

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY  
HEADQUARTERS 164TH COMBAT AVIATION GROUP  
APO San Francisco, 96215

AVBAW-C

9 March 1973

SUBJECT: After Action Report

→ Commander  
1st Aviation Brigade  
APO San Francisco, 96309  
ATTN: AVBAGC

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1. PURPOSE: To establish a record of activity by the 164th CAG during Pre Stand Down, Stand Down, and Withdrawal of the unit from the Republic of Vietnam, pursuant to directives received before and after termination of hostilities.

2. GENERAL: This report covers the period 1 November 1972 through 14 March 1973 inclusively.

a. Section 1: Significant Organizational Activities.

(1) Pre X-Day Phase (1 November 1972 - 27 January 1973)

(a) Personnel: Key and special category personnel for mission essential duties, critical to the stand down and withdrawal, were identified, briefed, and assigned those duties.

(b) Equipment retrograde/turnover: All units conducted an inventory of all organizational and installation property and made general plans for turn in of property. Certain non-aviation equipment was title transferred to the 4th AIC (ARVN) and hand received back to the units.

(c) Intelligence/security: The 164th CAG continued to provide personnel and equipment for their assigned sector of base security.

(d) Operations: Tactical and administrative missions continued during this period. Coordination was made with the DRAC Headquarters on required aviation support after X-Day.

(e) Logistics: All special category personnel and the Group S-4 held numerous meetings for planning purposes. Property books, issue functions, and unit supply activities were consolidated into a Central Issue facility.

(f) Transfer of control of air combatant assets: All units conducted extensive inventories of all assets and shortage lists were prepared. Items for retrograde were identified and movement control documents were prepared. Aircraft, not to be retrograded, were title transferred to RVNAF at Brigade level.

(g) Transfer of functions and reporting: There was no transfer of functions or reporting during this period.

(h) Transfer of billeting, bases, installed property and equipment and other real property: Planning was accomplished to implement the smooth transfer of post, camp, and station (PC&S) property and billets, by publishing a letter of instructions to the using units stating the standards of maintenance and police which would be met.

(2) Stand down Phase (28 January 1973 - 4 February 1973)

(a) Personnel: Rosters were prepared showing tentative departure dates of personnel by X-Date. Mission essential personnel were identified and DEROs extensions were requested. Transfer of personnel within the Group was effected to meet mission requirements.

(b) Equipment retrograde/turnover: Several non-aviation items of equipment were returned to the 4th AIC by all units, the majority being from Troop "C" (Air) 16th Cavalry (C/16th).

(c) Intelligence/security: The 164th CAG continued to provide personnel and equipment for their assigned sector of base security.

(d) Operations: On X-Day, C/16th ceased operations. Units began closing flight records, based on the schedule of personnel departures. The DRAC aircraft requirement was reduced to 10 aircraft per day. The Four Power Joint Military Commission (FPJMC) and International Commission of Control and Supervision (ICCS) flight detachments began operations. CH-47 helicopter support was increased for MR IV and MR III to provide support for the ICCS and FPJMC.

(e) Logistics: Provisions were made to turn in TA-50 and personal clothing and equipment to avoid last minute confusion. All personnel were encouraged to ship hold baggage. The Mess facility for C/16th was closed and the books were audited at 1st Aviation Brigade.

(f) Transfer of control of air combatant assets: Movement of OH-6A and AH-1G aircraft for retrograde was initiated. All UH-1 aircraft, assigned to C/16th, were transferred to the 18th CAC.

(g) Transfer of functions and reporting: No changes were made during this period.

(h) Transfer of billeting, installed property and equipment and other real property: Inventory of C/16th PC&S property was completed, preparatory to transferring the buildings to PA&E. Extensive work was done in area police and segregation of unserviceable material and trash.

### (3) Withdrawal phase (5 February 1973 - 14 March 1973)

(a) Personnel: The 164th CAG strength continued to decline throughout this phase. The morning report strength of C/16th reached "0" and the unit was inactivated. On X+30, a hold was placed on all personnel movement by higher headquarters, but was later resumed through X+45. On X+45 (14 March 1973) the remaining personnel of the group were transferred to the 18th CAC to facilitate the complete deactivation of the group. The 18th CAC remained operational until X+55. All personnel remaining were cleared, and placed "TDY Enroute", until X+59. All records were closed and turned in through proper channels.

(b) Equipment retrograde/turn/turnover: During this phase the physical movement of all equipment was completed. The transfer and turn in of all other items was also accomplished.

(c) Intelligence/security: The 164th CAG was relieved of Base Security requirements and replaced by Vietnamese Security Forces on X+10. The Army Support Element, Can Tho AAF assumed full responsibility for the Can Tho Base Defense.

(d) Operations: The Group continued to support the DRAC with 10 aircraft per day through 27 February 1973. Mission requirements were then reduced to 3 aircraft per day for the DRAC support. CH-47 support was no longer required in MR IV. Plans were made to support any phase of "Operation Homecoming" through 14 March 1973. All flight records were closed and unit operations stood down.

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(e) Logistics: During this phase property books were cleared and audited. All additional equipment was transferred to the Vinnell PC&S.

(f) Transfer of control of air combatant assets: All remaining aviation assets were turned into the KAPP yard in Saigon; aircraft and tools to RVNAF and Air America.

(g) Transfer of functions and reporting: Reporting procedures were terminated with the close-out of all morning reports and air operations.

(h) Transfer of billeting, installed property and equipment and other real property: The final transfer of PC&S property and billets was accomplished during this period.

b. Section 2: Commanders/Chief's Observations and Recommendations.

(1) Pre X-Day Phase (1 November 1972 - 27 January 1973)

(a) Personnel:

Observation: Drawdown prior to the cease fire and subsequent deactivation of military personnel has compelled this group to use military in administrative and supervisory positions in the 611th TC and contract civilians to perform the aircraft maintenance.

Evaluation: The 611th TC functioned most efficiently under this system. Adoption of the system has additionally allowed for more soldiers to be reassigned outside RVN, while the unit continues to accomplish the mission.

Recommendation: Adoption of this type organization for units in combat areas or areas where military ceilings are imposed, to include operational aviation units, will allow the Army to continue mission accomplishment while releasing soldiers to be reassigned elsewhere. The decrease in soldier mechanics, substituted by contract U.S. Civilians, would allow those assigned military men to be supervisors or in MOS's not suitable for contract.

Command Action: Referred to higher headquarters.

Observation: Based on the impending cease fire, personnel replacements virtually stopped through the months of November, December, and January, yet units were forced to release personnel for DEROS as the elusive cease fire date was not sufficient justification to extend said personnel.

Evaluation: Units of the 164th CAG were, at times, forced to operate at manning levels which were less than 60% of their authorized strength and many of the personnel were untrained. This had detrimental effects in the areas of Safety, morale, and reduced aircraft availability.

Recommendations: That replacement of personnel continue in sufficient numbers to maintain an adequate manning level for mission accomplishment, or reduce missions commensurate to the number of personnel available. Give the unit Commander more authority to retain or release personnel by name.

Command Action: The group consolidated as many functions as possible, i.e., supply, motor pools, property books, etc., in order to better utilize the available personnel.

(b) Operations:

Observation: Classified, close hold, messages were received concerning the organization of special flight detachments which were to be operational on X-Day.

Evaluation: Both flight detachments (FPJMC and ICCS) could have been organized more efficiently had the security classification of this mission been less stringent. As handled, personnel assigned to these detachments were only vaguely aware of their mission or chain of command.

Recommendation: That a reduced security classification be utilized for messages and operations of this nature, particularly when the establishment and purpose of these organizations was released through the news media long before they were established.

Command Action: Referred to higher headquarters.

(c) Transfer of control of air combatant assets:

Observation: Last minute procedural changes in transfer of Project Enhance Plus equipment made hastily conducted inventories subject to error.

Evaluation: The intent and purpose of the transfer of aviation general support equipment to RVNAF under Project Enhance Plus was clearly understood as outlined in the 1st Avn Bde LOI and OPLAN 215. However, on 25 January 1973 (A-3) a requirement was received to provide a list of this equipment, identified by FSN, nomenclature, and quantity considered appropriate for RVNAF transfer to G-4, Headquarters 1st Avn Bde NLT X-1. If said equipment was not on this recorded list, then it would not be transferred under the provisions of Project Enhance Plus. This procedure was not indicated in any previous instructions nor plans made at this level. It required a last minute, hurried, inventory of this equipment to insure that it could be transferred as intended. The plans made and instructions received at this level were to be effected as stated in the one mentioned LOI. This short suspended requirement was compounded by the fact that units were in the midst of reorganization to meet the requirements for personnel and equipment for future stand down operations and for aviation support of the FPJMC and ICCS.

Recommendation: Plans and coordination should have been made at the appropriate level of command to insure that the required lists were provided in advance. Accurate lists of this type of equipment actually on hand are difficult to obtain under normal operations. When urgent operational requirements exist, as happened during this period, it is even more difficult.

Command Action: Special teams were organized from the applicable units and briefed by the S-4 as to the action required. The lists were prepared and telephonically reported to G-4, 1st Avn Bde.

(2) Stand down phase (28 January 1973 - 4 February 1973)

(a) Personnel:

Observation: Many of the personnel assigned to support the peace keeping organizations never received briefings.

Evaluation: It was common practice for the Chiefs of the special detachments to select personnel with little or no coordination with anyone, including the individual concerned. People were alerted to move on very short notice with no authority from Brigade or 527 PSC.

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Recommendation: That personnel be identified and coordination effected with the parent organization and Brigade as a minimum.

Command Action: This group did not permit anyone to move until clearance was received from Brigade and the 527 PSC.

(b) Operations:

Observation: Much emphasis was placed on the special markings of the ICCS and FPJMC aircraft in order to distinguish them as non-combatant aircraft.

Evaluation: It is apparent that hostile forces were unaware of the purpose of these specially marked aircraft, not that it made any difference as later proven when one pilot of a FPJMC ship was fatally wounded on X-Day, and an ICCS pilot was wounded on X+31. Other aircraft of these detachments were fired on between those two periods. Some of these problems can be attributed to the security classification of these units prior to their becoming operational.

Recommendation: That the purpose of such flight detachments be disseminated through all known means of communication and far in advance of their becoming operational.

Command Action: Referred to Higher Headquarters.

Observation: The markings of US aircraft and RVNAF aircraft (helicopters) are such that the difference is negligible at any great distance.

Evaluation: Once the cease fire became effective, specific instructions were issued as to the employment of U.S. Army aviation assets in RVN, and utilization was strictly employed as non-combat support. However, the instructions were classified. Also, no provisions were made to mark the US assets so as to distinguish them from other helicopters, owned by RVNAF. Such markings could possibly have prevented the loss of a CH-47 helicopter on 16 February 1973 (X+19) which also resulted in four injuries and one death.

Recommendations: That the mission of US assets (Non-combat) be disseminated through all known means of communication and that all aircraft be given large, distinguishing markings.

Command Action: None. For consideration by higher headquarters.

(c) Logistics:

Observation: Lack of communication and control with regards to unserviceable military equipment, property, and trash.

Evaluation: During this phase, the control of trash points and trash trucks were real problems. Guidance had to be clarified with regards to what should be done with all of the unserviceable US government property that had to be policed up and disposed of. Letters of instruction were published containing general guidance on the proper disposition of unserviceable US Government property. Commanders guidance was issued on what to do with specific property.

Recommendation: That specific plans and guidance be effected to insure that trash points and trash trucks are controlled. Procedures must be implemented to insure that US property is not allowed to be burned or dumped into the local trash dumps to subsequently arrive on the black market.

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Command Actions: Unit trash points were closed and consolidated into one trash point per unit. Special teams were organized at the unit level to monitor trash points and sort US property and dispose of it in the appropriate manner.

Observation: Publication and dissemination of information pertaining to stand down operations.

Evaluation: During the pre X-Day time frame, there were many messages, letters of instruction, and plans written and published. All of this information received or published by the S-4 section was placed in a loose leaf notebook and separated by subject. This provided one central location for material to be researched and referred to as needed. Letters that were published by this headquarters went through normal distribution to units. In some instances the intent and purpose of these instructions were confused with normal day to day operations. This confusion could have been eliminated if each message, letter of instruction, or plan was identified as a stand down procedure in case of cessation of hostilities in RVN. A code word to identify these instructions and pieces of correspondence should have been designated and entered in the heading or subject portion of the correspondence.

Recommendations: That plans made and procedures set up for such a non-standard method of turning in or turning over equipment and property, as was accomplished in this stand down operation, be designated by a code word to be applicable to that operation only. That this code word be unclassified and placed in the heading or subject block of all correspondence pertaining to that operation.

Command Action: None.

(3) Withdrawal Phase: (5 February 1973 - 14 March 1973)

(a) Personnel:

Observation: Strength accountability figures were based on morning report strength and not present for duty strength.

Evaluation: Numerous personnel reflected on the morning reports assigned strength were not physically present for duty. These personnel were in leave status (out of country) TDy, DTOC, and the hospital. Consequently, these personnel could not be dropped from the strength figures due to lack of orders. Shipping spaces had to be filled with present for duty personnel.

Recommendation: Personnel shipment should be predicated on present for duty strength rather than on assigned strength figures.

Command Action: None

Observation: Too many inspections hampered unit performing mission of stand down.

Evaluation: During the stand down and withdrawal phase, unit missions were continually interrupted by numerous inspections. These inspections could have been reduced in number and achieved the same or better results.

Recommendation: That all inspections be coordinated with higher headquarters and reduced in number.

Command Action: None

(4) Roll-up phase: Not applicable

3. SPECIFIC:

a. Section 1: Significant organizational activities.

(1) Personnel: Prior to the beginning of this reporting period preparations were underway to initiate stand down operations upon notification of a cease fire. Special Category personnel for mission essential duties, critical to the stand down and withdrawal of forces from RVN were identified and assigned those duties. These personnel were briefed on the details and then allowed to formulate necessary plans applicable to their unit. Some of these key special action personnel included; 4th AIC Liaison officer; Enhance Plus Project officer; KAPP Liaison officer; Newport Liaison officer; PC&S Property officer. All officer and senior enlisted assignment preference statements were submitted to the appropriate career branch. Personnel were also identified to form the FPJMC and ICCS flight detachments. On 28 January 1973 (X-Day) the strength of the 164th CAG was as follows:

<u>Officer</u>	<u>Warrant Officer</u>	<u>Enlisted</u>	<u>Total</u>
65	63	473	601

All units identified mission essential personnel that were to be extended past their DEROs. The personnel were notified and request for extensions submitted. Personnel in leave or TDY status (R&R, Ordinary Lv, Emergency Lv) were identified. Summary Courts Officers were appointed to insure the personal affairs of these individuals were taken care of and copies of orders forwarded for reassignment. Rosters were submitted with X+Dates assigned for all personnel DEROs's, based upon projected turn in of equipment and aircraft. Thirty eight personnel were transferred from C/16th to the 18th CAC to complete personnel requirements for the FPJMC and ICCS flight detachments. Scheduling of personnel to depart was accomplished IAW higher headquarters, as to the number of personnel per day.

All Unit Funds, as well as the domestic hire fund, were closed and turned into group headquarters for audit prior to 8 February 1973. The status of these funds and minimum problems with turn in, can be attributed to the Annual General Inspection conducted in January 1973. This inspection enhanced the complete standdown and turn in of all items of equipment.

Checks and cross checks were set up to insure all efficiency reports were submitted during clearing procedures. Other steps to insure smooth flow of personnel included: Consolidation of health and dental records, flight records, central turn in facility for personal clothing and equipment; and a one time, 100% urinalysis prior to withdrawal. By X+30, the group strength had been reduced to:

<u>Officer</u>	<u>Warrant Officer</u>	<u>Enlisted</u>	<u>Total</u>
42	34	163	239

The morning report of C/16th was at "0" on 17 February 1973. Some personnel of the 611th TC, 774th Medical Detachment, and 345th Aviation Detachment (Div) were transferred to Headquarters Company, 164th CAG to facilitate clearing of their morning reports and deactivation of the units. All Funds were cleared for turn in after being audited by 1st Avn Bde.

On 14 March 1973 the 164th CAG was deactivated. Seventy five personnel were still located at Can Tho for real, and contingency missions. These personnel were assigned to the 18th Corps Aviation Company until

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X+55 at which time the morning report was zeroed and all remaining personnel were carried as TDY enroute.

(2) Equipment retrograde/turn over: Equipment was identified for transfer to RVNAF and for retrograde. Special action officers were appointed in each unit and were briefed for handling each type of transfer as required. Prior to X-Day, all equipment not to be retrograded was title transferred to RVNAF or the 4th ALC (ARVN). Physical movement of this equipment to 4th AIC began on X-Day, initially by C/16th, and continued throughout all phases until the transfer was completed. All OH-6A aircraft were turned in to Newport by 1 February and turn in of AH-1G aircraft was completed on 8 February 1973. CH-47 helicopters were released for turn in as their mission was decreased. By 14 February, 4 had been turned into Newport. On 16 February, one was destroyed by hostile fire while on an ICCS support mission and one was turned in. By 21 February, two more had been turned in and the remaining two were transferred to the 59th CAC in MR III. By X+45, all equipment (minus some air assets) had been turned in or retrograded. The remaining property book (18th CAC) was cleared by hand receipting the remaining helicopters to the section commander and a certificate of property book clearance issued to the unit by the 1st Avn Bde. Although disposition of equipment was one of the largest areas of the stand down, very few problems were encountered.

(3) Intelligence/Security: Prior to X-Day, the assigned sector was manned by personnel of C/16th. The duty officer was rotated throughout the group. The 18th CAC maintained responsibility for the internal security of the flight line. A great amount of effort was used to police the perimeter, removing all trash, expended brass, and the Claymore mines. All other equipment was left in place. On 6 February, the Army Support Element assumed control and responsibility of this defense sector. The 18th CAC maintained responsibility of flight line security through X+45.

(4) Operations: Tactical and administrative missions continued from 1 November 1972 until 27 January 1973. The major operation under way at the beginning of this period was recovery of a CH-47, which had been shot down by an enemy SA-7 missile, the evening of 31 October 1972 (not covered in last ORLL). Seventeen US personnel were fatally injured and all were recovered. Numerous SA-7 firings were reported during this period but no US assets were hit. Utilization of CH-47 assets was increased in order to prestock supply points for ARVN prior to the cease fire. Preparations were made to remove US military and civilian personnel from the Delta. Rosters of all such personnel and their location in MR IV, were updated, specific areas designated for emergency extraction and a reconnaissance made of each area. Coordination was made with the DRAC headquarters on mission requirements after the cease fire. During the reporting period, prior to the cease fire, 7 OH-6A aircraft were downed by hostile fire, resulting in one fatality and two personnel medically evacuated. By 27 January 1973, two additional flight detachments were formed to support the FPJMC and ICCS.

The effective date of the cease fire was 0800 hours 28 January 1973. However, enemy initiated hostilities continued. At 0750 hours (X-Day) one 122mm Rocket impacted on the South side of the airfield, damaging several buildings, one aircraft, and slightly wounding one US civilian (NHA). The FPJMC flight detachment began operation on this date also, in specially marked aircraft. At 0945 hours (X-Day) an 18th CAC aircrrew was operating a FPJMC aircraft when it was hit with small arms, automatic weapons fire. One US passenger was wounded in the leg, and the pilot received fatal wounds in the head. Non-combat support were the only missions flown on X-Day. C/16th ceased operations. The 18th CAC supported the DRAC with 10 UH-1 aircraft per day and increased the CH-47 support

*cease fire*

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to facilitate setting up sites for the FPJMC and ICCS teams. The AAE, located at the DRAC TOC was physically moved into the 164th Group TOC on X+5. All missions were accepted, but only those approved by the DRAC G-3 were flown. Over a period of two weeks, this system reduced the daily committed aircraft to 7, with an average of 3.8 hours blade time per day, per ship.

During the withdrawal phase, the 164th Group continued to support the DRAC with 10 UH-1 aircraft daily (when needed). All CH-47 requirements were either in support of FPJMC or ICCS teams located in MR III or MR IV. On 16 February 1973, a CH-47 was shot down approximately 3 miles south of An Loo, RVN. ICCS equipment had been off loaded just prior to the incident. All crew members were injured and the crew chief subsequently died due to burns received in the crash.

Turn in of CH-47 aircraft was completed. However, permission could not be obtained to transfer the UH-1's. Each RAC was tasked to retain sufficient assets for an "Operation Homecoming" mission. This requirement remained in effect until X+45. On X+30, the DRAC aircraft requirement was further reduced to 3 aircraft per day. This level was maintained until X+59.

(5) Logistics: During the Pre X-Day phase, supplies were becoming more readily available through supply channels. This put units in a much better posture for the phase X+30 - X+45 when they would not be receiving supplies. The 164th CAG began consolidation of all supply operations into the Group S-4 in October 1972 and completed this action prior to 15 January 1973. This also facilitated the transfer of equipment and property to RVNAF by only requiring instructions and coordination being made with a limited number of personnel. It also allowed for a much smoother operation of this non-standard turn in procedure.

On X-Day, all repair parts request for vehicles were cancelled and deadlined vehicles were the first items turned in. The consolidated supply formulated final procedures for the proper turn in/ turn over of all equipment and property. The necessary paperwork was prepared by the special action teams in the units and checked, verified, and documented appropriately by the supply clerks. The basic plan and function of the consolidated supply concept worked very well to insure that all equipment and property went to the proper activity or agency in accordance with the guidance and instructions from higher headquarters. A method of turn in of TA-50 was established and this was accomplished from X+5 - X+10 without problems due to the Central Issue/Turn in Facility. All "O" rations and basic loads of ammunition were turned in by X+5.

The problem of segregation of serviceable/unserviceable US material from the trash points was greatly underestimated the first two days after stand down. Immediate coordination was made with the Vinnell Corp on disposition of this material and a LOI was sent to the units. Amnesty points were established within the units for all US material. This material was segregated and all serviceable items placed back into the system and unserviceable items moved to the retrograde yard. The numerous trash pick up points were consolidated at one location. This material was separated to insure government material was not burned or hauled into the civilian community for resale purposes.

On 10 February, C/16th completed turn in of equipment and their property book was cleared. Property books of the 611th TC, 345th Avn Det (Div), and 774th Med Det were cleared between X+28 and X+32. The property of Hq Co, 164th CAG and 18th CAG was cleared on 16 March. All property books were audited by the 1st Avn Bde Hq prior to release of the commanders.

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(6) Transfer of control of Air Combatant Assets: All UH-1 aircraft were title transferred to RVNAF at Brigade level. Records of all aircraft assigned to C/16th were corrected and paperwork prepared for retrograde of OH-6A and AH-1G aircraft. UH-1 aircraft of C/16th were transferred to the 18th CAC on X-Day. An inventory of all TO&E line items was conducted and a shortage list was completed for each line item. This was followed by an inventory of camp and station (PC&S) property. All items were tagged and a list by FSN was submitted to the consolidated supply. The aviation related tools of C/16th and armament systems of all aircraft were processed through the KAPP yard in Saigon. Tool sets of the 18th CAC and 611th TC were transferred to RVNAF in February and March 1973. Those tools necessary to support the ICCS and FPJMC aircraft were hand received back to NHA personnel. The 611th TC float UH-1's were the only aircraft transferred to RVNAF prior to X+45. Those aircraft remaining on the 18th CAC property book were hand received to the user and the property book cleared by a Certificate from Brigade.

(7) Transfer of functions and reporting: Only three significant transfers of functions occurred during the stand down. On 6 February 1973 the mess facility of C/16th was closed and responsibility assumed by the 18th CAC. On 6 February, responsibility for base security was assumed by the Army Support Element. On 17 February, the 18th CAC mess facility was transferred to the 91st Composite Battalion. All reporting procedures terminated with the close out of unit morning reports.

(8) Transfer of billeting, installed property and equipment. One hundred percent inventories of all equipment and property were brought up to date and the necessary paper work was prepared. Turn in/turn over of all equipment and property physically on hand was completed by the units special action teams. All buildings were inspected and turned over to PA&E as they were cleared of personnel.

b. Section 2: Commanders Comments - See Paragraph 2, section 2.

  
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LTC AR  
Commander