

23 March 1965

OUTLINE

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DEVELOPING THE AIR ASSAULT CONCEPT
(Fort Sill Presentation)

Sequence of Vu-Graph Slides

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2. Snake Chart
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**GENERAL KNOWLES' PRESENTATION TO ARTY CAREER CLASS,
FORT SILL, OKLAHOMA, 27 MARCH 1965**

DEVELOPING THE AIR ASSAULT CONCEPT

INTRODUCTION: (Vu-GRAPH 1 - Patch) Privilege and pleasure to be here today.

Shortly after returning from AIR ASSAULT II, we put together a series of briefings which illustrated experiences and lessons learned during our many months in the field. These were presented at various times to many visitors and selected groups, to include the Chief of Staff of the Army, courses in session at Fort Benning, and we are currently scheduled to present essentially this same information to the career course at Knox, the Air War College, the Army War College, and Fort Leavenworth.

I will first cover certain background information leading up to AIR ASSAULT II, to include the overall programmed events.

Then some of our very fine officers who participated in the exercise will present selected operations at Brigade and Battalion level. Colonel Becker will then present an appraisal of Air Assault firepower, and this will be followed by a film which will summarize numerous air assault tactical and logistical operations. These presentations will set the stage for a question and answer period which will conclude our presentation.

Our main purpose is to give you a feel for the combat potential inherent in the air assault concept.

The story of air assault really begins many years ago. General Gavin first wrote of the Sky Cavalry back in 1947. Later he and many others recognized what we could have done during the Korean War if we had had large fleets of reliable helicopters. Certainly the mobility of our ground forces lagged behind our advances in the field of firepower.

On the technical side, significant advances were made with the turbine engine, the helicopter became much more reliable, and aircraft like the Caribou came into the picture.

Then the international picture gave the concept a boost. To the Communists, it appeared like they found a weak link in our defense chain, and they began to exploit the so-called brushfire war. This crystallized the requirement for ground forces that could be deployed rapidly and once deployed, could operate with speed and flexibility over all types of terrain and could apply measured force, whether it be a club, bayonet, rifle, or on up the scale to include tactical nuclear warfare. These were the considerations that call for the air mobility concept. It was the Howze Board in 1962 which took the first comprehensive look at this problem and the prospects for its solution, and in the process, dramatized the urgency of doing something about it. Their mission, from the Secretary of Defense, was to take a bold, new look at the role of the air vehicles in ground combat, without regard to traditional military doctrines. Two of their recommendations were to

were to organize and test an air assault division and an air transport brigade. This is how we came to be born a little over two years ago.

May I have the next slide? Shown graphically on this chart is the scope of the tests directed by the Army. On the left hand side is shown the authorized strength to be tested and along the bottom is plotted the months for calendar years 1963 and 1964. We started organizing, equipping, and training our first elements on 15 February 1963. The first test, called AIR ASSAULT I, was scheduled as a reinforced infantry battalion-size test with approximate logistical support elements and was held at Fort Stewart in September-October 1963.

Contrary to popular opinion, we were not given a nice, neat package and told to go out and test the complete concept. The Howze Board did a splendid job in the time they had. Nevertheless, what we had to start with was very sketchy -- it was simply a point of departure. We found ourselves experimenting, designing, and, yes - inventing -- tactics, doctrine, methods, and procedures. We started at the bottom and wrote the book. We hammered out TO&E's, SOP's, training programs, safety policies, maintenance procedures. We spent 50 - 75% of our time in the field trying out our ideas, and I can assure you that many times, it was back to the drawing board.

AIR ASSAULT I showed that the concept had much promise and that the build-up and testing should continue. It also demonstrated that a great deal of work had to be done if we were going to wring everything out of the

concept in the time that remained between AIR ASSAULT I and II. As a direct result of AIR ASSAULT I, we were authorized to continue the build-up to a full-strength division and to carry through with an expedited test schedule.

So much for the build-up phase -- now a word about our organization. (Display VU-GRAPH 3 - 11th AAD) Basically, it is the same as a standard ROAD infantry division. The principal differences are:

An Air Cavalry Squadron in place of a ground cavalry squadron.

An aerial rocket battalion instead of a medium artillery battalion.

This unit has 36 Hueys equipped with 48 2.75 rocket pods each.

The Support Command has been beefed up with an aircraft maintenance battalion.

The big change is in the Aviation Group which has 2 lift battalions of Hueys; one CH-47 battalion, Mohawk Battalion, and a general support company. Roughly, we have the capability within this unit of lifting 5 infantry battalions or 5 artillery batteries or any combination thereof.

Turning to the 10th Air Transport Brigade (display VU-GRAPH 4) I hasten to point out that this is a field army unit which was attached to us during the build-up and testing program as a matter of convenience. It is not really a fixed type organization, but will be tailored for a particular theater and/or mission. For the test, we were authorized a brigade as shown here. It has a fixed wing battalion which contains eight Caribou, a rotary wing battalion with two companies of Chinooks, and one company of Flying Cranes -- plus a maintenance battalion.

An Air Transport Brigade such as this has the capability of lifting the daily tonnage required by one Air Assault Division at a distance of 175 miles (784 S. T.).

The unit would normally operate as part of the Field Army Support Command and would be under the direct control of the Army Command.

Two air transport brigades should be able to support a Corps (four divisions), including all types in combat zone -- a distance of 75 miles.

So much for our organizations for the moment. Let's turn our attention to our graduation exercise: AIR ASSAULT II. (Display VU-GRAPH 5 - Maneuver area) The exercise took place over a 4 1/2 million acre piece of real estate in North and South Carolina. As shown on this chart, the area was approximately 150 miles long and 50 miles wide. It included Fort Bragg and Fort Jackson. There ~~was~~^{are} two important terrain features to remember: the PeeDee River and the Wateree Pond. (Display VU-GRAPH 6 - Restricted Areas).

We did not have free and unrestricted use of these areas. Shown here on this chart are the numerous towns and poultry farms that were off limits for landings and low flights. You can see at a glance the problems facing commanders and staffs in planning flight routes. Incidentally, we had another hazard that developed during the exercise that we had not anticipated. For one reason or another, farmers started taking pot shots at our helicopters. One Huey was hit by a shotgun at 50 feet. Another Huey was shot at by a high powered rifle, but was a near miss. Then we had an H-13 fired on by a 30-30 which hit the pilot's seat and

passed out the bubble over his head. Fortunately, the pilot was leaning forward at that instant and didn't receive a scratch from the bullet.

After the exercise was over, and we were comparing notes with Gen York, he stated that these incidents indicate the vulnerability of helicopters - 3 shots and 2 hits. General Kinnard took a different view. ~~Three~~ Three shots and not a single bird shot down - even with two hits.

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Shown on this chart are some of the forces that we had available to us on AIR ASSAULT II. First, we had the Neutral Forces, which included the Exercise Director Headquarters. This was headed up by General Rich, and included all the controllers, umpires, plate collectors, communicators, and other support type personnel. Also there was a support force which included the 5th Logistical Command, appropriate US Air Force support and post support from Fort Bragg for the aggressors and from Fort Jackson and Fort Gordon for the Blue Forces.

On this next slide are shown the two player forces, the Blue and the Red. Blue is the 11th Air Assault Division, which included 6 infantry battalions, the other elements of the division were represented on a 100% basis. For one phase, we borrowed 2 infantry battalions from the 82d Airborne Division. We also had the 10th Air Transport Brigade, the 72d Air Traffic Control Company, and the 14th Depot Battalion from Atlanta. On the Red side, we had the 82d, commanded by General York. During most of the exercise, they participated with 6 infantry battalions and one tank battalion, which was represented by Army personnel carriers, a Hawk battery, which was attached throughout the exercise, and an artillery AW battalion, which was equipped with dusters.

With this chart, I would like to give you an idea of the locations of various units that participated in the exercise. The area outlined in black is the area I just described to you. This black line is the international boundary; it follows the Pee Dee River. In general, the 82d operated on the east side of the Pee Dee, and the 11th Air Assault Division operated from its base southwest of the Wateree. (Describe area behind Wateree) The Exercise Director Headquarters was located at Fort Jackson. The 5th Log Command and the 10th Air Transport Brigade operated out of Fort Gordon, and the 14th Aircraft Maintenance and Support operated out of Atlanta. The Air Force support came from Shaw, Myrtle Beach, and Pope Air Force Bases.

The next two charts show the schedule of events for AIR ASSAULT II. I would like to point out that this was just the formal portion of the exercise. We actually went up to the Carolinas in the first part of September and spent a month training and getting read for the test. (Describe schedule from charts.)

(Vu-GRAPH 11) Using this chart, I would like to set the stage for AIR ASSAULT II. You should know at the outset that this exercise was designed to represent a limited war situation in a semi-sophisticated area. Counter-insurgency was not stressed and nuclear warfare was played on a very limited basis. This chart shows the general positions of key units when the war started. Once again, the Pee Dee River was the international Boundary. It is shown in red on this particular chart. The 11th Division was on the Wateree Pond. The border was patrolled by para-military forces and a Corps Recon Squadron. The

4th and 5th Mech Divisions were 3 - 4 days away from the area, and the Corps Headquarters was at Fort Jackson. On the other side of the border, there were two Aggressor Divisions and numerous support units.

So much for ~~that~~ the general picture. Now let's turn our attention to Brigade and Battalion operations. Lt Col Buchan and Maj Spiller will lead off. Col Buchan commands the 229th Assault Helicopter Battalion. He turned in a superb performance during AIR ASSAULT II and is a _____ when it comes to leading operations under adverse weather conditions. Maj Spiller is the S-3 of our 2d Brigade and is a very talented young man.

CONCLUSIONS:

1. During the past two years, I believe we have made tremendous progress in advancing the air assault concept. Nevertheless, I also believe we have only scratched the surface with respect to demonstrating its full potential. I would suggest, however, that we can produce ~~as~~ as much progress in any particular year for the next several years as we have in the past two years. If the requirement is to develop doctrine, organizations and equipment, one way to make fast progress is to put it under the same leadership and give it full support.

2. We believe that as a result of our efforts, the Army has a solid basis on which to make a decision. We are anxiously awaiting the outcome. Our conclusions are that an organization such as the unit we tested, can fight sustained ground combat over a wide variety of terrain and levels of combat. One possible exception is if it is required to hold a specific piece of ground indefinitely. To do this, it would require attachment of reinforcements and appropriate support.

We can move combat troops further, faster, and fresher than they have been moved before, and we believe we can make a substantial contribution to any military effort, if properly deployed.

Take a break - - -