

# An admiral among the GIs

By Lyle Nelson  
Star-Bulletin Writer



**FRIENDLY V.C.**—Island troops of the 29th Brigade dressed in the black pajamas of the Viet Cong to perform a realistic ambush for Adm. John S. McCain. He later talked to them in the woods in the Koolau Mountains.—Photos by Al Yamauchi.

There he was, a four-star admiral walking around in a forest of eucalyptus and guava trees in the Koolau Mountains, a long way from the ocean.

The occasion was a visit to Hawaii's 29th Brigade by Adm. John S. McCain, commander of the U.S. military force of 1,000,000 in the Pacific.

"I want to tell you guys what a great job you're doing. To each and every one of you I want you to know I appreciate your effort. God bless you all," the admiral said.

Then he popped a big Filipino cigar back in his mouth.

There's a new look at CINCPAC, and a new team.

**THE COACH IS** Adm. John S. McCain, grizzled son of an admiral, a man who goes where the action is, be it training at Schofield or troops under fire in Vietnam.

McCain, in the presence of foot soldiers, combines a bit of the football coach with the sideshow barker.

His pitch is patriotism.

"I say wherever I go that it's the man with the gun on his shoulder who makes the difference, not the airplane at 35,000 feet or the submarine under the water," he said yesterday in the woods near Schofield Barracks.

"Gee, he's a pretty regular guy," said a soldier, wearing the black pajamas of a Viet Cong impersonator.

McCain had just posed with the "V.C.," a group of Hawaii troops who had put

on an ambush demonstration for the admiral.

**HE QUIPPED,** "I hope this doesn't show up in the New York Times."

As former head of Navy Public Information, McCain has a good grip on what makes news and he may have figured it was a picture, just different enough, to make the New York Times.

His image is that of a man on the go, friendly, sometimes salty as a sailor, con-

cerned about the welfare of the troops.

The parade of aides who chase after him are invariably chuckling about his last quip.

McCain often has his component commanders in tow — for example when he boarded the battleship New Jersey followed by his Army, Air Force and Marine generals.

**HE IS PUSHING** the unified command image.

He is concerned with troop morale at the lowest level, and if he can leave them laughing he figures he has scored.

There is none of the austerity and rigid military formalism that often accompanied Adm. U. S. Grant Sharp's movements as Pacific commander-in-chief.

But whether or not McCain's go-go style will make any appreciable change in the conduct of the Vietnam war remains to be seen.

He is, after all, a spectator in a political tug-of-war in which a new President and events will determine the outcome of the Vietnam conflict.

McCain himself shares the agony of many service families. His Navy pilot son is a prisoner in Hanoi.

And when the admiral gives his pep talk to troops, he emphasizes the miseries of this unfortunate war.

And when an Army general and a newsman inadvertently discussed Schofield prisoner-of-war training in McCain's presence the admiral's eyes revealed the deep hurt of a man who wants the war ended as much as any man.



**LOCAL HEADGEAR**—Adm. McCain enjoyed this gift from an Island soldier of Hawaii's 29th Brigade.

## Pacific commander is 'jet set' commuter

Adm. John S. McCain is one of the jet set. "When I go, I want to get there," he said.

But that's not surprising. McCain is a man in a hurry. And get there he does, by jet.

"I'm more in a hurry than Ole Sharp," McCain said, referring to his predecessor, as Pacific commander in chief, Adm. U. S. Grant Sharp.

**BOTH SHARP** and the man who preceded him, Adm. Harry Don Felt, used a lumbering Navy prop plane to fly from Honolulu to Saigon and points east—even in the jet age.

But McCain switched to jets for his Asian trips.

He uses a C-135 jet of the Air Force's Blue Eagle Squadron at Hickam most

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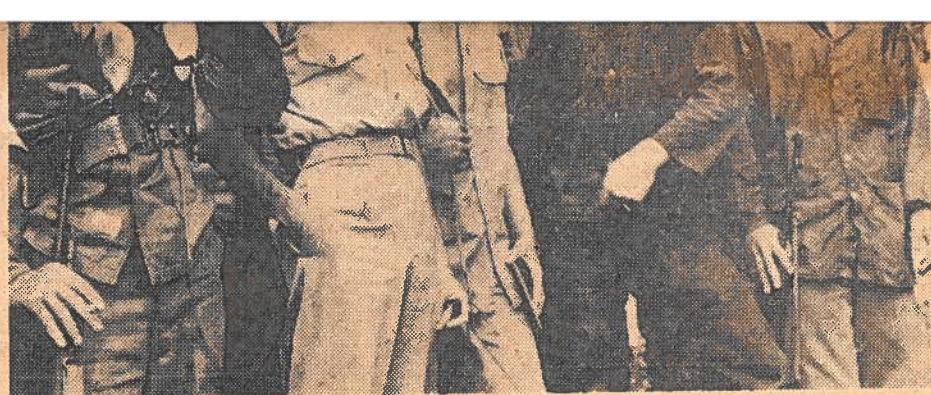
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He uses a C-135 jet of the Air Force’s Blue Eagle Squadron at Hickam most of the time.

The Blue Eagle is a flying Pacific command post with senior officers and all the communication gear any military leader would want aboard.

**SHARP AND FELT** used a C-118 (DC-6) from Fleet Tactical Support Squadron 21 at Barbers Point.

It used to take Sharp about 32 hours with layovers at Guam and Sangley Point to make the trip from Hickam to Saigon.

The new admiral makes the flight in 15 hours.

Both Sharp and Felt used the layover time to catch up on paper work and rest. But not McCain.

“When I go, I want to get there,” he said.

And get there he does, by jet.