

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY  
Headquarters, 12th Combat Aviation Group  
APO San Francisco 96308

AVIATION

7 March 1973

SUBJ: After Action Report

Comdader  
→ 1st Aviation Brigade  
ANALYST AIR: CPT Hefner  
AFC 07 46209

1. (U) Report: To report significant activities and planning involved in the standdown of 12th Combat Aviation Group during the period 1 November 1972 through 14 March 1973.

2. (U) General:

a. Section I: Significant Organizational Activities.

(1) Pre-V-Day Phase: During the period 1 November 1972 to 29 March 1973 the 12th Combat Aviation Group continued to provide troop aviation support to Command General, Third Regional Assistance Command (RAC), Headquarters MACV. Group assets included two air cavalry units, F Troop, 1st Cavalry, 5th U.S. Air Cavalry stationed at Bien Hoa AB, which were under Cdr, F Troop, with the primary mission of providing security for the MACV HQ and US Personnel in Military Region III (M). Their mission ended on 28 January 1973 commensurate with the cease fire. Additional Group assets included the Command Aircraft Company which provided UH-1 fixed wing support for MACV HQ and Headquarters, MACV/USAMV. The 50th Cavalry Aviation Troop was also assigned to Group and supported Headquarters MACV and MACV HQ and command and control helicopters. An additional major unit was the 388th Transportation Company with a mobility capability including an in-country general support and recovery of aircraft maintenance. Subsequent to the cease fire, the 388th provided the majority of aircraft out of Vietnam. The last aircraft to land in surface units was taken out of Da Nang AB on 1 March 1973.

During this period efforts of 12th Group during this reported period were as follows: numerous significant achievements. The combined average of 2500 hours of the two air cavalry units, toward accomplishing their mission, exceeded all other Group air cavalry averages in Vietnam. The 50th Cavalry Troop was the best in Vietnam even though it combat actions were limited and sporadic. The Command Aircraft Company completed one year of UH-1 fixed wing support for MACV/USAMV which is VII Corps, was also for the highest ranking U.S. general to visit as well as including co stories.

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An additional unit of this group was the 312th Aviation Detachment (Divisional). The 312th Commander was responsible for operating Hotel 3, which was the major heliport in Vietnam, and Lassister Heliport at Bien Hoa Air Base, the home of both F/8 and F/9 Air Cavalry Troops.

Subsequent to receipt of the 1st Aviation Brigade OPLAN 215, actions were initiated to prepare for standdown of this Group and its units. This phase was marked by enthusiasm and optimism on the part of all staff sections and unit headquarters. Plans were formulated and information was disseminated to unit levels. The process of reviewing and revising plans resulted in numerous changes in planning guidance for some units. As the cease-fire efforts continued and it became evident that peace would not occur in 1972, units resumed their missions and waited for final planning to be accomplished. However, suspense dates were established and plans were formulated for the timely submission of OIR's, IER's, awards, funds dissolution, and personnel strengths. As guidance was published and changes noted, units were contacted to insure their understanding and compliance.

Significant reorganization that occurred included the formation of special aviation teams to support the Four Power Commission and the International Control Commission Supervisors. This selection was primarily based upon aviator retainability and qualifications. Guidelines and suspenses for the termination of funds were also established. Rosters of personnel assigned and those pending orders were prepared during the initial stages of the pre-standdown and forwarded in order to assist in zeroing morning reports. A limited list of mission essential personnel for extension beyond normal DPES was submitted to USARV for approval. This was limited to key personnel in critical slots. Although activities were conducted on a continuing basis, the frequency of changes and actions resulting therefrom consumed considerable time on the part of administrative personnel at all levels of command.

During this first period, units were instructed to turn-in all excess equipment in anticipation of the cease-fire. The S-4 section conducted inspections in the areas of motor maintenance, arms room, mess hall, and supply operations. Safety inspections were conducted at Lassister's rearm and TOL points. All unit property books were audited for the scheduled Annual General Inspection and/or standdown.

The 12th CAG was preparing for an Annual General Inspection scheduled for the end of February. The overall posture of the group was improved by the pre-AGI inspections and assistance visits to the subordinate units. Equipment was in fair shape but there were problems with the "tire log" encountered in the offshore supply system. Equipment was earmarked for support of the aircraft retrograde mission and put in good condition. Coordination was made with Vinnell Corp and IAA&E for top priority on all projects once Y-Day arrived.

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Since planning originally commenced in mid-October there was no major problem during this time. Units were briefed on standdown procedures and copies of Annex F to USMACV OFPLAN 183 were furnished to all units. TEST charts were drawn up and used as a management tool to facilitate an orderly standdown. Personnel turbulence made it necessary for some units to change standdown officers which could have been avoided by astute personnel management.

The initial reaction to the promised cease-fire was enthusiasm and hard work in the effort to accomplish a fast withdrawal of U.S. Forces. However, the subsequent turn of events, when the war continued, saw a definite slatering in total productivity. All functional areas of military activity suffered from a reluctance to turn from peace preparations back to prosecution of the war. Even the promising start toward standdown began to suffer as morale took a downswing. The formulation of plans for standdown and the dissemination of information to troop units slowed, as did unit reaction. The re-umption of mission tasks was accomplished as the final plans for standdown were completed.

Based upon data obtained from Brigade OFPLAN 215, skeletal plans were outlined to coordinate the intelligence collection and counterintelligence functions as affected by depleted resources and personnel security - debriefing requirements. The disposition of unit files and security equipment was considered in the light of assumptions concerning time phased mission reduction. Document security, communication security, and personnel security, measures were planned in accordance with the proposed troop and mission reduction.

The 12th CAG Signal Section was actively engaged in maintaining communications to include an effective distribution system between 12th CAG Headquarters and subordinate units. The telephone communications from Saigon to Bien Hoa and Flanstation went steadily downhill since this system was no longer under U.S. control.

During the period from 1 November 1972 to 14 March 1973, plans and contingencies were formulated for the stand-down of all aviation maintenance facilities in MR 111. A plan for continued maintenance support for U.S. army aircraft in MR 111 subsequent to the standdown of the military maintenance units was established and implemented. Plans and contingencies were also formulated for the retrograde of 153 aircraft from Newport dock facility as well as the transfer of all remaining UH-1H aircraft in MR 111 to GVN (VNAP).

(2) Stand Down Phase: Upon official notification of the cease-fire, plans had to be updated and certain inadequacies of these plans were identified. Special aviation mission teams were organized; however, no provision for the administrative and support requirements had been made. Immediate reassignment of personnel with the MCS's 71P/H (clerical and administrative),

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CAF (comms), and 701 (armor/unit supply) caused problems for subordinate units. It not only created hardships for the individuals involved but also caused units to reassign personnel internally. Additionally, with the sharing of these MCB's throughout the Group, further reassignment between units was required in order to assist each unit to standdown in an orderly fashion. Most of the reassignments levied on individual units could have been anticipated and implemented in the current OFLAN.

The Unit Fund was turned in to the Central Post Fund on X+10 with no discrepancies. Pertinent files and records were boxed up and forwarded to AG Publications as per instructions.

P/8, P/9 and the 129th Medical Detachment commenced standdown on X-Day and were completed by X+15. The standdown was accomplished in a timely and orderly fashion. The remaining units in group continued to turn-in excess equipment and made coordination for the turn over of TC&S property. The army installation at Bien Hoa was turned over to ARVN on X+16. The LOI's that were published for standdown were followed by all units and proved to be a definite assistance. Sufficient transportation, other than TO&T vehicles was made available through Transportation Motor Pool (TMP). The Newport Plan was successfully put into operation for retrograding aircraft. Update information from the 1st Aviation Brigade OFLAN 215 was disseminated and the group standdown plan was updated and briefed to all units. The units located at Bien Hoa ceased tactical operations and started standdown immediately while all other units continued with their missions. Title transfer of selected TO&T property had been effected previously and was hand receipted back to US units. TC&S property at Bien Hoa was turned over to ARVN Units.

Notification of the cease-fire order brought back the enthusiasm seen initially in October. Minor changes in the OFLAN were implemented and units commenced immediate shipment and processing of troops. Special Mission Teams were organized and briefed. The sudden increase in personnel security requirements presented no particular problems. Staff coordination and adequate planning provided for effective personnel security processing. The planned termination of intelligence processing and dissemination caused some problems in providing for Special Action Teams. This was compounded by the cut-off of incoming material by higher headquarters. Although planning was adequate and timely for the most part, the uncertainties in contingency planning resulted in the holding of certain assets, notably secure voice radio and security containers, beyond the planned turn in date. The screening and disposition of files was uncomplicated though changes in the cut-off date occurred frequently.

(3) Withdrawal Phase: To assist in a planned withdrawal, release rosters were submitted. However, because of changes in unit missions the actual withdrawal did not coincide with the rosters and resulted in delays while orders were being published. This, in turn, caused delays in outprocessing. This phase could have been conducted more efficiently if more firm planning guidance could have been available at the time release rosters were being prepared. This phase of the cease-fire concerned not only the withdrawal of troops but also the reassignment of personnel within Vietnam to meet the needs of special teams.

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Intelligence files and logs were closed. Where necessary, mission - classified documents were transferred permanently to 1st Aviation Brigade. All files were disposed of in accordance with standdown plans. Staff sections reduced personnel strength where practical. Some difficulties were encountered as planning deficiencies appeared. Again, uncertainty in the contingency area caused a slow-down in personnel clearances, turn-in of files and disposal of classified material and references.

Mission requirements were reevaluated and aviation assets were adjusted accordingly. The CISUM Report was terminated on 1 March 1973. All other reports were continued. The Group assumed the responsibility for providing all aviation support in Vietnam for "Operation Homecoming" after "T+45". This added responsibility was thoroughly coordinated with 1st Aviation Brigade and plans were formulated for this Group to maintain a special aviation staff to control aviation support in MR III after "T+45". The majority of the communication equipment was turned-in during this period. Radio communications with the F Troops, 8th and 9th Cav was terminated on "T+14". During the withdrawal phase (20 Feb - 1 Mar 73) all classified files were destroyed with the exception of CCMCFC records which were shipped to the custodians of the gaining unit in CONUS.

All safety files and records were turned over to 1st Aviation Brigade. Group 3 Special Detachments retained the responsibility for aircraft accident investigations until standdown. The 12th CAG and its subordinate units safety record of 7.5% was a "milestone" in aviation safety. The accident rate for RVN was 17.0%. This low rate was brought about by experienced and safety conscious commanders and all support personnel.

(4) Roll-up Phase: The final phase of the cease-fire was concerned with the establishment of internal controls to insure unit deactivation stand-down and final morning report submission. A skeleton staff was established for movement to Brigade in order to finalize all unit administrative actions.

During this phase, the final disposition of files and references was accomplished; the transfer of personnel security functions to the 1st Aviation Brigade was made along with the closing of document control logs. As MR units cleared their areas, the exit security inspection was completed and final reports were forwarded to 1st Aviation Brigade. A methodology for security debriefing of personnel was implemented as they processed out of their units into the Camp Alpha transhipment area. All mission requirements were outlined and sufficient aviation assets were transferred to the CAC to support all remaining aircraft requirements. Command Aircraft Company (CAC) was the only aviation units in MR III remaining after "T+45". All reports after "T+45" were forwarded from CAC to the Group staff which was reduced to seven personnel and remained until X+50 to provide aviation support for MR III.

b. Section 2: Commander's comments on lessons learned.

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(1) Forming of Special Teams:

(a) Observation: The actual composition of special aviation teams was not adequate to enable them to perform both their mission and meet team administrative requirements.

(b) Evaluation: The requirement was to assign only aviators and crewchiefs to each special aviation team; however, it became apparent that each team needed operations and administrative personnel to maintain flight records and orders. Units had to be tasked to provide the additional support personnel; however, they could not be assigned to the teams due to team strength limitations.

(c) Recommendation: Special aviation teams be formed as separate detachments with the complete capability of performing operations and related administrative functions.

(d) Command Action: None.

(2) Orders for Special Teams:

(a) Observation: Members of special aviation teams were not reassigned promptly to a controlling headquarters or organization.

(b) Evaluation: When the special teams were formed, plans had not been completed to reassign team members to a gaining unit. This created confusion among the team members as well as their parent units. Morning reports did not accurately reflect unit strengths since members to be transferred were actually present for duty with their teams. The air cavalry troops were unable to zero out morning reports in a timely manner because team members were selected from their assets and had not been reassigned. In addition some confusion existed as to rating schemes and the administration of military justice.

(c) Recommendation: Personnel on special teams be immediately reassigned to a controlling headquarters that is scheduled to maintain a morning report throughout the entire period of utilization.

(d) Command Action: None

(3) Destruction of Unclassified Material:

(a) Observation: Adequate instructions were not published for the destruction of unclassified material.

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(1) Evaluation: Although there were adequate instructions for the loading and shipment of classified and unclassified files, no plan or file was received for the destruction of such material as regulations, manuals, and maps. There were inadequate facilities at Tan Son Nhut to effectively destroy the abundance of such material. Numerous phone calls and coordination with LAMC, the fire department, and other activities were required to locate a suitable facility for burning large quantities of unclassified material.

(c) Recommendation: Plans must be made for the large scale destruction of unclassified material in the final stages of unit stand down and withdrawal.

(d) Command Action: None

(4) Files and Security Containers:

(a) Observation: Uncertainty caused by added missions and responsibilities caused a slowdown in files disposition. This in turn delayed turnover of security containers.

(b) Evaluation: As previously mentioned, the delay in the proposed cease-fire caused a drop-off in productivity at all levels, a psychological reaction to disappointment sometimes referred to as "stand-stillitis". Staff planning and more particularly, staff coordination suffered because of this phenomenon. Decisions were slow in coming and even slower in dissemination as each level of the hierarchy added its own "as-far-as factor". Thus, at Group level, files were held beyond a time of any practical usefulness. The resultant, all-out purge and disposition when this static situation was overtaken by the third change of suspense date, caused a day-long stoppage in other activity. The chain reaction result was a holdup in transfer of security containers. Not a large problem, never-the-less it was time consuming and counter-productive.

(c) Recommendation: That early planning and initiation for hand disposition of historical and general files be required at all staff levels.

(d) Command Action: None.

(5) Closing of Funds:

(a) Observation: More command supervision at unit level was required to insure proper closing of funds and availability of auditing officers.

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(1) Evaluation: The terminal audits of funds were conducted by persons with little or no prior knowledge of funds management or financial procedures. This created a training problem; other problems resulted from auditing officers not initiating their audits promptly through failure to notify their respective fund custodians of the date for final audit.

(c) Recommendation: Auditors should be carefully selected and immediately initiate terminal audit procedures.

(d) Command Action: None.

(e) Maps:

(a) Observation: The UCAIV Map depot began disposition of maps early in the standdown. New supplies were not obtained.

(b) Evaluation: An immediate need for maps arose with the formation of the Special Action Teams by 12th Comint Aviation Group. This need was not out of stock-on-hand; however, the on-hand supply was seriously depleted. Contingency planning required additional map supplies which could not be readily obtained through normal channels.

(c) Recommendation: That normal supply channels remain open and functioning as long as US Forces require support in the combat area.

(d) Command Action: None

(7) PCS Orders:

(a) Observation: The shipment of personnel available for release was slowed by the lack of orders.

(b) Evaluation: Although assignment instructions were received, orders were not published by Y+10 as originally indicated but continued through Y+20. This often prevented units from releasing those persons scheduled for shipment and meant changing shipping dates by as much as three weeks. During the second increment, this prevented the units from maintaining their shipment rates and caused a delay in scheduling. In addition to creating problems for the various headquarters, it also created a hardship for individuals and their families.

(c) Recommendation: Orders be published as scheduled and in accordance with shipping lists submitted by individual units.

(d) Command Action: None.

AFTRAP

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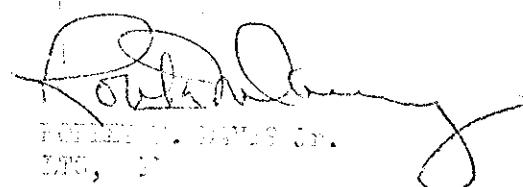
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(c) Intelligence Information:

(a) Observation: AFTRAP intelligence collection units to be in significant areas to be held open by US Army. The collection regiments will be taken over by Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces operating under ARVN intelligence operations and reporting. This office is not in a position to assess the credibility of such a plan but can only observe that the credibility and credibility of intelligence information received thereby, normal channels was inadequate.

(b) Recommendation: That US Intelligence collection and processing personnel continue support to US Forces until they exit the conflict areas.

(c) Command Action: None.



5.1.1.1

After Action Report is ready:

ROBERT W. DAVIS, JR.

1. 1st Artillery Regiment

1PC, 1P

2. 1st T-55 Cavalry

Commanding

3. 212th Artillery Regiment (Divisional)

4. Command Aircraft Company

5. 59th Corps Aviation Company

6. 308th Transportation Company

7. F Troop, 1st U.S. Cavalry (Air)

8. F Troop, 2nd U.S. Cavalry (Air)