

26A
Center

Operation YELLOWSTONE

The largest airmobile operation conducted by the 269th Combat Aviation Battalion occurred on 8 December 1967. Six weeks prior to that date, the 269th Combat Aviation Battalion was alerted to support the 25th Infantry Division in Operation YELLOWSTONE. The support of YELLOWSTONE constituted one of the largest commitments of an aviation battalion to an airmobile operation in the history of combat assaults. Six airmobile companies were utilized to insert two full brigades of US infantry. Con-junctive with the assaults was the conduct of an enormous logistical air-lift employing 33 medium CH-47 helicopters and a platoon of heavy CH-54 sky-cranes. A total of 200 logistical sorties were flown from rear area base camps to forward field locations in a steady flow of aircraft maintaining a planned two minute separation. The combined use of UH-1 aircraft in assaults and cargo helicopters in re-supply activities succeeded in placing in the Operational Area a great number of ground forces and an immense logistical back up in a relatively few number of hours.

To properly account for the sizeable achievement, credit primarily must be given to the luxury of planning time. The six weeks allotted were sufficient to insure that every facet of coordination had been accomplished and every contingency had been fully explored.

Certain problems were inherent in the planning phases of the assault. To rapidly implace the desired number of troops and tonnage of equipment into the LZ, forward staging areas were a necessity. Based on the logistical requirements of the participating aircraft and a large space requirement for cargo and troop massing areas, SOUI DA and DAU TIENG were selected for troop lifts, and TAY NINH WEST for cargo.

The nearly 150 aircraft employed in the conduct of the operation presented a refueling requirement at each of the forward staging areas. Fuel points were established at SOUI DA and additional points were furnished to support the assault. To expedite the refueling processes, however, it was necessary to direct the type aircraft which would be permitted to operate at each POL area. Since all logistical resupply was to be flown from TAY NINH, CH-47 and CH-54 aircraft would be serviced there. Lift ships of the six participating airmobile companies would refuel at the twenty points of DAU TIENG. Since only temporary fuel points had been installed at SOUI DA, refueling there was limited to gunships, smoke ships and command and control aircraft. This proved a most satisfactory arrangement and, as

such, presented no problem whatsoever during the conduct of the operation.

A very unique task confronted the Battalion Operations Section, however was the scheduling of CH-47 and CH-54 resupply sorties. Over 200 sorties were required to be placed into an LZ according to an itinerary of 100 in the morning and 100 in the afternoon. Utilizing 33 CH-47 and 2 CH-54, a schedule was developed insuring maximum utilization of aircraft. Having little experience in large scale Chinook operations from which to draw on CH-47 sorties were scheduled two minutes apart for the entire day at pre-determined air speeds.

Another area heretofore somewhat unique to 269th operations was the controlling of the immense tonnage of cargo moved from the PZ at TAY NINH to the LZ at KATUM. Extensive use of Pathfinder and Pathfinder technique assisted immeasurably in successfully inserting the logistical trains needed for the continued conduct of YELLOWSTONE.

Overall, the operation proved a substantial achievement for the 269th. The ease with which the operation was conducted was a tribute to the plan and professionalism of the Black Baron Combat Aviation Battalion.