

SECTION VI
COMBAT ASSAULT
LZ SOPHIA
5 MARCH 1971

A. (C) GENERAL

1. CONCEPT

SOPHIA (XD 3440) was the final fire base that was to be established prior to the assault into the Tchepone area. From SOPHIA, the assault into Tchepone could be supported by the 105mm battery that was to be inserted.

2. MISSION

Even while the assault of LZ LIZ was in progress, preparations were in progress for step three of the push along the escarpment to LZ SOPHIA. During the LIZ insertion, the 2d Sqdn, 17th Cav continued to screen to the west and south. This provided early reconnaissance of the SOPHIA area. Because of poor visibility in the LIZ area, it became dangerous for helicopters and Air Force fighters to operate in close proximity to each other competing for air space. The FAC's were directed to drop their ordnance in the SOPHIA area as preparation for the following day. The 2d Regt, 1st ARVN Inf Div was given the mission to air assault and secure LZ SOPHIA. They were then to establish a fire base for the receipt of 105mm howitzers to provide artillery support for the final move to Tchepone. The plan called for the heavy use of air assets to deliver fire power to the SOPHIA area and to conduct reconnaissance to the northwest toward Tchepone. Six 105 mm howitzers were to be moved to SOPHIA to provide tube artillery support for the final assault. Two battalions were to land on the escarpment, secure SOPHIA and then proceed northeast to the Xe Pon River to secure a river crossing for a possible ground withdrawal route after the assault on Tchepone. The plan included inserting 1134 personnel with 164 UH-1H lift sorties into the SOPHIA area. In addition to the 1st ARVN Inf Div air assault to SOPHIA, the VNMC Div conducted a troop insertion involving 60 UH-1H sorties to a field location south of DELTA on the afternoon of 5 March.

3. WEATHER

On the morning of 5 March the cloud cover was scattered and broken with early morning ground fog that dissipated around noon. By

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1300 hours the weather had improved to such a degree that it was of no tactical significance. As the day progressed, the possibility of conducting operations into the evening was considered should the insertion take longer than expected. This was the first day of desirable weather since the direction of the attack was diverted and directed along the escarpment to the south of the river.

B. (C) EXECUTION

1. ENEMY SITUATION

Aircraft in the SOPHIA area on 5 March were engaged primarily by 12.7mm and small arms fire. Elements of the 14th Anti-aircraft Battalion and the 17th Antiaircraft Battalion were reported in the vicinity of the LZ. It is believed that artillery fire on SOPHIA was delivered by Volunteer Company 34 which was reported in the vicinity of XD 3338. Two weapons companies from the 35th Engineer Battalion were also believed to be in the area. It was logical for the enemy to suspect an assault in the vicinity of SOPHIA following the previous two days' assaults along the escarpment and the preparation of the area during the insertion of LIZ on 4 March.

2. COMMAND AND CONTROL

The chain of command for the ARVN ground unit was from I Corps to the 1st ARVN Inf Div to the 2d Regt, all at Military Post near Khe Sanh. The CO of the 2d Regt, 1st ARVN Inf Div, was the Ground Commander for the insertion on LZ SOPHIA. The AMC was the CO, 223d CAB. The alternate AMC was the XO, 223d CAB. The AMC picked up the GC at 0800 hours on 5 March at Military Post and proceeded to the LZ area to observe the air cavalry reconnaissance and direct the preparation of the LZ by airstrikes. The preparation began at 0830 hours. Because of bad weather the assault was delayed until early afternoon and the preparation continued throughout the morning. The UHF radio net was used to control the aircraft during the assault. The VHF radio net was used to control all attack helicopter assets. The FM radio net was used for routine traffic and for coordination with the Air Force FAC. The downed crew recovery was controlled by the alternate AMC.

3. RECONNAISSANCE

A Troop, 2d Squadron, 17th Cav received the mission of reconnaissance, LZ preparation, and provision of security in direct support of an airmobile assault on LZ SOPHIA. A Troop's reconnaissance teams consisted of two AH-1G attack helicopters and one UH-1H command and control helicopter for coordinating the reconnaissance effort and LZ preparation. A Troop's commander elected not to use the OH-6A in anticipation of a heavy volume of antiaircraft fire. A Troop, during a visual reconnaissance of the high ground to the west of the LZ received 12.7mm fire in the vicinity of XD 322419. The reconnaissance team marked the position for the FAC, and airstrikes silenced the weapon. Further reconnaissance of this area revealed a 200-meter V-shaped trench line with the open end of the "V" oriented toward the south. Numerous bunkers and 12.7mm positions were located throughout the area. A Troop continued to direct airstrikes in this area. With airstrikes being employed to the west, A Troop made a visual reconnaissance of the LZ and the approach route from the east over the escarpment with a tight right turn to the north just prior to reaching the LZ and a left descending turn back south into the LZ. This pattern would prevent the lift aircraft from stacking up on final approach to the LZ. Antiaircraft weapons would have difficulty in accurately adjusting fire with the lift ships flying in three directions, one of which was a descending turn into the LZ. The other aircraft could easily observe any problems in the LZ and adjust their pattern accordingly. The departure route recommended was east and back along the escarpment. The AMC concurred with the Cav recommendations and A Troop directed airstrikes in preparing the LZ and the routes. Airstrikes were also employed on numerous huts and trails to the northwest in the vicinity of XD 341416. This location was passed to the AMC as representing a possible danger area during the insertion. Recommendations were made for the smoke screen drop between coordinates XD 355402 and XD 341392 and, during the insertion, for airstrikes on the high ground to the west. The AMC concurred with the recommendations and A Troop was given control of the TAC air and three sections of ARA to coordinate and provide adequate security during the insertion. A Troop marked the coordinates for the smoke drop and directed the FAC to shift the airstrikes on the high ground to the west. A Troop made one final reconnaissance of the LZ and did not receive any fire. The LZ was

marked for the AMC who marked it again for the UH-1H aircraft approaching the LZ. A Troop then employed the three ARA sections in a CAP over the LZ and provided security in a low CAP near the huts. The first lift into the LZ received small arms fire in the vicinity of the huts. A Troop detected the enemy positions and immediately suppressed the fire. ARA was not employed because of the aircraft congestion in that area and the fact that the fire had been immediately suppressed. A Troop was diverted to the east of the LZ by the AMC to search for two aircraft that had reported receiving fire and having to make emergency landings. ARA remained in a CAP over the LZ and A Troop continued to search for the downed aircraft, with negative results. A Troop returned to the LZ to provide security to the south against possible antiaircraft positions until the insertion and heavy lift were completed.

4. STAGING

The staging of aircraft for the assault on LZ SOPHIA on 5 March 1971 took place at the Lager Pad, Khe Sanh combat base. The aircraft reported from their home stations in company flights between 0800 and 0830 hours. The crew briefing was given by the S-3, 223d CAB at 0900 hours.

5. PICKUP ZONE

The flight arrived at PZ OSCAR (XD 860384) at 1250 hours under the control of the alternate AMC, the XO, 223d CAB. Some confusion arose from the fact that the pilots were briefed that the PZ would be KILO. The PZ was actually OSCAR Pad, which is approximately 300 meters west of KILO. There were no C&C aircraft or gunships assigned to the PZ since it was in close proximity to Khe Sanh combat base.

6. FIRE SUPPORT

The planned preparation of LZ SOPHIA consisted entirely of ARC LIGHTS and TAC air strikes. ARVN artillery was not planned for the preparation, although one battery of 155mm howitzers located on LZ LOLO was within range. LZ SOPHIA was not within range of 175mm artillery from the 108th Artillery Group located along the Laos/

Vietnam border. Preparation of LZ SOPHIA began on 3 March with three ARC LIGHTS being employed in the vicinity of the LZ. Two of these ARC LIGHTS were employed directly on the LZ with the center of mass at grids XD 345415 (1400 hours) and XD 345405 (2126 hours). The third was employed two and a half km to the west of the LZ with the center of mass located at XD 315470. On 4 March at 2300 hours one ARC LIGHT was employed two kilometers southwest of the LZ with the center of mass at XD 335395. Seven ARC LIGHTS were employed from 0115 to 1205 hours on 5 March on suspected enemy strongpoints along the flight path, and two directly on the LZ. These ARC LIGHTS were employed at grids XD 330415, XD 330405, XD 345415, XD 345405, XD 314415, XD 305420, and 377442. From 0805 to 1330 hours, 5 March, 23 sets of TAC air were employed in preparation of the LZ with the Cav identifying specific targets to the FAC. A total of six Daisy Cutters were employed from 0805 to 1231 hours. Other ordnance consisted of 500 pound bombs, napalm, cluster bomb units (CBU), 20mm fire, and smoke. Prior to the insertion time of 1321 hours, the regular FAC working the LZ area returned to Quang Tri with mechanical problems. At 1321 hours a replacement FAC arrived on station and stated that a set of air with smoke was on station. The Cav marked the area east of the LZ for smoke with WP, and the area was identified and marked correctly by the FAC. The FAC was instructed to employ the smoke along a north-south line. However, the first smoke was employed along an east-west line. The second smoke was directly on the LZ. This misplaced smoke hindered and added confusion to the insertion. ARA provided three sections for a CAP of the area. Throughout the insertion the fires of ARA were not called for even though there were active enemy antiaircraft positions. Of significant interest is the fact that the distance from the nearest rearm/refuel point necessitated the use of three sections (seven aircraft) to provide continuous ARA coverage. Unlike previous combat assaults, the ARA aircraft were not used by the Cav teams on station to engage targets they had detected by low altitude VR.

7. PICKUP ZONE TO LANDING ZONE

The flight departed the PZ at 1300 hours. The flight route was from the PZ to HOTEL to DELTA 1, then north to the river, west along the river to the RP which was a bend in the river at grid XD 3643. The flight initiated a descent at the RP on a 210 degree heading. The descent continued on this heading until, at approximately 50 feet above the ground, a left pedal turn was made into the LZ, terminating in a landing to the east. The aircraft departed the LZ on a 030 degree

heading. The flight then followed the river back to Khe Sanh. Enroute altitudes were 6000 feet from the PZ to LZ and 5500 feet from the LZ to Khe Sanh. All aircraft refueled at Khe Sanh prior to each pickup at the PZ. Enroute armed escort was provided by AH-1G and UH-1C gunships which were flying to and from rearm/refuel at Khe Sanh combat base. While enroute the first lift received both 12.7mm and small arms fire from an area west of ALUOI. Four aircraft were forced down on or around ALUOI as a result of this fire. UH-1C gunships engaged this area but were not able to neutralize these enemy positions. The first lift also received 12.7mm fire from the low ground along the river, vicinity XD 3842. This area was silenced by UH-1C gunships. In spite of heavy engagement by gunships all subsequent lifts received fire from the area west of ALUOI.

8. ASSAULT

The assault of the 5th Bn, 2d Regt, 1st ARVN Inf Div on LZ SOPHIA began at 1321 hours when the first lift aircraft touched down on the LZ. The first lift aircraft that departed the LZ received fire from the escarpment northeast of the LZ. Other aircraft of the first lift later received small arms fire from huts to the northwest while approaching the LZ. Escort Cobra gunships engaged the targets on the escarpment while A Troop, 2d Sqdn, 17th Cav Cobras silenced the fire from the huts. The second lift encountered enemy small arms fire in the LZ from a trench line to the west. Cav Cobra gunships were used to engage and silence the area. The continued small arms fire from the escarpment could not be suppressed due to the close proximity of friendly troops, who were moving toward these enemy positions. The third and fourth lifts received no enemy fire near the LZ. The enemy positions on the escarpment which were engaging the lift aircraft departing the LZ had been neutralized by friendly ground forces. Close fire support during the assault consisted of two teams of escort Cobra gunships, two teams of UH-1C gunships, one ARA team and one Cav team. Two escort Cobra teams provided coverage for the lift aircraft approaching and departing the LZ. The ARA team provided a CAP over the LZ. The Cav team engaged targets first to the west and then to the south of the LZ. The UH-1C gunships were used north of the escarpment along the river on the valley floor. Only one of the eight aircraft hit near the LZ was shot down. This UH-1H received numerous hits on the approach to the LZ but did not go down until after it departed the LZ area while the aircraft was in the process of

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attempting to return to Khe Sanh. During the third and fourth lifts UH-1H aircraft were used to extract injured ground personnel. The loading of wounded required more time and this caused the flights to swing to the west for spacing. This took the flight over additional enemy positions north of the escarpment and the river. This area was engaged by UH-1C gunships. To avoid this enemy fire the flight stopped swinging to the west, kept its reduced spacing and landed two and three aircraft in the LZ at one time. The assault of the 5th Bn, 2d Regt was completed at 1517 hours. The insertion of the 4th Bn, 2d Regt, 1st ARVN Inf Div immediately followed. At 1535 hours the medium/heavy lift aircraft created both spacing and timing problems in the LZ. The insertion of the 4th Bn, 2d Regt was completed at 1646 hours. The medium/heavy lift movement was terminated at 1830 hours as a result of poor weather.

C. (C) SUBSEQUENT ACTIONS

1. AIRCRAFT DAMAGE

Ninety-one aircraft participated in the assault on LZ SOPHIA. Sixteen aircraft were hit, 12 UH-1H and four UH-1C. Nine aircraft were hit by small arms fire, five were hit by weapons 12.7mm or larger and two aircraft were hit by an unknown type of fire. Six of the 16 aircraft hit were classified as combat losses. Five of the other ten aircraft hit returned to Khe Sanh and were determined to be in a non-flyable condition. Eight aircraft received damage on take off, landing and in the LZ. Two UH-1H's were damaged while on a recovery mission and the remaining UH-1H was damaged while enroute from the LZ. The 91 aircraft (63 UH-1H's, eight UH-1C's, and 20 AH-1G's) flew a total of 303 hours and a total of 979 sorties.

2. CASUALTIES

Of the 16 aircraft hit only three of the crews sustained injuries. One UH-1H aircraft was hit while approaching the LZ. The aircraft commander reported that the aircraft was hit and he was attempting to return to Khe Sanh. Shortly after this transmission a FAC reported seeing a helicopter going down in flames. The aircraft and crew that reported returning to Khe Sanh never arrived. Neither the aircraft nor the crew have been located. The four crew

members have been classified as missing in action. The aircraft commander and pilot of another UH-1H were hit by small arms fire. The aircraft commander received minor facial cuts and a foot wound. The pilot sustained a minor wound in the left ankle. The aircraft commander was evacuated to CONUS; the pilot was hospitalized in Vietnam. A door gunner on another UH-1H was hit in the left leg by small arms fire. He was treated in a hospital in Vietnam.

3. DOWNED AIRCRAFT RECOVERY

Seven aircraft were shot down during the assault, six of which were destroyed. The remaining aircraft was recovered on 6 March.

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SECTION VII
AIRMOBILE STUDY GROUP
COMBAT ASSAULT ON LZ SOPHIA
5 MARCH 1971

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GEN BERRY:

At Gen Lam's evening and morning briefings on 5 March, the day of the combat assault on SOPHIA, he emphasized the necessity of combat assaults against the HAIDONG, HAIPHONG, HOPE area in the vicinity of Tchepone on 6 March. He emphasized once again that, for the assault on the Tchepone area on 6 March, it would be a political as well as a military objective. He hoped to put four battalions into the Tchepone area. He had to put in at least one company, and would do whatever was necessary to put that one company into the Tchepone area. He said we must be in the Tchepone area by 6 March. There was no alternative. At Gen Lam's regular morning briefing on 5 March at 1740 he focused on the SOPHIA assault for the next morning. He directed that there be a FAC for the Cav. He would be carrying out reconnaissance both in the SOPHIA area and the Tchepone area. Both at the 1740 hours, 4 March briefing and the 5 March morning briefing, there was discussion on SOPHIA. The emphasis was that SOPHIA must be captured in order to move on and take Tchepone. SOPHIA would be a firebase on which there would be six 105's, essential to the assault of Tchepone on 6 March. The mission of the two battalions that would go into SOPHIA was to secure the high ground along the escarpment and build fire bases for operations in the Tchepone area. The two battalions would move west and northwest along the escarpment to conduct search operations. They also were to secure a river crossing northwest of the SOPHIA area for the two battalions, which would give them a secure river crossing to fall back on.

LTC KIRKLIGHTER CO, 223d COMBAT ASSAULT BATTALION:

On the morning of 4 March, at the 1st ARVN Inf Div briefing, Col Chung, the 2d Regiment commander, pulled me aside and said that on the 5th he would be going into SOPHIA, ultimately to go into Tchepone the following day. He said the combat assault into Tchepone would be given

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top priority, (and on the 6th he would attack Tchepone with a squad, a platoon, a company, or whatever else he had left.) At 0830 once we had ourselves oriented in the area in which we wish to put air-strikes on, I was notified by the FAC they had already put four to five sets of air on SOPHIA. We discussed various areas with the Cav Squadron and came to the common agreement on what targets and areas should be struck. A list of these areas was made and the preparation was initiated at 0830. The air was stopped (leaving the area high and dry) and the Cav went in. On two different occasions they went in and drew 12.7mm fire. We pulled them back out and started the preparation again, hitting specific targets the Cav troops had located, and concentrating heavily on gun emplacements. This went on at least another hour. At this time the Cav went in again and made another detailed examination of the area. I was told by the Cav lead that particular day that the LZ would be adequate, and that there were small stumps in the LZ. This recon was complete. That will take up through the preparation phase.

COL DAVIS:

I would again like to point out the extensive use of the Cav troop. It has been essential to have a Cav troop in direct support of the combat assault. This really represents a much more extensive use during a combat assault. The LZ time was more of a planning factor than a fixed point. This was demonstrated by the Cav recon, and the additional airstrikes. It was accomplished only after the determination that a satisfactory prep had been made. I believe it was understood the night before that with the bad weather we had been having the 0900 LZ time would not be made. The major importance of the 0900 LZ time was that the slicks would be ready at that time.

GEN BERRY:

On the previous day, 4 March, as I talked with XXIV Corps representatives about the LZ time of 0900, I said that I would think 1100 hours would be a more likely time. I told the XXIV Corps G-3 that we had to go with the Vietnamese planning time, but considering the likelihood of bad weather and the need to recon the area and put in additional fire power, that an 1100 hours LZ time would be more likely. After looking over my notes I took in the helicopter over the

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LZ, I now recall that on the early morning of the 5th there was bad weather. I was over the LZ and was bothered because no one else was there. I recall now that there was a 2400-foot ceiling in South Vietnam and unlimited ceiling in Laos with broken cloud cover 2400-3000 feet over the LZ. I recall now that the Cav had tried to get out right after I was lucky enough to get out.

LTC KIRKLIGHTER:

The first set of flights went in at 0933. They could not get through until that time.

MAJ KLOSE:

The ridge line was covered by rather tall trees. These trees were on both sides of the pencil-thin ridge line. I estimated the ridge line to be no more than 30-40 meters across.

LTC KIRKLIGHTER:

In 1966-67 in the III Corps area, we didn't have the benefit of a Cav troop for recon, that being normally done by the AMC. Making low passes at the LZ was the mission of the gunships. I think for the first time we see airmobility working as a team. It's impressive that we have massive TAC air when we are going up against this type of environment. We have to have priorities, realizing that sometimes you are going to have to go with fewer sets of TAC air if there is a higher priority mission. An early recon of the LZ and then several recons in the LZ prior to the troops arriving is just essential. Otherwise you have the question in your mind, "Is the LZ adequately prepared to receive assault troops?" I don't think I have been disappointed one time with the Cav troop's recon. The CAP cover we have been getting from ARA is another vital aspect of that teamwork. I would say again that the only disappointment I have had here is artillery. We just don't seem to get the artillery fire. It used to be that the artillery would hit the LZ and then be shifted to one flank or another, to provide some cover and to prevent the enemy from exiting the area. Air, ARA and Dustoff have been just absolutely outstanding. Once again we are going to discuss the organization for combat and formations required of the ground forces. This has never been a consideration that has affected our flight formations and landing formations other than the requirement to retain a battalion integrity.

COL. DAVIS:

On SOPHIA itself how many ships could touch down at one time?

LTC KIRKLIGHTER:

One, but you might see two ships at a time. Two ships get on the ground when there is a mix-up and one of the ships gets too close. The spacing is bad, but you can get two ships in. I was always afraid of blade strikes. There were stumps in the LZ eighteen inches to two feet high, also the tall trees.

GEN BERRY:

You know, a surprising thing to me is that back in 1967-68 anything smaller than a five-ship LZ was considered peanuts. Another amazing thing to me is the large number of troops we are putting in these one-ship LZ's. I don't believe it was envisioned by the early creators of airmobility. I think it is something that has developed through necessity. It is an extension of the capability of airmobility.

MAJ KLOSE:

This also explains why we are not taking more hits enroute. If we had a staggered trail left or right it would help. I think we are going to do this more often. I consider this being a mid-intensity air-defense system. Large formations flying overhead force the enemy to fire all of his antiaircraft weapons. I have two points to make on the formations. One, in a mid-intensity environment, we have good information on how many aircraft were hit, but we have no idea how many rounds were actually fired at our aircraft. If we increased the density of our aircraft the number of hits would increase. If we increase the number of ships in a given area or air space we would also increase the number of hits. There is alot to be said for formation flying in other than this type of environment. Behaviorally, a man flying in a formation is concentrating on his place in the formation and his relation to the other aircraft. He is interested in maintaining his place, and in nothing else. In the single trail-type formation the importance of the aircraft commander increases, for he is responsible for everything his aircraft does or fails to do. He must make many decisions in the single-ship thing. The 30 second separation has 60 flight leads

versus six. In these 60 leads, anyone of these 60 has it in his power to upset the whole operation.

LTC KIRKLIGHTER:

When we were working down around HOTEL 2 we were PZ-ing out of KILO and we had four aircraft join in on the trail of another flight. They went to the RANGER LZ where we had to police them up. They say the lead aircraft knew where his LZ was but he just caught on to the back of another flight. I think that in many respects the single-ship is tougher. Briefing is absolutely necessary. There was a drastic change in the case of flight routes. We flew from DELTA 1 over BROWN and LOLO to LIZ then to SOPHIA. We kept out of the river west of LOLO. There was a tremendous amount of antiaircraft. Another idea is that flying over the fire bases provides certain safe havens for the aircraft in case they experience some mechanical failure enroute.

MAJ KLOSE:

At 1400 hours there were two ARC LIGHTS to go in northeast of LOLO, and this is another reason we tried to stay close to the high ground.

GEN BERRY:

As I review this from some messages received from the CO and S-3, 223d CAB, they were telling people to get out of the valley and get up on the high ground. Whenever people got in the valley they were shot up, and I think we lost some people because they flew in the valley.

MAJ KLOSE:

None of my lift went into the valley, and everyone was told to stay on the high ground. My XO experienced engine failure and had to sit down in ALUOI. That was because he was coming out of DELTA 1, and trying to get to BROWN. That was the closest place he could get to. It's a natural tendency for everyone to try to follow rivers, roads and valleys because these are easy navigations. Flight discipline is very necessary for safe flight. One problem we ran into in this type of environment is that members of the same organization tend to follow one another. This is a survival instinct. The people

were briefed and knew what they were supposed to do, but at the time it happened one reacts instinctively and his emotions take over.

GEN BERRY:

That is in the organization and the briefing. Everyone knows that a chase ship will take care of downed pilots and that everybody must stay on the mission regardless of what happens.

LTC KIRKLIGHTER:

There is nothing in the doctrine about chase function.

GEN BERRY:

As we seek to eliminate losses, we find it more and more necessary to make provisions for downed aircraft. We pulled this chase ship idea out of our pockets. Do advantages of changing air call signs for security reasons outweigh the disadvantages of the added confusion?

MAJ KLOSE:

Right now everyone knows the call signs as people and it would be a little difficult to change. For example, as long as the FAC is in the AO he knows who DRAGON 20 is and who DRAGON 09 is, also OXHORN 20.

GEN BERRY:

It would take two or three days for us to get used to the new call signs. The same confusion would exist for the people on the ground, because the present call signs are what the people on the ground know the people in the air by. I recommend a delay in the SOI change.

COL DAVIS:

Please discuss LZ reconnaissance and preparation.

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CPT CURRY, 2/17 CAV:

We arrived at the LZ the same time as the AMC. We first did a high recon. We worked outside to inside. After working the LZ we turned to working the flight route. After we had worked the LZ and surrounding area, to include the flight routes in and out, we took a final look at everything before the first lift came in.

GEN BERRY:

What is the principal weapon used against antiaircraft fire?

CPT CURRY:

Well, the cannon I guess, but really airstrikes are the best thing to put on antiaircraft positions.

GEN BERRY:

I think that airstrikes are the best thing to use on ant aircraft guns or bunkers. Let the low level recon find the enemy and then call in airstrikes to kill the enemy.

LT LEIGHTON ALO, USAF:

From 0805-1330 we had a total of 23 sets of air. The first two sets of air were Daisy Cutters. From then on they were Daisy Cutters, CBU, snake and napalm. At the planned LZ time, of 1000, we had three sets of 500-pound bombs (snake), napalm and 20mm. At 1315, LZ time, we had a set of snake and napalm on station, and we had another set of CBU. From that time on, when we started to go in, the targets around the LZ were hit and helicopters reconned up to the HOPE area. After this there were three sets: 1515-1536 snake and napalm; 1700-1725 snake and napalm; 1805-1927 snake, napalm and CBU.

GEN BERRY:

According to my figures the touchdown time was 1321 hours. Then almost at the same time, HAMMER 40 checked in and said he had smoke. He had just arrived in the area and he asked for a brief target plan.

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The point is there was no smoke and no FAC in the air. At 1326 they were in the midst of telling where the smoke was to go. There were three WP markers set down indicating the line of the smoke and it was generally to the east of the target. The AMC reported the smoke should go in on the target on a north to south line.

The following was taken from the notes of a member of the Airmobile Study Group:

LT LEIGHTON:

The regular FAC for the area was diverted back to Quang Tri because of mechanical failure. That FAC that took over did not have the charts for his area. FAC's work certain areas all the time, so they are the only ones with all the information.

GEN BERRY:

How can we keep a FAC in the AO at all times?

LT LEIGHTON:

There are six FAC's for each mission with six more as backup. If one FAC has mechanical trouble 30 minutes out of Quang Tri and only a ten minute overlap is planned there will be a time over the AO when there is no FAC.

LTC KIRKLIGHTER:

The Cav marked the spot for smoke with WP. This spot was identified by the FAC, and he marked it. The smoke went east to west on the south side of the LZ when it should have gone north to south. The second smoke was right on the LZ. The Cav reported numerous 12.7 mm pits in the tree line. At both HOPE and LIZ the ARVN wanted high ground, but high ground gets hits from 360 degrees.

GEN BERRY:

On 3, 4, 5, and 6 March the high ground was the most dangerous; and

on down the slopes was safer. HOPE was a good LZ because it was selected at random so the enemy could not defend. LIZ was good because it was down in a bowl, and the enemy could not adjust.

MAJ KLOSE:

If the lead slick fires one hundred rounds it is a good day. There is too much restriction on the door gunners. What we need are definable limits so gunners can fire enroute and at the LZ.

COL DAVIS:

The gunners can fire up to three hundred meters of the LZ, but then must stop. The ARVN set limits for firing. The friendlies move out fast, and give no positions, so gunners cannot safely fire.

LTC KIRKLIGHTER:

After an LZ has been prepared with air and ARA, an M-60 is not much good. I don't like secured LZ's. I'd rather go into an unoccupied LZ. When the ARVN secure an LZ we get fire from the LZ. The 23mm, 37mm and 12.7mm antiaircraft weapons can all reach out further than the ARVN can secure. The NVA follow any force of ARVN moving so they can fire at the aircraft.

MAJ KLOSE:

We have a very pragmatic approach. Anything that we do that is unpredictable is good, for it throws the NVA off. Deception is important; any variation makes for a safer LZ.

GEN BERRY:

On the evening of the 5th we tried to get Gen Lam to go for a low ground LZ, but he insisted on going to the highest possible ground. The actual LZ was not, however, on the highest ground. Actually the AMC picks the LZ when he works the area. The AMC can pick the best spot. One thing we could do is brief the ARVN division commander on our findings. This might build his confidence and understanding. Then possibly the Ground Commanders would accept our recommendations.

The Cav commander plays a part in selecting an LZ. Does he speak with the AMC and the Ground Commander?

LTC KIRKLIGHTER:

The Cav commander does get with the AMC the evening before, and at the extensive radio briefing in the morning. The Cav commander does not meet with the AMC and the Ground Commander.

GEN BERRY:

How much flexibility does the regimental commander have?

LTC KIRKLIGHTER:

He is very flexible.

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SECTION VIII
COMBAT ASSAULT
LZ HOPE
6 MARCH 1971

A. (C) GENERAL

1. CONCEPT

LZ HOPE was to be the final objective in the western drive into Laos. The assault of HOPE in the Tchepone area was the result of the progression of moves along the escarpment from LOLO to LIZ to SOPHIA; then across the Xe Pon River and the final objective, LZ HOPE.

2. MISSION

The plan called for two battalions to air assault into HOPE with one battalion in reserve should it be needed to lend support to the thrust. Wide reconnaissance by the air cavalry squadron and dispersion during airstrikes were planned to deceive the enemy as to the actual location of the LZ. It was decided that there would be no other air move attempted in the LAMSON 719 area of operations during the HOPE air assault. This would release all assets to support this last vital objective should they be required. It was planned to use 120 UH-1H aircraft to move troops to LZ HOPE. The aircraft were first to move one battalion, and then the other without a break in the insertion.

3. WEATHER

The weather on 6 March was the best encountered during the entire thrust along the escarpment. Relatively little ground fog that morning enabled the cavalry to conduct early morning reconnaissance of the area by 0830 hours. Clear skies and excellent visibility existed most of the day. The weather did not dictate any tactical considerations. The operation got off to an early start and was completed in excellent time during favorable weather conditions.

B. (C) EXECUTION

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1. ENEMY SITUATION

The enemy fire in the LZ HOPE area (XD 3347) was characterized by 12.7mm machine gun fire with small arms, 23mm and 37mm antiaircraft fire was also reported. Reports indicated that there were elements of the 16th Antiaircraft Battalion, Binh Tram 32, the 69th Engineer Battalion (4 guns), and the 94th Engineer Battalion (platoon of 12.7mm) in the Tchepone area near LZ HOPE. A great number of 82mm mortars were also reported in the area. The 12.7mm machine guns were strategically placed to cover suspected landing zones. Anti-aircraft coverage of airways was provided by larger caliber weapons in the surrounding area. There had been previous indications of radar equipped antiaircraft positions in the Tchepone area.

2. COMMAND AND CONTROL

The chain of command for the ground troops which assaulted LZ HOPE was from I Corps to the 1st ARVN Infantry Division to the 2d Regiment. The 3d Battalion, 2d Regiment, 1st ARVN Infantry Division was inserted first, followed by the 2d Bn, 2d Regt, 1st ARVN Inf Div. The commanding officer of the 2d Regt was the Ground Commander for the combat assault of these battalions. Because of distance and heavy enemy concentrations in the area, the insertion of these two battalions required the use of over 120 UH-1H aircraft to assault both battalions simultaneously. These aircraft were broken down into two flights of 60 UH-1H aircraft. The AMC for both flights was the CO, 223d CAB. The AMC coordinated reconnaissance and airstrikes in the LZ area. The CO, 158th Avn Bn was to control the insertion of the second flight. Each of the above aviation battalions had an alternate C&C aircraft to replace the primary C&C when necessary.

The Ground Commander (CO, 2d Regt, 1st ARVN Inf Div) was in the AMC's aircraft directing the assault. Members of the regimental staff were present in the other three C&C aircraft. There were four C&C aircraft, any one of which could have assumed complete control of the operation at any time. Each aviation company sized element was further under the control of the company commander who led the flight.

The aircraft at the PZ were under the control of a C&C aircraft

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which orbited the PZ. The only problem encountered at the PZ was when two companies of aircraft did not arrive at the PZ in time for the planned sequence in the first lift of 60 sorties. These aircraft headed for Quang Tri when Khe Sanh received a rocket attack. They were placed at the end of the second 60 sortie flight when they finally arrived at the PZ.

The recovery of downed aircraft crews was controlled by the CO, 101st Avn Bn from his C&C aircraft. Four recovery aircraft were assigned sectors of the flight route; and one standby recovery aircraft was stationed at Khe Sanh. As aircraft were forced down, the closest of the four recovery aircraft would proceed to the location for the pickup. The C&C and the recovery aircraft were to monitor the flights' primary frequencies for notification of the downed aircraft.

The ADC (O), 101st Avn Div (Ambl) was the senior commander in the air over the LZ observing the assault. As senior commander, he could make a "go" "no go" decision. Having such a commander available during the assault relieves the AMC and the cavalry commander of the burden of making that decision. This allowed each of them to concentrate on his particular responsibilities. This third person (the senior commander) was also in a better position to make an objective decision since he was relatively detached from any one phase of the operation and could evaluate the situation from all aspects.

3. RECONNAISSANCE

A and C Troops, 2d Squadron, 17th Cavalry received the mission of visual reconnaissance and selection of an LZ in direct support of an airmobile assault of LZ HOPE. Each troop's reconnaissance teams consisted of two AH-1G attack helicopters and one UH-1H, command and control helicopter for coordinating the reconnaissance effort. The troop commanders elected once again not to use the OH-6A light observation helicopter because of the high density of antiaircraft activity known to be in the area. The troop commanders relieved their reconnaissance teams on station to provide continuous support. A Troop recommended to the Air Mission Commander that the insertion go into the vicinity of XD 3437. The LZ was large enough to contain three ships and was cleared enough for the aircraft to touch down. Enemy activity

appeared to be three days old and A Troop had not received enemy fire during their visual reconnaissance; however, C Troop had received 12.7mm fire on the high ground to the north. A Troop's visual reconnaissance revealed a large supply depot and motor pool to the east in the vicinity of XD 3546. A Troop recommended an approach route from the east down the escarpment to LZ SOPHIA then north into the LZ, with departure back out the same way. A smoke screen was recommended to the west in the vicinity of XD 3447. The Air Mission Commander concurred with A Troop's recommendation. A Troop directed airstrikes in preparing the LZ and routes. The smoke screen coordinates were marked with smoke and passed to the FAC on station. A Troop directed the FAC to shift the airstrikes back on the high ground to the north of the LZ. C Troop directed the airstrikes then screened to the north and west. A Troop received control of three sections of ARA to coordinate and provide adequate security during the insertion. Three sections of ARA were placed in a CAP over the LZ. A Troop provided security to the south below the UH-1H aircraft on the approach route. An aircraft in the first lift received fire on the approach route just north of the escarpment. A Troop located the target and suppressed the fire. Two sections of ARA were employed and no fire was received during the rest of the insertion.

4. STAGING

The aircraft assigned to conduct the assault on LZ HOPE on 6 March 1971 were staged at three different locations. Of the 175 aircraft involved (not including the Cav and ARA) all but 20 were staged at two locations at the Khe Sanh combat base: the Lager Pad and the airstrip. The remaining 20 aircraft were staged at PZ OSCAR (XD 856387).

The aircraft reported to the assigned staging area in company flights at staggered intervals between 0800 and 0915 hours, 6 March 1971. Although assembling this many aircraft invites enemy bombardment, it was felt that the importance of a complete briefing outweighed the risk. The scheduled start time of 1130 hours was advanced fifteen minutes when Khe Sanh started receiving indirect enemy fire at 1115 hours. All aircraft departed the Khe Sanh area in an orderly manner without sustaining damage from incoming rounds. Individual flights maintained unit integrity as some proceeded directly to the PZ and others refueled at Vandergrift or orbited in the Khe Sanh area until directed to the PZ by the PZ C&C element.

5. PICKUP ZONE

The PZ used for the assault on LZ HOPE was OSCAR pad (XD 856387). The aircraft of the first flight arrived at the PZ at 1130 hours. A C&C aircraft from the 223d CAB was used to control the PZ. The first 20 aircraft were loaded from their parked positions. Subsequent pickups were accomplished by simultaneously loading two aircraft in the PZ.

The first 40 sorties were picked up without incident. The last 20 sorties of the first flight were not in position to make the pickup in proper sequence. The second flight of 60 aircraft were immediately cycled through the PZ. The last 20 aircraft from the first flight were then brought into the PZ. The pickup was completed at 1230 hours.

Control of the loading of troops in the PZ was supervised by both ARVN and US Pathfinders. The advisor staff of the 2d Regt acted as liaison between the US Pathfinders, the ARVN Pathfinders, and the ARVN battalions.

6. FIRE SUPPORT

The planned preparation of LZ HOPE consisted entirely of Commando Vaults, ARC LIGHTS, and tactical airstrikes. ARVN artillery consisting of eight 105mm howitzers located at LZ SOPHIA was not planned for the preparation, although they were within range. LZ HOPE was not within range of 175mm artillery from the 108th Artillery Group located along the Laos-Vietnam border.

On 5 March, seven ARC LIGHTS were employed north of the Xe Pon River, supporting the planned assault into HOPE on 6 March. These ARC LIGHTS were employed at grids XD 315442, XD 374437, XD 354509, XD 345450, XD 315470, and XD 325470. Six ARC LIGHTS were employed south of the Xe Pon River near LZ SOPHIA, supporting the planned flight route into the HOPE area in addition to supporting LZ SOPHIA. On 6 March from 0135 to 0850 hours, five ARC LIGHTS were employed in the vicinity of LZ HOPE, and along the flight route leading from LZ SOPHIA to LZ HOPE. These ARC LIGHTS were employed at grids XD 345400, and XD 345440. Two Commando Vaults were employed at 0817 hours and 0910 hours, 6 March at grids XD 342482 and XD 344461 respectively.

From 0800 to 1136 hours 6 March, 16 missions consisting of 34 aircraft were employed in preparation of the LZ with the Cav identifying specific targets to the FAC. Six of the 16 missions were Daisy Cutters employed between 0800 and 0920 hours. The remaining ten missions employed ordnance consisting of 500-pound bombs, 1000-pound bombs, 200-pound bombs, Cluster Bomb Units (CBU), napalm, and 20mm fire in the vicinity of the LZ. During the preparation of LZ HOPE, LZ VICTORY was prepared with five sets of tactical air. LZ VICTORY served as a possible secondary LZ, and also deceived the enemy as to the actual location of the insertion.

At the critical time of insertion (1206), smoke had not been employed on the LZ by the FAC as planned. The smoke later was employed at 1216 hours and was effective. From 1216 to 1450 hours 20 additional missions consisting of 45 aircraft were employed on enemy positions in the vicinity of the LZ.

For the combat assault into LZ HOPE, ARA provided two sections on station for continuous CAP of the LZ area. As on the insertion into SOPHIA, the distance of the LZ from the nearest reload and rearm area required the use of four sections to sustain the continuous CAP. ARA flew a total of 14 hours covering the insertion.

The only request for ARA fires during the insertion was by the Cav team on station. Some enemy trucks had been detected in the vicinity of the landing zone and the ARA expended on these targets just prior to receiving end of mission.

7. PICKUP ZONE TO LANDING ZONE

The flight route to LZ HOPE was from the PZ, to HOTEL, to DELTA, BROWN, LOLO, LIZ, to SOPHIA, which was the RP. This flight route enabled the flight to overfly the friendly firebases which could be used as secure precautionary and forced landing zones. The flight was to depart the RP on a 350 degree heading in a steep descent from the enroute altitude of 5500 feet. The enroute altitude was changed for the second 60 sorties, the 158th Avn Bn flight. This flight maintained 5500 feet until passing LOLO at which time they initiated a descent to reach an altitude of 3500 feet at SOPHIA. The descent from

5500 feet at SOPHIA was felt to be unnecessarily steep.

Two aircraft were hit by enemy fire while enroute to the LZ. Both aircraft were hit as they descended over the escarpment between the RP and the LZ. It was impossible to put suppressive fires on the enemy positions because of the close proximity of friendly troops on the valley floor. For this reason the flight route was swung further to the west both to avoid known enemy positions and to allow for suppressive fires on the escarpment if needed.

Enroute gun cover was provided by armed escort aircraft as they flew the flight route to and from the rearm/refuel which was located at Khe Sanh.

8. ASSAULT

The assault on LZ HOPE (XD 339466) began when the first lift aircraft touched down at 1200 hours, 6 March 1971 with elements of the 3d Bn, 2d Regt, 1st ARVN Inf Div. The 2d Bn, 2d Regt, 1st ARVN Inf Div was inserted into the LZ upon completion of the insertion of the 3d Bn, 2d Regt.

Fire support at the LZ was provided by helicopter gunships and TAC air. Although tube artillery was located within range (LZ LOLO), it was not employed. Gunships were employed as follows: ARA provided a CAP over the LZ; an air cav troop screened the area north of the LZ; another air cav troop screened to the west and south of the LZ; UH-1C gunships provided coverage of the valley floor south of the LZ; and escort gunships (AH-1G) provided coverage for lift aircraft in the final approach path. TAC air provided a smoke screen north of the LZ and placed airstrikes on targets which were identified by the Cav. The only major problem with the fire support provided for the assault on LZ HOPE was that the smoke screen was late. Smoke was not dropped until ten minutes after the first lift aircraft touched down in the LZ.

The aircraft departed the LZ on a heading of 200 degrees and climbed to a return altitude of 6500 feet. This combat assault was completed at 1343 hours.

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C. (C) SUBSEQUENT ACTIONS

1. AIRCRAFT DAMAGE

The assault on LZ HOPE used a total of 185 aircraft. Only ten aircraft were hit, one of which was forced to land at the LZ and was later destroyed. The other nine aircraft flew to secure locations in South Vietnam. Of the ten aircraft hit, eight were determined to be non-flyable. Nine of the aircraft were hit between 3000 feet and 80 knots approaching the LZ and 500 feet and 70 knots taking off from the LZ. One UH-1C gunship was hit at 3000 feet and 80 knots while attacking a target. Nine aircraft were hit by small arms; the one aircraft that was forced to land was hit by an unknown type of fire.

The 185 aircraft (134 UH-1H, 12 UH-1C, 39 AH-1G) flew a total of 373 hours, and a total of 686 sorties.

2. CASUALTIES

Only three minor personnel injuries were incurred during the assault.

3. DOWNED AIRCRAFT RECOVERY

The UH-1H which was forced to land on the LZ was not recovered. This aircraft was destroyed as not recoverable because of the fast-moving character of the tactical situation.

SECTION IX
AIRMOBILE STUDY GROUP
COMBAT ASSAULT LZ HOPE
6 MARCH 1971

13 MARCH 1971

GEN BERRY:

I would like to summarize some comments made by Gen Lam prior to the combat assault on LZ HOPE. At his 1730 briefing on the 5th of March, Gen Lam stated "This is the principal object of the Republic of South Vietnam; that is, the landing of Vietnamese troops in the Tchepone area". He reaffirmed that the landing would be made a matter of highest priority, no matter what size unit would be placed on the ground. He made reference to the success of the combat assaults which had preceded this attempt. The atmosphere was not as tense as it was on the 2nd and 3rd of March prior to the landing at LZ LOLO, LZ LIZ on the 4th and SOPHIA on the 5th. Two battalions were to land in the LZ HOPE area. The 3rd battalion would be available on call. Gen Lam placed emphasis on reconnaissance by the air cavalry, use of the United States Air Force, and deception of the enemy in regard to the location of the actual LZ. We discussed with Gen Lam some of the details of the landing itself. With 120 lift ships being used, our aviation would not be able to conduct any other operations in the LAMSON 719 area until the completion of the combat assault on LZ HOPE. At Gen Lam's 0815 briefing on the morning of 6 March, the day of the combat assault on LZ HOPE, final details were discussed. I pointed out to Gen Lam that time and fuel factors involved were important. We could expect that the troop lift would have about 30 minutes in the objective area. I made this point to emphasize to Gen Lam that once the decision was made to conduct the combat assault, we had to go forward or lose the time taken to return to a refueling area. We presented to Gen Lam the full details of the combat assault, discussing the employment of FAC's, Air Cav, and preparatory fire. The general atmosphere at the briefing was one of confidence and determination that the operation would be a success. There would be extremely heavy enemy antiaircraft fire and this would be a difficult combat assault, but I believed it would succeed.

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MAJ KLOSE:

The assault of a 57 kilometer one-way distance of two battalions from KILO to HOPE was to be conducted maintaining the tactical integrity of the two battalions with 120 lift ships. The battalions were to go in consecutively, one behind the other, with minimum delay.

COL DAVIS:

Because of the distance and heavy antiaircraft concentrations in the area, one planning factor was the assemblage of enough aircraft to move both battalions in simultaneous lifts. The breakdown of C&C assignments of aircraft is as follows: CO of the 223d was given the responsibility of being the AMC for the insertion of the 3d and 2nd battalions. In addition, he was given the responsibility of coordination of recon and airstrikes in the landing area. The second flight of 60 aircraft was to put in the 2nd Battalion under the CO of the 158th Battalion. The critical factor was that the 2nd Battalion was to start on order, not at a predetermined time. The start time was to be determined by the AMC after the results of the Cav recon in the area had been evaluated. The 2nd Battalion was to launch on order. The point we are getting at is that until we ascertained the situation in the objective area, the second flight of 60 aircraft was not to be launched. We could not have that many aircraft orbiting, waiting for the decision to insert. If this would have occurred, we would have had to cycle 175 aircraft back to POL, which would have caused a two hour delay. The 223d had two C&C, 63 lift, three of which were to be employed as chase aircraft, and 18 gunships. The 158th Bn had two C&C, 62 lift, two of which were to be chase aircraft, and 14 gunships. The total number of ships employed was 175, not including the Cav and ARA. One additional C & C factor: the CO of the 101st was given the responsibility of recovering downed aircraft and crews. He was to monitor the AMC's control net, and control the recovery of downed aircraft and crews. The procedure had been employed in the past, but because of the size of the mission, it was placed under the control of a battalion commander. The aircraft were to be assembled at Khe Sanh except for the 2 lift companies of the 223d who would be assembled at PZ OSCAR. An important consideration here is that aircraft were massed at a forward staging area, a high risk operation. This was recognized at the time it was done. However, several of the companies (the 282d and the 116th) had been brought into the operation the day before. The actual Briefing and coordination

required prior to the launching of an airmobile assault of this scale requires a detailed briefing of all air crews. The decision to assemble the aircraft at Khe Sanh prior to the combat assault was dictated by the need of every aircraft commander and flight lead to receive a detailed briefing. Ideally, in a lift of this magnitude, the aircraft would arrive at the PZ at a prearranged time from widely separated loader areas. For a lift of this size, detailed briefings should be conducted at least 24 hours before. This is not a rigid time factor; but, in an operation of this size with the number of units not familiar with the area and having only a limited knowledge of the area of operation, the briefing then becomes a very important factor.

MAJ CLARK:

The Cav started reconnaissance of the area about five days prior to 6 March. Our mission at the time was just general recon to try to locate and destroy antiaircraft weapons and pick out possible LZ areas that would make good LZ's for future operations. When we got into the Tchepone area, the antiaircraft was very heavy. We received 12.7, 14.5, and 37mm antiaircraft fire. You couldn't get into the area without getting shot at from altitudes of 2000-7000 feet. We started beating down the antiaircraft fire by using gunships, ARA, and airstrikes on every target we could locate, and systematically hitting targets of opportunity where antiaircraft could be located. There was always at least one troop in the Tchepone area. Ultimately on the 6th, we put three troops working in the area. On 6 March, 2 troops were on station at 0830. A Troop worked Route 9 to about two kilometers north of Route 9 and C Troop worked the high ground about 5 kilometers north. Both had the mission of selecting LZ's and employing airstrikes and marking antiaircraft weapons. In the northern part of the AO, we found 12.7's. This was the only weapon we could pick up at the time. C Troop employed airstrikes on this weapon. In the southern part near Route 9 we took no fire at all. We had people working the low ground looking for secondary LZ's which appeared to be made by Commando Vaults or Daisy Cutters. We conducted a VR completely around the area in a 3 kilometer radius and took no fire. We located a motor complex with many 55-gallon drums, POL, 7 vehicles, tires, and several large cache pits. This was passed to the AMC. Airstrikes were continually employed in the north and then in the south at that time since we did not take any fire.

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We started VR south of Route 9, selected approach and departure routes into the secondary LZ in case that one would be used. My recommendation to the AMC was that the southern LZ be used for the lift. Although we had located 7 antiaircraft weapons in the northern LZ and destroyed them, it was my estimate that because it was on the high ground, we would be exposed to more antiaircraft fire.

GEN BERRY:

Going back to the initial pattern given by Gen Lam, he wanted the LZ to be on the high ground. On the morning of 6 March I had reservations about employing the high ground LZ. I hoped the AMC and Ground Commander would go along with the recommendation of the Cav commander and use the low ground LZ.

MAJ CLARK:

I think one thing that convinced him to use the low ground was the POL area and cache sites that were discovered. Also, we had not received any ground fire in that area. We also picked up five new 5-ton trucks in storage areas south of Route 9. The AMC and Ground Commander did concur with the Cav Commander and selected the low ground. Based on that selection, we started employing airstrikes completely around the LZ, to the north and south, to prepare departure routes. At that time I also recommended to the AMC that we have a smoke screen placed north of the LZ which would screen the high ground if the 37mm and 12.7mm were still present. This would block the approach routes into the LZ.

MAJ KLOSE:

We had three possible LZ's on the itinerary before we got out there. The moment the three were initially selected, Gen Lam wanted the high ground as did Col Chung, the regimental commander. Between the high ground and the northernmost LZ, there was a fresh ARC LIGHT, which Chung wanted as a fallback position. At about this time, at the LZ we did go into, the Cav reported the supply complex to the east and we put an airstrike on it. It was my estimation that this supply area find was what made the Ground Commander follow the AMC's recommendation and go into that area as an LZ.

GEN BERRY:

Gen Lam's stated preference on the 5th was for the high ground LZ. On 5 March it was reported that tanks were in the Tchepone area. That factor led Gen Lam to shy away from the low ground LZ. I believe he visualized the low ground LZ as being quite open to tank operations. The fact is that the low ground was quite heavily vegetated and I believe it would have considerably interfered with tank operations.

COL DAVIS:

Again, the LZ selected was a compromise which was defensible from the armor threat. The LZ we actually went into was not the VICTORY area we discussed, but rather an area on the ground which was definitely low ground near the river.

GEN BERRY:

The actual landing zone was on the lower southern slopes of the high ground we have been discussing. It was not the lowest ground in the area.

COL DAVIS:

I would like to switch now to after the 2000 hour briefing which we had here on the night of the 5th. We turned the planning session over to the 223d Bn Commander.

MAJ KLOSE:

All flight leads were here. We covered radio frequencies, routes of flight, the recommended altitudes, and the concept and employment of the guns. At my briefing, everyone got that. The 158th then continued with only their commanders but they were going to follow the identical flight route that we would follow.

COL DAVIS:

It was a normal preoperational briefing.

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MAJ KLOSE:

It showed up that day. We had new people in the AO that came up specifically to support this operation. It was essential that each aircraft commander understand what was going on. No one should ever arrive accidentally in any part of the area of operations.

COL DAVIS:

All the company commanders I believe were here that night. I will testify for the six companies of the 101st Group. These flights would be led by the company commander, and I believe it was the same for the 223d and the 14th Bn. We did in fact have the company commanders leading. It goes without saying that every time you do something big, it is not the time for the company commander to be in the rear.

MAJ KLOSE:

The flight altitude was 5500. The route of flight was KILO to HOTEL direct to DELTA 1, BROWN, LOLO, LIZ, SOPHIA, departing SOPHIA on a heading of 350 with a rapid descent. After the first flight left DELTA, we recommended 3500 feet at SOPHIA, start letdown at LOLO and make the turn at 3500 feet in a relatively short distance, approaching auto-rotation velocity. The return route was the same way. You were climbing out of SOPHIA all the way to 5500 feet. For an operation of this size, we really haven't said much about the organization of the PZ. There were two control elements in the PZ. The internal control was provided by the 2nd Battalion and their pathfinders. We had the HEADHUNTER pathfinders in combination with the combined 101st and 223d pathfinder teams. They organized the first 20 loads. These troops then moved to their parked aircraft. The 21 through 120 sorties came from two positions on the top of the hill at OSCAR. They loaded from the north and the south, so they could handle two aircraft in the PZ at the same time. The third control element was the advisor staff of the 2d Regiment. They made the liaison between the American pathfinders, the ARVN pathfinders, and the ARVN battalions. It worked very well. Also, we had a C&C ship over the PZ. It worked fine through the first 40 loads. We had two companies which did not get to the PZ. They headed for Quang Tri when Khe Sanh received the rocket attack and they became the 101-120 sorties.

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MAJ CLARK:

I think one other thing that may have helped was that I sent one Cav troop north of the LZ on the high ground. I put the second Cav troop south of the LZ underneath the approach routes. As the slicks were descending, I had gunships from the Cav VR around the approach routes. Any targets we could pick up, we would hit with ARA or other guns. I think this helped suppress any fire that may have been taken along the approach routes.

MAJ KLOSE:

If we were to do this again, I would recommend the pooling of guns instead of having them split up among battalions. We could have handed them off to the Cav troops in the objective area. There should be one aircraft who does nothing but keep up with all guns. He should know who is rearming and refueling, who is enroute, and who is replacing whom. This way we could have continuous coverage. We planned initially for 45 minutes on station for Cobras (AH-1G's) and 40 minutes for Charlie guns (UH-1C's). If we would have pooled our assets and planned for about 30 minutes for Cobras and 20 minutes for Charlie guns, we would have had enough guns within the objective area to cover both battalions. The Charlie guns had a corridor from SOPHIA to the LZ. There was a Cobra CAP around the LZ under the command of the Cav troop. In addition, the Charlie guns were under the Cav troop. They had to keep changing frequencies. We solved this problem because there were only two Victor (VHF) frequencies available for Charlie guns. Charlie guns now came up on the FM frequency of the Cav. It is an additional burden on the FM, but you can talk to everybody you want to without having to change frequencies. It is always a problem because of the limited communications of the Charlie guns.

MAJ MILLS:

The two ARA guns in the CAP worked with the Cav troop on the south, monitoring DRAGON's UHF. We were on VHF with the Cav and we switched several times on the FM from DRAGON to the troops on the ground.

MAJ KLOSE:

From a C&C aspect, we had four designated C&C's. The regimental

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commander with the CO of the 223d was the primary C&C. Because of the distance and the limited time on station, an alternate C&C for the 223d with a member of the regimental staff was used for their lift. The CO of the 158th as the AMC for the second lift also had an alternate C&C aircraft. In addition we had the C&C or the AMC for the downed aircraft recovery, and a C&C to control operations at the PZ.

MAJ CLARK:

With each Cav troop we had two C&C's. One remained on station so we always had a C&C there. As it worked out, the one in the north took charge of putting airstrikes north of the LZ and the one in the south was calling in ARA. They had about one hour on station. We would leave a little early so that we had no lost time out there. The squadron commander was overhead so he could take control any time.

MAJ KLOSE:

It would be nice to have an eight track tape recorder in the C&C aircraft. It could pick up the FM, VHF, and intercom traffic on all tracks. It should be cartridge type with 2 hour 30 minute capability, which would coincide with refueling capabilities. You could change the cassettes when you refueled. Then when we came back to reconstruct, we have everything that occurred recorded. The tapes can be erased if nothing of a critical nature happened. But if it did, we would know exactly who talked to whom and when. We would have it recorded in all C&C aircraft. It would be a small addition when we finally standardize the C&C console to have one of these cassettes in it. We should have one in the Cav C&C's, and perhaps in all recon and surveillance aircraft as well as all airmobile C&C's.

COL DAVIS:

It would aid in debriefing all recon and surveillance pilots also. It would aid anybody who wanted to reconstruct what happened.

GEN BERRY:

I think it is important to record in any airmobile operation.

This is particularly true of a combined operation such as LAMSON 719. In the air over the LZ there must be a senior commander who is empowered with the "go" or "no-go" decision. This commander should be someone separate from the AMC and the direct Ground Commander and the Cav commander. These commanders are involved in the operation and the details of what is happening. They probably lack the detachment and the relative objectivity to see all aspects of the operation and hence are not in the best position to make the "go" or "no-go" decision.

MAJ KLOSE:

The smoke was put in at about the right altitude and was very effective. There were two smoke sorties east to west just north of the LZ and they were put in at the right altitude.

GEN BERRY:

The smoke was late. It was absent at the critical touchdown time. This was a result of two factors. The first was the rocket attack on the staging area at Khe Sanh 15 minutes prior to start time. Because of this, the troop lift aircraft were launched earlier than had been planned. This led perhaps to the AMC giving too short notice to the FAC that the ships were about to touch down. Secondly, according to the FAC, the fighters were engaged in refueling. This led to a delay in beginning their smoke run. Whatever the case, once again for the second day in a row, at the most critical time of the combat assault, that is the actual beginning of the touchdown at the LZ, there was not a smoke screen laid by Air Force aircraft. The first touchdown was at 1206 hours and the smoke actually began at 1216 hours, ten minutes after the touchdown. Once the smoke began, it was quite effective, but again those ten minutes of combat assault, minus the smoke screen, could have been very critical to this operation.

MAJ KLOSE:

If combat assaults are going to get the priority of air in the future, I think that it would be worthwhile that the Air Force know there is going to be a combat assault so they can preposition a tanker for whatever fuel they need. I cannot estimate the number of times we couldn't put in an airstrike because their play time had run out. We are getting less than the optimum benefit from the airstrikes because we are in a position where we have to use them because of this time factor.

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GEN BERRY:

I do think that we ourselves are responsible for some of the lack of smoothness in our support from the Air Force. I think we assume too many things. We have to brief Air Force representatives and give them as much advance warning as possible. I think we assume a strike will be on station when we want it. We should provide the Air Force with as much information as possible and as soon as possible.

COL DAVIS:

Since the operation has started, we have acquired a Tactical Air Control Party for the Cav. In addition to this, I feel in an operation of this scope, even if it was just the 101st, consideration should be given to having an ALO with the Aviation Group.

GEN BERRY:

In November or early December of 1970, the 101st Abn Div (Ambl) requested that a TACP be assigned to the 2/17 Cav. The request was made then because of the independent operations of the 2/17 in the Division recon role in the A Shau Valley and the Khe Sanh area. XXIV Corps recommended approval. At the beginning of planning in January for LAMSON 719, the 101st recommended on several occasions, through XXIV Corps, that a full TACP be assigned to advance headquarters at Khe Sanh. The Air Force approved this but stated a shortage of radio equipment and personnel. I was unable to understand why the Air Force was unable to supply us with a TACP for an operation of this scale and importance. One of the abiding lessons of this operation is that we have to recognize the intimate relationship of the Army and Air Force in the airmobile operation. However, the Army aviation assets and the ground assets did not have the direct support of the TACP. We are not realizing the maximum effectiveness of tactical air in this airmobile operation.

LT CLARK, ASST G-2, 101ST ABN DIV (AMBL):

When the 2d Regiment got on the ground, they found 453 NVA bodies, two 37mm antiaircraft guns, and fifteen 12.7mm machineguns. This shows that the extensive preps by ARC LIGHTS, airstrikes, and

gunships were effective. The fact that the enemy was deceived as to the location of the LZ and was destroyed by the preparation is undoubtedly one of the reasons why the operation succeeded. There were at least three battalions of enemy in the area. If they had not been destroyed and would have been concentrated on the LZ, we would not have succeeded. They would have been able to knock the aircraft out of the air quite easily. It took a tremendous number of airstrikes to get a successful operation on the ground. Unless I am deceived, elements of the 2nd Regiment went through the area very quickly and the bomb damage assessment was nowhere near complete. It is possible that a great number of these bodies and items of equipment were the result of airstrikes and Cav action from airstrikes and as much as a week prior to the actual landing. However, it appears that most of it was a result of action 24 hours prior to the landing. The actual size of the enemy force in the area in my estimation was at least two battalions, both of which had anti-aircraft weapons.

COL DAVIS:

Let's turn to crew and aircraft recovery.

LTC PEACHEY: CO, 158th AHB

I briefed my pilots to have 30 seconds between aircraft. If a helicopter went down, the one right behind him would circle his location. The others would continue on until we could get the recovery aircraft to identify the downed helicopter and its location. I really felt that this was the only way we were going to find downed aircraft in that 20-foot grass. On the route out, I elected to keep all of my people over the high ground to the south. My people were to go in at 5500 feet to SOPHIA, turn to a heading of 340 directly into the LZ and back out on the same route climbing to 6500 feet. We came back 1000 higher than we went in. Other than that, my briefing was identical to the one given by the 223d. My flight leaders and company commanders controlled their flights on VHF. Everyone turned to UHF, but only the flight leads, guns, and myself used the UHF unless there was an emergency. I used FM to secure transmissions between the flight leads. I briefed thoroughly on everything I knew about the area as I always have and always will. I think you have to tell it like it is. Tell them what you are going to do and then you do it. You have to train the juniors. They

have to know what goes into one of these combat assaults. So if you brief thoroughly on every step, you will have the advantage of enabling the chain of command to go on, even if a key ship is knocked down.

I think that the thing I disagree with on HOPF was when I took my flights in there. We drew fire and I could not get immediate response from the guns. I think the guns have got to escort in, and to put the guns in CAP loses their effectiveness. We got three or four ARVN wounded coming over the river. We finally got some fire in there, but I would recommend in the future that each flight commander control his own guns. Have them shoot along the flight path. We could not return fire along the south of the river because there were friendlies down there. It is better to have a free fire zone than to plan flight routes over friendly locations. Every time I have flown over friendly troops, going into their LZ, I have taken fire. When I could get into a free fire zone and suppress with my escort guns and doo gunners, my losses were not as great.

MAC KLOSE:

There is just one problem. In areas where you could suppress, there is a lot of antiaircraft fire, west of ALUOI, all the way down that valley.

LTC PEACHEY:

All the way to SOPHIA is a good flight route. We took no fire, we were at altitude. I am speaking of when you turn final into the LZ, and I am not criticizing the operation. We have learned, and will continue to learn, that flying over friendly locations is inviting disaster. It is a much better idea, when you have to let down to a low altitude from approach altitude, to be over a free fire zone, which you can suppress with escort guns and your guns. We should try to get a route in which our final approach, at least a kilometer, is over an area we can suppress.

LTC KIRKLIGHTER:

On our final approach, we used a buttonhook. We took all our fire on final approach so we had to eliminate it. We used 170-270

degree buttonhooks. We used a side approach so they don't stack up on final. We learned that early and eliminated it. There should be no final approach if possible.

COL DAVIS:

Most of the things which we have hit on are variances. There is no radical change of procedure; only a change of technique. A long shallow approach in this environment is not the answer. As to whether the friendlies afford the best protection or not in this particular case, the answer is no. To others it has been yes. I think you just need a rapid assessment of the situation and then need to plan accordingly.

MAJ CLARK:

In this case, we did not have a choice to go west. If we went west, we would have taken 37mm and 23mm fire and got shot down.

GEN BERRY:

I don't understand how you eliminate a final approach by using a buttonhook.

MAJ KLOSE:

We use a 180 degree side approach, just like a 180 degree auto-rotation. We don't go into auto-rotation, but it approaches auto-rotation velocity. It is the tightest approach you can make.

LTC KIRKLIGHTER:

On the escarpment, we had been getting to the west, but the winds were high and from the east. Not wishing to go west, we went in on a long final east, trying to make a fast U-turn. A lot depends on what the Cav tells us.

LTC PEACHEY:

They can tell you exactly what your approach should be. They tell us whether it should be low level for the last kilometer or if it should

be a long descending approach. It will vary from day to day. The Cav is the only unit that can give you that information unless you go in with your first 18 slicks and find out for yourself.

GEN BERRY:

It appears we are moving the Cav out of its old role of far out recon. The question is, have any of you seen the Cav used in this role before in such an important and intimate association with the combat assault?

LTC PEACHEY:

We have always used the Cav to recon the area. Take for instance last summer when we went into the LZ's around EAGLE'S NEST. The Cav went out and located the weapons for us. In the past, in more or less static posture, we had difficulties in getting the Cav. It was always employed somewhere else. They can go out and find the enemy. The Cav's normal role is one of recon and security.

COL DAVIS:

The only thing that has been added to it is the fire support and coordination aspect. I don't think that it is very far removed from its role. Having the gunships CAP the LZ probably is a departure.

LTC KIRKLIGHTER:

Once we commit ourselves to go into the LZ, we have TAC air, but it is no longer useable in the LZ. The Cav is given a screening role, and it doesn't do any good for them to just fly back and forth unless they have weapons to employ. I don't think this is a departure from long range recon. Actually any airmobile operation is long range. At one time or another, friendlies get close and it ceases to be long range.

LTC PEACHEY:

Their (the Cav's) recon, security and screening role and employment of supporting fires is part of their role. We are assigned responsibility for initial recon of selection of LZ's, approach and

departure routes, and targets for TAC air. When the assault is initiated, the Cav moves out and goes into recon, security and screening roles. Control of all escorting gunships and the flights is also the responsibility of the Cav.

COL DAVIS:

The area in which the Cav is working versus the area of the escort gunships, is designated by the AMC in his allocation of air space. In final analysis, the AMC is responsible for everything that goes on in the area.

GEN BERRY:

I think the classic term "recon and security role" covers it all. The Cav recons and then assists in securing the LZ and surrounding area.

MAJ KLOSE:

The operation was the best that we have been involved in of all the airmobile assaults. The Cav was used extremely well in the mission that it was designed for. The final ship was in at 1343.

SECTION X
THE EXTRACTION OF
4TH BATTALION, 1ST REGIMENT, 1ST ARVN INFANTRY DIVISION
18 MARCH 1971

The extraction of the 4th Bn, 1st Regt, 1st Inf Div was accomplished on 18 March 1971, along with other elements of the 1st Regt. Plans to extract this Bn had been in the making for several days. The unit was scheduled to withdraw from an area south of FB LOLO where it was conducting search operations for enemy cache sites and interdicting Route 914. This withdrawal was advanced because it became impossible to resupply the Bn as a result of intense antiaircraft fire and indirect fire directed against the ground troops when resupply aircraft approached the friendly positions. The battalion commander requested that the attempts to resupply be aborted. The casualties and potential casualties from enemy mortar fire were more detrimental to the unit than not being resupplied.

The 223d CAB was given the mission to extract the 4th Bn, 1st Regt from a field location on 15 March. The battalion had been in contact and moving north toward the escarpment for several days. Once the battalion reached a suitable pickup site the aircraft would begin the extraction. The planned pickup point was to be on the top of the escarpment on 15 March. Radio contact was sporadic due to the unit's constant movement and weak radio batteries as a result of not being resupplied. The battalion's location was unknown on 15 and 16 March; therefore the extraction was not attempted or accomplished. The 1st Regt headquarters believed the 4th Battalion was moving east on the high ground toward LZ BROWN. Since the battalion's location was not known as late as 17 March the Deputy Commander, 1st Regt, 1st ARVN Inf Div personally attempted to establish contact. The Deputy Commander went to the area where the battalion was thought to be located with the CO, 223d CAB (the AMC for the extraction). The 4th Battalion was found high on the escarpment (XD 448380) late on the afternoon of 17 March. Both the Deputy Regimental Commander and the 4th Battalion Commander wanted to extract the battalion at that time. A Troop, 2d Squadron, 17th Cavalry conducted a low visual reconnaissance of the area and reported that the unit was not near any suitable pickup zone. This coupled with the impending darkness and heavy antiaircraft fire in the area caused the extraction to be postponed until the following day.

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The 1st Regimental Commander was informed of the situation and conferred with the 4th Battalion Commander. It was decided that the battalion would move that night to the northeast to find a suitable PZ and would attempt to break contact with the NVA element which was pursuing it. One company decided to move by itself and did so to the north. The AMC was informed of this decision and returned his flight to its home station. The planning of the flight route, approach and departure routes, etc, could not be accomplished the evening of 17 March since the PZ had not yet been established. The 4th Battalion requested gunships to orbit overhead while the battalion moved northeast. The battalion was surrounded and in contact at this time.

At 2330 hours 17 March the AMC was notified to put three lift aircraft and two gunships on standby for an emergency resupply of the 4th Battalion. At 0015 hours 18 March the aircraft departed Dong Ha Combat Base and arrived at KILO pad at 0100 hours for a briefing by the ARVN and US advisors. The exact location of the 4th Bn was unknown at this time. At 0200 hours two UH-1H aircraft and two UH-1C aircraft departed KILO pad with sling loads of ammunition, food and batteries. This third lift aircraft was not needed. The aircraft established contact with the FAC who was controlling the USAF gunships (C-130's) that were providing fire support for the battalion. The FAC instructed the aircraft to orbit over HOTEL until visual contact could be re-established with the 4th battalion. The aircraft were held in orbit so long that it became necessary to return to Khe Sanh to refuel. The aircraft dropped off the sling loads at KILO. By this time low ceilings and ground fog were present in the border area. The lead UH-1H went IFR shortly after departing KILO and had to make an instrument approach at Khe Sanh. The second UH-1H stayed close to the road and was able to climb and orbit at HOTEL. The helicopter gunships had to return to KILO because of the poor visibility. The resupply was consequently called off in the absence of helicopter gunships needed to escort the UH-1H aircraft into the LZ.

Other elements of the 1st Regiment extracted on 18 March included elements of the following units: the 1st Regt CP, an engineer company, the 1st regt recon company, artillery, the 3d Inf Bn, the 1st Inf Bn, and the 2d Inf Bn. These elements had been located on and around FB LOLO

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until the 1st ARV Inf Div Commander decided to destroy the howitzers and withdraw from the firebase. This decision was made in light of the fact that resupply was impossible because of the indirect fire attacks of the FB whenever resupply helicopters approached. The last supply mission into the FB was flown on 12 March, at which time the fire base was surrounded by NVA units. The fire base was subsequently completely evacuated, the occupants moving out to the north. The priority for extractions on 18 March was first to pick up the 1st Regt CP and all collocated ARVN elements. After this was completed the 4th Battalion, 1st Regiment was to be picked up at a PZ. The locations of the PZ's for both of these extractions were not known until radio and visual contact were established the day of the extraction.

At 0830 hours the AMC picked up the Assistant Division Commander, 1st ARVN Inf Div, and proceeded to the area where the Regimental CP and other elements of the 1st Regiment were located (XD510380). The Assistant Division Commander told the AMC that the Regimental Commander would be picked up by the first aircraft and taken to DELTA 1. The AMC requested the ground elements to use smoke to mark their location; however smoke was not employed because the ground units did not have any smoke capability. The CP was visually located by the 2d Squadron, 17th Cavalry team that was screening the area to the west of where the flight was orbiting. The actual location of the Regimental CP was at a good PZ at grid XD480381. The Cav team conducted a visual reconnaissance of the area around the PZ and drew only light fire. Therefore only minimum preparatory fires were placed along the recommended flight route and the area around the PZ. The extraction commenced at 1100 hours and moved the 1st Regimental CP and elements of an engineer company; Regt reconnaissance company; artillery personnel; 3d Inf Bn, 1st Regt; 1st Inf Bn, 1st Regt; and 2d Inf Bn, 1st Regt, respectively, to LZ KILO. The extraction of 796 personnel, 88 of whom were WIA, was completed at 1240 hours using an ACL of seven passengers per UH-1H.

The flight received 12.7mm machine gun and small arms fire from the escarpment between the 47 and 49 north-south grid lines south of the PZ. However, no aircraft were destroyed or shot down. TAC air was employed on these targets along the escarpment in the LOLO area. The Air Force provided one set of fighter-bombers every 15 minutes,

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employing sorties of hard bombs, CBU-16, a combination of high-drag bombs and napalm, and a smoke screen which was laid from east to west, north of the river. The Cav teams screened north and west of the Xe Pon River. The ARA provided coverage on the valley floor while escort gunships covered the lift aircraft on approach and departure. The Cav and ARA each had two teams of Cobras which rotated on station to provide continuous coverage. The escort ships also rotated on station.

Upon completion of the extraction, the AMC returned to the 1st ARVN Inf Div headquarters to wait for the 4th Inf Bn to reach a PZ. The battalion had been moving during the morning extraction. At 1230 hours the AMC was told to pick up the 1st Regimental Commander at DELTA 1. The location of the 4th Battalion according to the Regimental Commander was grid XD453389. The unit had no smoke capability but did display a marking panel. After a few minutes of searching the ARA located the marking panel at grid XD453384, 500 meters south of the coordinates given to the AMC by the Regimental Commander. The battalion was completely surrounded and in heavy contact. The battalion commander was killed and a sergeant was in command. ARA was instructed to contact the sergeant and fire close supporting fires. He reported that all his men were within two hundred meters of the panel marker. ARA was the only fire support employed to the west of the friendly elements and only when called for by the ground units. Other fire support to the west was not possible because the location of the one company that moved north alone (instead of northeast with the battalion) was unknown. Approximately fifty sorties of TAC air were put in to the north, east and south. The Cav teams screened the areas where TAC air was not working. Much of this fire support was employed prior to the first UH-1H aircraft going into the PZ.

When the AMC and Cav felt the area was prepped sufficiently the first attempt was made. The first lift aircraft successfully made the pick-up while taking heavy fire. However, the AH-1G that was escorting the first aircraft took numerous hits and crashed and burned at XD453410. The second lift ship was shot down at XD460385 as it was departing the PZ. The aircraft was landed safely but was hit by an RPG while on the ground. The crew and ARVN passengers were picked

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up after the area around the downed aircraft was prepped by ARA. The extraction was then discontinued until more fire support could be employed against the enemy targets. The aircraft refueled at Lang Con and remained there while the preparation continued.

The heaviest concentration of the enemy was north of a horseshoe bend in the river east of the 4th Battalion's location in the vicinity of XD 455385. The river generally separated the NVA from the ARVN. A FAC was on station with a set of fighters armed with CBU ordnance. The FAC marked the target area with two marks, XD 455392 and XD 457384. The FAC instructed the fighters to run the bombs north to south or south to north between the marks but not to drop any bombs west of the river. The first fighter's bombs exploded on a line between XD 455386 and XD 450379. Further preparatory fires were delivered by the Cav and ARA; ARA also continued close fire support of the ARVN's west flank without incident.

Approximately two hours elapsed between the time the extraction was broken off and the time of its resumption. Prior to the second attempt the Cav conducted a visual reconnaissance of the PZ and drew only sporadic fire. The Cav recommended an approach from east to west and recommended a departure that required a 180 degree pedal turn in the PZ and an exit over the approach path. The first few sorties into the PZ reported receiving light fire. The pilots of the remaining eight aircraft reported that they had picked up the last ARVN at the PZ. The extraction was completed at 1705 hours.

Initial contact with the sergeant in charge at the PZ revealed that 65 personnel were to be extracted. The number of personnel actually extracted was 82. Five aircraft were damaged by ground fire: three UH-1H's, one UH-1C and one AH-1G. Two AH-1G's and one UH-1H aircraft were destroyed. The two pilots in the destroyed AH-1G were classified as MIA as a result of the aircraft crashing and burning. One other US personnel was WIA. The one company that broke off from the 4th Battalion in an attempt to find its own PZ was not extracted with the battalion.

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