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HEADQUARTERS

V AMPHIBIOUS CORPS LANDING FORCE

-IWO JIMA-

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ON *10 August 1977*

Division Reports

- Appendix 1 - CG 3d Mar Div Report
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- Appendix 3 - CG 5th Mar Div Report

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Annex EASY

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Annex EASY to Special Action Report IVO JIMA Campaign.

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HEADQUARTERS

V AMPHIBIOUS CORPS LANDING FORCE

- IWO JIMA -

Landing Force Air Support Control
Unit Report

Annex FOX

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HEADQUARTERS
LANDING FORCE AIR SUPPORT COMMAND
PROVISIONAL AIR SUPPORT COMMAND
IN THE FIELD.

17 March, 1945.



SPECIAL ACTION REPORT

IWO JIMA CAMPAIGN

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HEADQUARTERS,
LANDING FORCE AIR SUPPORT CONTROL UNIT ONE,
PROVISIONAL AIR SUPPORT COMMAND, FMF,
IN THE FIELD.

17 March, 1945.

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[REDACTED]

From: Commander, Landing Force Air Support Control Unit One.
To : The Commanding General, Fifth Amphibious Corps.
Subj: Special Action Report, IWO JIMA Campaign.
Ref : (a) VAC Staff Memo 5-45, dtd 10Mar45.
Encl: (A) Summary of Air Operations with carrier aircraft,
1 March to 9 March, 1945.
(B) Summary of Air Operations with Army aircraft,
8 March to 14 March inclusive.

1. NARRATIVE SUMMARY:

- (A) Landing Force Air Support Control Unit One, consisting of 17 officers and 56 enlisted men, reported to Commanding General, Landing Force, Fifth Amphibious Corps, on 4 January 1945, and to Commander Air Support Control Units, Amphibious Forces, Pacific Fleet, on 10 January 1945, for employment in the IWO JIMA operation. Three officers of this command were then temporarily assigned to the U.S.S. ESTES for duty with Advance Commander, Air Support Control Unit; two were temporarily assigned to the U.S.S. AUBURN for duty with Relief Commander, Air Support Control Unit; four officers and forty-eight men were assigned with the principal equipment to the U.S.S. THURSTON, and seven men and the secondary equipment to the U.S.S. CARTERET, for transportation to the objective. The Unit Commander, nine officers and one enlisted man flew to SAIPAN and rejoined the organization there for transportation to the objective. The Unit Commander was then embarked on the U.S.S. AUBURN with Commanding General, Landing Force, and his staff.
- (B) Commander, Landing Force Air Support Control Unit One, and a nucleus of his staff, landed on IWO JIMA with Commanding General, Landing Force, on 24 February (D/5). Due to unavoidable delays in unloading, fostered by the critical tactical situation ashore, the unit equipment did not reach the beach until 27 February (D/8). Emplacement of equipment and testing of circuits was completed within 24 hours, and Landing Force Air Support Control Unit One then monitored the circuits during 28 February while air support operations were being controlled from the U.S.S. ELDORADO, and later from the U.S.S. AUBURN. Commanding General, Landing Force, submitted an official

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(B) The number of officers and enlisted men (17 and 57 respectively), tentatively assigned to a landing force air support control unit has proven insufficient for sustained operation in the field. Steps are being taken to increase this number to approximately 22 officers and 80 enlisted men. More adequate messing facilities can then be provided, provision made for better internal security, and for the immediate replacement of casualties. The five additional officers requested are necessary to provide reliefs for SAR, SAD, and SAO net controllers, who during this operation were required to operate an average of 12 hours daily for twelve consecutive days.

3. EQUIPMENT:

- (A) The principal equipment of this unit consists of modified Mark IV, U.S. Navy Communication Vans, with control remoted to a special operations room (tent). The arrangement of the control tables and the relative positions of the net controllers follows generally the layout in the Joint Operations Room of the AGC's, except that it is more commodious. All air support control nets, as listed in the communication annex of the Operations Plan, were manned continuously by officers during daylight; the ASC, LAW, and SAR nets were manned at night also, as required.
- (B) Except for the initial power failure, and minor interruptions on one net or another due largely to volcanic dust sifting into the receivers, the equipment functioned in a highly satisfactory manner. Occasional difficulty in communicating with ALO's on the SAR net was experienced, but was usually traceable to imperfections in the ALO's field equipment or to the location of their sets in rugged, defiladed terrain. In such instances communication was effected by relay from other stations on the net with but slight delay. The basic equipment as designed and assembled is considered to have passed its service test under most difficult conditions. No change is recommended at present.
- (C) The secondary equipment, mounted in three radio jeeps, proved very useful in controlling special strikes from advanced observation posts, and for directing air traffic at the airdrome. Its retention for this purpose is recommended. However, it would not be possible to control full scale air operations with such equipment, and it should not be depended upon for this purpose. A complete duplicate set of Mark IV Vans, modified, is recommended for each landing force air support control unit, as being absolutely essential for sustained operations in the field. Such a duplicate set has already been provided for Landing Force Air Support Control Unit One, and steps are being taken to so equip all other units for future operations.

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- (D) A medium cargo truck, a personnel carrier, and an additional passenger jeep are also considered essential additional equipment. Appropriate changes in the tentative TBA will be arranged.

4. OPERATIONAL PROCEDURE:

- (A) Landing Force Air Support Control Unit One operated in accordance with Amphibious Forces, Pacific Fleet, Standard Operating Procedure for air support control, thereby insuring smooth transmission of air support control from ship to shore. No change is recommended in this procedure at present.
- (B) Due to the location of Landing Force Air Support Control Unit One ashore, adjacent to Landing Force Headquarters, and connected directly by land wire to all major units, the control of close air support missions in coordination with troop movements, and with other supporting arms, was greatly facilitated. It is submitted that air strikes in close direct support of our troops, and in accordance with their current requests, can be handled more expeditiously and with greater safety when controlled from ashore. It is recommended, therefore, that in future operations the Landing Force Air Support Control Unit be established ashore at the earliest practicable date. To accomplish this, it is necessary that the unit be loaded in assault shipping, preferably in LST's.
- (C) It is further recommended that ~~as many~~ officers of the landing force air support control unit as possible be embarked on AGC's, for movement to the objective, and that they actively participate in the control of air support until the landing force air support control unit is established ashore. It is particularly recommended that Commander, Landing Force Air Support Control Unit, be embarked on the same AGC as Commander, Air Support Control Unit Afloat.
- (D) The principal operational difficulty experienced in running air strikes close to our troops was the variable efficiency and reliability of the battalion ALP's. Some of the ALO's were very alert and reliable; others were sometimes vague and uncertain in reporting observations. Some of this difficulty is attributable to an overloaded SAR net, and to insufficient personnel in the ALP's to maintain constant communications. It is evident however that a better system of selection and standardized training of ALO's is long overdue. Specifically, it is recommended that air-ground liaison officers should generally be chosen from combat experienced line officers and given special training in aviation tactics, sufficient to acquaint them with the capabilities and limitations of aviation as a supporting arm, and then be thoroughly grounded in the technique of air support control.

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- (E) Commander, Landing Force Air Support Control Unit One, and his principal assistant conducted numerous strikes from forward positions, utilizing the secondary equipment on the SAD, SAR and SAO nets, and directing the strikes by observation of target areas and fall of bombs. While this system offers some advantages for conducting a very close strike, the limitations of portable communication equipment make it of doubtful expediency. Certainly, it indicates the undesirability of turning over control of strikes to AIO's, whose VHF equipment was invariably inferior to the secondary equipment of Landing Force Air Support Control Unit. Usually, when at a forward observation post, Commander, Landing Force Air Support Control Unit One, limited himself to passing on observations over the SAR net to the SAD controller at the station, who relayed the information direct to the air coordinator without appreciable loss of time. Only occasionally was it considered desirable to talk directly with the aircraft while a strike was in progress.
- (F) Coordination between air and artillery was provided by having an artillery officer located in the air support control room, provided with radio and telephone connections direct to all artillery units. This officer was advised in advance of all air strikes, and was thus enabled to take necessary action regarding artillery fires. Plan "Negat" was used only in very special cases to permit low altitude photo and DDT spray planes to accomplish their missions. Plan "Mike" was involved only when Corps artillery was engaged in high angle firing; otherwise the air strikes were so conducted as not to interfere with artillery supporting fires.
- (G) Coordination between Naval gunfire and air was generally handled by the Naval ground liaison officers in forward positions, but inasmuch as only sporadic call fires were in progress during the period of control by Landing Force Air Support Control Unit One, it was possible to run air strikes without formal coordination simply by warning the air coordinators of any danger areas.

5. SUPPORTING AIRCRAFT:

- (A) Defensive air cover, as provided by Carrier Support Groups between 1 March and 9 March inclusive, and as provided by Army Garrison Air Forces after the latter date, was adequate and effective. No enemy aircraft closed the objective area during the period, although several attempts were made by single aircraft and small formations.

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- (B) (1) The preliminary heavy strikes, made prior to D-3 day by Army heavy bombardment units, did not accomplish the desired result of neutralization. This is considered attributable to the inherent inaccuracy of high altitude bombing against precision targets. Practically all the heavy antiaircraft installations remained intact until taken out by Naval gunfire and dive bombers.
- (2) The preliminary carrier based strikes (D-3 to D-1 inclusive) also failed to accomplish the desired degree of neutralization against enemy batteries and defensive installations. This was due in part to limited time and unfavorable weather, but principally to the disposition, number, and effective camouflage of enemy positions.
- (C) The D-Day carrier based attacks were well planned, well executed, and in maximum strength between H-60 and H-Hour. It is believed that air support during this period was highly effective. Post D-Day air support was adequate in strength, and is considered to have been generally employed to good advantage.
- (D) The air liaison parties performed their functions satisfactorily, considering their previous inexperience in some instances, and their inadequate personnel and equipment. (See paragraph 4(D) for additional comment).
- (E) Based on this and previous experience, it is considered that the ALP's did not have entirely satisfactory communications with the landing force air support control unit. Only one SAR net was available to three divisions, with a consequent overload. This resulted in the inability of some units to get their requests through while a strike was being run in another area. Due to the very limited enemy zone of activity, and the close proximity of our lines, Commander, Landing Force Air Support Control Unit One, chose not to invoke "procedure (1)", but continued to deal directly with battalion ALP's in the interest of greater speed in fulfilling requests, and in accomplishing the accurate direction of strikes. This procedure will undoubtedly be largely used in the future. Consequently it is recommended that a second SAR(MHF) net be provided the battalion ALP's in lieu of the useless VHF they now have, and that it be used only for the special purpose of requesting strikes while the primary SAR frequency is in use for reporting observations of air attacks in progress. This would entail the substitution of a second MHF radio set for the VHF set, as it is considered necessary that all ALP's monitor the primary SAR net at all times. The retention of VHF, (SAD frequency), by

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regimental and division ALP's. In addition to the two SAR frequencies, is considered desirable, to enable them to know exactly how air strikes in their zones are progressing. It is not considered necessary or desirable that battalion ALP's be equipped to communicate directly with aircraft in the air.

6. CONCLUSIONS:

- (A) The control of air support missions from a shore-based unit located adjacent to Landing Force Headquarters is practicable and highly desirable.
- (B) In order to exercise such control a well trained team of operational and technical personnel is required, and a complex set of communication equipment similar to that installed in an AGC is necessary.
- (C) That the present organization and equipment of landing force air support control units, (with the exceptions noted above), is considered adequate for the operational control of aircraft in support of troops.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- (A) It is recommended that the selection, training, and administration of landing force air support control units remain a function of Aircraft, Fleet Marine Force, Pacific, exercised through Commander, Air Support Command, Fleet Marine Force, Pacific; and that, where possible, landing force air support control units be attached to the Third and Fifth Amphibious Corps, Fleet Marine Force, for operational control on a semi-permanent basis. It is considered highly desirable that a landing force air support control unit be available to each Corps and its divisions for conducting training in air support missions, utilizing whatever air units may be available in the area.

V. E. MEGEE.

Copy to: ComASCU's, PhibsPac (2).
CG, AirFMFPac. (1).
CG, III PhibCorps (3).
CO, ProvAirSupCom (5).
FILE (10).

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HEADQUARTERS,
LANDING FORCE AIR SUPPORT CONTROL UNIT ONE,
PROVISIONAL AIR SUPPORT COMMAND, FMF,
IN THE FIELD.

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17 March, 1945.

ENCLOSURE (A) TO: SPECIAL ACTION REPORT, IMO JIMA CAMPAIGN.

Subj: Summary of Air Operations with carrier aircraft, 1 March to 9 March inclusive.

	Mar 1	Mar 2	Mar 3	Mar 4	Mar 5	Mar 6	Mar 7	*Mar 8	*Mar 9	*Mar 10	Total
(A) SORTIES:											
VF	152	104	91	-	114	126	92	91	110	48	928
VF	59	59	53	2	59	65	54	57	30	1	439
TOTAL	211	163	144	2	173	191	146	148	140	49	1367
(B) MISSIONS:											
Direct Support	21	17	24	-	18	11	9	9	15	6	130
Observation	8	11	7	-	9	3	4	3	6	2	53
Photographic	1	1	2	-	1	2	-	-	-	-	7
Miscellaneous	-	2	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	4
TOTAL	30	31	33	1	28	17	13	12	21	8	194
(C) MISSIONS											
Supp Air Groups	14	11	18	-	9	7	6	8	14	3	90
Air Observer	8	11	7	-	9	3	4	3	6	2	53
X-CAP or X-VOF	8	5	6	-	9	4	2	-	1	3	38
Other	-	4	2	1	1	3	1	1	-	-	13
(D) AMMO EX- PENDED:											
500# Bombs	96	62	66	-	66	64	82	61	80	46	623
250# Bombs	38	24	-	-	-	-	-	-	20	-	82
100# Bombs	150	190	160	-	220	200	110	340	146	-	1516
Tonnage	36.25	28	24.5	-	27.5	26	26	32.25	29.8	11.5	241.8
Rockets	242	290	480	-	630	376	451	403	244	6	3122
Napalm	31	16	-	-	8	-	33	30	-	8	126
(E) MISSION ORIGI- NATION:											
LFASCU #1	15	8	15	-	10	5	3	2	6	-	64
ALP:Division	1	2	-	-	2	3	4	3	3	-	18
ALP:Regiment	5	7	4	-	4	-	3	3	2	1	29
ALP:Battalion	8	10	11	-	8	6	2	4	9	7	65
Corps	1	4	3	1	4	3	1	-	1	-	18

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Subj: Summary of Air Operations with carrier aircraft, 1 March to 9 March inclusive. 17Mar45.

(F) AIR SUP- PORT REQUESTS:	Mar 1	Mar 2	Mar 3	Mar 4	Mar 5	Mar 6	Mar 7	*Mar 8	*Mar 9	*Mar 10	Total
Total	30	34	26	3	21	16	15	17	21	10	193
Fulfilled	14	19	15	-	15	12	10	10	15	8	118
Denied:											
Prox to F/L	5	1	1	-	-	2	-	1	3	2	15
Lack of observ.	-	3	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4
Lack of time	1	1	1	-	5	-	-	-	-	-	8
Lack of a/c	3	2	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	7
By adjacent or superior unit	3	5	3	-	1	2	4	4	3	-	25
Weather	-	-	-	3	-	-	1	-	-	-	4
Other	4	3	5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	12
(G) DISTANCE OF STRIKES:											
Less than 400Yds	2	1	3	-	3	1	-	6	5	-	21
400-600 Yds	8	10	7	-	2	4	4	1	4	-	46
600-800 Yds	3	1	3	-	9	6	2	1	4	-	29
More than 800Yds	8	5	8	-	1	-	2	1	-	-	25

- Note (1): March 4 air support operations cancelled because of weather.
- Note (2): March 10 direct support operations by P-51 aircraft and X-VOF only.
- Note (3): Under section (G), data not available for 3 strikes on March 3, 3 on March 5, 1 on March 7 and 2 on March 9.

*Information under these columns include strikes by Army P-51 aircraft for corresponding dates, as shown on enclosure (B).

V. E. MCGEE,
Colonel, U. S. Marine Corps,
Commanding.

(A) - 2.

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HEADQUARTERS,
 LANDING FORCE AIR SUPPORT CONTROL UNIT ONE,
 PROVISIONAL AIR SUPPORT COMMAND, FMF,
 IN THE FIELD.

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ENCLOSURE (B) TO: SPECIAL ACTION REPORT, IWO JIMA CAMPAIGN.

Subj: Air Support provided by 15th Fighter Group, Army Air Forces,
 Garrison Air Force, during occupation of IWO JIMA.

1. The 47th Fighter Squadron, 15th Group, arrived at IWO JIMA at noon 6 March, and flew their first close air support mission on the afternoon of 8 March. The 45th and 78th Fighter Squadrons of the 15th Group arrived 8 March and began flying close air support missions on the following day. The following summary of close support missions flown by the 15th Group between 7 March and 14 March inclusive is herewith submitted:

<u>DATE</u>	<u>TARGET AREA</u>	<u>NO-TYPE PLANES</u>	<u>NO 100# BOMBS EXPENDED</u>	<u>NO 500# BOMBS EXPENDED</u>	<u>NO FIRE BOMBS EXP.</u>	<u>NO RDS. .50 CAL EXP.</u>
8 March	185-202	8 P-51s	-	-	-	16,640
9 March	230-246	8 P-51s	16	-	-	8,770
9 March	196	7 P-51s	14	-	-	9,185
9 March	196-I	8 P-51s	16	-	-	12,265
9 March	-	8 P-51s	-	16	-	-
9 March	-	8 P-51s	-	16	-	-
9 March	185-D,Q,M.	8 P-51s	-	16	-	-
10 March	250-T 251-P	8 P-51s	-	16	-	2,844
10 March	250-T 251-K L,M,N,P.	7 P-51s	-	14	-	6,949
10 March	250-N,Q,S.	6 P-51s	-	12	-	47
10 March	250-251	8 P-51s	-	-	-	-
11 March	250-N,O. 251-K,L,M,N.	8 P-51s	-	14	-	11,272
11 March	250-T,P. 251-V,Q.	8 P-51s	-	16	-	4,875
11 March	250-T	4 P-51s	-	8	-	4,692
12 March	250	8 P-51s	-	16	-	2,980
12 March	251	8 P-51s	-	16	-	3,089
14 March	-	5 P-51s	-	-	10	9,000
17 Strikes						
125 Sorties			46	160	10	92,608.

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Air Support provided by 15th Fighter Group, Army Air Forces,
Garrison Air Force, during occupation of IWO JIMA. 17Mar45.

2. Considering that these squadrons had not previously been employed in close support missions, and that they had no previous knowledge of the control technique employed, their performance has been highly satisfactory. The flight leaders were intelligent, cooperative, and efficient in controlling their units in flight. The pilots were daring and skillful, pressing their strikes home to minimum altitudes with a consequent high degree of accuracy in their strafing and glide bombing. It is considered that the 15th Fighter Group provided material and timely assistance to our troops.

V. E. MEGEE,
Colonel, U. S. Marine Corps,
Commanding.

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