

SECRET-NOFORN

ANALYSIS OF HELICOPTER OPERATIONS

1. General

Helicopter operations were conducted from the USS Iwo Jima (LPH-2) during operation Fortress Attack II/Napoleon/Saline II.

2. Helicopter Utilization

a. The overall utilization of helicopters was very good. Some difficulties were experienced when HDC would switch missions on sections who were still working previously briefed missions. Also at times sections were unnecessarily split by HDC. The augmentation of aircraft to 1st MAW for support were not most effectively utilized in all instances. Occasionally the SLF "A" aircraft provided to the 1st MAW were not used for half the day and sometimes not at all. When used, and proceeding on a mission, the pilots often found two other aircraft already there working. This was due to a lack of organization and control ashore.

b. LPH-2 Squadron Relations

Relations between the LPH-2 and the squadron were conducted in a highly professional and effective manner and were mutually satisfying during this period. Those problems encountered were met by a joint effort on the part of HDC and the squadron to correct them.

c. Communication and Coordination

Communications and coordination between the SLF, HLT and squadron were excellent. Very few difficulties were experienced. Between the LPH and the squadron however, some communication and control difficulties were encountered. UHF radio communications between the squadron aircraft and the ship was severely limited by the imposition COMSEC with the result that often the pilots were not sure of mission requirements. Flights occasionally would return to the ship still on a mission and be diverted to another mission by means of a slip of paper without being completely briefed as to mission requirements. This procedure did not permit pilots to adjust fuel load, or aircraft with mission limitations in order to accomplish the mission. Section integrity was violated by directions from HDC without regard to prebriefed mission or aircraft limitations. Additionally, these changes were not always passed to the squadron operations section with the result that the squadron many times did not know at all times what missions its aircraft were performing.

c. Operations of HLT 2/4 Logistic Support Area. These personnel were outstanding in their work and utilization of aircraft available to them. They moved the maximum amount of cargo/personnel as expeditiously as possible every time we worked with them.