

AVIATION TEAM SAVES DOWNED CAV CHOPPER

COMBAT

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A highly specialized team of 1st Air Cavalry Division helicopters working with Air Force forward controllers and fighter-bombers recovered a downed helicopter which had been shot down near the Viet Cong held village of Nui Ong some 36 miles east of An Khe.

The downed aircraft had been on a routine Special Forces mission when it came under heavy ground fire, took a round in the engine and was forced down in a rice paddy.

A second Huey immediately landed and made a daring rescue, taking off with 13 men and the downed ship's radio gear aboard.

Less than three hours later, a force of twenty helicopters under the command of Lt. Col. Robert S. Kellar returned to the scene.

Kellar, working closely with Air Force forward air controllers, directed several bomb runs by a pair of Sky-raidiers on a suspect ridge, then sent in four gunships from the 1st Sqdn., 9th Cavalry.

The Cavalry choppers, armed with a mixture of rockets and machine guns, poured suppressive fires on suspected V.C. positions

When the fire was returned, four aerial rocket ships of the 2nd Battalion, Artillery delivered their load of 48 rockets each to the Viet Cong.

Seven troop-carrying helicopters from Kellar's own 229th Assault Helicopter Battalion landed around the downed aircraft and discharged a reinforced platoon from the 2nd Battalion, 5th Cavalry's Company C.

The platoon quickly secured the crash site, allowing a ship carrying a 229th maintenance team to land.

In just over two minutes, the team rigged the disabled craft for sling loading and a giant CH-47 Chinook from the 228th Assault Support Helicopter Battalion lifted it out and carried it back to An Khe.

Maj. William A. Johnson, the 229th operations officer termed the operation "the most well coordinated and executed recovery to date."

"In Cobra we were working for restoration of government control to a certain area," he said. "With Bynonet we were working in the category of fulfilling a basic Army mission to go after hard core units and kill or punish them in their strongholds, destroy their installations and deny them the use of their food supply."

The general said he felt the division had accomplished both missions.

He noted that casualty figures from "Byonet" indicated that the division had really roughed up at least a battalion.

Official body count of enemy dead in "Byonet" was placed at 45 with 46 captured. Another 36 suspects were also taken captive. An unconfirmed estimate said there were 50 VC dead, 90 wounded.

In the Song Con valley the situation was different. The objective was not so much to rout the hard core Viet Cong, as to restore government control.

"We intend to bring the district chief back to his former location in the valley so that he can begin exercising control," said General Kinnard.

Col. Lynch said the Song Con Valley is tremendously fertile and that as many as 1,000 head of cattle were seen in the upper portion of the valley.

The units in both operations were supplied almost entirely by helicopters of the division's support command. The unit daily delivered ~~300~~ tons to the combat men facing the enemy.

The bulk of the aircraft involved in simultaneous onslaughts came from the division's Aviation Group commanded by Lt. Col. Allen Burdette. The group committed a total of 186 helicopters. During the opening combat assault 126 were in the air at once, 102 Hueys and 24 Chinooks.

Although 42 choppers were hit by ground fire, only two were down and one was eventually recovered.

Col. Burdette said of his pilots: "The men were magnificent, I was particularly pleased by the responsiveness to operational systems and the actions of the individual aviators in doing exactly what they were supposed to do at the appropriate time. They flew