

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY  
Headquarters, 13th Combat Aviation Battalion  
APO San Francisco 96215

OR-1C  
13 CAB

30 MAR 72

AVBAWV-C

1 April 1972

SUBJECT: Operational Report - Lessons Learned of the 13th Combat Aviation Battalion for the Period Ending 30 March 1972, RCS CSFOR-65 (R3) (U)

Assistant Chief of Staff for Force Development  
Department of the Army  
Washington, D.C. 20310

1. (C) Operations: Significant Activities

a. (C) Unit Mission: The unit mission was changed, on 10 November 1971, to include direct support to the 9th ARVN Division. On 1 March 1972 the battalion began reduction to zero strength for redeployment to Fort Hood, Texas, as a zero strength headquarters.

b. (C) Organization:

(1) The 175th Assault Helicopter Company was assigned on 10 Nov 71 and began deactivating on 20 Jan 72.

(2) The 114th Assault Helicopter Company was assigned on 10 Nov 71 and began reduction to zero strength on 6 Feb 72 for redeployment to USARSO.

(3) On 7 Feb 72 the 18th Aviation Company (CORPS) began operating under MTOE 1-127DP506, which authorized six CH-47's, twenty UH-1H's, and ten OH-58's plus personnel to operate and maintain them. *New Unit?*

(4) The 147th Assault Support Helicopter Company began reduction to cadre (50%) strength on 15 Feb 72 for redeployment to USARPAC (Hawaii). *P9 CAB*

(5) Troop C (Air), 16th Cavalry, 18th Aviation Company (CORPS), 774th Medical Detachment and 345th Aviation Detachment (Airfield Service) were reassigned to 164th Combat Aviation Group on 1 Mar 72; the 162nd Assault Helicopter Company and H Battery, 29th Artillery were reassigned to 164th Combat Aviation Group on 15 March 1972. *Standdown 63 Melung UNITS end. 4.*

(6) The 52nd and 62nd Quartermaster Detachments were deactivated on 1 March 1972.

c. (U) Personnel Changes: The following changes in command and staff positions occurred during the reporting period:

Classified by CG, 1st Avn Bde  
SUBJECT TO GENERAL DECLASSIFICATION  
SCHEDULE OF EXECUTIVE ORDER 11652  
AUTOMATICALLY DOWNGRADED AT TWO YEAR  
INTERVALS  
DECLASSIFIED ON 31 DEC 1972

GROUP 4  
DOWNGRADED AT 3 YEAR INTERVALS  
DECLASSIFIED AFTER 12 YEARS

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(f) During the period of TET a platoon of AH-1G gunships was moved from Vinh Long to Can Tho to assist in the defense of the airfield. A light fire team and either a flare ship or Firefly was kept on airborne alert during the hours of darkness throughout the period. First and Last light reconnaissance of the surrounding area were conducted daily by the 162nd Assault Helicopter Company and C Troop (Air), 16th Cavalry.

(2) Communications Security: The S-2 completed disposition of classified material on hand and closed records and reports on 8 Mar 72.

g. (C) Operations and Training:

(1) Continuation of Operations:

(a) the 13th Combat Aviation Battalion continued to provide tactical and administrative aviation support for the 9th and 21st ARVN Divisions, and MR4 until 1 Mar 72 when the 164th Combat Aviation Group assumed responsibility.

(b) H Battery, 29th Artillery and attachments continued to support Can Tho Army Airfield and Vinh Long Army Airfield with searchlight Jeeps, counter-mortar and anti-personnel radar equipment for perimeter security. The personnel and equipment previously located at Dong Tam Airfield were reassigned in support of Binh Thuy Airfield on 1 Nov 1971.

(c) The 18th Aviation Company (CORPS) continued its general support role throughout MR4. The preponderance of this was VIP and administrative support to DIAC Headquarters, Province and Division Senior Advisors. On 7 Feb 72 the company began expanding its support role to include direct support missions previously provided by units of 13th Combat Aviation Battalion, which had commenced stand down. The company was augmented with additional aircraft and personnel to accomplish this task. (See Para 1b(3))

(d) The 147th Assault Support Helicopter Company continued its mission of general support in MR4, providing a medium lift capability for the transport of troops, supplies, artillery pieces and extraction of downed aircraft. The 147th ASHC began preparing for redeployment on 15 Feb 1972, at which time six CH-47 aircraft were transferred to the 18th Aviation Company (CORPS) to provide continued support in MR4.

(2) Significant Combat Operations: Some of the significant operations are listed below. Results are tabulated at Incl 3.

(a) Combat Operation on 3 Dec 1971: A mini-package (1 C&C, 5 UH-1H, and 2 UH-1M) from the 162nd Assault Helicopter Company was supporting the 21st ARVN Division operating in the U Minh area. Over 170 troops were lifted into several preselected LZ's. During the course of the operation, five armed escort aircraft were damaged by enemy ground fire. There was no damage to the transport aircraft and no friendly casualties. Subsequent strikes by the escort gunships resulted in 3 enemy KBA, 3 structures and numerous bunkers destroyed.

(b) Combat Operation on 9 Dec 1971: A cavalry package (4 AH-1G, 4 LOH-6, and 5 UH-1H) from C Troop (Air), 16th Cavalry was flying in support of

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the 14th Regiment, 5th ARVN Division, operating in the U Minh area known as the "Hump". Later in the day the cavalry package was diverted to support the 16th Regiment, which was operating in the same general area, and had contact with the enemy. An LZ recon was initiated for an insertion to reinforce the troops in the contact area. As the LOH team began their recon, they received heavy automatic weapons fire from an estimated enemy company size element, lying in ambush for the advancing friendlies, approximately 500 meters away. The two LOH's were shot down. One crew was recovered; however, repeated attempts to rescue the other crew failed and both crewmembers were KIA. Results: 2 KIA, 5 WIA, 5 battle damaged aircraft, and no confirmed enemy damage assessment.

(c) Combat Operation on 5 Jan 1972: A cavalry package from C Troop (Air), 16th Cavalry was supporting the 33rd Regt., 21st ARVN Division, operating in the U Minh area known as the "Rice Bowl". The cavalry package conducted two VR's in preselected areas of indicated enemy activity. Intelligence had indicated that the Viet Cong MR III headquarters was located in one of these areas. On the third VR the LOH team was shot down. After rescue of the crews, an LZ was selected and troops inserted to secure the downed aircraft and rout the enemy. Final results for the day were 3 WIA, 2 battle damaged aircraft, 4 KBA, 13 structures and 10 sampans destroyed. Also reported was the capture of a VC briefing room, inside of which were found documents and maps oriented toward an offensive on friendly installations during the TET holidays.

(d) Combat Operation on 8 Jan 1972: A mini-package from the 175th Assault Helicopter Company was flying in support of the 10th Regiment, 7th ARVN Division. The planned operation was to insert the 4th Battalion, 10th Regiment into 7 or 8 LZ's in Kien Hoa Province. On departure from the first LZ the troop transports received heavy enemy ground fire. After the second lift had been inserted the slicks returned to the PZ and shut down to check for damage. Although each aircraft had received at least eight hits, there were no casualties and the ships were determined to be still flyable. The crews volunteered to insert a needed additional company, and the mission was continued without incident.

(e) Combat Operation on 8 Jan 1972: A cavalry package from C Troop (Air), 16th Cavalry was supporting the 33rd Regt., 21st ARVN Division operating in the "Rice Bowl" area of the U Minh. The pac conducted four VR's of areas in which intelligence had indicated enemy activity. On the 3rd and 4th recon light contact was made and 150 troops were subsequently inserted. Results were: 58 structures and 16 sampans destroyed, and one KBA.

(f) On 20 Jan 1972, C Troop (Air), 16th Cavalry was assigned the mission Dynamic Defense of Can Tho and Binh Thuy Airfields. Intelligence strongly indicated possible indirect fire, sapper and ground attacks on these installations during the TET Holiday Season. The cav pac conducted first and last light recons, working the area from three to twenty kilometers out from the airfields. The results, as of 1 Mar 1972 were: 42 KBA, 49 structures and 53 sampans destroyed. The effectiveness of this mission may have been instrumental in preventing any attack on the airfields during the period.

(g) Combat Operation on 14 Feb 1972: A cav pac from C Troop (Air), 16th Cavalry was supporting the 7th ARVN Division operating in the Dong Tam

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area. On the second VR of the day, light contact was made with the enemy. No insertions were made since a friendly reaction force was already on the ground close to the contact area. Several Cobra and Black Pony (OV-10) strikes were made in the contact area. Final results for the day were: 15 KBA, 12 structures and 2 sampans destroyed.

(3) Training: Normal training requirements were continued until 15 Mar 72 when transfer of personnel and equipment forced its termination.

h. (U) Logistics: The 13th Combat Aviation Battalion transferred the responsibility for PUL products at Can Tho Army Airfield to the 18th Aviation Company, and ammunition resupply to Troop C, (Air), 16th Cavalry on 1 Mar 1972. Also transferred to the 18th Avn Co was a consolidated central issue facility, and a consolidated avionics facility.

i. (C) Aircraft Maintenance:

(1) The transfer of the assigned U-6 and three helicopters (one UH-1H, and two OH-58) was completed on 27 Feb 1972, leaving no aircraft on hand in HHC, 13th Combat Aviation Battalion.

(2) Aircraft status figures and operationally ready rates for the reporting period are tabulated at Incl 4 and 5.

j. (U) Safety: The Battalion experienced six major accidents while flying a total of 30,694 hours. The accident rate for the reporting period was 19.5.

k. (U) Weather: The effect of weather on mission accomplishment during the reporting period has been insignificant. Although a few missions were delayed by early morning fog or low clouds, most were accomplished as planned.

2. (C) LESSONS LEARNED. Commander's Observations, Evaluation and Recommendations.

a. Personnel:

(1) Reassignment of Personnel:

(a) Observation: Personnel meeting the Keystone criteria for return to CONUS have been unable to depart as scheduled.

(b) Evaluation: The primary reason has been the delay in receipt of assignment instructions, however other contributing factors were: finance records being centrally located at Long Binh and not readily available for out processing, and individuals being unable to ship hold baggage without orders.

(c) Recommendations: That an assignment team be dispatched from higher headquarters (MACV, USARV) to the Keystone unit, to process and expedite requests for assignment instructions. This team should be authorized to issue temporary orders to allow advance shipment of hold baggage. Arrange-

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ments should be made to return to the local finance office; upon notification of stand down, the records of all personnel meeting the "Drop" criteria. This would expedite out-processing.

(d) Command Action: The Commanding Officer, HHC, 13th Combat Aviation Battalion made arrangements to retrieve the finance records as indicated above. Other recommendations were forwarded to the Commanding Officer, 164th Combat Aviation Group for evaluation and transmittal as appropriate.

(2) Transfer of Missions and Personnel

(a) Observation: Transfer of essential missions and associated personnel, as soon as practicable after being identified as a "Keystone" unit, reduces the workload considerably.

(b) Evaluation: The transfer of those missions that are to be assigned to another unit (i.e. consolidated mess, consolidated flight issue facility) and the personnel associated with those missions, as soon as possible after being identified as a "Keystone" unit, eliminates much of the "Peak Load" when the unit receives actual notification to stand down.

(c) Recommendations: That additional emphasis be placed on transferring the above mentioned type missions prior to actual stand down.

(d) Command Action: The action discussed in para (b) was taken by 13th Combat Aviation Battalion and the recommendation was forwarded to the Commanding Officer, 164th Combat Aviation Group for possible implementation by other units scheduled to stand down.

b. INTELLIGENCE: None

c. OPERATIONS: None

d. LOGISTICS:

(1) Transfer of property.

(a) Observation: A central turn-in point for all equipment was established within the unit.

(b) Evaluation: This central turn-in point simplified turn-in and transfer of property by allowing the Property Book Officer to easily identify and account for all property. After being checked against the property books, equipment was immediately loaded into CONEX containers for shipment to the Keystone facility or transferred to the gaining units. This method allowed early identification of excess equipment and shortages. Although this method of turn-in may not be suited to all units, it worked exceedingly well for HHC, 13th Combat Aviation Battalion.

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(c) Recommendation: That this information be passed on to other "Keystone" units for their consideration and possible application.

(d) Command Action: The turn-in method described in para (b) above was used successfully by the Commanding Officer, 111th Combat Aviation Battalion, in standing down his unit. This recommendation was passed to the Commanding Officer, 164th Combat Aviation Group, for the possible use of other units scheduled to stand down.

(2) Turn-in of Weapons

(a) Observation: During stand down there are not enough weapons available to permit each soldier an opportunity to defend himself or others in case of an emergency.

(b) Evaluation: Each soldier stationed in RVN or any other hostile area should be assured that there are sufficient weapons if the need should arise. Knowledge of the lack of weapons, by enemy, press, elected members of the government or relatives of soldiers could prove detrimental to the U.S. Armed Forces.

(c) Recommendations: That sufficient weapons be made available on each installation for units during their stand down period. Another system could have individuals within stand down units not being reassigned within RVN turn in weapons at the 90th Replacement Battalion or another designated unit. Type weapon and serial number could be included on the individuals PCS orders in order to maintain accountability.

(d) Command Action: This recommendation has been forwarded to the Commanding Officer, 164th Combat Aviation Group for consideration.

(3) Lateral Transfer of Vehicles and Equipment.

(a) Observation: Vehicles and equipment which were laterally transferred and then hand receipted back to the unit in stand down were not being properly maintained.

(b) Evaluation: Many units which did not anticipate stand down requested, through the S-4, that the units standing down transfer certain vehicles and equipment to them. After the lateral transfers were completed, some of these items were hand receipted back to the original owner for use during stand down. In some instances this property was not properly maintained subsequent to the lateral transfer taking place.

(c) Recommendation: When vehicles and equipment are transferred in this manner a representative from both units should conduct a joint inspection to determine serviceability. Once the gaining unit has agreed to accept the equipment, the losing unit must guarantee the items which are hand receipted, will be returned in serviceable condition, upon completion of stand down. This agreement should be between the commanding officers of the gaining and losing units in order to insure compliance.

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(d) Command Action: This recommendation has been forwarded to the Commanding Officer, 164th Combat Aviation Group for consideration.

(4) Transportation.

(a) Observation: The scheduled arrival of LST's/barges at Binh Thuy in many instances has been unreliable.

(b) Evaluation: Turn-in of Keystone equipment from units has been delayed by the late arrival/departure of barges and LST's from Binh Thuy and often by an insufficient number of vehicles to transport the equipment from Newport to the Keystone facility. The LST that transported HMC, 13th Combat Aviation Battalion's equipment to Newport sailed with only nineteen CONEX containers on board.

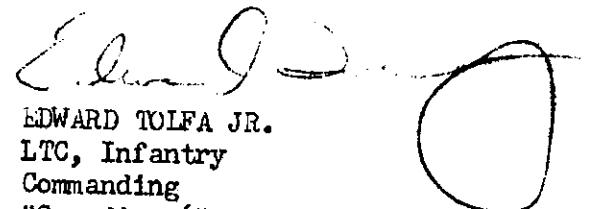
(c) Recommendation: That a Keystone turn-in point be established at Binh Thuy, where all units in the area can turn-in equipment upon stand-down. This would simplify scheduling of LST's and barges since the transportation schedule would no longer have to be geared to the stand down schedule, but could become a shuttle, running only as needed. This would also allow maximum efficiency in the use of assets by insuring that the barges and LST's were fully loaded on each run.

(d) Command Action: This recommendation has been forwarded to the Commanding Officer, 164th Combat Aviation Group for review and submission to HQ, USARV for consideration.

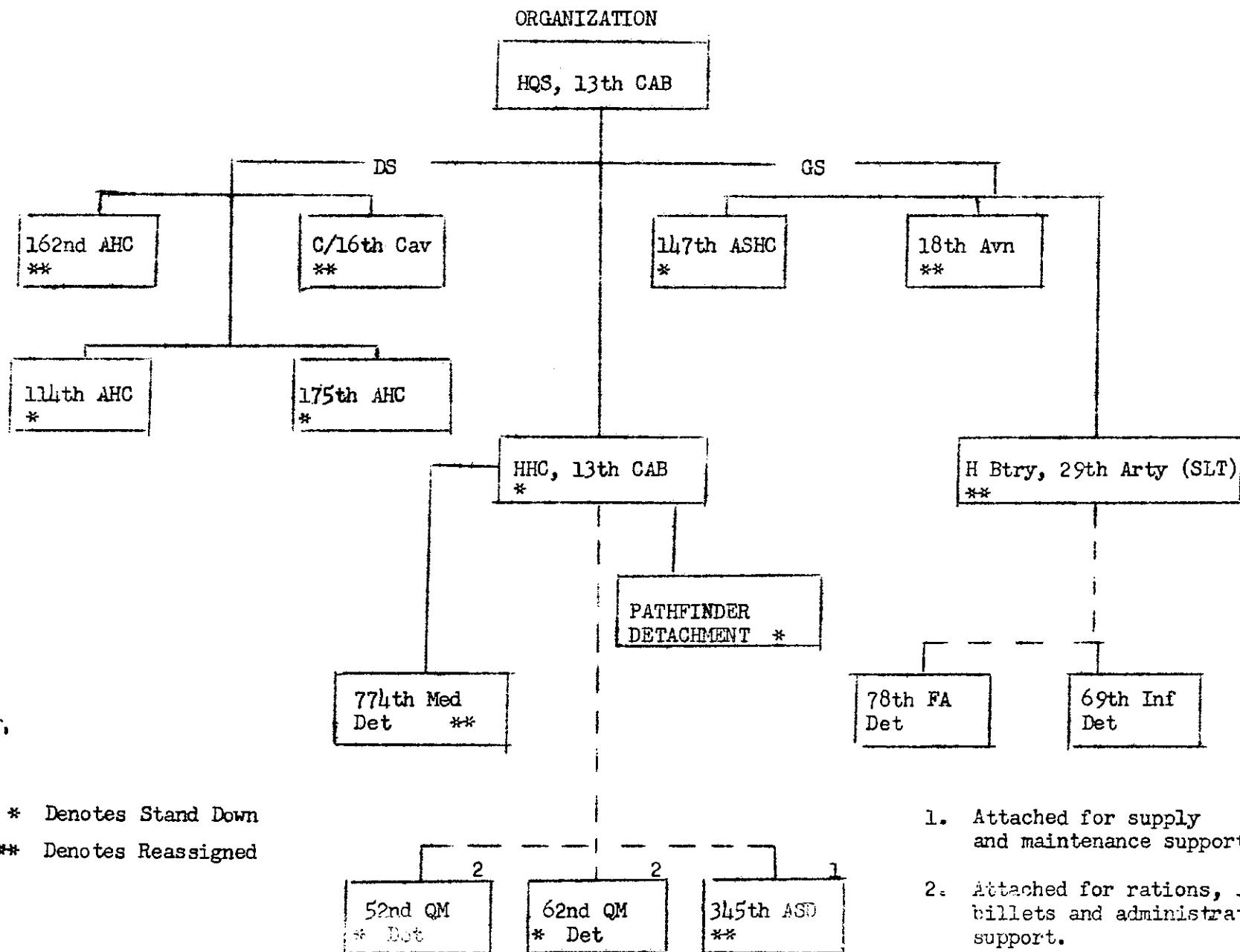
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As the final page is written in the history of the 13th Combat Aviation Battalion in the Republic of Vietnam, I pause to reflect on the unit's record of performance and am astounded. The battalion's accolades and achievements, as "Shield of the Mekong", are of such magnitude, that I am humbled to be one of its commanders. It is with deep regret that I perform the duty of standing down one of the oldest and finest aviation battalions in the Republic of Vietnam.

Much has happened to this unit since its activation on 1 July 1963. Many of its men, dedicated to the beliefs of freedom and liberty, have given of themselves, duty wise as well as personally, to help protect those beliefs for the people of Vietnam. Unfortunately, some of those valiant crusaders have had to pay the full measure in defense of those beliefs. The rolls of honored dead run long. As the 13th Battalion's last commander in Vietnam, it is my desire to dedicate this document to those magnificent men who have made a place of honor in history for the 13th Combat Aviation Battalion.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Edward Tolfa Jr." followed by a stylized surname.

EDWARD TOLFA JR.  
LTC, Infantry  
Commanding  
"Guardian 6"



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CASUALTIES

	HOSTILE	NON-HOSTILE
INJURED	22	15
KIA	6	5
MIA	0	0

AWARDS AND DECORATIONS

	NOV	DEC	JAN	FEB
LOM	0	0	0	0
DFC	0	6	4	8
SM	0	1	0	0
BS	28	26	48	68
AM "V"	0	3	15	3
AM	36	68	147	150
ACM	51	74	50	123
PH	3	3	1	0
OTHER	3 VCG	6 VCG	1 VCG	0
TOTAL	121	187	266	352

HOME TOWN  
NEWS RELEASE

NOV	DEC	JAN
19	35	45

LAW, ORDER AND DISCIPLINE

	NOV	DEC	JAN	FEB
ART 15	26	58	45	7
CM	27	11	6	0
DISCHARGE(212)	1	3	1	0

Incl 2

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## OPERATIONAL RESULTS

UNIT	TROOPS LIFTED	(TONS) CARGO HAULED	ENEMY KBA	DESTROYED		AIRCRAFT COMBAT		SORTIES
				SAMPANS	STRUCT	DAMAGE	LOSS	
162nd	22,870	205.2	64	373	35	19	1	16,400
147th	40,366	35,525	0	0	0	5	0	9,720
114th	37,346	199.9	2	1	43	14	1	21,360
175th	25,753	187.0	8	10	52	8	0	19,470
C/16th	6,995	622.4	371	970	2,442	27	3	2,400
18th CAC	16,200	441.6	0	0	0	0	0	2,700

UNIT	UH-1H		OH-58A		OH-6A		AH-1G		U-6A		CH-47		UH-1M	
	AUTH	O/H	AUTH	O/H	AUTH	O/H	AUTH	O/H	AUTH	O/H	AUTH	O/H	AUTH	O/H
18th Avn Co	20	20	10	12							6	5		
C/16th Cav	8	8			9	10	9	9						
HHC, 13th CAB	1	0	3	0					1	0				
147th ASHC			2	0							16	12		
162nd AHC	23	23											8	9
175th AHC	23	0					6	5						
114th AHC	23	0					6	5						

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AIRCRAFT OR%

UNIT	NOV	DEC	JAN	FEB
HHC, 13CAB				
UH-1H	100	100	65.2	100
OH-58A	100	29	93.2	100
U-6A	86.3	--- TURNED IN ---		
18th Avn Co				
UH-1H	90.3	89.3	97.2	87.7
OH-58A	86.4	78.2	83.3	76
CH-47	---	PICKED UP	---	71.4
C/16th Cav				
UH-1H	73.7	72	76.9	83.9
AH-1G	76.9	78.7	78.2	62.2
OH-6A	80.2	78.2	85.3	72.6
147th ASHC				
CH-47C	74.2	73.7	78.1	76.5
OH-58A	89.2	78	95.5	100
162nd AHC				
UH-1H	72.4	70	61.4	74.9
UH-1M/C	72.1	73.7	61.4	70.9
175th AHC				
UH-1H	76.8	61.6	83.2	---
AH-1G	72.1	73.4	64.2	89.6
114th AHC				
UH-1H	70.1	71.3	55.2	95
AH-1G	80.5	72.7	81.3	100