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ANALYSIS OF HELICOPTER OPERATIONS

1. General. Helicopter operations in support of BLT 2/4 and Third Marine Division elements were conducted by HMM-362 from the USS Princeton LPH-5 during operation Fortress Attack III/Scotland II.

2. Helicopter Utilization. The squadron was assigned three basic missions during this period; Medevac, Command and Control and administrative missions. The day medevac mission was conducted in conjunction with two aircraft assigned command and control for SLF Alpha and basically provided an airborne medical assistance capability with one medecal corpsman aboard. Night medevac was on condition III standby on board the LPH-5 and was rarely utilized due to extreme distance between the LPH-5 and BLT 2/4's position. The majority of the missions flown by HMM-362 were command and control missions assigned by First Marine Aircraft Wing augmented from SLF Alpha.

a. Command and Control Missions. Sections of two UH-34D's were assigned to each of three Marine infantry regiments in the Dong Ha, Ca Lu, and Khe Sanh areas on a daily basis under the control of Dong Ha DASC. These aircraft were continuously made available on a daily basis and requested to transport passengers and cargo in small increments (one UH-34D load or less) between the regimental CP, the battalions, and their outlying units. The requirements for piecemeal movement reoccured again and again during the same day from the same units. In addition when these aircraft were moving between units and combat bases, they are continually requested to "stop by and pick up a couple of pax" when requesting artillery clearance through a particular units area of operations. This uncontrolled piecemeal movement of troops and cargo increments frequently caused duplication of effort when command and control aircraft were later assigned to these same missions.

b. LPH Operations. Operations conducted aboard the USS Princeton were, on the whole, very satisfactory. Communications problems were encountered and solved when 19 mc equipment was installed in the SLF Alpha S-3 office and telephones installed in the maintenance control/line shack office.

3. Conclusions.

a. In order that the command and control mission be accomplished more efficiently, the regiments must require more advanced planning from its battalions for the administrative movement of troops and cargo. All personnel movement requirements should be transmitted from the outlying units to the regimental air officer as they occur. All this must be accomplished so the section leader of the UH-34D's may plan the utilization of both aircraft and the fuel loading so as to accommodate the separate landing zones with their varying elevations and obstacles.

Enclosure (2)  
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