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THE AIRMOBILE DIVISION

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TYPES AND DISTRIBUTION OF AIRCRAFT
in the
1ST CAVALRY DIVISION (AIRMOBILE)

Types

Helicopters

Light Observation (LOH)	93
Utility (UH)	
UH–1B	111
UH–1D	176
Cargo (CH)	
CH–47	48

Fixed Wing

OV–1	6

Distribution

Brigade (3)

LOH	8 each	(24)
UH–1B	2 each	(6)

Air Cavalry Squadron

LOH	30
UH–1B	38
UH–1D	20

Division Artillery

LOH	12
UH–1B	43

Aviation Group

LOH	19
UH–1B	24
UH–1D	136
CH–47	48
OV–1	6

Medical Battalion

UH–1D	12

Aircraft Maintenance Battalion

LOH	8
UH–1D	8

THE AIRMOBILE DIVISION

DA Pam 360–216
HEADQUARTERS
DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
WASHINGTON, D.C., *30 November 1965*

The 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile) was activated in July 1965 at Fort Benning, Ga. This gives the Army five types of combat divisions: infantry, armored, mechanized, airborne, and airmobile.

Establishment of the new airmobile division required the following administrative actions:

- The 2d Infantry Division at Fort Benning was redesignated the 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile).
- The 1st Cavalry Division in Korea was redesignated the 2d Infantry Division.
- The 11th Air Assault Division (Test) was inactivated.
- Personnel and equipment from the "old" 2d Infantry Division and the inactivated 11th Air Assault Division were transferred to the new 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile).

In his statement announcing establishment of the new division, Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara said:

> "The introduction of this new kind of division into the Army will greatly increase our growing capability to meet all kinds of threats. It places our Army on the threshold of an entirely new approach to the conduct of the land battle. Use of the helicopter to deliver men and weapons on the battlefield will result in greater freedom of movement and exploitation of the principles of surprise to an unprecedented degree."

The new airmobile division has a TOE strength of about 15,800. This figure is for a division base at 100 percent TOE strength, plus eight maneuver battalions (five infantry and three airborne infantry).

The airmobile division is authorized 434 aircraft, all but 6 of them helicopters of three types. For comparison, our infantry, armored, and mechanized divisions have 101 aircraft, and our airborne divisions 103.

The great increase in aircraft in the airmobile division permits a corresponding reduction in the numbers of organic ground vehicles. For example, the trucks and armored personnel carriers of an infantry division total almost 3,200, as against only about 1,600 in the airmobile division.

WHAT IS AIR MOBILITY?

The designation *Airmobile* expresses the characteristic—ability to move by air—that makes this new division different from the other division types. But the difference is relative, not absolute—*all* our divisions have some degree of air mobility. The airmobile division has a much greater degree of air mobility than any of the others.

This superiority in air mobility extends both to strategic and tactical movement.

Strategically, the airmobile division can be deployed almost twice as rapidly as a standard infantry division. This is because the weight (personnel and equipment) of the airmobile division is only about one-third the weight of an infantry division. The entire airmobile division can be strategically deployed in Air Force C–130 aircraft, except that the largest helicopters (Chinook) when fully assembled require the larger C–133 aircraft.

In tactical situations, the distinctive capabilities of the airmobile division are due primarily to its greater strength in organic aircraft. The other divisions, in varying degrees, can *be moved* by air. The airmobile division, more than any of the others, can also *move itself* by air. This is what enables the airmobile division, for example, to—

- Move rapidly and directly to key objective areas over any kind of terrain and deliver its soldiers fresh and ready for immediate combat.

- Maintain operations at a very rapid tempo and high intensity, and respond swiftly to changes in the tactical situation.

- Withdraw from an engagement at one point and move rapidly in any direction to fight at another point a considerable distance away.

- Operate in enemy areas using only the enemy's "vertical flank" to get in and out.

- Exploit rapidly any opportunities presented by the enemy and any advantages achieved by other friendly forces.

- Traverse terrain obstacles and areas of destruction and contamination that would stop or delay forces limited to surface mobility.

- Support itself logistically within the division area by means of its organic aircraft.

These capabilities would be highly valued in any kind of land warfare. They are particularly desirable for operations against guerrilla forces, including conventional military units that employ guerrilla methods. This is why the 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile) was deployed to South Vietnam soon after it was activated.

It may seem at first thought that a relatively slow-flying helicopter at low altitude would present an excellent target for enemy ground fire. But this is not the case. During several years of operations in Vietnam Army helicopters have proven very difficult to knock out of action. The rates of hit damage and loss from ground fire have been exceptionally low. There are several reasons for this, perhaps the most important being short exposure time, suppressive fire, and surprise. For example, in a typical airmobile operation in Vietnam the helicopters appear suddenly in an objective area at treetop level. Even then the enemy has little chance to deliver fire because at that moment he is more concerned with taking cover against the suppressive fire from the armed helicopters. And, before he is able to bring his weapons to bear, the helicopters have landed their troops in the objective area and are already out of range.

Because helicopters can land almost anywhere when disabled, a high percentage of the helicopters downed in Vietnam have been recovered, repaired, and returned to service.

The Engineer Battalion

The *engineer battalion* consists of—

- Headquarters and headquarters company
- Three combat engineer companies

The Air Cavalry Squadron

The *air cavalry squadron* consists of—

- Headquarters and headquarters troop
- A cavalry troop
- Three air cavalry troops

The Signal Battalion

The *signal battalion* consists of—

- Headquarters and service company
- A command operations company

The Maneuver Battalions

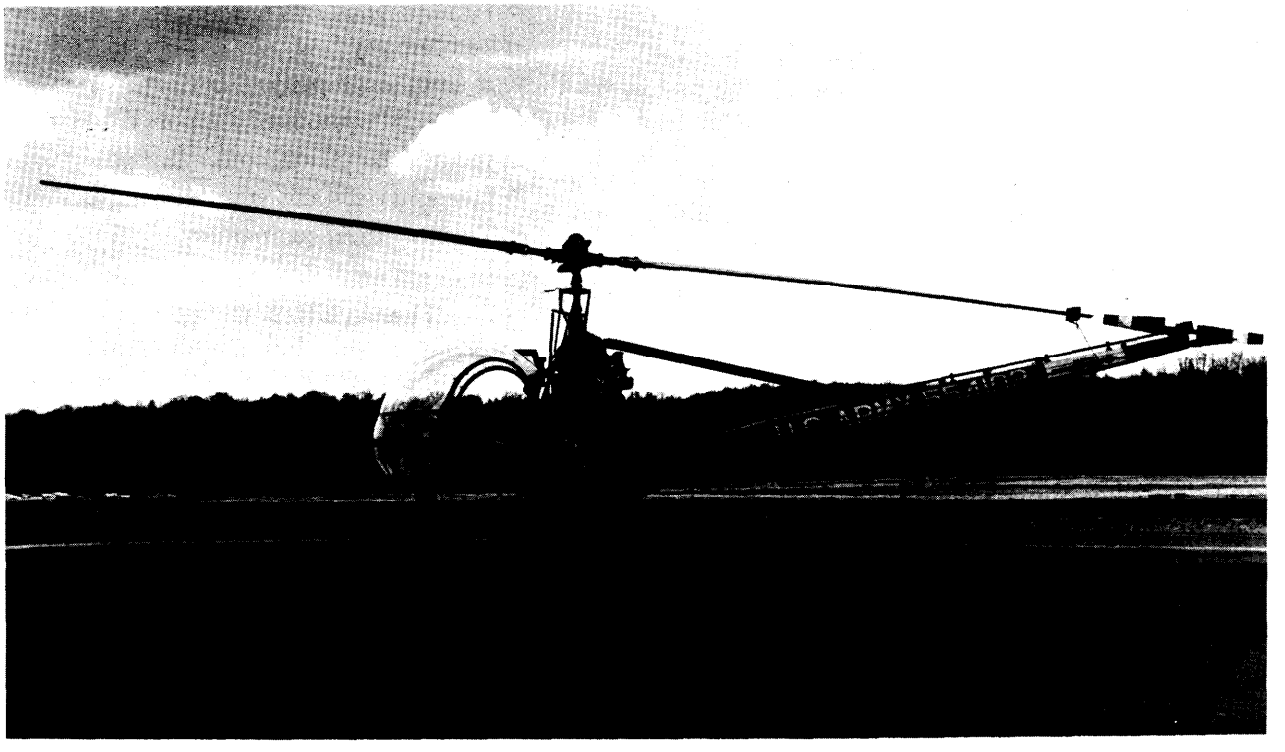
At the present time the 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile) has five infantry battalions and three airborne infantry battalions. One of the three brigade headquarters also has an airborne capability.

Both the infantry and airborne infantry battalions consist of—

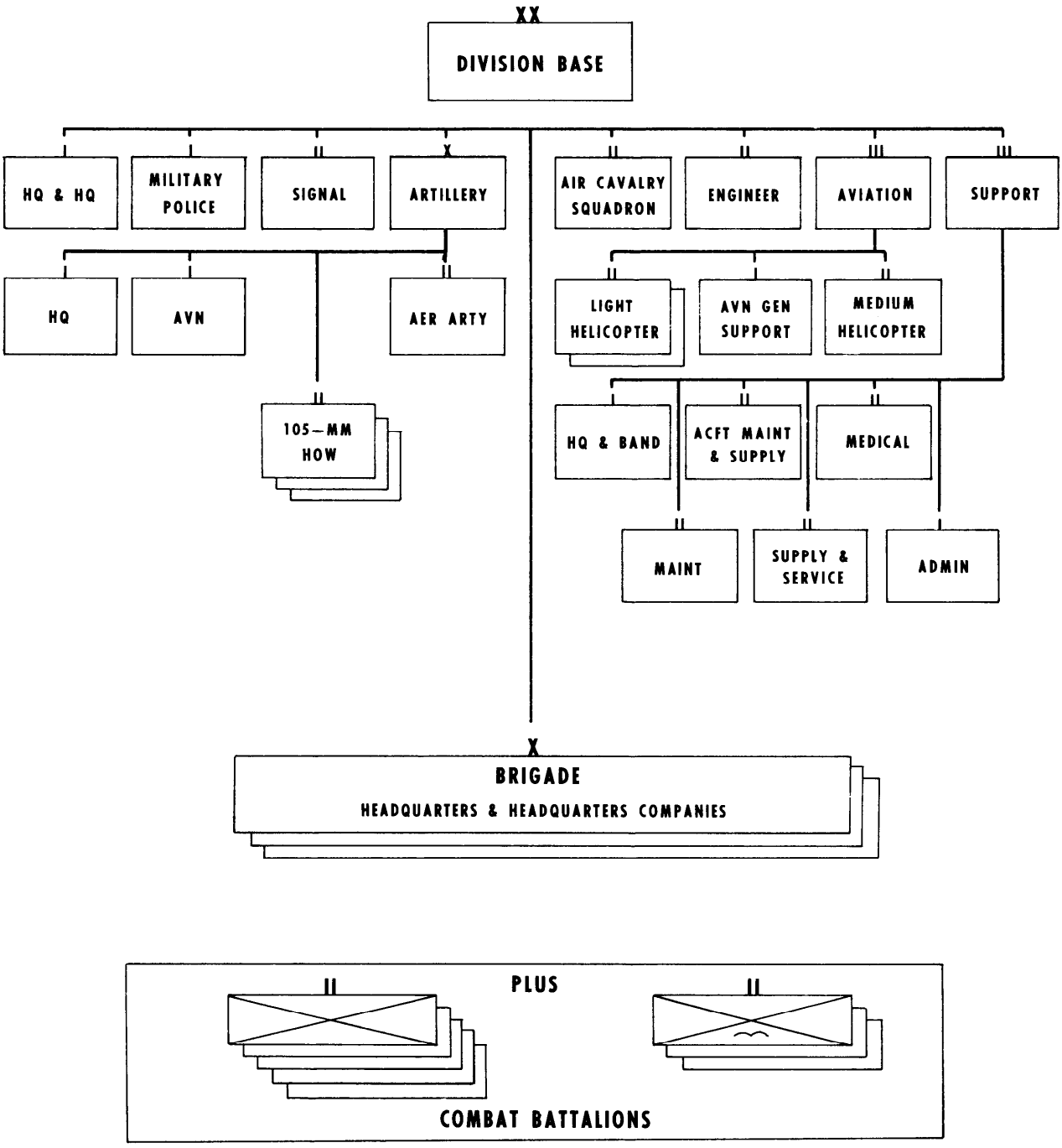
- Headquarters and headquarters company
- Three rifle companies
- A combat support company

(While companies in infantry and airborne infantry battalions are alike in structure, personnel of the latter are trained and equipped for airborne assault by parachute.)

OH–23 RAVEN. One of two types of light observation helicopters initially assigned to the 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile), the RAVEN can be used for reconnaissance, medical evacuation, command liaison, wire laying, and resupply in the combat zone.



1ST CAVALRY DIVISION (AIRMOBILE)



ORGANIC AIRCRAFT IN THE DIVISION STRUCTURE

Because greater strength in organic aircraft is a central feature of the airmobile division, it is worthwhile to take a closer look at how this strength has been incorporated into the division structure. It is especially instructive to compare the airmobile division's aviation elements with the aviation elements of the other division types.

- In the infantry, armored, mechanized, and airborne divisions the *aviation battalion* has an aviation general support company and an airmobile company. The *aviation group* in the airmobile division has (as already noted) two light helicopter battalions (each battalion having three helicopter companies and an aerial weapons company), a general support aviation company, and a medium helicopter battalion with three helicopter companies.

- In the other divisions the *armored cavalry squadron* has an air cavalry troop. In the airmobile division the *air cavalry squadron* has three air cavalry troops.

- In the other divisions, the division artillery has an *aviation section* assigned to the headquarters battery. In the airmobile division, the division artillery has both an *aviation battery* and an *aerial rocket artillery battalion* with three aerial rocket batteries.

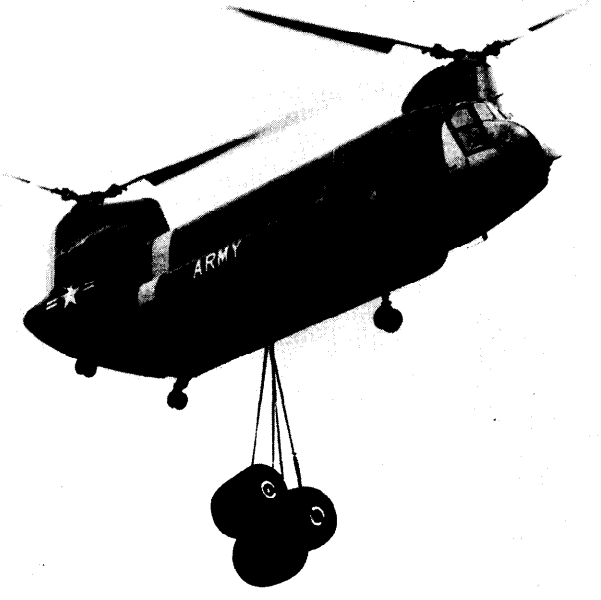
UH–1 IROQUOIS. The airmobile division has two models of this utility helicopter: The UH–1B (shown here armed with machineguns and the 2.75-inch rocket system) and the UH–1D.

The UH–1D IROQUOIS can transport 12 men plus the pilot, and can be armed with machineguns, the SS–11 missile, or the 2.75mm Barrage Rocket Kit. Other utility functions include medical evacuation, resupply, and observation. This aircraft has been tested as a mobile command post and as a mobile medical aid station.





CH–47 CHINOOK is a cargo helicopter that can carry payloads of up to 6 tons on a radius-of-action mission of 100 nautical miles. Its payload compartment holds each major component of the helicopter-transportable version of the PERSHING missile system. CHINOOK can transport 33 combat-equipped troops or 24 litter patients.





HOW THE ORGANIC AIRCRAFT ARE USED

In all five division types organic aircraft have the common function of increasing the Army's land combat capabilities. Army aircraft are employed on both tactical and logistical tasks.

Some of the *tactical* uses are—

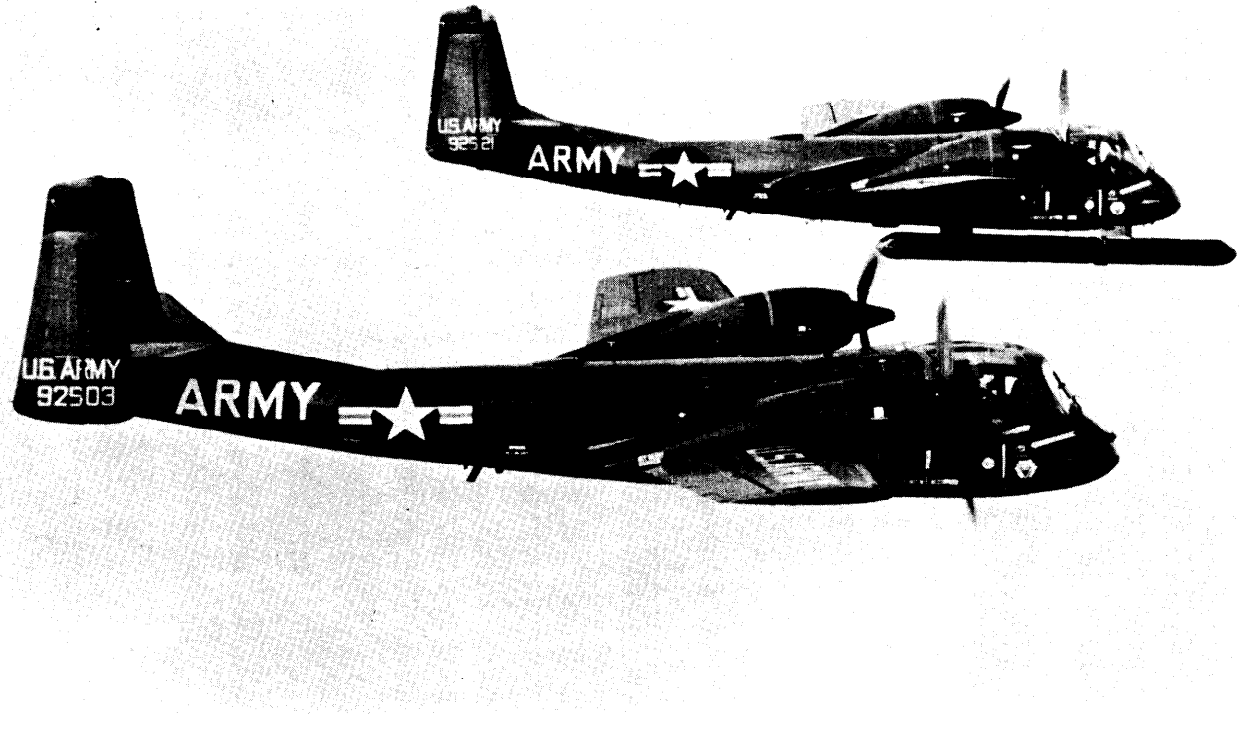
- Command, control, and communication
- Battlefield surveillance and target acquisition
- Reconnaissance, security, and screening operations
- Transport of infantry assault elements and their support elements
- Armed helicopter escort of transport helicopters
- Providing suppressive fires as an integral part of the land force maneuver and fire plan

(The above uses are separate from, and do not duplicate, the missions of close air support and tactical air reconnaissance that are performed by tactical air elements of the other Services.)

The main *logistical* uses for Army aircraft are—

- Movement of troops, equipment, and supplies within the battle area
- Evacuation of casualties

OV–1 MOHAWK is the only fixed-wing aircraft in the airmobile division. The tubelike object mounted beneath one of the aircraft shown here is the side looking radar surveillance system which provides aerial radar maps of the ground on either side of the flight path.



A "TYPICAL" AIRMOBILE OPERATION

During 1963 and 1964, the Army conducted extensive tests of the air mobility concept. A Tactical Mobility Board first studied the many problems involved. Then two test units were formed—the 11th Air Assault Division (Test), and the 10th Air Transport Brigade (Test). Their mission was to find out what airmobile units can and cannot do in combat situations ranging from general war to antiguerrilla operations. The test units, augmented by other forces, engaged in several field exercises, the last of which was completed in November 1964.

As already indicated, many of the capabilities clearly demonstrated during the airmobile test exercises are especially useful in operations against guerrilla forces. The following description of a hypothetical antiguerrilla operation will show why.

The locale is a remote jungle area, secret headquarters and hideout for a large force of Communist guerrillas. Some miles from the guerrilla headquarters is their sizable and carefully camouflaged supply center.

The helicopters have landed and troops quickly move to their objectives in a surprise attack.



Unknown to the guerrillas, a U.S. Army surveillance aircraft has located both the headquarters and the supply center. Elements of an airmobile division are now about to make full use of this intelligence information.

The stillness of the jungle is suddenly shattered by the sounds of approaching helicopters, flying just above the treetops. Caught by surprise in their hidden rest area, the guerrillas begin to seek even more concealment. They hear machineguns and air-to-ground rockets firing and realize that the armed helicopters are laying down suppressive fire. This fact tells them that fresh, ready-to-fight, troops soon will be coming to earth all around their position. They realize that the thing all guerrillas fear—encirclement—is about to occur.

The suppressive fires increase as the troop-carrying helicopters descend and quickly discharge their battle-ready infantrymen. As the troops move out toward their preplanned objectives, the armed helicopters follow them with more suppressive fire. The transport helicopters move back to their base for additional troops and supplies. In a few hours the surrounded guerrilla headquarters is taken.

But the operation is not yet complete. Now the airmobile force turns its attention to the next objective—the supply center. By tortuous jungle trail it would be many hours away; by helicopter only minutes. According to plan, the transport helicopters return to pick up most of the infantrymen, leaving a contingent to guard the captive guerrillas.

Although their headquarters has flashed them a warning to expect an attack, the guerrillas manning the supply center know that they cannot defend the installation against such odds. They have only one choice—disappear deeper into the jungle carrying what few supplies they can. When the airmobile elements arrive over the position, suppressive fires prove to be unneeded. The troops land unopposed and soon the large supply dump is in flames.

As the final phase of this imaginary, but entirely realistic, airmobile operation, troop-carrying helicopters return to the former guerrilla hideout, pick up the guard contingent and their captives, and return to base.

THE ULTIMATE VALUE

Air mobility (like ground mobility) has no independent military value. Movement of troops and equipment to or on the battlefield does not by itself produce the military decision. Only the actions of skilled and determined fighting men can do that. It is clear then that the establishment of an airmobile division improves the Army's combat ability by increasing the effectiveness of its most potent weapon—the ground combat soldier.

DISCUSSION OUTLINE

I Introduction

1. (See text for Sec. McNamara's statement about the 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile).)

2. Army now has five types of divisions: infantry, armored, mechanized, airborne, and airmobile.

3. The new airmobile division base, plus eight maneuver battalions (5 inf and 3 abn inf), gives a personnel strength of 15,787.

4. The new division has 434 aircraft, compared to 101 in infantry, armored, and mechanized divisions, and 103 in airborne divisions.

5. The new division has about 1,600 trucks and APC's, as against almost 3,200 in an infantry division.

II What Is Air Mobility?

1. All our divisions have *some* air mobility; the airmobile division has much more air mobility than the other types.

2. *Strategically*, the airmobile division can be deployed twice as fast as an infantry division. Air Force C–130 aircraft can carry everything except the division's largest helicopters (Chinook), which are moved strategically by the larger C–133 aircraft.

3. *Tactically*, the other division types can *be moved* by air. The airmobile division, more than the others, can *move itself* by air.

4. An airmobile division can—

   a. Move rapidly to objective areas regardless of terrain and in almost any kind of weather.

   b. Maintain a high tempo of operations and respond swiftly to changes in the tactical situation.

   c. Break off action at one point and move rapidly in any direction to fight at another point.

   d. Operate in the enemy's rear areas.

   e. Exploit tactical opportunities.

   f. Move across terrain obstacles and contamination that would stop or delay other forces.

III Structure of the Airmobile Division

1. Like the other four division types, the airmobile division consists of a division base and maneuver battalions.

2. See text for outline of airmobile division structure.

IV Organic Aircraft in the Division Structure

1. In the other four division types, the aviation battalion consists of an aviation general support company and an airmobile company.

Contrast this with the aviation group of the airmobile division, which has two light and one medium helicopter battalions, each having three helicopter companies.

2. In the other divisions the armored cavalry squadron has an air cavalry troop. In the airmobile division the air cavalry squadron has three air cavalry troops.

V How the Organic Aircraft Are Used

(See text for outline list of main tactical and logistical uses for Army aircraft.)

VI A "Typical" Airmobile Operation

1. During 1963 and 1964 two Army test units (11th Air Assault Division and 10th Air Transport Brigade) conducted several extensive exercises. Mission: To find out what airmobile units can and cannot do in a variety of combat situations.

2. (See text for account of a hypothetical airmobile operation against guerrilla forces.)

VII The Ultimate Value

Air mobility (like ground mobility) does not by itself win battles—only skilled and determined fighting men can do that. Air mobility improves the Army's combat strength by increasing the effectiveness of its most potent weapon—the ground combat soldier.

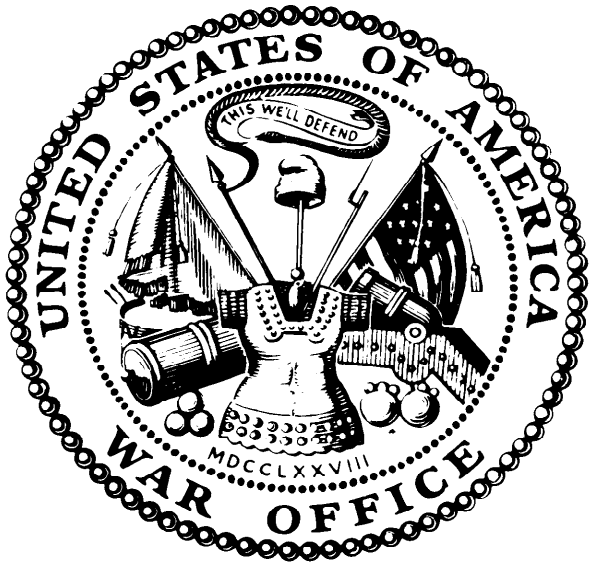
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