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DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
HEADQUARTERS, 10TH COMBAT AVIATION BATTALION
ATO 96312

11 August 1966

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AVGD-AE

SUBJECT: Operational Report, for Quarterly Period Ending 31 July 1966,
Reports Control Symbol CS for 65

TO: See Distribution 18 PACS FOR

12 19

17 DT-RD-660149

OCT 31 1966

SECTION 1: Significant Organization or Unit Activities.

1. Mission of the 10th Combat Aviation Battalion: To provide aviation support as directed by CO, 17th Combat Aviation Group, to US Forces, Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces (RVNAF) and Free World Military Assistance Forces (FWNAF) in developing and maintaining an effective conventional and counter - insurgency capability. To exercise command and control over assigned and attached units as directed by CO, 17th Combat Aviation Group. (LXI, 17th Combat Aviation Group, dated 3 June 1966).

2. Organization: The 10th Combat Aviation Battalion consists of the following units as of 31 July 1966.

- a. Headquarters and Headquarters Company
 - 256th Signal Detachment
 - 279th Signal Detachment
 - 296th Signal Detachment
 - 238th Counter-Mortar Radar Detachment
 - Detachment, Company A, 504th Military Police Battalion
- b. 48th Assault Helicopter Company (UH-1) (A)
 - 390th Transportation Detachment (CHEM)
 - 286th Medical Detachment
- c. 117th Assault Helicopter Company (UH-1) (A)
 - 140th Transportation Detachment (CHEM)

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130th Medical Detachment

d. 129th Assault Helicopter Company (UH-1) (A)

394th Transportation Detachment (C-119)

133rd Medical Detachment

e. 135th Aviation Company (CV-2)

256th Transportation Detachment (AFC)

f. 163rd Reconnaissance Airplane Company (O-1)

g. 281st Assault Helicopter Company (UH-1) (A)

463rd Transportation Detachment (C-119)

499th Signal Detachment

3. Command Relationship:

a. LTC B. L. Harrison, Infantry, assumed command of the 10th Combat Aviation Battalion on 12 July 1966, from LTC Albert J. Fern Jr., Infantry. The change of command ceremony was attended by Major General Stanley R. Larson, CG, I Field Forces Vietnam, Brigadier General George P. Seneff, CG, 1st Aviation Brigade and Colonel John W. Parr, CO, 17th Combat Aviation Group. LTC Fern was awarded the Legion of Merit at the ceremony.

b. Changes of Com and with subordinate units during this period were:

(1) On 18 July, Major Lavere W. Findrup, Armor, replaced Major Robert D. Stearns, Artillery, as CO of 129th Assault Helicopter Company.

(2) On 20 July 1966, Major William P. Griffin, Infantry, replaced LTC Everdus H. Hackett, Infantry, as CO, 281st Assault Helicopter Company.

4. Organizational Changes:

a. 163rd Reconnaissance Airplane Company (O-1): On 6 June 1966, the main body of this unit arrived at Dong Ba Thin, RVN from Fort Hood, Texas. This unit was assigned to the 10th Combat Aviation Battalion upon arrival.

b. 281st Assault Helicopter Company (UH-1) (A): On 8 June 1966, the main body of this unit arrived at Cha Trang, RVN, from Fort Benning, Georgia. This unit was assigned to the 10th Combat Aviation Battalion upon arrival. The 281st Assault Helicopter Company (UH-1) (A) absorbed the personnel and equipment of the 2nd platoon, 171st

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Assault Helicopter Company (UH-1) (A). As a result of this absorption the 201st Assault Helicopter Company (UH-1) (A) was declared operational upon arrival. This unit is under operational control of 5th Special Forces Group with headquarters at Nha Trang, RVN.

5. Organization and Unit Activity:

a. Combat/Combat Support Operations:

(1) General: During this reporting period the 10th Combat Aviation Battalion was committed to support elements of I Field Forces Vietnam in six major combat operations. (Subparagraphs 2 through 7) A minimum of two airmobile companies plus control elements of the battalion headquarters were committed to four of these operations. The remainder of the battalion's resources were used to reinforce the operations as needed and provide support to Headquarters, I Field Forces Vietnam, 5th Special Forces Group, II Corps and Army Vietnam Troops (ARVN).

(2) OPERATION AUSTIN 6 (28 April - 17 May 1966).

(a) The mission of the 10th Combat Aviation Battalion was to:

1. Provide GS to 1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division and 45th Infantry Regiment (ARVN).

2. Be prepared to mass aviation support as directed by CG, I Field Forces Vietnam.

(b) Aviation GS was provided by the 10th Combat Aviation Battalion with the 10th and 117th Assault Helicopter Companies.

(c) Area of operation was in vicinity of Nhon Co, RVN.

(d) Statistical highlights:

1. Airmobile assaults:	13
2. Troops lifted:	7654
3. Cargo lifted: (tons)	156
4. Sorties:	3803
5. Hours flown:	1915

(e) Comments:

1. Despite the adverse monsoon weather conditions, extensive airmobile operations can be conducted with careful planning and timing. Plans must be flexible, however, to meet contingencies created by adverse weather.

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2. The concept of employing the same assault helicopter company with a particular infantry battalion is mutually advantageous and enhances effectiveness of aviation support.

3. The effectiveness of armed helicopters is substantially reduced in heavy jungle terrain because of the inability to detect targets and deliver accurate supporting fires through the jungle canopy.

4. Resupply and medical evacuation problems encountered in jungle terrain can be overcome by the construction of hasty heliports by ground units.

5. Viet Cong units in the area display a reluctance to fire on helicopters. This could be attributable to fear of detection.

6. The 10th Combat Aviation Battalion continues to be handicapped by the lack of portable navigational beacons which are required to assist operations during adverse weather and at night.

7. Closer coordination is required between infantry battalion S-4's and S-3's to insure that resupply operations do not conflict with tactical plans.

8. Door gunners and aircraft crew chiefs are not habitually required aboard aircraft. During extractions from small LZ's in the jungle they remained behind to allow greater troop lift capacity per aircraft.

(3) OPERATION PAUL REVERE

(a) The mission of the 10th Combat Aviation Battalion was to provide one assault helicopter company to reinforce 52nd Combat Aviation Battalion during period 31 May - 1 June 1966 and 20 July until the present time.

(b) The support provided was the 117th Assault Helicopter Company during 31 May - 1 June 1966 and the 129th Assault Helicopter Company during period 21 July until the present time.

(c) Area of operations was in vicinity of Pleiku, RVN.

(d) Statistical highlights:

1. Airmobile assaults:	4
2. Troops lifted:	1500
3. Cargo lifted: (tons)	22
4. Sorties:	1800

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5. Hours flown: 625

(c) This operation is still in progress. The aviation support is controlled by the 52nd Combat Aviation Battalion. The 129th Assault Helicopter Company is reinforcing the 52nd.

(4) OPERATION PAWTHORNE (1-20 June 1966)

(a) The mission of the 10th Combat Aviation Battalion was to:

1. Provide general support to the 24th Special Tactical Zone with priority to the 1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division.

2. Be prepared to mass aviation support as directed by CG, I Field Forces Vietnam.

(b) 10th Combat Aviation Battalion utilized the 108th, 117th and 129th Assault Helicopter Companies to provide the required aviation support.

(c) Area of operation was in vicinity of Dak To, RVN.

(d) Statistical highlights:

1. Airborne assaults:	26
2. Troops lifted:	9780
3. Cargo lifted: (tons)	152
4. Sorties	5970
5. Hours flown:	1928

(e) Comments:

1. There was a tragic incident during Operation Pawthorne in which armed helicopters from another organization accidentally fired on friendly troops while making a strike which resulted in numerous friendly casualties. An immediate investigation of this incident was made by the 10th Combat Aviation Battalion in order to prevent any similar incidents in the future. As a result of this investigation the following policies were established for the employment of armed helicopters in the vicinity of friendly troops:

a. All gunships will monitor and the strikes will be directed on the company net for which the strike is being made. If the strike is being directed by a battalion commander, then the gunships will operate on the battalion command frequency.

b. The gunships will not fire until positive communications are established with the ground commander concerned and

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the location of friendly troops is definitely known.

c. Armed helicopters are an effective and accurate weapon, immediately responsive to the needs of the commander. In order for unit commanders to be aware of the fire support available to them, the 10th Combat Aviation Battalion periodically conducts orientations on the armed helicopter weapons systems and flies the commanders on demonstration firing runs.

2. When operating in mountainous, jungle-covered terrain such as is prevalent in the Dak To area, usable landing zones are almost nonexistent. Under these conditions, it is very important that unit commanders continually assess the terrain for sites suitable for clearing and use as an LZ. When a unit is going to be in a location for a period of time, an LZ should be selected and cleared so that helicopters can land for medical evacuation, resupply, extraction and reinforcing. As soon as an LZ has been selected and cleared, it should be checked by a pilot for adequate main rotor and tail rotor clearance and for obstacles on the approach and departure paths. If a landing must be made in the LZ at night or under adverse weather conditions, it is very advantageous to have a crew available that has been in the LZ and is familiar with it.

(5) OPERATION APACHE (10 June - 16 July 66)

(a) The mission of the 10th Combat Aviation Battalion was to provide five MH-1D's and five MH-1B's in support of the 1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division.

(b) This support was provided by the 129th Assault Helicopter Company.

(c) Area of operation was in vicinity Dak To, RVN.

(d) Statistical highlights:

<u>1.</u> Airmobile assaults:	8
<u>2.</u> Troops lifted:	519
<u>3.</u> Cargo lifted: (tons)	2.2
<u>4.</u> Sorties:	419
<u>5.</u> Hours flown:	168

(6) OPERATION FRAU'REGARD (22 June - 16 July 66)

(a) The mission of the 10th Combat Aviation Battalion was to:

1. Provide GS to the 24th Special Tactical Zone with priority to the 1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division.

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2. Be prepared to mass aviation support as indicated by CG, I Field Force Vietnam.

(b) 10th Combat Aviation Battalion utilized the 48th, 117th and 129th Assault Helicopter Companies to provide required aviation support.

(c) Area of operation was in vicinity of Dak To, RVN. This operation was a continuation of Operation Hawthorne.

(d) Statistical highlights:

1. Airmobile assaults:	38
2. Troops lifted:	8310
3. Cargo lifted: (tons)	162.9
4. Sorties:	7519
5. Hours flown:	2050

(e) No significant contact was ever made with the enemy. However, aviation support requirements continued at a high level.

(7) OPERATION JOHN PAUL JONES (24 July 66 until present time)

This operation will not be covered since the operation has just started and no significant enemy contact has been made.

(8) Operations of the 135th Aviation Company (CV-2B)

(a) During this reporting period the 135th Aviation Company has been under the operational control of the G-4, I Field Forces Vietnam.

(b) During this reporting period the 135th Aviation Company provided aviation support by transporting 41,010 troops and 2850.9 tons of cargo while flying 5381 sorties in 4070.6 hours.

(9) Operations of the 183rd Reconnaissance Airplane Company.

(a) The 183rd Reconnaissance Airplane Company (O-1) is authorized 32 aircraft and had received a total of 29 of these by 31 July 1966. There was considerable delay in receiving 6 of the O-1's because all of the aircraft were shipped into Saigon in error instead of Vung Tau. This caused the misplacement of parts of the empennage on 6 aircraft and the wing of another. Further, the aircraft arriving at the wrong location placed an undue workload on the maintenance unit located in Saigon, necessitating the aircrafts owning unit to perform 90% of the reassembly.

(b) On 13 June almost half of the aviators assigned to

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the company were dispatched to seven locations throughout II Corp tactical zone to train with the 219th Reconnaissance Airplane Company (O-1). One week later, other aviators in the company replaced the initial trainees. This method continued until all aviators had received in-country training and were qualified to accomplish the visual reconnaissance (VR) program.

(c) The company was assigned the mission to perform the VR program in the southern half of II Corps TZ and on 16 July 1966 became operational less the thirteen O-1 aircraft short at that time. The company, as of 31 July, physically has 21 aircraft located with Vietnamese units throughout their area of responsibility and are assigned missions through advisors. The remaining eight aircraft are in general support of US/FNAP throughout the zone.

(10) Operations of the 261st Assault Helicopter Company.

(a) The personnel of the 261st Assault Helicopter Company arrived in country on 8 June 1966. The personnel and equipment of 2nd Platoon, 171st Assault Helicopter Company was transferred to the 261st Assault Helicopter Company. As a result of this transfer the company was declared operational upon arrival in country.

(b) The 261st Assault Helicopter Company (UH-1) (A) is under operational control of 5th Special Forces Group.

(c) The aircraft are located throughout the area of I, II, and III Corps in small detachments.

(11) Combat/Support Summary:

(a) Typical missions have included: Reconnaissance, command and control, medical evacuation, troop lifts (airmobile combat assaults) and close fire support utilizing UH-1B gunships.

(b) A statistical summary of aviation support provided by this battalion during the period follows:

<u>1.</u> Airmobile assaults:	95
<u>2.</u> Troops lifted:	113,081
<u>3.</u> Cargo lifted: (tons)	5,122.2
<u>4.</u> Sortes:	56,176
<u>5.</u> Hours flown:	21,642

b. Annual General Inspection: The 10th Combat Aviation Battalion received its first Annual General Inspection on 11-15 July 1966 by LTC William N. Galt, USARV Inspector General and his 11 man team. A copy of the results of the inspection, dated 23 July 1966 was forwarded to CG, USARV and all intermediate headquarters. Significant problem areas were

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as shown on tabs D-F to the above inspection.

c. The 10th Combat Aviation Battalion initiated its first Command Information Bulletin on 4 June 1966. This publication was well received by troops, small unit leaders, and commanders alike. It is published weekly and contains all the current activities of the units and members of the battalion. It has created more interest among the troops than any other single activity.

d. Base Camp Activities:

(1) During this quarter, the battalion was not only involved in the combat activities outlined above, but also was faced with the major task of developing its base of operation at Dong Ba Thin and updating the base development plans of the complex.

(2) Detailed planning and construction is in progress at the Dong Ba Thin Military Complex to provide facilities for the following units.

(a) A Combat Aviation Battalion composed of three Assault Helicopter Companies (UH-1) (A), one Assault Support Helicopter Company (CH-47), one Aviation Company (Airmobile) (Fixed Wing), and one Reconnaissance Aviation Company (O-1).

(b) One Engineer Battalion (Construction) reinforced with one Light Equipment Company and one Dump Truck Company.

(c) One Engineer Group Headquarters and Headquarters Company (Construction).

(d) One Transportation Aircraft Maintenance Company (Direct Support).

(e) One Transportation Aircraft Maintenance Company (General Support).

(f) One Transportation Company (Aircraft Depot Supply)

(g) One Security Company.

(3) Initial planning phase has begun to provide facilities for the following additional units:

(a) One Infantry Brigade (Separate)

(b) One Artillery Battalion (105)

(c) One Engineer Battalion (Combat)

(d) One Air Cavalry Squadron

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- (e) Two Aviation Companies (Ambulance) (Light)
- (f) US Air Force Team (FAC)
- (g) One Engineer Company (Combat)
- (h) One Engineer Company (Water Supply)
- (i) One Hospital (Unknown size - 25 Acres Reserved)
- (j) Two US Army Strategic Communications Command Sites.
- (k) Numerous detachments for support.

(4) Estimated troop strength for the complex is 3550 by September 1966, and 6500 by December 1967. As Installation Coordinator for Dong Ba Thin, the Commanding Officer, 10th Combat Aviation Battalion has base development responsibility for this complex and is responsible for coordination of the construction effort.

(5) The supporting construction unit is the 20th Engineer Battalion (Combat), a subordinate unit of the 45th Engineer Group (Construction). The major portion of the engineer effort has been required to provide sand and fill over the entire area. Because of the high water table and low swampy land, three to six feet of fill is required to provide a suitable base for vertical construction or hard-stand. Sand fill is used because of its availability. Basic standard four (4) construction is being provided for tenant units with some common use facilities such as dispensary, chapel and post exchange.

(6) The 10th Combat Aviation Battalion units are building all of the troop housing and facilities other than those listed above through a "Self Help" program. Framed tents for billets and offices have been built by all units. Engineer support has begun to replace unit orderly room and supply tents with tropicalized wood frame buildings.

(7) Because of the constant enemy threat to aviation complexes, the 10th Combat Aviation Battalion has exerted a major effort in establishment of local security of the complex. An integrated defense plan has been established to incorporate the capabilities of all United States, Korean and Vietnamese forces in the area. Supporting fire plan and contingency plans are completed and continual improvement of defenses has been emphasized. Frequent rehearsals have been conducted at various hours of the day and night to insure adequacy of plans and training. Plans are continually improved and updated based on experience gained from practice exercises. A request for extensive defoliation of jungle vegetation near this complex has been submitted to improve perimeter security, provide better fields of fire and to deny concealment of possible attacking enemy forces.

(8) In all activities of the 10th Combat Aviation Battalion in the Dong Ba Thin area, relations with Korean and Vietnamese Military Forces and with Vietnamese Civil authorities have been excellent. Close

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coordination is effected on both civil and military matters and the highest degree of cooperation and best possible relations exist.

(9) As of 11 July 1966, three major problem areas exist in the complex:

(a) There is no central electrical power supply available for operation of mess hall refrigeration, perimeter lighting, and support of the units in the area. TQ&E generators are inadequate to supply this requirement and are needed to support operational missions. A command letter requesting generators for perimeter lighting has been disapproved. A power station for this complex has been planned and indications are that it will be operational by 1 January 1967.

(b) A critical water shortage exists during the dry season. The present source has become critically low on several occasions, however an unusually wet season has prevented a serious problem to date. Problems have been predicted by engineer water surveys and can be expected in the next two months. Water wells are planned for the Dong Ba Thin Complex, however they will be exploratory in nature. A date for drilling to start is uncertain. No pumping equipment has been requested because the requirements are unknown until a successful well is found.

(c) The requirements for three to six feet of fill to raise the general elevation of the complex sufficiently above the water table to avoid flooding has slowed the overall construction program at Dong Ba Thin. Estimated completion dates have continued to slip, increasing the operational dates of some units, particularly aircraft maintenance and supply type units which have requirements for work and storage areas. More engineer support to haul fill or a dredge for hydraulic fill is urgently needed to restore construction schedule to a realistic one which is more in line with the proposed arrival dates of new units from COMUS.

e. Personnel: The following is a list of authorized and assigned strength of the 10th Combat Aviation Battalion as of 2400 hours 31 July 1966.

<u>UNIT</u>	<u>AUTHORIZED</u>			<u>ASSIGNED</u>		
	<u>OFF</u>	<u>WO</u>	<u>EM</u>	<u>OFF</u>	<u>WO</u>	<u>EM</u>
HHC, 10th Cmbt Avn Bn	21	2	86	33	4	177*
238th FA Det (Radar)	0	1	8	0	0	8
256th Sig Det	1	0	9	1	0	5
279th Sig Det	1	0	9	1	0	8
296th Sig Det	1	0	9	0	0	8
48th Avn Co	14	41	141	26	31	170
286th Med Det	1	0	8	1	0	9
390th Trans Det	1	1	70	1	1	54
117th Avn Co	14	41	141	22	26	152
130th Med Det	1	0	8	1	0	6
149th Trans Det	1	1	70	1	1	69

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UNITS	AUTHORIZED			ASSIGNED		
	OFF	WO	EL	OFF	WO	EM
129th Avn Co	14	41	141	23	27	162
394th Trans Det	1	1	70	1	1	69
433rd Med Det	1	0	8	0	0	8
135th Avn Co	11	20	149	31	7	149
258th Trans Det	1	1	55	1	1	46
183rd Avn Co	32	1	95	34	5	100

*Includes security personnel authorized VOC, USARV

f. Aircraft Maintenance:

(1) The following statistics reflect the maintenance and aircraft availability by each unit experienced during the period of this report.

UNIT	TYPE A/C	% AVAILABLE	EDP	EDI	HRS FLOWN
46th Aslt Co	UH-1B	90.0%	1.8%	8.2%	1524
	UH-1D	88.2%	2.8%	9.0%	3511
117th Aslt Co	UH-1B	85.3%	3.0%	11.7%	1037
	UH-1D	85.3%	4.4%	10.3%	3133
129th Aslt Co	UH-1B-1	63.1%	4.4%	10.3%	1204
	UH-1D	80.3%	4.6%	10.3%	3436
281st Aslt Co	UH-1B-1	63.1%*	23.0%	13.9%	840
	UH-1D	80.3%	6.1%	13.6%	1958
135th Avn Co	CV-2B	81.2%		19.8%	3088
183rd Recon Co	O-1E	43.3%**		56.7%	1011
	Bn Avg R/W UH-1B/D		84% availability		
	Total R/W flying hours		16,643		
	Total flying hours		21,642		

* The 281st Assault Helicopter Company has all new 540 rotor systems on B model aircraft. Spare parts were not available for repairs resulting in low A/C availability.

** The 183rd Reconnaissance Airplane Company has recently arrived in country. The aircraft arrived during July and were being assembled and not mission ready. At the present time 91% of assigned A/C are mission ready.

(2) During this past quarter the 390th and 140th Maintenance Detachments (3rd echelon) assigned to the 46th and 117th Airmobile Companies have displaced to the forward area to provide on-the-spot maintenance in

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support of the combat operation. The 110th Detachment departed home station on 14 June and became operational in the forward location on 21 June 1966. The movement by surface transportation required a total of 7 days of non-productive time by this unit. The 390th Detachment departed home station on 21 June 1966 and became operational in the forward area on 25 June 1966. This unit experienced 4 days of non-productive time.

(3) On 15 July 1966 notification was received to move the maintenance detachments from Kontum to Tuy Hoa. This move was made under the same conditions as the previous move. The supported airmobile companies actually departed the Dak To area on 15 July 1966; however, the maintenance detachments did not leave Kontum until 25 July 1966, and arrived at Tuy Hoa on 30 July 1966. Units were fully operational in support of airmobile companies on 31 July 1966. This move provided ten days of ineffective maintenance and five days of complete non-productive time. During the period 14 June 1966 through 31 July 1966, the following work was accomplished by the two maintenance detachments:

- (a) Seven (7) periodic inspections.
- (b) Three (3) hot end inspections.
- (c) Five hundred (500) hours sheet metal repairs.

(4) In spite of this lost time the aircraft availability was maintained above 80% mission ready.

(5) During this period numerous main rotor blades, tail rotor blades and engines have been replaced. The normal life expectancy of engines is eleven hundred (1100) hours. The average time obtained from engines during this period was 360 hours. Normal life of main rotor blades on UH-1B's is 1000 hours and the UH-1D's is 2500 hours, the usage life obtained from those blades replaced was 344 hours. Normal life expectancy of tail rotor blades is 1100 hours; the usage life obtained was 311 hours. Primary failure cause was erosion due to sand and dust in operating area.

g. Flight Safety:

(1) Period 1 May - 31 July 1966.

	R/W	F/W	TOTAL
Incident	9	0	9
Major Accidents	2	0	2
Combat Loss	1 (total)	1 (Mod Damage)	2
Forced Landings	5	0	5
Preced Landings	3	3	6

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(2) Cumulative accident rate per 100,000 hours flying time (combined F/W and R/W aircraft: 23.4).

h. Summary:

(1) The 10th Combat Aviation Battalion continued to support the 1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division primarily with at least two and occasionally three assault helicopter companies (A) throughout the reporting period. Geographical locations ranged from the central highlands of Rhon Co, Cheo Reo and Dak To to the coastal plains of Tuy Hoa. At Dak To, the base camp supporting distance was almost 200 nautical miles back to Dong Ba Thin. This necessitated movement of maintenance support detachments forward to within 25 nautical miles of the area of operations. The Battalion has remained throughout the reporting period immediately responsive to the ground forces army aviation needs. Many exercises of short duration were performed in support of other F/WAF and ARVN troops during the period. The habitual attachment of 2 to 5 OH-47 helicopters on air-mobility operations has definitely enhanced the responsiveness needed by the ground commanders.

(2) The Battalion has continued its secondary mission of constructing a permanent base of operations through the "self help" program. Considerable progress was made during the reporting periods in both troop housing and facilities. An adequate post office, post exchange and dispensary was established.

SECTION 2: Commanders Observations and Recommendations.

Part I: Observations (Lessons Learned):

1. Personnel. None
2. Operations:

Armed Helicopter Support

ITMI: Close support with armed helicopters.

DISCUSSION: Reference Section 1, paragraph 5a(4)(c) 1. Locating the forward elements of the friendly units has often presented problems. In the referenced situation, the area was jungle terrain. Aviator's must be constantly informed of the tactical situation and location of friendly troops and be familiar with the terrain. Aviators must know frequencies and call signs of all the friendly units to which he must be responsive. The big problem area is not concerned so much with combat assault operations. During combat assault operations, the gun platoon leader is able to keep up with the progress of the leading elements of the friendly troops as they move out of the landing zone. Problem areas are usually encountered when a ground unit makes enemy contact and have an immediate requirement for gunship support. When the aircraft arrives, it takes a few moments to determine friendly troops location and the location of the enemy. Gunship pilots being eager to give requested support have, on occasion, opened fire without having full knowledge of all information required.

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OBSERVATION: It is essential for armed helicopter crews to have radio contact with the ground commander and make positive location of the friendly troops before firing.

Armed Helicopters

ITEM: Reduced effectiveness of armed helicopters in heavy jungle terrain.

DISCUSSION: Armed helicopters have found it difficult to detect and locate targets and deliver effective fire in heavy jungle terrain. It is more difficult for the friendly troops to identify their forward elements. Radio reception is curtailed as a result of a heavy overhead canopy of foliage. It becomes difficult for an aviator to navigate (plot himself on a map) when check points are scattered.

OBSERVATION: The effectiveness of armed helicopters is substantially reduced in heavy jungle terrain because of the inability to detect targets and deliver accurate supporting fires thru the jungle canopy.

Door Gunners

ITEM: Use of door gunners.

DISCUSSION: Door gunners in this unit feel that they are as important a crew member as the crew chief or pilot on helicopters. As a result they have taken positive interest in helping the crew chief in maintaining the armament system aboard the aircraft, and in performing as gunners. In addition, gunners feel left out and their pride hurt when they are required to be left off the crew list for any flight. By leaving the gunner behind, the helicopter has a 200 pound greater lift capability.

OBSERVATION: On some combat assaults, the gunner on the inside of a flight formation has been left behind to permit greater troop and/or cargo lifting capability. This inside gunner would have his firing capability curtailed at low altitudes and when in the landing zone as a result of being on the inside of the formation. There are times when it is advantageous to delete the gunner from the crew when the situation permits.

Aviation Support

ITEM: Habitual association (aviation support).

DISCUSSION: The more a supporting aviation unit knows about its supported unit, the better its capability of providing the best possible support. This battalion has frequently been required to support the 1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division with three assault helicopter companies. When this is the case, normally one assault helicopter company will provide support to a particular infantry battalion. Many requirements have caused exceptions to exist, but this principle is used when practical.

OBSERVATION: The concept of employing the same assault helicopter company with a particular infantry battalion is mutually advantageous and enhances

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effectiveness of aviation support.

ITEM: Helicopter landing zones.

DISCUSSION: When operating in mountainous, jungle covered terrain such as is prevalent in the Dak To area, usable landing zones are almost non-existent. Under these conditions, it is very important that unit commanders continually assess the terrain for sites suitable for clearing and use as an LZ. As soon as an LZ has been selected and cleared, it should be checked by an aviator for adequate main rotor and tail rotor clearance and for obstacles on the approach and departure paths.

OBSERVATION: When a unit is going to be in a location for a period of time (one day or more), an LZ should be selected and cleared so that helicopters can land for medical evacuation, resupply, extraction or reinforcing. If a landing must be made in the LZ at night or under adverse weather conditions, it is very advantageous to have a crew available that has been in the LZ and is familiar with it.

3. Training and Organization:

Night Training

ITEM: Night training requirements.

DISCUSSION: Requirements will continue to increase for night aviation support for ground units. On the job training while performing these night missions is not sufficient to keep all aviators proficient in night operations.

OBSERVATION: Continual night unit training must be accomplished in order to safely conduct company and battalion size night airmobile assaults. This training should be conducted using a minimum of 4 helicopters practicing formation flight, pick-up and landing zone procedures.

4. Intelligence:

Map Stocks

ITEM: Reduction of unit map stocks.

DISCUSSION: All aviation companies arrive in Vietnam with an excessive basic load of maps. Most of these maps (possibly as much as 75%) are never used, since they cover areas in which the unit will never operate. Units tend to order and reorder excessive amounts to replenish and exceed original basic load. An example is a unit returning to an area in which it has previously operated, and reordering complete coverage in excessive amounts. With the passage of time, the map supply continues to increase while at the same time many maps on hand become obsolete and are superseded by newer editions.

OBSERVATION: Consideration should be given to discontinuance of the issuance of maps to units prior to departure from COMUS. Units would then draw only those maps (minimum coverage) required for actual operations. Map depot

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service is rapid enough to permit fulfillment of most requirements in 24 hours. New units could also draw on the excessive map stock of other companies in the same battalion, or from other battalions or groups.

5. Logistics: None

6. Others: None

Part II: Recommendations:

1. Personnel: None

2. Operations:

a. That wherever possible, the same aviation units habitually support the same ground units; i.e., an assault helicopter company (A), habitually supports the same infantry battalion when the situation and circumstances permit.

b. That periodic orientation flights in the armed helicopters be given to ground unit commanders and platoon leaders in order for them to fully understand the fire power potential and the limitations of the aircraft.

c. When the ground unit (Battalion size) is in a static situation and contact is light, consideration should be given to placing a utility helicopter under the ground commander's control for the day. This will enable him to locally perform resupply, command liaison, medical evacuation, and small troop movements.

d. Cargo type helicopters (CH-47) should habitually be attached to the airmobile unit commander (Battalion size) for movement of artillery and large ammunition resupply (105 rounds) in conjunction with airmobile assaults.

3. Training and Organization: That all Army Aviators continue to be trained in the techniques and procedures of calling for and adjusting artillery fire. This, in effect, greatly increases the number of forward observers keeping the infantry brigade's area of operation under surveillance, ready to bring artillery fire in on the enemy.

4. Intelligence: None.

5. Logistics: That consideration be given to issuing "fly-away" maintenance tool and parts holders to assault helicopter companies, such as those fabricated for the 1st Cav Div (Airmobile) in order to sustain the maintenance capability of a unit for 15-30 days when the supporting distance precludes the aircraft from returning to home base each day. These should be air transportable by C-123 or CV-2 type aircraft.

6. Others: That an efficient type of soil conditioner be placed on sandy areas used for helicopter parking so as to increase main rotor, tail

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