

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY  
Headquarters, 101st Airborne Division Artillery (Airmobile)  
101st Airborne Division (Airmobile)  
APO San Francisco 96383

AVDG-DA

20 May 1971

SUBJECT: Recommendation for Award of the Presidential Unit Citation

Commanding General  
101st Airborne Division (Airmobile)  
APO 96383

1. The 4th Battalion (Aerial Artillery), 77th Artillery (Airmobile), 101st Airborne Division (Airmobile) is recommended for the Presidential Unit Citation for the period 8 February 1971 to 8 April 1971. During this period of time the recommended unit was stationed in northern Military Region 1, in the Republic of Vietnam.
2. From 8 February 1971 to 8 April 1971, the men of the 4th Battalion (Aerial Artillery), 77th Artillery (Airmobile), 101st Airborne Division (Airmobile), distinguished themselves in combat by repeatedly displaying extraordinary heroism against hostile forces while in support of operation Lamson 719. The battalion responded to all calls for fire support from the aerial reconnaissance units of the 101st Airborne Division (Airmobile) and the assault elements of the Army of the Republic of Vietnam involved in intense ground combat in western Laos, as well as in northern Military Region 1. The battalion was directly involved in every major airmobile operation conducted during Lamson 719 and provided devastating direct aerial fire support to the numerous beleaguered maneuver elements. The aerial rocket artillery battalion compiled an extraordinary record of courage and devotion to duty during the entire operation.

## SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATION FOR AWARD OF PRESIDENTIAL UNIT CITATION

4th Battalion (Aerial Artillery), 77th Artillery (Airmobile), 101st Airborne Division (Airmobile), U.S. Army.

### MISSION:

To provide aurally mounted rocket direct fire support to the aviation elements of the 101st Airborne Division (Airmobile) and to provide close and continuous direct fire support to the assault elements of the 1st Infantry Division (ARVN), 1st Airborne Division (ARVN) and all other attached and assigned units within I Corps (ARVN) involved in the Laos incursion.

### CONCEPT OF OPERATION

The aerial artillery battalion (ARA) was assigned the mission of general support to XXIV Corps, U.S. Army, which in turn was responsible for all the fire support afforded the ARVN units in operation Lamson 719. To provide the needed fire support it was necessary to dedicate all the available air assets within the battalion with the exception of six aircraft. These six aircraft were allocated on the basis of two aircraft per battery to ensure the availability of a section of ARA to answer requests for fire support from units in contact within the division area of operation.

### EXECUTION

The 4th Battalion (Aerial Artillery, 77th Artillery (Airmobile), 101st Airborne Division (Airmobile) began support of operation Lamson 719 on 5 February 1971 by establishing a forward command post at Khe Sanh. From the command post communications were established with the major ARVN units and coordination was effected with all units concerned, both U.S. and ARVN to outline the procedures to be used in requesting aerial rocket artillery fire support.

To insure rapid response to requests for fire, all the aircraft committed to support the operation were launched before dawn, when possible, from their respective battery locations at Camp Evans, Camp Eagle and Phu Bai so as to arrive at the ARA laager pad immediately after first light. Normally six aircraft remained overnight at Khe Sanh with the pilots continuously on alert near their aircraft awaiting receipt of a fire mission from the command post a few hundred meters away. When the first mission debriefings were received at the command post, it was evident that operating in Laos was going to be quite different from the area the unit was used to. The terrain and weather were similar but the tremendous amount of anti-aircraft (AA) fire directed at the ARA aircraft was not completely anticipated.

The aerial rocket artillerymen are well known for their ability to destroy antiaircraft weapons and are called upon to do so regularly; but the aviators had never before encountered antiaircraft fire as intense as it was during this operation or coming from positions as expertly placed as those in Laos. Rarely was an antiaircraft weapon firing by itself. The ARA pilots often found themselves attacking and destroying pairs of antiaircraft weapons while being fired upon by yet a third. All the skill and courage they could muster was needed to give close and continuous fire support to friendly elements in contact while the enemy was directing intense antiaircraft fire against their aircraft at the same time.

The enemy was equipped with antiaircraft weapons ranging in size from 12.7mm machine guns (MG) up to 100mm radar guided machine guns. ARA aircraft were engaged by 12.7mm, 14.4mm, 23mm, and 37mm machine guns as well as automatic small arms fire and indirect fire systems. Their aircraft were hit with frightening regularity throughout the operation but undaunted, the ARA pilots continued to provide the most accurate direct fire that could be provided by an aerial delivery system in support of troops on the ground in close contact. The ARA fires were placed as close as 10 meters or closer when the situation dictated the necessity. When the mission required relief on station such as in the case of the heavy fighting around Fire Bases Lolo, Aloui, Brown, 31, Delta and numerous others, the aerial artillerymen were rearming and refueling from morning to night to remain overhead in support of the beleaguered friendly elements.

The aerial artillerymen were also called upon to protect the crews of downed aircraft in imminent danger of being killed or captured. The blanket of protective fire coming from the ARA Cobra played a key part in effecting the rescue. Pilots of medical evacuation aircraft found their mission a little less hazardous when the aerial artillerymen kept the advancing enemy forces pinned to the ground.

Planned airmobile combat assaults by the ARVN forces sometimes involved up to 100 UH1H aircraft in order to maintain tactical integrity of the unit. These aircraft landed the troops in a landing zone (LZ) barely big enough for 2 aircraft at a time. Aerial rocket artillery aircraft teamed with tube artillery, high performance aircraft and other gunships to protect the UH1H aircraft during the assault. Sortie after sortie was flown amid intense enemy antiaircraft fire. When the assault was completed and all the elements were on the ground, the aerial artillerymen remained on station to continue their support of the units should they become immediately engaged with the enemy.

The aerial artillerymen distinguished themselves day after day in the face of intense enemy fire while providing devastating direct aerial fire support to the ARVN forces in contact. The support personnel of the battalion as well as the pilots and maintenance personnel who remained night and day at Khe Sanh amid the constant shelling deserve the highest praise. They truly performed in a manner that was beyond the call of duty. Working long hours during the day and then standing guard duty at night is no small task. The men of the battalion responsible for repairing the damaged Cobra aircraft worked around the clock to return badly needed aircraft to mission ready status at dawn of the next day. It was a team effort of the highest caliber that resulted in their outstanding success.

Throughout the entire operational period the men of the aerial rocket artillery battalion were dedicated to supporting the forces of the Army of the Republic of Vietnam in need of aerial rocket direct fire support. Day after day the aerial artillerymen attacked the advancing enemy forces disrupting their elements with devastating fire power. Although the operation lasted a relatively short time, the battalion amassed an incredible total of enemy killed and enemy equipment destroyed.

The facts contained in the citation and this summary are a matter of record.

LEE E. SURUT  
COL, FA  
Commanding

### GENERAL SEQUENCE OF EVENTS

The ARVN incursion into Laos was designed to be a fast moving, coordinated infantry/armor operation with the mission to seek-out and destroy the enemy and his cache sites and to interdict the road network referred to as the Ho Chi Minh Trail, denying the enemy use of these easy access routes for transporting supplies into the Republic of Vietnam.

Heavy reliance was planned upon the use of allied fire support and allied air assets. The operation was to be a continuous, hard hitting airmobile operation utilizing as many as 120 UH1H lift aircraft at a time to air assault the ARVN forces into selected landing zones. The rules of engagement outlined for U.S. forces involved in supporting the operation were specific and restricted U.S. ground forces from participating in the ground fighting in Laos. In addition no U.S. advisory personnel were allowed on the ground in Laos either. The single main factor making this operation noticeably different from other U.S. involved operations was the lack of one overall commander, such as is normal in a joint operation. In actuality there were two co-equal commanders involved. One having the entire maneuver force and the other having the air assets and fire support systems.

In response to the ARVN incursion into Laos beginning 8 February 1971, the 70B Front Headquarters, North Vietnamese Army (NVA) infiltrated into Laos to engage the ARVN forces. The 70B Front was activated in October 1970 to operate in the area of Highway 9, southern Laos and western Vinh Linh Province (P), North Vietnam. It is composed of three infantry divisions, (308th, 304th and 320th), the 559th Transportation Group, at least two artillery regiments, one armor regiment plus numerous support regiments having several antiaircraft battalions. The 2nd NVA Division, which normally operates in southern Military Region 1, and the 324B Infantry Division of North Vietnam's Military Region Tri Thien Hue (MRTTH) were also under the operational of the 70B Front during Lamson 719. Elements of the 320th NVA Infantry Division began operating in an area west of Ban Dong (XD5139) with the mission of attacking elements of the 1st ARVN Airborne Division. The entire 308th NVA Division infiltrated into Laos after the ARVN forces began operating in an area north of Ban Dong. Its mission was to attack ARVN forces along the 1032B/92B road complex to relieve the mounting pressure applied by the ARVN forces and to attempt to open these roads into North Vietnam. The 88th Infantry Regiment, 308th Division was sent to the allied stronghold at Khe Sanh. The 102nd Regiment, 308th Division was to initially operate along Highway 9 north of Lao Bao (XD7037). The 242 Regiment and elements of the 9th and 66th Regiments went further south below the Lao Bao area with the mission of attacking the ARVN forces in Laos and interdicting Highway 9 between Lao Bao and Ban Dong.

During infiltration, the 36th and 102nd Infantry Regiments of the 308th Division and the 24B Infantry Regiment of the 304th Division suffered heavy losses due to U.S. Air Force B-52 strikes and engagements with ARVN forces being supported continually by aerial rocket artillery (ARA) aircraft from the 4th Battalion (Aerial Artillery), 77th Artillery (Airmobile). The enemy forces received initial replacements for some of these losses when the 544th Infantry Battalions of the 5th Regiment, 350th Training Division infiltrated into Laos in mid-February.

By 18 February 1971, enemy resistance to the Lamson 719 operation increased to the point where NVA forces were able to consolidate and organize counterattacks against ARVN forces. Elements of the 102nd Regiment, 308th Division supported by heavy volume of ground, antiaircraft, artillery, rocket and mortar fire, attacked the 39th Ranger Battalion at XD 605512. Although their attack forced the ARVN forces to evacuate the area, it also resulted in heavy losses for the 102nd Regiment. Two battalions of the 102nd Regiment were rendered combat ineffective.

The enemy initiated their first coordinated infantry/armor attack of the operation when they assaulted elements of the 3rd ARVN Airborne Regiment at Fire Base (FB) 31. On 24 February 1971, the enemy employed armor and infantry in wave assaults until they overran the FB. Subsequent combat in the area resulted in the enemy losing at least 27PT 76 Light Amphibious tanks and an undetermined number of T 54 medium tanks. A Prisoner of War (PW) revealed that the 24B Regiment and the 36th Regiment, 308th Division were the infantry forces involved in the attack. In a counterattack on 27 February 1971, the enemy brought main gun tank fire to bear on FB 30. However, this time armor was used only in a supporting role. Following the launching by the enemy of several counterattacks, enemy antiaircraft units moved East to block the allied air assaults. During this period enemy antiaircraft fire took a heavy toll on allied helicopters.

On the southern flank of the operation, enemy support units and elements of the 32AB Division continued to exert pressure on the 3rd ARVN Armored Regiment. Along the Quang Tri border, 1st Ranger Group (ARVN) elements made contact on 3 and 4 March 1971, with large enemy forces. Captured documents indicated these were elements of the 88th Regiment, 308th Division.

The 2nd ARVN Airborne Division was also heavily engaged in early March 1971. On one occasion an element of the division received 1,000 rounds of indirect fire from enemy 82mm mortar positions followed by a ground attack by an estimated enemy battalion. The friendly elements sustained very light casualties, while inflicting heavy casualties on the attacking force with the aid of aerial artillery and tactical air support. A PW later revealed the attacking force to be the 25th Sapper Battalion, a subordinate unit to the 70B Front.

With increased reinforcements and supported by numerous B52 strikes, TAC Air, aerial rocket artillery and tube artillery ARVN forces again started to move westward. The 1st Regiment, 1st ARVN Division troop lifts into LZ Lolo (XD4337) met with stiff enemy resistance and intense antiaircraft fire. The 2nd Regiment, 1st ARVN Division air assaults into LZ Sophia and LZ Liz met with light resistance. At all three landing zones, searches revealed heavy enemy losses due to allied air and artillery preparations. The next combat assault, into LZ Hope (XD3348), also met with light enemy resistance.

The move by ARVN forces onto the escarpment south of the Xe Pon River required the enemy to realign his defenses. Initial ARVN incursions into the immediate Tchepon area appeared to catch the enemy off balance. Visual reconnaissance throughout the area of operation indicated increased movement of enemy ground units along with field and antiaircraft artillery elements. The enemy began preparations for immediate counter activity and attempted resupply of his forward most elements.

A PW report indicated that the 1st Viet Cong regiment was to conduct a coordinated attack with infantry and armor against FB Aloui. Another PW confirmed the fact that the regiment suffered no less than 500 casualties in that attack as a result of aerial artillery and TAC Air strikes. ARVN elements discovered a destroyed 122mm howitzer and two multi-tube 122mm rocket launchers south of FB Liz on 10 March 1971 indicating that the early March 1971 shelling of FB Aloui and FB Lolo were conducted from this location.

A read out of 7 March 1971 aerial photography revealed two camouflaged 100mm antiaircraft weapons near route 1032B at XD5958. This supported the belief that the enemy was increasing the size as well as density of his antiaircraft capability in the western demilitarized zone (DMZ) in an effort to protect infiltration routes.

Documents recovered from enemy bodies on 11 March 1971 near FB Delta identified the 141st NVA Regiment, 2nd NVA Division. Extensive attacks on ARVN fire bases indicated the increase of the use of conventional artillery by the enemy. He also chose to engage in counter battery activities against U.S. artillery positions along the QuangTri (P) border. Enemy field artillery was known to be increasing its mobility to prevent destruction by aerial rocket artillery and TAC Air sent to destroy the suspected artillery locations. The 675B Field Artillery Regiment was known to have been involved in much of the shelling of allied fire bases.

SUMMARY OF CONTRIBUTION

HOURS FLOWN:	3316
SCORTIES:	6476
2.75 TFPAR EXPENDITURES:	57,697
7.62mm MG EXPENDITURES:	114,355
40mm GRENADES EXPENDED:	38,862
NVA KILLED BY APA (KBARA):	1187
12.7 MG DESTROYED:	79
STRUCTURES DESTROYED:	113
FIGHTING POSITIONS DESTROYED:	42
30 Cal Automatic Weapons DESTROYED:	84
75mm RR DESTROYED:	9
37mm Anti Aircraft MG DESTROYED:	1
SECONDARY EXPLOSIONS:	78
ACCOMMODATION POINT DESTROYED:	1
PETROLEUM POINT DESTROYED:	1
VEHICLES DESTROYED:	5

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INDIVIDUAL VALOROUS AWARDS

<u>TYPE AWARD</u>	<u>PRESENTED</u> •	<u>PENDING</u>
SILVER STAR	6	1
DISTINGUISHED FLYING CROSS	42	15
BRONZE STAR WITH " V " DEVICE	3	4
AIR MEDAL WITH " V " DEVICE	15	5
ARMY COMMENDATION MEDAL WITH " V " DEVICE	3	2
PURPLE HEART	20	0
CROSS OF GALLANTRY WITH PALM (RVN)	0	55
CROSS OF GALLANTRY WITH SILVER STAR (RVN)	8	5

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AVDG-DA

20 May 1971

SUBJECT: Recommendation for Award of the Presidential Unit Citation

3. The inclosed documentation will amplify the performance of the recommended unit.

Incl

1. Summary of Recommendation
2. Narrative Description
3. Maps
4. Summary of Strengths and Casualties
5. Listing of Units
6. Proposed Citation
7. Individual Valorous Awards
8. Combat Damaged Aircraft
9. Summary of Contribution

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in the past several years for reaching a political settlement in the Middle East. The statement warned every government, every responsible politician must realize the alternative in the Middle East is such — political element or a military clash." The Soviet Union said it will allow Israel "to break up the Arab National Liberation Movement" or "to overthrow the progressive regimes that have assisted themselves in the U.A.R. and other Arab countries."

gressors, the statement said. "This aid will be given further." In other developments: — The Israeli cabinet met Sunday to discuss the latest Middle East peace moves and reportedly to take a critical look at President Nixon's Middle East policy. At its last session a week ago, the cabinet authorized Premier Golda Meir and Foreign Minister Abba Eban to draft a favorable response to an Egyptian declaration of willingness to make peace.

was prepared for recognition of Israel and would accept a completely independent Palestinian state on the West Bank of Jordan. — Egypt declared Israel was "closing the door" to peace by refusing to withdraw from occupied territory. The Egyptian charge was made by government spokesman Mounir Hafez, who also said Egypt considered an Israeli reply delivered Friday to U.N. mediator Gunnar V. Jarring a rejection of the Jarring proposals.

asked the Pentagon for an explanation and a discharge, if the Army somehow has forgotten Meschi. Meschi, now 73, says he was inducted with about 120 local men the day after the war ended. "Now I'm going to send you home to await further word," he says an officer told him after he was sworn in. "It's about time I found out whether they're going to let me out or keep me 'til I drop dead," he says.

## Been e Nears

g four major rail unions from striking was passed Dec. 10 and expires at midnight. The other three unions settled with the carriers earlier this month at wage hikes averaging 44 per cent over 42 months.

The Labor official also indicated he was authorized to speak for both sides Sunday in saying that talks would continue at the midnight deadline if there were no prior agreement. Usery said the bottleneck in current talks were three major work rule items complicated by the consolidation of four unions into the United Transportation Union after the latest rail contracts were signed.

As an example, he cited the use of two-way radios by train crews who make up most of the union's members. The old unions each had different pay and work rules for radios, on their use, he said.

In halting the strike and bargaining any resumption before March 1, Congress voted also a 5 per cent retroactive pay raise.

The four AFL-CIO unions, while not bargaining as a unit, had been seeking a 40 per cent pay hike, a cost-of-living provision and other benefits. They had averaged about \$3.50 an hour.



A heavily-armed American helicopter gunship, popular rock tune, lifts off from Khe Sanh taking its nickname "God of Hell Fire" from a support ARVN troops in nearby Laos. (AP)

## ay Viets Rush Fresh Troops to Laos

(Continued From Page 1) have been destroyed by air strikes and ground action, South Vietnamese spokesmen said. Three more American helicopters were reported shot down Saturday in Laos, the U.S. Command said. Two Americans were killed in the crashes, raising the total to 40 killed in air action in Operation Lam Son 719 in Vietnam and Laos, the command reported. So far 23 air-

craft, including two air force jets, have been lost in combat, the spokesmen said.

In all, 16,000 South Vietnamese troops were committed to the Laos campaign, but some of the best units in the Army, mainly Rangers and paratroopers, have been badly cut up while defending Landing Zone Ranger and Hills 30 and 31.

Military sources at Quang Tri told Associated Press correspondent Terry Wolkerstorfer that all scheduled U.S. military

passenger flights from Saigon have been cancelled and the C130 flights put on a top priority schedule to haul South Vietnamese troops and war materials northward.

The sources told Wolkerstorfer the troops had been drawn from other units all over the country.

Associated Press Photographer Neal Ulevich reported from the northern front that a column of South Vietnamese tanks crossed into Laos Sunday to relieve some airborne troops.

Ulevich also said several American tanks moved from near Khe Sanh farther west along Highway 9 toward the Laotian border as a blocking force after reports that 10 to 15 North Vietnamese tanks were sighted six miles west of the border. The report was based on the sighting of headlights across the border and was not confirmed. Some officers tended to discount it, but precautionary measures were taken.

## U.S. Says Stokely Owes 48G Taxes

NEW YORK (AP) — An Internal Revenue Service claim filed in the Bronx showed

## Record Rains Rip Brazil, 79 Killed

A P captured on 14 March 1971, southeast of PB 30, indicated he was a member of the 5th Battalion, 6th Regiment, 30th NVA Division. His capture in this area indicated the rapid movement of the regiment from its previous position along the Quang Tri (P) border and suggested its future commitment against ARVN forces in the PB Alam area. Enemy units throughout the area showed signs of preparation for increased pressure on withdrawing ARVN elements in a last ditch effort to gain the initiative.

Allied supply helicopters, aerial rocket artillery aircraft and aerial reconnaissance aircraft were experiencing continuous heavy antiaircraft fire near ARVN fire bases and there were frequent sightings of enemy armor. The enemy tanks were unsuccessfully trying to avoid the armed helicopters and F-4s that delivered devastating fire upon any sighted enemy armor.

Tanks were destroyed at PB Maroon on 14 March 1971 and six were destroyed north of the Xe Son River and PB Lix on 15 March 1971. Elements of the 1st ARVN Regiment were engaged in heavy contact from 14 through 17 March 1971 with elements of the 141st NVA Regiment and the 1st Viet Cong Regiment, both of the 2nd NVA Division. It was estimated that the enemy suffered casualties to the extent that both units were rendered combat ineffective. Again heavy attacks against the 4th Battalion, 1st ARVN Regiment by the 66th NVA regiment proved to be costly for the enemy. Enemy units appeared to commence an all out effort to inflict maximum casualties and prevent the withdrawal of ARVN forces no matter what the cost to themselves. In spite of heavy losses to the south, 2nd NVA Division elements maintained heavy pressure on the 2nd ARVN Regiment forces. Activity increased south of PB Delta with numerous attacks by fire to include 130mm field artillery gun. The intensity of enemy action there, indicated probable reinforcement of the 32nd NVA Division elements operating in the area.

On 16 March 1971, a Viet Cong indicated that the 812th NVA Regiment had deployed to the Co Nao area (XN7433). Enemy units deployed around PB Delta suffered extremely heavy losses and are probably combat ineffective. A P identified the elements in the PB Delta area as being from the 63rd Regiment, 32nd NVA Division. Even after sustaining heavy losses, the enemy continued their heavy counterattacks against ARVN forces to prevent their withdrawal from Laos into Quang Tri (P). Comments taken from enemy bodies in the vicinity of PB Brown revealed that the 1st Viet Cong Regiment and the 141st NVA Regiment were the units pressuring the ARVN withdrawal. These units were apparently reinforced with rear area service personnel as they continued intense counterattacks resulting in heavy losses. While the 2nd NVA Division attacked from the west, elements of both the 34th and 38th NVA Divisions attempted to block the ARVN forces along Highway 9.

As the major ARVN units approached the Quang Tri (P) border, aerial observers detected a large element of enemy armor closing rapidly on the rear of the ARVN columns. Over the next few days JAG Air and armed helicopters destroyed a large element of the enemy force. The enemy had apparently planned to block the ARVN movement to the front and then attack from the rear with their armored forces.

Throughout the ARVN withdrawal the enemy became increasingly willing to expend personnel and equipment in order to inflict maximum casualties on the withdrawing ARVN units. Tactics such as those afforded allied air and fire support systems lucrative targets of opportunity.

After the beginning of April 1971, operation Lamson 719 tapered off considerably as the ARVN elements departed Laos. The aerial rocket artillery aircraft remained on standby until all units had departed the area of operation and it was determined that the battalion could be equally responsive to requests for fire from their home base. On 4 April 1971, the Aerial Rocket Artillery Forward Command Post was terminated at Khe Sanh and on 5 April 1971 at 1200 hours, Lamson 719 was officially ended.

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COL, FA  
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### PARADES

As the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) forces initiated their move into Laos on 8 February 1971, the men of the 4th Battalion (Aerial Artillery), 77th Artillery (Alphatlas) were established on strip alert at the dark meeting calls for flare support from their forward command post a short distance away. Before the day was over the aerial artillerymen had accounted for 2 EVA killed by aerial rocket artillery (KABs), 2 million orange bombs destroyed, 1 petroleum point and 1 ammunition storage area destroyed and 4 secondary explosions. This was the result of 64 hours and 21 minutes of mission flight time with 1251 x 2.75" Folding Fin Aerial Rockets (FFARs), 4500 x 7.62mm machine gun (MG) and 300 x 40mm grenades expended. One aircraft received 3 hits from an enemy 12.7mm MG but the aircraft continued the mission and returned to the dark where it was found to be non-flyable. This day was destined to be one of the darkest days for the men of the aerial rocket artillery (ARA) battalion.

On 10 February 1971, the ARVN forces were encountering strong enemy resistance as they moved deeper into Laotian territory. ARVN was in constant demand and this day proved to be exceptionally active. Heavy anti-aircraft weapons seemed to be everywhere, as indeed they were, and the aerial artillerymen encountered increasingly heavy enemy anti-aircraft fire. The battalion accounted for 2 EVA KILLS and 2 x 12.7mm MG destroyed while flying 76 hours and 35 minutes and expending 1690 x 2.75" FFARs, 5100 x 7.62mm MG and 2700 x 40mm grenades. Heavy anti-aircraft (AA) gunners brought intense fire to bear on several occasions. At 10 5236 2 ARA alpha aircraft were caught between multiple AA weapons that scored numerous hits resulting in the destruction of both aircraft as they crashed. The crew of one aircraft was extracted unhurt while both members of the other crew sustained injuries to the extent that they were evacuated to CCUB.

12 February 1971 found elements of the 1st ARVN Airborne Division in heavy contact for most of the day. AAA was requested and received continuously. When contact was finally broken, it was determined that AAA accounted for 37 EVA KILLS, 1 x 57mm AA MG destroyed and 2 x 12.7mm MG destroyed. The AAA pilots experienced their longest flying day in Laos to date with 105 hours and 40 minutes of mission time and expenditures of 8045 x 2.75" FFARs, 3800 7.62mm MG and 550 x 40mm grenades.

By mid-February the RVN forces intensified their efforts to destroy the ARVN elements in Laos. On 18 February 1971, the 102nd Infantry Regiment, 308th RVN Division launched a ground attack against the 37th ARVN Ranger Battalion, vicinity of ID60512. Aerial artillery was requested on station throughout the contact. By dusk the 102nd Regiment had two battalions run over and 4 ineffective due to losses suffered as a result of coordinated ARVN, V.C. Air Force and RVN Flarepower.

In support of the 3rd Battalion, 1st ARVN Regiment on 19 February 1971, the aerial rocket artillerymen accounted for 17 NVA PRAGS and 2 x 12.7mm MG destroyed. Two ARA cobras received hits during the day and were determined to be non-flyable upon their return to the base.

On 20 February 1971, ARA was positioned overhead for elements of the 71st ARVN Ranger Group in fire contact with an unknown size enemy force. The aerial artillerymen were credited with 30 NVA PRAGS, as well as 1 mortar position silenced and 2 trucks destroyed. One ARA cobra was shot down and subsequently destroyed. One of the crew members received a minor shrapnel wound in the left arm. Heavy AA fire prevailed as a total of three ARA aircraft were hit during the days fighting.

On 21 February 1971, the aerial rocket artillery cobras provided direct aerial fire support to elements of the 2nd ARVN Airborne Battalion in the vicinity of XD5944. For their participation in the fighting, the men of the battalion were credited with 45 NVA PRAGS. The ARVN forces are well aware of the devastating amount of firepower available in a section of ARA aircraft. There is no doubt that on numerous occasions the ARA on station made the difference between many friendly casualties and few friendly casualties.

Again on 21 February 1971, the aerial rocket artillery pilots launched in support of the 2nd Battalion, 1st ARVN Regiment in the vicinity XD4925. The battalion's forward elements had broken through to a suspected enemy training center. Heavy contact had the lead elements pinned down and ARA was requested. When the ARA cobras left the scene they were credited with 33 NVA PRAGS, 1 x 12.7mm MG destroyed, 1 RPG rocket launcher destroyed and 7 bunkers destroyed. The ARVN then continued a sweep of the area and discovered an NVA training center was indeed located there with a bunker complex of 5 bunkers. The enemy AA gunners claimed two ARA aircraft on this day. One crew member sustained injuries causing him to be evacuated to COMUSMACV.

22 February saw heavy contact scattered throughout the the ARVN area of operation. A section of ARA launched in support of the 7th ARVN Airborne Battalion in the vicinity of XD6139. ARA was credited with 15 NVA PRAGS and the ARVN element reported the capture of 21 individual weapons and 4 crew served weapons. Another section of ARA engaged a 12.7 mm MG position resulting in 1 x 12.7mm MG destroyed and 2 NVA PRAGS.

Elements of the 3rd Battalion, 1st ARVN Regiment encountered an unknown size enemy force in the vicinity of XD5921 on 23 February 1971. The aerial rocket artillerymen launched in support of the battalion and quickly left 13 NVA PRAGS while sustaining one AA hit in one of the ARA cobras.

Aerial rocket artillery aircraft covered resupply missions into the hard pressed LZ Ranger and LZ 31 areas and launched for the ARVN elements at FB Hotel-2 when they received incoming mortar and artillery rounds. A total of 49 hours and 30 minutes of mission time and expenditures of 1366 x 2.75" FFAR, 4200 x 9.62mm MG and 820 x 40mm grenades netted the ARA 35 NVA KBARA, 6 x 12.7mm MG, 1 EPU and 4 individual weapons destroyed.

On 26 February 1971 in support of the 2nd Battalion, 3rd ARVN Regiment, the ARA pilots were credited with 17 NVA KBARA and 2 x 12.7mm MG destroyed. Intense AA fire again found its mark as three colors received ground to air fire resulting in all three sustaining hits. Only the skill and exceptional ability of the aerial artillerymen prevented more aircraft from being hit.

Near LZ Don on 27 February 1971, in support of the 4th Battalion, 3rd ARVN Regiment the ARA aircraft were credited with 17 NVA KBARA, 10 individual weapons and 4 crew served weapons destroyed. At LZ 30 many hours of flying time resulted in 40 NVA KBARA and 11 individual weapons destroyed. A section launched to the vicinity of KD6420 to give needed direct fire support to a company of the 2nd Battalion, 3rd ARVN Regiment and left 35 NVA KBARA and 2 EAC rocket launchers destroyed.

Mission flight hours totaling 61 hours and 20 minutes and ordnance expenditures of 1584 x 2.75" FFAR, 7200 x 9.62mm MG and 2650 x 40mm grenades accounted for 73 NVA KBARA on 26 February 1971. A mission in support of elements of the 1st ARVN Airborne resulted in 47 NVA KBARA of the days total. In addition, 3 x 12.7mm MG and 17 individual weapons were destroyed by the aerial artillerymen. Contact prevailed in the area of FB Aloui and FB 31. Heavy AA fire in this area resulted in two hits to ARA aircraft with negative injuries to the crew.

On 1 March 1971 the enemy launched a coordinated attack with armor and infantry against elements of the 8th Airborne Battalion at LZ 31. ARA fires were coordinated with all the fire support means available to include TAC Air and the results were devastating against the enemy. NVA killed nearly 250 total. In addition 15 tanks, 45 x 12.7mm MG and 8 EAC rocket launchers were included in the bomb damage assessment. The ARA was credited with 30 NVA KBARA and 4 x 12.7mm MG destroyed. ARA pilots damaged two tanks and rendered them immobile.

On 2 March 1971 heavy contact continued to rage in the FB Aloui area as well as FB 30. ARA escorted a resupply aircraft into the FB 30 area and heavy contact started while the aerial artillerymen were overhead. The deadly fire from the ARA colors left 35 NVA KBARA and 21 individual weapons and 2 x 12.7 MG destroyed.



3 March 1971 proved to be a very bitter day for the enemy forces in the FE Aloui area. Once again elements of the 8th ARVN Airborne Battalion were engaged in heavy contact with a numerically superior enemy force. Aerial rocket artillerymen immediately responded in support of the ARVN elements. Amid intense anti-aircraft fire, the ARA pilots delivered a devastating amount of aerial rocket artillery fire in return. The men of the battalion were credited with 180 NVA KBARA for their valiant efforts in support of the beleaguered friendly elements. When the contact was broken a sweep of the area revealed no less than 383 NVA KIA, 180 of which were credited to the ARA battalion. While this engagement raged through the day, other aerial rocket artillerymen, in support of elements of the 1st ARVN Regiment left 35 NVA KBARA and 11 individual weapons and 2 x 12.7mm MG destroyed in their wake. Total mission flying time was 94 hours and 55 minutes. Ordnance expenditures totaled 2891 x 2.75" FFAR, 7200 x 7.62mm MG and 1250 x 40mm grenades.

A determined enemy force once again attempted to destroy the ARVN Airborne elements at FE Aloui on 4 March 1971. The men of the ARA battalion were called to drive away the enemy forces. The aerial artillerymen displayed extraordinary skill and courage as they fired again and again at the enemy forcing his retreat. After hours of flying time, contact was broken and the enemy fled from the battle area. ARA was credited with 75 NVA KBARA and 3 x 12.7mm MG were destroyed. Immediately after this engagement, the ARA was needed for a contact near FE Don where ARVN elements had engaged an unknown size enemy force. After leaving 6 NVA KBARA and destroying 3 individual weapons and 2 x 12.7mm MG, the enemy began to retreat.

On two separate occasions, ARA aircraft were badly hit by anti-aircraft fire on 6 March 1971. The aircraft attempted to return to their base camp at Khe Sanh but the severely damaged cockpits were forced to land inside FE Aloui. Repeated attempts to recover these aircraft met with intense enemy fire from the NVA forces around the FE. The crew was extracted from the area successfully but the aircraft were subsequently destroyed due to indirect fire and small arms fire. Near XD6537 friendly elements in contact requested and received ARA support. Again the aerial artillerymen were instrumental in aiding the ARVN forces to break the contact. ARA was credited with 7 NVA KBARA, 7 individual weapons and 2 x 12.7mm MG destroyed. FE Sophia and FE Hope were now both installed and the aerial artillerymen were ready to launch on a moments notice should the ARVN forces encounter heavy resistance.

Mission flight hours totaling 32 hours and 40 minutes on 9 March resulted in 7 NVA KBARA and 3 individual weapons destroyed near XD4986. The aerial artillerymen were also busy right at their own larger base at Khe Sanh. Increasing mortar and artillery fire was landing all over the ARA area with increasing accuracy and intensity.

Since the first day that troops were placed on PB Lolo it was an area of continual enemy initiated attacks by fire. On 14 March 1971, the men of the AAA battalion again displayed extraordinary courage in answering calls for fire received from the ARVN forces near PB Lolo and PB Brown. Amid the heaviest antiaircraft fire to date, the aerial artillerymen were credited with 70 NVA KIA, 900 x 840 rockets, 100 x 60mm mortar rounds, 200 x 82mm mortar rounds, 1 x 75mm Recoilless Rifle, 3 individual weapons and 3 x 12.7mm MG destroyed. The men of the battalion flew the entire day in support of these two fire bases, expending 2626 x 2.75" FFAR, 11,000 x 7.62mm MG and 1450 x 40mm grenades. A total of four AAA aircraft were hit by fire from enemy gunners on this day. One aircraft was shot down and destroyed resulting in one crew member casualty while the remaining three aircraft were flown back to Khe Sanh where they were found to be non-flyable.

On 15 March elements of the 1st ARVN Regiment were in heavy contact with an unknown size enemy force near XC6539. The friendly forces were in desperate need of aerial rocket artillery support. AAA immediately launched to the area and found the ARVN elements taking heavy indirect fire as well as an enemy ground attack almost simultaneously. The aerial artillerymen first located the enemy indirect position and after completing their firing runs on the enemy positions, 4 x 82mm mortars and 3 x 12.7mm MG positions were silenced. These were later determined to be destroyed by the AAA. Turning their attention back to the enemy forces attempting to destroy the ARVN elements, the aerial artillerymen were directing their deadly cobra aircraft again and again at the enemy forces. One aircraft was shot down and destroyed but the crew was once again extracted unhurt. When contact was finally broken the AAA was credited with 76 NVA KIA, 4 x 82mm mortars, 2 x 75mm RL, 3 x 12.7mm MG, 3 AK47 and 1 840 rocket launcher destroyed.

On 17 March 1971, AAA was again needed at the hard pressed PB Lolo. The men of the battalion flew 33 hours and 45 minutes and were credited with 17 NVA KIA. One AAA cobra was hit by antiaircraft fire but the cobra managed to get back to Khe Sanh due to the skill of the pilot in command. The aircraft was then determined to be non-flyable.

On 23 March 1971, the AAA forward command post was the scene of a sapper attack that successfully penetrated the perimeter. The officers and men of the battalion were instrumental in detecting and repelling the enemy assault. The men of the battalion were credited with 2 NVA KIA and 1 NVA captured. The aerial artillerymen suffered 1 US KIA, 6 US KIA, 1 AH1G destroyed and 2 AH1G damaged. The commanding general of the 101st Airborne Division will present three Silver Stars to three aerial artillerymen for their part in the action at Khe Sanh.

The ARVN forces were beginning to withdraw from Laos toward the end of March 1971. The aerial artillerymen stayed at Khe Sanh to provide immediately responsive fire support to the friendly elements as they started their long trek back to their home bases. The convoys were seemingly endless and the aerial artillerymen provided escort cover for many of them. The NV forces tried blocking the highway to contain the ARVN elements while they tried to overtake the withdrawing convoys.

Throughout the operation the men of the 4th Battalion (Aerial Artillery), 7th Artillery (Airmobile), 1st Airborne Division (Airmobile) distinguished themselves while supporting the forces of the Army of the Republic of Vietnam. Their unending devotion to duty with complete disregard for their individual safety is one of the qualities that makes this unit outstanding.

LET E. SURST  
COL, FA  
Commanding

SUMMARY OF STRENGTHS AND CASUALTIES

Friendly Forces

<u>Total Assigned</u>	<u>MHA</u>	<u>MHA</u>	<u>MHA</u>	<u>CAP</u>
549	1	20	0	0

Enemy Forces

<u>Estimated Strength</u>	<u>Body Count</u>	<u>Probable Casualties</u>	<u>CAP</u>
37,800*	1187	Unknown	1

\* Estimated strength midway through the operation. Does not include the 559th NVA Transportation Group and its subordinate units.

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### PARTICIPATING UNITS

Part I. Units assigned and recommended for award of the Presidential Unit Citation.

<u>Unit</u>	<u>Period</u>	<u>Previous US Unit Decorations and Dates</u>
1. 4th Battalion (Aerial Artillery), 77th Artillery (Airmobile)	8 February 71 to 8 April 71	NONE
2. Headquarters and Headquarters Service Battery, 4th Battalion (Aerial Artillery), 77th Artillery (Airmobile)	8 February 71 to 8 April 71	NONE
3. Battery A, 4th Battalion (Aerial Artillery), 77th Artillery (Airmobile)	8 February 71 to 8 April 71	NONE
4. Battery B, 4th Battalion (Aerial Artillery), 77th Artillery (Airmobile)	8 February 71 to 8 April 71	NONE
5. Battery C, 4th Battalion (Aerial Artillery), 77th Artillery (Airmobile)	8 February 71 to 8 April 71	NONE

Part II. Units attached and recommended for award of the Presidential Unit Citation.

1. None

Part III. Units assigned but not recommended for award of the Presidential Unit Citation.

1. None

Part IV. Units attached but not recommended for award of the Presidential Unit Citation.

1. None

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PROPOSED CITATION

PRESIDENTIAL UNIT CITATION

AWARD OF THE PRESIDENTIAL UNIT CITATION BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE FOLLOWING UNIT OF THE ARMED FORCES OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA IS CONFIRMED IN ACCORDANCE WITH PARAGRAPH 194, AR 672-5-1.

THE 4TH BATTALION (AERIAL ARTILLERY), 77TH ARTILLERY (AIRMOBILE), 101ST AIRBORNE DIVISION (AIRMOBILE)

THE CITATION READS AS FOLLOWS:

THE 4TH BATTALION (AERIAL ARTILLERY), 77TH ARTILLERY (AIRMOBILE) 101ST AIRBORNE DIVISION (AIRMOBILE), DISTINGUISHED ITSELF BY EXTRAORDINARY HEROISM AGAINST A HOSTILE FORCE WHILE ENGAGED IN OPERATIONS IN THE KINGDOM OF LAOS AND THE REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM BETWEEN THE TIME PERIOD 8 FEBRUARY 1971 AND 8 APRIL 1971. THROUGHOUT THIS PERIOD THE MEN OF THE BATTALION BRAVED INTENSE ENEMY FIRE WHILE IN SUPPORT OF THE ASSAULT ELEMENTS OF THE ARMY OF THE REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM ENGAGED IN HEAVY GROUND FIGHTING AGAINST A NUMERICALLY SUPERIOR ENEMY FORCE IN THE KINGDOM OF LAOS. WITHOUT HESITATION THE AERIAL ARTILLERYMEN CONTINUOUSLY LAUNCHED THEIR AIRCRAFT TO PLACE DESTRUCTIVE FIRES UPON THE ENEMY FORCES, FORCING THEM TO WITHDRAW. WHEN THE FRIENDLY ELEMENTS WERE BEING HARD PRESSED BY THE ENEMY FORCES, THE MEN OF THE AERIAL ROCKET ARTILLERY BATTALION RESPONDED IMMEDIATELY TO REINFORCE BY FIRE THE DELEAGUED FRIENDLY ELEMENTS WITH COMPLETE DISREGARD FOR THEIR OWN SAFETY. ALTHOUGH INTENSE ENEMY FIRE DAMAGED EVERY AIRCRAFT IN THE BATTALION DURING THIS PERIOD, CAUSING HALF OF THE BATTALION ASSETS TO BE DESTROYED OR TURNED IN FOR REPLACEMENT, THE MEN OF THE BATTALION DID NOT WAIVER. THE DETERMINATION, DEVOTION TO DUTY, INDOMITABLE COURAGE AND EXTRAORDINARY HEROISM DEMONSTRATED BY THE MEMBERS OF THE 4TH BATTALION (AERIAL ARTILLERY), 77TH ARTILLERY (AIRMOBILE), 101ST AIRBORNE DIVISION (AIRMOBILE), ARE IN KEEPING WITH THE HIGHEST TRADITIONS OF THE MILITARY SERVICE AND REFLECT GREAT CREDIT UPON THEMSELVES, THEIR UNIT AND THE ARMED FORCES OF THE UNITED STATES.

COMBAT DAMAGED AIRCRAFT

<u>TYPE AIRCRAFT</u>	<u>ASGN</u>	<u>GDD(1)</u>	<u>CDTI(2)</u>	<u>CDR(3)</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
UH1H	3	0	0	0	0
AH1G	36	9	9	43	61
TOTAL	<u>39</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>43</u>	<u>61</u>

(1) Combat Damaged and Destroyed

(2) Combat Damaged and Turned In

(3) Combat Damaged and Repaired

\* For Period Covered

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