

Hawks In Vietnam Make Dec. 5 Debut

By GySgt Bob Russell

CHU LAI, Vietnam, Dec. 5 — The drone, looking like a miniature plane and trailing wisps of steam from the launching pad, arced into the sky over the South China Sea. On an island about four miles from the Marine Corps airfield, a radar set resembling a pair of pupil-less eyes waggled around, seeking the drone. Once it found the dummy aircraft, the set locked on, following the drone's path.

Three missiles sat on a nearby launcher, pedestaled like the three winners in an Olympic match. Suddenly, with an eardrum shattering roar, a single missile leaped from the pack. It wobbled skyward, at first, then, when its radar found the drone it straightened out and clashed towards the make-believe plane.

A small explosion, because the missile wasn't combat packed, and another direct hit was recorded in the first HAWK missile shoot ever held in Vietnam.

The practice HAWK (Homing All the Way Killer) firing began Dec. 5 when the first of six Marine missile batteries moved into "Alpha" Battery of the 2nd Light Anti-Aircraft Missile (LAAM) Bn. Three of the batteries belong to 2nd LAAMs, the remaining three to the 1st LAAM Bn. at Da Nang.

All Marine Corps HAWK batteries will rotate into this site some time during December, to take turns firing six missiles each at U.S. Navy-launched drones. While one battery is firing, the other five will remain tactically alert at their home bases, scanning for possible enemy air attacks.

The HAWK missile was developed for ground-to-air interception in 1960, when these two battalions were activated in the Corps. Highly mobile, with each battery able to operate independently, 1st and 2nd LAAMs can detect, track and kill intruding planes, should there be any to hit Da Nang or Chu Lai.

There have been seven days of firing thus far, witnessed by throngs of military and civilian dignitaries, as well as parties of newsmen. Five more days are planned.

Missiles used during the exercise are outdated HAWKS which the Marines tabbed for practice firing rather than destroying. Because of their age, not all have hit their targets, and others have been intentionally diverted after a "lock on" to preserve drones.

But the exercise has been successful to the point where experts know that the combat launchers, dressed with new missiles, will not miss if "bogies" head towards the Republic of Vietnam.

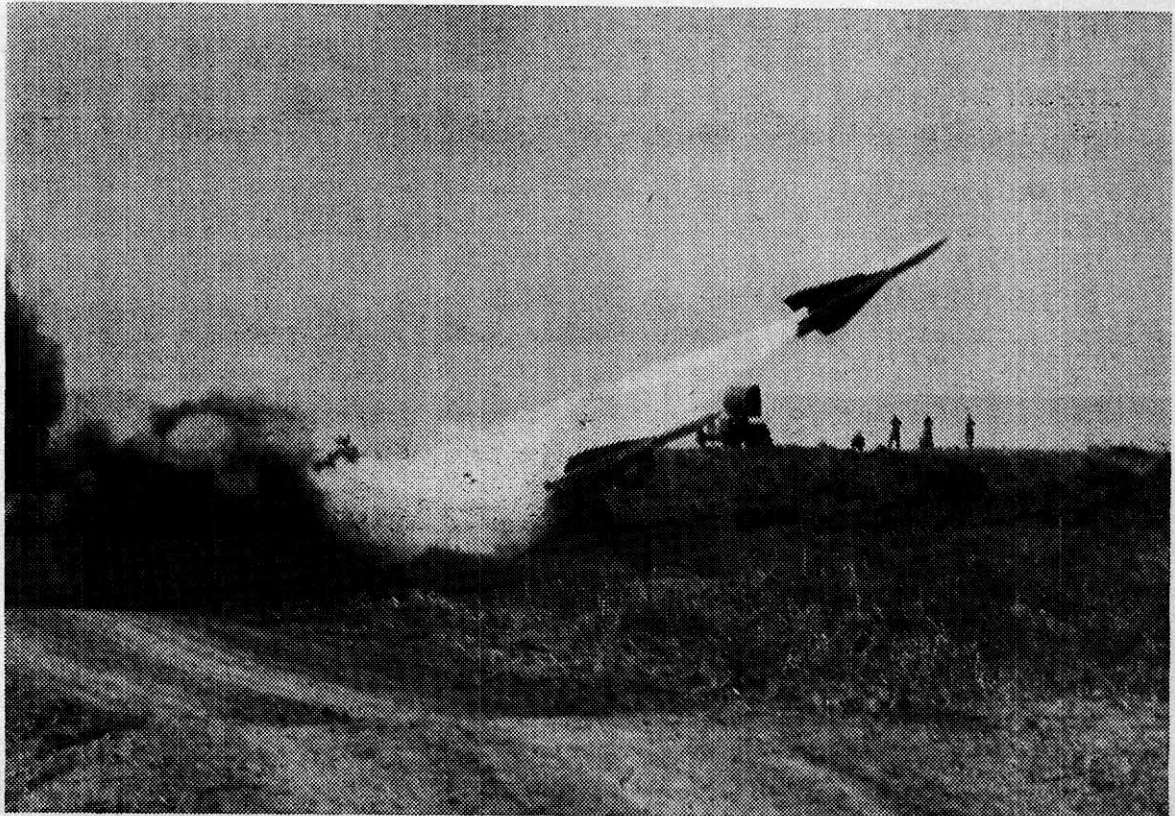


TO A GOOD FRIEND—Chet Ellis (left), president of the 29 Palms Chamber of Commerce, presents departing Force Troops - MCB Commander, BrigGen William K. Jones with plaque on behalf of the citizenry of 29 Palms. The plaque, presented during the general's farewell reception at the COM on Dec. 23, thanked Gen Jones for the outstanding and rewarding relationship which he was instrumental in forming between the military and civilian community during his hi-desert tenure.

(Photo by SSgt Frank Candelario)



CARE IN SOUTH VIETNAM—Marines of "Fox Trot" Company, 2nd Bn., 3rd Marines distribute CARE food to children at the Phu Thuong Orphanage near Danang. CARE is one of the many organizations our volunteer contributions support. (CARE Photo)



HAWK UP—A HAWK (Homing All the Way Killer) missile lifts off to intercept a target drone during a Marine Corps firing exercise now going on at Chu Lai. The first HAWK shoot in Vietnam will continue throughout December as two missile battalions practice with outdated missiles. (OFFICIAL USMC PHOTO by PFC D. E. Marsh)