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Helicopter pilot. Senators found an "Army-wide" shortage of such pilots, which "is overcome in Vietnam only by requiring them to perform a second tour involuntarily."

LATEST HELICOPTER STATISTICS

U. S. Army helicopters, a key factor in the fighting in Vietnam, are proving harder than ever to knock down.

In the last six months, helicopter operations have become considerably safer, while sorties have increased both in number and scope in keeping with the U.S. build up.

The number of aviation personnel killed in hostile action has remained approximately the same despite a tremendous build up in personnel. Vier Cong hits on U.S. helicopters have decreased 11 per cent in one year.

Continental Army Command announced in September that U.S. Army helicopters were hit an average of once in each 411 sorties. The announced knock-down rate caused by ground fire was one helicopter in 7,887 combat sorties. In the first half of 1966, one helicopter in 450 combat sorties was downed by enemy fire. In other words, 18 out of 19 helicopters hit by ground fire returned to base.

Because more than half the downed ships are recovered, the actual loss rate was one helicopter in each 15,599 combat sorties or, to put it another way, .0064 per cent of the combat sorties flown lost a helicopter. In the first half of 1966, only one ship in 16,700 combat sorties was rendered unrecoverable, or .0059 per cent of the sorties flown lost a helicopter, amounting to a safety increase of .0005 per cent in one year.

These statistics are based on studies of approximately one million sorties from January 1, 1965 through May 31, 1965 and from January 1, 1966 through April 30, 1966.

The Huey in flying a majority of the Army combat sorties in Vietnam, averages three hours of ground maintenance for every hour in the air. In spite of this, Army ships fly an average of 55 hours per month.

In April, Army helicopters flew 12 times as many combat sorties as the U.S. and Vietnamese Air Force combined.

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ARMY PILOTS NEEDED. "There are certain personnel shortages of key types, the most notable being helicopter pilots, particularly in warrant-officer grades.

"This shortage is Army-wide and is overcome in Vietnam only by requiring . . . a second tour involuntarily.

"For example, in October, 1966, there were a number of Army helicopter pilots serving their second tour in Vietnam of which only a . . . few were volunteers.

"Army aviators who had served in Vietnam in the 1963 and 1964 time period are now being selected to serve a second time."