

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
12th Combat Aviation Group
F Troop, 8th Cavalry
AIC San Francisco 96388

AVIAU-1-8

28 February 1973

SUBJECT: After Action Report - Lessons Learned, F Troop, 8th Cavalry,
1 November 1972 through Deactivation

Commander
12th Combat Aviation Group
ATTN: G-3
AIC San Francisco 96388

1. Purpose: To report significant activities during all phases of stand-down of F Troop, 8th Cavalry, 12th Combat Aviation Group, 1st Aviation Brigade.

2. General: During the period 1 November 1972 through 28 January 1973 F Troop, 8th Cavalry was under the operational control of the Commanding General, Third Regional Assistance Command (TRAC), to provide security for key installation and US personnel in Military Region III. The mission involved conducting visual reconnaissance mission along major avenues of approach into the key installations of Saigon, Tan Son Nhut and Bien Hoa. The troop had been moved from Da Nang to Bien Hoa beginning 15 October 1972 and was concurrently conducting tactical missions and improving the campment area.

a. Section 1: Significant Organizational Activity.

(1) Pre X-Day: From the period 1 November 1972 through 27 January 1973 plans were made for the stand down of the Troop. Checklists for functional areas provided by higher staff agencies were reviewed and personnel were briefed on the expected actions that would be required in relation to X-Day.

(2) Stand-Down Phase: Standdown was accomplished between 270800 January 1973 and 281000 January 1973. All UH-1H's with crews and sidearms required to support the International Control Commission for Supervision (ICCS) and the Joint Military Commission (JMC) were relocated to Saigon. The Troop Operations Center was discontinued and proper disposition was made on all classified documents and materials. One VRC 46 radio set was relocated to the orderly room for administrative communications.

AVIA-LP

28 February 1973

SUBJECT: After Action Report - Lessons Learned, B Troop, 8th Cavalry,
1 November 1972 through Deactivation (Cont)

(3) Withdrawal Phase: TCM and TDA equipment, to include equipment found on post, was turned in to the proper agencies. The remainder of the entire troop area continued throughout this phase. The 14th Army Base was inspected; post, camp and station (1042) properly was turned over to ARVN representatives; and buildings were jointly inventoried and turned over to the 14th Army Base Section and the ARVN representative. Remaining vehicles and weapons were turned in as the rear detachment moved by bus to Camp Alpha, Tan Son Nhut Air Force Base, for redeployment to COMUS.

(4) Roll-up Phase: The Troop Command Post was established at Headquarters 12th Combat Aviation Group. A deactivation ceremony was conducted on 14 February 1973. The remaining few members of the unit were outmarched. The morning report was reduced by attrition to zero balance.

B. Section 2: Commanders Observations and Recommendations.

(1) Pre-X-Day: The prohibition against the use of the Aero-Battle Platoon in a ground role and the non-availability of ready US reaction forces dictated that only aerial visual reconnaissance techniques be employed. The Aero-Battle Platoon was employed as a full time base security force. Maintenance availability of the AH-1G helicopters, was also a limiting factor. The age of the AH-1G fleet, the added complexity of the weapons and the stabilization systems, the lack of personnel qualified in AH-1G maintenance, resulted in low availability and seriously affected the capability of the entire troop. The sophistication of the AH-1G makes it imperative that school trained mechanics be made available to maintain the system to meet high availability requirements.

(2) Stand Down Phase: Immediate transfer of some key personnel to support the JOC and JMC required that each man be cleared in a short period of time. Clearance papers, efficiency reports, awards and decorations, and all other possible actions had been prepared in advance. Selection of aviators for the JMC/JOC terms was made on the basis of JMCOS. Consequently, it was not possible to hold platoon leaders until all aircraft were turned in or transferred.

(3) Withdrawal Phase: Orders were completed according to prepared deployment roster submitted on X+2, allowing a gradual phase out of unit personnel. Maximum efficiency of the remaining personnel was obtained by assigning specific areas of responsibility and daily objectives to complete standdown.

AVFAL-PT

28 February 1973

SUBJECT: After Action Report - Lessons Learned, F Troop, 8th Cavalry
1 November 1972 through Description (Cont)

(4) Roll-up Phase: All personnel except two were released to return to COMUSMACV. Two men were pending on Article 15. The Commander and the Morning Report Clerk remained to clear the morning report of all personnel.

3. Specific:

a. Section 1: Significant Activities.

(1) Pre-V-Day:

(a) Personnel:

1. Personnel strength had dropped to approximately 80% and only the concentrated efforts of the Group Commander kept the aviator strength at a minimum acceptable level. One combat casualty, family emergencies and normal DMAS's combined to require replacements of all platoon leaders and key staff officers except the G and H. The strength of the 11E, more rifle platoon, personnel, dropped to the point that twenty two men from other sections were required to complete the unit guard detail requirement of thirty six men each day. In addition, a lack of experienced AH-1G mechanics and a shortage of technical inspectors caused a poor AH-1G availability.

2. Standby MA's and CM's were written, all voluntary personnel actions were requested, and preference statements were submitted.

3. During this period the Human Relations Program and the Drug Control Program were major areas of endeavor.

(b) Equipment retrograde/turnover: Equipment designated by higher headquarters was transferred to ARVN and then hand receipted back to the Property Book Officer. The avionics float equipment was reduced to twenty per cent.

(c) Intelligence/Security: Enemy intelligence was provided by daily visits from TRAC C-2 personnel, intelligence summaries prepared at TRAC, and the 12th CIG S-2. The TRAC C-2 personnel debriefed the scout pilots each day and provided valuable additional information to that already available from spot reports. The troop also provided its own local security.

(d) Operations: During the period 1 November 1972 through 28 January 1973, F Troop, 8th Cavalry, conducted Air Cavalry Reconnaissance operations in the Tay Ninh, Binh Duong, and Binh Long Provinces around the Michelin Plantation. Use of USAF Tactical Air Support was emphasized. This additional factor proved a great asset since the Forward Air Controller used fighter-bombers on significant targets once discovered. TAC air was also used to open up holes in triple canopy jungle, enabling the scout helicopters

AVL-128

26 February 1972

SUBJECT: After Action Report - Lessons Learned, F Troop, 8th Cavalry
1 November 1972 through Deactivation (Cont'd)

recent in more detail. This interservice relationship proved to be a great asset to both services and an excellent weapon against the enemy. The US Air Force obtained detailed descriptions and locations of targets plus an immediate bomb damage assessment. The US Army received heavy ordnance on known targets in a short period of time, enabling further development of the situation. While involved in these operations, the unit had light aircraft losses and casualties. From 1 November 1972 to standdown, two aviators were medivaced as a result of hostile actions and two aircraft were downed and destroyed in place. In all cases recovery of the downed crews was immediate utilizing organic assets.

(e) Logistics: Since the unit had recently arrived in this area, logistics relationships were still being established at the beginning of the period. In general, logistics support provided by ARVN or VNAF was difficult to establish and maintain, while support provided by US military or US controlled contractors was smooth and efficient.

1. The shortage of USG equipment, especially generators and special tools, continued to hamper the mission effectiveness of the unit. Ammunition resupply and operation of the ammunition resupply point by organic personnel was an area of major effort.

2. The maintenance availability of vehicles continued downward until early January and in some cases lack of vehicles hindered the efficiency of the sections within the unit. Availability of spare parts was the primary problem.

2. All members of the unit were encouraged to ship large valuable possessions to COMUS by hold baggage in mid November. In early January more emphasis was put on this area and transportation was set up on a regular basis enabling all members of the unit to ship hold baggage.

(f) Transfer of control of air combat assets: N/A

(g) Transfer of functions and reporting: Plans were made for transfer of functions to officers, NCO's or N's who would remain in the unit until 2415. All normal reports continued.

(h) Transfer of billeting, bases, installed property and equipment and other real property: All buildings and installed property were jointly inventoried and hand receipts were signed by the Property Pool Officer in early December. ARVN representatives accompanied the inventory team.

(2) Stand Down Phase: Since the entire unit was intact at the beginning of the stand down phase, each platoon was tasked to prepare aircraft and personnel for the designated agency. As JN-1H aircraft became available they were flown out by personnel who would compose the special IGCS and JMC teams.

AVIATION-P-670.

26 February 1973

SUBJECT: After Action Report - Lessons Learned, F Troop, 5th Cavalry
1 November 1972 through Deactivation (Cont'd)

(a) Personnel:

1. Individuals were tasked to clear assigned areas. Officer areas were cleared by platoon leaders and enlisted areas were cleared by platoon sergeants. When each unit had completed clearing and had signed out, he reported to operations and waited for movement.

2. IDK's were issued to individuals to be placed in 201 files later. Blank IDK forms were not available, so pencil drafts were completed and turned in to the administrative officer. A list of personnel on TDY Wk or on leave in 1973 was submitted to 12th CAG with a request that all personnel remain in 1973 to await reassignment.

(b) Equipment Retrograde/Turnover:

1. All UH-1H aircraft were immediately transferred, as were all vehicles. However, vehicles were held on hand receipt and utilized until close out of the unit.

2. The requirement to clean out conox containers forced distribution of military equipment to the proper place within the troop.

3. Weapons systems were removed from all AH-1G and OH-6A helicopters although packing boxes were not available. All non-flyable aircraft were reported to 12th CAG AHC. The first of many loads of ammunition, aircraft parts, vehicle parts, and TOL equipment were moved to Long Binh and Saigon.

(c) Intelligence/Security: Civilian personnel, except mess personnel, were released at the end of the working day without prior notice to prevent last minute pilfering. They were given a date to return for their final pay. The normal guard commitment was reduced to six men on two bunkers and one tower, and one man roving on the heliport. One aircraft (with no M-60's mounted) received fire and sustained three hits at approximately 0630 on 28 January 1973.

(d) Operations: Normal missions continued through 270600 January 1973, and a first light reconnaissance of the Bien Hoa Army Base was conducted until 280600 January 1973. The secure-voice II and all other tactical II's were terminated at 280800 January 1973.

(e) Logistics: Initial turn-in of equipment and supplies was begun. Maximum available equipment was moved by organic transportation.

(f) Transfer of Control of air combatant assets: N/A.

AVENUE-37

20 February 1973

SUBJECT: After Action Report - Lessons Learned, F Troop, 8th Cavalry
1 November 1972 through Deactivation (Cont.)

(g) Transfer of functions and reporting: All departing personnel with key functions briefed the individual assuming his responsibility.

(h) Transfer of billeting, leases, installed property and equipment and other real property: N/A.

(3) Withdrawal Phase: Two major tasks; the turn in of the remaining aircraft equipment and supplies, and the clean up of the unit area while the personnel strength was declining, were accomplished.

(a) Personnel: The initial deployment of personnel was executed in accordance with release posters previously submitted. After WLL requirements changed on a daily basis. The XO was appointed to coordinate personnel shipments with the 3-1. Supervisory personnel who were needed to close out certain functions were retained until their responsibilities ended. Some personnel with family emergencies were deployed earlier than planned rather than use the emergency leave system. Leaves for several NCS's were filled to complete the JIC team and to redistribute personnel within 12th CAS.

(b) Equipment retrograde/turnover: All AH-1G and OH-6A aircraft were delivered to Newport for retrograde 29 January 1973, the first day that Newport was open. One AH-1G and one OH-6A were evacuated as slim loads. Required property adjustments were completed later. The Keystone Officer, assisted by the Transportation Coordination Officer (TCO), was responsible for the retrograde of all US Government equipment. The responsible officer reported the equipment ready for turn in the Property Book Officer, who coordinated with the Keystone Officer. The TCO was delegated the responsibility for turning in all empty conex containers. The additional capability afforded by the daily use of five ton and ten ton flat bed trucks, tractors trailer trucks and a contractor operated fork lift was invaluable. All deadlined organic vehicles were turned in and other vehicles that developed major problems during this period were turned in. Three 2 1/2 ton trucks, three 1/2 ton trucks and twenty M-16 rifles were retained for the use of the troop. One bus, provided on a daily basis, was used to move personnel to out processing at the MACV Annex and then to Camp Alpha.

(c) Intelligence/Security: One 3/4 ton truck was hit by one round of small arms fire on CL 1 near Long Binh on 14. A 2 1/2 ton truck was stopped near the Lien Hoa ARVN gate and the driver was held up while three ARVN's attempted to steal his truck. Employment of house maids was kept to a minimum and all daily hire employees were kept under continuous supervision. No civilians or ARVN's were allowed to enter the post unless they were escorted by US personnel. On the day of departure extra effort was required to keep VN personnel out of the troop area.

AFM 1-100

20 February 1973

SUBJECT: After Action Report - Kissore Barrad, Part 3, (1) covering
1 November 1972 through Reaction (Cont)

(d) Operations: A request for three steady A-10's and seven was received on 19 January 1973. This unit was briefed for two steady cover to 33, where 33 on strike alert is held. The troop was also briefed for four. Information from 20 Jan up to 1973 through 21 January 1973 for a special mission. The personnel were designated and equipped with weapons, ammunition, and supplies. They returned the unit on 1 February 1973.

(e) Logistics: The vehicles comprised the major support requested by the troop. The unit was closed on 2-7 and personnel subsisted at the B/C mess until departure.

(f) Transfer of control of air combat assets: N/A.

(g) Transfer of functions and reporting: Final monthly reports were submitted at the end of January as normal reports. All fund audits were completed. All files and records were packed in boxes and held until departure.

(h) Transfer of billeting, lanes, installed property and equipment and other real property: Preparation of bill of sale up of the entire unit continued. The USARV MC, accompanied by a base closure team visited on 30 January 1973 and provided detailed guidance on standards of condition for base closure.

(A) Roll-up Phase:

(a) Personnel: The rear detachment personnel proceeded to Camp Alpha and were shipped within two days. The OC and the Morning Report Clerk stayed behind to zero out the morning report.

(b) Equipment retrograde/turnover: N/A.

(c) Intelligence/security: N/A.

(d) Operations: N/A.

(e) Logistics: N/A.

(f) Transfer of control of air combat assets: N/A.

(g) Transfer of functions and reporting: N/A.

(h) Transfer of billeting, lanes, installed property and equipment and other real property: N/A.

ATAP-FC

20 February 1972

SUBJECT: After Action Report - 1st and 2nd Troops, 7th Cavalry
2 November 1971 through Deactivation (Cont)

1. Section 1: Command's contacts on Deactivation Journal.

(1) Civilian employees.

(a) Observation: Civilian workers were a valuable asset to the unit.

(b) Evaluation: The nine civilian employees in the camp and three secretaries were well qualified and enthusiastic workers who fit well into a fixed base operation.

(c) Recommendation: That foreign nationals be utilized to the maximum extent available.

(2) Air crew recovery by OH-6A helicopters.

(a) Observation: The OH-6A helicopter made two recoveries during normal recon operations.

(b) Evaluation: The OH-6A scout helicopter was usually near the ground and close to any enemy activity directed against aircraft. It proved an excellent aircraft for recovery of one or two crew members, particularly in an area where the vegetation allowed sufficient room for the OH-6A to land or hover low enough to make a pick-up. The OH-6A presents a small target. With its high speed and maneuverability, the OH-6A is an ideal aircraft for this type of operation.

(c) Recommendation: That the OH-6A scout helicopter be used to extract downed crews during air cavalry reconnaissance missions.

(d) Command Action: N/A

(3) Excess Property

(a) Observation: Much excess property from aircraft peris to individual weapons was on hand in the unit.

(b) Evaluation: Only the officer or NCO signed for the property knows what is accountable and what is not, which could result in unauthorized disposal. When excess is on hand it endangers the accountability of authorized accountable items because personnel tend to avoid documentation of excess. Officers are prone to sign for anything when there is excess available. Weapons control is difficult when excess weapons are on hand.

(c) Recommendation: That higher command spot check units to insure that all government property is accounted for properly and that all excess is turned in to the proper agency during standdown.

AVIAR-78

28 February 1972

SUBJECT: After Action Report - Lessons Learned, F Troop, 8th Cavalry
1 November 1972 through Participation (Cont'd)

(d) Command Action: N/A

(4) Standard procedures

(a) Observation: Checklists and SOI's from higher commands and support agencies were an excellent means of orienting personnel on required stand-down actions.

(b) Evaluation: In some cases, especially in aircraft maintenance, the pressure of daily maintenance problems prevented the aircraft maintenance platoon leader and his supervisors from detailed study, planning and preparation for the turning in of helicopters and aviation support equipment. Once the helicopters were physically deposited with the gaining agency, considerable work was required to complete the property accountability records for the aircraft and support equipment. In other cases, especially in the area of dissolution of funds, inadequate check lists were received.

(c) Recommendation: That issuing agencies check to insure that the SOI or checklist is understood and that plans have been made to comply with the guidance provided.

(.) Command Action: N/A

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