

who directed the proceedings of all aircraft in accordance with the desires of the ground commander within the capabilities of the aviation unit (or units) participating.

Once having been alerted that the Company was to support a particular ground force during an operation, the Company's operations section began making plans, scheduling aircraft and crews and making other preparations. A briefing was conducted by the aviation battalion liaison officer from the supported unit. He outlined the area of operation, the details of the operation and other matters to the aviation personnel holding key positions, based on the tactical plan of the ground force commander. Final planning was then completed prior to beginning the operation. This included the preparation and distribution of maps and the briefing of all personnel on matters pertinent to their mission.

At the appointed time certain designated aircraft moved command post personnel and equipment into position and other such personnel and equipment necessary to support the operation. Then all aircraft proceeded to the staging area and lined up ready to begin when called upon.

The C & C ship picked up the ground force commander, his staff, and advisors and proceeded to the operational area at the designated time. Normally Air Force and VNAF prestrikes on the objective area had been pre-arranged and the ground force commander observed these and changed or adjusted them as he saw fit. The C & C ship orbited the operational area in a right hand orbit at 2500 feet MSL. From this position the ground force commander and the aviation mission commander had a good view of all that was going on and could direct their respective elements.

At an appropriate time the "T-Birds" were called in to make a reconnaissance of the area. They flew over designated areas using prestablished tactical patterns at low level and reported their findings. Based on their reconnaissance, the commanders were better able to decide where they wanted the troops to be landed. When a landing zone was picked, the "armed ships" made a thorough reconnaissance of the area.

In the meantime "Warrior 6", the aviation mission commander, had notified the "slicks" to pick up the troops and to proceed to a specified RP. From there they could be called when wanted and directed to the LZ. From the RP the "slicks" were normally under the direction of "T-Bird Chief", the armed platoon leader. He gave "Warrior Lead", the "slick" formation leader, instruction as to how to approach the landing zone and landing in formation. He had one of his ships throw a smoke grenade to mark the exact location of where he wanted the lead "slick" to touch down. He also gave him instructions as to how to depart the landing zone. At the approximate time while the "slicks" were inbound from the RP to the LZ, the "T-Birds" went out and "picked them up" providing armed escort for them.

While on final approach to the LZ the "T-Birds" suppressed if necessary and on some occasions the "slick" door gunners were instructed to lay down suppressive fire to their flanks with their machine guns.

Upon touching down in the LZ the troops quickly unloaded and formed for the assault of the enemy position or a sweep of a specified area. Their actions were dictated by the ground force commander in the C & C ship who had been observing the movement.

The "slicks" were in the landing zone for an average of seven seconds

to unload the troops. On signal from "Warrior Lead" they departed the LZ in formation according to their instructions from "T-Bird Chief", climbed to altitude, and returned to the staging area to pick up troops for another lift or to refuel and standby for another lift. The "T-Birds" stayed on station to give aerial fire support to the friendly units on the ground.

During the course of an operation one lift might have been all that was required or many lifts might have been necessary. This was determined by the size of the enemy force, the number of friendly units available, and whether or not any contact was actually made with the Viet Cong. A force was always maintained in reserve in the staging area to act as a reaction force.

On an aviation company sized operation the "armed ships" were often employed in fire teams relieving each other on station. By rotating in this manner, sustained coverage in the operational area was maintained—one fire team working while the other returned to the staging area to refuel and rearm.

Ten "slicks" were normally employed in an average sized company operation giving the flight the capability of landing 100 combat troops in the landing zone simultaneously. At the staging area they lined up in a trail formation and started their machines on signal from "Warrior Lead". Once having the troops aboard they took off in trail formation and quickly went into a formation of two Vees of five aircraft each designated as "ALPHA" flight and "BRAVO" flight respectively. It was the responsibility of the trail aircraft to tell "Warrior Lead", who was in the first aircraft in the "ALPHA" flight, when all aircraft were caught up and in their correct positions in the formation. At that time "Lead" discontinued his

climbing orbit over the secure stage field area, increased his air speed, and proceeded to the RP.

The entire flight was conducted in close formation giving "Warrior Lead" positive control over all the aircraft in the formation and assuring that they all would land in the landing zone close together and at the same time. Once in the area of the LZ all aircraft were still in tight formation for landing thus minimizing the ground unit leader's difficulty in grouping his forces and forming them for his intended assault.

When taking off from the landing zone, one of several different methods was utilized. The first was a take off in formation on the same heading as the approach and gaining altitude as rapidly as possible, still maintaining the integrity of the formation. Another method was taking off in formation on the same heading as the approach and gaining altitude as rapidly as possible, still maintaining the integrity of the formation. Another method was taking off to the front and making a hard right or left break as soon as all aircraft had gained translational lift. This right or left turn was often aided by all aircraft making a partial pedal turn at a hover before take off. The final method used by the "Warriors" was a 180 degree reversal of the formation in the landing zone and departing on the opposite heading from the one used to come in, thus flying out over the same terrain the aircraft had approached over. This was accomplished by all of the ships making a 180 degree pedal turn at a hover in the landing zone and taking off with the "BRAVO" flight lead aircraft leading the formation out. Once at altitude the "ALPHA" flight passed the "BRAVO" flight once again giving "Warrior Lead" the foremost position. The 180 degree turn was practiced and perfected by the "Warriors" in September and successfully utilized from then on. Upon reaching the vicinity of the stage field

"Warrior Lead" would call for the flight to "go trail" and each aircraft would fall into single file, one behind the other for landing.

After all the initial lifts were completed the "slicks" would stand-by for possible utilization for resupply of the friendly combat troops on the ground, evacuation of dead and/or wounded, or to haul out captured enemy prisoners, supplies, or arms and ammunition. When ships were needed for this type of mission "Warrior 6" called "Warrior Lead", specifying how many ships were needed and where they were to go. The "T-Birds" provided armed escort if necessary.

Finally, on many operations it was necessary to extract the troops at the end of the operation. The troops were lined up and grouped according to how many could ride in an aircraft, and the "slicks" were brought into the landing zone in trail formation. After loading them aboard they were then returned to the stage field and discharged. Following an extraction all personnel and equipment that had been brought in for the CP and logistical support were flown back to their home stations and the "Warriors" and "T-Birds" were released for return to "home plate".

More and more often, the "Warriors" and "T-Birds" joined forces with the other aviation companies of the "Delta" Battalion. When more than one company was used in support of an operation, one company was designated to command the operation and the other unit or units were attached to it. The company whose commanding officer was designated as the aviation mission commander had the responsibility for planning the mission in accordance with the ground force commander's plans and desires. That company provided the C & C ship and was responsible for the actions of all aviation elements involved. This responsibility was passed back and forth between

the 13th Aviation Battalion's four airmobile companies.

The procedures followed were much the same as those in the company sized operation except on a much larger scale. Each company had its flight of ten "slicks" and two or more armed platoons were available. In cases where a company could not provide a full complement of "slicks", the required number of aircraft from other companies were attached to its flight. There was no set number of "slicks" required to make up a flight. Some RF's had flights of five, eight, or perhaps as many as fifteen; but ten was the number most normally utilized and is a good guide-line figure.

Each "slick" flight was directed to its intended landing zone and often the same LZ was used for all flights on a given lift. On subsequent lifts the same LZ or an entirely different one might have been utilized by one or all flights.

The armed platoons often relieved each other on station in the same manner as the fire teams on a company sized operation. Each armed platoon may have worked as a platoon or may have been broken down into fire teams and assigned a particular area to work.

Due to the fuel limitations of the UH-1D aircraft it was often advisable to have an alternative C & C ship to take over while the primary C & C ship had to pull off station to refuel. The change over was planned to take place when it would not disrupt the conduct of the operation at a critical moment. The alternate C & C ship was normally flown by another company commander and his operations officer who were equally familiar with procedures and plans and had followed developments carefully.

The maintenance aircraft and "Dust Off" aircraft remained airborne at such times as their assistance might be needed on a moments notice. This position during an assault was normally orbiting the operational area at a