



UNITED STATES MAR CORPS
HEADQUARTERS
3D MARINE DIVISION (1) (REINFORCED), FLEET MARINE FORCE
FLEET POST OFFICE, SAN FRANCISCO 94132

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From: Major Peter C. BROWN 097 28 25 29/0302 USMC
To: Commanding General

Subj: Investigation to Inquire into the Circumstances
Surrounding the Missing in Action Status in the Case
of Private First Class Gary C. HALL DATA 0331
USMC, Lance Corporal Joseph N. HARGROVE
0331 USMC and Private Danny G. MARSHALL DATA
0311 USMC

Ref: (a) MARCORCASPROCMAN, par 7004

- Encl: (1) CG, 3d Marine Division appointing order 7/MLHB/
mks 5800 of 24 May 1975
- (2) Statement of Captain Mykle E. STAHL DATA
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- (3) Statement of Captain James H. DAVIS DATA
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- (4) Statement of Second Lieutenant James W. DAVIS
DATA USMC
- (5) Statement of Gunnery Sergeant Lester A. MCNEMAR
DATA USMC
- (6) Statement of Staff Sergeant Clark E. HALE DATA
DATA USMC
- (7) Statement of Sergeant Carl C. ANDERSON DATA
DATA USMC
- (8) Statement of Lance Corporal John S. STANDFAST
DATA USMC
- (9) Statement of Private First Class Robert K.
ATKINS DATA USMC
- (10) Statement of Private First Class Lowell R.
GALLAGHER DATA USMC
- (11) Statement of Private First Class Jeffrey M. KERN
DATA USMC
- (12) Statement of Private First Class Terry G.
LAMBERT DATA USMC
- (13) Statement of Private First Class Willie J.
OVERTON DATA USMC
- (14) Statement of Private First Class Andrew F.
PIECHNA DATA USMC
- (15) Statement of Private First Class Fernando A.
RIOS DATA USMC
- (16) Statement of Private First Class Emilio TREVINO
DATA USMC
- (17) Copy of Chronological Record of Medical Care For
Lance Corporal Joseph N. HARGROVE

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- (18) Statement of Private First Class David M. WAGNER
DATA USMC
- (19) Statement of Private Mario GUTIERREZ DATA
DATA USMC
- (20) Summary of Personal History for Private First
Class Gary C. HALL DATA USMC, Lance
Corporal Joseph N. HARGROVE DATA USMC
and Private Danny G. MARSHALL DATA USMC
- (21) Annotated Aerial Photo of Koh Tang Island,
Cambodia

Preliminary Statement

1. In accordance with the Commanding General, 3d Marine Division appointing order of 24 May 1975, which appears as enclosure (1), a detailed investigation into the events surrounding the missing in action status of those three Marines cited in the subject, above, and hereinafter, referred to as HALL, HARGROVE and MARSHALL was conducted. The results of this investigation are as set forth in the remainder of this investigative report.

2. This investigation, required by reference (a), was necessitated by the disappearance and declaration as missing in action of HALL, HARGROVE and MARSHALL upon conclusion of combat operations on Koh Tang Island, Cambodia. Koh Tang Island center of mass is located at geographic coordinates 10 degrees 18 minutes 50 seconds North, 103 degrees 8 minutes zero zero seconds East. These three Marines, members of Company "E", Second Battalion, Ninth Marine Regiment, were part of the Marine force which made a helicopter borne assault on Koh Tang Island during the morning of 15 May 1975.

3. Koh Tang Island is forest covered, has no mountains, is five miles long and one mile wide. Beaches are sandy on the North East side of the island and more rocky on the North West side. All approaches to the island have deep water.

4. The area of Koh Tang Island in which Marine force operations took place was characterized by normal tropical foliage which included dense jungle forest broken by an area without trees but in which grass ranging from 4 to 6 feet in height was present. Visibility in the general area of operations where HALL, HARGROVE and MARSHALL were last seen was limited during daylight hours and nonexistent during darkness. The beach area from which all personnel were extracted was clear.

5. Combat operations against enemy forces continued throughout the daylight hours with extraction of Maxima forces effected during the hours of darkness on 15 May 1975.

HALL, HARGROVE and MARSHALL were present and participated in combat operations throughout the day, as indicated in the findings of fact, below. None of the three Marines were injured or wounded prior to their disappearance. None of the three men were seen subsequent to the final extraction of the Marine force from Koh Tang Island which occurred about 2200, 15 May 1975.

6. The service and health records of HALL, HARGROVE and MARSHALL were reviewed in detail with a summary of personal history contained in enclosure (20). The health record of

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9. The service records of HALL, HARGROVE and MARSHALL disclosed that HALL and HARGROVE were unqualified swimmers and that MARSHALL was a Third Class Swimmer.

Findings of Fact

1. That HALL, HARGROVE and MARSHALL landed on Koh Tang Island, Cambodia at about 1230 on 15 May 1975.
2. That HALL, HARGROVE and MARSHALL comprised an M-60 machine gun team which was attached to the 3d Platoon, Company "E", 2nd Battalion, Ninth Marines.
3. That the machine gun team formed by these three Marines was positioned on the extreme right flank of a 180 degree defensive perimeter, of which the right portion consisted of the 3d Platoon of Company "E".
4. That the 180° defensive perimeter extended a maximum of 300 meters from the beach at its farthest point inland.
5. That the machine gun position occupied by HALL, HARGROVE and MARSHALL was located not more than 25 meters from the beach.
6. That HALL, HARGROVE and MARSHALL were located about 5 meters forward of a position co-occupied by Sergeant Carl C. ANDERSON, 3d Platoon right guide and Private First Class Fernando A. RIOS.
7. That during the daylight hours of 15 May 1975 HALL, HARGROVE and MARSHALL were observed in their defensive position by several members of Company "E".
8. That between 1830 and 1900 a prearranged signal was sounded initiating withdrawal of the defensive perimeter toward the beach, to execute the extraction of all Marine forces from Koh Tang Island.
9. That prior to initiation of the preplanned withdrawal HALL, HARGROVE and MARSHALL had been briefed on the sequence of events which would culminate with the extraction of all Marine forces from Koh Tang Island.
10. That when the signal was sounded to begin withdrawing toward the beach area, PFC RIOS, who was located about 5 meters from HALL, HARGROVE and MARSHALL, shouted to the three Marines telling them to pull back, whereupon RIOS withdrew and did not see the three men again.
11. That the first phase of the withdrawal was executed as planned and a perimeter defense was reestablished.

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12. That near darkness prevailed when the signal to commence withdrawal was sounded and the action was executed.

13. That upon reestablishment of the perimeter defense, HALL, HARGROVE and MARSHALL were observed by Sgt ANDERSON to be nervous and in a confused state. Furthermore, upon questioning the three men Sgt ANDERSON determined their supply of machine gun ammunition was completely expended.

14. That upon determining HALL, HARGROVE and MARSHALL were ineffective as a machine gun team, Sgt ANDERSON ordered them to move to a new position which was located to the left of the position occupied by Captain James H. DAVIS, Commanding Officer, Company "G", who was then in charge of all Marine forces remaining on Koh Tang Island, and then to board the next helicopter which was extracting Marines from the island.

15. That Sgt ANDERSON was the last member of the Marine force to see HALL, HARGROVE and MARSHALL and that the time was about 2000.

16. That Capt DAVIS' position was located about 25 meters from the point where Sgt ANDERSON directed HALL, HARGROVE and MARSHALL to withdraw from the reestablished defensive perimeter.

17. That HALL, HARGROVE and MARSHALL did not report to Capt DAVIS.

18. That during the approximate time when HALL, HARGROVE and MARSHALL should have reported to Capt DAVIS a state of confusion existed in and about the beach area.

19. That when the 5th of 6 helicopters landed incoming enemy small arms fire was received as well as incoming enemy grenades and that the execution of a final protective fire was ordered by Capt DAVIS.

20. That after the 5th of 6 helicopters lifted off a 30-40 minute period of quiet prevailed at the Koh Tang Island extraction site. At this time no sounds were heard outside the Marine defensive perimeter.

21. That about 10 minutes after the 5th of 6 helicopters lifted off Koh Tang Island an aerial illumination flare was ignited which lighted the entire area in and around the Marine defensive perimeter. At this time no movement was observed outside the perimeter.

- 22. That before lift-off of the final helicopter a check of the beach area was made by Capt DAVIS, his gunnery sergeant and the Air Force helicopter crew chief and that no personnel remained in the beach area.
- 23. That darkness prevailed when the last extraction of Marine force personnel was made from Koh Tang Island.
- 24. That subsequent to the extraction of Marine forces from Koh Tang Island a search for serialized equipment known to be in the possession of HALL, HARGROVE and MARSHALL was directed by Capt STAEL resulting in negative findings.
- 25. That a physical search of Koh Tang Island was not made after HALL, HARGROVE and MARSHALL were discovered missing as the conduct of such a search was not authorized.

Opinions

- 1. That all Marine force personnel exercising authority over HALL, HARGROVE and MARSHALL performed their duties in a satisfactory manner.
- 2. That HALL, HARGROVE and MARSHALL did not obey the order issued by Sergeant ANDERSON to report to Captain DAVIS' position and moved elsewhere.
- 3. That HALL, HARGROVE and MARSHALL were not in the helicopter landing site area after lift off of the 5th of 6 extraction helicopters.
- 4. That HALL, HARGROVE and MARSHALL were not in the helicopter landing site area when the 6th and final extraction helicopter landed.
- 5. That if HALL, HARGROVE and MARSHALL had been in the general vicinity of helicopter landing site area they would have attempted to board either the 5th or 6th helicopter unless they were unconscious, incapacitated because of wounds, or were dead.
- 6. That if HALL, HARGROVE and MARSHALL had been conscious, and/or wounded or separated from the Marines remaining in the helicopter landing site area, they would have called for help during the 30-40 minute period of quiet which prevailed after the 5th of 6 helicopters lifted off.
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8. That HALL and HARGROVE would not have attempted to swim from Koh Tang Island because they were unqualified swimmers.

9. That MARSHALL could have attempted to swim to safety from Koh Tang Island.

10. That HALL, HARGROVE and MARSHALL could have been fatally wounded subsequent to the time they were last seen by Sgt ANDERSON at about 2000 and the time when the final helicopter lifted off, since there was firing by both enemy forces and the Marines awaiting extraction from Koh Tang Island.

Recommendation

1. That the status of HALL, HARGROVE and MARSHALL be changed from missing in action to killed in action (body not recovered).

Peter C. Brown

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