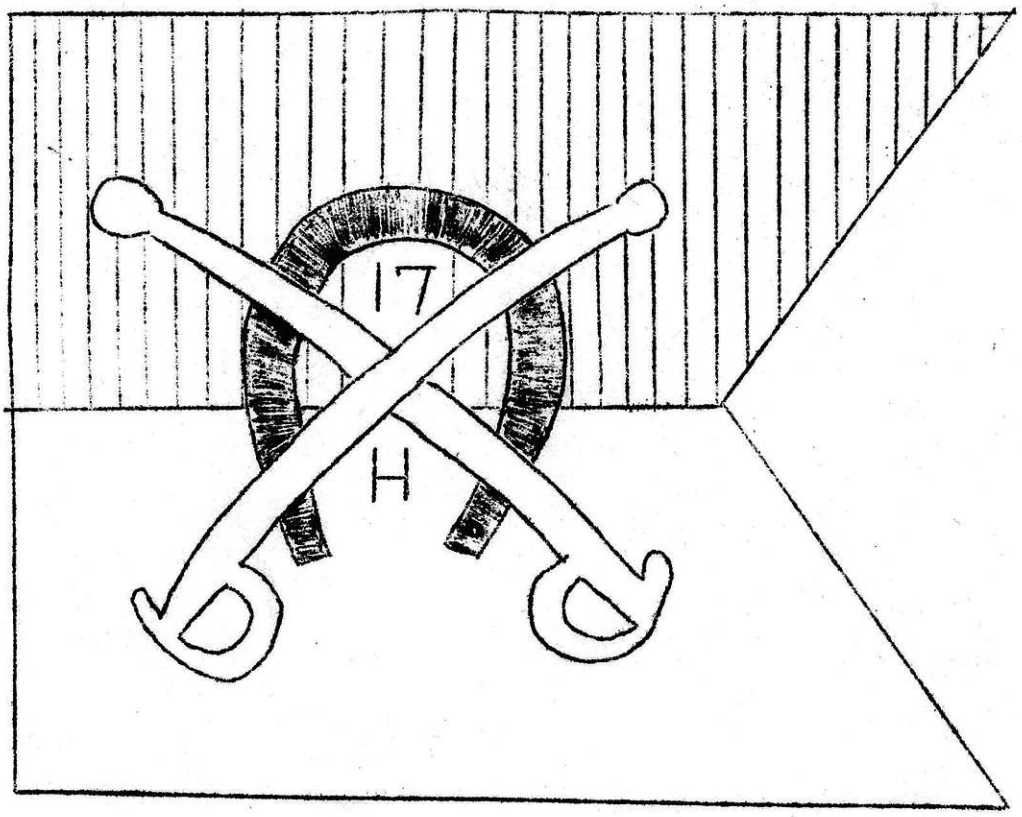
DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
H TROOP (AIR) 17th ACS
APO SAN FRANCISCO 96318



Operational Report

Lessons Learned

1 May 1972 - 31 October 1972

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
H TROOP (AIR) 17TH ACS
APO SAN FRANCISCO 96318

2 November 1972

SUBJECT: Operational Report-Lessons Learned of H Troop (AIR) 17th ACS for period ending 31 October 1972.

This report covers the period 1 May 1972 through 31 October 1972, and is submitted in accordance with AR 525-15.

RONALD M. FISHBURN
MAJ ARMOR

5 Incl
1. Operational Summary
2. Maintenance Summary
3. Safety Summary
4. Valorous Awards
5. Organizational Chart

TABLE OF CONTENTS

SECTION I - OPERATIONAL REPORT

SECTION II - LESSONS LEARNED

2 November 1972

SUBJECT: Operational Report-Lessons Learned of H Troop (AIR) 17th ACS for period ending 31 October 1972.

SECTION I - SIGNIFICANT ACTIVITIES

A. COMMAND

1. Mission:

a. The primary mission of H Troop (AIR) 17th ACS is to provide armed reconnaissance and security in Military Region II, Republic of Vietnam, with the capability of conducting dynamic defense and offensive operations in an economy of force role.

b. The Troop may be employed on route, zone, or area reconnaissance missions, used as convoy escort, or used to protect and secure ground lines of communication.

c. In the conduct of the defense, H Troop may provide reconnaissance and security for the allied forces in MR II as well as providing anti-tank capability, rear area security, and perimeter defense.

2. Organization: H Troop is under the operational control of II Corps TOC, Pleiku, Vietnam. Administratively, H Troop is part of the 17th Aviation Group (COMBAT), and may be assigned base defense and recovery missions from the 17th Group Operations Center. (See Incl 5, Organizational Chart)

3. Personalities:

a. Commander: During this reporting period, there were two Troop Commanders. Major JAMES M. GIBBS, [redacted] Field Artillery, was succeeded by Major RONALD M. FISHBURN, [redacted] Armor, on 4 October 1972.

b. Staff: At the close of the reporting period, the principal Troop staff officers were:

(1) Executive Officer: Captain TED P. TATE, [redacted] Armor.

(2) Operations Officer: Captain RALPH ARTIGLIERE, [redacted] Armor.

(3) Aircraft Maintenance: First Lieutenant EDWARD L.D. CRAIG, [redacted] Transportation Corps.

c. Platoon Leaders: At the close of the reporting period the platoon leaders were:

(1) Lift: Captain BARRY P. GERISCHER, [redacted] Armor.

(2) Scout: Captain WALTER R. MOSS, [redacted] Field Artillery.

2 November 1972

SUBJECT: Operational Report-Lessons Learned of H Troop (AIR) 17th ACS for period ending 31 October 1972.

(3) Weapons: Captain JOHN R. PARKER, [redacted] Field Artillery.

2 November 1972

SUBJECT: Operational Report-Lessons Learned of H Troop (AIR) 17th ACS for period ending 31 October 1972.

B. PERSONNEL

1. The mission ready strength of H Troop (AIR) 17th ACS as of 31 October 1972 was:

OFFICERS	WARRANT OFFICERS	EM
23	27	222

2. The rated aviator strength as of 31 October 1972 was:

TOE	ASSIGNED
50	50

3. Personnel losses in combat for the reporting period were as follows:

KIA	WIA	MIA
2	15	1

4. Valorous awards for the six month period are listed in inclosure

2 November 1972

SUBJECT: Operational Report-Lessons Learned of H Troop (AIR) 17th ACS for period ending 31 October 1972.

C. INTELLIGENCE AND SECURITY

During the past six months Troop H (AIR) has provided aerial reconaissance and support during three distinguishable phases of enemy activity. The first phase consisted of activity in the Kontum Province and Dak To Districts. At the beginning of the reporting period the Dak To and Tanh Canh areas were under enemy control, the enemy forces streamed across the Cambodian-Laotian border to the east. One axis of advance crossed the western border of RVN in the approximate vicinity of base area 702. The enemy forces swept south along QL-14 through the general vicinities of Dien Binh and Vo Dinh. One enemy element provided rocket and gun support from the ridges and mountains north and east of Kontum City. Another enemy element moved eastward from the base area consuming the Polei Kleng area and harrassing the Kontum area with rockets and gunfire from the west. Still another enemy element cut higjways QL-14 from the east in the pass south of Kontum between the cities of Kontum and Pleiku. By cutting the highway at this location they were able to prevent the allied effort in the Kontum area from receiving supplies by convoy. Thus, by isolating the Kontum forces, the resupply effort was limited to air.

The enemy elements rocketing the city had accurate and effective capabilities to interdict fixed wing supply sorties. Several fixed wing cargo/type aircraft were damaged or destroued while landing, taking off, off loading, and refueling on the airstrip; several helicopters were damaged or destroyed during similiar missions. The heavy fixed wing traffic at the airfield on occassion significantly hampered the prompt execution of many priority missions being conducted by the Air Cav Team because fixed wing traffic attracted rockets and mortor attacks. During the initial assaults on Kontum City the Air Cav Teams staged out of a separate operations base south of the airfield. On an average day incoming rockets would be observed at the airfield, Kontum Sector Pad, the MACV Advisory PAD, and some of the fire support base locations around the perimeter of the city while operations at the cav staging pad were relatively unaffected. The only exception in this case was when the teams had to land at the airfield to refuel. Only after a POL point had been established at the operations base was it harrassed by accurate rocket fire. Many times the cav effort was hampered and endangered by the VNAF aircraft operating from an adjacent staging area. VNAF aircraft were consistently shooting approaches and takeoffs over cav aircraft on the ground, VNAF aircraft both at the airfield and the operations base failed to monitor or make any other use of published radio frequencies resulting in many hazardous situations such as two aircraft shooting approaches from opposite directions.

Troop H continuously conducted visual reconnaissance missions in the Kontum area locating numerous NVA forces of varying size and strength. The Troop exploited its finds when possible and was credited with 84 enemy KIA, 3 POW, numerous enemy bunkers and other structures, fighting positions, several wheeled and tracked vehicles. (See Incl 1) H Troop was instrumental in the location and destruction of many additional enemy structures, fortifications, locations, tanks and other armored vehicles through coordination with tactical forward air controller and tow missile gunships. Several times the Troop was called on to extract the remaining few American Advisors

from fire support bases which were in imminent danger of being overrun. As the attack closed in on the Provincial Capital one of the primary problems was the identification and location of friendly troops. When tactical air support and heavy bomb strikes were available the troop was able to provide timely and accurate targeting information and follow the strikes with on the spot evaluations and assessments. The concentrated enemy locations revealed during this phase indicated apparently preplanned supply points along the axis of advance. As the enemy stopped at different locations to resupply, his advance was slowed considerably and he was momentarily fixed and vulnerable when located by the Air Cav Reconnaissance Team. When these supply and base areas were discovered, they were engaged by air cavalry attack helicopters, TAC Air, or artillery and often destroyed. After the climax of the attack and unsuccessful attempt to seize the city, the enemy began withdrawing in almost the same manner he ahd advanced leaving small blocking and delaying forces behind. The ARVN initially began extending their perimeter north of the city. Once an acceptable perimeter was established around the city the friendly forces dug in, rebuilt a few of the fire support bases and have advanced no further at this time. The ARVN forces sent north of the city have consistently remained on the north-south highway or elected to move only a few hundred meters from it. A couple of small enemy blocking forces remained northwest of the city and a small element remained on the high ground north of Kontum and northeast of Fire Support Base November on the hill known as Ngok Cuan. The enemy element on Ngok Cuan still presently holds the same ground, and have effectively fixed ARVN in place. Just prior to a purported cease fire at the end of October, ARVN inserted a two company element in the town of Dakto which has received little resistance.

The second phase includes enemy activity west of Pleiku in the area around Than An. As the month of August began the enemy forces moved eastward from their base areas along three general routes. The first route crossed the border in the area of Plei Djereng and assaulted the friendly forces at that location with numerous rocket attacks and ground attacks. Another force crossed in the vicinity of Duc Co, and the friendly elements at that location are affectively under siege at this time. The third element crossed the border generally following the Ia Drang and Ia Puc Rivers generally east and northeast. The force moving through Duc Co continued moving to the east attacking through and seizing the city of Plei Yt and generally holding the high ground to the northwest of Than An. The compound located at Than An was also subjected to numerous rocket attacks. One element of the enemy force bypassed Than An and held the Catecka Plantation along the QL-19 highway. At first, air support directed against the Catecka element was limited to VNAF since the Plantation was owned by a French National. Many reports received from the friendly elements in the Tanh An area often proved to be over-exaggerated or unreliable. The unreliability of this information often left the air mission commander to draw on his own assumptions and evaluations on the situation.

The third phase of the enemy action is actually a continuance of the second phase as the enemy troops continued to move eastward along the Ia Drang valley toward the highway south of Pleiku in the vicinity of Phu Nhon. Fire Support Base 43 at the intersection of QL-14 and LTL 7B was a focal point of the enemy activity south of Pleiku. The enemy forces were

able to cut two lines of communication by securing the highways at the intersection. Rocket attacks, scare techniques, (such as mentioning enemy armor elements supposedly in the area), and the actual troop build-up along the highway enabled the enemy to effectively cut the ground access routes to Phu Nhon and Cheo Reo. The friendly units operating in the areas south and west of Pleiku were constantly reporting enemy armor in their areas. Not one time was any cavalry reconnaissance team or tactical forward air controller able to confirm even any positive signs of such armor units. Enemy activity increased as the United States Presidential election neared. Pleiku City received an increased volume of incoming rounds and the highways and communication routes were continually interdicted. ARVN Forces instituted a plan of action in mid October to insert a ground reconnaissance element across the Cambodian border in the vicinity of Base Area 702. The intelligence that had been gathered on the area in question by VNAF forward air controllers was used as the basis of the insertion. H Troop screened for the operation, operating over the border for a week.

The Air Cavalry mission of H Troop of armed reconnaissance has been effectively accomplished throughout MR II. The area to be covered is large, but, through an effective debriefing program and the establishment of priorities, H Troop has been at the critical location at the right time. During the end of the reporting period, H Troop began to engage more targets of opportunity hoping to disrupt enemy activity. By working far behind enemy lines in rear areas, such as the area 23 miles due north of Kontum and in Cambodia, H Troop has caused the enemy to react. It is believed that such operations have caused the premature launching of rocket attacks on Kontum and Pleiku cities as well as resulting in the destruction of enemy trucks, bulldozers, structures and personnel.

2 November 1972

SUBJECT: Operational Report-Lessons Learned of H Troop (AIR) 17th ACS for the Perod Ending 31 October 1972.

D. OPERATIONS:

1. H Troop operates as a package of four OH-6A's, four AH-1G's, and four UH-1H's. The primary mission during the reporting period was providing reconnaissance in the Kontum-Pleiku-Phu Nhon areas in support of MR II forces. H Troop also maintains two AH-1G's on standby at night for the defense of the Pleiku area. H Troop has also been utilized for first light and evening VR's of Camp Holloway's perimeter and has, on several occasions, located several threats to Holloway's physical perimeter. H Troop also provides an aircraft for evening VR in the Pleiku area with an observer from II Corps.

2. A detailed summary of operations can be found in C, the intelligence section of the ORLL. A chart of significant operations data is found in Incl 1 and 2.

2 November 1972

SUBJECT: Operational Report-Lessons Learned of H Troop (AIR) 17th ACS for period ending 31 October 1972.

E. LOGISTICS

In the past six months Logistics problems have multiplied for this unit because the constantly changing supply situation has not been able to readily respond to the unit's needs. As supply sections (GS and DS) stand down or change from US control to Vietnamese control, the supply channels have become more constricted and less efficient. Also, when the unit changed its designation from B 7/17th to MR II CAV Troop to H Troop (AIR) 17th ACS, confusion was increased in all supply channels because no one was quite sure where the unit was located and there was a lack of command emphasis placed on the unit's supply.

Other major problem areas are found with Keystone, stand-short letters, and PA&E and other contractor controlled areas. While Keystone and stand-short procedures have well devised pamphlets, the interpretation and implementation is difficult since there is no standard USARV procedure for implementation. Keystone facilities for this Region should be closer to Pleiku. PA&E support is not adequate in the functions of supply and construction. Another major problem area is the shipping of hold baggage of persons already departed from Vietnam. Once the supply section receives the man's orders, the baggage is shipped but inquiries keep coming in as to when the man's baggage was shipped and requiring a bill of lading.

2 November 1972

SUBJECT: Operational Report-Lessons Learned of H Troop (AIR) 17th ACS for period ending 31 October 1972.

F. SIGNAL

In the past six months the communications section of H Troop has increased its responsibilities due to the deactivation of other units at Holloway. The communications section is responsible for all communications within the Troop, to include the radios in the Troop Operations Center. The communications section has also been tasked with the responsibility to maintain land line communications in a number of bunkers along the perimeter and maintaining communications in the Eagle Telephone Net.

The major problem areas include lack of trained personnel in the section and the inability to get parts for repair of items on hand.

2 November 1972

SUBJECT: Operational Report-Lessons Learned of H Troop (AIR 17th ACS for period ending 31 October 1972.

G. AIRCRAFT MAINTENANCE

1. The most prominent maintenance activity over the last six months was the installation of the IRM kits on all three aircraft types, UH1H, AH1G, and OH6A. There was 100% completion of this project by 20 August 1972. Since that time the inferior construction of these kits have been readily observed. Common problems that have occurred included the softening of the fiberglass "scoop" section of the AH1G and UH1H kits; the flaking, chipping and cracking on these same kits; the breaking of the upper cowling latch on the AH1G kits; and the shredding of the outer rim of the scoop area on the OH6A kits. Although repairs are relatively simple at this level of maintenance, these kits have presented a continuous series of problems since installation.

2. By 15 October 1972, the Quality Control Section had completed a 100% review of the Troop Configuration Control Program and corrected all errors in paperwork and ordered all delinquent MWO kits. A complete review had not been accomplished for some time.

3. Over the six month period there were numerous problems in each type of aircraft. The following list includes most of the more frequent one that occurred on the unit's OH6A:

a. Failure of the number eight bearing pack on the T63-A-5A happened four times over this period (in addition to other engine maintenance problems). EIR's were submitted on all occurrences but nothing more than general action was taken by the EIR board.

b. Cracking of tail rotor hub and blade assemblies in the area where there the fiberglass blades attach to the metal hub extensions. EIR's were submitted on all occassions and specific action included the testing of a new, all metal, tail rotor assembly.

c. The leaking tail rotor gearbox output quill seal was a constant problem. EIR results back on these indicate a change to a higher grade of seal to prevent this problem in the future.

d. Five main rotor hubs were changed due to the teflon coming out of the main rotor hub pivot bearings.

4. The AH1G presented its usual array of maintenance difficulties, but some problems appeared more than others. The most serious of these, and the one that cost more aircraft down time, was the 540 hub assembly. This part, especially the rebuilds from Spartan Aviation, have a mission life from 150-300 hours with some getting less than 100 hours of flight time. EIR's submitted usually have the same reply, "test s are being made on new type bearings. Inspection levels should be decreased to every 300 hours".

2 November 1972

SUBJECT: Operational Report-Lessons Learned of H Troop (AIR) 17th ACS for period ending 31 October 1972.

5. The UH1H remains the most dependable mission aircraft. It has proven time and again its ability to maintain operational readiness with only minimum unscheduled maintenance.

2 November 1972

SUBJECT: Operational Report-Lessons Learned of H Troop (AIR) 17th ACS for the Period Ending 31 October 1972.

H. SAFETY

1. H Troop has encountered no problems unique to this unit during the past six months. The environmental problems of heat, dust, rain and a tactically hostile area of operations have presented H Troop with a challenge to operate in a safe manner. In order to insure that all personnel in the unit are made aware of safe practices and safety requirements, an enlisted safety meeting has been instituted on a monthly basis. The enlisted personnel have responded favorably and have offered valuable suggestions in the interest of safety.

2. Accident, Incident, Forced Landing and Pre cautionary Landing Statistics appear in Inclosure 3.

2 November 1972

SUBJECT: Operational Report-Lessons Learned of H Troop (AIR) 17th ACS for the Period Ending 31 October 1972.

I. H TROOP CIVIC ACTION

During the 1972 Communist offensive the tactical situation curtailed the H Troop Civic Action Program. The town was off limits making it impossible to effectively continue with such a program. One hundred dollars was given to the refugee fund through United Appeal. After the offensive H Troop's project village was taken over by 17th Group.

In August of 1972 the H Troop Civic Action Program was reactivated with a leprosy treatment center as a project. H Troop has provided the treatment center with food and medicine and articles intended to ease the life of 85 Montaguard refugees presently living on the treatment center grounds. A MEDCAP team led by Major Pollard, the Group Flight Surgeon, recently visited the treatment center.

As long as the town of Pleiku is on limits it is possible to carry on a very successful Civic Action Program. When the town goes off limits, however, the continuance of such a program becomes impossible.

2 November 1972

SUBJECT: Operational Report-Lessons Learned of H Troop (AIR) 17th ACS for the Period Ending 31 October 1972.

J. DRUG SUPPRESSION AND REHABILITATION

During the last six months the H Troop Drug Program has expanded its mission to keep pace with the ever growing problem of drug abuse. At the beginning of the period there was only one Drug Abuse Officer, but one full time EM counselor of the grade SP5, one part time Admin. counselor of the grade SP4, and two Drug Abuse Officers have been added to the program.

H Troop has also established a "Rap House" with a four fold mission:

1. To make available to all the EM in our unit a "Rap House" through which they can make their problem areas known to the Commander.

2. To set up and maintain a system of informal records and scheduled counseling appointments for all personnel caught on unit urinalysis sweeps.

3. To make information available concerning educational, recreational, and spiritual opportunities available to the members of H Troop.

4. To carry on scheduled human relations meetings and provide feedback to the command element regarding problem areas.

Although the cure rate of drug abusers in the last period has been low, we feel that our present program will show improved results in the future.

2 November 1972

SUBJECT: Operational Report-Lessons Learned of H Troop (AIR) 17th ACS for the Period Ending 31 October 1972.

SECTION II - LESSONS LEARNED

A. INTELLIGENCE AND SECURITY

1. Rocket Attacks:

a. Observation: It has been observed that rocket attacks occur in increasing number at certain critical times such as the weeks prior to an election or national holiday. Surveillance by H Troop in the rocket boxes around Pleiku have mainly served as a deterrent; and, due to the minimum amount of enemy personnel and equipment required to mount an attack, finding the source of rocket attacks is a difficult mission.

b. Evaluation: Rocket attacks are usually directed against Pleiku Air Base and II Corps Headquarters and usually take place between 0700 hours and 0830 hours.

c. Recommendations:

(1) All H Troop mission ready aircraft must be preflighted and postflighted and ready to launch at any time.

(2) In the event of an attack, two cavalry teams and a C&C should launch. One team will search and observe to the west of Pleiku and one to the east.

(3) The C&C will keep in contact with the ground controlling authority and inform the teams of any information such as SEL or sighting of smoke. The C&C will designate when the guns will fire on suspected enemy locations.

(4) In the event of an effective rocket or mortar attack on Holloway, the remaining mission ready aircraft should launch and come under the control of the airborne C&C.

(5) The two cavalry team reation force must be capable of responding instantly during the critical rocket and mortar attack periods. The visual reconnaissance is more effective against crew served weapons such as mortars since rockets may be left to fire by timing devices.

2. Continued Use of Old Base Areas:

a. Observation: VC/NVA forces are frequently utilizing partially destroyed hootches and bunkers in old abandoned friendly and enemy base camps.

b. Evaluation: It has been noted that VC/NVA forces utilize old and abandoned base areas to avoid detection from air.

c. Recommendation: Frequent observation of old abandoned hootch and bunker complexes should be conducted to avoid reuse by enemy forces. Often the trails in and around old complexes will show enemy use. Enemy habitation of the complexes should warrant their destruction by air and artillery resources available.

3. Transmittal of Intelligence Data:

a. Observation: In the past, intelligence data obtained by the scout pilots during the conduct of the VR mission has not been effectively transmitted to higher headquarters.

b. Evaluation: It has been noted that a wealth of data is gathered by the scouts during the conduct of a VR, and thw wing Cobra is responsible for sending it to home base. During these transmittals, a good deal of information is lost or misinterpretted.

c. Recommendation: An officer is stationed in operations at all times. During the transmittal of spot reports, he supervises the RTO, providing guidance and interpretation when necessary. In addition, the G-2 Air from II Corps TOC conducts a daily debriefing with all the aviators who flew the mission for the day. The aviators clarify and elaborate on the spot reports for the debriefing officer, add their general impressions, and answer questions about the day's mission. Unless spot reports are effectively conveyed to G-2 in the form of intelligence data, the efforts of the air cavalry and the blade time in the AO are worth very little.

4. Accuracy of Coordinates:

a. Observation: The intelligence data provided by the Air Cavalry, especially when it concerns B-52 strike or sky spot information, must be completely accurate.

b. Evaluation: Due to limited map reading ability of aviators and inaccuracy and incomplete map data, exact coordinates for target locations have not been completely accurate in all cases.

c. Recommendation: Map reading methods must be taught to aviators, emphasizing utilization of terrain features for locating coordinates rather than man made objects. In addition, the person reading the map should be backed up by another aviator who checks the data prior to sending it on to higher. Special emphasis should be given to targets singled out for air attack.

2 November 1972

SUBJECT: Operational Report-Lessons Learned of H Troop (AIR) 17th ACS for period ending 31 October 1972.

B. OPERATIONS AND TRAINING

1. Operations:

a. Size of the Area of Operations:

(1) Observation: Often the units utilizing the Air Cavalry Troop do not assign reasonable or workable areas of operations.

(2) Evaluation: Failure to understand the methods and capabilities of the Air Cavalry Troop has caused the loss of valuable visual reconnaissance time due to assigned areas of operations which were not within the capabilities of cav operation.

(3) Recommendation: First of all, the commander who utilize the cavalry should make the capabilities and limitations of the Air Cavalry known throughout all levels of command. Misutilization of the cavalry should be noted whenever it occurs and corrective action taken. Close liaison should be established between the Air Cavalry and the people for whom they operate. Whenever possible, rated aviators with a thorough knowledge of the capabilities of the air cav concept should be placed in advisory positions to prevent misuse of the assets.

Generally, an area reconnaissance for one period (1½ hours working time) should not cover an area greater than 10 x 10 Km in the terrain around Pleiku or Kontum. Sparse terrain will allow more area to be covered. The unit for whom the cav works should have specific information to be gathered from the area whenever possible so the scouts know what to look for. Alternate blocks should be assigned during the monsoons so that time will not be lost if the weather is not workable in the original A/O. Alternate A/O's should be located so as to not be affected by the same weather phenomenon as the original A/O.

b. Misutilization of Air Cavalry Attack Helicopters:

(1) Observation: At times the Air Cavalry Attack Helicopters have been diverted to fire upon aerial artillery type targets.

(2) Evaluation: The Air Cavalry Troop is dependent upon organic attack helicopter forepower to cover the scouts on a VR mission. When the attack helicopters are diverted to fire in an Aerial Rocket Artillery mission, the unit cannot function in its primary role of armed reconnaissance.

(3) Recommendation: When a target is obtained, all sources of target destruction such as ground artillery, tactical air, and Aerial Rocket Artillery (ARA) should be exhausted before diverting the cavalry attack helicopters. Once all sources have been exhausted, the commander must weigh the value of the firepower to be provided by the cav attack helicopters against the VR mission which cannot be accomplished if the gunships are diverted. Then, and only then, should the gunships be employed. Often the cavalry comes upon targets of opportunity that enhance rather than detract

from the VR mission. Thus, the air mission commander should use the same process of elimination before using his attack helicopters to fire on the target.

c. Visual Reconnaissance of Known Enemy Locations:

(1) Observation: The Air Cavalry is often assigned the mission of VR of known enemy locations prior to application of neutralizing fires.

(2) Evaluation: H Troop has conducted VR in the same areas day after day, getting shot at by the same people reported the day before. This constitutes misutilization of the cav's assets, as it exposes the scouts to a dangerous situation while producing information of limited value due to its repetitive nature.

(3) Recommendation: When the Air Cavalry locates occupied enemy positions in an area, neutralizing fires should be applied as soon as possible. When this is not feasible, efforts should be made to avoid repetitive usage of the cav in the same area. The cavalry will conduct a peripheral VR about the known enemy location to determine information as to size of the element, its resupply lines, etc., but they should not be sent right back into the area unless the location has been hit and a bomb damage assessment is necessary. This does not mean that the air cavalry should not be sent into a previously reported enemy location after a reasonable time or when intelligence indicates a change in the disposition of the enemy forces in the area.

d. Composition of Cavalry Teams:

(1) Observation: During a period of increased activity, such as the recent Kontum offensive, the number of LOH pilots available may not be commensurate with what the mission dictates.

(2) Evaluation: When the number of LOH pilots reached a low, H Troop effectively utilized cav teams composed of two attack helicopters, one LOH, and a chase slick (UH1H).

(3) Recommendation: A Cavalry mission in the Central Highlands can be accomplished utilizing one LOH per VR team. The preferred composition, however, is two LOH's per team because of the ability of the wing LOH to cover the lead, pick lead up if he's shot down, and pick up additional intelligence. The terrain and enemy situation also effect the number of LOH's which can be used during VR. At this time, H Troop teams have the capability of operating with one LOH per team or two, depending on the enemy situation, terrain, and weather (it is easier for one LOH to operate when the winds get high and turbulence is near the operating limit).

e. Ceiling Limitation for Air Cavalry:

SUBJECT: Operational Report-Lessons Learned of H Troop (AIR) 17th ACS for period ending 31 October 1972.

(1) Observation: The Air Cavalry cannot operate on a sustained basis when the ceiling is less than 1550' above ground level.

(2) Evaluation: When the cavalry operates with low ceilings, the wing attack helicopter and chase slick who normally fly at or about 2000' above the ground are forced to operate at lower altitudes. This restricts their mobility, forcing them to operate at the same altitude. While flying at the same altitudes, these aircraft are in greater danger of midair collision and they violate basic principles of avoiding anti-aircraft fire. The entire team is within small arms range when operating below 1500' AGL.

(3) Recommendation: H Troop has been on urgent missions where the team was forced to fly with ceilings below 1500' AGL. On one occassion, the C&C ship was brought down by enemy ground fire due to low ceilings. Only on the highest priority missions should the cavalry operate with ceilings under 1500' AGL. They should never operate with ceilings below 1000' AGL. Other factors may also influence the decision to work such as visibility, proximity of back-up force, enemy situation, and known or suspected anti-aircraft.

f. Marking Known Enemy Positions:

(1) Observation: When an enemy position is marked with smoke, the enemy realizes his location has been detected and the natural response is to open fire on the person who marks them.

(2) Evaluation: When a scout or C&C drops a smoke on a known enemy location, the aircraft usually takes fire immediately.

(3) Recommendation: A UH1H attempted to mark some .51 cal pits with smoke, and they were shot down immediately after placing the mark. The LOH's mark many locations with smoke, and they take fire quite often after dropping the smoke. The best way to mark is to approach the area from a different flight path than previously used. Do not turn around immediately after detecting the enemy to mark. Once the mark is out, open fire to attempt to suppress enemy fire. LOH's should mark at high speed whenever possible and UH1H's should mark from an altitude out of small arms range. When a scout marks, the attack helicopter above him should be ready to react with suppressive fire should the enemy open up.

g. Prime Time for Air Cavalry Operation:

(1) Observation: The supported units want the Air Cavalry on station at first light to conduct VR type missions.

(2) Evaluation: Due to the slant of the sun's rays in early morning, the shadows and available light prohibit looking down into wooded areas. Also, the slant of the sun causes a "whiteout" on all aircraft when heading in the general direction of east. Early morning and late afternoon

visual reconnaissance is dangerous because the gunships have difficulty seeing the scout, the scout has difficulty flying low level with poor visibility to his front, and the scout gathers little or no information which might cause him to run into a dangerous enemy situation unknowingly.

(3) Recommendation: The Air Cavalry should inform the people they work for of the dangers and disadvantages for flying early morning and late afternoon VR. The on-station time for the VR mission should be adjusted to a time suitable to the scouts and gunships. VR during periods of poor visibility should be limited to those absolutely essential to the tactical situation. The Air Cavalry Troop should select the time that visual reconnaissance is conducted.

Maintenance requirements preclude flying teams all day long unless it is tactical necessary. A limit of 60 hours of flying per day has been established in H Troop. This enables the unit to accomplish the mission while still staying within maintenance limits. It also enables the teams to preflight and postflight during fully lighted conditions. The best hours of the day for visual reconnaissance lay right around noon, so the air cavalry should take advantage of the slant of the sun by operating from about 8 A.M. to 3 P.M. If the teams reach the 60 hour limit and the tactical situation allows it, an earlier quitting time would allow maintenance to "catch up" on some of the aircraft that flew that day by performing scheduled or deferred maintenance in the afternoon.

During periods of tactical emergency or sustained enemy activity, it may be necessary to perform night time maintenance. During the early part of this six month period, the teams often worked from dawn to dusk. The necessity of good preflights and postflights and an effective night maintenance program is reemphasized during these periods.

h. Air Cavalry and the Forward Air Controller:

(1) Observation: The Forward Air Controller is valuable to the Air Cavalry, and the VR capability of the air cav is valuable to the FAC.

(2) Evaluation: The FAC can provide effective destruction of targets found on VR by the air cav. The air cav can check out targets prior to putting in air to determing suitability, plus the scouts can provide bomb damage assesments (BDA) after the bombs are dropped.

(3) Recommendation: A FAC should be available to the Air Cavalry whenever possible so that he can remain up the air cav working frequency. The Air Cavalry can communicate with the FAC, providing target description and location as well as fire clearance in the area and location of nearest friendlies. The Air Cavalry can often remain on station, providing the FAC with adjustments as the air goes in, and doing a BDA afterwards.

Many times the FAC is given targets or locates probable targets and needs more information. The air cavalry can provide a detailed VR of the targets location and again perform a BDA afterward. When a FAC is available, the air cavalry and the Air Force FAC should act as a team.

The C&C of the air cavalry team also has the capability of acting as a forward air controller when a FAC is not available. This procedure has been

used effectively in the past six months.

2. Training:

a. Validation of Instructor Pilots:

(1) Observation: One Instructor Pilot (IP) per type aircraft is the minimum necessary for sustained operation.

(2) Evaluation: With the cutback of American Forces and the reduction of the number of replacements, availability of trained IP's has become a problem in USARV due to the lack of Standardization Instructor Pilots, especially in the OH-6A aircraft.

(3) Recommendation: At least two IP's per type aircraft should be present in a unit at all times. The nature of war and the rapidly changing personnel situation makes it necessary to retain a "back-up" IP. When only one IP is available, another pilot should be trained to take his place should a replacement not arrive. Becoming an IP is good for Warrant Officer career development, and it takes a load off a single individual who was holding the job. The First Aviation Brigade should help individual units keep enough Instructor Pilots on hand to sustain operation by making Standardization Instructor Pilots available and channeling Instructor Pilots to units that need them most.

2 November 1972

SUBJECT: Operational Report-Lessons Learned of H Troop (AIR) 17th ACS for the Period Ending 31 October 1972.

C. SIGNAL

1. Spot Reports

a. Observation: Intelligence gained by the scout is being lost and misinterpreted during transmission to H Troop operations and higher headquarters.

b. Evaluation: Due to shortage of trained RTO's and the brevity necessary while transmitting, intelligence data is not reaching G-2 in its entire or original form.

c. Recommendation: Spot reports, other than those which would warrant special or immediate consideration by G-2, should be held until the debriefing at the end of the day. At that time, significant spots should be evaluated by the scout, gun and C&C pilots.

2. Communications

a. Observation: Our operations, both in the AO and at homeplate, have been seriously impaired by unauthorized use by other units of our assigned frequencies.

b. Evaluation: ARVN and VNAF personnel are constantly using H Troop's FM, VHF, and UHF frequencies without authorization. Occasionally US fighters have been on our UHF.

c. Recommedation: Vietnamese personnel should be required to use only their assigned frequencies and the 17th CAG SOI be reviewed to insure there is no conflict with other radio nets.

3. Jamming

a. During the months of September and October, H Troop's primary FM was repeatedly jammed between the hours of 1300 and 1600.

b. Evaluation: The jamming originated from a low power transmitter that could not completely disrupt communications; however, it did reasonably affect confusion on the radio net. It is suspected that it was coming from a PRC 25 on Holloway's bunker line and that the interference was accomplished by keying the mike while holding it in front of the speaker.

c. Recommendation: Suggest that all personnel operating radios be briefed on the importance of radio discipline and anti-jamming procedures.

2 November 1972

SUBJECT: Operational Report-Lessons Learned of H Troop (AIR) 17th ACS for the Period Ending 31 October 1972.

4. Available Frequencies

a. Observation: Although contrary to current regulations and directives H Troop's mission dictates that we use both our primary and alternate frequencies.

b. Evaluation: It is imperative that each Cav team have its own set of frequencies for control of the flight and protection of the scout. When both teams are in the AO, or enroute to the AO, the alternate frequencies must be used by the second team.

c. Recommendation: If possible the Cav should be issued a third set of frequencies in the event a tactical emergency, jamming, or other emergency.

5. Land Line Communications

a. Observation: On several occasions land lines have been destroyed by personnel performing maintenance on the bunker line.

b. Evaluation: In recent months the Troop's communication with the bunker line has been disrupted on an average of twice weekly. Generally, the wires are destroyed by indiscriminant burning of the high grass along the perimeter, but there have also been instances of wires cut by personnel chopping down weeds or digging on the perimeter.

c. Recommendation: The land lines should be properly placed up on telephone poles or buried. Until this is accomplished, the communications section should be notified prior to burning or digging in the vicinity of wire lines. Once notified the communications shop will send a repairman to identify affected wires and supervise the operation.

6. Equipment Maintenance

a. Observation: At the present time H Troop has very limited support from organizational assets for repair of assigned equipment.

b. Evaluation: Due to a lack of qualified maintenance personnel and inadequate reserves of equipment, LSA no longer supports H Troop communication maintenance requirements, which taxes the already undermanned communications section.

c. Recommendation: More command emphasis should be placed on securing qualified personnel and supplies to repair and maintain communications equipment on hand.

2 November 1972

SUBJECT: Operational Report-Lessons Learned of H Troop (AIR) 17th ACS for period ending 31 October 1972.

D. SAFETY

1. LOH Pilot Training:

a. Observation: Two accidents and an incident have involved LOH pilots of limited experience. None of the accidents were attributed in any way to a combat situation.

b. Evaluation: Low level flight over heavily vegetated terrain is a requirement for the accomplishment of the air cav mission. There are no minimum hour level requirements for LOH pilots to perform low level reconnaissance missions. A 10 hour transition and flight school comprise the only training many LOH pilots get before being released to fly in Vietnam without another qualified pilot aboard the aircraft.

c. Recommendation: A training program for LOH pilots should be instituted at unit level in low level techniques and all other phases of flight. Aviators just out of flight school who fly LOH's should fly a 100 hours in the lift platoon whenever feasible to give them a good grasp of the mission and procedures prior to going to the scout platoon. Possibly the LOH transition program should be reevaluated to determine if more time is needed with additional training in low level flight techniques. The object of all these procedures is to ensure that the LOH pilots are well qualified prior to the performance of air cavalry mission.

2. Supply and Engineer Support:

a. Observation: The continued reduction in US strength in Vietnam has led to difficulty in obtaining support in the form of airfield repairs and supplies such as protective clothing.

Evaluation: A shortage of penaprime for keeping down airfield dust and inability to get engineer support to repair parking ramps and taxiways have led to increasingly unsafe flying conditions in the revetment areas. Difficulty in obtaining nomex flight suits, gloves and leather boots has caused uncomfortable and hazardous flying conditions.

c. Recommendation: Priorities should be established in order to ensure safe flying conditions are maintained. Command emphasis should be placed on alleviating unsafe conditions on a priority basis over other engineer jobs of lesser importance.

3. Peer Judgement:

a. Observation: Peer judgement is an excellent measure of an aviators abilities and conformity to standard aviation procedures.

SUBJECT: Operational Report-Lessons Learned of H Troop (AIR) 17th ACS for Period Ending 31 October 1972.

b. Evaluation: When an aviator is immature, accident prone, or found to be exercising non-standard procedures, the opinions of his fellow aviators should be solicited as well as the evaluation of the unit SIP/IP.

c. Recommendation: Prior to counselling an aviator suspected of poor judgement or immaturity, the opinions of the men who fly with and depend upon the man should be evaluated and taken into consideration. Often, these men can provide valuable insight into the facts bearing on the individual case.

H Troop instituted a program of self-policing utilizing peer judgement which has had excellent results. If an aviator commits a non-standard or unsafe act, he is liable to be reported to his Platoon Leader and Safety Officer via an Operational Hazard Report. This program resulted in a renewed concern on the part of all aviators for following standard and safe practices.

2 November 1972

SUBJECT: Operational Report-Lessons Learned of H Troop (AIR) 17th ACS for Period Ending 31 October 1972.

E. LOGISTICS

1. Refuel Points:

a. Observation: Some ARVN refuel points still utilize old type nozzels with locks on them to lock the nozzle in the open position.

b. Evaluation: US Aviators are not authorized to refuel at POL points with the lock latches on them due to the safety hazard inherent in the possibility that the nozzle could lock in the open position causing spillage.

c. Recommendation: The ideal situation would be to insure that all ARVN refuel locations conform to US standards and safety specifications to preclude loss of time or aborting a mission due to unsafe POL conditions.

2. Supplies and Repair Parts:

a. Observation: As operational commitments are phased down and more US units leave Vietnam, supply channels are slowing down. Expendable and non-expendable common items are still required to maintain an effective operating force.

b. Evaluation: Many items such as flight gear and tools have been increasingly difficult to obtain at Troop level.

c. Recommendation: As the war further deescalates and Vietnamization is further increased, unit supplies should be consolicated at Group or Battalion levels so that full time, school trained personnel can constantly monitor supply channels and tailor them to the needs of the using unit. Through a consolidated supply section, greater command emphasis can be placed on the rapid filling of all requisitions.

OPERATIONAL SUMMARY

	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT
Total Sorties	3731	2182	1270	1453	1789	2259
A/C Shot Down	4	1	0	0	3	0
Combat Losses	4	1	0	0	2	1
Aircraft Hit	22	9	1	6	3	6
Enemy KIA	5	17	0	0	0	0
Enemy KBA	3	1	2	49	2	6
Enemy Captured	0	3	0	0	0	0
Friendly KIA	0	2	0	0	0	1
Friendly WIA	7	4	0	0	4	2
Friendly MIA	2	0	0	0	0	0
A/C Shot At	52	29	14	20	25	30
Bunkers Destroyed	2	49	12	1	5	27
Structures Destroyed	30	17	4	16	20	32
Trucks Destroyed	0	0	1	1	0	6*
APC's Destroyed	0	0	0	1	0	0

*3 Bulldozers

Inclosure 1

MAINTENANCE SUMMARY

AVERAGE AIRCRAFT AVAILABILITY

	OH6A Availability	AH1G Availability	UH1H Availability	Hours Flown
MAY	80%	50%	87%	1812
JUNE	82%	70%	77%	1861
JULY	78%	69%	76%	982
AUGUST	78%	70%	86%	1069
SEPTEMBER	70%	70%	92%	1259
OCTOBER	81%	66%	82%	1690

AIRCRAFT STATUS AS OF 31 OCTOBER 1972

	TOE	ON HAND
OH6A	10	10
UH1H	8	7
AH1G	9	8

Inclosure 2

H TROOP SAFETY RECORD

Hours Flown	9092
Precautionary Landings	11
Forced Landings	1
Incident	1
Major Accident	3
Minor Accident	0

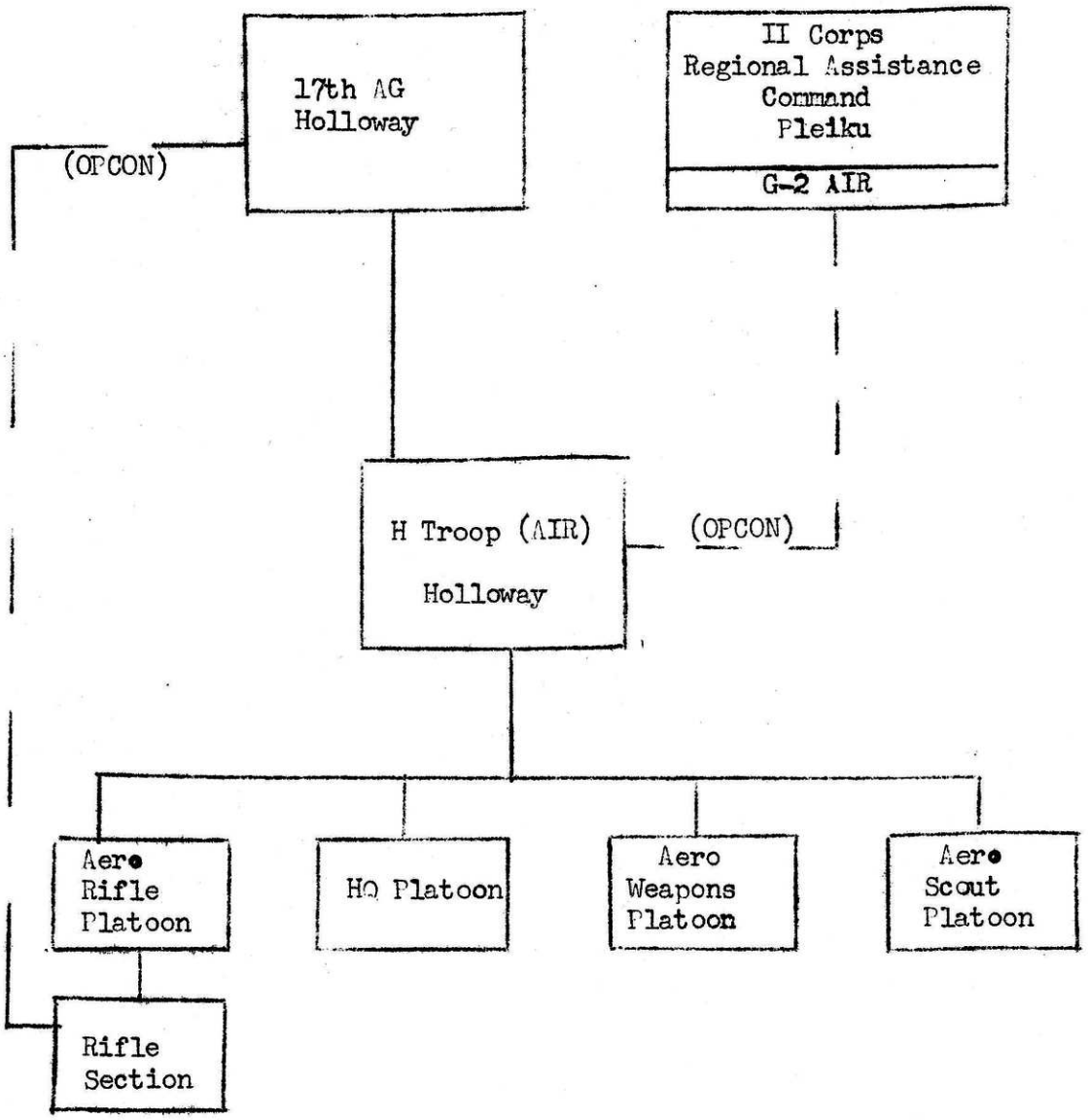
Inclosure 3

VALOROUS AWARDS

AWARD	SUBMITTED	APPROVED	DOWN GRADED	PENDING
ARCM "V"	2	0	0	2
AM "V"	17	11	0	6
BS "V"	8	4	0	4
SM	3	0	3	0
DFC	36	5	15	16
SS	6	2	2	2
DSC	2	0	0	2

Inclosure 4

ORGANIZATIONAL CHART



Inclosure 5