

711 Long Pt. Rd, Grasonville, MD 21638

27 June 2005

Commander, Headquarters, Department of the Army
VIA: The Honorable Wayne T. Gilchrest, Member of Congress
ATTN: AHRC-PDO-PA, Mr. Ross Sparacino
200 Stovall St, Alexandria, VA 22332-0471

SUBJECT: Review and Action on Recommendation for Award of the Valorous Unit Award to 14th Aviation Battalion and Assigned and Attached Units, Original Dated 6 May 1971

Sir:

I am a retired Army Warrant Officer aviator who served with the 71st Aviation Company (Assault Helicopter) (AHC), 14th Aviation Battalion, 16th Aviation Group, 23rd Infantry Division from May 1970 to May 1971. While conducting research at the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), I discovered an unsigned recommendation for a Valorous Unit Award (VUA) for the 14th Aviation Battalion's participation in Operation LAM SON 719.

Given that no record of a VUA for that event was found in DA Pam 672-3, I contacted retired Colonel Benjamin S. Silver, who commanded 16th Aviation Group from 8 June 1970 to 20 May 1971. He has provided a notarized statement indicating that, per command guidance, a senior staff member involved in LAM SON 719 was submitting a recommendation for the 14th Aviation Battalion, so his original recommendation did not go forward. With one exception, all Army unit citations given for LAM SON 719 used the same citation period, 8 February - 24 March 1971, indicative of a single source for the recommendations that resulted in awards.

According to personnel at NARA, there was no Awards File maintained for the 23rd Infantry Division, hence no record of the recommendation alluded to by Colonel Silver. There is more support, beyond the common dates, for the contention that a recommendation was made. A Letter of Commendation was provided to all 23rd Infantry Division participants in LAM SON 719 by the Commanding General, indicating that some notice of the 14th Aviation Battalion's conduct was received, and the other aviation battalion ordered north for the operation, the 223rd Aviation Battalion, received a VUA, also for the period 8 February - 24 March 1971.

While the 14th Aviation Battalion, specifically the 71st and 176th AHCs, had some experience flying in Laos in support of MACV/SOG CCN, they were thrust into an entirely different front, which was fiercely defended by a numerically superior and well entrenched enemy. The battalion suffered its first loss on 8 FEB 71 when WO1 Robert Gentry of the 174th AHC was killed as his aircraft was departing Landing Zone (LZ) Hotel in Laos. Supporting both

LAM SON 719 in Laos, and DEWEY CANYON II in South Vietnam, the battalion quickly adapted to the new environment, and altered their tactics to survive in an area that was determined, by the 101st Aviation Group's after action report comparison of combat damage statistics, to be thirteen times more dangerous than flying in the rest of South Vietnam.

After the aircraft losses sustained by the 71st and 174th during the assault into LZ Lolo, the battalion responded with assets from the 116th and 176th AHCs to support the major assaults and, again later, to extract the beleaguered South Vietnamese troops. While not listed in the 101st Aviation Task Group, the 176th, call-sign "Minuteman," moved forward in a combined flight with the 116th "Hornets and Stingers," and suffered the loss of an entire crew on 22 March 1971. "F" Troop, 8th Cavalry was normally assigned to 16th Group's 123rd Aviation Battalion, but they were attached to the 14th Battalion for the duration of the 14th's forward deployment, supporting DEWEY CANYON II, and losing an AH-1G Cobra and crew on 7 March 1971.

During the cited period, the 14th Aviation Battalion was OPCON to the 101st Aviation Group, 101st Airborne Division. The 158th Aviation Battalion, with operational control of 14th Aviation Battalion units during most major assaults, received a Presidential Unit Citation (PUC) for the period 8 February - 24 March 1971. Because of that OPCON status, the units controlled by the 158th Aviation Battalion do not share in the PUC awarded to the 158th, even though they fought along side and, in some cases, led the 158th in battle.

It is clear from the recommendation drafted at Colonel Silver's request that the actions of the 14th Aviation Battalion warrant appropriate recognition in the form of a VUA. It should be noted that the 101st Aviation Battalion received a VUA for the period 3 - 20 March 1971. On 3 March, the 71st AHC, augmented by Headquarters Company, 14th Aviation Battalion pilots, led the assault into LZ Lolo, losing two of five ships shot down, and the rest of the flight damaged. Although three battalions provided aircrews for the initial assault, recognized as the most heavily resisted insertion in Operation LAM SON 719, the 14th Aviation Battalion provided half of the assault aircraft. In addition to the assault being led by the 71st, the 174th AHC also provided ten lift ships and UH-1C gunship support.

The remaining aircraft in the initial assault were from "A" Company, 101st Aviation Battalion, and "B" Company, 158th Aviation Battalion. After the losses incurred in the initial assault, lift ships from a fourth battalion were employed. When the losses for the 174th Aviation Company are considered for the assault on LZ Lolo, 14th Aviation Battalion losses, at 17 aircraft damaged or destroyed, amount to 40% of the aircraft damaged that day among the four battalions participating, and 50% of the aircrew casualties sustained in that assault.

On 5 March 1971, among the four battalions participating, the 14th Aviation Battalion suffered almost 50% of the casualties and 33% of the aircraft damage. "Witch Doctor," the 174th's maintenance crew, was shot down, evading capture until they were rescued on 7 March.

On 6 March 1971, units of the 14th Aviation Battalion were among those companies participating in the assault into LZ Hope, the largest and longest reaching helicopter assault in the history of the Vietnam conflict. Although heavy bombing prior to the assault prevented the kind of loss experienced on 3 and 5 March, the 14th Aviation Battalion had three more aircraft damaged by enemy fire.

During the period 18 -21 March 1971, 14th Aviation Battalion and, in particular, the 71st AHC were instrumental in the resupply of beleaguered VNMC fire bases. Noted historian Shelby L. Stanton, in his book, "The Rise and Fall of an American Army," cites the "heroics of the Army helicopters of the 14th Aviation Battalion" in keeping the Vietnamese Marines in ammunition. By keeping the VNMC in ammunition and evacuating their wounded, the 14th Aviation Battalion prevented the complete annihilation of those surrounded units engaged by a numerically superior force of NVA, and allowed them to fight their way through enemy lines for extraction from Laos.

On 20 March 1971, among the four aviation battalions employed during the extraction of LZ Brown, the 14th Aviation Battalion was second in aircraft losses behind the 223rd Aviation Battalion, and suffered 50% of the casualties. Together, the 3rd and 20th of March accounted for 29% of UH-1H "Huey" helicopter damage sustained during the two and one half months of the LAM SON 719 operation.

On 24 March 1971, the 71st AHC was called upon to conduct emergency insertions and extractions to rescue downed aircrews from several Air Cavalry ships that were shot down in the tri-border area below the DMZ and east of the Laotian border. While Major Tommie Stiner, Brigade Aviation Officer, 1/5 Mechanized Infantry, recommended impact awards of the Distinguished Flying Cross to the aircrews involved, many of the awards were lost. The incident, however, serves as further evidence of the heroism demonstrated by the 14th Aviation Battalion in the fiercest test of Army Aviation in the history of the Vietnam conflict.

The attached documentation substantiates the facts in this matter, and makes clear the timely original effort and inadvertent failure to render appropriate recognition to the 14th Aviation Battalion and its assigned and attached units. Each attachment is described by its source and significance as follows:

1. *Recommendation - Copy of original VUA recommendation dated 6 May 1971* obtained from the NARA, bearing NARA reproduction stamp, transcribed below due to illegibility of NARA original, *Notarized statement of COL Benjamin L. Silver and signed verbatim transcript of the original VUA recommendation dated 6 May 1971* attesting to the timely effort to recognize the units involved, and the inadvertence of the failed effort; **CORRECTED COPY FOR BOARD ACTION** making clear the command relationships of recommended units, amending citation periods to reflect actual dates of participation by cited units, and correcting prior U.S. Unit Awards to the recommended units, per DA Pam 672-3. Any changes from the original are supported by the following documents.

2. *Daily Staff Journal or Duty Officer's Log (DA 1954), S-2, 101st Avn Gp, 101st Abn Div, dated 3 Mar 71* and attachments, obtained from NARA. These documents indicate the degree of enemy resistance to the assault into Landing Zone Lolo, which was led by the 71st AHC and supported by the 174th AHC. All of the ten UH-1H helicopters flown by the 71st were struck by enemy fire. Two were destroyed in Laos, and three of the remaining eight that made it back to Khe Sanh were so badly damaged that they had to be recovered by CH-47 sling operations.
3. *Photographs and Maps depicting Area of Operation - Rescue of a UH-1C aircrew* from the 174th AHC on 21 FEB 71 in the vicinity of coordinates XD575286, *Landing Zone Lolo, XD431372, Laos*, depicting five of the aircraft shot down on 3 Mar 71 (two from the 71st AHC), three burned, one intact and one crashed on the far side of the LZ, *NVA Soldier* (North Vietnamese Army Photograph) approaching two 174th AHC UH-1C helicopters shot down in the vicinity of LZ Lolo on 3 MAR 71.
4. *Extract from 101st Airborne Division Final Report-Airmobile Operations in Support of Operation LAM SON 719*, depicting organization of participating units, concept of operations, and the degree of combat exposure of participating elements, particularly on 3 and 20 March 1971. This report also documents the waiver of maximum flight hours for aviators in order to meet the demands of this operation, considered a tactical emergency and the Enemy Force casualty figures for the operation.
5. *Extracts from "Rise and Fall of an American Army" by Shelby Stanton, and "Indochina Monographs - Lam Son 719"* by Major General Nguyen Duy Hinh, obtained from the U.S. Army Center of Military History, which highlights VNMC operations, contains maps illustrating Landing Zones and enemy locations, and documents the desperate events of 3 - 21 MAR 71, including the loss of the UH-1H flown by Rattler 11 and crew, of 71st AHC, on 21 MAR 71, supporting Shelby Stanton's considered opinion of heroism by aviators of the 14th Aviation Battalion.
6. *Extracts from Vietnam Helicopter Pilot's Association (VHPA) database and 101st Aviation Group Aircraft Loss Summary*, obtained from NARA, were established from the daily supplements attached to 101st Aviation Group S-2 DA 1954 logs, document casualties and combat damage occurring on 8; 21 FEB and 3, 5, 18; 20 MAR 71. While not an official source, the VHPA database maintains a comprehensive list of helicopter aircrew casualties derived from official sources.
7. *Daily Staff Journal or Duty Officer's Log (DA 1954) S-3, Tactical Operations Center, 14th CAB*, obtained from NARA. These documents reflect the control exercised over the various participating assigned and attached units and the support to the VNMC alluded to in the Indochina Monograph, "Lam Son 719," and Shelby Stanton's "Rise & Fall of an American Army." The 71st AHC Rattlers and Firebirds operated under the tactical call-sign "Benign Fires" or "Fires," and the 174th Dolphins and Sharks used call-sign "Boats" during LAM SON 719.
8. *Notarized copy of original statement* by Major Tommy C. Stiner, Brigade Aviation Officer, 1/5 Mechanized Infantry, recommending impact awards of the Distinguished Flying Cross for members of the 71st Aviation Company for action on 24 Mar 71. While the unit rescued was initially reported as "C Troop, 2d of the 17th Cav" when the statement was written in March of 1971, they were later identified as "D" Troop, 3/5 Cavalry. Rattler 11, referred to in this document, is the same aircraft commander described as shot down on 21 MAR 71, having been shot down in flames both dates.

Douglas M.F. Womack
CW4, USAR, Retired

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
Headquarters, 16th Aviation Group (Combat)
APO San Francisco 96374

AVDF-ABCO

27 June 2005

SUBJECT: Recommendation for Award of the Valorous Unit Award

THRU: Commanding General
23d Infantry Division
APO 96374

Commanding General
XXIV Corps
APO 96349

TO: Commanding General
U.S. Army Vietnam
APO 96375

1. Under the provisions of USARV Regulation 672-3, I strongly recommend that the 14th Aviation Battalion be awarded the Valorous Unit Award, for their outstanding actions during Lam Son 719 in the Kingdom of Laos during the period 8 February 1971 to 7 April 1971, inclusive.
2. The officers and men of the 14th Aviation Battalion (Combat), and their assigned and attached units, heroically distinguished themselves, in military operations in the Kingdom of Laos, against a fierce and highly trained enemy. Despite intense rockets, mortars, and small arms fire throughout the entire period of operation, the officers and men of the 14th Battalion continually, and without regard for their own safety, conducted numerous combat assaults and extractions against an enemy who was determined to stop them. By their display of unswerving courage and fortitude, the officers and men of the 14th Battalion successfully extracted the friendly ground forces, at the conclusion of the operation, and contributed immeasurably to the success of the operation.

- 4 Incl
1. Narrative Description
 2. Summary of Strength and Casualties
 3. Listing of Units
 4. Proposed Citation

//ORIGINAL SIGNED//
BENJAMIN S. SILVER
Colonel, Infantry
Commanding

NARRATIVE

The 14th CAB and its assigned and attached units distinguished themselves by extraordinary heroism while engaged in military operations in the Kingdom of Laos during the period 8 February 1971 to 7 April 1971. The officers and men displayed unwavering courage and professional competence in the face of a vastly superior enemy force while attempting to insert or extract friendly forces. The complete area was saturated with an estimated 36,000 man enemy force consisting mainly of anti aircraft and armor units, which reacted to the heliborne assaults with deadly accurate and intensely fierce anti aircraft fire. Once in the LZ, the vulnerable helicopters were subjected to a devastating density of rocket and mortar fire. As the operation progressed and the end was in sight some 25,000 friendly troops were positioning themselves for extraction. The heavy mortar, rocket, automatic weapons fire, and numerous large-scale ground attacks, spearheaded by tanks clearly made the area untenable. Although enemy gunners were well secured on strategic ground positions in command of the area, aerial extraction was necessary and the members of the 14th CAB once again responded to the emergency situation. While an unmerciful rain of hostile rocket, mortar, and automatic weapons fire poured into the paths of oncoming helicopters, unit personnel were undaunted by the fire and expertly maneuvered their ships into the pickup zones to extract the friendly forces. As air strikes pounded enemy positions and gunships aggressively supported the lift helicopters the men of the command effectively completed numerous vital resupplies of ammunition and continued to extract the hard-pressed troops. Despite severe damage to numerous aircraft, the determined aviators repeatedly entered the dangerous battlefield, ultimately extracted the entire friendly force and contributed immeasurably to their safety. The extraordinary heroism and devotion to duty displayed by the members of the 14th CAB amidst the most ferocious and accurate fire thus far in the Vietnam war has proved that Army Aviation as it is today can withstand the enemy's best and emerge victorious. The actions of the officers and men of the 14th CAB during this operation are in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service and reflect great credit upon themselves, and the Armed Forces of the United States.

INCL #1

SUMMARY OF STRENGTH AND CASUALTIES

FRIENDLY FORCES

<u>Totals Assigned</u>	<u>KIA</u>	<u>WIA</u>	<u>MIA</u>	<u>CAP</u>
Headquarters and Headquarters Company 14th (CAB) (134)	0	0	0	0
F Troop, 8th Cavalry (224)	2	2	4	0
71st Aviation Company (AH) (231)	0	9	0	0
116th Aviation Company (AH) (198)	0	0	0	0
174th Aviation Company (AH) (227)	5	23	0	0
176th Aviation Company (AH) (212)	4	0	4	0
756th Medical Detachment (8)	0	0	0	0

ENEMY FORCES

<u>Estimated Strength</u> 36,000	<u>Body Count</u> 13,914	<u>Probable Casualties</u> 12,000	<u>CAP</u> 69
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INCL #2

LISTING OF UNITS ASSIGNED AND ATTACHED
PARTICIPATING UNITS

Part I. Units assigned and recommended for award of the Valorous Unit Award.

<u>UNIT</u>	<u>PERIOD</u>	<u>PREVIOUS US UNIT CITATIONS AND DATES</u>
Headquarters and Headquarters Company 14th (CAB)	8 February 1971 to 7 April 1971	VUA 13-19 AUG 67, DAGO 37, 70 VUA 12 MAY 68, DAGO 43, 70
71st Aviation Company (AH)	8 February 1971 to 28 March 1971	PUC(N) 28 JUL-1 AUG 67, DAGO 32, 73 VUA 13-19 AUG 67, DAGO 37, 70 VUA 12 MAY 68, DAGO 43, 70 VUA 11-31 AUG 69, DAGO 43,72
116th Aviation Company (AH)	5-7 March 1971 and 22-24 March 1971	PUC 24-26 APR 69, DAGO 21, 78 Amended DAGO 14, 73 VUA 19 JUL 66, DAGO 17, 68 VUA 22, 23 OCT 66, DAGO 5, 79 Amended DAGO 17, 68 VUA 4-20 NOV 66, DAGO 17, 68 VUA 13 JUN-23 SEP 68, DAGO 52, 74 MUC 1967, DAGO 48, 68
174th Aviation Company (AH)	8 February 1971 to 7 April 1971	VUA 22 APR-20 AUG 67, DAGO 43, 72 VUA 12 MAY 68, DAGO 43, 70
176th Aviation Company (AH)	5-7 March 1971 and 22-24 March 1971	VUA 13-19 AUG 67, DAGO 37, 70 VUA 12 MAY 68, DAGO 43, 70
756th Medical Detachment	8 February 1971 to 7 April 1971	VUA 13-19 AUG 67, DAGO 37, 70 VUA 12 MAY 68, DAGO 43, 70

Part II. Units attached and recommended for award of the Valorous Unit Award.

F Troop, 8th Cavalry	8 February 1971 to 7 April 1971	VUA 24 AUG-25 SEP 68, DAGO 53, 70 VUA 11-31 AUG 69, DAGO 43, 72
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Part III. Units assigned but not recommended for award of the Valorous Unit Award.

132nd Aviation Company (ASH)

178th Aviation Company (ASH)

Part IV. Units attached but not recommended for award of the Valorous Unit Award.

NONE

INCL #3

PROPOSED CITATION

VALOROUS UNIT AWARD

BY DIRECTION OF THE SECRETARY OF THE ARMY, UNDER THE PROVISIONS OF PARAGRAPH 202.1, AR 672-5-1, THE VALOROUS UNIT AWARD IS AWARDED TO THE FOLLOWING NAMED UNITS OF THE UNITED STATES ARMY FOR EXTRAORDINARY HEROISM WHILE ENGAGED IN MILITARY OPERATIONS DURING THE PERIOD INDICATED:

THE 14TH AVIATION BATTALION (COMBAT) AND ASSIGNED AND ATTACHED UNITS:

HEADQUARTERS AND HEADQUARTERS COMPANY 14TH AVIATION BATTALION (COMBAT)
(SECOND OAK LEAF CLUSTER)
F TROOP, 8TH CAVALRY (SECOND OAK LEAF CLUSTER)
71ST AVIATION COMPANY (AH) (THIRD OAK LEAF CLUSTER)
116TH AVIATION COMPANY (AH) (FOURTH OAK LEAF CLUSTER)
174TH AVIATION COMPANY (AH) (SECOND OAK LEAF CLUSTER)
176TH AVIATION COMPANY (AH) (SECOND OAK LEAF CLUSTER)
756TH MEDICAL DETACHMENT (SECOND OAK LEAF CLUSTER)

THE CITATION READS AS FOLLOWS:

THE 14TH AVIATION BATTALION AND ITS ASSIGNED AND ATTACHED UNITS DISTINGUISHED THEMSELVES BY EXTRAORDINARY HEROISM WHILE ENGAGED IN MILITARY OPERATIONS FROM 8 FEBRUARY 1971 TO 7 APRIL 1971 IN THE KINGDOM OF LAOS. THE UNIT CONDUCTED NUMEROUS COMBAT ASSAULTS INTO AREAS CONGESTED WITH ANTI-AIRCRAFT WEAPONS AND ARMOR. THE ENEMY GUNNERS WERE HIGHLY ACCURATE WITH THEIR WEAPONS AND WERE STRATEGICALLY LOCATED SO AS NOT TO OFFER ANY SECURE FLIGHT PATH TO THE HELICOPTERS. ALTHOUGH HARRASSED BY THE INTENSE ENEMY FIRE, THE VALOROUS ELEMENTS CONTINUED TO FLY MISSION AFTER MISSION INTO LAOS. AS THE OPERATION NEARED COMPLETION THE ENEMY FIRE INTENSIFIED. DISPLAYING UNWAVERING COURAGE AND EXCEPTIONAL SKILL, THE PERSONNEL OF THE BATTALION BEGAN TO EXTRACT THE BESIEGED ALLIED TROOPS. AN UNMERCIFUL ENEMY INFLICTED SEVERE DAMAGE TO NUMEROUS AIRCRAFT AND CONTINUALLY RAINED A HAIL OF ROCKET AND MORTAR FIRE INTO THE PICKUP ZONES. UNIT PERSONNEL WERE UNDAUNTED BY THE ENEMY FIRE AND EXPERTLY MANEUVERED THEIR AIRCRAFT INTO THE PICKUP ZONE TO EXTRACT THE HARD-PRESSED FRIENDLY TROOPS. THE DETERMINED AVIATORS REPEATEDLY ENTERED THE DANGEROUS BATTLEFIELD, ULTIMATELY EXTRACTED THE ENTIRE FRIENDLY FORCE AND CONTRIBUTED IMMEASURABLY TO THEIR SAFETY. THE UNYIELDING HEROISM AND DEVOTION TO DUTY DISPLAYED BY THE MEMBERS OF THE 14TH AVIATION BATTALION DURING THIS OPERATION ARE IN KEEPING WITH THE HIGHEST TRADITIONS OF THE MILITARY SERVICE AND REFLECT GREAT CREDIT UPON THEMSELVES AND THE ARMED FORCES OF THE UNITED STATES.

INCL #4

VUA REC

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
Headquarters, 14th Aviation Group (Combat)
APO San Francisco 96374

AVDF-ABCO

6 May 1971

SUBJECT: Recommendation for Award of the Valorous Unit Award

THRU: Commanding General
23d Infantry Division
APO 96374

Commanding General
XXIV Corps
APO 96349

TO: Commanding General
U.S. Army Vietnam
APO 96375

1. Under the provisions of USAFV legislation 572-3, I strongly recommend that the 14th Aviation Battalion be awarded the Valorous Unit Award, for their outstanding actions during Lesson 719 in the Kingdom of Laos during the period 8 February 1971 to 7 April 1971, inclusive.
2. The officers and men of the 14th Aviation Battalion (Combat), and their assigned and attached units, heroically distinguished themselves, in military operations in the Kingdom of Laos, against a fierce and highly trained enemy. Despite intense rockets, mortars, and small arms fire throughout the entire period of operation, the officers and men of the 14th Battalion continually, and without regard for their own safety, conducted numerous combat assaults and extractions against an enemy who was determined to stop them. By their display of unswerving courage and fortitude the officers and men of the 14th Battalion successfully extracted the friendly ground forces, at the conclusion of the operation, and contributed immeasurably to the success of the operation.

- 4 Incl
1. Narrative Description
 2. Summary of Strength
and Casualties
 3. Listing of Units
 4. Proposed Citation

BENJAMIN S. SILVER
Colonel, Infantry
Commanding

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NARRATIVE

The 14th CAB and its assigned and attached units distinguished themselves by extraordinary heroism while engaged in military operations in the kingdom of Laos during the period 8 February 1971 to 7 April 1971. The officers and men displayed unwavering courage and professional competence in the face of a vastly superior enemy force while attempting to insert or extract friendly forces. The complete area was saturated with an estimated 15,000 man enemy force consisting mainly of anti aircraft and armor units, which reacted to the heliborne assaults with deadly accurate and intensely fierce anti aircraft fire. Once in the LA, the vulnerable helicopters were subjected to a devastating density of rocket and mortar fire. As the operation progressed and the end was in sight some 25,000 friendly forces were positioning themselves for extraction. The heavy mortar, rocket, automatic weapons fire, and numerous large-scale ground attacks, spearheaded by tanks clearly made the operational area untenable. Although enemy gunners were well situated on strategic ground positions in command of the area, aerial extraction of the friendly forces was necessary and the members of the 14th CAB once again responded to the emergency situation. While an unmerciful rain of hostile rocket, mortar, and automatic weapons fire poured into the paths of ascending helicopters, unit personnel were undaunted by the fire and expertly maneuvered their ships into the pickup zones to extract the friendly forces. As airstrikes pounded enemy positions and gunships aggressively supported the lift helicopters the men of the command effectively completed numerous vital resupplies of ammunition and continued to extract the hard-pressed troops. Despite severe damage to numerous aircraft, the determined aviators repeatedly entered the dangerous battlefield, ultimately extracted the entire friendly force and contributed immeasurably to their safety. The extraordinary heroism and devotion to duty displayed by the members of the 14th CAB amidst the most ferocious and accurate fire thus far in the Vietnam war has proved that Army Aviation as it is today can withstand the enemy's best and emerge victorious. The actions of the officers and men of the 14th CAB during this operation are in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service and reflect great credit upon themselves, and the Armed Forces of the United States.

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SUMMARY OF STRENGTH AND CASUALTIESFRIENDLY FORCES

<u>Totals Assigned</u>	<u>KIA</u>	<u>WIA</u>	<u>MIA</u>	<u>CAP</u>
Headquarters and Headquarters Company 14th (CAB) (134)	0	0	0	0
F Troop, 8th Cavalry (224)	0	0	4	0
71st Aviation Company (AH) (231)	0	9	0	0
116th Aviation Company (AH) (198)	0	0	0	0
174th Aviation Company (AH) (227)	3	23	0	0
176th Aviation Company (AH) (212)	0	0	4	0
756th Medical Detachment (8)	0	0	0	0

ENEMY FORCES

<u>Estimated Strength</u>	<u>Body Count</u>	<u>Probable Casualties</u>	<u>CAP</u>
35,000	13,000	12,000	UNK

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LISTING OF UNITS ASSIGNED AND ATTACHED

PARTICIPATING UNITS

Part I. Units assigned and recommended for award of the Valorous Unit Award.

<u>UNIT</u>	<u>PERIOD</u>	<u>PREVIOUS US UNIT DECORATIONS AND DATES</u>
Headquarters and Headquarters Company 14th (CAB)	8 February 1971 to 7 April 1971	Valorous Unit Award 30 March 1970 Valorous Unit Award 27 October 1969
F Troop, 8th Cavalry	8 February 1971 to 7 April 1971	Valorous Unit Award 22 October 1970
71st Aviation Company (AH)	8 February 1971 to 7 April 1971	Valorous Unit Award 30 March 1970 Valorous Unit Award 27 October 1969
116th Aviation Company (AH)	8 February 1971 to 7 April 1971	Valorous Unit Award 29 September 1970 Valorous Unit Award 23 April 1968 Valorous Unit Award 10 October 1967
174th Aviation Company (AH)	8 February 1971 to 7 April 1971	Valorous Unit Award 30 March 1970 Valorous Unit Award 27 October 1969
176th Aviation Company (AH)	8 February 1971 to 7 April 1971	Valorous Unit Award 12 August 1970 Valorous Unit Award 8 July 1970
756th Medical Detachment	8 February 1971 to 7 April 1971	Valorous Unit Award 30 March 1970 Valorous Unit Award 27 October 1969

Part II. Units attached and recommended for award of the Valorous Unit Award.

NONE

Part III. Units assigned but not recommended for award of the Valorous Unit Award.

NONE

Part IV. Units attached but not recommended for award of the Valorous Unit Award.

NONE

Inc 3

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PROPOSED CITATION**VALOROUS UNIT AWARD**

BY DIRECTION OF THE SECRETARY OF THE ARMY, UNDER THE PROVISIONS OF PARAGRAPH 292.1, AR 672-5-1, THE VALOROUS UNIT AWARD IS AWARDED THE FOLLOWING NAMED UNITS OF THE UNITED STATES ARMY FOR EXTRAORDINARY HEROISM WHILE ENGAGED IN MILITARY OPERATIONS DURING THE PERIOD INDICATED:

THE 14TH AVIATION BATTALION (COMBAT) AND ASSIGNED AND ATTACHED UNITS:

HEADQUARTERS AND HEADQUARTERS COMPANY 14TH AVIATION BATTALION (COMBAT) (SECOND OAK LEAF CLUSTER)

F TROOP 8TH CAVALRY (FIRST OAK LEAF CLUSTER)

71ST AVIATION COMPANY (AH) (SECOND OAK LEAF CLUSTER)

116TH AVIATION COMPANY (AH) (THIRD OAK LEAF CLUSTER)

174TH AVIATION COMPANY (AH) (SECOND OAK LEAF CLUSTER)

176TH AVIATION COMPANY (AH) (SECOND OAK LEAF CLUSTER)

756TH MEDICAL DETACHMENT (SECOND OAK LEAF CLUSTER)

THE CITATION READS AS FOLLOWS:

THE 14TH AVIATION BATTALION AND ITS ASSIGNED AND ATTACHED UNITS DISTINGUISHED THEMSELVES BY EXTRAORDINARY HEROISM WHILE ENGAGED IN MILITARY OPERATIONS FROM 9 FEBRUARY 1971 TO 7 APRIL 1971 IN THE KINGDOM OF LAOS. THE UNITS CONDUCTED NUMEROUS COMBAT ASSAULTS INTO AN AREA CONGESTED WITH ANTI-AIRCRAFT WEAPONS AND ARMOR. THE ENEMY GUNNERS WERE HIGHLY ACCURATE WITH THEIR WEAPONS AND WERE STRATEGICALLY LOCATED SO AS NOT TO OFFER ANY SECURE FLIGHT PATHS TO THE HELICOPTERS. ALTHOUGH HARASSSED BY THE INTENSE ENEMY FIRE, THE VALOROUS ELEMENTS CONTINUED TO FLY MISSION AFTER MISSION INTO LAOS. AS THE OPERATION NEARED COMPLETION THE ENEMY FIRE INTENSIFIED. DISPLAYING UNWAVERING COURAGE AND EXCEPTIONAL SKILL THE PERSONNEL OF THE BATTALION BEGAN TO EXTRACT THE BESIEGED ALLIED TROOPS. AN UNMERCIFUL ENEMY INFLICTED SEVERE DAMAGE TO NUMEROUS AIRCRAFT AND CONTINUALLY RAINED A HAIL OF ROCKET AND MORTAR FIRE INTO THE PICKUP ZONES. UNIT PERSONNEL WERE UNDAUNTED BY THE ENEMY FIRE AND EXPERTLY MANEUVERED THEIR AIRCRAFT INTO THE PICKUP ZONE TO EXTRACT THE HARD-PRESSED FRIENDLY TROOPS. THE DETERMINED AVIATORS REPEATEDLY ENTERED THE DANGEROUS BATTLEFIELD, ULTIMATELY EXTRACTED THE ENTIRE FRIENDLY FORCE AND CONTRIBUTED IMMENSURABLY TO THEIR SAFETY. THE UNYIELDING HEROISM AND DEVOTION TO DUTY DISPLAYED BY THE MEMBERS OF THE 14TH AVIATION BATTALION DURING THIS OPERATION ARE IN KEEPING WITH THE HIGHEST TRADITIONS OF THE MILITARY SERVICE AND REFLECT GREAT CREDIT UPON THEMSELVES AND THE ARMED FORCES OF THE UNITED STATES.

Inc 4

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STATEMENT
TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Reference letter dated 6 May 1971 Subject:

“Recommendation for Award of the Valorous Unit Award.”

I caused the referenced letter to be written, as I knew the situation at the time. However, I never signed it because I was advised that such a recommendation would be submitted by a senior officer involved directly in operation LAM SON 719. My letter was never submitted!

I relinquished command of the 16th Aviation Group (Combat) and departed at 0900 hours 20 May 1971 for a new assignment as G-4 MASSTER Fort Hood, Texas. I never gave the matter any more consideration.

In view of what did not happen, as it should have, I strongly agree that immediate action should be taken to rectify the situation.

I there fore submit this notarized statement accompanied by a signed copy of the referenced letter. I hope that this grave inequity is resolved in favor of the brave men of the 14th Aviation Battalion.

Benjamin S. Silver

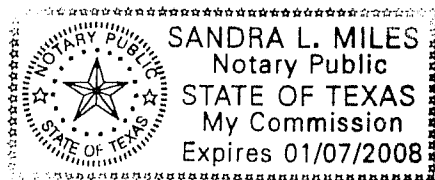
Benjamin S. Silver
Colonel (Retired) Infantry
United States Army

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

STATE OF TEXAS

COUNTY OF CORYELL

This instrument was acknowledged before me on April 12, 2005 by Benjamin S. Silver.



Sandra L. Miles
Notary Public, State of Texas

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
Headquarters, 16th Aviation Group (Combat)
APO San Francisco 96374

AVDF-ABCO

6 May 1971

SUBJECT: Recommendation for Award of the Valorous Unit Award


THRU: Commanding General
23d Infantry Division
APO 96374

Commanding General
XXIV Corps
APO 96349

TO: Commanding General
U.S. Army Vietnam
APO 96375

1. Under the provisions of USARV Regulation 672-3, I strongly recommend that the 14th Aviation Battalion be awarded the Valorous Unit Award, for their outstanding actions during Lamson 719 in the Kingdom of Laos during the period 8 February 1971 to 7 April 1971, inclusive.
2. The officers and men of the 14th Aviation Battalion (Combat), and their assigned and attached units, heroically distinguished themselves, in military operations in the Kingdom of Laos, against a fierce and highly trained enemy. Despite intense rockets, mortars, and small arms fire throughout the entire period of operation, the officers and men of the 14th Battalion continually, and without regard for their own safety, conducted numerous combat assaults and extractions against an enemy who was determined to stop them. By their display of unswerving courage and fortitude the officers and men of the 14th Battalion successfully extracted the friendly ground forces, at the conclusion of the operation, and contributed immeasurably to the success of the operation.

- 4 Incl
1. Narrative Description
 2. Summary of Strength and Casualties
 3. Listing of Units
 4. Proposed Citation


BENJAMIN S. SILVER
Colonel, Infantry
Commanding

NARRATIVE

The 14th CAB and its assigned and attached units distinguished themselves by extraordinary heroism while engaged in military operations in the Kingdom of Laos during the period 8 February 1971 to 7 April 1971. The officers and men displayed unwavering courage and professional competence in the face of a vastly superior enemy force while attempting to insert or extract friendly forces. The complete area was saturated with an estimated 35,000 man enemy force consisting mainly of anti aircraft and armor units, which reacted to the heliborne assaults with deadly accurate and intensely fierce anti aircraft fire. Once in the LZ, the vulnerable helicopters were subjected to a devastating density of rocket and mortar fire. As the operation progressed and the end was in sight some 25,000 friendly troops were positioning themselves for extraction. The heavy mortar, rocket, automatic weapons fire, and numerous large-scale ground attacks, spearheaded by tanks clearly made the area untenable. Although enemy gunners were well secured on strategic ground positions in command of the area, aerial extraction was necessary and the members of the 14th CAB once again responded to the emergency situation. While an unmerciful rain of hostile rocket, mortar, and automatic weapons fire poured into the paths of oncoming helicopters, unit personnel were undaunted by the fire and expertly maneuvered their ships into the pickup zones to extract the friendly forces. As airstrikes pounded enemy positions and gunships aggressively supported the lift helicopters the men of the command effectively completed numerous vital resupplies of ammunition and continued to extract the hard-pressed troops. Despite severe damage to numerous aircraft, the determined aviators repeatedly entered the dangerous battlefield, ultimately extracted the entire friendly force and contributed immeasurably to their safety. The extraordinary heroism and devotion to duty displayed by the members of the 14th CAB amidst the most ferocious and accurate fire thus far in the Vietnam war has proved that Army Aviation as it is today can withstand the enemy's best and emerge victorious. The actions of the officers and men of the 14th CAB during this operation are in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service and reflect great credit upon themselves, and the Armed Forces of the United States.

SUMMARY OF STRENGTH AND CASUALTIES

FRIENDLY FORCES

<u>Totals Assigned</u>	<u>KIA</u>	<u>WIA</u>	<u>MIA</u>	<u>CAP</u>
Headquarters and Headquarters Company 14th (CAB) (134)	0	0	0	0
F Troop, 8th Cavalry (224)	0	0	4	0
71st Aviation Company (AH) (231)	0	9	0	0
116th Aviation Company (AH) (198)	0	0	0	0
174th Aviation Company (AH) (227)	3	23	0	0
176th Aviation Company (AH) (212)	0	0	4	0
756th Medical Detachment (8)	0	0	0	0

ENEMY FORCES

<u>Estimated Strength</u>	<u>Body Count</u>	<u>Probable Casualties</u>	<u>CAP</u>
35,000	13,000	12,000	UNK

LISTING OF UNITS ASSIGNED AND ATTACHED

PARTICIPATING UNITS

Part I. Units assigned and recommended for award of the Valorous Unit Award.

<u>UNIT</u>	<u>PERIOD</u>	<u>PREVIOUS US UNIT DECORATIONS AND DATES</u>
Headquarters and Headquarters Company 14th (CAB)	8 February 1971 to 7 April 1971	Valorous Unit Award 30 March 1970 Valorous Unit Award 27 October 1969
F Troop, 8th Cavalry	8 February 1971 to 7 April 1971	Valorous Unit Award 22 October 1970
71st Aviation Company (AH)	8 February 1971 to 7 April 1971	Valorous Unit Award 30 March 1970 Valorous Unit Award 27 October 1969
116th Aviation Company (AH)	8 February 1971 to 7 April 1971	Valorous Unit Award 29 September 1970 Valorous Unit Award 23 April 1968 Valorous Unit Award 10 October 1967
174th Aviation Company (AH)	8 February 1971 to 7 April 1971	Valorous Unit Award 30 March 1970 Valorous Unit Award 27 October 1969
176th Aviation Company (AH)	8 February 1971 to 7 April 1971	Valorous Unit Award 12 August 1970 Valorous Unit Award 8 July 1970
756th Medical Detachment	8 February 1971 to 7 April 1971	Valorous Unit Award 30 March 1970 Valorous Unit Award 27 October 1969

Part II. Units attached and recommended for award of the Valorous Unit Award.

NONE

Part III. Units assigned but not recommended for award of the Valorous Unit Award.

NONE

Part IV. Units attached but not recommended for award of the Valorous Unit Award.

NONE

PROPOSED CITATION

VALOROUS UNIT AWARD

BY DIRECTION OF THE SECRETARY OF THE ARMY, UNDER THE PROVISIONS OF PARAGRAPH 202.1, AR 672-5-1, THE VALOROUS UNIT AWARD IS AWARDED TO THE FOLLOWING NAMED UNITS OF THE UNITED STATES ARMY FOR EXTRAORDINARY HEROISM WHILE ENGAGED IN MILITARY OPERATIONS DURING THE PERIOD INDICATED:

THE 14TH AVIATION BATTALION (COMBAT) AND ASSIGNED AND ATTACHED UNITS:

HEADQUARTERS AND HEADQUARTERS COMPANY 14TH AVIATION BATTALION (COMBAT) (SECOND OAK LEAF CLUSTER)
F TROOP 8TH CAVALRY (FIRST OAK LEAF CLUSTER)
71ST AVIATION COMPANY (AH) (SECOND OAK LEAF CLUSTER)
116TH AVIATION COMPANY (AH) (THIRD OAK LEAF CLUSTER)
174TH AVIATION COMPANY (AH) (SECOND OAK LEAF CLUSTER)
176TH AVIATION COMPNAV (AH) (SECOND OAK LEAF CLUSTER)
756TH MEDICAL DETACHMENT (SECOND OAK LEAF CLUSTER)

THE CITATION READS AS FOLLOWS:

THE 14TH AVIATION BATTALION AND ITS ASSIGNED AND ATTACHED UNITS DISTINGUISHED THEMSELVES BY EXTRAORDINARY HEROISM WHILE ENGAGED IN MILITARY OPERATIONS FROM 8 FEBRUARY 1971 TO 7 APRIL 1971 IN THE KINGDOM OF LAOS. THE UNIT CONDUCTED NUMEROUS COMBAT ASSAULTS INTO AREAS CONGESTED WITH ANTI-AIRCRAFT WEAPONS AND ARMOR. THE ENEMY GUNNERS WERE HIGHLY ACCURATE WITH THEIR WEAPONS AND WERE STRATEGICALLY LOCATED SO AS NOT TO OFFER ANY SECURE FLIGHT PATH TO THE HELICOPTERS. ALTHOUGH HARRASSED BY THE INTENSE ENEMY FIRE, THE VALOROUS ELEMENTS CONTINUED TO FLY MISSION AFTER MISSION INTO LAOS. AS THE OPERATION NEARED COMPLETION THE ENEMY FIRE INTENSIFIED. DISPLAYING UNWAVERING COURAGE AND EXCEPTIONAL SKILL, THE PERSONNEL OF THE BATTALION BEGAN TO EXTRACT THE BESIEGED ALLIED TROOPS. AN UNMERCIFUL ENEMY INFLICTED SEVERE DAMAGE TO NUMEROUS AIRCRAFT AND CONTINUALLY RAINED A HAIL OF ROCKET AND MORTAR FIRE INTO THE PICKUP ZONES. UNIT PERSONNEL WERE UNDAUNTED BY THE ENEMY FIRE AND EXPERTLY MANEUVERED THEIR AIRCRAFT INTO THE PICKUP ZONE TO EXTRACT THE HARD-PRESSED FRIENDLY TROOPS. THE DETERMINED AVIATORS REPEATEDLY ENTERED THE DANGEROUS BATTLEFIELD, ULTIMATELY EXTRACTED THE ENTIRE FRIENDLY FORCE AND CONTRIBUTED IMMEASURABLY TO THEIR SAFETY. THE UNYIELDING HEROISM AND DEVOTION TO DUTY DISPLAYED BY THE MEMBERS OF THE 14TH AVIATION BATTALION DURING THIS OPERATION ARE IN KEEPING WITH THE HIGHEST TRADITIONS OF THE MILITARY SERVICE AND REFLECT GREAT CREDIT UPON THEMSELVES AND THE ARMED FORCES OF THE UNITED STATES.

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

DAILY STAFF JOURNAL OR DUTY OFFICER'S LOG
For use of this form, see AR 220-15; the proponent agency is
Office of Deputy Chief of Staff for Military Operations.

PAGE NO. 2
NO. OF PAGES 3

ORGANIZATION OR INSTALLATION S-2 101st Avn Gp 101st Abn Div	LOCATION Gp Forward, RVN	PERIOD COVERED			
		FROM		TO	
		HOUR	DATE	HOUR	DATE
		0001	3 Mar 71	2400	3 Mar 71

ITEM NO.	TIME		INCIDENTS, MESSAGES, ORDERS, ETC.	ACTION TAKEN	INITIALS
	IN	OUT			
9	1410		0840H at YD195748, 1/A/1/501 individual detector - ated BBT consisting of 82MM mortar rds with a pressure type firing device in bush. Results: 3x US WIA(E).		WCF
10	1415		At 1030H at XD0766 sensors picked up vehicle and tank movement. 1130H more heavy vehicles and tank movement going south.		WCF
11	1415		At 1321 Gen Berry reported that LZ LCLO is very hot, with arty fire being received from N at 1312H, 1st UH1H into LZ at 1312H. Received heavy fire and exploded and burned. The A/C called off the insertion and A/C will return to PZ. A/C reports 23MM in vic. The insertion may go into another LZ near LoLo.		WCF
12	1420		At 031310H at XD533433 a friendly element is in heavy contact and is about to be overrun		WCF
13	1430		At 1400H at XD371334 2/17 Cav observed 15x- 20x trucks in 400M wide area. 5x trucks at center of mass grid		WCF
14	1440		Astro 20 reports that there are a total of 16x US personnel at LoLo. 1x US is KIA, and 15x alive. Of the 15x, 3x are WIA critical.		WCF
15	1515		Received 2x Arc light at following times and		WCF

TYPED NAME AND GRADE OF OFFICER OR OFFICIAL ON DUTY CONFIDENTIAL	SIGNATURE
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UTICH 101 007 015 12 12.74 32MM 24175 111

ORGANIZATION OR INSTALLATION		LOCATION		PERIOD COVERED			
				FROM		TO	
				HOUR	DATE	HOUR	DATE
S-2 101st Avn Cp 101st Abn Div		Cp Forward, RVN		0001	3 Mar 71	2400	3 Mar 71
ITEM NO.	TIME		INCIDENTS, MESSAGES, ORDERS, ETC.	ACTION TAKEN	II TI		
	IN	OUT					
15	Cont'd		locations: 031715H at XD315410 and at 031715H at XD375430.				
16	1640		Received word that 2x more birds have been hit and at least 1x US WIA.				
17	1720		Received word that a AH1G from D/158th had received hits in main rotor blade and horizon- tal stabilizer. Tail #577. Non-flyable.				
18	2100		FB Phu Loc (1st Rangers CP) is under ground attack. NFI				
20	2330		Summary: See attached sheet.				
21	2400		log Closed.				

TYPED NAME AND GRADE OF OFFICER OR OFFICIAL ON DUTY: WILLIAM C JOHNSON MSG INTELL S-2
 SIGNATURE: *William C Johnson*

DA FORM 1594 1 NOV 62

PREVIOUS EDITION OF THIS FORM IS OBSOLETE. U.S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE: 19

11	UH1H	161		XD431372	12.21.37.72 2 HITS 1
71	UH1H	383		XD431372	6 HITS Hooked to AT

CONFIDENTIAL

DAMAGED A/C for 3 MAR 71

UNIT	A/C TYPE	A/C NR	WIA	KIA	LOCATION	REMARKS
A/101	U.H.I.H	495			XD 431372	RETURN TO MS NON FLYABLE
A/101	U.H.I.H	049			XD 431372	" " " " "
A/101	U.H.I.H	511			XD 431372	" " " " "
A/101	U.H.I.H	641			XD 431372	" " " " FLYABLE
A/101	U.H.I.H	268			XD 431372	" " " " "
A/101	U.H.I.H	252	1		XD 431372	" " Eagle NON FLYABLE
A/101	U.H.I.H	261			XD 431372	DOWN AT LOLO CREW EXTRA
A/101	U.H.I.H	900			XD 431372	DOWN AT HARISANK NON FLYABLE
A/101	U.H.I.H	103			XD 440378	DOWN AT KHE SANH FLYABLE
B/101	U.H.I.H	341			XD 440378	RETURN TO MS. FLYABLE
C/101	U.H.I.H	735			XD 440378	RETURN TO MS. NON FLYABLE
B/158	U.H.I.H	425			XD 538349	1 HIT RD NON FLYABLE
B/158	U.H.I.H	326			XD 538349	2 HITS SIDE OF A/C FLYABLE
B/158	U.H.I.H	455			XD 538349	2 HITS T/B A SKID FLYABLE
B/158	U.H.I.H	812			XD 538349	2 HITS CONSOLE FLYABLE
B/158	U.H.I.H	894			XD 538349	1 HIT R door POST FLYABLE
D/158	A.H.I.G.	577			XD 354540	HIT MAIN SYNC. ELV. NON FLY
A-2/17	A.H.I.G.	697			XD 363354	HIT ROTOR FLYABLE
223/48	U.H.I.C.	097	1		XD 431372	SA 12.7 4 HITS NON FLYABLE
48	U.H.I.C.	520			XD 371385	3 HIT T/B PILOTS SEAT ELY
48	U.H.I.C.	649			XD 431372	DOWN DANG NG NON FLYABLE
48	U.H.I.H	388			XD 431372	6 HITS HOURED TO QT
71	U.H.I.H	761			XD 431372	12.7.37MM 2 HITS P/H QT
71	U.H.I.H	383			XD 431372	6 HITS HOURED TO QT
71	U.H.I.H	568	1		XD 431372	2 HITS QT FLYABLE
71	U.H.I.H	496			XD 431372	4 HITS QT FLYABLE
71	U.H.I.H	826			XD 431372	2 HITS CONT MSA FLYABLE

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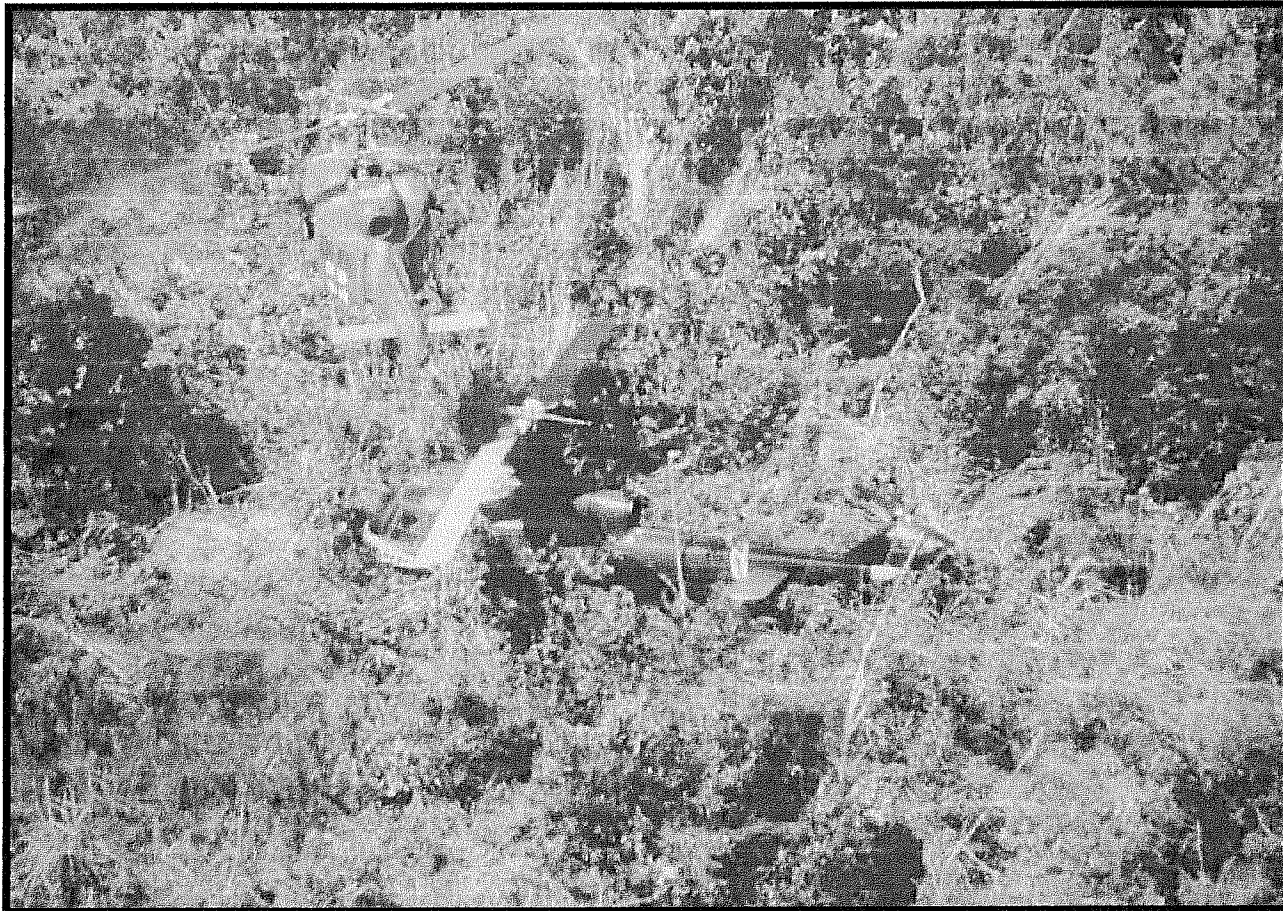
UNIT	AC TYPE	AC NR	WIA	KIA	MIA	LOCATION	REMARKS
71	UHIH	357				XD431372	5 HITS FLOUNTO GT NON FLYABLE
71	UHIH	426				XD431372	3 HITS HOOKED TO GT NON FLYABLE
71	UHIH	376				XD431372	5 HITS RETURNED NON FLYABLE
174	UHIH	671	1			XD432373	5 HITS NON FLYABLE
174	UHIH	953	1			XD432373	1 HIT FLYABLE
174	UHIH	191				XD640380	1 HIT NON FLYABLE
174	UHIH	092				XD631372	DOWN CREW EXT NON FLYABLE
174	UHIH	533				XD432373	2 HITS FLYABLE
174	UHIH	170	1			XD640380	DOWN CREW EXT NON FLYABLE

DECLASSIFIED
 Authority NND 873541
 By [Signature] Date 1/2/98

REPRODUCED AT THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES

DESTROYED A/C 3 MAR 71

UNIT	AC TYPE	AC NR	WIA	KIA	MIA	LOCATION	REMARKS
14/71	UHIH	269	4			XD431372	DESTROYED CREW EXTRA
			MEMPHIS				
71	UHIH	358	4			XD431372	DESTROYED CREW EXTRA
			42 FORTENBERG				
223/48	UHIH	177	4			XD650299	DESTROYED CREW EXTRA
B/158	UHIH	279	1	2		XD538349	DESTROYED CREW EXTRA
14/174	UHIH	639			4	XD588388	DESTROYED
A/101	UHIH	189				XD431372	DESTROYED CREW EXTRA
A/101	UHIH	720				XD431372	DESTROYED CREW EXTRA



Shark 161, "Surfer," down in Laos with Howard "Mo" Modjeski in his DUSTOFF "Iron Butterfly" hovering over the Shark. Unable to land because of the bamboo, Mo's crew had to hoist them up. Photo nervously taken by Fred Thompson, 1971.

COMBAT ASSAULT on LZ LOLO

Photograph following the Assault on March 3, 1971

The following photograph of LZ Lolo was on the cover of the 1994 edition of the Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association (VHPA) Membership Directory. Following the first color photo, taken two days after the initial assault, there is an explanation of what is in the photo, followed with an annotated black-and-white reproduction of the photo.



VHPA member Mike Sloniker has spent countless hours searching Cliff Whiting's pictures of FSB LOLO, which were most likely taken on the afternoon of March 5, 1971. Mike talked to over 20 "LOLO veterans," listened to tapes of radio transmissions, collected copies of a dozen "LOLO photos," consulted Defense Intelligence Agency material and the VHPA KIA/MIA database, and read numerous After-Action reports. The notes on this page summarize the events of March 3rd -- the initial assault of LZ LOLO.



A -- WO Gary Arne, Rattler 23, 71st AHC, flew UH-1 H #67-17269, the first aircraft shot down. He was Chalk 2 in the initial assault. The tail rotor was shot out on final, he lost hydraulics, and the engine quit. The Huey was skewered on a broken tree. The crew was evacuated that afternoon.

B -- 71st AHC, UH-1H #69-15358, was Chalk 4 in the initial assault and the second aircraft shot down. The CE was Will Fortenberry but the names of the other crew members are not known.

C -- WO Robert Morris, Comanchero 39, A/1 01 AHB, flew the third aircraft that was forced down during the initial assault. The aircraft caught fire after they had dropped off the ARVN troops. Knowing there were no friendly bases nearby, Morris returned to LOLO. They were streaming fuel and had other battle damage when they landed but the fire had gone out. Many believe this Huey was retrieved from

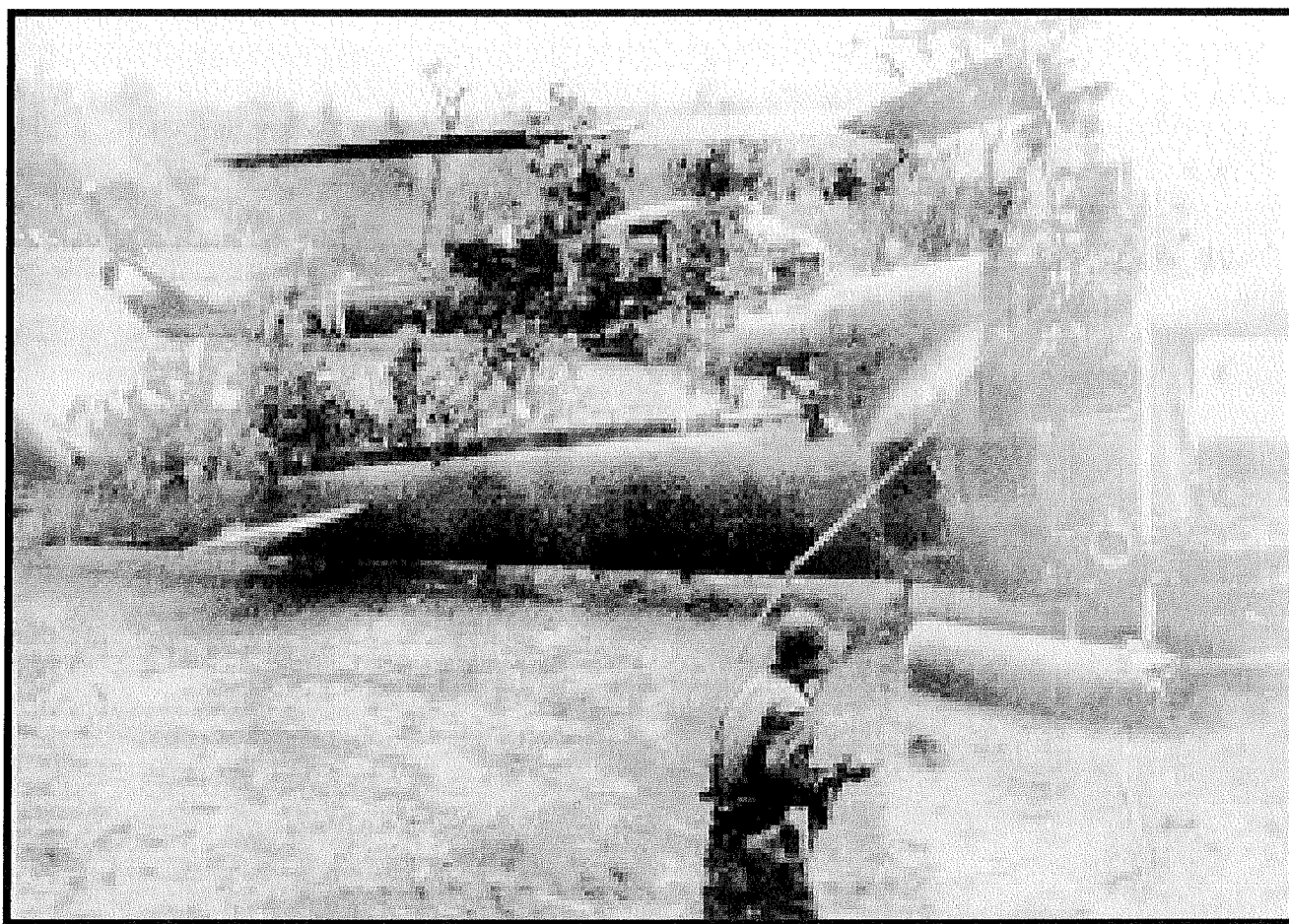
LOLO on the 5th or the 6th. The crew was evacuated that afternoon.

D -- CW2 John Gale, Comanchero 14, A/101 AHB, flew UH-1H #67-17720, the fourth aircraft shot down. He was Chalk 18 (the 8th Comanchero) in the assault. They took heavy fire, especially on the right side, during the approach and caught fire. CPT Gerald Crews, the copilot on this ship, was a former Special Forces officer and helped organize the ARVN, the artillery, and air strikes around the base. SP4 Boop, the CE, took several photos on LOLO including a striking series of three showing 720 burning.

E -- WO Manuel Catzoela, a Lancer, B/1 58 AHB, flew the fifth UH-1H downed on LOLO. His aircraft was hit by an RPG as they started to leave the LZ and burned rather quickly. 1LT Charles R. Anderson, the copilot, was hit in the head by the main rotor and died on the spot as he left the aircraft and started running toward the trench. Their CE, possibly SP4 Paul Sgambati, received a serious head wound during the approach. He was unconscious when they crashed, was evacuated that afternoon, but died soon thereafter. They were the only LOLO fatalities.

F -- A CH-47 landing to lavender smoke with possibly the sixth 105mm howitzer.

G -- The 174th AHC's gun platoon, the Sharks, lost two UH-1 Cs, #66-15094 and #66-15169 during action near LOLO. Most everyone involved believe the gunships crashed on the face of the escarpment and not on LOLO. The only explanation for this white area is that a bomb had shattered one of the boulders.



In this bottom picture, an NVA soldier is clearly approaching the Shark with his rocket-propelled grenade (RPG) at the ready. Note the 19-shot rocket pod laying on the ground. While it is very difficult to see on this scanned photo, the dark spots directly above the aft end of the rocket pod, on the side of the engine cowling in front of the exhaust stack, are several rather large holes from a .51 Caliber antiaircraft gun- Mike Sloniker/Jim McDaniel



HEADQUARTERS, 101ST AIRBORNE DIVISION (AIRMOBILE)
Office of the Assistant Division Commander
APO 96383

AVDG-AC

24 April 1971

SUBJECT: Final Report-Airmobile Operations in Support of Operation
LAMSON 719

Commanding General
101st Airborne Division (Airmobile)
APO 96383

1. In compliance with Letter, AVDG-GC, Headquarters, 101st Airborne Division (Airmobile), 25 February 1971, subject: Letter of Instructions, Airmobile Operations Study Group (Inclosure 1), the final report is forwarded for review and approval.
2. This report records and analyzes the history of airmobile operations conducted by the 101st Airborne Division (Airmobile), and those units under its operational control, in support of the Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces during LAMSON 719. The bases of the analysis contained in this report are official records and journals, personal experiences and opinions of those directly involved in the operation on a daily basis, and professional seminars conducted during the operation. The principal focus of this report is on US Army aviation support to RVNAF during their operations in Laos. The report covers the period 8 February 1971, date of the initial airmobile combat assaults into Laos, through 6 April 1971, the date of the concluding airmobile raid into Laos. Major emphasis is placed on the period 8 February to 24 March, the date of the withdrawal of RVNAF forces from Laos.
3. The Final Report-Airmobile Operations in Support of Operation LAMSON 719 is presented in two volumes. Volume I, the decision maker's volume, summarizes salient points and observations concerning airmobile operations in support of LAMSON 719. Volume II, the staff officer's volume, contains detailed records, facts, and commanders' observations appropriate.

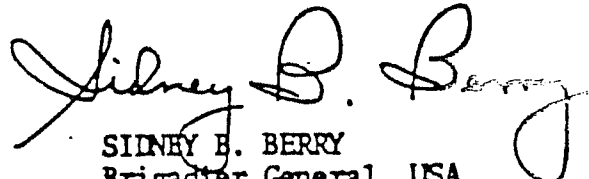
AVDG-AC

24 April 1971

SUBJECT: Final Report-Airmobile Operations in Support of Operation
LAMSON 719.

4. Names and positions of members of the Steering Committee, Working Group, and participants in the work of the Airmobile Operations Study Group are at inclosure 2.

2 Incl
as


SIDNEY B. BERRY
Brigadier General, USA
Assistant Division Commander

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5. Enemy Strengths/Disposition

Enemy forces in and near the operational area prior to the initiation of LAMSON 719 on 8 February 1971 were estimated to total 22,000. Of this total, 13,000 were in main line combat units and 9,000 were primarily engaged in supporting, maintaining and defending the extensive infiltration networks. Later, during the peak of enemy activity in early March, it is estimated that the enemy had committed approximately 36,000 troops total to counter LAMSON 719 operations. This figure includes the reversion of the infiltration support troops to their secondary combat role. Of major importance was the increasing density, mobility and sophistication of the anti-aircraft defenses used by the NVA to counter the airmobility of LAMSON 719. Particularly effective was the emplacement of these weapons very close to RVNAF forces; this hugging tactic made neutralizing fires difficult if not in some cases impossible. Resupply and extraction missions became extremely hazardous. Detailed discussions of this threat and its effect can be found in Annex A (Intelligence) and throughout this report. In addition LAMSON 719 resulted in the third confirmed appearance of NVA armor against FWMAF and RVNAF. Unlike the first two armor engagements, the NVA used armor in LAMSON 719 in both a fire support role and as part of a coordinated tank/infantry assault, (i.e., the attack on FB 31).

E. (C) XXIV CORPS AND I CORPS CONCEPT OF OPERATIONS

1. I Corps forces conducted all combat operations on the ground in Laos. The maneuver units were provided light and medium artillery support by Vietnamese artillery units. XXIV Corps, assisted by 7th AF, provided support and assistance to I Corps consisting of:

a. Ground and airmobile operations by infantry, armor and airmobile units to secure Quang Tri Province in Vietnam for the staging and supplying of Vietnamese forces.

b. All aerial lift, escort, armed reconnaissance and aerial rocket artillery for I Corps operations in Laos.

c. Heavy artillery at the Vietnamese-Laotian border for I Corps units in range.

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a. Command and Control

Command Officer, 101st Aviation Group commanded all assault, assault support, and aerial weapons helicopter units. Commanding officer, 2d Squadron, 17th Cavalry commanded all air cavalry units. Commanding Officer, 4th Battalion (Aerial Artillery), 77th Artillery commanded all aerial rocket artillery. Commanding Officer, Division Support Command was responsible for medical evacuation operations. Commanding Officer, 101st Aviation Group employed his staff and his headquarters as the central planning and coordinating headquarters for all aviation activities in support of LAMSON 719. The Assistant Division Commander (Operations) was the Division Commander's on-the-ground representative and was overall coordinator of all aviation units supporting LAMSON 719. The collocation at Khe Sanh of the Division's advance headquarters and the tactical headquarters of the 101st Aviation Group facilitated and simplified command control. Located nearby were tactical headquarters from all supporting helicopter battalions, the aerial rocket artillery, the air cavalry, the Division Support Command and a control headquarters for medical evacuation helicopters. This facilitated the holding of briefings daily at 2000 hours at which was covered a review of the day's airmobile operations, a preview of the next day's operations, and discussion and policy guidance as appropriate. The evening briefings were essential to the conduct of airmobile operations in support of LAMSON 719.

b. Assault Helicopters (UH-1H)

An assault helicopter battalion provided direct support to each major RVNAF unit. The 158th Assault Helicopter Battalion supported the 1st ARVN Airborne Division, Ranger Group, and Armored Brigade. The 223rd Combat Assault Battalion supported the 1st ARVN Infantry Division. The 14th Combat Assault Battalion supported the Vietnamese Marine Division. The direct support helicopter battalion planned and controlled all combat assaults and general support missions for the supported unit. Each assault helicopter battalion kept an aviation liaison officer full time with the supported unit, and each battalion commander visited the commander of the supported unit at least once daily. Regardless of what aviation units provided helicopters to support of RVNAF unit, the direct support assault helicopter battalion headquarters always commanded the operations.

101st AHB

A/101 (20 UH-1H)
B/101 (20 UH-1H)
C/101 (20 UH-1H)
D/101 (12 AH-1G)
* 235 AWC (21 AH-1G, 3 UH-1H)

158th AHB

A/158 (20 UH-1H)
B/158 (20 UH-1H)
C/158 (20 UH-1H)
D/158 (12 AH-1G)
* D/227 (12 AH-1G)

14th CAB

* 71 Co (23 UH-1H, 8 UH-1C)
* 174 Co (23 UH-1H, 8 UH-1C)
* 116 Co (23 UH-1H, 8 UH-1C) (5-7, 22-24 March)

223d CAB

* 48 Co (23 UH-1H, 8 UH-1C)
* 173 Co (23 UH-1H, 8 UH-1C)
* 282 Co (23 UH-1H, 8 UH-1C) (5-7, 22-24 March)
* 238 Co (12 UH-1C)

159th ASHB

A/159 (16 CH-47)
B/159 (16 CH-47)
C/159 (16 CH-47)
478 Co (10 CH-54)
* 179 Co (16 CH-47)
* 132 Co (16 CH-47)
* 463 Sqdn (16 CH-53)

163d GS Co (10 UH-1H, 12 OH-6A)

* OPCON to 101st Avn Div (Ambl)

FIGURE II-1 (U) Task Organization, 101st Aviation Group (U)

2d Squadron, 17th Cavalry

A 2/17 (8 UH-1H, 9 AH-1G, 10 OH-6)
-- C-2/17 (8 UH-1H, 9 AH-1G, 10 OH-6)
* B 7/1 (8 UH-1H, 9 AH-1G, 10 OH-6)
* C 7/17 (8 UH-1H, 9 AH-1G, 10 OH-6)

4th Bn (Aer Arty), 77th Arty

Btry (12 AH-1G)
Btry (12 AH-1G)

* OPCON to 101st Abn Div (Ambl)

FIGURE II-2 (U) Additional Division Aviation Committed (U)

OH-58	5
OH-6A	59
UH-1C	60
UH-1H	312
AH-1G	117
CH-47	80
CH-53	16
CH-54	<u>10</u>
TOTAL	659

(Totals reflect command and control aircraft from battalion headquarters not elsewhere indicated)

FIGURE II-3 (U) Total Aircraft Assets Available to Support LAMSON 719 (U)

SECTION IV

AIRMOBILE OPERATIONS IN LAOS.

A. (U) CONCEPT OF OPERATIONS.

1. Unit Alignment

An Assault Helicopter Battalion was placed in direct support of each major ARVN unit. This positive orientation was designed to facilitate planning, coordination, and execution of combat operations while simultaneously realizing an increasing degree of confidence and professionalism between the US helicopter battalions and the ARVN units they were supporting. The 223d CAB was placed in direct support of the 1st ARVN Inf Div. All airmobile assaults conducted by the 1st ARVN Inf Div were controlled by the 223d CAB. Additionally, all UH-1H general support aircraft required by the 1st ARVN Inf Div were provided by the 223d CAB. The 158th AHB was placed in direct support of the 1st ARVN Airborne Division and the 1st ARVN Ranger Group. All combat assault and general aviation support requirements for these two units were controlled by the 158th AHB. The 14th CAB was placed in direct support of the VNMC Division and controlled all combat assaults and general support missions for the division.

2. Aircraft Allocation

Based on mission requirements, the assets of the twelve assault helicopter companies and four aerial weapons companies were allocated to the three assault helicopter battalions. Additionally, assets were reallocated during the day as requirements changed. The only constant in aircraft allocation was the direct support battalion headquarters which habitually worked with the designated ARVN units. Aviation companies of the various aviation battalions performed well, regardless of the controlling battalion headquarters.

3. Heavy Lift Support

The Commanding Officer, 159th ASHB was charged with the responsibility for coordinating and performing all heavy lift missions. A liaison officer from the 159th ASHB was assigned to each major ARVN unit. Additionally, a pathfinder team from the 101st Aviation Group was placed at all resupply bases in South Vietnam.

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the effectiveness of the air strikes. The use of smoke ships was another type of TAC air employment. The Air Force had smoke available on call. The smoke was used to help conceal the aircraft enroute and on approach to the LZ.

(e) Artillery fires were available from US and RVN-
AF units. Preplanned artillery was fired on suspected enemy locations before and during heavy lift efforts. The 159th Avn Bn AMC closely coordinated with the supported unit to insure accurate and timely artillery fire on the desired locations. The artillery was fired into areas not being covered by the ARA or TAC air.

(2) CO, 159th Aviation Battalion Comments

The 159th Avn Bn accomplished its mission of medium and heavy lift support to LAMSON 719. The proper use of all available fire support facilitated this accomplishment. On numerous occasions aircraft were forced to abort the mission because of heavy antiaircraft and indirect fire on the LZ's. After applying artillery and TAC air, renewed attempts were made to accomplish the mission. On very few occasions, the enemy was able to prevent the aircraft from getting their cargo onto the LZ. The rare times the enemy was successful were a result either of effective long range artillery or exceptionally heavy direct fire, both small arms and antiaircraft fire, all around a fire base. When activity became this intense, even the less vulnerable UH-1H aircraft were unsuccessful in resupply attempts, such as occurred at Fire Base DELTA in the last days of the operation. An adequate number of gunships was not always available because of combat damage, maintenance problems, and combat assault requirements. The large number of fire bases demanded more than one flight of heavy lift aircraft to accomplish all missions. Additionally, to effectively use the cargo aircraft, it was desired to keep gunships on station continually. This was not possible at times and resulted in some missions being delayed while the gunships refueled. A strong recommendation for future operations of this nature would be to attach a gun company to the assault support helicopter battalion. This would facilitate command and control, briefings, and coordination, making that unit directly responsive to the needs of CH-47 and CH-54 aircraft for all types of missions.

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N. (C) PERSONNEL SUMMARY

1. Flying Hours

In mid-February it became apparent that the 101st Airborne Division (Airmobile) aviation units and units OPCON to the 101st Aviation Group could not maintain the level of flight hours required to support LAMSON 719 and at the same time adhere to the USARV flight time regulation. This regulation requires both aviators and enlisted crew members to be grounded after flying 140 hours in a 30 day period. A request to waive this regulation was forwarded from the 101st Airborne Division (Airmobile) to USARV. A waiver of the regulation was granted to units directly supporting LAMSON 719 (USARV msg DTG 040939Z Mar 71). Although the mandatory grounding at the 140 hour level was waived, the flight surgeon continued to evaluate individuals and recommended grounding when fatigue was evident. Fatigue was present in individual aviators and crew members but was not a significant problem at any time during the operation. Although all air crews experienced increased hours during the operation the only significant increase in flight time above the 140 hour level was among the key personnel, particularly at the section and platoon level.

2. Casualties

In 45 days of combat flying over Laos a total of 210 casualties were incurred by US Army and USMC helicopter crews; of this total 152 were WIA, 26 KIA and 32 MIA. The average casualties per day were 3.4 WIA, .58 KIA and .71 MIA. During the entire operation a daily average of 161 aircraft and 575 air crew personnel were exposed to combat flight. An average of 4.7 crew members were injured or killed per day, which is eight tenths of one per cent of the total personnel exposed each day. Further examination of casualty figures indicates that for each 1000 hours flown during the 45 days, slightly over five aviators or crew members became casualties. Sorties flown in Laos were recorded separately from the sorties flown in Vietnam. The casualty rate for the total sorties (both in Laos and Vietnam) flown during the operation was less than two casualties per 1000 sorties flown as compared to nearly five casualties for each 1000 sorties flown in Laos.

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2. (C) COMBAT DAMAGE

1. General

Combat damage information was collected for helicopter assets of the 101st Airborne Division (Airmobile) which operated in the LAMSON 719 environment. There were 644 aircraft damage incidents to 451 different aircraft and a total of 90 aircraft lost. Annex D contains the chronological summary of this data further organized by series helicopter. Reviewing this data, preliminary conclusions were reached regarding the damage helicopters received from the enemy.

2. Light Observation Helicopters

Commanders occasionally limited the role of the OH-6A in the hostile antiaircraft environment of LAMSON 719. There were 22 of these aircraft which received battle damage on 34 different occasions. Two-thirds of the incidents of damage occurred as these aircraft were flying within 100 feet of the ground. Six of these aircraft were reported lost; one to RPG, one to small arms fire, one to antiaircraft fire, three to 12.7mm fire.

3. Attack, Utility, and Medium Lift Helicopters

The AH-1G, UH-1C, UH-1H, and CH-47 aircraft were studied. Graphs at Figures IV-37 through IV-40 show the number of these aircraft hit versus lost, by Julian Date.

a. The data base shows that 101 different AH-1G aircraft were damaged on 152 occasions. Eighteen were lost; seven to small arms fire, six to 12.7mm fire, three to mortar fire, and two to enemy rockets at Khe Sanh. Eighty-one hit occasions involved AH-1G aircraft in the target attack phase of flight. This durable aircraft was hit by 12.7mm fire on 71 occasions and survived 92 per cent of these.

b. Forty-eight different UH-1C aircraft were damaged on 66 different occasions. There were twelve lost; four to small arms fire, four to 12.7mm fire, one to RPG, two to sachel charges, and one by unknown enemy fire received in the target attack phase of

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Flight. - Forty-two hit occasions involved aircraft in the target attack phase of flight. - This aircraft was hit by 12.7mm fire on 27 different occasions, surviving 85 per cent of these. These aircraft lacked the performance characteristics of the AH-1G.

c. Two hundred and thirty-seven UH-1H aircraft were damaged on 344 different occasions. Forty-nine aircraft were lost; sixteen to small arms fire, fifteen to 12.7mm fire, ten to mortar fire, two to rocket fire, two to anti-aircraft artillery fire, two to RPG, and two to enemy artillery fire. Thirty-nine losses occurred in conjunction with operations in and around the landing or pickup zone. One hundred and seventy-four hit occasions involved 12.7mm fire. Sixty-one per cent of the aircraft damaged were hit within 100 feet of the ground; of these, 77 per cent were landing, landed, or departing an LZ or PZ. Nearly twenty-nine per cent of all the UH-1H losses occurred on 3 March and 20 March 1971, with respective operations to assault LOLO and to extract forces near BROWN. Altogether there were 84 incidents of damage to UH-1H helicopters on these two days.

d. Thirty CH-47 aircraft were damaged on 33 different occasions. Three were lost; one when hit by mortars, one after receiving battle damage involving an engine, the third after the hydraulic system was hit by small arms fire while the aircraft was enroute.

4. Heavy Lift Helicopters

Fourteen CH-53 aircraft were hit by enemy fire. Two were lost; one when hit by mortar fire while hovering, the other enroute to its home station after having apparently received damage to the main rotor system. Only one CH-54 aircraft was damaged. It was struck by mortar fragments while at Khe Sanh.

5. Combat Exposure

Using sortie information from the Aviation Statistical Summary, combat damage rates were established and then compared for aircraft operations over Laos and the Republic of Vietnam, during LAMSON 719. This comparison showed that the threat of damage was thirteen times greater when flying in Laos. One incident of damage occurred

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c. Thousands of tons of ammunition, POL and other supplies and equipment were destroyed by LAMSON 719 forces including US air assets. In addition to the destruction of these stockpiles, supplies from the caches of BA 604 were at least partially consumed by the NVA forces opposing LAMSON 719. Initial reports of supplies and equipment destroyed or captured include over 4,000 individual weapons; more than 1,500 crew served weapons; 20,000 tons of ammunition; 1,200 tons of rice; 106 tanks; 76 artillery pieces; and 405 trucks. The effectiveness of B-52 strikes, TAC air, helicopter gunships and artillery is further indicated by over 9,700 secondary explosions obtained. A significant supply facility destroyed during the operation was a fuel pipeline. This pipeline was severed in numerous places by both ground and air elements to include the destruction of three pumping stations.

2. Destruction of Enemy Forces

Enemy personnel losses were very heavy. While these losses can eventually be replaced, the requirement to replace losses in such regiments as the 1st VC, 29th, 36th, 64th, 102d, and 803d will in all probability draw off replacement personnel programmed for other units. Combined air-ground operations in Base Area 604 resulted in a reported total of 13,914 enemy killed in action. Air and ground attacks inside the five depot areas reportedly accounted for 5,357 of these casualties. An additional 69 enemy soldiers were captured.

3. Interdiction of Lines of Communication

As a minimum, it can accurately be stated that the lines of communication in Base Area 604 were severed, and that supplies and equipment ceased to move south through this area during the inclusive dates of the operation. This is a significant point, in that in past years the enemy has reached his peak efficiency in moving resources south during the months of February and March. Additionally, the detailed knowledge obtained concerning the locations of depots, trail networks, truck parks and the fuel pipeline facility will permit more precise targeting in the future.

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