

## THE REQUIREMENT FOR AIR FIGHTING UNITS

I invite the special attention of the Board to another area of aircraft tactical employment, hitherto unexploited, which is of fundamental importance to the Army.

MOMAR and DCSOPS Plans I, II, III and IV are all devoted to the purpose of enhancing the combat capability of infantry, tank and reconnaissance units through the device of assigning those units additional quantities of light aircraft. Substantial benefits will undoubtedly accrue from this, but it should be fully acknowledged that the assigned and attached aircraft will simply improve the ability of these units to execute their conventional missions, and that the employment of the aircraft will be restricted to those missions. A prime example exists in the Armored Cavalry regiments visualized in MOMAR and Plans I-IV: aerial reconnaissance companies will be very useful here, but the missions of the regiment, which has basically only wheeled mobility, will control and limit the employment of the aircraft. In the days when the horse provided the highest degree of battlefield mobility, it would have been a fundamental error to restrict the assignment of horses to the infantry divisions. While infantry divisions employed horses in considerable quantities, with benefit, it was necessary and desirable to group a substantial percentage of all the horses in cavalry units in order to take proper advantage of their mobility.

I therefore submit that a new course of action, parallel to and of equal importance to the modernization of conventional type ground units, is urgently necessary. The Army should proceed vigorously and at once in the development of fighting units (which may be called air cavalry\*) whose mode of tactical employment will take maximum advantage of the unique mobility and flexibility of light aircraft--aircraft which will be employed to provide, for the execution of the missions assigned these units, not only mobility for the relatively few riflemen and machine gunners, but also direct fire support, artillery and missile fire adjustment, command, communications, security, reconnaissance and supply.

\*The name of the unit is not of any considerable importance. "Air Cavalry" is used simply because it is most descriptive of the missions appropriate to the unit.

Missions appropriate for assignment to air cavalry units are these: the seizure of critical terrain in advance of larger forces, delaying action and cover for the withdrawal of larger forces, raids, penetration of shallow enemy positions and the disruption of enemy rear areas, pursuit and exploitation, the protection of a long flank, and wide reconnaissance. New weapons developments will provide air cavalry units with very destructive firepower, and these forces will develop many targets for the employment of surface-to-surface missiles. Air cavalry would find particular applicability in any battle area in which the threat of area weapons forces wide troop dispersion - and hence a porous battlefield - as well as in "brush fire" actions against relatively unsophisticated opponents.

In 1957 the undersigned developed a detailed study on the organization and tactical employment of air cavalry; it is on hand in the office of the Director of Army Aviation, DCSOPS. Subsequent to this study the detailed testing of a troop size reconnaissance unit, while not yet reported to the Department of the Army, indicates that in this limited respect the concept shows great promise.

It is, of course, not desirable that the Army commit itself now to the investment of personnel and materiel necessary to the activation of a large number of air cavalry units. The concept does however offer enough promise to warrant the prompt activation and equipment of an experimental unit of substantial size. If experimentation proves the general concept sound, a reduction may be made in other type combat units corresponding to each increase in air cavalry - with a concurrent and substantial augmentation of the Army's overall combat power.

Because the delivery of existing airborne units onto an objective (within an established battle area) by formations of Air Force transports seems very doubtful of success, it would appear desirable to select one of the two airborne divisions as an appropriate organization within which to form an experimental air cavalry unit. This idea finds further support in the fact that airborne units are by tradition trained to move through the air and psychologically conditioned for the execution of semi-independent missions in isolated areas. Aircraft (HU-IAs and H-13s) could be made available by drawing from existing sources, Army-wide, H-34s and H-21s could be used as interim substitutes for part of the required HU-IAs.

Under the assumption that the concept proves sound, it is estimated that one air cavalry regiment (of about 175 utility helicopters, 85 light observation helicopters) would be needed for each corps of 3 divisions. For the active Army this would mean perhaps 5 regiments totalling about 875 utility and 425 light observation helicopters. Provision of air cavalry units in the reserve components should await the development of a better aviation base in those components.

It should be noted that these figures are based on a very rough estimate of what would constitute a proper scale of equipment, and are presented only as an expression of the order of magnitude of aircraft required.

The costs involved (although partially offset by savings if air cavalry replaces other units in the force structure) would be substantial. However, assuming once more that the concept proves sound, this development is a vital requirement in the evolution of a modern Army, and the cost would be "salable" on the same basis that the atomic submarine - Polaris combination has proven acceptable.\* The processes of development should also capture the imagination and enthusiasm of the best young officers of the Army. However this may be, of more fundamental importance is the fact that air cavalry should contribute materially to the solution of the complicated and perplexing problem of how to win the ground battle in the scientific age.

The prompt establishment of an experimental air cavalry unit of regimental size is necessary and desirable for these purposes:

- a. The determination and test of feasibility and doctrine.
- b. The development and test of organization.
- c. The determination of materiel requirements, of all types.

The execution of this action would entail, among others, the following actions:

- a. The designation of a battle group (an airborne battle group is recommended) as the developing unit. Initially only a fraction of the total battle group strength would be required.
- b. The appointment of a capable and imaginative officer of brigadier general's or colonel's rank, with a technically and tactically qualified staff, to direct the project.

\* As a matter of comparison, the cost of a single atomic submarine should approximate the cost of the entire aircraft requirement for five regiments of air cavalry.

c. The assembly of aircraft, on a priority basis, for the equipment first of an experimental squadron (50 HU-IAs), with H-34s or H-21s acceptable as a substitute item, and 25 H-13s) and later of an experimental regiment, of air cavalry.

d. A high degree of logistical and technical support by the Army general and special staff.

e. The execution of the purposes listed above by the device of frequent, repetitive small unit exercises on appropriate terrain, the program director being empowered to try any organizational variation he might consider desirable. In the course of this evolutionary practice the aviation, ordnance and electronic industries should be encouraged to observe and comment, in order that industry will have maximum opportunity to contribute to the development of practical and effective equipment. This cannot fail to generate great industrial interest and support, and to have the most beneficial results on the evolution of the unit itself.

Respectfully submitted,

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