

269th Launches Huge Operation

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A classic example of an Air Mobile operation at brigade level and one of the largest air mobile operations to date was recently launched by the 269th Cbt Avn Bn in conjunction with the 25th Inf Div.

All three battalions of the 2d Bde, 25th Inf Div were airlifted into a heavily wooded area five miles west of Go Da Ha near the Cambodian border to begin a massive search and seal operation. The entire force was moved in less than one and one half hours. The highly synchronized operation included the many Pickup Zones (PZ's) being operated expertly by the 269th "Black Barons" Pathfinder Detachment "Caveliers"; who readied both troops and cargo for their air-mobile delivery. Due to the close proximity of the Cambodian border, the area was extensively prepped by heavy artillery strikes which preceded the numerous gunships' prep of the Landing Zones (LZ's) prior to the slicks entering. Timely coordination between the Ground Commander and the Air Mission Commander was essential to the success of the operation due to the enormous size of the Air Mobile force and the limited weather conditions which prevailed throughout the entire operation. Despite a ceiling of less than 1,000 feet, the multi-lift missions continued on schedule.

The 1st Bn (Mech) 5th Inf, the 1st Bn 27th Inf, and the 2d Bn 27th Inf of the 2d Bde, 25th Inf Div were airlifted from three field locations near Trang Bang

and Go Da Ha into six separate landing zones. The operation, which called for precise, well planned and executed flights by the five assault helicopter companies involved, was conducted in five two-company flights and one single company flight. On one occasion as many as forty troop carrying helicopters made simultaneous landings in two different LZ's.

The Air Armada included the 116th "Hornets", the 187th "Black Hawks", the 188th "Black Widow"; all from the 269th Combat Aviation Battalion "Black Barons". The 173d Aslt Hel Co "Robin Hoods" and the 162d AHC "Vultures" from the 11th Cbt Avn Bn also participated in the action under the operational control of the "Black Barons".

Twenty gunships from the respective companies involved, besides prepping the many LZ's, helped seal the eastern and western boundaries of the large area with machine gun and rocket fire. The gun teams involved included the 116th AHC "Stingers", the 187th AHC "Rat Pack", the 188th AHC "Spiders", the 173d AHC "Cross Bows" and the 16th AHC "Copperheads".

The 269th Cbt Avn Bn smoke ship "Smoky Baron" covered for the approaching slicks, laying dense smoke screens in six of the Landing Zones. The heavier Infantry equipment was later carried in by Chinook helicopters from the 205th Aslt Spt Hel Co "Geronimos" under the operational control of the "Black Barons."

Source: Topic Lightning News,