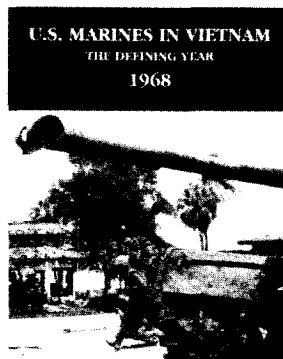


Vietnam Official History Series Completed



The recent publication of *U.S. Marines in Vietnam, 1968, The Defining Year* brings to completion the series of official histories covering Marine operations in Vietnam, 1954-1975. The writing project, which spanned more than 20 years, was initiated and seen to completion by BGen Edwin H. Simmons, USMC(Ret), long-term director of Marine Corps History and Museums.

The Vietnam series comprises a total of 12 volumes—9 operational histories, functional volumes on chaplains and military law, and an anthology-bibliography volume. *The Defining Year*, the largest in the series, covers the most active year of the war—a year that included the Tet Offensive, Khe Sanh, Hue City, two “Mini-Tet Offensives,” and the III MAF counteroffensive that established a remarkable degree of security throughout I Corps in the latter part of the year. Authored by a team of four—Dr. Jack Shulimson, head of the History Writing Unit, supported by LtCol Leonard H. Blasiol, Mr. Charles R. Smith, and Capt David A. Dawson—the 1968 volume captures complexity of conflict remarkably similar to that likely to be encountered in the foreseeable future. It covers not only all major ground operations but also doctrinal issues, employment of aviation and artillery, reconnaissance efforts, support of allies, manpower policies, engineers activities, Navy support, pacification, and logistics, touching on virtually every aspect of the conflict. It is a highly readable account in the pattern of the early volumes in the set.

The Defining Year is on sale at Government Printing Office, Superintendent of Documents, Mail Stop: SSOP Washington, DC 20402-9328 ISBN 0-16-049125-8 for \$70. Unfortunately, only two of the earlier volumes (1973-1975 and the volume on military law) remain in print, and the set has become a collector's item. Battery Press of Nashville, TN, however, has reprinted 1965, plans to do 1967 next year, and hopes, eventually, to make the entire set available. □

1998 Spending Bill Signed

President Clinton signed the 1998 Defense Appropriations Bill into law last month. Included in that \$248 billion bill, now the 1998 Defense Appropriations Act, is nearly \$10 billion in Marine Corps funding, which is categorized as follows: \$6,138 million for Active military personnel, \$392 million for Reserve personnel, \$2,373 million for Active operations and maintenance, \$116 million for Reserve operations and maintenance, \$127 million for ammunition procurement, and \$482 million for other procurement accounts. These figures do not include funds from Navy accounts for aircraft procurement and research and development, as well as military construction and family housing accounts that in part will benefit Marines.

No major surprises are found in that spending law. But there are a few helpful “plus-ups,” or funding increases, in key areas for the Corps. There also are continuing long-term concerns about shortfalls in procurement levels and a maintenance backlog that will soon reach the \$1 billion level. A more detailed look at selected categories of the Marine budget follows.

The budget's military personnel accounts maintain a Corps of 174,000 active duty Marines and 42,000 reservists. Also, Congress has projected maintaining this endstrength through 1999, though the Corps and other Services may hope to begin implementing force structure cuts during the next 2 years. This does not represent a disagreement between Congress and the Department of Defense as much as it reflects timing realities—though the Department believes it has identified appropriate structure cuts with its Quadrennial Defense Review, that review process won't be completed and presented to Congress until later this fiscal year. Therefore, congressional planners have maintained current endstrengths in documents relating to the 1998 budget.

Procurement accounts are off from 1997, but include more than \$130 million in congressional plus-ups over the President's budget request. Congress added \$30 million to fund a HMMWV service life extension program. Also, \$17 million has been added to a requested \$42 million for the Javelin antiarmor weapon, bringing the 1998 buy up to 280 systems. Congress also appropriated \$10 million for equipment for the Chemical Biological Incident Response Force. The largest subcategory under procurement is communications and electronics equipment—this year's accounts total more than \$266 million.

The Corps would like a sustained procurement account of \$1.2 billion a

year but recognizes the unlikelihood of that given current fiscal constraints. This shortfall is one of several factors that led to what is becoming an oft-cited quote from the Commandant: “We cannot afford the Corps we have now, nor the Corps we want in the future . . . I would suggest that we accept it. It is true.” This shortfall along with maintenance and military construction backlogs are primary reasons Gen Krulak recently chartered internal force structure reviews (see article on page 4) to identify potential savings beyond that of the Quadrennial Defense Review.

“Blue dollar” accounts that impact the Corps include aircraft procurement and shipbuilding and conversion. Of primary interest to Marines is funding included in 1998 appropriations for the MV-22 Osprey and the remanufacture and upgrade of the AV-8B Harrier. Both programs are on track, and Congress included appropriations for two additional Ospreys. Also, a congressional plus-up has kept budgetary plans on track for the LPD-17 program.

The budget process has been more newsworthy this year because of the President's new line-item veto powers. The President exercised these powers to trim \$144 million from the \$248 billion spending bill. None of these cuts affected Marine Corps programs, though two Marine Reserve facilities included in a separate Military Construction Bill did fall prey.

The President cut 38 military construction projects in all, including \$6.7 million for a new Marine Reserve Center in Pasadena, CA, and \$14 million for a Marine Reserve Training Center and aircraft maintenance hangar in Johnstown, PA. The line-item veto became a central character in this year's budget plot, as political tensions rose over the President's relatively heavy chops in military construction—close to 3 percent—in early October. The President may have avoided a showdown with Congress by his comparatively mild use of line-item powers with regard to the larger defense spending bill.

It should be noted, however, that Department-level funding issues may yet impact Marines in 1998. This year's Authorization Bill reportedly is in danger of dying in Congress over language regarding the privatization of two Air Force maintenance depots. Not having an Authorization Act would impact all Services in that the Appropriations Act alone only could fund previously authorized programs. □