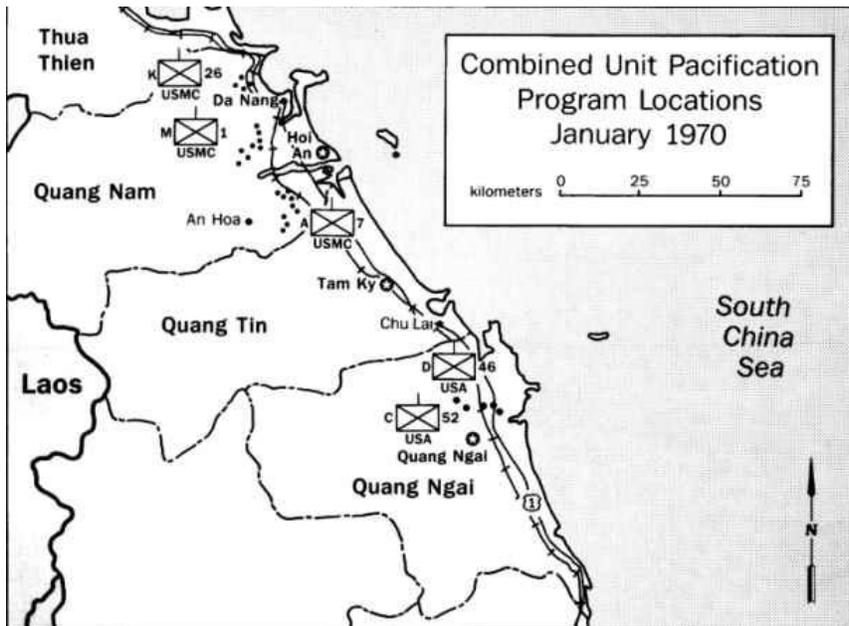


## USMC COMBINED UNIT PACIFICATION PROGRAM (CUPP)



### **Vietnamization & Redeployment**

As in the CAP program, CUPP companies broke down into squads, each of which was paired with a RF or PF platoon to protect a particular village. The company headquarters, usually located near the headquarters of the district in which its squads were stationed, performed many of the functions of a CACO. Each CUPP squad had the same seven missions as a CAP, centering around territorial security and training the RF/PF, and the aim of the new program, as of the Combined Action Program, was to merge Marine firepower and military skill with the militia's intimate knowledge of the local people and terrain.

The CUPP, however, differed from the Combined Action Program in two ways. First, unlike CAP Marines, CUPP Marines were not specially selected or trained. They were regularly assigned members of a rifle company which had been given a special mission. Second, a CUPP company, and the Marine members of its combined units, remained under the operational control of their parent regiment and usually were deployed within that regiments area of operations. CUPP units requested air and artillery support and medical evacuation through the same channels used by an ordinary rifle company, and the regiment could regroup them into a conventional company when necessary.

As the Deputy Assistant Chief of Staff, G-3, of III MAP put it, "It's a way to take forces and make [them] much more effective by multiplication ... without destroying the infantry unit itself.... As long as you're got them in a CUPP, you can always bring them back together if you had to.

Beginning with the early months of 1970, the CUPP program was expanded and pushed vigorously by both Lieutenant Generals Nickerson and McCutcheon. The latter, according to his Deputy G-3, Colonel John W. Haggerty III, was "very much interested in CUPPING the whole outfit [1st Marine Division] in order to maximize the ... Vietnamization process. The program never approached divisional size, but during the year every regiment of the division committed at least a company to combined action.

The 1st Marines' Company M continued combined operations throughout the year. During January, the 26th Marines inserted elements of its Company K in four hamlets just south of Nam O Bridge.

On 15 January, Company A of the 7th Marines started combined operations in nine hamlets along Route 1 north of LZ Baldy and along Route 535 between Baldy and FSB Ross.

The 5th Marines initially did not designate a full CUPP company, but early in February organized a combined action platoon under its headquarters company. The three squads of this platoon established themselves in villages along Route 4 where it passed by the foot of Charlie Ridge.

In March, the redeployment of the 26th Marines and its accompanying realignment of regimental TAORs brought changes in CUPP organization and control. The 1st Marines on 6 March transferred operational control of its Company M to the 5th Marines, which had expanded its AO to include the villages around Hill 55 where most of the company's squads were stationed. At the same time, the 1st Marines absorbed the personnel of the 26th Marines CUPP squads and concentrated them for defense of two of the four hamlets initially protected by the departing regiment.

These rearrangements left the 1st Marines with three CUPP squads under its direct control: the two inherited from the 26th Marines and one squad from Company M in the AO of the 2d Battalion, 1st Marines. The 5th Marines now had its own Headquarters Company CUPP Platoon and Company M from the 1st Marines, while the 7th Marines continued operations with its Company A.

By the end of April, the 1st Marine Division had 22 CUPP squads protecting some 23,000 villagers and working with 16 PF and 7 RF platoons and over 500 armed PSDF. Most of the CUPP teams were located in villages along Routes 1, 4, and 535 or around major allied bases, such as Hill 55 and LZ Baldy. Unlike CAPs, which usually protected villages more or less friendly to the allies, most of the CUPP squads occupied communities under strong Viet Cong influence. Of the nine hamlets held by the 7th Marines' CUPP company, for instance, eight had C and D ratings under the Hamlet Evaluation System and the remaining one was acknowledged to be VC controlled.

The combined unit pacification companies underwent another reorganization in September, as the 7th Marines redeployed in Keystone Robin Alpha and the 5th Marines took over its TAOR.

**On 7 September, Company G, 2d Battalion, 5th Marines relieved Company A of the 7th Marines in its hamlets along Routes 1 and 535. The 5th Marines' company incorporated over 50 percent of the men of the 7th Marines CUPP unit. Two weeks later, as the 3d Battalion, 5th Marines turned the Thuong Due corridor over to the 1st Battalion, 1st Marines, the latter regiment resumed operational control of its own Company M and also of the three 5th Marines headquarters CUPP squads along Route 4.**

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