NIGHTHAWK

1st Air Cav's Night Fighters

By Capt. Donald M. Otteley, Jr.

President George Bush today announced that he was establishing the Night Hawk, a new lightweight, night-vision-equipped helicopter designed to support the 1st Air Cavalry Division.

The Night Hawk, a twin-engine, single-rotor helicopter, is designed to operate in a variety of environments, from urban areas to wilderness regions. It is equipped with a advanced night-vision system, allowing pilots to see in complete darkness.

The Night Hawk is expected to enter service in the coming months, and will be deployed to the 1st Air Cavalry Division in Vietnam.

PHOTOGRAPHS - Photos by SP5 TERRY MOON

1st Air Cavalry Division
Prowling the countryside, the Husky "low bird" and Cobra "high bird" team up to find the enemy during darkness and stop him before he can strike at 1st Cav unit positions on the ground.

Photos by SP5 TERRY MOON
1st Air Cavalry Division

Minigun—Standing ready next to the target detection equipment is a minigun capable of firing 4,000 rounds per minute at enemy positions trapped by the ship's powerful searchlight beam.
Nighthawk -- A Cobra gusship from the 2nd Battalion, 20th Artillery's (AAA)
N Gunner joins the Nighthawk search ship, loaded with electronic deception equip-
ment, to support 1st Air Cav'lry Division ground units.

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Ready To Tackle Enemy -- Armed with two mini-guns, a 40mm grenade launcher,
machine gun and 70 rockets, the Nighthawk team of Hubs (left) and Cobras helicopters
are ready to tackle the enemy during night missions for the 1st Air Cav'lry Division.

Detection Equipment -- Before the evening mission, S/Sgt Harold W. Boats
(Moscow, ID) sets up the heart of the Nighthawk's detection system—a combina-
tion powerful Starlight Scopes (top) and 50,000 watt searchlight mounted on the
Hubs' machine gun brakset.

Checks Aircraft -- Before the Nighthawk mission, WO J of John D. Snowgram (Wine-
more, N.H.) checks out his Hubs helicopter at Battery F, 11th Artillery's Camp Corral
headquarters.
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By CPT GERALD SHAPE
PHOTO VNN, Vietnam — A half of bullets and rockets streaking down a beam of light are only part of the Nighthawk surprise waiting for Charlie operating from dusk to dawn in the 1st Air Cavalry Division.

Organized in late July, the Nighthawk team is composed of a Huey helicopter from Battery E, 654th Artillery and a Cobra gunship from the 2nd Battalion, 20th Aerial Rocket Artillery’s Battery B, located at Camp Chau Doc.

The firepower available to this team includes two 7.62
mm machine-guns, each capable of firing 4,000 rounds per minute, a 40 mm grenade launcher, delivering 150 grenades in 20 seconds, and 70 2.75 inch rockets in a variety of weights, warheads and fuses.

The Nighthawks patrol the area each night with assistance from several target detection teams, ranging from the infantrymen to sophisticated ground and air radar.

When the Nighthawk team is alerted to a possible enemy location, the crew is west equipped to find whatever is lurking in the shadows near friendly positions.

A powerful infra-red light and scope turn night into day for the beam-red target detection equipment. Also, at his disposal is a night observation device, which needs only starlight to operate effectively.

Besides these two modern electronic detection systems, the crew uses the “ultimate finder” — an old 400 volt searchlight which not only serves as a locator but also as a marker of the enemy position.

The Nighthawk’s specialty is giving close support to the infantry unit, a night defensive or ambush position. The moment that an infantry squad spots movement around its position, the word is flashed to the Nighthawks.

A typical mission is underway.

In a matter of seconds the unit briefs the pilots and marks the positions with a light that can only be seen from the sky. Quickly, the Nighthawks begins searching the area until the target detector SP4 Harold Boats picks up movement on his scope.

With a target in sight, WO1 John Howes, piloting the Huey, banks to the left while co-pilot WO1 Ronald Baker informs the Cobra helicopter circling above the line of the sighting.

As the searchlight beam hits the ground, the Skytroopers below relay their positions in reference to the light before the launcher radio coordinates.

“Nighthawk Two, this is Dodge Six, you are clear to engage.”

On the mini-gun, SP4 Stanley Cook pours a constant stream of fire and lead down into the small beam of light. Moments later, the Blue Max overhead rolls hot and releases a burst of mini-gun fire and a salvo of rockets from pods tucked under its sides.

The light grows dark, but infra-red scopes continue to probe the target area for an assessment of damage.

Mission completed for Nighthawk means that the enemy has been caught and stopped in the darkness before he can strike at Cav unit positions on the ground.

MANNING SEARCHLIGHT — SP4 Harold W. Boats (Matson; HIL) mans the combination searchlight scope and 50,000 watt infra-red searchlight which replaces the conventional machine gun on the Nighthawk search ship.