Second Battalion, Fifth Marines (2/5) would soon face. In addition to these primary objectives, the two regiments had a specific target list of over 200 facilities, government officials, and individuals. The list was so accurate that it included the location and names of occupants at an American Central Intelligence Agency facility in Hue City, which officers at
the MACV Headquarters knew nothing about.³¹ Despite the report by an ARVN reconnaissance unit to the west of the city that large groups of North Vietnamese were headed toward the Hue, the warning went unheeded and no response was mounted, nor the MACV personnel advised.

At 0233 on 31 January 1968, the North Vietnamese attack on Hue began. By morning the 6th North Vietnamese Regiment held 60 percent of the Citadel, but had failed to capture the Mang Ca Compound and the Tay Loc Airfield. The Imperial Palace had fallen into Communists hands, and their victory was symbolized by the Viet Cong flag of blue and red, with a gold star, that had been raised over the structure.³² The focus of this study however is the events in the southern portion of the city, attacked by the 4th North Vietnamese Regiment.

The 4th North Vietnamese Regiment, reinforced by the 804th North Vietnamese Battalion, had launched their attack into southern Hue simultaneously with commencement of actions in the Citadel. Divided into several separate attack groups, the assault forces focused on the key civilian and military facilities. Because some groups became lost enroute to their targets, a lack of cohesion of the assault existed, and the full potential of the attack was not realized. Although they controlled the majority of the southern portion of the city by morning, the attackers had failed to gain full control of the Prison, and had been repulsed at the MACV Compound. Immediately improving their now defensive positions, the North Vietnamese were positioned to bring fire upon the road entering the city from Highway One, but failed to capture the boat ramp to the northeast of the MACV compound, on the Perfume River.³³ Whether it was an objective the communists failed to gain, or a position never identified to capture, the ramp, unprotected at the time of the attack, would play a critical role in the days ahead.
Throughout the 31st of January 1968, various ARVN units, supported by armor, attempted to penetrate the city, only to be repulsed by the well equipped and entrenched enemy. The day ended with the Americans at the MACV Compound holding on against repeated attacks and constant bombardment with rockets and mortars. The attackers strengthened their positions and established fields of fire making every corner in the city a killing zone. Meanwhile, the Communists attackers began their round up of officials and citizens whom they felt were "enemies of the people." A systematic execution followed. After the battle, the graves of over 2,800 residents of Hue City were found and an additional 3,000 were never accounted for. This round up was the catalyst behind a voluminous refugee movement from the city, as Hue citizens attempted to find a route out of this maze of death.

Southern Hue City offers the example of a littoral city much like Marines may find themselves engaged in during present day operations. Prior to Tet, its environment was one similar to peacekeeping operations, with heavy reliance upon a coalition force. The orientation northward in I Corps, the failure of intelligence to appreciate and accurately interpretate enemy intentions, and the scope and surprise of the Tet offensive throughout the country overwhelmed the resources and confused the response of American forces. The result was that for a period of time, Hue City was an isolated crucible of defended urban terrain. Because of poor weather conditions and an allied demand to minimize collateral damage, the city would offer a unique stage for a nearly infantry pure engagement. A determined, prepared, and well equipped enemy reinforced regiment, committed to holding their gains, faced off against Marine Infantry units, unable to call upon any significant supporting arms, and charged to regain the city. The subsequent days and actions of 2/5 would not only contribute a chapter in Marine
Corps history, but would offer lessons on leadership, the fighting character of the individual Marine, weapons, and urban combat tactics. Further, the battle can serve to orientate the Corps along an avenue of approach toward the future combat it will face when engaged upon the world's littorals in Operational Maneuver From the Sea and employing of Killer Teams in such an environment and situation. Hue City presented an urban arena for combat, which was truly nonlinear and dynamic; an exceptional and rare insight into the battlefields of the future.

CHAPTER FOUR....THE LONG WALK DOWN LE LOI STREET

"Estimates of the enemy situation prior to 31 January did not indicate a divisional size attack against Hue; no reliable indicators of a large scale deployment of forces toward Hue. The enemy had tactical surprise. Throughout the first days of the battle, an amazing amount of misinformation was given the Marine Command, the U.S. High Command, and ultimately the American public."
Colonel Charles Meadows USMC (Ret)

As the communists conducted their attack on Hue City, the Marines of 2/5 found themselves thoroughly engaged on 30 and 31 January 1968, in the Phu Bai area of operations, south of Hue City. Lieutenant Colonel Ernest C. Cheatham was directing the efforts of his rifle companies(**) to relieve Combined Action Platoons (***), in the Troui River and Phu Loc sectors, with the key Troui River bridge under attack and threatened to be lost. The success of the companies aggressive response, sent the enemy forces retreating in a direction which would ultimately trap them at the river. Captain George R. (Ron) Christmas, commander of Hotel Company, 2/5, recalls the situation as the first time since his tour in Vietnam had started that the enemy was in a position to be fully engaged by the fire power the companies could bring to bear. They had no where to retreat and were forced to stand and fight. It was the fruitfulness of this situation which would lead to his great frustration, when directed to disengage the enemy and assume defensive positions.36

**During the Vietnam era, Marine Infantry Battalions had a Headquarters and Service Company and four infantry companies (colloquially called "rifle" companies. The companies in the Second Battalion were F, G, H, and I, (Fox, Golf, Hotel, and India under the phonetic alphabet.)

***Combined Action Platoons (CAP) typically consisted of a squad of Marines and a squad from the South Vietnamese Popular Forces, essentially an uniformed full-time militia, working closely with the local population.

Captain Charles L. Meadows, commander of Golf Company, 2/5 was in reserve at Phu Bai, having just completed a security mission prior to the offensive. At Phu Bai, the newly formed Task Force X-Ray, commanded Brigadier General Foster C. LaHue, was task organized and comprised of Fifth Marines with two battalions, and First Marines with just one battalion.
The two regimental commanders, as well as General LaHue, had been in the Phu Bai area less than three weeks. Receiving word of enemy action along Highway One and Hue City, Alpha Company First Battalion, First Marines (1/1) was expeditiously deployed north on Highway One toward Hue City at 0630 on 31 January. After several changes to the initial orders, the company was directed to the Boat Ramp in southern Hue City, to investigate reports that the city was under attack.

As Alpha Company approached the city, reinforced by three Marine tanks they had happened upon enroute, the company was engaged in a murderous cross fire. Upon receiving reports from Alpha Company, Lieutenant Colonel Mark Gravel, Commanding Officer 1/1, asked that he be permitted to reinforce his company. His request approved, Gravel and his command group departed, along with the only organized combat force available at Phu Bai, Golf Company 2/5. Meadows recalls that he received an order to mount up his company, head to Hue City to relieve Alpha Company and the MACV Compound, and to escort the Commanding General of the 1st ARVN Division out of the Citadel and back to Phu Bai. Higher headquarters believed that no more than three hours would be needed to accomplish this mission. Based on this guidance, Meadows directed that his Marines leave all non-essential combat gear at Phu Bai, so packs were dropped as they moved out. With no intelligence on the situation, Meadows and his Marines started their movement to contact under the command of a man Meadow's had met just hours before.

By 1445, the reinforcements had linked up with Alpha Company. Their casualties were evacuated back to Phu Bai, and the remainder of the company, commanded by a gunnery sergeant, joined the relief force and continued into the city. Arriving at the MACV Compound
under enemy fire which had essentially shot his force out of their trucks and forced them to proceed on foot, Gravel met with the senior Army advisor present, Colonel George Adkisson. He advised Gravel that the situation in the Citadel was "fine." On this point, some documents and Meadows' recollection, relate differently and claim that Adkisson encouraged Gravel not to attempt to enter the Citadel, but gave up his argument when Gravel was unable to persuade Task Force X-Ray of the gravity of the situation. The only map which offered the degree of detail needed to navigate in the city had been taken off a gas station wall, when Meadows had noticed it while taking cover in the building, trying to make his way to the MACV compound. The battalion commander, leaving Alpha Company to defend the compound, set out to locate and evacuate the ARVN Commanding General.

With the tanks on the south side of the Perfume river providing direct support, Golf Company 2/5 started across the bridge into the Citadel at approximately 1610. Despite a hail of enemy fire, two platoons made it across the bridge only to be caught in a murderous crossfire. Private First Class Bill Tant caught in the fire, sought cover behind one of the trees lining the streets. Pondering a move from the tree to aid his fallen comrades, he watched as small arms fire from two directions literally chipped away his tree, threatening to drop it.

Realizing his company's predicament, Meadows began the withdraw of his Marines back to the south side of the river. Still under withering fire, the extraction proved as difficult as the assault. They would be the last Americans within the walls of the Citadel until 11 February 1968. After the refusal of MACV to provide vehicles to evacuate the casualties, Gravel, enroute to the MACV Compound to find out what the "Hell was going on," happened upon a couple
Navy trucks with drivers. He directed the wounded and dead be gathered, and ordered the force back to the MACV Compound.49

For a mission which was expected to take a few hours, it had been a costly day for Golf Company. Captain Meadows had five Marines killed in action, and forty four wounded.50 Once back at the compound, defensive positions were established, and a brief lift in the weather permitted a helicopter to land and remove the most seriously wounded. In all, over 100 Marines of the thrown together battalion had become casualties. It was obvious to every American at the compound that the enemy was clearly superior in numbers and firepower, and had a free run of the city. It was still unclear to Gravel if his superiors at Task Force X-Ray, as well as theirs at III MAF, fully appreciated the situation at Hue City.

During the evening, General Cushman at Da Nang, had come to agreement with the South Vietnamese leadership, that American forces would be responsible for the southern portion of the city, and the ARVN forces the Citadel to the north.51 Further, attempting to minimize collateral damage, the two agreed that neither air or artillery would be used in Hue City. Cushman then ordered elements of the First Air Cavalry into a positions north and west of the city in an attempt to isolate the enemy force. By mid-afternoon 2 February 1968, the Air Cavalry began their move. Throughout the next several days they would have battalions fighting for their survival in the area, while failing to ever gain a position to disrupt enemy activities and isolate the city.52

On the morning of 1 February 1968, Gravel was ordered by Task Force X-Ray to attack westward from the MACV compound to secure the Thua Thien Provincial Headquarters and
Prison. The non-linear "inside-out" battle, which would most likely be a common tactic of the conceptual Killer Team, to secure the southern city had begun. Supported by tanks, the understrength battalion started their assault to the facilities six blocks away. The force was taken under fire less than a block from the compound, and lost a tank as they were stopped cold. The battalion was driven back into defensive positions at the MACV Compound, at the cost of two Marines dead and five wounded.\textsuperscript{53}

At Phu Bai, General LaHue gave tactical control of the Marine actions in the southern portion of the city to the First Marines commander, Colonel Stanley S. Hughes.\textsuperscript{54} Despite marginal weather with 200-500 foot ceilings and one mile visibility, Fox Company, 2/5, commanded by Captain Mike Downs was flown out of Phu Bai and inserted near the MACV Compound. Ordered to relieve a nearby MACV radio facility surrounded by the enemy, Downs remembers nothing he was told at Phu Bai remotely prepared him for what he found in Hue City. He questioned the sensibility of the order he had been given, but attempted to carry it out. After several hours of effort, three dead and thirteen wounded, Fox company was ordered back to MACV Compound.\textsuperscript{55} After having a request for air support denied, Gravel was ordered to remain in his defensive positions for the night.

On 2 February 1968, Gravel's force made some measured headway against the enemy. After three hours the Hue University building, near the MACV Compound was secured. Though the North Vietnamese had dropped the railroad bridge to the west, they failed to destroy the An Cuu Canal bridge.\textsuperscript{56} With it in place, Hotel Company, 2/5, commanded by Captain Ron Christmas, was able to fight into the city, reinforcing the Marines at the MACV compound. As
Hotel Company entered the city, supported by Army trucks with quad fifty caliber machine guns and two Marine Ontos vehicles with six 106 mm recoilless rifles each, they drew sniper fire from the area near the MACV Compound. Rapidly responding, the inbound Marines engaged the enemy targets, as well as Marines in defensive positions near the compound. Though no serious friendly casualties resulted, the incident serves to illustrate that the difficulty of target acquisition, even in the case of direct fire weapons, was not limited to the jungled areas of Vietnam, but was a challenging reality in urban terrain as well. The Marine force in the MACV Compound had grown significantly in size, and Hotel Company took up positions in the Hue University building for the night.

At Phu Bai, General LaHue directed Colonel Hughes to Hue City to take charge of the tactical effort in the southern portion of the city. With three of his companies in the city, Lieutenant Colonel Cheatham was also directed to Hue to take control of the preponderance of his battalion. Rifling through the Regimental Combat Operations Center, Cheatham found a reference publication on urban warfare and began preparing himself for the task ahead. Still, the situation was unclear at Hue City, and as Cheatham prepared to depart the next morning he knew they were going in "blind."

On 3 February 1968, the command groups of Hughes and Cheatham arrived at the MACV Compound via convoy, receiving sporadic sniper fire as they approached. As Hughes established his command post in the MACV Compound, the weather continued to worsen with rain, dropping temperatures, and fog. It was shortly thereafter that he directed Gravel, with Alpha Company, 1/1 to keep the route into the city open, and returned control of the 2/5
companies to Cheatham.\textsuperscript{60} At this point, Hughes issued a mission type order to Cheatham, if ever a mission type order has been issued. He told Cheatham to move up to the university building, and with the Perfume River and Le Loi Street being the battalion's right flank, attack through the city and clean the North Vietnamese out, all the while with an exposed left flank. After a brief pause, Hughes told Cheatham, "If you are looking for anymore you are not going to get it....Move out!"\textsuperscript{61}

From his command post in the university, with Golf Company in reserve, Cheatham directed Fox and Hotel Companies to attack the Public Health, Post Office, and Treasury facilities nearby. Armed with Light Antiarmor Weapons (LAAW), the Marines could not effectively penetrate the walls surrounding the facilities. The inability to breach the walls, coupled with murderous fire from well prepared defensive positions, resulted in the attack making no head way. It became obvious as the afternoon wore on that two companies attacking simultaneously was not successful. Returning to defensive positions in the university, 2/5 studied the lessons of the day and resupplied for the next morning's attack.\textsuperscript{62}

At 0700 on 4 February 1968, Marines of Hotel Company breached the walls of the Public Health Building with 3.5 inch rockets and secured the facility.\textsuperscript{63} It was during this assault that Hotel learned a lesson which would serve them throughout the remainder of the battle. When trying to use smoke to cover movement across streets, the Marines were quickly taken under fire from their left flank, despite the low visibility. Christmas recalls that it seemed the North Vietnamese had read the our Fleet Marine Force Manuals, whereas as soon as smoke was thrown, enemy fire erupted down the street. A solution arrived from the "Lance Corporal
ingenuity and PFC power," which Christmas believes makes the Corps "Go round." A suggestion of the Marines manning the 106 mm recoilless rifle supporting Hotel Company was to take the mule mounted weapon out into the street and fire a single round at the enemy position firing from the flank. The round would cause the enemy gunner to draw down to safety, while the back blast cloud of dust would cover the Marines movement across the street. The tactic worked particularly well, allowing platoon sized units to cross the street and immediately turn and engage the enemy position from their improved vantage point. Christmas remembers to his surprise, that despite the volume of fire the 106 team came under each time they entered the street, the Lance Corporal in charge of the gun, along with this PFC assistant gunner, went through the entire gun drill before firing, seemingly impervious to the hail of fire they faced.64 Throughout the battle the 460 pound weapon system would prove itself priceless in breaching walls, creating exits where none had existed, and destroying hardened enemy positions. Meadows recalled some walls were so thick that it took over a dozen 106 rounds to punch a hole, while some were never penetrated. He added that an occasional 106 round from the 2/5 area of action in the southern city could be observed crossing the Perfume River, attempting to knock down the North Vietnamese flag flying over the Imperial Palace.65

Once Hotel Company was in a position in the Public Health Building to support the assault, Fox Company launched its attack to gain the Treasury Building. Despite the 106's and tank support, the intense enemy fire and unbreachable walls of the facility stalled the attack. At this point, the battalion executive officer, Major Ralph Salvati suggested to Cheatham that they use CS gas against the enemy defenders. Salvati had seen E-8 launchers in the MACV Compound, each firing 16 canisters of the tear gas variant.66 The gas worked well and the Treasury defenders exited the facility under the fire of the attacking gas masked Marines of Fox
Company. 2/5 consolidated its gains and moved into defensive positions for the reminder of the day.

That night, communists sappers succeeded in destroying the Phu Cam canal bridge, cutting Highway the supply route. With weather preventing any sort of air support, the Landing Craft Utility (LCU) ramp near the MACV Compound remained as the only logistical line into the southern portion of the city. Because of the courageous actions of the LCU's Navy crews, that supply line remained open throughout the battle. Despite ammunition being expended at nearly ten times the normal combat rate experienced in the country side, the assault never slowed due to any shortage, though some items such as grenades were in short supply. As was the case with the Army Cavalry units to the west, the communists had failed to isolate the American forces operating south of the Perfume River. This failure to isolate the city, yet ultimately secure it, is a positive consideration toward the Killer Team concept, who limited by size could not expect to physically isolate any significant sized area.

Beginning on 5 February 1968, the Marines of 2/5 had begun to adapt to fighting in the city, and the tactics of their enemy. According to Christmas, street fighting was the dirtiest type of warfare, but beat fighting in the mud. A point made by more than one Marine of 2/5 was they could see the damage they were inflicting on the enemy, particularly because the enemy could not drag away their dead as they did in the jungle.

On entering the city to fight, the lack of maps of the necessary scale to navigate the streets made orientation and movement difficult. The needed maps were eventually received and the commanders in 2/5 developed a numbering system that assisted in providing position reports.
and the coordination of fires in support of each advancing company. The battalion had an area of
operations roughly 11 blocks wide and 8 to 9 blocks deep.\(^7^0\) Attacking with two companies
abreast, with the third in reserve attempting to protect the western flank, Cheatham repeatedly
had to commit his reserve company to cover the advance. He later reflected that the area was just
too large for an infantry battalion of only three rifle companies.\(^7^1\) Unable to attempt any flanking
attack against the enemy, 2/5 was forced to fight building by building, block by block, assaulting
one strong point at a time and exploiting each success as it was gained. By this time, 2/5 had
recognized that the North Vietnamese were fighting every other block, with spider holes around
the base of buildings and communist gunners throughout the structure. According to Christmas,
you would take a strong point under fire for no particular duration. He stated that whether it was
a slight decrease in the volume of enemy fire, or some other minute indicator, you quickly
developed a "sense" for the moment to breach the wall and launch the assault into the structure.\(^7^2\)
Then the building would be cleared room by room.

Supporting arms played a minimal role in the battle. Poor weather conditions coupled
with the close proximity of the engaged forces ruled out close air support. Artillery was used
with little success. The structures of the city prevented the adequate observation of rounds.
However, if on target in an urban environment, the effects of artillery can be amplified because
of the containment of the blast by structures. Equally, structures tend to lessen the effects when
the round is off, even if only by one courtyard, as was the case in Hue City. In fact, the rubbling
effect can even serve to strengthen enemy defensive positions. Christmas recalled that he "Tried
like hell," to use artillery, but that was only by selecting targets such as assembly areas and later
in the battle enemy escape routes, from a map study.\(^7^3\) Beyond the exceptional effectiveness of
the 106 recoilless rifle and 3.5 inch rockets in breaching walls and knocking out enemy positions,

the mortar used with a disregard for "danger close" proved to be a workhorse. Downs', company used 81mm mortars to engage targets within 35 meters of his position. As the wearforall of the enemy became apparent, the mortars were used more freely with little regard to damage of city structures. The 81mm rounds were used to literally sledgehammer the tops of buildings until the roof fell in. Tanks were effective on occasion, but in the narrow streets of the city were quickly taken under fire and often disabled. Cheatham found that as soon as a tank rounded a city corner, the street lit up like the fourth of July. He recalled one tank absorbing over 120 hits and another going through several crews before being completely knocked out. The highly mobile Ontos with its six recoilless rifles, though thin skinned and easily knocked out, proved to be the most effective weapon not organic to the battalion. Protected in defilade positions, their tubes reaped a great toll on the Communists.

Against tanks and their attackers, the Communists used B-40 rockets with great success. Cheatham recalls an engagement from a mere 50 meters apart, where Communists and Marines exchanged "Hundreds and hundreds," of rockets. The deciding factor in the exchange was that the Marines had more ammunition than the North Vietnamese; the unheralded LCU ramp and line of communication it provided made the difference.

The morning of 5 February 1968, found 1/1, now with two rifle companies starting its attack into southern Hue City, on 2/5's left flank. The Hospital and the Provincial Headquarters were the key objectives. From nearly the point of crossing the line of departure, the battalions moved at different paces, neither contributing significantly to the others flank protection. With a two block front caused by the reduced size of the battalion, 1/1 gained only 75 yards that day
with a cost of 19 casualties. Ultimately, the battalion would fight a pitched battle of over two days for a single building. 78 2/5's attack moved forward, with Golf company capturing structure surrounding the Hospital. The battalion had accounted for 70 enemy dead and 30 prisoners. 79

On 6 February 1968, with his three companies on line, Cheatham moved 2/5 forward to clear the entire Hospital Complex. Fox company on the left flank met stout resistance, falling back to use mortars and artillery on the entrenched enemy. The event marked one of the few successful uses of artillery in Hue City, killing over 20 North Vietnamese. Simultaneous to Fox company's use of supporting arms, Golf company moved on the Provincial Prison Complex. Again using CS gas, the company killed 36 communists, while losing one Marine. Hotel company had pushed through the Hospital and started its assault on the Provincial Headquarters. Meeting a hail of rockets and automatic weapons fire, the company using mortars, recoilless rifles, CS, and supported by tanks finally gained the Headquarters by overwhelming the defenders with firepower. 80 This building, unknown to the Marines at the time, had been the Headquarters of the 4th North Vietnamese Regiment, and its capture would greatly diminish the Communist effort to coordinate his defense of the southern portion of the city in the days ahead. 81

Two events occurred with Hotel company at this point which serve to illustrate the character and fighting spirit of those Marines. Quickly, the North Vietnamese flag was drawn down and replaced by an American flag. This was done in disregard to the standing MACV directive on such events, and under the close eye of correspondents covering the battle. Evening approached shortly after the flag went up. According to Christmas, while Cheatham was trying to turn a deaf ear, the command at the MACV compound directed the flag come down. With
no response, two Army majors were dispatched to get the flag taken down. Upon their arrival, Christmas expressed his "disagreement" with the MACV position, but told the majors that they were welcome to pull it down, but added that there was no way he could insure the majors' safety in the open courtyard. Whether their concern was with the communists who continued to snipe and shell the area or the Marines of Hotel company remains unclear, but the majors departed, requiring the MACV commander to sent a Marine from his staff to talk to Christmas. Sharing Christmas' opinion about the directive, the two agreed the flag would continue to fly until the company moved out in the attack the following morning. (This same flag would be the first raised over the Aegis Cruiser CG 66 Hue City at its commissioning ceremony over two decades later.) The significance of this minor victory played a role in maintaining the morale of the company, but the arrival of the battalion chaplain would play a role in lifting it. Arriving in the company's defensive position, the chaplain, with Christmas' approval shouted over exploding enemy mortar rounds, moved from position to position providing the Marines with a quick but uplifting word or pat on the back. According to Christmas, there was a place for god in the heat of combat.

With the capture of the Provincial Headquarters, the following days of 7 to 10 February 1968 reflected a distinct shift in momentum from the Communists to the Marines. Coordinated enemy defensive started to erode, and Communists bodies and abandoned weapons littered the trail of the enemy's retreat. Though still encountering several isolated pockets of staunch resistance and sniper fire, 2/5 moved forward securing objectives and clearing the southern portion of the city. On 7 February 1968, North Vietnamese sappers had dropped the main bridge across the Perfume River. Likewise Marine engineers had earlier destroyed the Le Loi bridge in an attempt to isolate the western approach into southern Hue, but not in time preclude
the escape of numerous Communist units.\textsuperscript{85} By the tenth, Cheatham and the Marines of 2/5 had accomplished their mission to attack through the city and clear it of the enemy. With the Citadel still in the hands of the North Vietnamese, 2/5 prepared to cross the Phu Cam canal and continue the attack to the west. The battalion's effort had resulted in over 1,000 enemy dead and 6 confirmed prisoners, as well as 89 suspects. The cost had been great. The battalion had nearly 400 hundred casualties, to include 38 dead. Hotel company had lost the bulk of its officers and staff noncommissioned officers.\textsuperscript{86} As he was evacuated with serious wounds, Christmas turned command of the company over to his remaining senior Marine, a staff sergeant.\textsuperscript{87}

Though reasonably secure, southern Hue was far from orderly. South Vietnamese authorities quickly attempted to reestablish order, establishing a refugee center at the university, and actively trying to prevent the wide spread looting which was taking place. Still isolated from Highway One, Marine engineers constructed a pontoon bridge across the Phu Cam canal to facilitate the delivery of supplies to not only the American military forces and, most importantly, critical food for the refugees.
CHAPTER FIVE....TAKE AWAYS FOR THE FUTURE

"It's up close and personal......you see the guy you kill."

Lieutenant General Ron Christmas USMC(Ret)

Combat operations in an urban environment present unique and complex challenges, which can change with each city block. The use of supporting arms, both air and artillery consistently the U.S. Forces greatest advantage in war to include present day, was restricted initially because of the desire to minimize collateral damage to southern Hue City. Even when restrictions were lifted, weather, buildings obscuring observation, and the terrain prevented their effective use. The structures of a city tended to depreciate any technological advantage, and impacted weapon effectiveness. The city and the environment in which 2/5 operated offers numerous lessons which can significantly influence the development of the Operational Maneuver From the Sea "Killer Team" described in the introduction, which conceptually is heavily reliant on supporting arms.

Force Organization

2/5 was at 90 percent of its chargeable strength when the Tet offensive of 1968 commenced. The extent to which the offensive overwhelmed a misdirected allied intelligence effort, as well as enemy actions in the Phu Bai area, lead to 2/5 being piecemealed into Hue City. Although the efforts of Golf and Fox companies were exceptionally heroic, the effective clearing of the southern portion of the city did not get underway until Hotel company and the command element of 2/5 arrived, creating unity of command. The piecemeal deployment of 2/5, perhaps understandable under the circumstances and level of situational awareness, undoubtedly resulted
in casualties which may not have occurred had the battalion arrived as a single organization. Unit commanders placed into a situation as desperate as Hue will normally perform more effectively when sent into harms way by a commander they are familiar with and fully trust. Based on the mission and size of the battalion's zone of action in Hue, the personnel strength, and ultimately the mass provided by an infantry battalion city provided the minimal punch that was needed to prevail.

As previously indicated, Golf company lost over a third of its strength the first day in the city, while on another occasion later 2/5 lost 25 Marine casualties in a single enemy mortar barrage. Limited as it might be, reinforcement was critical. At one point, Hotel company received cooks to fill the voids in its ranks. Illustrating the importance of the ethos that "every Marine is a rifleman first", Christmas remembered that one of the bravest acts he observed during the battle was performed by one of the cook replacements. Although the Marine was evacuated before his name became known to Hotel company Marines, the cook, shortly after his arrival, saved the life of a Hotel company Marine. After the lead Marine went down wounded in a hail of fire while attempting to cross a street, the cook, with no regard for his personal safety, went into the street, and though seriously wounded himself, retrieved the Marine and pulled him to safety.\textsuperscript{88}

Though mass was not a common requirement to physically breach into a facility, numbers were needed to provide adequate covering fire to assaulting units and room to room clearing capability. Gravel's concerned expression of lacking sufficient numbers to conduct urban clearing operations with only the two reduced companies of 1/1 is obvious, but even with three
full companies, 2/5 was pressed.

While the battalion lacked any current training or experience in urban warfare, the company, platoon, and squad organization typical to infantry battalions proved effective and readily adaptable to the situation they faced. Sound small unit tactics and actions facilitated the decentralized control needed to succeed. Cheatham's keen ability to quickly determine what was proving to be effective, relay it to his company commanders, and direct and control its implementation was key during the battle. His nightly meetings and discussions with the company commanders enabled them to overcome shortfalls, such as maps, determine common enemy tactics and methods, and ultimately facilitate a rapid, though steep, learning curve. Likewise, the confidence Cheatham held regarding his company commanders and their decision making abilities is evident. 2/5 demonstrated that the infantry battalion, organized as it currently is, provides a flexible and capable unit, with the manpower and organic firepower to engage an enemy successfully in high, as well as low, intensity urban combat.

WEAPONS

Throughout the battle, the Rules of Engagement played a significant role. The use of both indirect fire and direct fire weapons against the many historic, religious and civic building in the city was restricted severely initially. Slowly, these restrictions were lifted, even to the point where religious pagodas being use by the communists could be engaged. Unfortunately, even with this freeing up, weather and the terrain of the city prevented accurate and effective employment of air and artillery assets.

Mortars provided the most reliable source of fire support for 2/5, and were employed with little regard to "danger close" considerations. They were accurate and useful in suppressing
enemy fires, sealing flanks, and covering kill zones. As the battle progressed, 2/5 began using a barrage of white phosphorous followed by high explosive rounds to preface assaults. Noting that the enemy seemed to be defending every other block, as an assault was made and mortar fire shifted, it was targeted upon the second open street behind the objective to catch retrograding enemy in a kill zone.\textsuperscript{90}

The weapon which appears to have played the most vital and diversified role in the battle was the 106 mm recoilless rifle. It proved to be effective in breaching walls, sometimes requiring several rounds, and was highly accurate and destructive against enemy targets. It was the true work horse for 2/5 and its performance lead to Cheatham to comment that in urban combat, the Marine Corps needs a weapon which fires a round "slightly smaller than a trash can."\textsuperscript{91} The 3.5 inch rocket launcher, which was organic to 2/5, likewise proved itself as a highly lethal asset.

Tanks were found to be effective support to attacking infantry, but only when employed from covered positions, directly coordinating the targets engaged with ground forces. Once on a street uncovered, they became quick targets for Communist gunners.

Regardless of the weapon employed, the survivability of a building and its defenders was not necessarily linked. Rather, the arrangements and deposition within the building were more vital to survivability, and in some cases rubbling caused by weapon systems served to strengthen enemy positions vice soften them. The situation in southern Hue city, complicated by weather, restrictions, diminished observation, and the inherent difficulty associated with controlling fires in an built up area, served to neutralize the advantage of American forces had in supporting
arms. The current Killer Team concept being explored by the Marine Corps as indicated will be heavily reliant on supporting arms systems.

TACTICS AND CONTROL

2/5 exhibited the adaptability afforded by their task organization. Although further training in the urban environment would have been greatly beneficial, sound small unit leadership at the fire team and squad level proved critical and prevailed against a determined enemy. The battalion's ability to adapt to the enemy's tactics and continue to use what was working illustrates the value that the size of an infantry battalion organization provides in urban conflict.

Throughout the battle, 2/5 fought with an exposed western flank. Though at times slowing their assault, they responded by fighting companies in a manner which allowed them to support each others attack, and place suppressive fire on the flanks. Almost as a matter of routine, the reserve company was employed early in an assault.

Interestingly, no night operations were conducted by either side in southern Hue.

It can be assumed that with the advanced night fighting capability of today's forces, it easily could have been undertaken. However, the primary reason for 2/5 not engaging at night was based on a conscious decision by Cheatham. It had become apparent to him that though moving through the city was easier than mud and brush of the jungle, the intensity and proximity of the combat in Hue was far more taxing on his Marines. Meadows remembers that crossing a single street under intense fire, resulted in such a great rush of adrenaline and emotion, that once safely to the other side, most Marines dropped for several minutes exhausted. By restricting his efforts to the daylight hours, Cheatham went into the attack each morning with a reasonably well rested
force. The communist defenders did much the same throughout the course of the battle.

Concerning command and control, radios played an important role, but sometimes failed. Couriers and various signals were also used in an effective manner. Christmas remembered that Hue offered his Marines an unique opportunity to observe the enemy, take him under fire, and see the effectiveness of their actions first hand. Further, despite the intensity they faced, his Marines responded with zeal, and one of his control challenges was not getting his Marines to attack, but rather to stop their assault after securing a facility rather than continuing into the next block of buildings.

The value of decentralized control and the small unit leadership in Hue City played a key role in success. 2/5 realized that the commander on the scene was most aware of what was happening, and allowed him to act on this first hand knowledge. Decision making was maintained at the lowest level, and as a result timely and effective actions were taken. The momentum once gained was held in 2/5's grasp because of decentralized control. Cheatham conducted the battalion in concert with its companies, which were cohesive and very familiar with each other, and he possessed confidence in his subordinate leadership. However, although Cheatham decentralized control, he never decentralized command, and positioned himself forward in his battalion's assault formation, providing him with keen situational awareness he would not have had from any other position.

LOGISTICS/SUPPLY

The experience of 2/5 serves to illustrate the great logistical concerns in urban combat.
Granted the American forces never isolated the enemy or his lines of communication, it was only through his failure to do the same that the Marines of 2/5 were able to prevail. When the bridge was dropped which connected the Marines to Highway One and their supplies at Phu Bai, the LCU ramp at the MACV Compound and the courageous efforts of the sailors operating the small and essentially defenseless boats out of Da Nang provided the vital link.

Upon entering the city, 2/5's expenditure of ammunition multiplied many fold. Typical daily planning figures which had proved adequate in the bush, in some cases did not come close to hourly consumption rates in the city. A 60 mm mortar of the battalion on a busy day in the jungle would use approximately 33 rounds. In a single day in Hue, two 60 mm tubes expended over 1,000 rounds. Likewise, breaching elevated 106 mm and 3.5 rocket ammunition consumption, while limited grenade stocks were quickly used and a shortfall throughout the battle. Clearly, Killer Teams could not expect to succeed with any organic weapons system, which such a small group could carry and keep sustained over a long period of employment.

Casualties took a drastic and rapid climb on the urban battlefield. Beyond the associated medical supplies, casualty evacuation drew on 2/5's already taxed personnel strength. To get wounded and dead to collection points, civilian vehicles were confiscated in several cases to assist in the effort.

CONCLUSIONS

"Man is the foremost instrument of war."

Ardant du Piaq
In Hue, the Killer Team conceived in conjunction with Operational Maneuver From The Sea would have failed to recapture the city.

As the Marine Corps faces the future, its crucial role in executing the nation's strategy upon the littorals of the world is clear. As world demographics continue to shift, and urban areas continue to rise upon the littorals, the Marine Corps must expect to find itself engaged there. Though the effort is underway to capture technology and employment concepts which place small, highly mobile units, "Killer Teams", in control of overwhelming firepower, in urban areas to fight the non-linear battle, one element of today's reality of smaller budgets for the development and procurement of technology and force structures remains. If the Marine Corps fought the battle of Southern Hue City today, it would do so with an infantry battalion organized and equipped very similar to the battalion Cheatham fought there nearly thirty years ago. This fact is reassuring, considering the likely result had Killer Teams been employed. The absence of 2/5's fourth rifle company from Hue City, resulted in it being very similar to an infantry battalion of today. Further, armed with only the Shoulder Launched Assault Weapons (SMAW), today's battalion lacks a breaching capability comparable to that which 2/5 had with the 106 recoilless rifle and 3.5 rocket launcher.  

Granted, many items in the current inventory, to include Global Positioning Systems, laser guided weapons, Unmanned Aerial Vehicles, and precision delivered munitions would have greatly contributed to the effort. It can likewise be expected that concerns toward collateral damage and non-combatant casualties would only be greater in the real time news coverage environment of today's world. Undoubtedly, Marines would again be using car mirrors tied to poles to look around corners much as they did in Hue City.
Facing a determined enemy, entrenched in a city, zealously committed to maintaining control is a very realistic situation which the United States will face in the world's littorals in the future. Accordingly Marines, along with the Navy, will be involved; they have little choice. The concept of Operational Maneuver from the Sea appears to be the appropriate approach in such a situation, because it facilitates force projection flexibility and a selective surge of logistics needed to succeed. But, to face and defeat an enemy determined to defend a city, block by block, regardless of any technological advantage and degree of stealth-like mobility, no small unit will readily succeed. Such combat requires that an enemy essentially be dug out and destroyed, a costly operation in itself. Further, once gained, this area must be physically occupied or constantly surveyed in the non-linear battlefield of the city. 2/5 was successful, but had neared its culminating point when southern Hue was secured. A smaller unit would not have succeeded, even in most Operations Other Than War, where rogue enemies we face today on the lower end of the conflict spectrum recognize the value and advantage of controlling urban areas, if only by isolation.

The value of developing concepts and technology is vital. To remain content with current standards and equipment, and to not explore future technological breakthroughs would be criminal. However, though the battle of Hue City and the experience of 2/5 is nearly thirty years old, the valuable lessons they provided are fundamentally sound and important to the concepts being developed for the future. No technology or Killer Team concept will ever provide the capability or mission execution that a disciplined Marine infantry battalion, schooled in sound but basic tactics, utilizing the full spectrum of subordinate leadership, and competently lead from the front brings to combat in an urban environment. Its company, platoon, squad, and fire team
organization permits it to quickly adapt and execute on a stage of decentralized control and utter chaos. Any technological advance, concept, or tactic explored must have application across the spectrum of the infantry battalion mission. It would appear that removed from the urban environment, and unrestricted with collateral damage concerns, the Killer Teams would prove highly effective, much as the similar organizations used in Operation Stingray during the Vietnam Conflict.

From any viewpoint, but most particularly manpower, urban combat will always be a costly and difficult undertaking. This battlefield calls for small unit actions, but casualties, logistics, and fatigue require great redundancy. However, all indications point to the need for the Marine Corps to train, equip, and focus on this demanding environment. Despite the difficulty and stress characteristic to urban combat, Marines will find themselves there, and any stride made toward improving capabilities must focus on the infantry battalion, easily cross the spectrum of conflict, and prove beneficial in non-urban combat as well.
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