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DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
OFFICE OF THE ADJUTANT GENERAL
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20310

IN REPLY REFER TO
AGAM-P (M) (20 Aug 68) FOR OT RD 682264 5 September 1968

SUBJECT: Operational Report - Lessons Learned, Headquarters, 12th Combat Aviation Group, Period Ending 30 April 1968 (U)

SEE DISTRIBUTION

1. Subject report is forwarded for review and evaluation in accordance with paragraph 5b, AR 525-15. Evaluations and corrective actions should be reported to ACSFOR OT RD, Operational Reports Branch, within 90 days of receipt of covering letter.

2. Information contained in this report is provided to insure that the Army realizes current benefits from lessons learned during recent operations.

3. To insure that the information provided through the Lessons Learned Program is readily available on a continuous basis, a cumulative Lessons Learned Index containing alphabetical listings of items appearing in the reports is compiled and distributed periodically. Recipients of the attached report are encouraged to recommend items from it for inclusion in the Index by completing and returning the self-addressed form provided at the end of this report.

BY ORDER OF THE SECRETARY OF THE ARMY:

Kenneth G. Wickham
Major General, USA
The Adjutant General

INCL 1

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  US Army Logistics, Doctrine Systems & Readiness Agency
  US Army Aviation Test Activity
  12th Combat Aviation Group
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DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
HEADQUARTERS, 12TH COMBAT AVIATION GROUP
APO 96266

AVGC-SC 14 May 1968

SUBJECT: Operational Report of Headquarters, 12th Combat Aviation Group for Period Ending 30 April 1968, RCS CSFOR-65 (R)(U)

See Distribution

1. (C) Section I, Operations: Significant Activities:

a. General:

   (1) This quarter began with the TET Offensive. The results, effects and actions taken by HQ's 12th Combat Aviation Group during the VC TET Offensive are discussed in Special ORL - TET Offensive. (Incl 1)

   (2) During the period, one air cavalry squadron, one armed helicopter company, and the 2nd Flight Platoon of the 273rd Assault Support Helicopter Company (Heavy) arrived in-country from CONUS. The 7/1st Air Cavalry Squadron main body arrived by bost at Vung Tau on 26 Feb 68. The air cavalry squadron was moved to its base camp at Di An and became operational on 22 Mar 68. The 7/1st ACS was placed under OPCON of II FFORCEV. The 361st Armed Helicopter Company arrived in-country on 8 Apr 68 and was moved to Di An on 18 Apr 68. The 361st AHC is assigned to the 269th Combat Aviation Battalion. The 2nd Flight Platoon of the 273rd ASHC was moved to Vung Tau to join the Company (-).

   (3) During the period the 308th Combat Aviation Battalion was alerted and moved to I CTZ to support the 101st Airborne Division in the III MAF area of operations. The units assigned to the 308th Combat Aviation Battalion upon deployment were the 17th LHC, 188th AHC and the 200th ASHC, plus organic detachments. The 308th CAB was attached to the 16th Combat Aviation Group.


a. Organization:

   (1) Organization of the 12th Combat Aviation Group during the reporting period included the following units with headquarters located as indicated:

      (a) HQ, 12th Combat Aviation Group - Long Binh
      (b) 17th Combat Aviation Battalion - Phu Loy
      (c) 145th Combat Aviation Battalion - Bien Hoa
      (d) 210th Combat Aviation Battalion - Long Thanh
      (e) 214th Combat Aviation Battalion - Bien Hoa

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(2) In addition, these organizations had units stationed at Phuoc Vinh, Lai Khe, Long Cao, and Vinh Long in IV CTZ as well as field positions as called for by the tactical situation. For a detailed breakdown of the organization of the 12th Combat Aviation Group, see Incl 2 and Incl 3.

d. Personnel Changes:

(1) Colonel R.O. Lambert, 063400, assumed command of 12th Combat Aviation Group on 9 Apr 68 vice Colonel Nicholas G. Paiki, 062121.

(2) LTC Christopher B. Sinclair, 028265, assumed duties as DCO on 1 Mar 68 vice LTC Wilber A. Sidney, 071599.

(3) LTC Wilber A. Sidney, 071599, assumed duties as S-2 on 1 Mar 68 vice Major George W. Harris, 04042827.

(4) Major Jonah B. Davis, Jr., 094067, assumed duties as Adjutant on 1 Mar 68 vice LTC William W. Brannon, Jr., 061356.

(5) LTC William A. Hobbs, 085769, assumed duties as S-3 on 22 Apr 68 vice LTC William F. Bauman, 068430.

(6) LTC Lowell K. Solt, 060200, assumed duties as S-2 on 23 Apr 68 vice LTC Wilber A. Sidney, 071599.

(7) LTC Wallace I. Baker, 070259, assumed duties as S-4 on 1 Apr 68 vice LTC Lloyd D. Smith, 091263.

e. Unit Strength as of 30 April 1968:

(1) Military:

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(3) Civilian:

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<th>VN Auth O/H</th>
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* Attached

f. Aircraft Status as of 30 April 1968 - See Incl 4

g. Operational Results as of 30 April 1968: Reported by assigned battalions.

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(1) 2.75" FROG (Rocket) arrived in-country from NISHOM arrived in-country to instruct personnel in the handling, storage, and assembly and actual firing of the 17 lb warhead (XM-229) and the proximity fuze (XM-429) for the 10 lb warhead. In order for the 1st Aviation Brigade to develop doctrine and rules of employment for these new warheads, the 334th Armed Helicopter Company conducted a comprehensive training program and actually tested procedures while in support of ground operations. The 17 lb warhead had a one third reduction in maximum effective range due to the added weight. A more accurate employment of this larger warhead is gained by using a 10 - 15 degree dive angle which is steeper than normal. The 17 lb warhead has 3 more pounds of composition "B" explosive than the 105 mm howitzer HE projectile and has several thousand more fragments. The XM-429 proximity fuze is certified for the 10 lb warhead only at the present time. As a result of its greatly increased lethal radius and aerial burst, it is not being used for close in-support of troops. Rather, its best use is for LZ preparation, area targets, and fire support (a combination of a light ship, 2 gunships, and a CAC aircraft loaded with a .50 cal machine gun). At the present time, the XM-229 warhead and the XM-429 fuze with the 10 lb warhead are not to be fired over the heads of troops. It will require approximately a two week training program for each aviator to adequately train in the use of these new additions to the 2.75" rocket family.

(2) A total of 12 VNAF (Vietnamese Airforce) pilots received UH-1 transition training and in May 68 will begin training as IP's in the HH-1H with the 214th CAB. In addition, two (2) VNAF enlisted personnel are undergoing OJT training in Avionics (RL) Teams with the 145th CAB.

i. Intelligence

(1) Security:

(a) The S-2 Section continued in its capability as the focal point of advice to the Commander for matters pertaining to personnel security and safeguarding of classified material.

(b) The Group Headquarters continued to maintain a very strong security posture. Security posters were displayed in all staff offices, and no security violations were recorded during the reporting period. The section received no formal inspections by personnel of supporting MI units.

(c) In Mar 68, there was a change in the S-2 Staff Officer, resulting in a change in the Security Control Officer.

(d) During Mar and Apr, a 100% inventory was conducted of all SECRET documents within the Group Headquarters. There were no deficiencies noted. As a result of the inventory, 247 documents were destroyed. Before destruction of the documents, each primary staff officer concerned was contacted to verify that the documents were no longer needed. At the end of the reporting period there were 186 SECRET documents in the classified repository.
In Mid-April a new steel plated door was installed in the main entrance to the office. The door was fitted with two Sargent & Greenleaf locks; resulting in increased security for the section.

In late February and early March, several incidents took place within the 214th Combat Aviation Battalion Aircraft Maintenance, which were considered to be possible acts of sabotage. Cotter keys were found missing; safety wires were found out; and certain critical bolts had been loosened. Personnel from the 219th Military Intelligence Detachment were sent to the Battalion for approximately 7 days, and an investigation was initiated. The CI investigation was inconclusive; however, two suspects were noted.

Intelligence Statistics:

(a) The classified repository and distribution facility operated by the S-2 section processed approximately 11,103 incoming and outgoing pieces of CONFIDENTIAL material and 158 incoming and outgoing blank documents.

(b) Also during the period, a total of 221 security clearances were validated throughout the Group.

(c) Map processing continued to be an S-2 function which received considerable emphasis. A total of 17 map requests were processed resulting in issuance of approximately 44,650 map sheets. The section continued to maintain a stockage level of approximately 10 copies of each map sheet of the entire III CTZ plus portions of the eastern IV Corps and western II Corps. These maps are maintained in both 1:50,000 and 1:250,000 scales.

(d) The section continued to maintain a spot intelligence radio set. A total of 60 reports were received from inflight aircraft during the reporting period.

Loss of SOI's:

(a) There were two (2) SOI's lost during the reporting period, one of which resulted in a formal investigation. The formal investigation resulted in disciplinary action being taken against the pilot. He did not have the SOI secured to his person during flight. The aircraft was forced to land in an insecure area and the pilot exited the aircraft leaving the SOI in the cockpit.

(b) The second SOI was lost due to combat and was destroyed by fire when the aircraft crashed and burned.

Staff Visits, Briefings and Liaison:

(a) On a monthly basis, representatives of the section conducted staff visits with the assigned battalions. These visits continued to provide the battalion S-2's with guidance and assistance pertaining to intelligence matters. In addition, mutual problems were discussed often resulting in changes of established policies and procedures.
(b) In late March, the section began to present a daily intelligence briefing to the commander and staff. The briefing included the following:

- Present weather situation
- Challenge and password
- Enemy organization and composition
- Current disposition of enemy units
- Significant enemy actions within the III CTZ for the preceding 24 hour period (2400-2400)
- Significant enemy activities within the past 6 hours (2400-0600)
- Significant activities within the other three CTZ's
- Enemy capabilities, vulnerabilities and courses of action
- Conclusions

(c) Weekly a representative of the section attended the intelligence conference at USAV Headquarters. Information and material obtained at the conference were often used in briefings presented by the Group S-2. In addition, daily briefings were attended at II Field Force Headquarters, and liaison visits were made with Headquarters, 1st Aviation Brigade.

(d) Once a month, generally following the monthly commanders call, a formal intelligence briefing was held for the battalion S-2's. The briefings depicted the current enemy positions, capabilities and probable courses of action for the Republic of Vietnam. In addition, information of particular interest and significance to the Group aviators in the accomplishment of missions was discussed during the briefings.

(5) Escape and Evasion:

(a) For the reporting period, the E&E officer conducted staff visits to assigned battalions. These visits provided the battalion E&E officers with guidance and assistance pertaining to survival, escape, and evasion.

(b) In March, the Group E&E program was modified and the E&E school program became the responsibility of the Group S-3.

(6) Intelligence Summary (INTSUM). To facilitate the processing of information and preparation of reports, and to keep the group commander and higher and lower headquarters informed of significant events within the 12th Combat Aviation Group, an INTCUM was developed in March. An INTCUM is submitted daily by each battalion and then consolidated and submitted by the group. The INTCUM was well received by all concerned.

J. Logistics:

(1) Supply:
The following items remained in critical short supply during the past ninety days: Gloves, Leather, Flying Glasses, Sun, Flying; Ballistic Helmet; and VY Armor.

Supplies are being prepared by the 14th ICC for subsequent issue of NOMEX Flight Suits. Receipt and issue for use of this item will be a significant progress achievement.

Requirements for NOMEX Flight Gloves have been submitted through command channels and we are presently waiting for release and issue.

Requirements have been submitted through command channels for the new size large Ballistic Helmet. Subsequent issue of these helmets will partially fill the existing shortage of this item. Additional quantities of size medium are required to replace losses and ‘initia’ items.

C.M.A-15 Submachine Gun: With the two squadrons of Air Cavalry conducting combat operations in the compact LON-6A Helicopter and the increased density and deployment of AH-1G helicopter gunships, a definite requirement exists to equip the crews with a weapon capable of automatic fire. At present the crewmen are armed with .38 cal and .45 cal sidearms. This has proven to be inadequate to protect the aircraft and crew when forced down in a hostile area. Due to the compact configuration of these aircraft, this submachine gun is most suited for this use. M-16 and M-14 rifles are too cumbersome - pistols are inadequate.

Aircraft Maintenance:

Combat damage and enemy interruptions of night maintenance during the past three (3) months has strained the capability of maintenance personnel to accomplish adequate maintenance of aircraft and equipment. This has reflected in lower aircraft availability and a higher accident rate. In order to provide more time for daylight maintenance, CV has established a policy where as each aircraft with crew and each company will be allotted a stand-down period of 24 hours. This policy has not been in effect long enough to accurately determine its overall effectiveness. However, for the month of April all aircraft showed an increase in availability except the AH-1G (Cobra) which dropped from 79.4% to 57.6%.

A look at the 12th Combat Aviation Group flying hours statistics for the third reporting period indicates three types of aircraft (UH-1A, AH-1G, UH-1H) averaged below the flying hour program; one type (UH-1C) was approximately even; and seven types (OH-1, OH-6, UH-1H, UH-1H, CH-47, and CH-54) were above. Where the flying hour program was exceeded, experience indicated that availability will decrease due to repair parts (i.e., engines, transmissions etc.) shortages. This is due to logistical plans based on an established flying hour program. It should be noted that the program is continually changing based on past experience and projected needs. In most cases 12th Combat Aviation Group aircraft exceeded the USAF average hours flown.
(1) Command Post Communications:

(a) During this reporting period command post communications were enhanced by the completion of the 12th Combat Aviation Group Headquarters Command bunker for use in alerts. One FM radio and one portable UHF are available for monitoring "Blackjack" control which is responsible for helicopter fire teams in defense of Bien Hoa and Long Binh. In addition, two FM radios are reported from the 12th Group Signal Center to the bunker for use in monitoring "Base Defense" net and 12th Group Command Net. Blackjack Switchboard lines have been run in parallel to allow internal telephone communication between staff sections. A back-up AN/TSC-59, completely independent from the commercial power of the command bunker and the generator backup power for the Signal Commander, provides back up communication to the overall system. There are currently a total of 30 AN/VSC-2 and 12 AN/KRC-119 assigned within the 12th Group. This equipment allows the HF Voice and Radio Teletype communication between Group, Battalion and Company Headquarters. A Voice HP Admin/Log Net was also established during the reporting period.

(b) Local "Plantation" telephone service was curtailed as all class "C" phones were restricted from dialing the operator direct for access to Long Distance trunks. A ratio of 70 percent class "C" phones to 30 percent class "A" phones was set up for each headquarters by USA RV. As the majority of routine business conducted by the 12th CAG is outside the Plantation telephone service area this action will limit the amount of Long Distance calls placed from this location. Some relief from this restriction has been requested and action is pending.

(2) Air Traffic Control and Navigation Aids: Under the current concept of assignment of Airfield Service Detachments (ASD), for Air Traffic Control, 12th Group will have assigned 4 teams and will be responsible for Sperton Heliport, Long Binh Heliport, Plantation Airfield, and Long Thanh North Airfield. The heliport for USA RV Headquarters, "Headshed", will also be under the control of 12th Group. A daily status report of all navigational aids has been instituted to insure reliable operational status information for MACV prior to the forthcoming rainy season.

(3) NOTAM and Weather Service: No change during the reporting period with the exception that the newly activated 58th AD battalion now addresses NOTAMs to the groups and 12th Group then retransmits them on the III FFV NOTAM Network.

(4) SOL: The 12th Group SOL continues to be sent to lateral and higher headquarters; however, assigned battalions now receive only a total of five complete copies with all supported units being included. The remainder of the copies are distributed with only pages for 12th Group assigned units and miscellaneous unclassified pages. Each battalion Signal Officer is then required to extract from supported division SOL the required frequencies for their particular operational use. This technique reduces the chance of compromising all organizational frequencies within III Corps. Since a 12th Group SOL has been compromised by a particular company, changes for complete copies continue to be sent twice a month. This technique will be evaluated during the next quarterly period for its effectiveness.

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(5) Avionics: The presence of avionics trained personnel within 12th Group was held by Project FIX. Avionics personnel were sent from 0601 for up to 90 days. This project assisted 12th Group during a shortage period caused by closing the training centers during the past holidays.

- Safety:

(1) The Group Aviation Safety Program has been expanded and organized this quarter. This program was directed by the Group Commander and given his special attention. The new approach to aviation safety which concentrates its efforts on the main accident cause factors and the AH-1C and AH-1G Troops with high accident rates, has resulted in an accident rate of 18.6 for the past quarter compared to 30.1 rate for the first half of fiscal year 68.

(2) A majority of Group Aviation Accidents for this period were a result of the following factors:

(a) Engine failure - during the dry season there has been a great increase in this area. Group Safety has produced a comprehensive engine failure survey in which a direct parallel between the dry season and engine failures is shown. This survey has been distributed throughout USAF and safety channels in the USA. The assistance of the 34th General Support Group and Wyoming technical representatives has also been used to combat FOD, which contributes to about 20% of the failures.

(b) Loss of visual reference (IFR in Dust) and hard landing. To combat this the Group has produced a vigorous dust suppression program which includes directives from HQ, II FORCEN to the ground commanders on selection and preparation of helicopter landing or pick up zones.

- Chaplain Activities:

(1) A Protestant worship service was conducted each Sunday in the Group Headquarters area. Catholic Mass and Jewish Services, as well as denominational services were provided in nearby chapels.

(2) The chaplain made himself available to personnel for counseling and guidance not only in his office, but also by frequent regular visitation to duty areas, day room, mess hall, barracks, and throughout the Headquarters area.

(3) Monthly Chaplains' Training Conferences conducted by the Group, chaplain for all chaplains assigned to subordinate units of the Group, plus his frequent visits to the chaplains and to subordinate unit areas, has continued to result in increased unit coordination, and supervision of chaplain activities throughout the Group.

(4) Chaplain activities provided in the Group Headquarters area this quarter were:

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2. (c) Section 2, Lessons Learned: Commanders' Observations, Evaluations and Recommendations.

a. Personnel:

(1) Public Information:

(a) Observation: It has been found that subordinate units, especially at company level, with 10 officers on extra-duty basis are hampered by both inexperience and operational commitments. On numerous occasions good stories have been passed over because inexperienced personnel in subordinate units could not recognize the publicity value of the stories.

(b) Evaluation: This headquarters receives written articles from the units under its command and has the responsibility for rewriting, sending forth for clearance, and distribution of cleared copy to approving media. The extent of distribution on any story is based on its content, its newsworthiness, and the type of audience it appeals to.

(c) Recommendations: The information office at Group Headquarters level and battalion level provide as much aid as possible to subordinate units. It is recommended that commanders at all levels from group to company level, emphasize a disciplined and widespread information program.

b. Operations: None.

c. Training:

(1) Shortage of Instructor Pilots:

(a) Observation: There exists a shortage of instructor pilots in some units. Especially those units having H-1, and H-6A aircraft. Units having CH-47 aircraft are able to maintain an adequate number of instructor pilots to meet their needs. Most UH-1 units have sufficient numbers of instructor pilots to administer in-country orientation rides, periodic standardization rides, and still conduct instructor pilot training. Some units will have to conduct accelerated training programs to meet the turn over of their instructor pilot personnel due to aviator rotation.

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(b) Evaluation: As pilot experience and flight time increase in the AH-1G, and OH-6A models, an accelerated instructor pilot training program can be expected. Many returnee pilots have extensive backgrounds and experience in the CH-47, so normal aviator rotation, and a constant training program, meet the requirements. The UH-1 units are able to meet their instructor pilot needs, though the time available to them for instruction is limited due to combat commitments, and the units frequently fall behind in scheduling periodic standardization rides.

(c) Recommendations: Units must realize a need for more than the minimum essential number of instructor pilots. They must also realize the importance of maintaining standardization of maneuvers as well as a frequent review of emergency procedures. To accomplish the training tasks an accelerated training program must be initiated. Units using AH-1G and OH-6A models should initiate instructor pilot training as soon as possible due to the few instructor pilots available and the amount of time available and required to train each aviator.

(2) Training Time:

(a) Observation: Combat commitments limit a unit's available time for training, standardization rides, and in-country orientation rides. The time required to cover the instruction is magnified by the need to instruct the aviators in tail rotor malfunction and emergency procedures, which are not covered during flight school instruction.

(b) Evaluation: With a shortage of instructor pilots, coupled with insufficient training time for each aviator, there exists a lack of standardization of maneuvers and a need for more aviator proficiency in all emergency procedures.

(c) Recommendation: Units could better utilize a training schedule to govern their available training time. A periodic review of maneuvers and emergency procedures is necessary to maintain aviator proficiency, regardless of prior flight school instruction; though instruction in tail rotor malfunction procedures, while an aviator is at flight school would assist in relieving some of the training burden.

(5) Instrument Proficiency:

(a) Observation: Bad weather, rain, periods of reduced visibility, low ceilings and fog are all common characteristics of the monsoon season, with which an aviator must contend in the performance of his mission. Though most aviators are not fully instrument rated, and do not intentionally attempt instrument flight conditions, they are often subjected to such conditions, and their proficiency at instrument flight determines their safety.

(b) Evaluation: The importance for aviators to practice and maintain proficiency at instrument flight is not stressed, nor is time made available to the aviator for instruction.
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d. Intelligence: None.

e. Logistics:

(1) Initial Support Packages for New Aircraft (i.e., AH-1G)

(2) Dirty Turbine Engine Compressors:

(3) Particle Separator Kit:

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(b) Evaluation: 
Dirt, sand, grease etc. building up on the stator vanes and compressor blades. The end result is low engine life. A survey of UH-1B/C and UH-1D/H helicopters is being conducted in an effort to ascertain the number of helicopters on which the MWOs have not been complied with. As this information is compiled, a thorough search will be conducted and a strenuous effort made to get the necessary kits to the DS units for installation. Upon completion of modification, engine life will invariably be prolonged and a more effective overall helicopter capability will be realized.

(a) Recommendations: That all units program their assigned UH-1 aircraft into the DSU for modification after receipt of required MWO kits.

(4) UH-1C N/R Head:

(a) Observation: Continuous problems at N/R yoke extension sleeves and N/R trunion sleeve.

(b) Evaluation: At the teardown inspection of the main rotor hub as directed by TM 55-1520-220-20, it was noted the teflon sleeve bearings in the N/R yoke extension and N/R trunion sleeve were excessively worn. The teflon bearings are supposedly manufactured to withstand long periods of use with little or no wear; however, the inspections revealed abnormal wear versus relatively short time period in operation. It was determined by close examination that the cause was dirt and sand working its way into those areas and setting up an abrasive action between the bearing and sleeves resulting in an abnormal wear condition.

(c) Recommendation: That units begin performing the teardown inspections during every other Aircraft Periodic Inspection, (every 200 hours), cleaning the affected areas mentioned and reassembling component for installation. This action has notably increased the helicopter units capability in that the life of the teflon bearings were greatly extended by this action.

f. Organization: None.

G. Signal:

(i) AN/VRC-24 Radio Set:

(a) Observation: The AN/VRC-24 Radio Set is capable of receiving or transmitting in 100 KHZ steps only.

(b) Evaluation: Current airborne UHF sets are capable of tuning 50 KHZ steps for a total of 3500 channels. Current UHF frequency congestion could be partially eliminated if ground to air could use all 3500 available channels.
(c) Recommendation: That a compatible ground UHF set be developed, using the present airborne receiver-transmitter unit for issue to aviation units requiring ground to air UHF capabilities.

(2) Avionics Direct Support Units:

(a) Observation: Air Cavalry Squadrons are being deployed to RVN without avionics direct support units attached.

(b) Evaluation: Due to employment and stationing of air cavalry squadron avionics, direct support is usually not available. This requires the General Support units to provide direct support on location. With shortages to test equipment, personnel, and float assets, this action results in poor avionics support.

(c) Recommendation: Any unit that has a large quantity of organic aircraft must deploy with a direct support avionics team attached. This unit must also have on hand all necessary test equipment and float items.

h. Safety:

(1) Accident Prevention Program:

(a) Observation: Problems at Battalion Level - the relatively low accident experience does not permit the development of a comprehensive accident program as trends are hard to detect.

(b) Evaluation: The relatively low accident experience in any one month coupled with rapid turnover of personnel makes it difficult for battalion size units to recognize problems. They become complacent and non-aggressive in working on potential accident problem areas far enough in advance to develop appropriate correction action.

(c) Recommendation: It is recommended that at organizational level accident prevention programs be based primarily on incident experience which are numerous enough for the unit to forecast problem areas and indicate corrective action before accidents occur.

(2) Safety of Flight Messages:

(a) Observation: This group has experienced a communications problem in getting safety of flight messages distributed down to the air core level where they will do the most good.

(b) Evaluation: To resolve this problem area, the following action was required: All safety of flight messages are compiled each quarter and distributed to battalion size organization aviation safety officers. The organizations have experienced difficulty in the reproducing of these messages for various reasons. To alleviate the problem, a sufficient quantity of these messages are reproduced at Group Level to insure that enough copies reach company size units for insertion in pilot reading files and placement on safety and maintenance bulletin boards as indicated by the content of the message.
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(c) Recommendation: It is recommended that this approach be incorporated by all middle headquarters in the area of safety of flight messages. This will insure that the people who need to know are getting the word.

R.O. LAMBERT
Colonel, Infantry
Commanding

Incl 1-Special CALL-TET Offensive
Incl 2-Stanioning List
Incl 3-Organisation Chart
Withdrawn, Hq, DA

DISTRIBUTION:
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3-CC, USARV, ATTN: AVHGC-DST, APO 96375
2-CINCUSARPAC, ATTN: GPUP-DT, APO 96558
2-INFO CG, 1st Avn Bde, ATTN: S-3, APO 96384
SUBJECT: Operational Report of Headquarters, 12th Combat Aviation Group for Period Ending 30 April 1968, RCS CSFOR-65 (RI) (U)

TO: Assistant Chief of Staff for Force Development, Department of the Army, Washington, D.C. 20310

1. Subject report is forwarded.

2. This command has reviewed the attached Operational Report-Lessons Learned of the 12th Combat Aviation Group and concurs with it.

FOR THE COMMANDER:

O. B. FRY

ALT, AGC

Asst AG
AVBA-C (14 May 68) 2d Ind
SUBJECT: Operational Report of Headquarters, 12th Combat Aviation Group,
for Period Ending 30 April 1968, RCS GSR-65 (R1) (U)

DA, HEADQUARTERS, 1ST AVIATION BRIGADE, APO 96384 JUN 27 1968

THRU: Commanding General, US Army Vietnam, ATTN: AVHCC-DST, APO 96375
Commander in Chief, US Army Pacific, ATTN: GPOF-OT, APO 96558

TO: Assistant Chief of Staff for Force Development, Department of the
Army, Washington, D. C. 20310

1. (U) This headquarters has reviewed subject report, considers it to be
adequate, and concurs with the contents as indorsed except for the following:

Paragraph 2a (3) (c), page 12. The installation of particle separators
is not considered a job for a DSU. Accomplishment can be done by the
supporting KD team at the next scheduled inspection.

2. (C) The following additional comments are considered pertinent:

a. Paragraph 1j (a), page 6. Gloves and glasses are under strict
control by USARV but issues are being made. Ballistic helmets, also
under USARV control, will become available by the end of June 1968.

b. Paragraph 1j (e), page 6. Available CAR-15's have been re-
distributed to meet this requirement.

c. Paragraph 2c (1), page 9. A reply to this comment was submitted
to USARV on the last 12th Combat Aviation Group Operation Report. USARV
in turn queried DA. The results are that second tour warrant officers will
be sent TDY to the USAVINS for OH-1 and AH-1G IF training or CH-47 IF
training. These two courses previously had no input from COMARC. The
OV-1 and U-21 IF courses are being expanded. At this time no IF course
is being conducted for the OH-6A at Ft. Rucker.

d. Paragraph 2c (2), page 10. At the present time no allocation
of a training aircraft is authorized. Some units are committed daily
beyond their capability. Training and standardization rides are conducted
in conjunction with mission requirements and very little training is
effected. Assault Helicopter Companies should be allocated one training
aircraft per day and Assault Support Helicopter Companies one every other
day when operational commitments will permit. This aircraft allocation
for training will assist in reducing the number of pilot induced accidents.

e. Paragraph 2e (4), page 12. This problem has been recognized and
unit maintenance officers have the authority to increase the frequency of
maintenance inspections as they deem necessary. It is not recommended
that all units adopt the action suggested since there is a great dissimi-
larity of conditions encountered and not all of them would require the
increased frequency of teardown. This headquarters has reminded all units that premature failure of aircraft components requires an Equipment Improvement Report to be submitted.

f. Paragraph 2g (1), page 12. Until a compatible ground UHF set is developed the AC/VRC-24 Radio Set should continue to be used instead of replacing it with the airborne receiver-transmitter unit. Sufficient frequencies are available to be allocated to aviation units for the air to ground requirement.

g. Paragraph 2g (2), page 13. Both avionics and maintenance direct support units for all incountry squadrons are programmed for arrival during June and July 1968.

h. Paragraph 2h (1), page 13. It is recognized that at battalion level and lower, accident experience does not lend itself to analysis to detect accident trends and develop a comprehensive accident prevention program. One point of the 1st Aviation Brigade eleven point accident prevention program outlined by the Brigade Commander on 29 November 1967 was "Unit Analysis of Aviation Accident Prevention Program". This requires the analysis of all phases of flight operations to insure a sound, responsive accident prevention program at the small unit level.

FOR THE COMMANDER:

[Signature]

J. O. Segal
H.G. AGC
ASST ADJUTANT GENERAL
CONFIDENTIAL

AVHGC-DST (14 May 68) 3d Ind (C) CPT Arnold/dls/LUN 4485
SUBJECT: Operational Report of Headquarters, 12th Combat Aviation Group
for Period Ending 30 April 1968, RCS CSFOR-65 (RI) (U)

HEADQUARTERS, US ARMY VIETNAM, APO San Francisco 96375 JUL 1968

TO: Commander in Chief, United States Army, Pacific, ATTN: GPOP-DT,
APO 96558

1. (U) This headquarters has reviewed the Operational Report-Lessons
Learned for the quarterly period ending 30 April 1968 from Headquarters,
12th Combat Aviation Group.

2. (C) Comments follow:

   a. Reference item concerning training time, page 10, paragraph 2c(2):
      Concur. Where combat commitments permit, each unit must effectively pro-
      gram its available training time to maintain aviator standardization and
      proficiency. Current standardization of maneuvers guides are available
      for all the 12th Combat Aviation Group's aircraft. A message was dispatched
      to DA on 15 June 1968 requesting additional school trained instructor
      pilots for all aircraft.

   b. Reference item concerning initial support packages for new
      aircraft (i.e., AH-1G), page 11, paragraph 2e(1): Concur. All support
      packages are now being shipped to AT 8889 (AMMC) so that distribution of
      these packages can be according to the latest aircraft distribution plan,
      as changed. The procedure recommended has already been adopted for use.

   c. Reference item concerning AN/VRC-24 radio set, page 12, para-
      graph 2g(1): Concur. Immediate inquiry will be made by this headquarters
      to determine the practicality of modifying AN/VRC-24 radios. If modifica-
      tion is impractical, a request will be made to develop a UHF ground station
      radio that will be compatible with the airborne sets.

   d. Reference item concerning avionics direct support units, page 13,
      paragraph 2g(2): Concur. Force packages were developed to include
      direct support avionics teams for deploying avionics units; however, in
      most cases, the aviation units were deployed before these avionics support
      elements could be formed and trained. Avionics teams are scheduled to
      arrive in RVN for these units.

FOR THE COMMANDER:

C. S. NAKATSUKASA
Capt. 12th Cbt Avn Gp
Assistant Adjutant General

Cy Term:
HQ 12th Cbt Avn Gp
HQ 1st Avn Bde
GPOP-DT (14 May 68) 4th Ind (C)
SUBJECT: Operational Report of HQ, 12th Combat Aviation Gp, for Period Ending 30 Apr 68, RCS CSFOR-65 (R1)

HQ, US Army, Pacific, APO San Francisco 96558 12 AUG 1968

TO: Assistant Chief of Staff for Force Development, Department of the Army, Washington, D.C. 20310

1. (U) This headquarters has evaluated subject report and forwarding indorsements and concurs in the report as indorsed.

2. (C) Reference 3d Indorsement, paragraph 2a: Complementing the unit program to train instructor pilots there should be a like program within the aviation training base in CONUS, particularly in the case of new equipment such as an OH-6A and the AH-1G. To require the tactical unit to train the majority of instructor pilots places an unrealistic burden upon these units and seriously detracts from accomplishment of the tactical mission.

FOR THE COMMANDER IN CHIEF: 

[Signature]
C.L. SHORTT
CPT, AGC
Asst AG
SECTION I

LANNING AND PREPARATION WHICH AFFECTED THE COMMAND'S READINESS POSTURE FOR INITIATION OF THE TET OFFENSIVE:

A. (C) Problem: To determine the best method of countering an attack on the Bien Hoa - Long Binh complex, primarily relying upon the utilization of those aviation resources readily available and under the control of 12th Combat Aviation Group.

B. (C) Discussion:

1. The possibility of an attack on the Bien Hoa - Long Binh complex was recognized in November 1967, and a plan (OPERATION CHECKRATE) was developed which would most effectively counter such an attack.

2. The resources available consisted of command and control helicopters, light fire teams, and flare or "Firefly" light ships under the control of "CHECKRATE CONTROL" (Headquarters, 12th Combat Aviation Group.) These aircraft are primarily located at Bien Hoa Airbase and in the immediate Long Binh area. These aircraft can react as rapidly as desired depending upon the state of alert that the crews are placed on, the time required to become airborne can be less than two minutes when crews are required to remain with the aircraft.

3. The plan was developed in the following manner: A command and control (C&C) helicopter is designated nightly and remains on five minute stand-by. The C&C ship carries a detailed map of the Bien Hoa - Long Binh area which has air-control points, artillery concentrations, and surveillance zones plotted which are necessary to control aircraft located by CHECKRATE CONTROL. The same information, less artillery concentrations, is plotted on maps carried by the light fire teams. The C&C ship is airborne upon notification from AAR and begins surveillance in suspected areas. As light fire teams get airborne, they report the impression of the team, status of fuel and type ammunition carried to the C&C ship. The C&C ship then directs the fire teams to orbit at designated air-control points. From this point, as targets become available and are reported, the C&C ship directs the closest light fire team to attack the target.

C. (C) Conclusions: The plan was considered feasible and proven effective on two occasions in December 1967 prior to the TET Offensive. The first was an enemy attack conducted against an ARVN compound southwest of the Honour-Smith Compound. The plan was put into effect and
proved successful. The second test of the plan occurred when Honour-Smith Compound received small arms fire. Again the plan was implemented and proven successful.

SECTION II

CONDUCT OF OPERATIONS DURING THE VC/NVA TET OFFENSIVE:

A. (C) Situation: On 30 January 1968, reliable intelligence was received that the VC would conduct an attack in force in the Bien Hoa - Long Binh area.

B. (C) Discussion:

1. As a result of this intelligence it was directed that three C&C ships be airborne from 302000 January 1968, until 310600 January 1968. Two light fire teams were placed on ramp alert with one minute reaction time. At 0248 on 31 January 1968, rockets and mortars began falling on the Plantation area. The two light fire teams launched within 30 seconds, and proceeded to the area from which the mortars and rockets were fired. A Spooky aircraft was positioned over the area and took the VC firing sites under fire with Gatling guns. Several secondary explosions were noted, followed by fires in the area. This completely stopped the rocket and mortar attack from this position. At 0300 a ground attack was started on the West side of Plantation in conjunction with a ground attack on Bien Hoa Airbase. Initial attacks were repulsed at Plantation, however, the enemy successfully penetrated the Bien Hoa perimeter. Light fire teams, under direction of the C&C ships, took the enemy under fire. During the next eight hours, light fire teams were constantly hitting the enemy. At 0430, 31 January 1968, there were indications that the VC were attempting to break contact. The C&C ships maintained visual contact with the VC at all times using flares and the light ship from the "Firefly Team." Light fire teams were continuously on station to hit the VC. This close, continuous fire support prevented the withdrawal of the enemy, broke him into small groups before dawn and consequently he was caught during daylight hours and destroyed. Considerable difficulty was encountered by Headquarters Company, 12th Combat Aviation Group, in obtaining permission to employ light fire teams in front of the Group's perimeter. It took approximately four hours to gain this permission, and during this time the perimeter was under constant small arms automatic weapons, and RPG fire. Army aviation is only as responsive to the tactical situation as is the ground commander. OPERATION CHECKMATE was then expanded and dispatched light fire teams to Saigon, My Tho, Lai Khe, and several other areas. 11th ME, II FFORCEV, received these missions and passed then onto CHECKMATE CONTROL. In turn, by maintaining an accurate up to date picture of all gunships and light fire teams in the area, CHECKMATE CONTROL was able to dispatch light fire teams to affected areas almost immediately. Centralized control of gunships and light fire teams in an emergency situation has proven to be feasible, valuable, and productive. At present, OPERATION COUNTERAGENT is being developed to provide the same type reaction plan throughout III CTZ for such areas as Saigon, Tay Ninh, Bau Tieng, 

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Cu Chi, Thua Loi, and Phu Vinh. OPERATION GHOSTKITE has been in effect nightly since 30 January 1968 and has proven to be a deterrent to the VC effort in the Bien Hoa - Long Binh area.

2. The following is a summary of statistical data accumulated during OPERATION GHOSTKITE:

a. Aircraft flying hours: UH-1C - 139
   UH-1D - 82
   LH-1G - 76

b. VC KIA: 57 confirmed, 408 estimated

c. Structures destroyed: 135

d. Aircraft damaged by GNF: 15

e. Ammunition expended: 7,62 - 815,000
   2.75 - 2,620
   40mm - 2,500
   81mm - 104

C. (C) Lessons Learned:

1. Rapid response of the light fire teams is effective not only in the light of punishment inflicted on the enemy, but also the shock and amazement expressed by VC prisoners to this rapid reaction. (RE: page 11, USARV Weekly Combat Intelligence and Security Review dated 6 February 1968.)

2. The rapid response and tremendous volume of fire placed on the VC by light fire teams materially assisted in breaking the VC into small groups, creating confusion, loss of control, and a severe blow to the enemy morale.

3. The timely and accurate accounting and employment of light fire teams prevented the VC from breaking contact.

4. The centralized control of light fire teams in an emergency situation has proven to be feasible, valuable, and productive.

5. Army aviation, again, is only as responsive to the tactical situation as is the ground commander.

D. (C) Recommendations:

1. Employ a similar plan at all other bases in RVN where similar situations and resources exist.

2. That similar plans be prepared in other CTZ's to take advantage of the flexibility and fire power of Army gunships.

NICHOLAS C. PSEY
Colonel, Infantry
Commanding
Operational Report - Lessons Learned, Headquarters, 12th Combat Aviation Group

Experiences of unit engaged in counterinsurgency operations, 1 Feb - 30 Apr 1968

CO, 12th Combat Aviation Group

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DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY

OACSFOR, DA, Washington, D.C. 20310

OACSFOR, DA, Washington, D.C. 20310
The following items are recommended for inclusion in the Lessons Learned Index:

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* Subject Title: A short (one sentence or phrase) description of the item of interest.

** FOR OT PD #: Appears in the Reply Reference line of the Letter of Transmittal. This number must be accurately stated.

***Page #: That page on which the item of interest is located.