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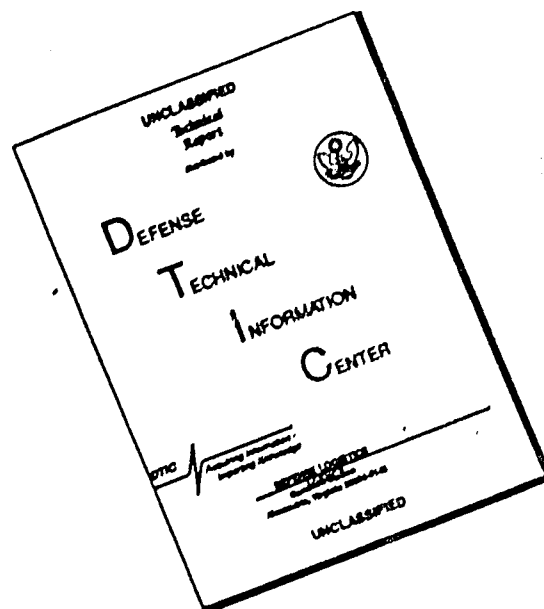
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HQDA Ltr 525-74-12

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
OFFICE OF THE ADJUTANT GENERAL
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20310

DAAG-PAP-A (M) (26 Feb 74) DAMO-ODU

12 March 1974

Expires 12 March 1975

SUBJECT: Operational Report - Lessons Learned, 13th Combat
Aviation Battalion, Period Ending 31 October 1971 (U)

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1. The attached report is forwarded for review and evaluation in accordance with para 4b, AR 525-15.
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Verne L. Bowers
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DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
HEADQUARTERS, 13TH COMBAT AVIATION BATTALION
APO San Francisco 96215

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10 November 1971

SUBJECT: Operational Report - Lessons Learned of the 13th Combat Aviation
Battalion for the Period Ending 31 October 1971

2. (C) Section 2, Lessons Learned: Commander's Observation, Evaluation,
Recommendations and Command Action:

a. Personnel:

(1) Observation: During the initial phase of the 18th Aviation
Company's (Corps) activation it experienced difficulty in obtaining
enough experienced and qualified personnel to perform its mission.

(2) Evaluation: This was caused by the fact that very few
replacements were being received by the 164th Combat Aviation Group.

(3) Recommendation: In the future, when possible, a greater degree
of emphasis should be placed on determining available assets to fulfill
needed requirements prior to activating a new unit.

(4) Command Action: Not Applicable.

b. Intelligence: None

c. Operations:

(1) Identification of LOH's during VR.

(a) Observation: Often it is difficult during a VR to immediately
identify which LOH, i.e. lead or wing, is taking fire.

(b) Evaluation: Once the VR has started, the two LOH's sometimes
set up a race track pattern to cover the area. During this situation it
is difficult to tell which ship is lead or wing.

(c) Recommendations: None

(d) Command Action: This unit has initiated action to have the
horizontal stabilizer marked with paint to enable the Command and
Control ship and/or the gunships to readily and positively identify the
LOH that is taking fire by his call sign and the mark on the horizontal
stabilizer.

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Aviation Battalion for the Period Ending 31 October 1971

(2) CH-47 Ramp Check.

(a) Observation: Presently the unit's standing operating procedures concerning the CH-47C helicopter provide for the flight engineer performing ramp checks on take off along with the copilot performing engine oil temperature and pressure checks.

(b) Evaluation: Although ramp checks should be made as soon as possible to determine the operational readiness status in these areas, consideration must be given to the hazardous situation resulting from the flight engineer performing ramp checks during take off while the aircraft is in a tilted altitude as well as the danger of the copilot diverting his attention from looking for other aircraft while monitoring the engine instruments during take-off.

(c) Recommendation: The flight engineer and copilot should not perform ramp checks and engine oil temperature and pressure checks respectively, during take-off.

(d) Command Action: It has been established and incorporated in the unit SOP that the flight engineer make his ramp checks after the aircraft has been established in straight and level flight and that the flight engineer wear the safety harness during the checks. The copilot will make his engine oil temperature and pressure checks after the aircraft has departed the airfield or stagefield traffic pattern.

(3) CH-47 Sling Loads

(a) Observation: As the U Minh fortification project intensified, the number of pierced steel planking, (PSP), loads carried rose significantly. The normal airspeed for an external load is 80-90 knots, however, with PSP the airspeed was reduced to the 10-20 knot range. Perhaps even more critical was the characteristic spin of PSP. Eventually this spin deteriorates the straps and results in a dropped load.

(b) Evaluation: Many problems developed. The enroute time doubled, particularly catastrophic when the mission required gunship escort. It became increasingly difficult to estimate blade time requirements and consequently many tactical moves were misplanned and sometimes resulted in tactical emergencies or blade time extensions and an increased percentage were dropped.

(c) Recommendation: It was determined that the aerodynamic instability of PSP could be eliminated by the attachment of a segment of rope and a sandbag to one end of the PSP. This affects stabilization much like a dragchute. Recommend that this method of stabilization be added to the training curriculum of our rigging schools.

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(d) Command Action: Supported units were instructed on the method of rigging PSP loads.

(4) Augmentation of the Infant Package.

(a) Observation: A single UH-1MF, (UH-1M gunship with the Infant night surveillance equipment), often did not have enough time on station or ordnance on board to successfully engage a lucrative target or target area.

(b) Evaluation: By augmenting the Infant Package with two UH-1M gunships and an additional UH-1MF, a lucrative target could be engaged by one fire team, (a UH-1M and a UH-1MF), as the other team refuels and rearms.

(c) Recommendation: The Infant Package be augmented with two UH-1M gunships and an additional UH-1MF when assigned to operate in an area of heavy enemy activity.

(d) Command Action: The above recommendation was implemented with success during operations when heavy enemy activity was encountered or anticipated.

d. (U) Organization:

(1) Maintenance: Inadequate TOE and Administrative Structure.

(a) Observation: The maintenance section of a Chinook company encompasses nearly 2/3rds of the unit strength, and by necessity, needs a command structure similar to that utilized at a company level. In a combat environment the maintenance officer is frequently in the field and unable to supervise the maintenance being performed at the unit.

(b) Evaluation: Through experimentation, the 271st ASHC found that a command block utilizing both an officer and a NCO provided the best results, allowing the maintenance officer to preserve the delicate perspective between administrative paperwork and personnel supervision. If organized under the TOW umbrella, this perspective would vanish due to the high volume of paperwork.

(c) Recommendation: The TOE structure for a Chinook maintenance department to be altered to subordinate the systems repair platoon to the service platoon commander. This would insure a division of labor and permit the maintenance officer to have adequate supervision even in his absence.

(d) Command Action: Above recommendation was submitted in the last MTOE.

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e. (U) Training: None

f. (U) Logistics:

(1) Activation of 18th Aviation Company (Corps):

(a) Observation: When the company was initially activated under the provisional MTOE, the company was supposedly authorized to requisition necessary supplies and equipment. However, in reality the only manner in which the company could receive required equipment was to have it laterally transferred from other organizations.

(b) Evaluation: This procedure proved to be very hindersome and time consuming in the respect that it was very difficult to acquire many mission essential items.

(c) Recommendations: Priorities and supply procedures should be firmly established prior to unit activation.

(d) Command Action: Not Applicable.

(2) Deactivation of units.

(a) Observation: Units selected for standdown and deactivation often had difficulty with property accountability and excess equipment.

(b) Evaluation: The unit's tenure in Vietnam resulted in moving from one location to another, and placing primary emphasis on its combat mission. Equipment was lost or destroyed through combat damage and normal operations. The overall result was during the short period of time in which a unit was allowed to effect deactivation, many problems were encountered in accounting for and turning in equipment.

(c) Recommendation: More emphasis be placed by commanders at all levels on property accountability and turn in of excess equipment.

(d) Command Action: This battalion has initiated a vigorous inventory system and property accountability program and is continuously turning in non-essential and excess equipment.

g. Communications: None

h. Material:

(1) Protection for OH-6A crewmember:

(a) Observation: The majority of enemy hits the OH-6A received in this unit while conducting a VR were in the AFT cabin area.

(b) Evaluation: The crewmember in the OH-6A during VR's sits in the right rear seat in order to effectively engage the enemy with his M-60

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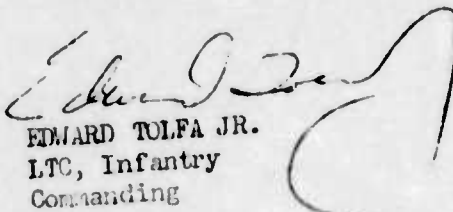
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and have easy access to grenades and smoke which are carried in the left side of the back seat. The back portion of this seat has no armor protection.

(c) Recommendation: That a modification be made to the OH-6A to incorporate an armor protected right rear seat.

(d) Command Action: This unit has used, when available, a discarded armor plate from a CH-47 SCAS closet as the back portion of the right rear seat. This affords protection to the immediate rear, but none to either side.


EDWARD TOLFA JR.
LTC, Infantry
Commanding

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