

IN THEIR FIRST 42 days in Vietnam the 1st Air Cavalry Division's helicopter reconnaissance squadron flew 567 combat missions.

"We often fly day and night trying to locate the enemy and we've had as many as 18 pilots fired on in a single day," one platoon leader said.

Another pilot remarked, "At first I used to get a little shook up when the Viet Cong would fire at me, but after a while you get used to it and it doesn't really bother you."

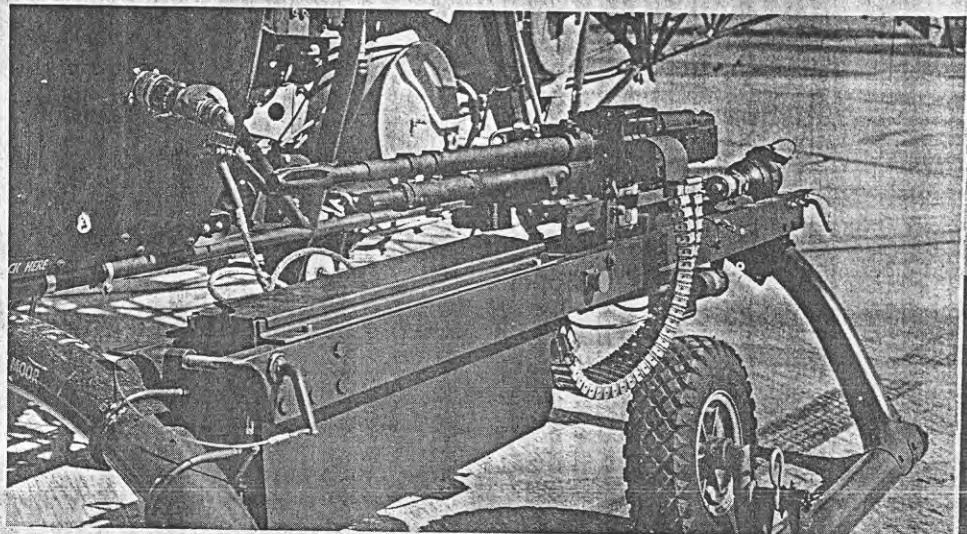
Flying the OH-13, which has no armor protection, is like sitting in a fishbowl just waiting to get cracked. Visibility is unlimited but the pilot and observer feel kind of naked sitting out there in the bubble.

So far the helicopters have held up under fire better than the pilots thought they would.

"They're a little slow. They'll only do about 70 knots, but they're a small target," one pilot ventured. "When we first started working with them we thought we'd been assigned to the suicide squadron. But our experience with them has been fine."

Usually the Sioux fly in teams of two, one equipped with 7.62 mm machineguns on each side

Heap Big Little Scout



and the other carrying eight 2.75 inch aerial rockets.

On scout missions forward of the infantry troops the Sioux try to get a fix on the enemy. Their job is a lot easier when the Viet Cong fire on them because then

they can pinpoint the enemy in a matter of seconds and call in armed Hueys or artillery support.

A platoon leader stated, "Every day we are proving the advantages of an airmobile unit in this kind of war."

Chinooks Accept Challenge



LIKE ITS World War II numerical counterpart the C-47, the CH-47 is proving itself to be the workhorse of the 1st Air Cavalry Division.

Since their arrival in Vietnam, Chinooks have flown night and day carrying loads that vary from 105 mm howitzers to pigs, chickens, rice, downed helicopters, and medical evacuees.

According to the battalion operations officer, unit Chinooks fly an average of 850 missions per

week carrying 550 tons of equipment and 1,500 passengers.

With the many hours the Chinooks spend in the air, maintenance can become a real problem. Battalion aircraft repairmen work with a real sense of urgency.

Sixty percent of the maintenance performed on the aircraft is done by the helicopter's own crewchief and flight engineer. Most of the men work 14 to 16 hours a day to keep their ships in top running order.