

IS THE AIR CAVALRY TRAINING FOR THE RIGHT MISSIONS?  
THE 1ST SQUADRON, 9TH CAVALRY, 1ST AIR CAVALRY DIVISION  
REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM - 1965 TO 1966

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MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE

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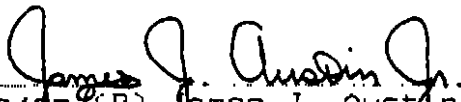
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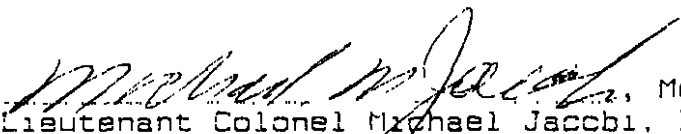
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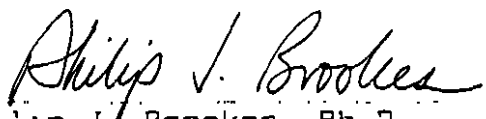
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## ABSTRACT

IS THE AIR CAVALRY TRAINING FOR THE RIGHT MISSION? THE 1ST SQUADRON, 9TH CAVALRY, 1ST AIR CAVALRY DIVISION--REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM - 1965 TO 1966, By Major William L. Driver, USA, 173 pages.

The purpose of this study is to determine whether a disparity exists between the doctrinal missions an air cavalry unit trains for in peacetime and the missions it actually performs in combat.

The study presents an overview of what cavalry missions have been historically, as well as the Army's doctrinal definition of what the cavalry mission was in the 1960s. This study also presents the actual missions of an air cavalry squadron as performed in combat.

This study examines the U.S. Army's doctrinal definitions of the air cavalry mission during the 1960s and then compared this definition to the missions which were performed by the 1st Squadron, 9th Cavalry in the Republic of Vietnam.

Research confirms that a disparity did exist between the doctrinal missions and the mission which were performed in combat. Investigation also shows that the cavalry doctrine of the 1960s lacked an applicability to air cavalry units, because the doctrine was almost exclusively based on ground cavalry units. As a result, when the 1st Squadron, 9th Cavalry was deployed into combat it established its own doctrinal employment procedures.

This study concludes that in Vietnam the Army structured most of its combat operations around the limitations of available helicopters rather than on the enemy threat. As a result, the Army began to use the 1st Squadron, 9th Cavalry as just another aviation unit rather than as a cavalry squadron. This thought impacts on today's employment techniques of air cavalry units.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### THE PROBLEM

I would be willing to trade one or two infantry battalions for an additional air cavalry squadron.

Major General Thomas M. Tarpley [1]

The purpose of this thesis is to determine, through an historical example, if at the tactical level of war there exists a disparity between the doctrinal missions an air cavalry unit trains for in peacetime and those missions the unit will actually conduct in combat.

The citizens of the United States of America expect our military force to be prepared to fight and win when needed. To win on tomorrow's battlefields, air cavalry leadership must fully understand its expected missions so that it may balance limited resources available with the correct mixture of training efforts. Only through a thorough understanding of combat missions can air cavalry units approach the state of readiness which will allow successful deployment onto the battlefield of tomorrow.

There is an increasing awareness in the officer corps of the importance of studying military history. The reasons are many, but two are of particular importance. First, there is the necessity for professional military officers to glean whatever lessons are available from the past so they can better prepare to analyze and meet the challenges on future battlefields. Second, there is the eagerness to ensure that AirLand Battle doctrine builds on and takes advantage of the experiences of the military community in past conflicts.

Achieving the basic tenets of AirLand Battle doctrine is critical to the commander's success on the battlefield. The commander can assure success by maintaining his ability to use full flexibility, creating opportunities to fight by capitalizing on enemy vulnerabilities, and by knowing the enemy's center(s) of gravity. Therefore, commanders must ensure they have total access to information about the enemy from solid, reliable human intelligence.

## BACKGROUND

### General

The military community is increasingly aware of the importance of reconnaissance to successful tactical situations. The only historical example in which helicopter units were organized solely for reconnaissance missions,



occurred during the conflict in the Republic of Vietnam. Some military personnel may contend that the Grenada operation, code-named "Urgent Fury," also contained combat air cavalry operations. Air cavalry operations did occur during "Urgent Fury"; however, none of them can be classified as combat reconnaissance and security missions. The 1st Squadron, 17th Cavalry, 82d Airborne Division, arrived on the island of Grenada only after fighting had ended and never fired a bullet or rocket in anger. Therefore, combat examples of air cavalry operations are found only within the history of U.S. Army operations in the Republic of Vietnam.

Although there are many examples of fine air cavalry operations, I will only use the arrival of the 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile) into the Republic of Vietnam to compare the peacetime doctrinally defined air cavalry missions of the 1960s to the missions actually performed by the 1st Cavalry Division's air cavalry squadron in the Republic of Vietnam.

No literature currently exists which analyzes the training of the air cavalry before it entered combat in the Republic of Vietnam.

#### Air Cavalry Historical Development

Major General A.D. Surles, Jr., Commander, U.S. Army Armor School, in an article for the U.S. Army Aviation Digest

in June 1967, wrote about the use of aviation in the air cavalry mode. [2] In this article, one can see the early thought about developing and testing reconnaissance-capable helicopters in support of reconnaissance missions.

A "Sky Cav" platoon was formed in 1955 and tested through 1957. [3] This unit showed the feasibility of integrating Army aviation elements with the new concept called "aerial reconnaissance by fire." [4] This concept continued through 1959 with further study by both the Armor School and the Aviation School and was tested by the Infantry School at Fort Benning, Georgia. These studies led to the formation of a "Sky Cav" company at Fort Knox, Kentucky. [5]

In mid-1959, the provisional unit was designated the Aerial Combat Reconnaissance/Security Troop. [6] This concept was fully realized in 1962 when an air cavalry troop was organized organic to the 2d Infantry Division. With the reorganization of the Army under the new "Reorganization Objectives Army Division (ROAD) Concept, the U.S. Army had entered into a new age--the age of air cavalry reconnaissance.

Although many influential military officers openly opposed further development of the helicopter, Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara directed the Army to explore "...further [the] application of air vehicles to land warfare." [7] In April 1962, the Department of Defense directed the formation of the U.S. Army Tactical Mobility

Board. This board, commonly called the "Howze Board" after its president, General Hamilton H. Howze, was

to evaluate land warfare mobility with the view of substituting [an] airmobile system for [a] traditional ground system, wherever it would improve [the Army's combat] capabilities and effectiveness. [8]

Following many months of study and field testing, the Howze Board recommended that the Army adopt three types of Army airmobility concepts: the air assault division, the air transport brigade, and the air cavalry brigade. To test the first two of these organizations, the 11th Air Assault Division and the 10th Transport Brigade were organized and tested at Fort Benning and in the Carolinas. [9] The formation of the 11th Air Assault Division had far-reaching effects; it replaced 1,900 ground vehicles organic to a ROAD division with 459 aircraft. [10] The culmination of this testing resulted in the activation of the 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile) in July 1965. It was deployed to Vietnam in August of the same year.

Minor changes in the Howze Board recommendations for reconnaissance helicopters were incorporated into the approved tables of organization and equipment (TOE) for the 1st Cavalry Division. The air cavalry squadron assigned to the 1st Cavalry Division was designated the 1st Squadron, 9th Cavalry. This air cavalry squadron proved to be the key element in the many successes of the 1st Cavalry Division during its tour in the Republic of Vietnam.

## Air Cavalry Mission

In June 1965, the mission of the 3rd Squadron, 17th Cavalry, 11th Air Assault Division (soon to be the 1st Squadron, 9th Cavalry), was to perform reconnaissance and security operations for the division; to provide security for the unit to which it was assigned or attached; and to engage in offensive, defensive, and retrograde operations as an economy-of-force unit. The squadron was also to provide a limited air and ground antitank capability to the division. [11] As these operations pertain to air cavalry units, they could be appropriately labeled reconnaissance, surveillance, and economy-of-force operations. The employment of the air cavalry units for such operations provided the higher commander the capability to concentrate efforts on more important objectives or aspects of the mission. [12]

## Air Cavalry Employment

Air cavalry deployed to Vietnam trained to execute aerial and ground reconnaissance, including conducting route, zone, and area reconnaissance operations in one of three types of conflicts: general war, limited war, or cold war. [13] Air cavalry was also trained to conduct screen

missions, normally with a ground force, but the cavalry could also conduct this mission independently. However, the available literature did not mention how this task was to be completed in a tactical environment in concert with the ground maneuver commander.

### Conclusion

Senior army leadership during the early 1960s demonstrated a keen sense of vision. They pushed Army leaders from a strict ground maneuver warfare vision into the new, forward-looking capabilities of 20th Century technological warfare. But, the question still remains, did the understanding of the doctrinal air cavalry missions by the commander of the 1st Squadron, 9th Cavalry, allow him to train his unit for the missions they would be asked to do in the Republic of Vietnam?

### PROBLEM STATEMENT

Air cavalry units (normally assigned to U.S. Army Divisions) have a short but colorful history. During the Vietnam conflict, air cavalry proved itself a proud member of the combined arms team. This tradition continues. However, since the Vietnam conflict, development of sound doctrinal and tactical applications of air cavalry seems to have lost

its emphasis. This thesis states the problem that, based on historical documentation, no U.S. Army tactical manuals address realistic mission statements of what air cavalry will be expected to do.

America's most recent tactical operation, "Urgent Fury" (Grenada), illustrates several problems in current air cavalry employment doctrine. These problems were addressed in many after-action accounts. One of these problem areas, with application to this thesis, was the mission allocation to the air cavalry.

Current air cavalry doctrine, as stated in the Army field publications listed below, does not clearly address mission profiles which can be expected on future potential battlefields. The current Field Manual (FM) 17-95, Cavalry Operations, does not address any tactical aviation mission other than in a broad sense. This FM primarily addresses the cavalry's ground component. Field Circular (FC) 1-114, Regimental Combat Aviation Squadron, and FC 1-116, Air Cavalry Troop, address missions only in ground cavalry terms and do not address several possible air cavalry missions.

Commanders must fully use air cavalry capabilities while ensuring they have a reasonable chance of returning to fight another day. This thesis answers the question: Does current cavalry doctrine provide air cavalry units with adequate focus to train for the first battle?

## Thesis Hypothesis

The thesis hypothesis is that, at the tactical level of war, there exists a disparity between the doctrinal missions an air cavalry unit trains for in peacetime and those missions that the unit will actually conduct in combat.

U.S. Army air cavalry units have been deployed into combat environments without adequate mission focus in which to orient their training. Air cavalry units arrived in combat unprepared to properly conduct operations. In Grenada this was caused by a direct lack of definition in the Army's current field manuals, by Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) supplying little or no training to leaders on proper utilization of air cavalry in battle, and by those senior commanders responsible for employment of the air cavalry units not ensuring that those subordinate units fully understood what missions would be performed.

There are two aims in this research project. First, to determine if the first air cavalry unit to be committed to combat during the Vietnam conflict sufficiently understood the U.S. Army air cavalry doctrine before conducting combat operations, and, second, to determine if that doctrine was applied during actual combat operations.

## Significance of the Thesis

As has been taught at the U.S. Command and General Staff Collage, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, the Soviets are sincere in their intentions to control as many countries as possible without directly confronting the United States and NATO. To counter this threat, air cavalry units must be prepared to deploy and conduct their missions at any time and anywhere in the world.

To best complete this goal, emphasis must be placed on understanding air cavalry missions. Because missions are given to air cavalry units by headquarters above the squadron, it follows that it would be of grave importance that our leaders fully understand past lessons. This does not mean simply taking the lessons learned and blindly applying them to ensure they fit future battles. Not all conflicts will lend themselves to application of all lessons learned.

Understanding the definition of the air cavalry mission in the execution of AirLand Battle doctrine is fundamental in confirming the significance of the intelligence preparation of the battlefield process. The bases of success can be directly measured by both the accuracy and amount of intelligence the maneuver unit receives.



At the tactical level of war, divisions, battalions, and companies conduct sustained operations to defeat an enemy force in a specified space and time with simultaneous and sequential battles. The disposition of forces, selection of goals, and action taken to weaken and out-manuever the enemy to exploit tactical gain are all linked to understanding the definition of the mission. However, there is a gap between the doctrinal definition of missions and the actual combat missions performed.

Tactical mobility of air cavalry is greater than any other asset in the division or corps and, today, exceeds the mobility of Vietnam-era air cavalry. The U.S. Army's current helicopter reconnaissance aircraft are the Cobra gunship (AH-1S) and the light observation helicopter (OH-58). These aircraft provide exceptional mobility.

While current air cavalry aircraft are superior to the Vietnam-era aircraft in speed, endurance, ordnance, and survivability, assigned missions are often still not well defined. The direct result is a ground-manuever commander who becomes frustrated and impatient with air cavalry support. Military operations will suffer from definition problems if commanders and their staffs do not fully understand the mission capabilities of assigned air cavalry units.

## Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

### Assumptions

Several assumptions must be made before examining air cavalry missions. First, the enemy which U.S. forces will meet in many of its contingency operations is fundamentally little changed from that of the Vietnamese. Air defense systems used by the North Vietnamese in 1969 were conventional and comprised little threat. This has not changed. But neither have sight systems and weapon ranges changed much on the helicopter which is to be used in the air cavalry role--nor has weapon lethality.

As a side note, it would be prudent to assume that many of the lessons our forces learned in Vietnam the Soviets are currently learning in Afghanistan.

### Limitations

Historical research is always limited by the availability and accuracy of information. Historical information in this thesis was limited primarily to the combat reports and records available in the Combined Arms Research Library (CARL) at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. Most of the reports, as well as the after-action reports,

were written soon after the end of the actual events; therefore, they should be accurate.

#### Delimitations

Because of the time constraint and availability of data, research was limited primarily to information located in the CARL. The research was also limited because a comprehensive view of the day-to-day missions and lessons learned by the operational pilots of the 1st Cavalry Division were never completely documented.

The Vietnam lessons learned were limited to the time frame from 1965 to 1966, which covers the initial train-up, deployment, and commitment of the 1st Cavalry Division to combat. That first year, I feel, was critical in determining if the doctrinal, peacetime training in Georgia and the Carolinas helped this division prepare for combat.

This thesis will not address the issue of air-to-air missions. Nor will it address the problems associated with joint or combined operations. Nonetheless, lessons learned from an analysis of air cavalry operations in the Vietnam conflict are important. This research will increase awareness and knowledge in the important area of air cavalry missions development and definitions.

## DEFINITIONS OF TERMS

Appendix A contains definitions for standard cavalry operational terms not supplied in the text.

## ORGANIZATION AND METHODOLOGY

For this thesis, I gathered all available material on the historical background applicable to Air Cavalry missions. I then molded this information into a usable format.

This thesis considers the deployment and the first year in Vietnam of the first air cavalry reconnaissance missions. It presents a departure point for further understanding of cavalry missions by the new generation of air cavalrymen.

This thesis analyzes the type of missions allocated to America's first air cavalry unit deployed into Vietnam. It also compares mission statements and the lessons learned in Vietnam. I did this by researching unit after-action reports, accounts of combat actions from professional magazines, and wartime observations by key American leaders during the Vietnam conflict. My goal was to arrive at an operational procedure common to the Vietnam conflict and then compare it to the doctrine of the day. Operational procedures were drawn from strictly unclassified accounts of the Vietnam experience.

This thesis is organized into five chapters. Two chapters contain the introduction and the review of literature. One factual chapter contains the description of the cavalry and the air cavalry mission. One chapter contains a review of the first introduction of an air cavalry unit into combat during several operations. The final chapter analyzes the preparation of the 1st Cavalry Division's air cavalry squadron versus its introduction into combat. This is then compared to the squadron's peacetime training preparation. This final chapter also contains the conclusions that were formulated from the previous chapters and provides recommendations to apply to air cavalry training programs.

## ENDNOTES

1. Headquarters, 101st Airborne Division (Airmobile), Airmobile Operations in Support of Operations Lam Son 719 (1971): 14.
2. Major General A.D. Surles, Jr., Commander, U.S. Armor School, Army Aviation Digest (1967).
3. LTG (Ret) John J. Tolson, Airmobility in Vietnam (1981): 6.
4. Ibid.: 6.
5. LTC George R. Strudeman, Air Cavalry in Perspective: Before the Helicopter a Tank, Before the Tank a Horse, Before the Horse a Chariot (1970): 17.
6. Ibid.: 18.
7. Tolson, Airmobility in Vietnam: 6.
8. Ibid.: 51-52.
9. Strudeman, Air Cavalry in Perspective: 18.
10. Ibid.: 18.
11. U.S. Army. Tactical Reference Handbook, 3rd Squadron, 17th Cavalry (1965): 1.
12. U.S. Army. Training Text 17-37-1, Air Cavalry Squadron (1967): 7.
13. U.S. Army. FM 17-95, The Armored Cavalry Regiment (1960): 5.

## CHAPTER 2

### SURVEY OF LITERATURE

#### GENERAL

This thesis is intended as an historical review of air cavalry missions conducted in Vietnam from 1965 to 1966. Additionally, it is designed to review other researchers' efforts in the area of air cavalry missions to discover the lessons learned and apply them to this analysis.

My information search for this thesis was guided only toward locating historical documentation of air cavalry units, placing emphasis on locating lessons learned from actual combat operations within the Republic of Vietnam. This material was required to establish criteria for air cavalry missions.

The material available for my historical research was plentiful. I reviewed both air cavalry and cavalry literature. However, information about the analysis of types of unit combat missions has been difficult to ascertain, because most units simply did not document or analyze the types of missions conducted prior to, or during, their combat tour within the Republic of Vietnam.

I began this thesis with a dedicated effort to locate all material written about the use of air cavalry during the Vietnam conflict. I then further narrowed this thesis to allow only review of information which applied to air cavalry missions in the Republic of Vietnam from 1965 to 1966.

This valuable information included after-action reports from division headquarters, research papers published by professional military schools (e.g., War College, Command and General Staff College), Vietnam historical after-action reports, personal articles written of the Vietnam experience, order-of-battle studies on Vietnam, unit handbooks concerning operating procedures, U.S. Army field circulars, and a number of articles, reports, and various aviation- and defense-oriented periodicals from Armor magazine and Army Aviation Digest.

My research effort was based primarily on the official records and reports of U.S. Army combat units and a thesis produced by a past MMAS candidate. All sources are available in the CARL, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas.

The research documents fit into the following categories: books, government publications, periodicals and articles, and unpublished thesis and papers. Several sources contained useful data for more than one category and I used them to support factual and analytical passages throughout the thesis. I briefly reviewed the most significant



documents under the category in which they individually contributed the most material.

I also used several secondary sources to conduct this research. Unit after-action accounts and biographies published after the conflict provided good background information and usually contained detailed descriptions of air cavalry operations.

I reviewed no classified resources. From the start, I decided that this thesis should be unclassified so it could benefit from the widest possible dissemination. I felt it imperative that the conclusions of this thesis be widely disseminated in order to foster professional discussions.

#### Books

I found three books that provide more information concerning the operational mission analysis of this thesis than any others. The first book, exceptionally helpful in pursuing military problems at the operational level of war, is The 25th Year War: America's Military Role in Vietnam, by General Bruce Palmer, Jr. (1984). Because General Palmer was personally involved in most operational decisions, he provides valuable insight into the interservice rivalries concerning the birth of Army aviation. General Palmer's personal insight into the conduct of the Ia Drang operation provides particularly useful information.

The second book, LTJG (Ret) John J. Tolson's, Airmobility in Vietnam, provides an excellent discussion of the U.S. Army's role in the build-up and use of its helicopter force. General Tolson's book provides numerous details concerning air cavalry operations and equipment. It also gives a well-written account of the Ia Drang Valley operation.

The last book, and one of the most important as a secondary reference on the Ia Drang Valley operation, is Charles E. Heller and William A. Stofft's book, America's First Battles 1776-1965. This account of the Ia Drang Valley operation is well researched and documented and provides an excellent overall view of the operation. Its failing is that it does not provide good maps.

#### Government Publications

Informative sources in this category include troop, squadron, division, corps, and army group after-action reports and periodic reports. All of these sources are available at the CARL. Some sources, of course, provide more detailed information than others.

The Final Report of the Howze Board is a very good overview of why the air cavalry was formed and how it was organized. The report also provides copies of the original requests from the Secretary of Defense to the board.

To get a well-rounded view of the development of the air cavalry mission, the first source must be Committee I's Final Report. This report is, in fact, the committee's working papers and is four inches thick. The report provides a detailed look at the committee's thought processes as well as the conclusions at which it arrived.

Air Cavalry Operations in the Delta, from the 1st Aviation Brigade, reflects lessons derived from operational reports of combat air cavalry squadrons. I found that this document is useful not only for this thesis topic but also as a professional development tool in the area of air operations.

Troop B, 7th Squadron, 17th Cavalry's, Historical Entry is a well-documented analysis of the difficult challenges involved in supporting ground units. This account provides insight into the potential frustrations associated with supporting missions when separated from the parent unit.

Although not addressed in this thesis, LAM SON 719 provides valuable insight into the difficulties of planning and executing air cavalry operations in support of a large force. The best primary sources for determining types of missions performed by air cavalry during LAM SON 719 were: 2nd Squadron, 17th Cavalry, Operational Report - Lessons Learned, Period Ending 31 March 1971; 101st Airborne Division (Airmobile), 30 March 1971, Airmobile Operations in Support of Operation Lam Son 719; and XXIV Corps Aviation Officer,

Fact Sheets prepared for LTG Sutherland, concerning Operation LAM SON 719.

Analysis of air cavalry mission definitions was best expressed in several sources. Among them, a handout entitled 3rd Squadron, 17th Air Cavalry: Resources & Employment provides an excellent guide to exactly what the title suggests. Other sources include Troop A, 2nd Squadron, 17th Cavalry, Feeder After-Action Report Covering the Period 1 December 1970 to 31 December 1970, Operation Jefferson Glenn; LTC Carl M. Putnam's 1st Squadron, 9th Cavalry, Operational Report as Commander of the 1/9th Cavalry (1971); FM 17-36, Divisional Armored and Air Cavalry Units (1965); and the 1st Aviation Brigade's Aviation Operational Procedures Guide (1969).

The official accounts of the 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile) during its first year in Vietnam are contained in six files in the CARL. The best, for researching the Ia Drang Valley operation, is the 1st Cavalry Division's Combat Operations After-Action Report, PLEIKU CAMPAIGN, 23 Oct-26 Nov 1965. This document contains clear, concise maps as well as daily accounts of the operations. It is a well-documented paper. I used the other five documents to provide insight into the refinement of the air cavalry mission. All contain maps and pertinent facts relevant to the history of the initial year of air cavalry operations as part of American effort in the conflict.

### Periodicals and Articles

I used several good single-source documents to review the broader historical perspective of air cavalry operations in Vietnam. There are several articles concerning personal accounts of the helicopter war in Vietnam which were of great benefit. Among these are John A. Cash's Seven Firefights in Vietnam, from the Office of the Chief of Military History. Although not directly linked to air cavalry operations, this article provides a glimpse into what it must have been like for helicopter gunship pilots and their leaders while performing daily short-notice, on-call missions.

Ample information is available in the CARL about LAM SON 719 operations to provide professional insight into the missions experienced by air cavalry. Some of the most useful sources concerning this operation are Captain Jim E. Fulbrook's three-part essay in Aviation Digest, which provides many fine facts concerning the operation; and two Newsweek articles titled "Indochina: A Cavalryman's Way Out" and "Indochina: The Soft-Sell Invasion."

One of the best articles providing insight into cavalry mission definitions is, "The Cavalry-Air Cavalry Team," by CPT Charles W. Donaldson, in Armor magazine. It provides an evaluation of the Cavalry's air/ground team. This article describes the organization of the two types of cavalry units, the problems of attaching air cavalry to a ground unit unable to exploit this type of operation, the

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problems associated with the complexities of air cavalry communications, and, finally, the lack of understanding of the air cavalry mission, which the author states was prevalent among ground commanders. Donaldson ends his article by sharing his ideas concerning methods of using air cavalry; he uses a combat operation in Vietnam to illustrate his point.

"The Air Cavalry Troop," by Major Richard V. Doty, in Armor magazine, provides a well-written outline of the capabilities surrounding employment of an air cavalry troop. He also outlines some of the concerns air cavalry commanders had with nonair-cavalry qualified commanders. Doty also provides thought-provoking views about the benefits of night reconnaissance operations outweighing daytime reconnaissance, how to employ the troop's aircraft on missions, and how a reaction force from the supported ground unit is essential to the reconnaissance effort and possible contact with an enemy force. He concludes with views concerning the need for planning for relief-on-station of the troop's aircraft.

"Air Cavalry in Battle: A New Concept in Action," by Major Thomas H. Harvey, Jr., in Armor magazine, describes an air cavalry operation using a case study of the Dam Trao Lake battle. His article walks the reader through each step in the air cavalry mission.

LTC Robert H. Nevins, Jr.'s article, "Air Cavalry Find and Fix Operations," in Armor magazine, deals with a larger

perspective than Maj. Harvey's article. LTC Nevins was the squadron commander during the Dam Trao Lake action.

"Air Cavalry Rides High," by LTC Benny E. Edney, in Armor magazine, discusses air cavalry missions and the missions of each platoon within the troop. He also gives insight into some of the special missions assigned to the cavalry during his tour with the unit.

"Cavalry Air and Ground Reconnaissance," by Major Cecil L. Shrader, in Armor magazine, concerns a typical air cavalry troop operation in South Vietnam and highlights some major techniques that were followed there.

Colonel George S. Patton III's article, "Pile On," in Armor magazine, describes the requirements he placed on his air cavalry units and his views on how they performed.

LTC Robert W. Mills' article, "Operation BLACKHAWK," also in Armor magazine, provides an excellent insight into that operation. LTC Mills was the former commander of 7th Squadron, 1st Air Cavalry, during operation BLACKHAWK. His unit operated within the 44th Special Tactical Zone in Vietnam's delta region. This article provides information on air cavalry reconnaissance, first-light/last-light missions, night operations, types of ordnance used, and weather effects.

Alexander S. Cochran in his article, "First Strike at River Drang," in Military History magazine, complements LTG Harry W.O. Kinnard's 1967 article, "A Victory in the

Ia Drang: The Triumph of a Concept," in Army magazine. These articles describe the initial actions of the 1st Cavalry Division in Vietnam and provide the reflections of LTG Harry W.D. Kinnard, the former division commander.

### Theses and Papers

I used four sources during this research--two Command and General Staff College MMAS theses, a research paper written as a requirement for the individual research elective for the Command and General Staff College, and a student research paper for the Air Force Air War College.

"Attack Helicopter Employment Options," by Major Michael L. Brittingham, has been the only MMAS thesis completed concerning Army aviation mission analysis. In his thesis, Maj. Brittingham examines the present capabilities of the attack helicopter to operate effectively in a battlefield environment protected by a sophisticated air defense system. He also proposes that the Army's organizational basis for attack helicopter doctrine and tactics are both inadequate and lack unity.

Major Virgil L. Packett's thesis concerning Airmechanization: The Direction and Dynamics of Army Aviation from a Combined Arms Perspective, addresses key challenges that confront Army Aviation during the formulation of the helicopter into a partner on the combined arms team.



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Student research papers include Air Cavalry in Perspective, which examines the role of air cavalry and makes an historical survey of the armored air cavalry's growth; and Air Cavalry of the Future, which recounts the experiences of Col. George W. Shallcross in Vietnam and relates the evolution of night-vision capabilities. Col. Shallcross's paper is somewhat disappointing. Rather than recounting detailed combat lessons learned, he relates tales of fading visions and distant dreams.

## CHAPTER 3

### CAVALRY MISSION DEVELOPMENT

The cavalry soldier is destined to work over a large tract of country, and ride to any spot he can see in the distance....

Lieutenant-Colonel Bonie  
Eleventh Dragoons  
French Cavalry, 1870

#### Introduction

Cavalry missions, as allocated to air cavalry units in the Republic of Vietnam, can be linked not only to America's historical uses of cavalry but also to the European belief relating to the employment of cavalry. Therefore, we must understand how the development of cavalry missions has been affected by hundreds of years of history and many great military thinkers, such as Machiavelli, Gustavus Adolphus, and Napoleon. We must be aware of historical tactical practices before we can understand the deployment of America's first air cavalry division to the Vietnam conflict.

An historical survey of western military thought and military campaigns teaches that cavalry missions have changed very little. Historically, such missions have involved raids for supplies, reconnaissance for information, and static observation to provide early warning for a friendly

force. [1] Cavalry was also assigned missions which included overpowering an enemy force by using its inherent shock power--mobility and firearms.

In Machiavelli's view, cavalry was assigned to support and aid the infantry. He thought cavalry was necessary for reconnaissance, conducting raids, harassing enemy camps, keeping the enemy on continual alert, and stopping their convoys.

But in field battles, which commonly decide the fate of nations, and for which armies are chiefly designed, they are fitter to pursue an enemy that is routed and flying than anything else. [2]

Machiavelli believed that cavalry's chief advantage over any other combat arm was mobility.

In the seventeenth century, Gustavus Adolphus, King of Sweden, often used his cavalry as part of a combined arms force. His cavalry applied the shock, his infantry conquered, and his artillery supported his forces. But, Gustavus Adolphus mainly assigned his cavalry security missions. Placing cavalry to protect his flanks contributed to his decisive victory at the battles of Brietenfeld and Lutzen in 1631. In this battle, the enemy force, unable to decisively engage Gustavus's forces from the front, tried to attack repeatedly on the flank, each time without success. This was attributed to the protection afforded by his cavalry. [3]

Napoleon knew well the value of his cavalry forces. He kept his cavalry light and assigned it the missions of covering the movements of his army and searching out and watching the marches and intentions of the enemy. [4] Although Napoleon assigned his cavalry the mission of sweeping the battlefield and devastating the enemy, they were also assigned the primary tasks of reconnaissance, conducting exploitation, and pursuing a fleeing enemy force.

During the Franco-German War of 1870, the French cavalry was placed forward of friendly main elements and assigned the missions of gaining intelligence, interdicting the enemy where possible, and striking "terror into the inhabitants." [5]

Simultaneously, the Germans used their cavalry in a reconnaissance role. They sent scouts to follow French forces and to search the countryside, thereby enabling the main forces to maneuver and to act without hesitation to every opportunity afforded them. [6]

The Germans used a system which stressed having continuous communications maintained with their cavalry; hence, the main body was constantly aware of the French positions. The German cavalry kept a close watch on the French soldiers while ensuring no direct contact. The German cavalry would harass the French forces by continually appearing and then disappearing, only to reappear again.

This was very effective in keeping the French in a constant state of turmoil. [7]

LTC Bonie, a participant in the Franco-German war, observed that each time French forces advanced, they would meet German cavalry. LTC Bonie wrote that he perceived the German cavalry's mission was not to fight, but to watch, and this they carried out to perfection all through the Franco-German campaign. [8]

During this war, the German cavalry was used to reconnoiter, establish contact with the enemy, keep contact with the supported headquarters, and "spread itself like a curtain, behind which the commander...maneuvers his troops and makes necessary disposition for a general action." [9] It was precisely these tactics of placing cavalry forces far in advance, not only to gain contact with the enemy but to ensure that this contact was never lost, which enabled cavalry forces to be most effective.

The Germans had learned the lessons of proper cavalry mission assignment. This guidance, as it relates to the mission of gaining and maintaining contact with the enemy, has remained unchanged. A 1923 School of Cavalry field manual states,

Contact with the enemy, once gained, must be maintained if the fullest fruits of any given reconnaissance are to be realized.... Reconnaissance should be unceasing--relentless! [10]

During the American Civil War, specifically the Gettysburg Campaign, we find the closest American link to today's methods of employing cavalry. The most common employment of cavalry was the mission of obtaining information on the enemy's actions while preventing the enemy cavalry from obtaining any information about the protected unit. [11]

A superb example of cavalry thought during this period is found in an order issued by Major General J.E.B. Stuart to Brigadier General Robertson, one of his cavalry commanders:

...watch the enemy, deceive him as to our designs, and...harass his rear if you find he is tiring. Be always on the alert; let nothing escape your observation, and miss no opportunity which offers to damage the enemy. After the enemy has moved beyond your reach, leave...pickets in the mountains and withdraw...and place a strong picket to watch the enemy.... [Continue to] follow [our] army, keeping on its right and rear. [While] the enemy remains to your front in force,...hold the gaps with a line of pickets. If...you withdraw, sweep the valley clear of what pertains to (our) army.... You will...report anything of importance to Lieutenant-General Longstreet, with whose position you will communicate by relays through Charlestown.... In case of an advance of the enemy you will offer such resistance as will be justifiable

to check him and discover his intentions, and, if possible, you will prevent him from gaining possession of the gaps.... [12]

J.E.B. Stuart fully understood then current cavalry operational doctrine; he set the tone by which his cavalry operated. His application of cavalry can be directly linked to current cavalry missions.

Stuart assigned his cavalry four missions; to screen the entire area of operations in which General Lee's army was operating; to conduct armed reconnaissance, a tactic in which cavalry would avoid battle for the higher mission of information collecting but all the while being totally prepared for a fight; and to conduct the cavalry raid and cavalry ambush. Stuart was well recognized for his exploits into the enemy's territory--gathering information while pursuing and trying to capture the enemy's headquarters. [13]

An example of the importance of tactical information to the maneuver commander was shown when, after Stuart's death, General Lee, while conducting a campaign in Petersburg, Virginia, vented his frustration to his staff. General Lee, while heavily involved in the operation, yelled, "Oh, for an hour of General Stuart! I can do nothing if my young men cannot keep me well informed." [14]

Gathering information about the enemy is the prime role of reconnaissance.

The initiative and resourcefulness of cavalry reconnaissance must exploit every possible source, in the collection of military information; [and] they... must have the facilities to reach the proper authority in time for their information to be of value. [15]

The distribution of this gathered information to the maneuver commander is still the key mission in cavalry reconnaissance. [16]

Seemingly slow in learning lessons from history, the U.S. Army found from the lessons of World War I that the mission of reconnaissance was not to engage the enemy, but to observe him. The Army also found that for cavalry reconnaissance to be effective it needed to cover wider areas. This compounded the command and control problems for the Army's leadership, as the control of forces spread over vast distances became more and more difficult. [17]

America and its European allies had experienced the rigors of modern combat and, more than ever before, found that the timely procurement of pertinent information was an essential weapon against the new-found mobility available to mechanized forces.

Doctrinal planners tried not to overburden cavalry by simultaneously assigning mutually exclusive missions. Planners learned that the mission assigned must be both clear and doctrinally sound. Major General Sir Edmund Ironside gives an example of the assignment of mutually exclusive



missions from the Russian cavalry during the East Russian Campaign. He said,

The Russians, in almost every case, hampered their cavalry by giving them a dual role of Reconnaissance and Protection. It cannot be too clearly impressed upon all authorities issuing orders that these two roles are incompatible, since different tactics are needed for their execution. Reconnaissance means dispersion; whereas Protection means concentration of force. [18]

World War II and the Korean conflict have shown the modern battlefield to be not only lethal but highly mobile, thereby creating a need that cavalry was designed to fill. But, since cavalry employment did not change during the Korean conflict when compared to prior employment techniques, I will only review cavalry mission assignments in the European theater of operations. [19] The missions included:

- o Offensive combat, including attack as well as pursuit and exploitation.
- o Defensive combat, including defense, delaying action and holding of key terrain until arrival of main forces.
- o Reconnaissance.

- o Security for other arms, including blocking, moving and stationary screening, protecting flanks, maintaining contact between larger units, and filling gaps.

- o Special operations, including acting as mobile reserve, providing for security and control of rear areas, and operating as an army information service. The accomplishment of reconnaissance missions normally involved offensive combat as frequently as did the accomplishment of security missions.

The missions assigned to cavalry units in the European Theater of Operations, did not, however, follow the precedence a cavalrymen would expect. Cavalry units received the following percentage of missions by type: defensive combat, 33%; special operations, 29%; security, 25%; offensive combat, 10%; and reconnaissance, 3%. [20]

Although these percentages give the impression that the cavalry was misused, their subsequent assignments produced more recognizable cavalry missions; for instance:

- o Dismounted attack of an important terrain feature.
- o Dismounted attack in zone.
- o Seizing and holding a town or communications center.
- o Counter-reconnaissance, screening, and blocking.
- o Filling a gap and maintaining contact between divisions, corps, and armies.
- o Pursuit.
- o Covering force and rear guard.

- o Defense of wide sectors of the Siegfried Line.
- o Reconnaissance in force.
- o Patrolling and mopping-up of an area.
- o Reconnaissance of routes and bridges, including seizing and holding them.
- o Offensive operation in the enemy rear area. [21]

During this period cavalry missions involved the same qualities that have historically belonged to cavalry missions. These characteristics included mobility, unpredictability, fire power, and shock. These characteristics continue to dominate cavalry employment doctrine. The cavalry missions have habitually contained these elements while either conducting its primary missions of information collection or while protecting a military force on the battlefield.

#### Development of Air Cavalry

The Army confined its cavalry mission execution to ground reconnaissance vehicles during both World War II and the Korean war. Until the 1960s, the Army had a ground maneuver-oriented tactical philosophy; this philosophy inhibited the Army's ability to predict the conduct of future land warfare.

During the 1960s, the Army's attention was oriented toward Western Europe, where there existed a special

adversary poised for battle--the Soviets. By 1961 improvements in firepower had outstripped concurrent efforts to improve the cross-country mobility of the combat forces. [22] This arena was the focus for improving the Army's capability for detection and delay of the first echelon of potential enemy forces. The air cavalry regiment was envisioned as the unit responsible for this mission. [23] Concurrently, the need for development of a highly mobile antitank delivery system was identified.

As military leaders surveyed the world situation in the 1960s, they were faced with myriad divergent military options. There was the threat to America's national security from a modern army in Europe; an oriental army in Asia, composed of Chinese communists, Vietnamese Vietminh, North Koreans, and the large insurgent force composed of the Viet Cong; as well as other military threats in Africa, the Middle East, and Latin America. The requirements for airmobility in these areas were viewed as essential for future success. [24]

Military leaders were pressed to develop a military force which could contribute equally well in either limited nuclear confrontations in Europe, where the terrain was urbanized, forested, and mountainous; in jungle environments such as Southeast Asia; or in Africa and the Middle East, where desert and rugged terrain operations would be the norm.

It became apparent that the Army had to be prepared to conduct operations in a variety of terrains under extreme

climactic and physical conditions. The answer to the Army's problem lay in the development of the third dimension of warfare--aerial mobility. General Hamilton H. Howze thought the Army's greatest hope for success appeared to lie in the development of units of highly trained, helicopter-borne infantry, of scout helicopters, and of attack airplanes and helicopters. [25]

The U.S. Army Tactical Mobility Requirements Board

"The Howze Board"

Before 1961, the U.S. Army experience in helicopter use was limited to medical evacuation, as a utility platform for air-lifting South Vietnamese soldiers, and for command and control. The Army was very slow in expanding its view of what the aerial dimension could offer in terms of increased capabilities in reconnaissance, firepower, and lifting capability.

In 1961, Secretary of Defense, Robert S. McNamara, after reviewing the Army's stated requirements for aviation equipment through the 1970s, felt the Army's estimate of its need was far too low. Mr. McNamara foresaw that the future of the Army was to include, to a much greater extent, aviation technology. Because of this, on April 19, 1962, McNamara informed the Army that he was not satisfied with its evaluation of the role and use of aviation and that he felt

the Army had not "fully [explored] the opportunities offered by aeronautical technology [by] making a revolutionary break with traditional surface mobility means." Because of this, he further directed the Army to re-examine with "special attention" six areas of concern. One of these was to examine the question dealing with organizational and operational concepts which were needed to exploit the potential increases in mobility. He directed that consideration to be given to completely air mobile infantry, antitank, reconnaissance, and artillery units. [26]

The result was the formation of the U.S. Army Tactical Mobility Requirements Board, commonly called the Howze Board after Lieutenant General Hamilton H. Howze, the board's president. When the board ended its exhaustive research, it recommended that the Army begin a five-year program that would develop eleven divisions, five air assault divisions, three air cavalry combat brigades, and five air transport brigades, all of which were designed to increase the combat effectiveness of the Army. [27] The board further recommended specific military organizational options for Korea, Hawaii, Germany, and the continental United States.

The board proposed many other recommendations. The one which relates to this study was that for forming the air assault division. This recommendation included the extensive development of both fixed-wing and rotary-wing aircraft. [28]

In 1962, LTIG Howze wrote, "If the mobility does not match the firepower, we cannot properly exploit the effects of enemy firepower on ourselves." [29] In an attempt to break the Army fixation on ground-oriented thinking, LTIG Howze, quoting a German General in his final report, defined mobility as being of,

'quick decisions, quick movements, surprise attacks with concentrated force; to do always what the enemy does not expect, and to constantly change both the means and the methods and to do the most improbable things whenever the situation permits; it means to be free of all set rules and preconceived ideas'.

Still quoting the German General, LTIG Howze went on to say, "'Let us kill stereotyped things, otherwise they will kill us'." [30]

As a direct result of these recommendations and inputs from other Army agencies to the Department of the Army, on January 7, 1963, the Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations issued the plan for testing an air assault division and an air transport brigade. On February 15, 1963, the first cadre was formed for the test division which was called the 11th Air Assault Division (Test). The division was called the 11th after the World War II 11th Airborne Division. [31] The 10th Transportation Brigade was activated during the same month and, once organized, was assigned the mission to

maintain air lines of communications for the 11th Air Assault Division (Test).

Each of these units was formed around a battalion-sized organization. Expansion was to continue during Fiscal Year 1964. The commander of the 11th Air Assault Division (Test), who was to remain in command for 39 months and take this new division to the Republic of Vietnam as the 1st Cavalry Division, was Brigadier General Harry W.D. Kinnard. For a year and a half, this new force trained and exchanged information with the doctrinal concepts proponents at Fort Benning, Georgia; Fort Knox, Kentucky; and the observers and participants from the Southeast Asia conflict.

At the end of the training, the 11th Air Assault Division was tested for four weeks in the Carolinas during Exercise Air Assault II. Using the 82nd Airborne Division as an aggressor force, exercise evaluated the 11th Air Assault Division (Test) during offensive, defensive, and retrograde operations. [32] When Exercise Air Assault II ended, LTJG C.W.G. Rich, who was tasked with the difficult mission of testing the concept and basing his evaluation on scientific principles, recommended that the division, and the 10th Air Transport Brigade, be integrated into the Army's force structure. [33]



## Development of Air Cavalry Doctrine

The doctrine for the employment of the 11th Air Assault Division's air cavalry squadron, was based on the Howze Board's Committee Number I's Final Report. Committee Number I was tasked to review and analyze the traditional roles of mounted combat, reconnaissance, security, and target acquisition, and then determine to what extent the Army's combat effectiveness could be enhanced by including the mobility offered by the air vehicles and the associated air mobility concepts during the 1963-68 period. [34] The study found

that the Army reconnaissance and security units must possess the highest order of mobility and [the military must] provide these units with the best available air and ground mobility means, while retaining the maximum combat capability consistent with the dominant mobility requirement. [35]

The view of Committee I was that the requirement for reconnaissance and security had not changed since the beginning of warfare. They believed that with the introduction of tactical nuclear weapons, the requirement for an increased emphasis on battlefield mobility was important. If this was to be done, according to the findings, it was essential to introduce air vehicles into armored cavalry units. [36]

The committee, headed by Brigadier General F.W. Boye, Jr., was instrumental in developing the foundation of the tactical procedures which America's first air cavalry squadron took into battle in the Republic of Vietnam. Because this committee had such a great effect on doctrine, we must understand the mission and operational concepts of cavalry, as viewed by this committee.

The committee saw the cavalry's mission as having to collect and provide to combat maneuver forces timely information about the enemy and the area of operations. They also envisioned the cavalry doing security missions to either the front, flanks, or rear of a main force to prevent surprise to the maneuver commander by providing enough time in which to react to an enemy threat. They saw the presently organized and equipped armored cavalry units as possessing a marginal capability to provide this timely information. Lastly, the committee believed that effectively using cavalry units would minimize diverting main combat forces from their primary roles. The committee believed that cavalry units, performing in the reconnaissance and security role, were ideally suited for use in economy-of-force missions and, by performing these missions, permitting the maneuver commander to manipulate his principal combat forces to the decisive place at the proper time. [37]

The committee also outlined missions which they believed the air cavalry was able to perform against an

unsophisticated enemy. These missions included:

- o Conducting rapid reconnaissance of large areas normally inaccessible to ground reconnaissance units.

- o Conducting extensive reconnaissance of the brigade area of responsibility, thereby canceling the requirement for using ground troops.

- o Engaging an unsophisticated enemy, when directed to contain and maintain contact, until an airmobile reinforcement force arrived.

- o Guiding an airmobile force to an objective area and providing aerial fires during and after the landing phase.

- o Conducting a route reconnaissance which would include reconnaissance of lateral routes, the terrain next to the route, and to act as an advance guard for ground elements as they moved along a main route.

The committee believed that this type of unit was only capable of conducting limited operations during periods of reduced visibility. However, during such periods the committee envisioned the cavalry troop, or squadron, to be able to reconnoiter major roads and avenues of approach and locate the movement of mechanized enemy forces while elements of the aero-rifle platoon were used to establish listening posts. [38]

Doctrine manuals of the period contained less specific guidance toward the missions cavalry was able to perform. The 1960 version of FM 17-95, The Armored Cavalry Regiment,

contains the doctrinal thought concerning the capabilities of the armored cavalry regiment. The outlined capabilities were:

- o To operate as a light armor task force, without reinforcement, in security and light combat missions.

- o To execute screening and counter-reconnaissance missions.

- o To operate as a highly mobile armor task force when suitably reinforced.

- o To reconnoiter for higher echelon, normally by independent action without reinforcement. [39]

The doctrinal-specific missions that the armored cavalry could expect to do were outlined as follows:

- o Conduct reconnaissance and surveillance over wide fronts and to extended depths.

- o Collect and report information of an intelligence nature, including acquisition of nuclear targets.

- o Conduct chemical-biological-radiological monitoring and survey operations and nuclear damage assessments.

- o Conduct offensive, defensive, and retrograde operations as an economy of force unit.

- o Provide flank protection for or security between major units.

- o Act as a covering force in offensive, defensive, or retrograde operations.

- o Screen the concentration of other forces and subordinate elements.

- Maintain combat liaison.

- o Secure rear areas, lines of communications, and installations from attack by enemy airborne, airmobile, or guerrilla forces.

- o Provide, in emergencies, alternate means of communications for other units. [40]

While the capabilities and missions were general enough to allow a commander maximum flexibility, except in a general sense, aviation was only addressed between explanations of the uses of armor. The aviation elements were to operate from fixed airfields and were broken into two separate units--the aerial surveillance platoon and the transport section. The manual focuses primarily on the fixed-wing aircraft assigned to the regiment and addressed aircraft only as possessing the ability to "provide an extended reconnaissance and security capability" during covering force operations. [41] The manual covers in two sentences how the helicopter was to be used in airmobile patrols. These airmobile patrols were to be transported by the helicopters to locations behind enemy lines during the conduct of a covering force operation. Aviation was covered in light detail for its ability "to provide an auxiliary communication and enable rapid liaison visits between command

[elements]." [42] There is no description of how, when, or where these missions were to be done.

Missions, as defined in the Army manual of 1960 and the Howze Board findings in 1962, are somewhat different in scope. The doctrine of the 1960 manual was oriented toward a philosophy which was influenced by the Army's European threat and ground-oriented mind-set. The doctrine was developed for fighting enemy forces located on easily defined terrain where friendly forces could easily orient. The Howze Board recommendations allowed a broader application of cavalry mission definition philosophy, as the findings were written with both an unsophisticated and sophisticated enemy force in mind.

#### Air Cavalry Mission

The air cavalry's mission was greatly refined during the testing of the 11th Air Assault Division (Test) at Fort Benning, Georgia. By June 1965, the mission of the divisional air cavalry squadron, the 3rd Squadron, 17th Cavalry, was

to perform reconnaissance and security for the Division or its major subordinate combat elements; to engage in combat as an economy of force unit; and to provide a limited air and ground anti-tank capability for the Division. [43]

In this squadron, within the Army's newest combat division, each air cavalry troop of the squadron had the same mission capability at its level as the squadron as a whole. The cavalry troops were thought to be most efficiently used under squadron centralized control, but were capable of independent mission performance while attached to major combat elements of the division. [44] The missions envisioned to be assigned to this air cavalry squadron included the same mission as the troops--reconnaissance, security, and economy-of-force.

In March 1965, the decision was made to integrate the 11th Air Assault Division (Test) into the Army's force structure. On July 1, 1965, the 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile) was officially activated. [45]

With the doctrinal missions outlined in tactical standard operating procedure booklets, divisional tactical operating manuals, and in the Army's field manuals, Major General Kinnard's division was deployed to the Republic of Vietnam. In Vietnam the unit guidon of the 3rd Squadron, 17th Cavalry, would belong to the 12th Aviation Group. How this happened is beyond the scope of this study.

The deployment of the new air cavalry division to the Republic of Vietnam, in the summer of 1965, as the 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile), was a major step for Army aviation. But, and of most importance, had the air cavalry

squadron trained for the missions it would be asked to do in the Republic of Vietnam?

The first operational divisional air cavalry squadron in the Republic was to be the 1st Squadron, 9th Cavalry, of the 1st Cavalry Division. The 1/9th's general mission was to find and fix the enemy forces. The purpose of the mission was to provide the information to the division commander, thereby allowing him time to react in the manner he thought proper. The 1/9th's mission also included conducting reconnaissance in operational areas for proposed future missions, screening ground elements, and conducting reconnaissance of possible enemy-used routes, and regaining contact with the enemy.

Chapter 4 contains my analysis of the missions assigned to the 1/9th Cavalry upon their employment into combat in the Republic of Vietnam, from October 18, 1965, to July 30, 1966. Chapter 4 also contains the information that will answer in Chapter 5 the two most basic questions that concern a tactical level commander: Am I training for the right tasks for combat?; and, Are my soldiers mentally ready for combat?



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## CHAPTER 4

### AIR CAVALRY'S BAPTISM IN COMBAT

VIETNAM, 1965

During the summer of 1965, the military situation within the Republic of Vietnam was questionable. General William C. Westmoreland, head of the Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (MACV), was tiring of the United States government's "enclave" strategy. In his opinion, the best strategy for stabilizing the South Vietnamese government was one which involved destroying North Vietnamese Army (NVA) and Vietnamese Communist (Viet Cong) forces. However, Maxwell Taylor, then ambassador to South Vietnam and the proponent of the enclave strategy, insisted on minimizing U.S. casualties by limiting U.S. involvement to securing critical coastal areas. He felt this strategy demonstrated American resolve. [1]

In February 1965, the U.S. State Department published a white paper which typified the American government's opinion. The paper stressed that the South Vietnamese were fighting for their lives against a "brutal campaign of terror and armed attack [that was] inspired, directed, supplied, and controlled by the communist regime in Hanoi." The paper

alleged that the "Flagrant" aggression had been going on for years, but that recently the pace had "quickened and the threat" had become acute. [2] The paper roused anti-North Vietnam sentiment when it equated the North Vietnamese "'invasion of South Vietnam' with the North Korean invasion of South Korea." [3] The purpose of the paper was two-fold: to show that the conflict in Vietnam was not a civil war as was being proclaimed and to call for the same American intervention as had been sanctioned by the United Nations in response to the Korean conflict.

Senator Barry Goldwater voiced the same point of view in his book, Where I Stand. In the book, he makes the claim that the United States was not using its military forces effectively and blamed President Johnson for not clearly establishing a goal for the war. Senator Goldwater claimed that if he were president, his aim would simply be oriented on achieving victory. Furthermore, he wrote,

If we learned anything from the tragic lesson of Korea, if we can draw any guidance from the life of one of history's great military figures, Douglas MacArthur, it might well be this--that in war there is no substitute for victory. [4]

By 1965, the NVA had developed into a forceful military organization. Its military organizational design paralleled that of the Chinese Army. The North Vietnamese soldiers were trained and indoctrinated with strict

discipline and they hoped to achieve a tactical advantage on the battlefield through careful planning and preparation.

The People's Army of Vietnam (PAVN) had grown to almost 500,000 men backed by a reserve force of nearly half a million soldiers. Its divisions were designed for maximum mobility and were composed of 10,000 lightly armed and equipped men. The infantrymen, the heart of those divisions, were armed with Chinese-made weapons. Each division was organized around three infantry regiments. These regiments concentrated their training in camouflage techniques, demolition usage, and small-unit tactics. Training was oriented toward conducting operations both at night and under adverse conditions. [5]

These soldiers had been heavily indoctrinated with political ideology and trained to avoid battle unless conditions were favorable. They were masters of the ever-growing hit-and-run tactic which used the ambush as its basis. The PAVN took great pains in planning and preparing for an operation--stockpiling ammunition, digging massive underground support systems, and hiding food and ammunition at both the attack sites and withdrawal routes. [6]

American intelligence reported that the NVA had been planning to use this army in the Long Xuan (Winter-Spring) offensive of 1965-66. [7] By doing so, North Vietnam would be switching its tactics from small-unit to large-unit operations. The intent of the NVA was to employ first one

division, then two more, to cut South Vietnam in half by invading along the Central Highlands along a line from Pleiku, An Khe, and Qui Nhon to the coast. [8] To counter this threat, the activation and deployment of the 11th Air Assault Division [later 1st Cavalry Division (Air Assault)] became one of the military options developed by Pentagon planners. [9]

In the summer of 1965, the South Vietnamese Army (ARVN) had lost both men and outposts to the Viet Cong. The insurgent forces had overrun a Special Forces camp in Phuoc Long Province. It seemed that the North had responded to President Johnson's escalation by stepping up their its operations. [10]

The Viet Cong, supported by North Vietnamese regulars, had,

besieged another Special Forces camp in the central plateau and overran the district town of Dakout in the highlands. Viet Cong terrorists kept up a war of nerves against U.S. bases in Danang, Bien Hoa, and even Saigon. Only at Chu Lai, near Danang, where a sweeping action by U.S. Marines in August produced heavy enemy casualties, did the United States and South Vietnam effectively resist the enemy onslaught. [11]

General Westmoreland again stressed to President Johnson that the mounting North Vietnamese actions made additional American troops even more necessary.

To President Johnson the choices were simple, either intensify United States efforts in the conflict or accept defeat. [12] Therefore, in June 1965, President Johnson, fearing the collapse of the South Vietnamese government, authorized General Westmoreland to use U.S. troops in offensive operations against the Vietnamese Communist insurgents. In July 1965, he approved General Westmoreland's request for additional forces. [13]

The additional force level authorization resulted in the newly formed and controversial 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile) being pitted against the North Vietnamese 32d, 33d, and 66th Regiments. [14] The entrance of the 1st Cavalry and the ensuing battle would represent America's "first battle" involving not only a large American division-sized force, but the first distinctive Air Cavalry squadron deployed in combat.

#### 11th Air Assault, Fort Benning, Georgia

After twenty-one months of development and training, Major General Harry W.O. Kinnard, Commander, 11th Air Assault Division, learned of the possible deployment of his division to the conflict in Vietnam.

In April or May of 1965, General Harold K. Johnson, Chief of Staff of the Army, went to Fort Benning, Georgia, and informed Major General Kinnard that the 11th Air Assault



Division would be redesignated as the 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile) and thereafter ordered to Vietnam. [15] This information would become official when President Johnson addressed the American people on a television broadcast on July 28, 1965. [16]

It was stated that Major General Kinnard was glued to his television set waiting for the President to declare a state of national emergency, thereby committing the entire 1st Cavalry Division to Vietnam. This declaration never materialized. President Johnson only stated that the division was being committed to Vietnam. [17]

In June, the 1st Cavalry Division's colors were moved from Korea to Fort Benning, Georgia, to "fly over a brand new Army organization--the 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile)." [18] On July 1, 1965, the 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile) was officially activated.

Historians have recorded that the 1st Cavalry Division (1st Air Cav) had not prepared for its future battles. They have written that the 1st Air Cav was rapidly preparing for deployment and as a result had little time to properly train for its jungle mission. The 1st Air Cav had no actual jungle warfare experience and historians have alleged that the division had "absorbed nothing more than last-minute instruction in Viet Cong tactics before leaving the United States." [19] However, Major General Kinnard felt his

division had not only prepared for combat, but had specifically trained for Vietnam. [20]

The 1,000-man divisional advance party, under the command of Brigadier General John M. Wright, Jr., Assistant Division Commander, 1st Air Cav Division, had arrived in the Republic of Vietnam on August 25, 1965, and on August 27 the party was further transported to its operational base camp, An Khe, near Route 9 (Figure 3). The security for the base was provided by the 1st Brigade of the 101st Airborne Division. General Westmoreland had chosen to deploy the 1st Air Cav into An Khe to cut off what he thought would be the area of the major thrust of the NVA through the Central Highlands.

For the next month, the advance party cut out an operations support base from this semi-jungle area. Because BG Wright knew of both MG Kinnard's love for golf and his concern for keeping the topsoil in place to protect the turbine blades, he named the location the "Golf Course." [21]

The 1/9th debarked at Qui Nhon, Vietnam, on September 19, 1965, and moved to the An Khe base area. During this time the squadron was getting established and acclimating to its new environment. Orders of the day included carving a base area out of the jungle, maintaining aircraft, and conducting patrolling. Other duties included local search-and-clear operations and defense of the base area.

By the 28th of September the division had assumed responsibility for its own security, and the Air Cavalry squadron was assigned the mission of performing

a wide-sweeping reconnaissance [throughout the] entire area, but most particularly around the Special Forces camps at Pleime, Duc Co, Plei Murong, and Dak To. [22]

The division retained one of the 1/9th's air cavalry troops in the base camp area for use as a reaction force.

At this time, the North Vietnamese launched two NVA regiments toward what was believed to be one of their initial targets--the Civilian Irregular Defense Group (CIDG) camp at Plei Me. The camp was located twenty-five miles south of Pleiku and was assigned the mission of conducting surveillance of the southern approaches to Pleiku City. This attack on the CIDG camp at Plei Me led directly to the first deployment of the 1st Air Cavalry Division in combat.

On October 23, 1965, Major General Stanley Larsen, the commander of I Field Force (MG Kinnard's immediate boss), ordered the 1st Cavalry Division to prepare to assist in the defense of United States and Vietnamese installations located near Pleiku. Also MG Larsen directed the division to prepare to reinforce the II Corps operations in the relief of the Plei Me CIDG camp. According to the official 1st Cavalry Division's after-action report, the 1/9th Cavalry performed the following missions in support of that operation: [23]

Pleiku Campaign (23 October - 26 November 1965)

On October 23, 1965, General Kinnard ordered the headquarters of the 1/9th to move to Pleiku to assume command of its troops already there. Once the squadron arrived, it operated under divisional control. The squadron was directed to conduct a screen mission along the route to Pleiku as well as to begin searching for the enemy west of Highway 14 and south of Highway 19 (Figure 9-10). MG Kinnard called the latter area of operations "a large, trackless area seldom penetrated by government troops." [24]

During this operation, Troop B, 1/9th Cavalry, was attached to the 1st Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, and assigned the mission of assisting the brigade during the initial phases of the division mission.

On October 24, Troop B, 1/9th Cavalry, was tasked by 1st Brigade to perform reconnaissance and screening operations for the Brigade's operational area. There was little activity, and the troop closed into its night positions by 1900.

During the afternoon of October 25, Troop B reverted to the squadron's control and subsequently began search operations around the Le Thanh District headquarters. The troop was augmented with a Montagnard ground reconnaissance group consisting of six, 5-man scout squads.

The remainder of the 1/9th Cavalry screened the flanks of 1st Brigade's operational area.

The 1/9th Cavalry Squadron was attached to the 1st Brigade on October 26. Company A, 2 Battalion, 12th Cavalry (an infantry company), was then attached to the squadron. After the attachment was complete, Company A, 2/12th Cavalry, was air-lifted to a position located 1700 meter south of Plei Me, where it moved by foot to 500 meter northwest to a trail. When the company arrived at that location, it established several night ambush patrols. On October 26, General Westmoreland visited the 1st Brigade headquarters. While there, he directed the 1st Air Cavalry Division to establish an area of operations in the vicinity of the Plei Me CIDG camp with the intent to find, fix, and destroy Viet Cong forces.

All through October 27 and 28, the 1/9th Cavalry continued its aggressive aerial reconnaissance and surveillance in the areas west and south of the Plei Me camp. The squadron began to make fleeting contacts with enemy elements west of the camp and fired on them. According to MG Kinnard, the 1/9th Cavalry began developing and polishing its technique of aerial reconnaissance-by-fire that made the enemy's withdrawal costly. [25] That night the squadron's rifle platoons established ambush positions which operated from a patrol base.

October 29 produced a more active day. Contact was made with the enemy during the day, and some of the most significant division actions, for the day, were recorded by the squadron. During the night, elements of the squadron reported fleeting contact at its patrol sites. During the day, the reconnaissance-by-fire techniques of the squadron were starting to get results. The aerial scout sections spotted and fired upon isolated groups of enemy, drawing fire upon themselves in the process. At about 1400, the Squadron's gunships made several passes, firing at suspected strong points at 1700 meters southwest of Plei Me. The squadron's rifle platoons followed up, but no contact was made on the ground. At 1800 the squadron set three ambushes on Highway 19 designed to block enemy movement from south to north.

On October 30, the squadron moved its command post (CP) to Plei Ring Do (2A218345), adjacent to the 1st Brigade CP, and reinforced its defensive position.

From this base squadron aerial scouts swarmed over the woods and streams of the rolling country west of Plei Me and made numerous contacts, drawing heavy automatic weapons fire in most instances. [26]

The division reports state that the scout and weapons helicopters would habitually return fire, but that they had no way of accurately assessing the results. The division found that this technique was keeping the enemy both stirred

up and on the move. That night the squadron again put its rifle elements in night ambush positions near Highway 19.

The 1st Cavalry Division's intelligence summary entry for October 30 reads,

Maintaining unit integrity was becoming increasingly difficult for many elements of the 33d Regiment as cavalry helicopters seemed to be everywhere, firing into carefully camouflaged positions and causing individuals to either break and run or reveal positions by returning the aircraft fires.... [27]

On October 31 the 1/9th Cavalry continued its first daylight and last daylight reconnaissance missions on the brigade's flanks, and its reconnaissance-by-fire missions throughout the zone of operations. The fires by the scout and weapons helicopters brought numerous air-to-ground engagements but no definitive engagements. Prior to darkness, two of the squadron's rifle platoons were again sent to occupy ambush sites near Highway 19. The other rifle platoon established a platoon ambush and patrol base around a stream southwest of Plei Bong Kle.

November 1 was an eventful day. It began with the aerial scouts of the squadron searching for the enemy. While operating near Ia Tac, the first major encounter took place. At 0720, B Troop scouts spotted approximately a dozen NVA soldiers near the Tae River. An air troop took the soldiers under fire and B Troop's rifle platoon was flown by lift

helicopters into the area. Meanwhile C Troop's air scouts had spotted another 30 enemy soldiers a little further to the northeast. At 0808, Troop B's rifle platoon was on the ground and moving to engage the enemy force. At the same time the troop's scout helicopters were conducting screen operations as well as guiding the ground elements.

Closing into a streambed 1800 meters southwest of Plei Me, the rifle platoon engaged an NVA element, killing five NVA and capturing four more. Moving on, the 30-man rifle platoon then captured an aid station. This was believed to be a regimental aid station, complete with all appropriate instruments, drugs, supplies, and equipment. The fight around the hospital site, southwest of Plei Me, continued, and at 0955 another 15 enemy soldiers were killed and an additional 15 captured.

Scout helicopters were then sent aloft to drop surrender leaflets in the area in an attempt to further demoralize the enemy. During the fighting, all captured equipment was evacuated by helicopter in order to deny the enemy any chance of recovering the vital medical supplies. The squadron's two remaining rifle platoons were then committed to the action because of the size and importance of the target.

At about 1410, the aerial scouts, who had continued their screen of the battle area, reported a battalion-sized enemy force moving from the northeast toward the squadron's



positions. The enemy was taken under rocket and machine-gun fire from both the scout and weapons helicopters, but continued to close on the squadron's defensive positions. From 1420 until 1800, the three platoons of the 1/9th Cavalry were heavily engaged by this NVA element. The enemy had pressed close in order to hinder the use of tactical air or aerial rocket artillery support. The squadron operated at a disadvantage because the position was well out of range of tube artillery. Time and again enemy assaults were repulsed with just the organic weapons of the three platoons.

During the operation, resupply and evacuation took place simultaneously in a small and exposed landing zone. Seven aircraft were hit by hostile fire. By evening the NVA element had broken contact and withdrawn. [28]

The squadron was detached from brigade control at 0840 and again placed under the division's control. The maps the squadron had captured the previous day depicted trails. All enemy movement was headed toward the Chu Pong - Ia Drang complex. The division commander and his assistants were anxious to start operations close to the Cambodian border in order to stop this enemy activity. MG Kinnard felt that the cavalry squadron was ideally suited for the task. This was planned as the 1/9th next mission.

Once again the Special Forces CIDG team along with Company A, 1st Battalion, 8th Cavalry (the infantry company) were attached to the squadron. The squadron then moved its

operations to the Duc Co CIDG camp and began a reconnaissance-in-force south from the CIDG camp along the Cambodian border to the Chu Pong Ia Drang complex. Reinforced by the rifle platoons of A and C troops, B troop and the CIDG team established a patrol and ambush base at YA834061 where a five-ship landing zone was available. There the troop established three ambush sites located 400 meter north of the Chu Pong Mountains near the Ia Drang River.

At 1930, the soldiers at the southern most ambush position sighted a large, heavily laden NVA unit, estimated at company strength, moving along the east-west trail. The enemy column stopped about 100 meters short of the ambush site. This enemy unit then loitered just outside the killing zone for a full hour and a half. The NVA unit then formed up and moved in what appeared to be a confident and noisy manner along the trail to the west.

The platoon leader of the troop's ambush patrol allowed the first element to pass and then sprang the trap on the enemy weapons platoon. The enemy soldiers were carrying machine guns, mortars, and recoilless rifles. After five minutes, the ambush site fired eight Claymore mines which had been set along the 100-meter kill zone. The troopers fired their M-16s for two minutes. Simultaneously, Claymore's sited both up and down the trail were fired into the enemy column. There was no return fire from the enemy. [29]

On November 6, B Troop, 1/9 Cavalry, continued its screening mission and conducted its reconnaissance on the east and west flanks of the brigade. The troop continued its screen and reconnaissance-by-fire to the flanks of the brigade on November 8.

From November 10 to 13, the 1st Brigade was replaced by the 3rd Brigade. To support the 3rd Brigade in the conduct of the division's operation, Troop C, 1/9th Cavalry, was tasked to conduct reconnaissance and screening missions which oriented on the eastern flank of the brigade.

On November 14, C Troop made visual reconnaissance of the immediate battle area in an effort to pinpoint movement of NVA forces, with no results.

During November 15, C Troop continued its screening and reconnaissance missions in the vicinity of the Ia Drang Valley. D Troop was tasked to secure the brigade operations base located at a site named STADIUM.

On November 16 the 1/9th Cavalry elements continued close surveillance of the battlefield and the routes leading into it. Early that afternoon one of the squadron's gunships (UH-1B) was shot down in the jungle north of Ia Drang. The squadron attempted to recover the crew but heavy fire from the area prevented this recovery. The crew was then accounted as missing.

From November 17 to 25, the 1/9th Cavalry was attached to 2d Brigade. After moving to and establishing a base, the

squadron was assigned the mission of conducting screening operations oriented around the entire brigade sector.

November 26 marked the final day of the operation. The 1st Cavalry Division returned to its base camp to wait for the enemy to make the next move. The 1/9th Cavalry's final mission in support of the operation was to cover the division's withdrawal. With that mission completed, the 1/9th Cavalry closed into Camp Holloway. [30]

Not included in this chronological account of the operation is the fact that Troop B, 1/9th Cavalry, was attached to 2d Brigade to support an operation to re-establish a USSF/CIDG camp. They were also tasked to assist in the re-establishment of RVN government control in the Ia Drang. According to the after-action reports, this mission was conducted from October 6 to November 19; during the mission the troop faced light enemy resistance which varied from sniper fire to small guerrilla contacts. [31]

According to the after-action reports, the 1st Cavalry Division learned several lessons. One of these dealt with operating and coordinating the use of landing zones (LZ). The division found that when coordinating and operating LZs, the 1/9th Cavalry often provided initial LZ security. The time from the arrival of the air cavalry elements to the initial troop lift had be reduced to an absolute minimum (less than 20 minutes, they stressed) in order to take advantage of the secure area before the enemy had a chance to

reinforce and build up defenses around the LZ. The division also found that in several situations where this close coordination had not been accomplished, the enemy closed in on the LZ and attacked the second and third lifts. The division recommended careful planning and the inclusion of Pathfinder teams inserted during the initial lift to "assure early, sufficient, orderly control of the LZ and to direct aircraft in between enemy and friendly fires." [32]

The division also learned that aircraft become vulnerable to small-arms fire when flying at lower altitude but that a good reconnaissance could not be made while flying at high altitude. The idea was to include a deceptive air reconnaissance plan. That plan was the key to actual success in the overall divisional reconnaissance effort. One successful method was to fly past an area from a different direction at a low altitude, preferably at a different time of the day than was anticipated for the actual conduct of the mission. [33]

The division used the technique of reconnaissance-by-fire extensively. They felt that reconnaissance-by-fire in open areas was a valuable air cavalry technique. They noted that in one operation the 1/9th Cavalry's scout helicopters received return fire from the ground 37 times out of the 105 instances in which they initiated reconnaissance-by-fire techniques. The division found that in areas where valuable enemy targets were found by the use of reconnaissance-by-

fire, they were able to fix the enemy with artillery and TAC air fire prior to employing ground-maneuver elements against the enemy. [34]

Operation Masher (January 23 - February 3, 1966)

The 1st Cavalry Division's mission was to conduct offensive operations in order to dominate their area of operations (Figure 11). They were to conduct combined operations in the northeastern Bing Dinh Province. The main operations were conducted near "the Hoai Nhon District coastal plain extending northeast of Bong Son and in the Kim Song Valley (Hoi An District) southeast of Bong Son." [35] For this operation, MG Kinnard was also directed to retain one of his battalions as the reserve or reaction force for Field Force Vietnam. [36]

The enemy situation prior to the operation indicated that the 18th NVA Regiment had moved into the vicinity of Dam Tra O Lake (BR 9802) to celebrate the Tet holidays. The division believed the 2nd VC Battalion might have returned into the Masher operational area. Additionally, three unidentified enemy battalions with an estimated strength of 2,000 were reported to be operating in the same area. [37]

This operation is extensively outlined in the division after-action report. The report contains diagrams, maps, and a well-written documentary on how the operation was planned

and executed. However, the participation of the 1/9th Cavalry is somewhat sketchy. Prior to the 1/9th Cavalry's participation in this operation, LTC Robert M. Shoemaker assumed command of the squadron.

The following is a summary of the squadron's participation.

On January 24, 1966, while the division conducted its main operation, the 1/9th Cavalry was tasked to conduct deception operations in the Suoi Ca Valley. The 1/9th Cavalry did this by executing numerous helicopter insertions of infantry assigned to conduct ground reconnaissance missions. The squadron also provided security to a vehicle convoy from the 1st Battalion, 7th Cavalry, (an infantry battalion), enroute from An Khe to Phu Cat along Highway 19 and Highway 1. [38]

On January 25, the 1/9th Cavalry supported the division's 3rd Brigade. The squadron initiated operations along the southern portion of the Chop Chai hill mass southeast of Bong Son in order to deceive the VC as to the division's main area of tactical and operational interest. This mission was also designed to enhance the security of Highway 1 for use as a ground supply line for the division. [39]

The 1/9th Cavalry continued their deception and security mission until February 2 or 3; the squadron was then tasked to conduct extensive reconnaissance of B-52 strikes.

This reconnaissance effort met with no enemy contact.

From February 18 to 19, the squadron conducted a screening mission to the east and west of the division area of operation.

#### Operation Lincoln (March 25 - April 8, 1966)

Interestingly, the 1st Cavalry Division was now about to conduct operations in an area where they had "defeated" an enemy only four months earlier; the area of operations included the area near the Le Thanh District Headquarters, Plei Me and Duc Co Special Forces Camp, and the Chu Pong hill mass (Figure 12).

Prior to conducting this operation, in early March 1966, the division learned that various American bases in the Eastern Pleiku Province would be attacked by the VC at the beginning of the monsoon.

The 25th Infantry Division had been conducting operations to the north of the Pleiku area and had experienced "light contact with elements of the 32d Regt and moderate contact with elements of the 66th Regiment." [40] Because this confirmed the presence of enemy units, and substantiated earlier reports, the 1st Cavalry Division was ordered to try to avert the anticipated enemy offensive.



The division order reads,

Division conducts search and destroy operations vicinity Duc Co (YA 8425), Plei Me (ZA 1605) and Le Thanh (ZA 1228); prepare to continue the attack on order; continues offensive operations and secures Hwy 19 in the TAOR. [41]

On March 25, 1966, the operations began; no contact was made by the 1/9th Cavalry.

On March 28th, while the division was conducting intensive patrolling throughout the area of operations, the only results of this operation was achieved by the 1/9th Cavalry. Troop A engaged an unknown size of VC at YA 939788, and Troop B uncovered a ton of rice at YA 907128 while conducting its ground reconnaissance mission.

At 1700 hours the [commanding officer], 1/9th Cavalry and his chase ship were fired on at ZA 16095 and in the ensuing engagement where 2 VC KIA (BC), 2 VC KIA (EST) and one weapon recovered by one of the aircraft crews. [42]

March 29 showed no dramatic events. Troop D, 1/9th Cavalry, along with aerial weapons and surveillance support from Troop A, 1/9th Cavalry, escorted an engineer battalion from Pleiku to Cheo Reo without incident. The "remainder of the squadron continued reconnaissance without significant contact or sighting." [43]

The operational area was quiet until March 30 when Troop D, 1/9th Cavalry, sighted 32 enemy personnel in camouflage uniforms in foxholes and bunkers south of Chu Pong (LZ Eagle - YU 855882). The 1/9th weapons helicopters fired on these targets and reports of the engagement were sent to the 1st Brigade. The brigade decided that the situation needed to be developed, and Troop A, 1/9th Cavalry, inserted its rifle platoon into the area at 1530. The rifle platoon came under fire from the enemy force, and the Troop's weapons platoon made several passes in an attempt to cover the platoon as it assembled and made ready for extraction.

During the extraction, a lift ship was hit by automatic weapons fire and crashed about 1,000 meters east of the LZ with minor injuries except for [a] VC prisoner who died as a result of the crash. Weapons ships and OH-13s evacuated crash survivors. A "B" Troop UH-1D lifted off with 12 of 15 remaining personnel at 1610 hours but was hit by heavy fire and crashed killing 14 of the 15 persons on board. A second UH-1D crashed as a result of heavy fire approaching the LZ. The third lift ship extracted all remaining personnel from the LZ. [44]

As a result, the division committed additional forces into the area and disengaged the 1/9th Cavalry. In order to allow the squadron to recover from its recent enemy contact, the division assigned the squadron the mission of conducting

ground and aerial reconnaissance south and west of OASIS (ZA 115288). This subsequent mission did not meet with significant results. [45]

The 3rd Brigade, 25th Infantry Division, now came under the control of the 1st Cavalry Division. This brigade conducted a helicopter assault into LZ 11 (YA 803078) with elements of the 1st Battalion, 14th Infantry, and into LZ 21 (YA 944053) with elements of the 1st Battalion, 35th Infantry. The 1/14th Infantry, gained contact with the enemy along the Cambodian border. Because of this contact, the 1/9th Cavalry was relocated from Pleiku to OASIS. Squadron reconnaissance was then concentrated in the Chu Pong area between the 1st Brigade and the 3rd Brigade, 25th Division. [46]

On April 2, at 1257, an aerial scout from the 1/9th Cavalry reported an undetermined number of NVA at YU 860895. After a significant build-up in American strength, the NVA succeeded in breaking contact at 1925.

During all of the operations, the 1/9th Cavalry remained at OASIS. There the division reports reflect no significant sightings other than the ones obtained from the aerial scouts supporting the infantry battalions.

April 3, the 1/9th Cavalry was placed under control of the 3d Brigade to support the relocating of the 6th Battalion, 14th Artillery, to its forward firing positions.

This artillery supported the assault into Chu Pong which started on April 4. [47]

To support the final portion of this operation, the 1/9th Cavalry was to screen the border areas and operate south of the 1st Brigade to interdict enemy forces attempting to withdraw or reinforce.

On April 4, the 1/9th Cavalry formed TF NAUE with Troop C, 1/9th Cavalry, and Troop C, 3/4th Cavalry, 25th Division. This task force made a sweep from Position Purple (YU 988997) to LZ Albany (YA 948040). The task force remained overnight and returned to Position Purple on April 6.

Also on April 4, the aerial weapons aircraft from Troop C observed and engaged from 60 to 70 VC in an open field near YU 827919. The aerial weapons aircraft crew observed that the enemy fled west to Cambodia. On April 5, Troop D, 1/9th Cavalry, conducted convoy security operations between Pleiku-Le Thanh and Plei Me. During this mission they located the ammunition which had belonged to the ARVN relief column for Plei Me which had been ambushed in October of 1965. [48]

#### Operation Mosby I (April 11 - 17, 1966)

The conduct of Operation Mosby is similar to Operation Lincoln. The 1st Cavalry Division's mission was to analyze

trail systems and to "establish company bases and conduct sustained patrolling and ambushes [and] to locate facilities, caches [sic], and [to] interrupt any infiltration in progress." [49]

On April 11th, the 1/9th Cavalry moved out to conduct its portion of the division's mission. Only two missions were noted in the division after-action report. The first was Troop C's involvement in conducting a reconnaissance of a special area of operations south of Chu Pong; no significant sightings were noted. The second occurred on April 18th, when the 1/9th Cavalry provided ground escort and aerial weapons cover for the division's convoys moving to An Khe. [50]

#### Hooker I (June 10 - 21, 1966)

The intent of Operation Hooker was to obtain a complete intelligence picture of an area of operations stretching over approximately 50 by 80 kilometers. This area belonged to the 2nd Brigade, and the operation was to confirm the existence of an NVA secret base allegedly east of Plei-Djereng.

The 2nd Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, was assigned the mission of conducting the operation. The 1/9th Cavalry was assigned under the brigade's operational control to facilitate the mission's effective accomplishment of

Operation Hooker. The operation was directed toward confirming or denying intelligence reports alleging that the special forces camps located at Plei-Djerang, Plei Mrong, and Pol1 Kleng were to be NVA targets during the coming "Monsoon Offensive." The enemy was suspected of building in this area extensive infiltration route systems, secret bases, rest areas, and cache sites. The cavalry's 11-day operation confirmed that no NVA forces were located in the area. Two-thousand pounds of rice was discovered, however.

On June 11, 1966, the 1/9th Cavalry conducted surveillance and spoiling operations in the southwestern portion of Kontum Province in coordination with the II ARVN Corps and CIDG troops. The squadron was directed to support 1st Cavalry Division infantry battalions as required and to conduct screening operations along a "mid-range patrol lane". [51]

The 2nd Brigade's mission was to attack and destroy enemy targets as they developed, secure Highway 19, and conduct offensive operations in their assigned tactical area of responsibility (TAOR). The 2nd Brigade directed the squadron to continue its reconnaissance to locate enemy trails, with primary emphasis north of the 10 EW grid line in the operational area and between the Cambodian border and the 90 NS grid line.

On June 13, the squadron was directed to conduct ground route reconnaissance of trails from REBEL (AR 772897)

to UNION (2A 109682) with one squad, C Company, 8th Engineer Battalion. The squadron was also directed to be prepared to conduct a show-of-force mission near Plei Djereng. The force that assembled to support this mission consisted of an infantry rifle company, an artillery battery (-), and elements of the 1/9th Cavalry. The squadron was tasked to provide reconnaissance and surveillance as required as well as providing ground escort for convoy on Highway 14 and the Pleiju-Plei Djereng road.

From June 10-12, the squadron conducted area reconnaissance west from Kontum to the YB 80 NS grid line and then south of the YB 10 EW grid line. The squadron also conducted aerial reconnaissance of the special forces camps in Darlac Province. The squadron's D Troop began route reconnaissance of roads and trails leading from Kontum into the TAOR.

A special forces team, located in the squadron's area, requested that they be allowed to conduct patrolling operations into the western part of the area of operations. The squadron approved and supported this operation by conducting aerial reconnaissance to locate suitable landing zones, aerial weapons escort for the lift ships, and the establishment of FM radio contacts at predesignated times. The squadron had also prepared to execute immediate extraction of these special forces teams if necessary.

The operation began on June 12, 1966, when the squadron (~) moved from Camp Radcliff (BR 475475) to Kontum (AR 772897). Major missions that the squadron conducted in support of this operation included:

- ▣ Perimeter defense of the squadron CP and aircraft lager area provided Troop D. This troop also conducted numerous route reconnaissance missions as well as providing convoy escort for movement of the 2nd Brigade CP, artillery units, and logistical vehicles.

- o Aerial and ground reconnaissance, by air cavalry troops, who conducted on-call response to friendly units in contact, as well as area reconnaissance. These troops also conducted show-of-force missions, reconnaissance and surveillance of the 2nd Brigade area of operations, and ground escort for convoys. These troops also checked the area's many trails. Most of these actions resulted in no significant finding.

June 19 to 21 were quiet days. The squadron requested and received approval for a free-fire area. The area was used by the air cavalry troops for pilot training and door-gunner training. The squadron's B and C troops conducted their training by performing assault landings with their rifle platoons, lift ships, and aerial weapons helicopters. The troops also conducted maintenance on their equipment.

Operation Hooker I was officially terminated at midnight on June 21, 1966.



Operation Nathan Hale (June 20 - July 30, 1966)

Operation Nathan Hale was a reconnaissance-in-force operation conducted under the new division commander, Major General John Norton (Figure 13). The 1/9th Cavalry had also received a new commander, Lieutenant Colonel James C. Smith.

For most of this operation, the 1/9th Cavalry was under the operational control of the 3rd Brigade, with the exception of one troop which was attached to the 1st Brigade (Figure 14).

During May and June the enemy of the 95th NVA Regiment had been attacking the 47th ARVN Regiment and other forces along Highway 1. Part of the 1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division, had experienced heavy contact with what was estimated to be an enemy battalion. As a result, the 1st Cavalry Division conducted operations directed toward destroying that enemy force. [52]

The missions (listed chronologically below) performed by the 1/9th Cavalry in support of this operation demonstrates a difference in the operational procedures when compared to the previous year.

During June 25 and 26, the squadron provided reconnaissance and aerial surveillance over the southern, southwestern, and southeastern portions of the 3d Brigade's area of operations. The squadron received large amounts of

ground fire during the day, mostly from the vicinity of CQ 060699 to CQ 048614 along the ridge.

From June 27 to 30, the 1/9th Cavalry conducted reconnaissance and aerial surveillance to the west and northeast of Dong Tre. Two observation posts were established at BQ 799691 and BQ 798705.

On July 3 and 4, the 1/9th Cavalry (-) continued aerial reconnaissance along the western boundary of the 1st Brigade area of operations and conducted isolated air-to-ground, hunter-killer operations.

On July 5, the 1/9th Cavalry (-) discovered a large assortment of enemy packs and assorted ammunition in the vicinity of BQ 851225. Documents identified the equipment as belonging to NVA 7th and 8th Companies, 95th Battalion, 68th Artillery Regiment, 251st Division.

On July 7, the 1/9th Cavalry (-) continued aerial reconnaissance in the area of operations uncovering a cache of rice and clothing near BQ 637261. The squadron then moved its efforts to the western flank. This resulted in no contact with the enemy.

The period from July 9 to 16 produced missions which included screening in the 1st Brigade area of operations, continued aerial surveillance of the area of operations, ground reconnaissance to the north of area DATE, and reconnaissance and search operations in PALM and SAND. Most of these missions met with only light, sporadic contacts with

the enemy. During this same period Troop D uncovered a weapons cache at BQ 308517. This cache contained 62 individual weapons and two crew-served weapons.

During July 17, the squadron, along with Company C, 1st Battalion, 69th Armor, and Company A, 1st Battalion, 8th Cavalry, conducted search operations in the northern portion of AO SAND without contact.

On July 18, the squadron screened AO BLACK until noon, then screened along PL RED, reporting scattered contact with the enemy. July 19 showed little change; the squadron screened the western flank of the 1st Brigade area of operations along PL RED without significant contact. The squadron (less Troop B) closed into its base camp on July 27 at An Khe. Operation Nathan Hale ended on July 30.

During this first year, the 1/9th Cavalry experienced changes in both commanders and assigned missions. While studying these missions, I could see a distinct change in the orientation of missions.

In Chapter 5, I will analyze the doctrine and the missions of the air cavalry as outlined in this chapter and U.S. Army doctrinal manuals. I will also address missions which, in preparation for combat, an air cavalry squadron should orient its training program toward. In the process, I will discuss the 1/9th Cavalry's performance based on how it prepared in peacetime.

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## CHAPTER 5

### ANALYSIS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Introduction

...determine the enemy's plans and you will know which strategy will be successful and which will not....

SunTzu [1]

Senior army leadership during the early 1960s had demonstrated a sense of vision. They had convinced key Army leaders to reorient their vision of the modern battlefield from strictly ground-maneuver warfare into the forward-looking capabilities of 20th Century technological warfare.

Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara, on June 6, 1965, recognized that the 11th Air Assault Division's air mobile capability was better suited for fighting in the jungles of Southeast Asia. He approved acceptance of the Army's plan to activate the 1st Cavalry Division on July 1, 1965. He then announced that the division would be combat ready in eight weeks. [2]

The date of activation was also the first day in a count-down toward full combat readiness. Therefore, the new air mobile division did not have a full eight weeks to be combat ready; they had until July 28, just four weeks. [3]



On July 28, President Johnson held a press conference at the White House and announced, "I have today ordered to Vietnam the Air Mobile Division..." [4] MG Kinnard, the division commander, thus reached a long-awaited point, a climax to all the training and testing of what had been a concept only a short time ago. He would take to combat a division which he had built and trained.

In previous chapters I reviewed historic cavalry missions as well as the combat operations of the 1/9th Cavalry during its first 10 months in Vietnam. I found that the 1/9th Cavalry had adapted an operational procedure that differed from its original peacetime training and doctrinal orientation. I also found that the squadron's adapted combat role, in relation to types of missions assigned, also matched the other U.S. air cavalry units that arrived later in Vietnam.

The methods used by these units were the combat techniques of searching, finding, (with ground assistance from an infantry unit) striking, and finishing the enemy. These types of missions were never clearly outlined within the U.S. Army's tactical field manuals. However, in their conclusions the Howze Board's Committee Number I had accurately described these air cavalry combat missions.

I further found that the squadron developed its own doctrinal procedures during combat operations. This occurred

because the doctrine that the 1/9th Cavalry used during their peacetime training lacked a focused doctrinal definition concerning the uses of air cavalry.

However, the possibility exists that the doctrine was adequate but, the 1/9th commander and his men did not understand it and therefore did not train properly to its standards. Furthermore, if the commander did understand the doctrinal missions, did this understanding allow him to train his unit for the missions they would be asked to do in the Republic of Vietnam? These concerns lead me to my thesis statement and its analysis.

### Analysis

U.S. Army air cavalry units were required to conduct missions in combat that they had not trained for in peacetime; therefore my thesis hypothesis is that, at the tactical level of war, there exists a disparity between the doctrinal missions an air cavalry unit trains for, in peacetime, and those missions that the unit will actually conduct in combat.

In the search for factual data in which to either support or disprove this hypothesis, I examined the 1/9th Cavalry, 1st Cavalry Division, during its peacetime preparation for and subsequent combat deployment to the Republic of Vietnam. I chose the 1/9th Cavalry because it

was the first air cavalry squadron to be deployed as part of a division from a peacetime training base into a combat area.

Through an analysis of the squadron's combat operations, I determined that the disparity between doctrinal missions and actual combat missions did exist at the time of the squadron's introduction into combat. In this chapter, I will also draw conclusions concerning the relevancy of the 1/9th Cavalry's experiences to today's air cavalry combat training.

The purpose of this section is to answer the first research question: did the 1/9th commander's understanding of doctrinal missions allow him to train his unit for the missions it would be asked to do in the Republic of Vietnam? Before answering this question I must address whether or not the 1/9th Cavalry commander both understood and used the doctrinal definition for air cavalry missions when preparing his unit for combat. With this answered, the thesis question can then be properly addressed.

The simplest and most direct answer to this question is yes, the commander both understood and used air cavalry doctrine in his unit's training program. The 1/9th Cavalry (originally the 3rd Squadron, 17th Cavalry, 11th Air Assault Division) was deployed to the Carolinas in the fall of 1964 to participate in an evaluation exercise called Air Assault II. The exercise lasted for 71 days and resulted in not only the evaluation and subsequent validation of the air assault

concept, but more important to the squadron, the exercise assisted in the refinement of their understanding of potential missions. The squadron also learned exactly what missions it could perform in support of the division.

LTC John B. Stockton, the squadron's commander, states in his tactical reference handbook that it would be naive to assume that his squadron had learned all there was to know about air cavalry operations. However, he was aware that because of this field training, his squadron had developed considerable knowledge and experience on the subject. [5] His squadron had spent the better part of twelve months in the field under what he called "operational conditions simulating various levels of combat." [6] I can only ascertain that the "various levels of combat" to which he refers are general war, limited war, and cold war as defined in FM 17-95, The Armored Cavalry Regiment, dated August 1960. According to a narrative in the squadron's tactical handbook, during this time of field training the squadron concentrated its efforts on helicopter gunnery and perfecting the techniques of air cavalry tactics. [7]

In order to ascertain LTC Stockton's understanding of the then current doctrine, I will present an analysis of his mission definitions. LTC Stockton envisioned the following missions:

perform[ing] reconnaissance and security [missions]  
for the division or its major subordinate combat

elements; engaging in combat as an economy-of-force unit; and provide a limited air and ground antitank capability to the division. [8]

LTC Stockton defined the reconnaissance mission as "a mission which directs the unit's effort in the field towards collecting information of the enemy and the area of operations by ground and air means." [9] In the August 1960 version of FM 17-95, The Armored Cavalry Regiment, the same mission definition for reconnaissance is reflected. Even FM 17-36, Division Armored and Air Cavalry Units, October 1965, and the updated November 1968 version do not offer different definitions. Therefore, the reconnaissance mission, as defined and used to guide the training of the squadron, was understood and did follow the doctrinal definition. As an interesting note, after cavalry units had been in combat in Vietnam for two years the U.S. Army published, in August 1967, a manual titled Training Text (II) 17-37-1, Air Cavalry Squadron. This manual's definition of reconnaissance was the same as the other manuals except that the last word "means," used in the earlier manuals, had been replaced with "activities."

The 1/9th Cavalry, in the Tactical Reference Handbook, defined the security mission as "including all the measures taken by a command to protect itself from espionage, observation, sabotage, annoyance, or surprise." [10]

Field Manual 17-95, The Armored Cavalry Regiment, August 1960, reflects the same definition. Even FM 17-36, Division Armored and Air Cavalry Units, October 1965, does not offer a different definition, except that it deletes the words espionage, sabotage, and annoyance. The definition of security contained in IT 17-37-1, as it applies to air cavalry, also deleted the words espionage, sabotage, and annoyance. Therefore, the security mission definition used by the 1/9th Cavalry did follow the then current U.S. Army doctrinal definition.

After the testing in the Carolinas, LTC Stockton further tailored his definition of the security mission by adding that the:

portion of the overall security mission performed tactically by the Squadron for the Division is limited to refusing the use of terrain to the enemy and denying him observation of our deployed forces. [11]

The economy-of-force mission was defined by the 1/9th Cavalry as combat operations which were "characterized by the skillful and prudent use of combat power to accomplish the mission with minimum expenditure of resources." [12] The August 1960 version of FM 17-95 did not contain the mission at all. The October 1965 version of FM 17-36 offered the same definition as that used by the 1/9th Cavalry's. Therefore, the 1/9th Cavalry's economy-of-force mission definition was both understood and in conformity

with the U.S. Army's doctrinal definition. Training Text 17-37-1's definition of the economy-of-force mission was exactly to that of the 1/9th Cavalry.

Having understood the doctrinal missions as outlined in the squadron's handbook, and having used those missions as a basis for training; LTC Stockton tried to prepare the squadron before it was deployed to combat during the summer of 1965. However, had he adequately prepared his unit for the combat missions it would perform in Vietnam? Were the doctrinal missions even applicable to the realities of combat? Following deployment from October 23, 1965, to July 30, 1966, the unit performed several missions which included--

- o Conducting extensive aerial and ground reconnaissance and surveillance over wide areas in order to develop lucrative intelligence information in the current or planned area of operations.

- o Supporting a brigade through extensive reconnaissance and development of the tactical situation in its area of operations.

- o Conducting aerial and ground reconnaissance and bomb damage assessment of B-52 strikes in the division area of operations.

- o Conducting route screening missions (aerial route reconnaissance).

- o Providing a blocking force to interdict enemy forces attempting to withdraw or reinforce.
- o Accepting the attachment of a rifle company which conducted daytime patrolling as well as night ambush patrols.
- o Accepting a foreign national ground reconnaissance force augmentation.
- o Detaching a cavalry troop to an infantry brigade.
- o Attaching the squadron to an infantry brigade.
- o Conducting aerial reconnaissance-by-fire.
- o Conducting first-light and last-light reconnaissance missions in an assigned area of operations.
- o Conducting internal screen operations and providing aerial guiding service to cavalry ground elements.
- o Conducting cavalry operations out of artillery range.
- o Conducting close surveillance of the battlefield and the routes leading to it.
- o Covering a division's withdrawal.
- o Providing initial landing-zone security for an airmobile force.
- o Conducting deception operations in support of the division's main tactical effort.
- o Conducting sweep operations with an air troop attached from another division.
- o Conducting reconnaissance at low altitude.



- o Conducting aerial weapons cover for division convoys (convoy escort).

The doctrinal missions as outlined in FM 17-95, August 1960 were--

- o To operate as a light armor task force without reinforcement in security and light combat missions.

- o To execute screening and counterreconnaissance missions.

- o To operate as a highly mobile armor task force when suitably reinforced.

- o To reconnoiter for higher echelon, normally by independent action without reinforcement.

- o To conduct reconnaissance and surveillance over wide fronts and to extended depths.

- o To collect and report intelligence information, including acquisition of nuclear targets.

- o To conduct chemical, biological, and radiological monitoring and survey operations and nuclear damage assessments.

- o To conduct offensive, defensive, and retrograde operations as an economy-of-force unit.

- o To provide flank protection for or security between major units.

- o To act as a covering force in offensive, defensive, or retrograde operations.

- To screen the concentration of other forces and subordinate elements.

- o To maintain combat liaison.

- o To secure rear areas, lines of communications, and installations from enemy airborne, airmobile, or guerrilla forces.

- o To provide, in emergencies, alternate means of communications for other units.

The missions derived from Exercise Air Assault II for the 1/9th Cavalry included--

- o Conducting air and ground reconnaissance over broad fronts and to extended depths.

- o Collecting and reporting information of intelligence value, including information of nuclear targets and nuclear damage assessment.

- Protecting or screening flank(s).

- o Providing security or maintaining contact between elements of a unit or between adjacent units.

- Acting as part of a covering force in offensive and retrograde operations and as a general outpost in defensive operations.

- o Conducting chemical agent detecting and radiological monitoring and survey operations.

- o Performing area damage control operations and providing forces for rear-area security.

- o Providing a highly mobile counterattack and pursuit force.

- o Conducting offensive, defensive, or delaying actions as required.

Did these missions match the doctrinal template which the 1/9th Cavalry used to prepare for combat? From this comparison, my answer is no.

Major General Kinnard and his subordinate commanders had a very firm grasp on their war-fighting skills. It is evident that the 1st Cavalry Division leaders conducted their operations with the professional expertise expected at that level of command. Their tactical orientation was directed toward fighting the battle as a complete division and not by fragmenting the unit.

When Major General Norton assumed command, May 6, 1966, a new trend appeared in the division after-action reports. This trend was reflected in the division's reports on how it conducted tactical operations. This trend showed that the division was no longer fighting battles with a broad division-level vision but with a vision oriented at lower tactical levels; such as, brigade, battalion, and sometimes company. This can even be seen in how the division formatted its after-action reports. This could have been the result of the division's first battle in the Ia Drang. As John Shy wrote in the chapter entitled "First Battles in Retrospect,"

America's First Battles, 1776-1965,

...the first battle had a "hardening" effect, creating a postbattle confidence that approached complacency, making the [division] less flexible during subsequent operations. [13]

The 1/9th Cavalry missions began to reorient from providing support to the division's main operation to performing extraneous missions apart from the division's main effort.

The scope of the squadron's training in the United States was guided by a doctrine oriented on the European threat. Manuals were written with a distinct bias toward the European theater, even though the U.S. Army was involved with 20,000 advisors in South Vietnam. The air cavalry mission and the unit's capability statements were too general and vague. The 1/9th Cavalry did not have an adequate basis from which to orient its pre-deployment training efforts. Because of this, the initial scope and handling of the missions conducted in the Ia Drang Valley were in support of the division fighting as a whole. After Ia Drang the division began to operate with an orientation toward isolating its use of the lift helicopter toward infantry operations. The division's orientation had become fixed on the means and not the methods.

## Conclusions

Considering the then available doctrine and Army experience of insurgent warfare, the 1st Cavalry Division received an adequate amount of training in air cavalry operations prior to deployment. The commanders involved with air cavalry training ensured that their units had received training which included operational techniques and situations that they would later encounter in battle.

Although the 1/9th Cavalry trained extensively in the United States prior to deployment, the peacetime training did not prepare the squadron for all combat situations. Nor would it have been prepared even if the squadron had conducted more intensive training. The training would never have been adequate in preparing the squadron for actual combat. [14]

For the most part, the difficulties of developing air cavalry doctrine sprang from the abruptness with which the U.S. Army had to change from cavalry doctrine oriented on ground maneuver with airplanes to a highly mobile maneuver force assigned large quantities of helicopters. Although the division conducted numerous tests and field exercises to establish an air cavalry doctrine to support its operations, the base doctrine as expressed in FM 17-95 and FM 17-36 was narrow in how to apply its tactical procedures in other than a European theater.

Because of the lack of an applicable air cavalry doctrine in the Army's manuals, the 1st Cavalry Division could not adhere to the established doctrine when conducting combat operations. The division was forced to deviate from the current doctrine in order to be successful in the face of a type of combat that it had never encountered before. In Vietnam the cavalry troopers often had to respond to different and fast-changing situations under new and demanding conditions. Therefore, throughout the Vietnam conflict, the 1st Cavalry Division developed and followed its own doctrine while employing the 1/9th Cavalry.

During the initial battles in the Pleiku Campaign, air cavalry was employed as traditional cavalry. In later battles this distinction became blurred as the 1/9th Cavalry was used as another aviation unit instead of as an air cavalry unit in the traditional role. As has been noted by many historians, most combat operations in Vietnam were structured around the limitations of the available helicopters rather than the enemy threat. Because of this, II Corps used the 1st Cavalry Division as a quick-reaction force. As a result, the 1/9th Cavalry's missions were a reaction to this unique overall employment concept.

## Recommendations

Doctrine should be a clear set of guidelines to be used in preparation for wartime operations. But, doctrine seldom reflects the current air cavalry employment methods. The problem lies in the fact that when doctrine lacks clarity and, therefore, credibility, leaders at every level fall back on prior experience and their personal opinions of what air cavalry "doctrine" should be. As John Shy wrote,

While keeping the focus on doctrine and its role in... battle, we can also be ready to admit the importance in some cases of a wider circle of mental factors, unofficial, often vague, sometimes not wholly conscious.... Doctrine, whether explicit or implicit, is never absent; defined simply, it is the general consensus among military leaders on how to wage war. [15]

This case study of the 1/9th Cavalry points to an obvious recommendation; tactical units which have air cavalry units organic to its organization must strive to conduct realistic field training in preparation for combat deployment. There must also be continual training evaluations of the commanders and their staffs. This training and evaluation should be oriented on air cavalry operations in their most likely deployment scenarios. Orientation toward tactical training can not be

overemphasized, especially because such emphasis will, hopefully, overcome the resistance of peacetime routine, priorities, and traditions.

John Shy stated this problem best when he wrote ...the prewar experience of senior commanders and staff officers are dictated...by peacetime needs, not by wartime probabilities. Headquarters in the U.S. Army habitually expend their time and energies on routine administration. Of course, headquarters work hard, but the result too often seems to be that the troops...are [more] readied for war than the men who lead them. The implied lesson is that senior commanders and their staffs [must] free themselves from the routine busywork of peacetime military life and to plan and carry out frequent, more realistic training exercises for themselves...that will hone skills that otherwise must be bought with blood and, possibly, defeat. [16]

#### Relationship to Previous Studies

There have been few studies of air cavalry. The paper that best addresses air cavalry units and operations in a broad sense is LTC Richard C. Strudeman's Air Cavalry in Perspective. In this document, he addresses the narrow vision of some Army leaders when viewing the application of



air cavalry in future wars. Leaders must remember that what is applicable today will be outdated tomorrow. In my opinion, lessons learned by the 1/9th Cavalry during its combat baptism support LTC Strudeman's conclusions in his research paper entitled, Air Cavalry In Perspective: Before the Helicopter a Tank, Before the Tank a Horse, Before the Helicopter a Tank, Before the Tank a Horse, Before the Horse a Chariot, that air cavalry is a type of unit that is highly adaptable and that leaders must be wary of adopting a narrow vision.

A study with relevance to the air cavalry's historical perspectives and its relationship to the attack helicopter can be drawn from Major Michael L. Brittingham's thesis Attack Helicopter Employment Options.

A comparison of the Howze study and Major General Kinnard's new division and its introduction into combat is found in Major Virgil L. Packett's thesis concerning Airmechanization: The Direction and Dynamics of Army Aviation from a Combined Arms Perspective. In this thesis, Major Packett addresses key challenges that confronted Army Aviation during the formulation of the helicopter into a partner on the combined arms team.

#### Suggestions for Further Research

Today, the primary role of the air cavalry squadron is to find and fix the enemy for its support unit. To gain and

maintain contact, if you will. In this process, the squadron is able to kill or capture and destroy enemy facilities. Large areas can be swiftly and easily reconnoitered using the troop organic aero-scout and aero-weapons platoons, allowing the maneuver element commanders to place the bulk of his forces in other critical areas.

But mission-definition problems still exists. Ground commanders regularly state their mission request to air cavalry units in terms of, "get some gunships out there," or "send your lift ships over to support that air assault." Commanders must understand the employment capabilities of their air cavalry assets. This can be achieved through conducting well planned tactical exercises which integrate the air cavalry squadron into the total tactical plan.

There are many areas which require further study for the betterment of the Aviation Branch, not only for aviation officers but for members of the combined arms team. Because of the limited scope of this thesis, there are many topics which I was unable to address. These include--

- o What employment methods did air cavalry troops use in Vietnam and are they applicable today?

- o How did the air cavalry units in Vietnam perform reconnaissance, security, and economy-of-force missions?

- o How was the new scout or gun pilot introduced to his job when he arrived in Vietnam?

- o How were the aerial observers trained and used?

- o What was the pilot-in-command selection criteria?
- o How did the air troops handle night operations?
- o What services did both the squadron and troop flight operation provide?
- o How did the flight operations section set up and operate?
- o How did the air cavalry squadrons train the individual aviators on the mission?
- o What is contained in the Vietnam era air squadron's tactical standing operating procedure books?
- o How did the squadron and troops handle tactical communications?
- o Were the troops in each squadron standardized; if not, why not?
- o How did the first units who received the OH-58 helicopter handle the training and operation of the M-60 machine guns?

In concluding this study I can not help but draw a connection between the 1/9th Cavalry's experience in 1965 and the challenges facing air cavalry today. Restating a paragraph from Chapter 3, I am concerned with the effectiveness with which we train our divisional air cavalry units today for its possible employment into combat.

In Chapter 3 I wrote about the challenges which faced the U.S. Army in the world. This challenge, which affected the United States in the 1960s, is just as relevant today.

As the United States surveys the world situation in the 1980s and beyond, it will still be faced with myriad divergent military options. Military leaders perceive a threat to America's national security from a modern army in the Soviet Union and its associated Warsaw Pact allies, the oriental armies in Asia. Our leaders are also faced with potential combat operations against irregular forces not only in Central America but world-wide and with the affect that our nuclear deterrence policy in Europe has on a conventional military build-up.

IF the reader learns nothing else from reviewing this study, I wish him to remember that history demonstrates that written doctrine lags behind the actual tactical application of military forces. Because of this, Army units must not only say that they must train as they would fight in combat, but that they must really train as they expect to fight. To not live up to this goal will only cost American lives.

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APPENDIX A  
CAVALRY MISSION EVOLUTIONAL OVERVIEW

## APPENDIX A

### CAVALRY MISSION EVOLUTIONAL OVERVIEW

This appendix presents a broad historical overview of the evolution of the cavalry mission that was not covered in Chapter 3. It adds to the further understanding of air cavalry mission development. From reviewing this appendix, one will be able to then understand the U.S. Army's thought concerning cavalry prior to the deployment of the 1/9th Cavalry into the Vietnam conflict. This, in turn, enables one to understand the use of air cavalry and contrast the air cavalry missions which were assigned with the doctrinal cavalry missions of the 1960s.

There has been little change, historically, in the application of the modern cavalry mission it gradually has evolved into a classical mission possessing the dominate characteristics of mobility, fire power, and shock. Because of these characteristics, including cavalry missions in military operations is desirable. Of the three key characteristics, mobility is the key. (The mode of transportation cavalry uses for mobility advantage is not important.)

Although cavalry is also prepared to use its mobility and fire power on the enemy, the cavalry's primary mission is

to collect information by continual reconnaissance. The cavalry has also evolved into a flexible maneuver force which a ground commander can use for gathering intelligence or, if required, protecting his force.

During the 16th century all european armies adopted the use of cavalry formations as the standard. The formations changed frequently, however, because of the different cavalry employment techniques used by officers commanding in different battles and countries. Because of these variances in cavalry employment, cavalry became less predictable, and the equipment used for riding became lighter. Cavalry had evolved into a light force with a very formidable character. The Hungarian cavalry began the trend by wearing lighter swords on the waist and riding on horse saddles composed of a very light wood. [1] The Hungarian cavalry's missions included raids for supplies, reconnaissance, and outpost service. Generally, these missions, remained unchanged until World war I, where only the names of the missions changed.

Cavalry missions during the 16th and 17th centuries, included overpowering the enemy force using the shock power inherent in the cavalry's mobility and firearms.

During the battle of Pavia in 1525, the Marquis de Pescara mixed his cavalry and infantry formations. Cavalry was ordinarily used to attack enemy forces by using its rapidity of movement with the intent to injure the enemy. [2]



Because the Marquis intermingled his forces the cavalry lost its mobility advantage when the horse soldiers had to restrain their mounts to a trot while charging the enemy. This resulted in a marked reduction in the effectiveness level. The French suffered heavy losses, and the French King and his officers were captured.

No victory could have been more decisive than that won by the [French], and it was supposed to have been secured by the fact of the infantry and cavalry being mixed together. [3]

The Marquis de Pescara had violated one of the fundamental principles on which cavalry forces had originated--proper use of the advantage of the cavalry's mobility.

In 1521, Machiavelli envisioned cavalry as an extension of and complement to the infantry. He did not see it as the army's main force. He wrote that cavalry forces were

necessary to reconnoitre, to scour roads, to make incursions, and lay waste an enemy's country, to beat up their quarters, to keep them in continual alarm, and to cut off their convoys; but in field battles, which commonly decide the fate of nations, and for which armies are chiefly designed, they are fitter to pursue an enemy that is routed and flying than anything else. [4]

During the Thirty Years War, which began in 1618, the cavalry experienced many changes, resulting from the insight of Gustavus Adolphus, the King of Sweden. Gustavus was well educated, acquainted with the practice of war, and fully understood the principles practiced by the great military

leaders of past wars. He applied his notions of cavalry in what we now term a "combined arms" application. Gustavus ensured that the rapid movements of the cavalry would not be slowed by of the infantry.

### Cavalry in the Franco-German War

During the 1870 Franco-German War, the German cavalry was better trained to execute cavalry maneuvers on the battle field than the French cavalry. During the opening cavalry operations of the war, the German cavalry had grown complacent because of the lack of opposition from the French. As a result, during one operation, French soldiers surprised and attacked a German cavalry patrol in a village inn. One may wrongly assume that the German cavalry was undisciplined and therefore probably ineffective. Lieutenant-Colonel Bonie correctly depicted the situation when he wrote,

if one man escaped [from the inn] to tell the tale of what he had seen...the object for which the operation had been undertaken was accomplished. [5]

Lieutenant-Colonel Bonie participated in the Franco-German War and observed the German's employment of their cavalry. He considered it effective and felt the French cavalry was untrained and ineffective. There were many differences between the two countries including knowledge of the country, the French cavalry's inability to place scouts ahead at critical moments, and the French's

insignificant scouting actions. During the Battle of Wissembourg on August 4, 1870, LTC Bonie observed the French cavalry failed to place proper reconnaissance to cover the leading divisions

in such a manner as to render a surprise impossible... [and]...next, to establish a chain of communication between the other divisions, so as to enable them to get timely notice to march to the help of the one attacked. [6]

At dawn one of the field commanders, at dawn, was engaged by the enemy's outposts and accepted battle because he was ignorant of the fact that the enemy had tripled its forces during the night.

According to LTC Bonie, during the battle of Rezonville, the Germans used their cavalry to compensate for a "numerical inferiority," thus creating the much needed delay and allowing for reinforcements to arrive. [7] As French forces advanced,

the more frequently [they] encountered the [German's] cavalry. The German cavalry mission was not to fight, but to watch continually, and this role they carried out to perfection all through the campaign. [8]

LTC Bonie's monograph reveals several missions the cavalry performed. The cavalry reconnoitered, established contact with the enemy, kept contact with the supported headquarters, and "spread itself like a curtain, behind which the commander...maneuvers his troops and makes necessary disposition for a general action." [9] These tactics, placing the cavalry far in advance, to gain and maintain

contact with the enemy, are precisely what makes cavalry forces effective. The Germans used these actions on the eve of the Franco-German War of 1870.

The cavalry must constantly study the enemy's positions. It follows the enemy step-by-step through every move, maintaining a constant watch of the enemy. While observing the enemy the cavalry must ensure that information is reported to all concerned headquarters, and the cavalry must not be fractionated. The French suffered numerous defeats on their flanks because their cavalry was split into useless, ineffective, unsupportable elements.

The role of the cavalry is to vigorously pursue and harass the enemy in every possible way; but if the enemy army is retreating, the place of cavalry must be in the front of the retreating unit.

If it is necessary to give intelligence, it is indispensable to establish a contact [with the enemy] and be acquainted with [the smallest] of the enemy's movements, and...it is not only necessary to guard against surprise, but also [interpret] the enemy's intentions, to understand his dispositions, numbers, and future plans. The fate of great operations depends on the accuracy of these reports.... [10]

During the Franco-German War, the cavalry was only effective when the commanders responsible for employment of cavalry units ensured that the missions assigned were fully and properly delineated.

## Cavalry in the American Civil War

The American Civil War, and more specifically the Gettysburg Campaign, provides insight into historic evolution of the U.S. Army's current methods of employing its cavalry.

Major-General J.E.B. Stuart envisioned the cavalry mission as observing, deceiving, and harassing the enemy. He ensured that his cavalry was always alert and that nothing escaped its observation or that it missed any opportunity to damage the enemy. He directed his commanders to establish observation posts on key, dominant terrain, and to place one main base to watch the enemy and protect his southern force if the enemy moved back beyond an acceptable reach. As long as the northern army remained to the front of his force, he insisted on a screen line being established and maintained. If his cavalry was forced to withdraw, it was to sweep the operational area to ensure that the enemy reconnaissance elements had not infiltrated his lines. His cavalry was to keep the army informed as its movements progressed, and to report anything of importance to the maneuver commander. When the enemy advanced, Stuart's cavalry was to offer such resistance as was justifiable to stop or interfere with the advance to discover the enemy's intentions, and to prevent the enemy from gaining possession of any gaps in the army's lines.

Because of the freedom of movement exercised by cavalry elements, the Civil War armies designed forces to effectively deal with a rear threat which could develop during a retreat. The threatened force would place infantry element in its rear area to protect its retreating forces. This mission was called rear-guard. General Sheridan was one of the first to use this tactic effectively against the Confederate Army during the confederate infantry's retreat to Lynchburg.

#### World War I Cavalry Thought

The cavalry doctrinal thought and cavalry mission definition after World War I was closer to the current U.S. Army operational doctrine. The military was quick to analyze lessons from the war and found that many of those lessons only reinforced past lessons, reaffirming the difficulties and hazards associated with efficient reconnaissance.

Frequently the army found that negative information was the only definite information available. This this was sometimes equal, or of more importance than positive information. Information gathering and distribution being the key.

The initiative and resourcefulness of cavalry reconnaissance must exploit every possible source, in the collection of military information; they, of course, must have the facilities to reach the proper authority in time for their information to be of value. [11]

The never changing guidance for any cavalrymen was found to be still viable in 1923.

Contact with the enemy, once gained, must be maintained if the fullest fruits of any given reconnaissance are to be realized....  
Reconnaissance should be unceasing--relentless! [12]

On many occasions, American forces witnessed how small, French cavalry elements would become isolated and then engage in combat, widely separated from their mounts, thereby jeopardizing their its primary mission. [13] The French had not learned to plan its cavalry operations to ensure they are designed to optimize mutual supportability.

Modern battlefield movement now began to require different demands. Night maneuver was a constant that the American Army instilled in its soldiers by training them to expect it as the norm. Counterreconnaissance was found to be essential to any battle plan. This lesson had been learned during the August 12, 1914, operation at Haelen, Belgium, when the Belgians employed an effective counterreconnaissance screen against the German line. Belgian reconnaissance not only obtained information relating to the enemy, but it also denied the enemy areas and terrain features from which they might gain information of the Belgian main forces. This is the purpose of counterreconnaissance cavalry. The Belgians found that placing reconnaissance well to the front, for the purpose of gaining early information of enemy intentions and denying the enemy the same information, was essential. [14]

The Belgian cavalry's primary mission was that of screening the advance of a force. When this mission was assigned, a zone of action was usually prescribed for its cavalry. The technique the Belgians used was to advance a line of patrols forming the screen from one coordinating line to another. The cavalry units advanced by bounds from one suitable terrain feature to another, and maintained contact with adjoining units. In general, the dispositions of the counterreconnaissance units in a stationary screen were similar to that in a moving screen.

#### Air Cavalry Mission

As I outlined in Chapter 3, the air cavalry's mission was defined during 1965 with the testing of the 11th Air Assault Division at Fort Benning, Georgia. The first operational divisional air cavalry reconnaissance unit was employed in the Republic of Vietnam was the 1st Squadron, 9th Cavalry, of the 1st Cavalry Division. This squadron's general mission was to find and fix enemy forces in order to enable the division commander to react in an appropriate manner. Its mission also included conducting reconnaissance in areas of operations proposed for future missions. screening a ground element, reconnaissance of possible enemy used routes, and reconnaissance to regain contact with the enemy.



Chapter 4 lays out the missions which were conducted by the 1/9th Cavalry during actual combat operations as part of the 1st Cavalry Division. These operations are representative of operations conducted by air cavalry in Vietnam, until the withdrawal of American forces in the 1970s.

With the military's historic experience as a backdrop, the Army's cavalry missions were solidified in cement. When 1965 came to a close, the foundation for the employment of air cavalry was now rooted in the U.S. Army doctrinal combat employment techniques of its leaders.

## ENDNOTES

1. Colonel George T. Denison, A History of Cavalry (1913): 201.
2. Ibid.: 210.
3. Ibid.: 193.
4. Machivelli, Art of War: Translated by Ellis Farnsworth (1965): 55-56.
5. U.S. Infantry and Cavalry School, Cavalry Studies from Two Great Wars (1896): 15.
6. Ibid.: 19.
7. Ibid.: 60.
8. Ibid.: 76.
9. Ibid.: 99
10. Ibid.: 117-118
11. U.S. Infantry and Cavalry School, Cavalry Combat (1937): 78.
12. Ibid.
13. Ibid.: 79.
14. Ibid.: 80-93.

APPENDIX B  
LESSONS LEARNED BY THE 1/9TH CAVALRY

## APPENDIX B

### COMBAT LESSONS LEARNED BY THE 1/9TH CAVALRY

#### B-52 SURVEILLANCE

The appendix outlines the procedures and techniques the 1/9th Cavalry used while conducting surveillance of B-52 strikes in the Republic of Vietnam. The following narrative was prepared by the 14th Military History Detachment & Air Cavalry Historian of the 1st Cavalry Division. The time period covered is from April through October 1966.

The minimum force required for effective surveillance and intelligence exploitation of tactical B-52 strikes is one Air Cavalry Troop reinforced with one reconnaissance platoon of a maneuver battalion. For most economical utilization of the troop's airlift platoon the additional reconnaissance platoon should come from the maneuver battalion located in close proximity to the strike area. The troop conducting the strike reconnaissance must be backed up by a reaction company with responsive lift aircraft. To the extent possible, this company should be organic to the battalion which provides the reconnaissance platoon. Major commanders must be cognizant of the requirement for a maneuver battalion reaction force if the tactical situation developed as a result of the strike reconnaissance necessitates commitment of the company reaction force. Obviously, the committed battalion should have been designated to provide the reconnaissance platoon and the initial reaction company.

Surveillance activities in the strike area are initiated as soon as light and safety conditions permit. Strike surveillance begins at first light for

strikes occurring during hours of darkness. When strikes are scheduled during daylight hours the initial aerial reconnaissance aircraft establish orbits on the periphery of the strike warning area just prior to the scheduled first bomb time. In this position they warn friendly aircraft from inadvertent entry into area during the strike and can immediately enter the area as soon as the 'all clear' is received.

The terrain of the strike area and the imminence of enemy contact dictate the actual surveillance techniques which are employed. When there is a high degree of probability that enemy forces were in the area at the time of the strike, the ground recon elements may be deployed to blocking positions on exit routes concurrently with the first movement of air elements into the area. The more frequent employment has air recon elements making the initial surveillance effort with the troop's organic rifle platoon married with its aircraft in an immediate reaction posture and the supporting recon platoon standing by at its forward landing zone. The Air Cavalry Troop commander makes his estimate on how to best exploit the reconnaissance potential of the strike based on the results of his initial aerial reconnaissance. If indications of enemy personnel, equipment, and facilities are detected, landing zones are selected, and the plan for employment of the ground recon forces is formulated. The ground recon elements should normally be in the strike area within thirty minutes to one hour. Continuous aerial surveillance is maintained of the area from initial entry after the strike until the full intelligence potential of the strike is achieved. All elements participating in the reconnaissance effort, to include weapons ship air crews providing aerial cover, are assessed surveillance responsibilities to assist in the damage assessment, determining the target coverage, and weapons effectiveness. Key personnel from each element participating in the surveillance activity are debriefed by the squadron intelligence officer immediately upon completion of the mission to insure timely collection and dissemination of intelligence information.

The organization and equipment of the Air Cavalry Squadron and Air Cavalry Troop offer ready-made capabilities for exploiting the intelligence value that may be achieved by a tactical B-52 strike. The training and experience of the air crews coupled with the capabilities of the reconnaissance helicopters facilitates the close-in surveillance of the confined areas in which the strikes are normally programmed. The command and control capabilities of the Air

Cavalry Troop enable it to integrate immediately an additional recon platoon into its operations. The intelligence and communication capabilities of the Air Cavalry Squadron Headquarters facilitate the rapid processing of the results of the post strike surveillance." [SIC] [1]

Although the importance of the strategic bombing assessment is important, there are two additional lessons that the the 1st Cavalry learned during its first year in Vietnam. It pioneered the air cavalry's relationship with the Air Force's tactical fighters and also introduced the concept of using a method of combating the NVA through "Hunter-Killer" teams.

In the next several pages, I have recounted the experiences of the soldiers of the 1st Cavalry Division and the lessons that they learned in relation to the air cavalry squadron.

#### Cavalry Troop relationship with IAC Air Cap

A close working relationship between cavalry troops and Air Force tactical air craft (IAC air) produced excellent results. The 1st Cavalry Division recommends that in order to further increase the combat effectiveness of the air cavalry troop during reconnaissance-in-force missions, that an AirForce IAC air capability be provided to attack selected targets. [2]

By connecting the two organizations in areas which were isolated and inaccessible for an hour or an hour and a half can produce effective results.

### Hunter-Killer Technique

The hunter-killer technique employed during operations in Vietnam produced excellent results. Missions provided immediate intelligence, conserved the infantry battalion energies until a target had been found, and avoided the 'brush beating' associated with search operations.

One item that provided increasing effectiveness was the launching of the hunter elements (1/9th Cavalry) early in the morning (0600-0630) and not later than 1600. The VC would habitually seek an opportunity to engage small elements late in the afternoon when reinforcement was difficult because of the existing weather or last-light conditions. The 1st Cavalry Division recommended that the hunter teams be committed at first light each day to ensure there was sufficient light left upon establishing contact to maneuver killer forces (infantry) into positions that would enable the battle to be fought on our terms. [3]

Colonel Moore, the hunter-killer concept while he was the 3rd Brigade commander, thought that the hunter team should be supported by ARA, TAC air, and cavalry firepower. He did not think that artillery should be positioned to support the

hunter operations except when and where it was tactically and logistically inexpensive to do so.

He saw the hunters job as being to seek out the enemy, report its progress to the killer elements, and update the killer elements concerning the new landing zones in which the killer elements were to develop the situation. The killer elements were to be the bulk of an infantry brigade, but slimmed down in order to operate on short-notice and for small amounts of time. [4]

As Colonel Moore stated in writing of this concept "when the killers are committed, the principle of mass both in combat power and helicopter lift, must be observed. The size of the committed force would depend on the situation.

None of this three missions are outlined in any current doctrinal manual in the U.S. Army today. The only experience in how to conduct these mission belongs to those soldiers who employed them in combat in Vietnam. These soldiers now do not exist in our air cavalry units. Therefore, these lessons must be capsilized and taught to our combat cavalry crews of tomorrow before they have to relearn them.



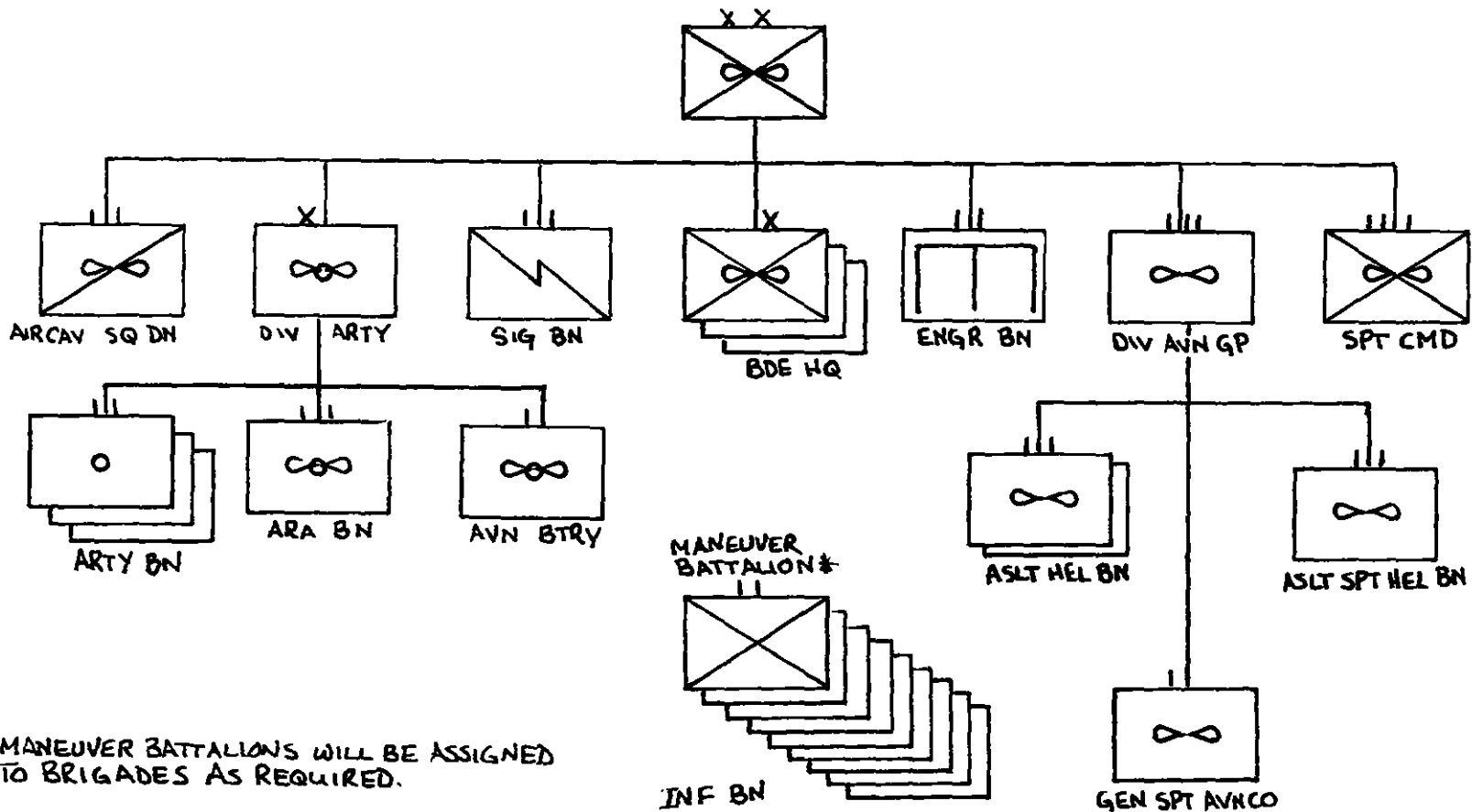
## ENDNOTES

1. U.S. Army. Historical and Briefing Data,  
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and Air Cavalry Staff Historian: 1-1
2. Ibid., 139.
3. Ibid., 137.
4. Ibid., 11-3.

FIGURES

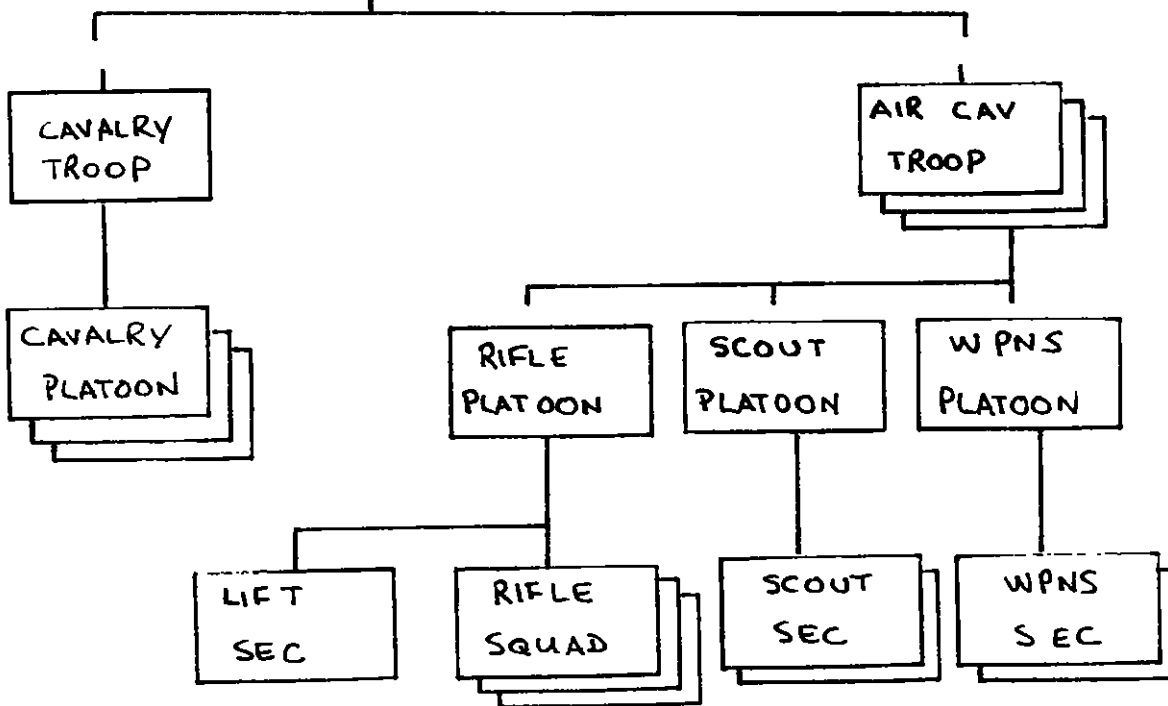
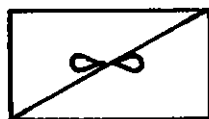
# Organization Chart 1st Cavalry

## DIVISION AIRMOBILE



# Organization Chart

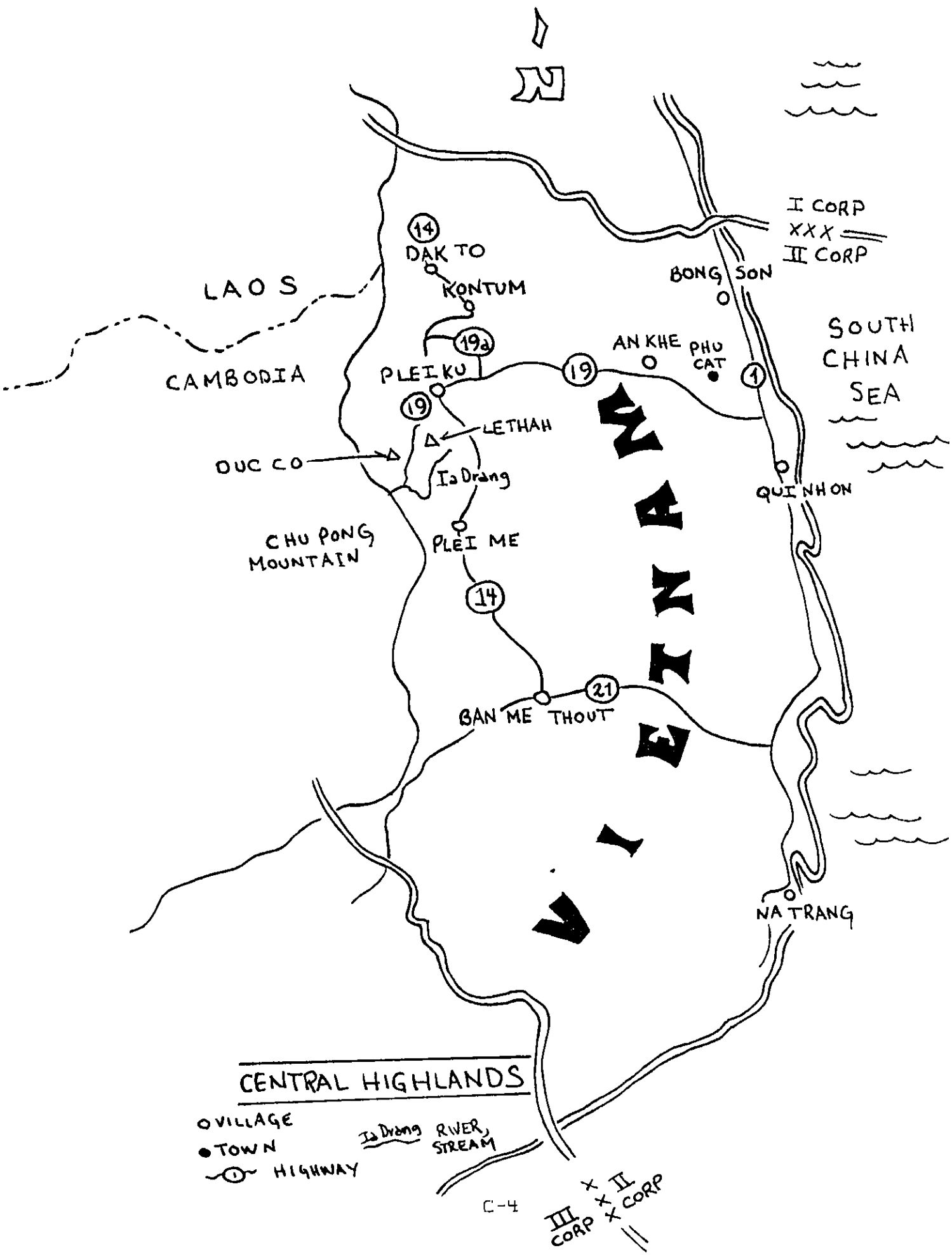
## 1<sup>ST</sup> SQUADRON 9<sup>TH</sup> CAVALRY



AIRCRAFT:	
LOH	30
UH-1B	38
UH-1D	20
	<u>88</u>

WEAPONS:	
Machine gun	37
Grenade Launcher	223
Mortar 81-mm	3
Pistol	507
Rifle	258
Recoilless rifle (106-mm)	6
* Acft subsystem M-16	38
* Acft subsystem XM-7	30

\* M-16 system--4x7.62 machine gun plus 2.75 Rkts x2 on UH-1.  
 \* XM-7 system--4x7.62 machine gun on LOH.





The personable Major General Harry W. O. Kinnard, steering force in the development of the airmobile concept, commander of the experimental 11th Air Assault Division and first commander of the 1st Air Cavalry Division, infused the revolutionary division with his own style and clan when he first took it into combat. After the division surgeon prescribed an eye patch for the general's slight eye injury, MG Kinnard added the insignia of his division. Hardcore . . . and with style. [Source: 1st Cavalry Division, p.216 written by Major J.D. Coleman]



LTC John B. Stockton  
[Source: The First Cavalry Division, p 11 written by Edward Hymoff.]  
C-6



A 1st Squadron, 9th Cavalry, OH-13 observation helicopter lifts off for a reconnaissance mission near An Khe in the Cav's II Corps area of operations.

[Source: 1st Cavalry Division, p 104 written by Major J.D. Coleman]



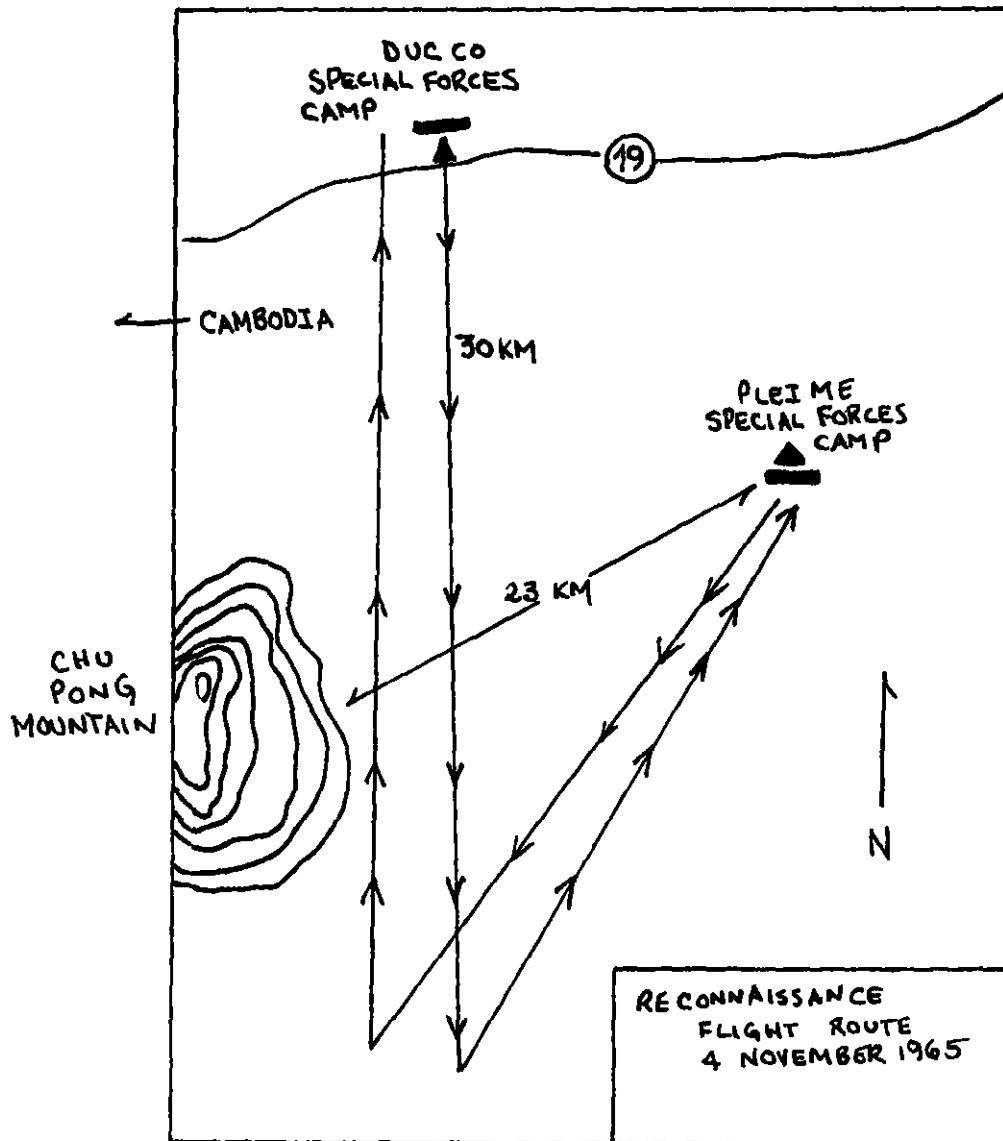


Bravo Troop's "BLUES" being inserted into a reconnaissance mission. The square marking on the helicopter's door identifies the aircraft as belonging to the 1/9 Cavalry. [Source: 1st Cavalry Division, photo written by Major J. D. Coleman]

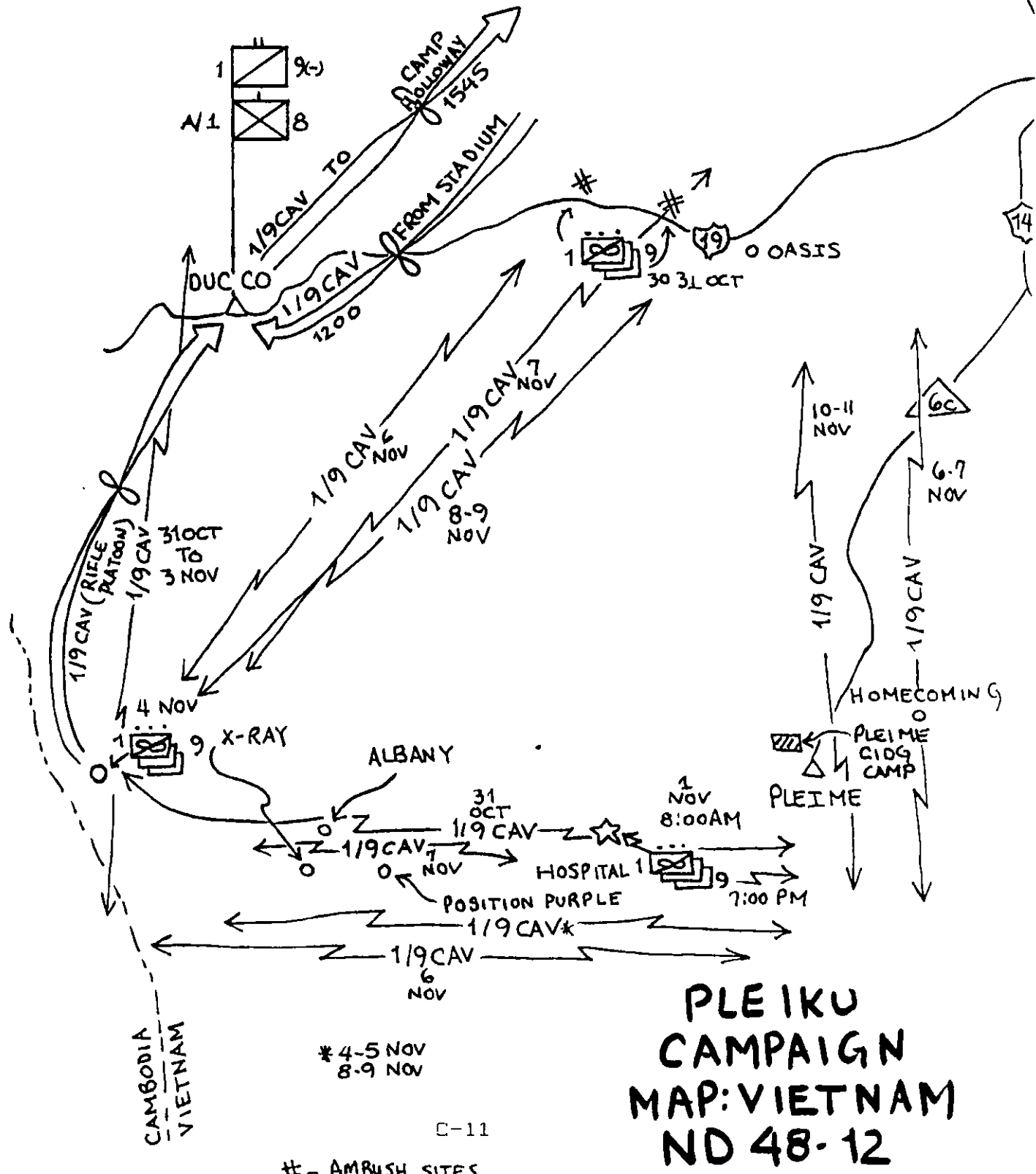


Delta Troop—better known as “The Rat Patrol”—makes a sweep through clearings and jungle in the area surrounding Phuoc Vinh, the division’s III Corps headquarters.

[Source: 1st Cavalry Division, p 107 written by Major J.D. Coleman]



PLEIKU



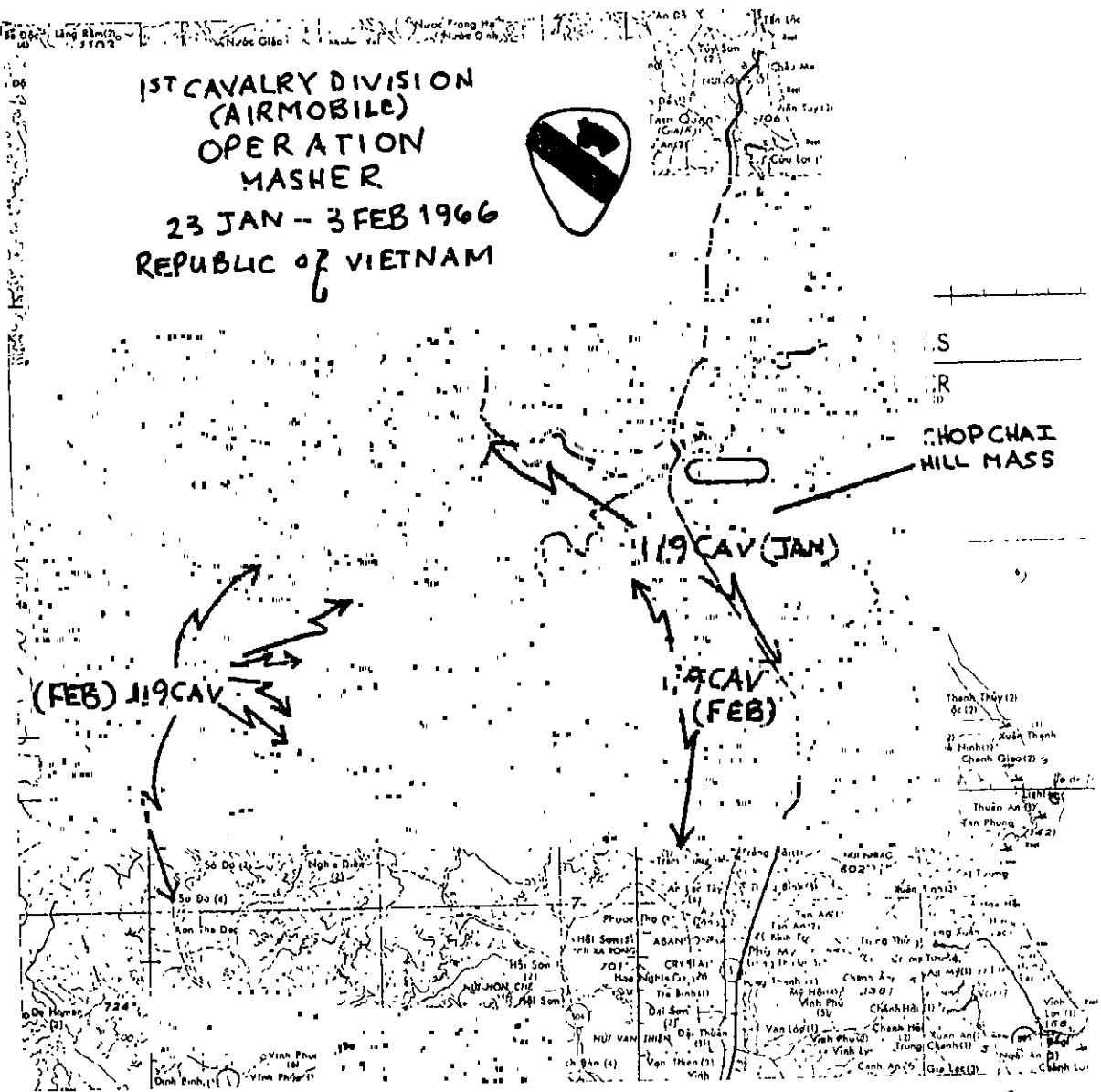
**PLEIKU  
CAMPAIGN  
MAP: VIETNAM  
ND 48-12**

\* 4-5 NOV  
8-9 NOV

C-11

# - AMBUSH SITES

1ST CAVALRY DIVISION  
(AIRMObILE)  
OPERATION  
MASHER  
23 JAN -- 3 FEB 1966  
REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM

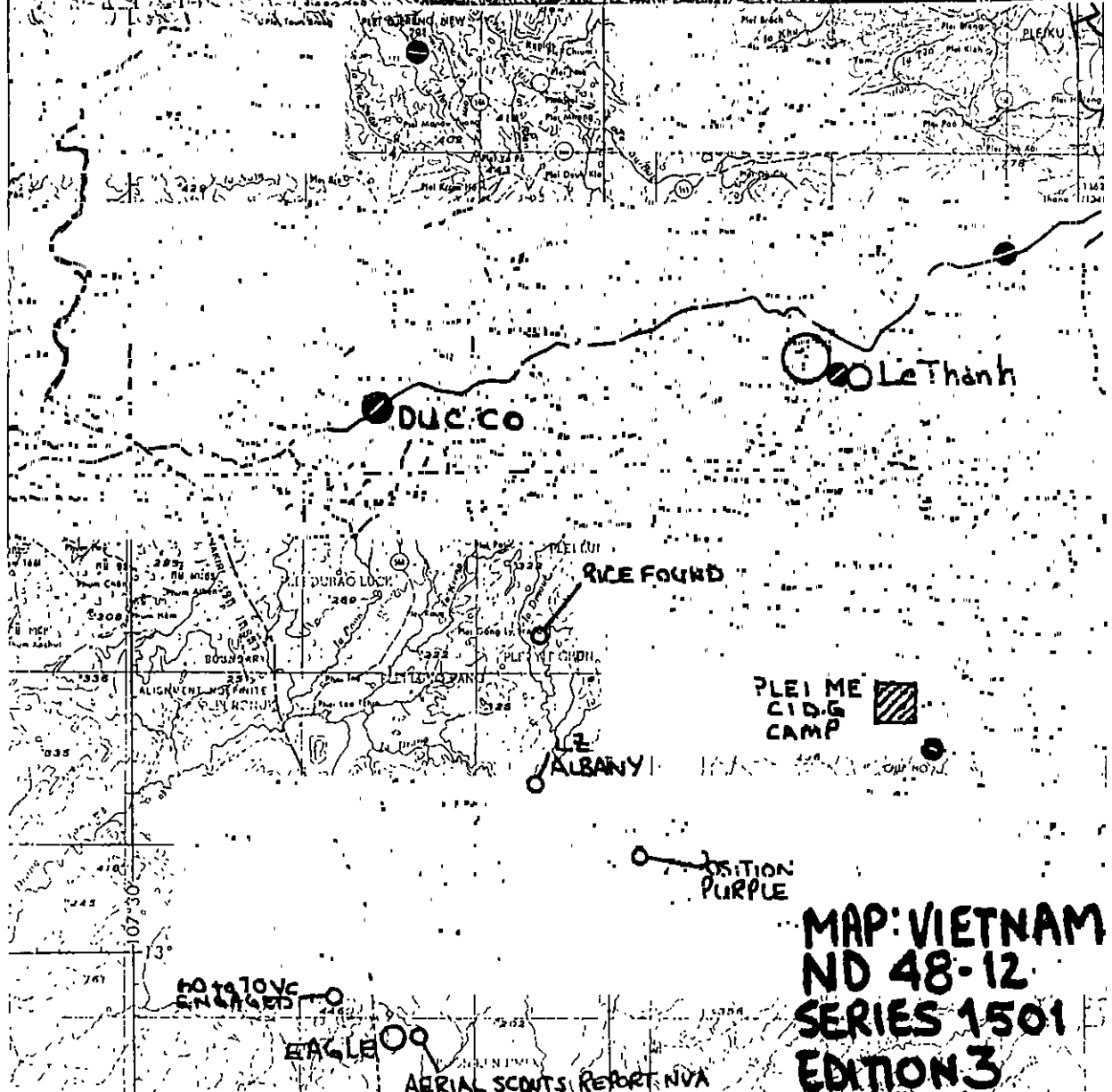


MAP: VIETNAM  
ND49-5  
SERIES 1501  
EDITION 3

1ST CAVALRY DIVISION  
(AIRMOBILE)  
OPERATION  
LINCOLN  
25 MAR - 8 APR 1966  
REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM



MAP VIETNAM  
ND 48-2  
SERIES 1501  
EDITION 4



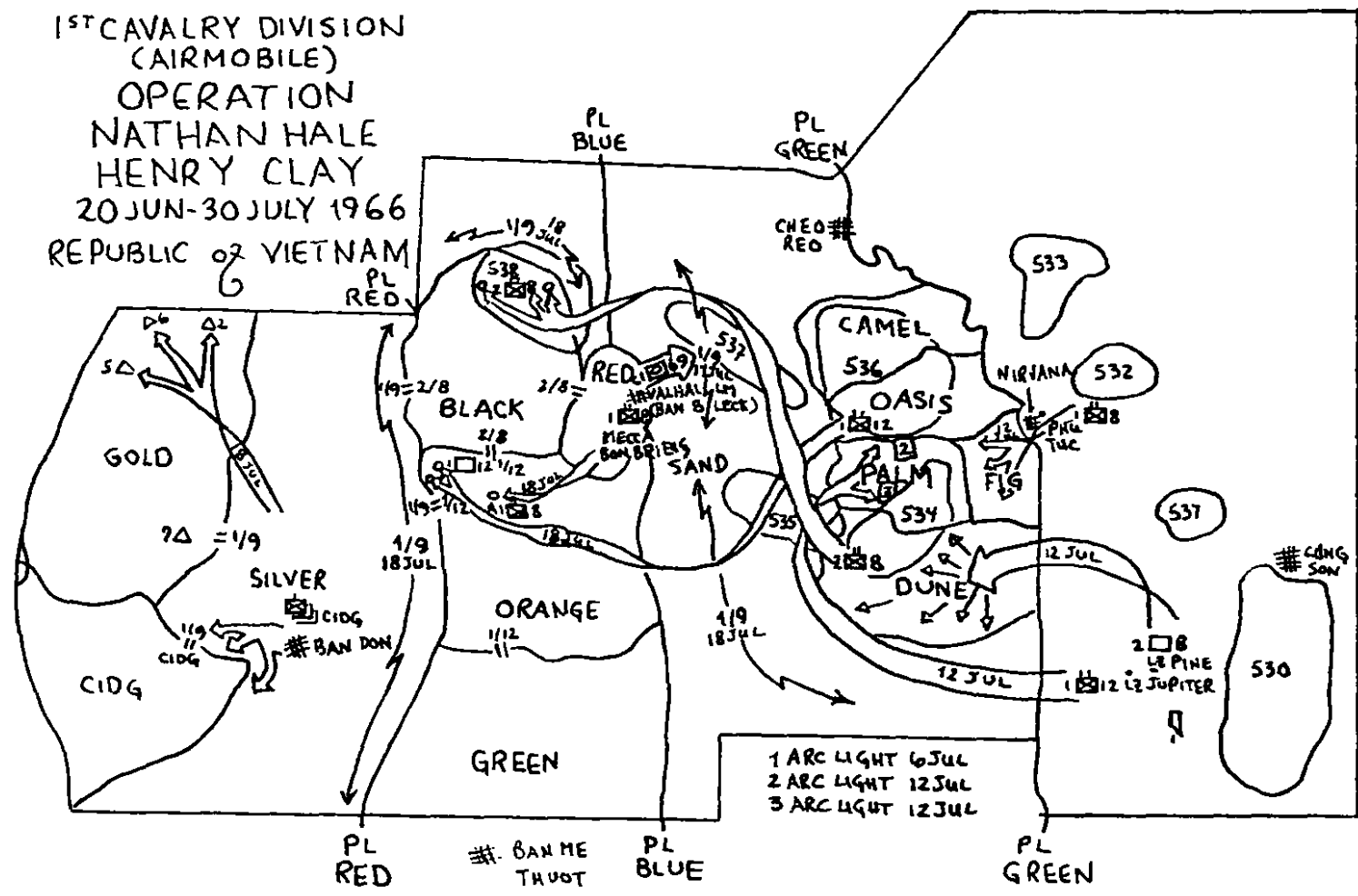
MAP VIETNAM  
ND 48-12  
SERIES 1501  
EDITION 3



"Brigadier General John Norton is welcomed by Major General Harry W.O. Kinnard.  
[Source: The First Cavalry Division, p 81 written by Edward Hymoff.]

1<sup>ST</sup> CAVALRY DIVISION  
 (AIRMOBILE)  
 OPERATION  
 NATHAN HALE  
 HENRY CLAY  
 20 JUN-30 JULY 1966  
 REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM

C-15





## DEFINITIONS AND ABBREVIATIONS

### DEFINITIONS

Attack--Used to search out, attack and destroy enemy targets using conventional or special weapons. Also used for limited interdiction and very close air support missions. Provides armed escort and conventional artillery-type and automatic weapons-type base of fire. When suitably armed, used as highly mobile anti-tank weapon. [Source: Howze Board Recommendations]

Gunship--An armed helicopter.

Lagger Area--An area with a perimeter type defense for local security of aircraft on the ground. Established by aircraft crews in conjunction with any troops in the area. Armed aircraft are positioned so that the weapons can be used in the defense of the perimeter. Area should be inaccessible to enemy forces. [Source: Training Text 17-37-1, August 1967]

Observation--To observe (through visual or other means) and report information concerning composition and disposition of enemy forces, troops, supplies, and to adjust artillery fire.

In addition used in command, control, liaison, lightweight resupply, reconnaissance, and emergency evacuation. [Source: Training Text 17-37-1, August 1967]

Reaction Force--Standby relief or reenforcement force.

Surveillance--The systematic and continuous observation of the battlefield including selected areas, routes, or static locations; such as, crossroads, bridges, aircraft landing areas, or other specific installations. Factors influencing surveillance are visibility, terrain, natural or man-made concealment, enemy air defense capabilities (aerial surveillance), and types of surveillance equipment. Units performing surveillance missions provide commanders with current information by keeping a systematic watch over the assigned surveillance area for detecting, locating, identifying, and reporting information of military value. [Source: Training Text 17-37-1, August 1967]

## ABBREVIATIONS

### A

ACT .....Air Cavalry troop  
AFB.....Air Force base  
AH-1S.....Attack Helicopter, Model Number 1S  
AO.....Area of Operations  
ARA.....Aerial Rocket Artillery  
arty.....Artillery  
ARVN.....South Vietnamese Army  
aslt.....Assault  
avn.....Aviation

### B

BC.....body count  
bde.....brigade  
BG.....brigadier general  
bn.....battalion  
BS (B.S.).....Bachelor of Science  
btry.....battery

C

CARL.....Combined Arms Research Library  
Cav.....Cavalry  
CIDG.....Civilian Irregular Defense Group  
Cmd.....Command  
CO.....Company  
Col.....Colonel  
CP.....Command Post  
Cpt.....Captain

D

div.....division

E

enrg.....engineer  
est.....estimated  
EW.....east-west

F

FC.....field circular  
FM.....field manual; frequency modulated

G

gen.....general

gp.....group

H

hel.....helicopter

HQ.....headquarters

I

ibid.....ibidem (latin)--in the same place

i.e.....that is

inf.....infantry

incl.....inclusion

K

KIA.....Killed in Action

Km.....kilometer

L

LOH.....light observation helicopter

LIC.....Lieutenant Colonel

D-S

LIG.....Lieutenant General

LZ.....Landing Zone

M

MA (M.A.).....Master of Arts

MACV.....Military Assistance Command, Vietnam

MG.....Major General

Maj.....Major

MM.....Millimeter

MMAS.....Master of Military Art and Science

N

NS.....North-South

NVA.....North Vietnamese Army

O

OH-13/SB.....Observation Helicopter,  
Model Number 13 and SB

P

P.....Promotable

PAVN.....People Army of Vietnam

PL.....Phase Line  
prov.....provisional

R

RCS.....  
ret.....retired  
ROAD.....Reorganization Objectives, Army  
Division

S

sec.....section  
SIC.....(Latin)--indicates error in the  
original source quote  
sig.....signal  
spt.....support  
sqdn.....squadron

T

tac.....tactical  
TAC air.....tactical aircraft (Normally Air Force)  
TAOR.....tactical area of responsibility  
TF.....task force  
TOE.....tables of organization and equipment

TRADOC.....Training and Doctrine Command  
TT.....training text

U

UH-1B/1D.....Utility Helicopter, Model  
Number 1B and 1D

USA (U.S).....United States of America;  
United States

USAAC.....

USSF.....United States Special Forces

Unk.....Unknown

U

VC.....Vietnamese Communists; Viet Cong



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