

**CONFIDENTIAL**

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY  
HEADQUARTERS, 52ND AVIATION BATTALION (COMBAT)  
APO San Francisco 96494  
"FLYING DRAGONS"

AVBACB-CC

14 May 1970

SUBJECT: Operation Report - Lessons Learned, Headquarters, 52nd Aviation Battalion (Combat), Period Ending 30 April 1970, RCS CSFOR-65 (R2) (U)

SEE DISTRIBUTION

1. Section 1 - Operations: Significant Activities.

a. (C) General. This report for the period 1 February 1970 through 30 April 1970 is submitted in compliance with AR 525-15, USARPAC Reg 525-15 and USARV Supplement 1 to AR 525-15.

(1) Headquarters, 52nd Aviation Battalion (Combat), LTC Charles D. Utzman, Commanding, remains at Camp Holloway, Pleiku, RVN. Inclosure 1 reflects the station list of all assigned and attached units with location and APO, as of 30 April 1970.

(2) During this quarter there has been no significant change of mission. The battalion continues to provide aviation support to the U.S. Fourth Infantry Division, 5th Special Forces Group, Airborne; II ARVN Corps, MACV, and other forces in the Central Highlands of Vietnam. (See Inclosure 2) All operational and administrative functions and activities of Camp Holloway, Holloway Army Airfield, and Kontum Army Airfield are controlled by the 52nd Aviation Battalion (Combat).

b. (C) Personnel.

(1) Awards and Decorations. The following awards were approved and presented during this reporting period.

	<u>FEB</u>	<u>MAR</u>	<u>APR</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
Silver Star	0	2	0	2
Distinguished Flying Cross	5	2	0	7
Bronze Star "V"	5	0	1	6
Bronze Star	37	11	3	51
Air Medal "V"	3	15	24	42
Air Medal	640	185	109	934
Army Commendation Medal "V"	2	0	11	13
Army Commendation Medal	200	107	27	334
Purple Heart	0	0	0	0
	892	322	175	1389

GROUP 4  
DOWNGRDED AT 3 YEAR INTERVALS  
DECLASSIFIED AFTER 12 YEARS

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(3) Personnel turnover for the reporting period was as follows:

MONTH	OFFICERS			EM		
	GAINS	LOSSES	CHANGE	GAINS	LOSSES	CHANGE
FEB	9	39	-30	154	94	+60
MAR	20	33	-13	172	204	-32
APR	67	23	+44	106	128	-22
	96	95	+1	432	426	+6

(4) The battalion total assigned strength is 1,649 as of 30 April 70. The battalion is short 19 commissioned officers, 54 warrant officers and 189 enlisted men. Strengths by unit are shown in Inclosure 3.

(5) Information Office Activities:

- (a) Printed Releases 21
- (b) Pictorial Releases 4
- (c) Hometown Printed Releases 90
- (d) Hometown Pictorial Releases 2

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c. (C) Intelligence. The S-2 section continues to publish a daily intelligence summary of significant activities in the Pleiku-Kontum area. Intelligence information is gathered from II ARVN Corps, 5th Special Forces, other supported units, liaison visits to other S-2 offices and debriefings submitted by aviators and air mission commanders.

(1) Enemy Activity. There were ten attacks by fire against 52nd Aviation Battalion (Combat) facilities. Kontum AAF received a total 8 rounds of 122mm rockets from three attacks directed against the airfield. Seven enemy attacks by fire were directed against Camp Holloway AAF with 82mm mortar, 75 recoilless and 122mm rockets landing in and around the runway. 3 RPG-7 exploded over the field grade BOQ with negative damage or casualties. The 119th and 57th Avn Co suffered one sapper attack at An Khe.

(2) Movement. The 408th Sapper Bn moved back into its normal area of operations to the northeast of Pleiku City from base area 229. The unit has increased in strength from 280 men to 300 men during the last weeks in April. This was substantiated by agent reports, captured documents and IR missions in the area. There have been reports that the 28th NVA Regt, 40th NVA Arty Regt and other support elements are located to the east of base area 609 staying in constant contact with the local forces in the Dak Pek - Dak To region. The present location of the 66th NVA Regt is unknown. The last confirmed location was in base area 701.

(3) New Units. There were no new units confirmed or reported during the period.

(4) Situation. The mission of the NVA units remain unchanged. They have conducted attacks by fire on RF/PF units, OP's and poorly defended hamlets. The K-631 Bn has been conducting attacks by fire against U.S. and ARVN units and installations. The 408th Sapper Bn continues to attack installations by fire.

(5) Capabilities:

(a) Kontum Province: In Kontum Province enemy forces can conduct standoff attacks or combination standoff/sapper attacks against US/GVN installations anywhere in the province. He can conduct large scale ground attacks in up to reinforced battalion strength with supporting artillery primarily in the areas of Dak Seang, Ben Het, and Dak To. The enemy can employ and has employed mortars up to 120mm. 100mm and 105mm artillery have been used against installations near the Cambodian border. Enemy tanks have been reported along the Ho Chi Minh Trail providing convoy cover for the infiltration route. Friendly air activity may be restricted with fire from small arms, automatic weapons, 12.7mm, 14.5mm and 37 anti-aircraft weapons.

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(b) Pleiku Province: The K631 Composite Bn has the capability of launching 122mm rocket attacks on installations in and around Pleiku City and of conducting multi-company ground probes and attacks by fire on villages and friendly units in the area. The 24th NVA Regt has the capability of launching multi-battalion ground attacks, attack by fire and interdiction of lines of communications north and northwest of Pleiku. The 408th Sapper Battalion is capable of conducting multi-company sapper attacks on Pleiku, U.S. and ARVN installations, and attacks by fire on villages and friendly units in the area. The H-15 LF Bn is capable of harassing villages and friendly units in the area using 60mm mortars and B-40 rockets. The 95th Regt has the capability of launching multi-battalion attacks on villages and friendly units in the area.

d. (C) Operations.

(1) During the reporting period, the 52nd Aviation Battalion (Combat) has supported combat, combat service and pacification operations throughout the II Corps Tactical Zone. The battalion flew a total of 32,242 hours during the period, including 16,086 hours of combat assault. Units or activities receiving daily aviation support included the 4th Infantry Division, MACV, 5th Special Forces Group (Airborne), IFFV Artillery, II ARVN Corps, and Pleiku, Kontum, Phu Bon and Binh Dinh Provinces. Tabulated data of operational results is shown in Inclosure 4.

(2) The following 4th Infantry Division operations were supported during the period:

<u>OPERATION</u>	<u>START</u>	<u>TERMINATION</u>
Hines	21 January 1970	Continues
Wayne Stab	30 January 1970	Continues
Putnam Shark	30 January 1970	Continues
Greene Deuce	30 January 1970	17 March 1970
Wayne Wind	15 April 1970	Continues
Earhart White	10 March 1970	Continues
Engleberck Black	22 March 1970	Continues

(3) The 119th Aviation Company (Assault Helicopter) relocated from Camp Holloway during this quarter and closed at An Khe on 22 Mar 70. The 119th Avn Co (Assault Helicopter) is continuing aviation support to MACV, IFFV Artillery, 5th Special Forces Group, II ARVN Corps, and its primary supported unit, the 4th Infantry Division. Missions supporting 1/10 Cav and 1/40 Inf are continuing.

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4th Infantry Division, and IFFV Artillery, with lesser support going to the II Corps (ARVN), 5th Special Forces, Engineers, and the 17th Aviation Group (Combat). Commencing with the last week in March and continuing through the month of April major CH-47 support was provided to the 24th Special Tactical Zone, and the 5th Special Forces in the Dak Seang/Dak Pek areas.

(5) The 189th Aviation Company (Assault Helicopter) primarily supported the 4th Infantry Division with some support being provided II ARVN Corps and CORDS. Major support was provided to the 24th Special Tactical Zone during the battle of Dak Seang/Dak Pek. (2 Apr - 2 May)

(6) The 170th Aviation Company (Assault Helicopter) relocated from Camp Holloway this quarter and closed at Kontum on 15 Mar 70. The new mission of the 170th Aviation Company is to provide support to the 24th Special Tactical Zone, Command and Control Central (MACSCOG), Kontum Province, and the 5th Special Forces Group.

(7) The 361st Aviation Company (Escort) has had the primary mission of supporting Command and Control Central with four AH-1G aircraft daily. During the battle of Dak Seang/Dak Pek, daily support of two AH-1G were provided to the 24th Special Tactical Zone.

(8) The 57th Aviation Company (Assault Helicopter) relocated from Kontum this quarter and closed at An Khe on 13 Mar 70. The 57th Aviation Company provides support primarily to the 4th Infantry Division, 24th Special Tactical Zone, and 5th Special Forces. The majority of support was provided to the 24th Special Tactical Zone during the battle of Dak Seang/Dak Pek.

(9) During the period the battalion again experienced hazardous flying conditions due to dust. Some landing zones were declared unsafe until the supported unit could provide a satisfactory landing area free of hazardous conditions.

e. (C) Training. All units and sections continued to use on-the-job training to meet tactical and administrative mission requirements. Training as outlined in AR 350 series was conducted as prescribed with make up classes scheduled as necessary. Command emphasis was placed on instrument training of all aviators in preparation for the coming monsoon season.

f. (C) Logistics.

(1) Class II:

(a) Shortages were experienced in flight gear and clothing.

(b) Problems will be eliminated or substantially reduced, in the month

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(b) Motor vehicle shortages have again become a problem. Recent messages from the 1st Logistical Command indicate that assistance will be rendered in the month of May on  $\frac{1}{2}$  ton and  $2\frac{1}{2}$  ton vehicle shortages.

(2) Class III

(a) Total JP-4 dispensed by this battalion during the reporting period was 3,872,354 gallons of which 901,320 gallons were dispensed at Kontum Airfield by the 57th and 170th Aviation Companies. This is an increase of 1,717,754 gallons. Increased activity at Dak To and Dak Seang was the prevalent factor for this increase in JP-4. 81,300 gallons of Avgas were dispensed at Kontum to transient and tenant aircraft. As of 29 April 1970, the 45th Group (GS) assumed operational control of the Kontum Airfield refueling point.

(3) Class V: Ammunition expenditures and issues were above the amounts of the last reporting period. This was in direct relation to activity in the Dak To and Dak Seang areas. Ammunition issues and expenditures for helicopter gunships, by type, were as follows:

<u>NOMENCLATURE</u>	<u>ISSUED FROM ASP</u>	<u>EXPENDED</u>
2.75" Rkt	23,107	19,074
40mm	24,611	20,766
7.62mm	2,562,300	2,096,400

The only problem area was the allocation for 81mm illumination flares. The initial allocation was not realistic and assistance was received from the S-4, 17th Aviation Group to obtain additional amounts.

g. (U) Aircraft Maintenance.

(1) Maintenance Statistics:

	<u>AH-1G</u>	<u>UH-1C</u>	<u>UH-1H</u>	<u>CH-47C</u>
Aircraft Authorized	12	32	92	16
Total Aircraft Assigned	11	28.5	86.2	16
Average Aircraft Per Co	11	7.0	21.5	16
Availability Rate (%)	65.5	48.6	67.0	67.0
EDM Rate (%)	20.9	34.6	22.9	25.8

(2) Aircraft on-hand status as of 30 April 1970.

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<u>UNIT</u>	<u>AH-1G</u> <u>Auth/OH</u>	<u>UH-1C</u> <u>Auth/OH</u>	<u>UH-1H</u> <u>Auth/OH</u>	<u>CH-47C</u> <u>Auth/OH</u>
179th Avn Co				16/16
189th Avn Co		8/6	23/21	
361st Avn Co	12/11			
HHC			2/2	

(3) Aircraft availability rates by unit and other tabulated maintenance data are shown in Inclosure 5.

## h. (U) Accident Prevention.

(1) The number and causes of forced landing showed no trends or specific areas of concern. There were two short shaft failures, an engine failure, a low side governor failure, and one instance of blown transmission seals. Probably the most mentionable was that of a forced landing necessitated by the breakup of the 90° gear box and tail rotor which occurred on 27 April 1970. The aircraft was landed without injury to the crew and passengers and without further damage to the aircraft. Suspect components were submitted for teardown and analysis.

(2) There were seven precautionary landings in February due to hydraulic problems. This area was investigated and it was found that the failures occurred due to lack of proper hydraulic test equipment, lack of supervision, and contamination (dust, dirt) within hydraulic shops. Steps were initiated to test all locally made hydraulic lines and fittings and to properly sanitize all shops. With increased supervision and more efficient maintenance operations, this problem has now been alleviated.

(3) Seventy-five percent of the incidents were either main rotor or tail rotor strikes. Fifteen of the incidents involved IFF conditions in dust, and ten percent involved mishaps between vehicles and aircraft. Problems in these areas were due to lack of supervision and operational error, in that the aircraft were operating at or beyond the limits of their design parameters. Some landing zones were both ill-prepared and poorly reconned. Aircraft commanders were operating fully loaded aircraft under high density altitudes, sometimes in downwind conditions. Unforecast and often very treacherous winds were encountered in many of the mountain landing zones. Emphasis has been placed on operator awareness and thorough knowledge of the aircraft and chapter seven of the operators manual.

(4) Accidents were, in seven cases, due to operational error on the part of the aircraft commander or pilot. Crew error and material failure accounted for the remainder. Contributing causes were, in five cases, supervision, and in one case, maintenance error. The accidents, as did the incidents, resulted primarily from heavily loaded aircraft operating under high density altitudes, thus losing either power or tail rotor control.