

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

ATTN:

7 March 1973

SUBJECT: After Action Report

→ Commander  
1st Aviation Brigade  
AMMAY-GFT AFB: GFT Pfeiffer  
APO SF 96308

1. (U) Purpose: 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 1: 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 aviation support for the Commander, General, Third Regional Assistance Command (MACV) Headquarters, MACV. Group assets included two air cavalry wings, F Troop, 1st Cavalry, 5th U.S. Air Cavalry stationed at Tan Son Nhut, which were to be CDR, MACV, with the primary mission of providing security for the MACV and US Personnel in Military Region III (MR). Their mission on 28 January 1973 commensurate with the cease fire. Additional Group assets included the Command Aircraft Company which provided F-4H fixed wing support for all MACV's and Headquarters, MACV/USARV. The 5th Combat Aviation Group was assigned to Group and supported Headquarters, MACV, USARV and MACV/USARV and command and control helicopters. An additional major asset was the 388th Transportation Company with a major capability in providing in-country general support and back-up of all support aircraft. Subsequent to the cease fire, the 388th provided the major air route of army aircraft out of Vietnam. The 12th aircraft is being moved by surface means was taken out of Vietnam 600 on 1 March 1973.

The efforts of 12th Group during this reporting period were numerous significant achievements. The combined average of the two air cavalry units, toward accomplishing their mission, exceeded all other Group air cavalry averages in Vietnam. The 12th Group was the lowest in Vietnam even though the combat activity was increased sharply. The Command Aircraft Company completed 100% of all F-4H fixed wing support for all of Vietnam which was the highest ranking MACV group to visit all of the major countries.

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An additional unit of this group was the 312th Aviation Detachment (Divisional). The 312th Commander was responsible for operating Hotel 2, which was the major heliport in Vietnam, and Lassiter 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 DIFCS 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 Lassiter's rear and FGL 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 "time 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 IA&E for top priority on all projects once V-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 USMIV OFLAN 183 were furnished to all units. PEET 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 slatment 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 resumption of mission tasks was accomplished as the final plans for standdown were completed.

Based upon data obtained from Brigade OFLAN 215, skeletal plans were outlined to coordinate the intelligence collection and counterintelligence functions as affected by depleted resources and personnel security - detriking 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 Plantation 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 III. A plan for continued maintenance support for U.S. army aircraft in MR III 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 UK-1H aircraft in MR III to GVW (VNAF).

(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 71E/W (clerical and administrative),

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SLF (cocks), and 761 (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 shortage of these MCS'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 V-10 with no discrepancies. Pertinent files and records were boxed up and forwarded to AG Publications as per instructions.

F/8, F/9 and the 129th Medical Detachment commenced standdown on V-Day and were completed by V-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 MCS property. The army installation at Fien Hoa was turned over to ARVN on V-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&E 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 Fien Hoa ceased tactical operations and started standdown immediately while all other units continued with their missions. Title transfer of selected TO&E property had been effected previously and was hand receipted back to US units. MCS property at Fien 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 - essential 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 CISM 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 V445. 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 V445. 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 V414. During the withdrawal phase (20 Feb - 1 Mar 73) all-classified files were destroyed with the exception of COMSEC 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 A Special Detachments retained the responsibility for aircraft accident investigations until standdown. The 12th CAC and its subordinate units safety record of 7.5% was a "milestone" in aviation safety. The accident rate for AVI 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 the 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 transshipment area. All mission requirements were continued and sufficient aviation assets were transferred to the CAC to support all remaining aircraft requirements. Command Aircraft Company (CAC) was the only aviation unit in MR III remaining after V445. All reports after V445 were forwarded from CAC to the Group staff which was reduced to seven personnel and remained until V450 to provide aviation support for MR III.

2. 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 crew chiefs 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 moving and shipment of classified and unclassified files, no plans or instructions were received for the destruction of such material as regulations, manuals, and forms. There were inadequate facilities at Tan Son Nhut to effectively destroy the abundance of such material. Numerous phone calls and coordination with INH, 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 "safety 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 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 administrative 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.

(6) Maps:

(a) Observation: The USARV Map depot began disposition of assets 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 Combat Aviation Group. This need was met 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) FCS 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 M410 as originally indicated but continued through M400. 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.



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(f) Intelligence Information:

(a) Observation: Military intelligence collection efforts have stood down almost immediately upon 24 May. The collection responsibility must be taken over by Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces agencies who would continue operations and reporting. This office is not in a position to assess the reliability of such a plan but can only observe that the quality and quantity of intelligence information received through normal channels was inadequate.

(b) Recommendation: That US intelligence collection and processing agencies continue support to US Forces until they exit the combat area.

(c) Command Action: None.

Signal

After Action Reports from:

1. Army Aviation Element
2. Air Force Element
3. 212th Aviation Battalion (Divisional)
4. Command Aircraft Company
5. 59th Corps Aviation Company
6. 315th Transportation Company
7. F Troop, 5th U.S. Cavalry (Air)
8. F Troop, 9th U.S. Cavalry (Air)

  
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