

CONFIDENTIAL
 DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
 HEADQUARTERS, 52D COMBAT AVIATION BATTALION
 APO San Francisco 96318
 "FLYING DRAGONS"

AVGD-CC

10 December 1967

SUBJECT: After Action Report, Operation MAC ARTHUR (AO SPAATZ), 25 October - 30 November 1967

TO: See Distribution

1. (C) GENERAL: This report covers Operation MAC ARTHUR (AO SPAATZ) in the vicinity of DAK TO, Kontum Province, Republic of Vietnam, for the period 25 October - 30 November 1967.

a. Command Headquarters. The command headquarters, from the standpoint of aviation operations, was the 17th Combat Aviation Group.

b. Mission. The mission of the 52d Combat Aviation Battalion (FLYING DRAGONS) was to provide aviation support to the 1st Brigade, 4th Infantry Division and its attached and supporting elements within the confines of AO SPAATZ (see inclosure 1).

c. Participating Units.

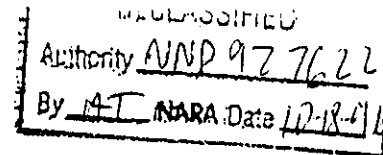
(1) Units organic to the 52d Combat Aviation Battalion, commanded by LTC Edward P Lukert Jr, which participated in Operation MAC ARTHUR, are as follows:

Headquarters, 52d Combat Aviation Battalion
 57th Assault Helicopter Company
 119th Assault Helicopter Company
 155th Assault Helicopter Company (-)
 170th Assault Helicopter Company
 189th Assault Helicopter Company (-)
 179th Assault Support Helicopter Company

(2) Supporting detachments organic to units in paragraph 1c(1), which supported the operation, were:

545th Transportation Detachment
 70th Signal Detachment
 94th Medical Detachment
 405th Transportation Detachment
 448th Signal Detachment
 755th Medical Detachment
 402nd Transportation Detachment
 604th Transportation Detachment

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6th Signal Detachment
615th Transportation Detachment
822nd Signal Detachment

(3) Additional aviation support elements, OPCON to the 52d CAB during Operation MAC ARTHUR, were:

Gun Platoon, 192nd Assault Helicopter Company
180th Assault Support Helicopter Company
196th Assault Support Helicopter Company
213th Assault Support Helicopter Company
243rd Assault Support Helicopter Company

2. (C) INTELLIGENCE:

a. INTSUMS pertaining to Operation MAC ARTHUR were published as early as 15 October 1967, containing reports showing the build-up of enemy forces in preparation for the Battle of DAK TO. However, taken as they occurred, the reports were not significant until on or about 29 October when they began to indicate a pattern.

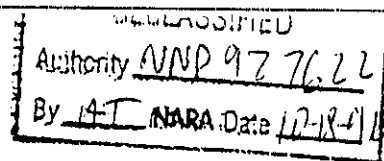
(1) During the period 15-21 October, there were several reports of small arms fire directed at aircraft in an area 20 kilometers (km) northeast of DAK TO. TAN CANH City (4 km northeast of DAK TO) received 5 rounds of mortar fire.

(2) 22-29 October, contact was made with an unidentified company size unit 8 km southeast of DAK TO. Heavy trail building activity was reported 30 km northwest of DAK TO. An agent reported that a 4000 man force would use the trails indicated to move into KONTUM Province.

(3) From 30-31 October, an agent reported the 24th NVA Regiment in an area 25 km northwest of DAK TO. A Special Forces vehicle hit a mine 12 km northwest of DAK TO.

(4) During the period 1-7 November, several mines were detonated along Highway 14, between DAK TO and KONTUM City. Ground contacts took place daily in an area West and South of DAK TO. The National Police reported extensive propaganda and anti-government lectures throughout KONTUM and PLEIKU Provinces. They also reported plans to cut Highway 14 and hit KONTUM with rockets and mortars. NVA Sgt Vu Hung, 66th NVA Regiment, rallied at DAK KRI Village, near DAK TO. He gave locations and battle plans for the 66th, 32nd, 24th and 174th Regiments. He also mentioned the 40th Heavy Artillery Regiment. These units were reported by Sgt Vu Hung to be deployed in the vicinity of DAK TO, and planned to rocket DAK TO and KONTUM and overrun DAK TO.

(5) From 8-14 November, savage fighting occurred in the DAK TO area, with almost continuous heavy contact. 8-10 November, contact centered 7-15 km westsouthwest of DAK TO. After the 10th, the heaviest concentration of activity was approximately 15-20 km westsouthwest of DAK TO.



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(6) On 15 November, the second phase of the DAK TO battle began. From 15-21 November, heavy contact continued. Enemy troops seemed to be well entrenched. Their objective seemed to be an attempt to inflict as many US casualties as possible, rather than attempting to overrun DAK TO itself. Units mentioned in paragraph 2a(4) had by now been confirmed in contact.

(7) During the period 22-28 November, enemy activity decreased significantly. In what appeared to be an attempt to divert US Forces from DAK TO, the enemy began to increase ambush and harassing activities in the KONTUM City, PLEIKU area. KONTUM City was mortared on the 27th. The 32nd, 66th and 174th Regiments were badly mauled and attempted to pull back and regroup and resupply, with the 24th remaining in contact northeast of DAK TO.

3. (C) OPERATIONS:

a. The 52d CAB was the principle supporting aviation element during Operation M.C. ARTHUR. The battalion's normal daily operational commitment to the 4th Infantry Division was 22 UH-1Hs, 10 UH-1Cs and 7 OH-47s, the majority of which was allocated to the 1st Brigade at DAK TO.

b. Significant Events. A day-by-day account of significant events is listed below. Due to the heat of battle and the maximum effort required of the operation, only the most important events are recorded. Single ship operations and miscellaneous missions will only be reflected in the overall statistics.

(1) 25 October 67 - 170th Assault Helicopter Company (AHC) participated in a combat assault (CA), lifting the 1/8th Inf and 1/22nd Inf, for a total of 550 passengers (PAX) and 150 sorties. 119th AHC moved a portion of the 1/12th Inf, totaling 54 PAX in 20 sorties.

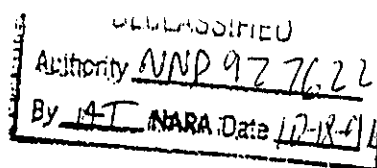
(2) 26 October 67 - 170th AHC conducted a CA, lifting the 1/8th Inf, totaling 225 PAX and 143 sorties. 119th AHC conducted a final extraction for the 3/12th Inf, totaling 100 PAX.

(3) 27 October 67 - 170th AHC conducted a CA for the 3/12th Inf, lifting 132 PAX in 40 sorties. 119th AHC conducted a CA, lifting 108 PAX; then conducted a final extraction for 3/8th Inf, totaling 261 PAX.

(4) 28 October 67 - 170th AHC participated in a CA for the 1/8th Inf.

(5) 30 October 67 - 170th AHC conducted a CA for 3/12th Inf, totaling 254 PAX in 158 sorties.

(6) 31 October 67 - 170th AHC conducted a CA for 1st Bde lifting 72 PAX in 45 sorties.

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(7) 3 November 67 - 170th AHC conducted a CA for the 3/8th Inf, lifting 264 PAX in 111 sorties; followed by 4 assaults for the 3/12th, totaling 249 PAX in 105 sorties. The 119th then assaulted with the 1/12th, airlifting 211 PAX.

(8) 6 November 67 - 170th AHC conducted a CA for the 2/504th Abn, lifting 120 PAX in 65 sorties. Heavy enemy fire was encountered in the landing zone (LZ). 1 UH-1H received 5 hits and 1 crewman was wounded.

(9) 7 November 67 - 170th AHC participated in a CA for the 1st Bde.

(10) 9 November 67 - 170th AHC conducted a CA with the 3/8th Inf, lifting 121 PAX in 54 sorties. Aircraft received light small arms fire approaching the LZ. As aircraft were departing the LZ, heavy mortar fire was received. 1 UH-1H was hit and destroyed, wounding 1 crewman. The 170th then assaulted with elements of the 3/8th Inf, lifting 162 PAX in 67 sorties. That same day, the 119th lifted B/ 24th CIDG, totaling 130 PAX.

(11) 10 November 67 - 119th AHC lifted a 4th Div element, totaling 60 PAX. 1 UH-1C was shot down while providing covering fire.

(12) 11 November 67 - 119th AHC conducted a CA for the 3/12th Inf, totaling 120 PAX.

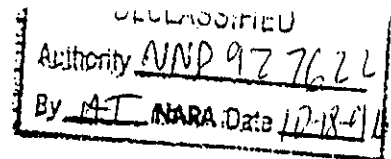
(13) 12 November 67 - 119th AHC conducted a CA for the 1/8th Inf, lifting 180 PAX. Sniper fire was received in and around the LZ with negative results. The 170th, on the same lift, had 1 UH-1H hit by 2 rounds of small arms fire, sustaining minor damage.

(14) 13 November 67 - 119th AHC assaulted with B and C Companies, 1/8th Inf, lifting 210 PAX and 4 additional sling loads. Sniper fire was received from 6 locations in and around the LZ, with negative results. On the same assault, the 170th had 1 UH-1H hit by rocket fire (B-40). The aircraft was destroyed and 4 crewmen wounded.

(15) 14 November 67 - 119th AHC conducted 2 CAs for the 3/8th Inf, totaling 450 PAX. Sniper fire was again received from all quadrants.

(16) 15 November 67 - 170th AHC conducted 2 CAs with the ARVN in support of the 1st Bde. A total of 690 PAX were lifted in 164 sorties. 1 UH-1H was hit by small arms fire and 1 crew member was wounded.

(17) 18 November 67 - 170th AHC participated in a 4th Inf Div CA.

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(18) 19 November 67 - 170th AHC participated in 4th Inf Div CA. 1 UH-1C was hit by small arms fire, sustaining only minor damage.

(19) 22 November 67 - 170th AHC participated in a CA for the 4th Inf Div. The 119th assaulted with the 173rd Abn, lifting 120 PAX. 2 aircraft were hit by small arms fire without major damage.

(20) 23 November 67 - 170th AHC participated in a CA for the 4th Inf Div. The 119th conducted an assault and final extraction for the 3/8th Inf, totaling 120 PAX. Another final extraction for the 3/12th Inf resulted in the movement of 240 PAX.

(21) 24 November 67 - 170th and 119th AHCs conducted assaults with the 1/12th Inf, vicinity HILL 875. 120 PAX were moved. Automatic weapons fire was received from all quadrants of the LZ. 2 aircraft were hit; 1 by 8 rounds, the other by 10 rounds. 1 crew member was wounded. The 119th then made a final extraction for 2/503rd Abn from HILL 875. 150 PAX were extracted.

(22) 25 November 67 - 119th AHC conducted an assault and final extraction for the 1/8th Inf, totaling 240 PAX and 10 sling loads. A final extraction was also executed for the 3/8th and 3/12th Inf with 370 PAX. Immediately following, the 170th assaulted with the 3/12th with 300 PAX in 100 sorties.

(23) 26 November 67 - 189th AHC executed 3 night medical evacuations under emergency conditions.

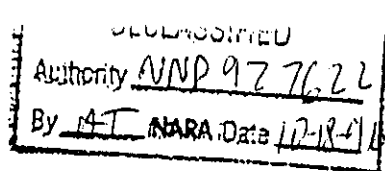
(24) 27 November 67 - 189th AHC moved 73 PAX and 1600 pounds of cargo for 4th Inf Div.

(25) 28 November 67 - 170th AHC conducted a CA with the 1/8th Inf, moving 121 PAX in 58 sorties. The 1/12th Inf was then lifted, totaling 353 PAX in 183 sorties. The 189th also participated in this lift, moving 372 PAX. 1 UH-1H crashed in the LZ with negative injury to the crew.

(26) 29 November 67 - 189th AHC conducted a final extraction and an assault, moving 252 PAX.

(27) 30 November 67 - 189th AHC conducted another move, lifting 565 PAX. 1 aircraft received automatic weapons fire, suffering 1 hit with negative injury to the crew. However, the battalion commander of the 3/12th Inf received minor facial wounds from flying metal particles.

c. Operational Statistics. The following is a resume of statistics amassed by the 52d CAB during Operation MAC ARTHUR. These totals do not include performances of those units attached or OPCON to the battalion during that operation.



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|----------------------------|-------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| <u>CBT SORTIES</u> | <u>UH-1 HOURS</u> | <u>OH-47 HOURS</u> | <u>TOTAL HOURS</u> |
| 17,563 | 6325 | 1225 | 7550 |
| <u>CBT ASLTS</u> | <u>BTRY MOVES</u> | <u>TOTAL PLX</u> | <u>CARGO TONS</u> |
| 64 | 20 | 32,516 | 9075 |
| <u>NED EVACS</u> | <u>DEAD EVACS</u> | <u>ENEMY KBA</u> | <u>I/C HITS</u> |
| *720 | *320 | UNKNOWN | 16 |
| <u>I/C DAMAGED</u> | <u>I/C DEST</u> | <u>DOWN A/C RECOV'D</u> | <u>CREW MEM INJ/KILL</u> |
| 24 | 3 | **40 | 15 / 3 |
| <u>AMMUNITION EXPENDED</u> | | | |
| <u>7.62mm</u> | <u>2.75mm</u> | <u>.40mm</u> | |
| 577,900 | 3488 | 6329 | |

* Figures include ARVN evacuations.

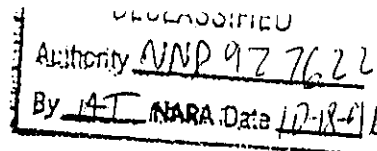
** Figures include aircraft evacuated for the 335th Aslt Hel Co (attached to 173rd Abn Bde and B/229th Avn Bn (attached to elements of 1st Cav Div).

4. (C) MAINTENANCE:

a. During the period 25 October - 30 November 1967, elements of the 52d CAB flew in excess of 10,000 hours, the majority of which were flown in support of the 1st Brigade, 4th Infantry Division, on Operation MAC ARTHUR. The elements involved performed 330 PMIs and 121 PIP inspections during that same period.

b. In and around DAK TO, 40 aircraft were evacuated by the 179th Aslt Spt Hel Co. All of these aircraft had been damaged by enemy fire or due to operating in extreme confined areas. Most of these aircraft were repairable, but may have been otherwise lost except for the professional competence of the 179th.

c. It required approximately 25,000 maintenance manhours to perform the inspections mentioned in paragraph 4a. Additionally, it took an estimated 25,000 maintenance manhours to perform unscheduled maintenance. Because of the shortage of maintenance personnel in critical skills, crews often worked around the clock to supply aircraft to meet operational requirements. Because of their efforts, the battalion was able to maintain throughout the operation an availability rate of 78.4% on UH-1Cs and 84.6% on UH-1Hs.

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5. (U) **AWARDS AND DECORATIONS:** The following recommendations for awards and decorations have been forwarded or are being prepared as a result of the Battle of **DAK TO**.

| | |
|----------------------------|----|
| Silver Star | 25 |
| Distinguished Flying Cross | 41 |
| Bronze Star | 13 |
| Air Medal with "V" Device | 74 |
| Army Commendation Medal | 16 |
| Purple Heart | 18 |

6. (U) **COMMANDER'S OBSERVATIONS, DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS:**

a. **Landing Zones.**

(1) **Observation and Discussion.** During this operation, an increased rate of combat and operational damage was experienced in infantry battalion and company size landing zones. On several combat assaults bomb craters were used for landing zones. This situation, although extremely hazardous, was unavoidable due to the terrain and location of the enemy. However, these same hazardous landing areas were used again and again with little or no improvement. In addition to the extremely small landing areas, trash in these landing zones doubled the risks to incoming aircraft. Loose ponchos, C-ration boxes and cans, as well as empty sandbags, were to be found in quantity in and around all landing zones. During this operation alone, this battalion replaced 38 main rotor blades and 35 tail rotor blades, the majority of which were caused by flying debris. The incidents cited cost the government approximately \$123,500.

(2) **Recommendation.** I recommend that commanders place increased emphasis on proper landing zone selection and preparation. The police of the area should be the responsibility of the individual within the infantry unit who is responsible for unit resupply by aircraft, and the clean-up program should be closely monitored.

b. **Aircraft Utilization.**

(1) **Observations and Discussion.** During the Battle of **DAK TO**, a misutilization of aircraft was experienced on a number of occasions. This was due primarily to inadequate planning or a lack of sufficient planning time. On several occasions, aircraft were assembled from all over II Corps for a priority lift when existing assets could have served the purpose, properly utilized. Commanders failed to seek aviation advice during mission planning. Consequently, aviation supporting elements suffered. Aircraft would arrive on station, on time, only to find loads not ready for pickup or the intended delivery point had not been decided upon. Due to excessive idle time, critical blade time was expended, thereby reducing the aviation effectiveness during peak operational periods. Aviation requirements were constantly changed without warning, and using units had difficulty determining what might be needed two hours hence. The more aircraft allocated a unit, the more sorties added on to

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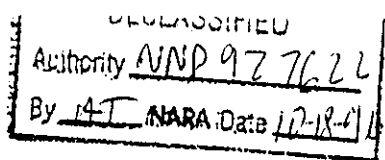
the existing requirements. Frequently, aircraft were extended to conduct emergency resupply at night, though these same aircraft may have remained idle for prolonged periods throughout the day. Whenever possible, missions should be given to the aircraft commander, not just a commitment for a certain number of aircraft. This way full utilization of the aircraft can best be managed with maximum flexibility.

(2) Recommendation. Commanders of supported units should place increased emphasis on the need to make known their requirements as far in advance as possible, utilizing warning orders which should be issued to aviation units as well as to ground elements. If a combat assault is to be conducted at first light, the mission requirement should be made known early enough the day before to provide time for a daylight reconnaissance of landing zones, flight routes and pickup zones. Execution of immediate combat assaults should be kept to a minimum and ordered only in the case of a combat emergency. With adequate planning time, a greater aviation effort can be made with fewer aircraft.

c. Airfield Operations.

(1) Observations and Discussion. A common practice of ground commanders is to establish their base of operations adjacent to the air facility serving the area. Of course, this is for convenience of the headquarters, as well as facilitating air support to forward elements. However, after a time, so many restrictions are placed on the aviation elements involved that it ceases to function as an aviation base of operations; and at times, aircraft are forced to divert to alternate poorly equipped areas to continue operations. The haphazard mixing of Air Force cargo aircraft, helicopters, light fixed wing aircraft and LC's, plus the lack of ramp space and inadequate refueling and servicing facilities, cause confusion and resulted in a distinct safety hazard during the Battle of B N C.

(2) Recommendations. Extreme care should be exercised in the development of a small airfield into an adequate facility for supporting the various aviation elements required for a major operation. Priority engineer support must be allocated to build adequate parking ramps, dispersed PCL points and rearward points. Consideration must be given to separating fixed wing traffic and parking from helicopter traffic and parking. Right and left hand traffic patterns should be initiated. Also, hover lanes should be provided gunships, so that they may move to the runway for a running takeoff after refueling and rearward. High priority should be given to dust control. Artillery positions should be placed so they do not fire through traffic patterns or otherwise restrict the full utilization of the airfield. Airfield perimeters must be moved out far enough to meet the above requirement and to provide for adequate dispersion of aircraft to preclude excessive losses to rocket or mortar attack. Vehicle traffic must be routed away from the active runway(s), taxi strips and parking areas. The location of VJF pads, padovac pads and other critical installations should be dispersed parallel to and along the active runway.

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d. Safety.

(1) Observations and Discussion. During the Battle of DAM TO, several extremely unfortunate accidents occurred; accidents which could have easily been avoided. Passengers loading and off-loading helicopters continued to walk into turning rotor blades. Turning blades are a hazard at any time; however, when operating on other than level ground, the hazard increases ten-fold. A rotor strike will almost always result in decapitation and death to the individual involved.

(2) Recommendation. Personnel operating in the vicinity of helicopters should be constantly reminded of the dangers involved. Classes or demonstrations should be given as to the proper method of boarding or departing a helicopter. On the just concluded operation, 3 lives were unnecessarily lost due to carelessness in this manner.

FOR THE COMMANDER

1 Incl
Map (AO SPARTZ)

Curtis D Green
CURTIS D GREEN
MAJ IAF
Adjutant

Distribution
2-1st Avn Bde
4-17th Cbt Avn Sp
2-4th Inf Div
1-1st Bde, 4th Inf Div

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