

Copy No. _____
101st Aslt Hel Bn
160th Avn Group
Republic of Vietnam

STANDING OPERATING PROCEDURES NO. 2

TACTICAL

1. GENERAL:

a. Purpose: This SOP standardizes all 101st Assault Helicopter Battalion units operational procedures and expedites planning, facilitates control, and insures timely, professional execution of airmobile operations. It provides the commanders and staff officers throughout the battalion with guidance required to plan and conduct airmobile operations as they are received as mission by this headquarters.

b. Conformity: Subordinate units will conform. All officers and ranking enlisted men will familiarize themselves with these contents.

c. Revisions: The S-3 has primary staff responsibility for the maintenance of this SOP. Recommendations for revisions will be submitted to the S-3 in writing.

d. Definitions: (ANNEX A)

2. MISSION ASSIGNMENTS:

a. The 101st Assault Helicopter Battalion is assigned to the 160th Aviation Group, 101st Air Cavalry Division. The battalion provides tactical mobility for combat troops, supplies, and equipment of the 101st Air Cav Division during the conduct of airmobile operations.

b. Missions will normally be assigned to the battalion by the 160th Aviation Group.

c. For missions involving fifteen troop carriers (UH-1 aircraft) or less, this headquarters will assign the mission to a Company Commander. In this type operation the initial coordination and planning is the responsibility of the selected Company Commander. Signal, Logistical, and pathfinder support will be provided by this headquarters as required. The operation will be controlled from a C&C aircraft provided by the selected company.

NND 873544
Authoritative
By ADM, USA
Date 10-10-87

STANDING OPERATING PROCEDURES NO. 2 Con't

d. For missions involving sixteen or more troop carriers, this headquarters will plan, coordinate, and control the operation as a battalion effort.

3. AIRMOBILE OPERATIONS:

a. General:

(1) All airmobile operations are directed towards supporting ground forces in combat. No Army aviation operation is an end in itself. All operations must be keyed to provide the best possible support. Each individual involved with the airmobile operation must thoroughly understand the mission objectives and what impact their individual efforts and tasks will have on its accomplishment.

(2) This SOP is aimed primarily at airmobile operations utilizing the UH-1 helicopters assigned or attached to this headquarters. However, the consideration to utilize the CH-47 in conjunction with UH-1 assault operations must not be neglected. Planning considerations such as utilization of the same PZ's and LZ's as well as refueling must be made.

(3) The use of good common sense along with available experience will insure a successful assault operation. The following items will usually mark the degree of excellence in mission accomplishment and should be emphasized.

(a) Attitude: Success in the conduct of any operation, but especially in airmobile operation, is achieved by a combination of imagination, tactical intuition, discipline, and determination on the part of every commander and staff officer involved. Attitude determines more often than not, whether any particular mission is a failure or success.

(b) Flexibility: Flexibility may be defined as the ability to adopt to change in order to successfully accomplish the mission. The skillful commander or staff officer is able to achieve flexibility by proper planning and briefing.

(c) Accuracy: Accuracy is a work of professionalism. Reports, positive control, and adherence to time schedules and flight routes must all be accurate to have any meaning. The successful commander or staff officer will check computations to insure accuracy before allowing any operation to commence. Strive for complete accuracy in every task.



STANDING OPERATING PROCEDURES NO. 2 Cont

b. Four Phases of Airmobile Operations:

(1) General: The following items of information are minimum essential and must be coordinated prior to the conduct of an airmobile operation.

(a) Sequence of Events Time Schedule: Allow for adequate time to insure that aviation elements will be able to comply with schedule.

(b) Organization of Loads: i.e., ACL? How much equipment? How many sorties?

(c) Rules of Engagement and Suppressive Fires:
(ANNEX G & H)

(d) Fire Support: (ANNEX U)

(e) Communications, frequencies and callsigns.
(ANNEX C)

(f) Alternate plans due to weather delays, changes in PZ's or LZ's, enemy actions, ect. ANNEX J and B)

(g) Location, organization, and control of the PZ. This is a very critical area during all airmobile operations and use of pathfinders is encouraged. (ANNEX I)

(h) Available security forces for downed aircraft.
(ANNEX P)

(i) Command and control

(2) Phase I: Joint Briefing, General Planning and Coordination.

(a) General: This phase will be discussed for the three different types of airmobile operations, (Bn, Co, Plat). As far in advance as possible, the B O C will notify units of pending operations and will provide all available information for coordination. The battalion liaison section will make every attempt to establish liaison with supported unit for battalion operations as far in advance as possible to assist the supported unit and its respective aviation officer in the initial planning for the operation. When requested, this liaison will be provided to support company sized operations.



STANDING OPERATING PROCEDURE NO. 2 Con't

(b) Aviation Battalion Operations: Normally there will be adequate time available prior to a battalion size operation for the liaison officer to coordinate with the aviation Officer of the supported unit and to formulate the aviation annex of the supported units operation plan. The Battalion Commander, S-3, LNO, S-2, and pathfinder representative, when required will normally attend the briefing by the supported unit when it issues its order. At this time final details can be coordinated. Upon completion of the briefing, if time allows, the Battalion Commander and S-3 will make a physical recon of the PZ and LZ with the supported unit Commander and his S-3. This recon will normally be made from the air during which the routes of flight, landing direction, and final details concerning the PZ and LZ will be coordinated. The S-2 will collect any intelligence information available and make known the intelligence affecting the airmobile operation to the supported unit. The pathfinder representative will coordinate the details of the PZ by a visual recon. The primary objectives of this coordination meeting and recon are to enable the ground commander to complete his airmobile operation plan and to enable the Aviation Battalion Commander to return to the battalion headquarters with enough detailed information to present an aviation briefing and publish an operations order.

(c) Aviation Company Operations: The company operations will generally follow the same procedures as outlined in "b" above, with the exception that there will probably be less time available to perform the required coordination. A written order is not normally expected. The unit commander or his operations officer will perform the functions as outlined for the Battalion Commander and S-3 above. On many occasions, this liaison will be performed late in the evening before the operation and a recon of the PZ's and LZ's may not be possible, therefore all available sources of information concerning these two areas should be exploited. These sources may be experienced crews, available large scale maps, photos, and sketches. A briefing upon the return from the coordination meeting will be conducted for air crews conducting the operation. The Air Mission Commander is responsible for providing the briefing information to any attached companies or sections.

(d) Platoon/Section Operations: These operations will normally be considerably smaller than company operations. A typical example of a Platoon/Section operation would be support of a special forces operation with two UH-1 and one LFT. All of the coordination relevant to the operation will normally occur when the aircraft involved reports to the designated place at the designated time.



STANDING OPERATING PROCEDURES NO. 2 Con't

The same general steps outlined in paragraph "b" above should be followed. The Air Mission Commander (Platoon or Section Leader) is responsible for briefing his sections. The amount of detail and coordination is greatly reduced due to the size of the operation.

(3) Phase II: Planning, Briefing, and Publishing of the Aviation Order.

(a) General:

(1) One of the keys to a successful airmobile operation is the dissemination of required information to all elements to provide flexibility during the actual conduct of the operation. Normally, for all battalion operations, a written order will be published and a briefing will be conducted.

(2) During the conduct of company operations, the same considerations should be made with the exception that a written order and overlay will not normally be utilized. In place of the written order a detailed briefing for all aircraft commanders should be conducted.

(3) The coordination and briefing requirements for a Platoon/Section Airmobile Operation can be reduced. However, as a minimum, the MIC should brief all his crew members on the items as outlined.

(b) Planning: Upon the completion of the coordination meeting with the supported unit commander and the issuance of his order, adequate detailed data should be available for the S-3 to formulate and publish the operations order. During this phase, the task organization and the detailed time schedule should be formulated. The use of templates graduated in time to various map scales assist in selecting the detailed route of flight, IP's, ACP's and RP's. In formulating the operation order the following subjects must be closely monitored.

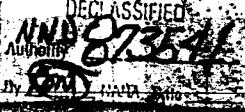
(1) Allow for adequate time for units to form up in the air upon departure from PZ.

(2) Establish all formations and altitudes.
(ANNEX K AND W)

(3) Enroute reports required.

(4) Description of LZ (sketch or photo if possible.)

(5) Rules of engagement and suppressive fire instructions (ANNEX G and H).



STANDING OPERATING PROCEDURE NO. 2 Con't

- (6) Supporting fires (ANNEX U)
- (7) Marking of LZ
- (8) Downed A/C procedures (ANNEX P)
- (9) Spare A/C and their control.
- (10) Diagram and procedures to be utilized in the refueling area and allowance for adequate time for refueling.

(c) Briefing and publishing of the aviation order: The written aviation order should be issued at the briefing conducted for representatives of each participating aviation element. Normally the following personnel will attend the briefing.

- (1) Battalion Commander
- (2) S-2
- (3) S-3
- (4) S-4
- (5) CO and OPNS OFF of each participating aviation unit.
- (6) Fire support representatives (Arty LnO, ALO, ETC)
- (7) Liaison Officers if Utilized.
- (8) Communications Officer
- (9) Representatives of supported units (Dn CO's, S-3's, etc)
- (10) Pathfinder Commander.
- (11) Others designated by the BN CO.

Upon completion of the briefing, all problems should be identified and solved and the complete plans should be ready for implementation.

(4) Phase III: Mission Execution.

- (a) General: During this phase, timing is of utmost importance. If the aircraft depart the PZ in the correct formation, sequence and on time, and adequate time has been allowed to form up and meet the IP time, a successful operation is underway.

STANDING OPERATING PROCEDURE NO. 2 Con't

if the order has been issued with sufficient detail, the required flexibility will be available in the event last minute changes are required due to the tactical situation.

(b) Battalion Operations:

(1) General: The battalion C & C aircraft should arrive in the PZ early enough to coordinate the last minute changes. Upon arrival, the flight leader of each element will report to the C & C aircraft to obtain these changes from the AMC. If a weather ship is to be utilized, it should be dispatched at this time. When the flight leaders return to their flights, the aircraft commanders should be briefed on changes received. The C & C aircraft will normally depart the PZ with the supported unit's command element in order to be in the objective area during the artillery/air preparation and to control the gun ships.

(2) Composition of the C & C party: Normally the Aviation Battalion Commander and his S-3 will be operating the C & C aircraft. The supported unit will have on board, the AMTF Commander, Battalion S-3, Artillery LNO, and the ALO. On occasion the supported unit's Sergeant Major will accompany the ground Battalion Commander.

(3) Gunship Utilization: For Battalion assault operations, normally one gunship flight per aviation company participating will be required. These will be heavy or light teams, depending on the predicted tactical situation. One flight will be utilized in the recon and preparation of the LZ, usually during the final moments prior to the arrival of the lift aircraft, and will also mark the LZ with smoke at the exact touchdown location of the lead ship. Two smoke grenade s will always be thrown. The remaining teams will be utilized for escort of the flights enroute to the objective area and as a cover for any downed aircraft. It must be remembered that special considerations are required for gunships due to rearming time and fuel limitations. (AMEN 0)

(4) Reports required by the Flight Element: Normally the following reports will be made by each flight element leader to the C & C aircraft.

- a Time departing PZ
- b Time Crossing IP
- c Time Crossing ACP's



STANDING OPERATING PROCEDURE NO. 2 Con't

- d Time at RP
- e Time departing LZ
- f Time arriving at PZ
- g Any unusual circumstance; ie; ground fire, downed A/C, etc.

(5) Smoke Aircraft: The smoke aircraft will normally join the flight at the release point. The aircraft commander will notify the flight leader of the lead unit when the smoke A/C is in position. The smoke aircraft will monitor UHF and VHF so as to keep posted on the gunships as well as the slicks. The C & C aircraft will give final approval on the area to be screened. (ANNEX H)

(6) As the lead elements of the troop carriers approach the LZ, armed helicopters engaged in pre-strike and reconnaissance will shift to areas away from the LZ. Armed escort helicopters will assume the suppressive fire role while the troop carriers are landing, unloading and departing the LZ.

(7) The Mission Commander will insure that, whenever possible, all troop elements land and depart in formation to decrease exposure to hostile fire and facilitate the suppressive fire mission of the escort aircraft. The standard to be achieved is simultaneous touchdown and take off of all aircraft, with a maximum of ten seconds on the ground.

(8) Communications: (ANNEX C)

(9) Spare Aircraft: The C & C aircraft will control the spares. The spare A/C will normally be left in the PZ area and can be dispatched by contacting the pathfinder or control agency at that location. Every effort will be made to insure the total number of aircraft committed to the operation will always be available. Spare aircraft will start engines at the same time as the lift aircraft in the PZ and remain running and listening to Bn UHF until all lift elements depart the PZ. The spare A/C may then shut down but the crew will remain on a five minute stand by. The gunner will report to the pathfinder section to relay any messages.

(10) The recovery (maintenance) aircraft and medical evacuation aircraft will be controlled by the C & C. (ANNEX P and V)

(11) The remainder of the operation will follow the procedures as outlined for subsequent lifts with the addition of the refueling operation between lifts.

STANDING OPERATING PROCEDURE NO. 2 Con't

A PRC 25 radio will be carried by each flight leader so that the flight may be readily contacted while the aircraft are shut down. This radio will be operated on the designated frequency (normally the battalion primary FM at all times while the aircraft are shut down. Upon completion of the lift, the C & C aircraft will normally drop off the C & C party of the supported unit in the LZ.

(c) Company Operations

(1) Company operations generally follow the same procedures on those outlined for battalion operations. It will not be unusual for a company to participate in a battalion operation during a morning and then conduct several other assault operations on their own that afternoon. This requires a great deal of flexibility and sufficient personnel to coordinate and operate a company and still provide mission commanders.

(2) C & C aircraft. The CO and his Operations Officer will generally operate in the same fashion as the BN CO and S-3. However communications are somewhat different. Sometimes there will not be a C & C console. The supported units must provide PRC 25 radios for their use or a "Y" cord connected to a rear selection box in the aircraft will provide the ground commander the use of the aircraft's FM radio. The AMG may also be responsible for providing a spare A/C, control of the aircraft recovery and medical facilities. Additional support required will be provided, if available, from other battalion resources.

(5) Phase IV After Action Debriefing: Many things can be learned by critiquing each operation upon its completion. Habitual association of an aviation understanding and a smooth operation. Upon the completion of each airmobile operation the AIC should attempt to discuss with the supported unit commander any problems that when corrected would improve future operations. Nothing formal is required. The AIC should also debrief the aircrews that participated in the operation.

4. LESSONS LEARNED:

a. General: Many lessons have been learned by other units here in South Vietnam. In order to properly benefit from these lessons, some of the most important are presented here for implementation into our operations. The scope of the following comments will cover both battalion and company size operations. However, most entries are inter-related and all well worthy of note.

DECLASSIFIED
AM 873544
Author: [Signature]
by [Signature]

STANDING OPERATING PROCEDURE NO. 2 Cont'd

b. Commanders should insure that, when planning flight routes into LZ's in the proximity of waterways, over flights at low level or on final approach must not be made. An alternate route in nearly all cases can be found.

c. The use of "H" hour in an OPORD and its subsequent "H-Plus", should a delay occur, would deny the enemy knowledge of the exact time of an insertion.

d. Weather delays create a situation wherein aviation elements are highly vulnerable to mortar or recoilless rifle attacks. When planning weather delay increments, serious consideration should be given to the amount of ground time resulting once all aircraft finally close at the staging base. Extended ground time may be invitations to disaster.

e. Gunships should be given a refueling priority at all PCL locations. When a fire team arrives, other ships should allow gunships immediate access to the PCL points.

f. PCL consumption is a consideration which cannot be over emphasized. The average fuel consumption of the UH-1H is 600 pounds of JP-4 fuel per hour. The company IWO should be consulted to assist in computing PCL requirements. Refueling and supply areas must be picked with rotor wash in mind. Avoid, when ever possible, dusty or sandy areas, tents, bamboo or thatch huts, mess areas, and parked fixed wing aircraft.

g. During large scale airmobile operations involving two Infantry Battalions or more, the AMC, at coordination meetings, should stress the importance of one C & C aircraft with only the Brigade Commander and his staff on board. This accomplishes, first, assured unity of command, in that one and only one commander is at the helm of the airmobile assault, and second, logically, two more aircraft, aircraft which would have been assigned to Battalion Commanders, can be released to support the insertion. Once the airmobile assault is complete, aircraft can then be assigned to individual Battalion Commanders in support of their smaller unit missions.

h. To insure maximum depth of control in the event of the loss of the C & C aircraft, in airmobile operation alternate ATFC's and AMC's will be designated. Normally the ATFC will designate an assistant Bn S-3 whereas the AIC usually will designate a Company Commander from a participating AMC.

STANDING OPERATING PROCEDURE NO. 2 Con't

In the event the alternate Command Group is utilized, the designated AAC will utilize one of his A/C as the C & C.

i. Engaging an enemy target by the C & C aircraft could well result in the loss of all commanders on board, an Army helicopter, and if lost at a critical time, the success of the airmobile assault. A decision to engage an enemy target by a C & C aircraft during the conduct of an airmobile assault is, at best, highly imprudent.

j. Pilots of C & C aircraft should use discretion in the area and altitude in which they choose to fly their aircraft. The loss of a Battalion or Brigade Commander as a result of negligence on the part of an aviator is an offense most grave in nature. Not only is the loss of life involved, but also the success of the operation. Aviators knowing fire to have originated from a specific area, must make the ground command aware of the impending hazard of flying within effective range of the weapon.

k. During coordination conferences, or whenever contact is made with an Air Force FAC, the "Daisy Cutter" should be requested by name as a type of ordnance to be expended in any LZ suspected to be mined.

l. Commanders should insure that all aviators understand that the instructions to "pick your spot" are not synonymous with "disband". Flight integrity through the maintenance of a formation must be maintained. "Pick your spot" merely indicates that caution and discretion should be used in the point of touchdown.

m. It is imperative that prior contact be established with the unit to insure the selection of a safe landing or parking area during resupply missions. Many times rotary wing aircraft are required to park near the perimeter of friendly units which are protected by claymore mines. Static electricity during storms has caused some of these mines to detonate.

n. Combat extractions immediately prior to darkness should be avoided whenever possible. The enemy, knowing little can be done to counter his activities with the onset of darkness, may attempt to ambush a force with intense ground fire. Recovery of downed aircraft becomes extremely hazardous during this period.