COMMANDERS MESSAGE

For the past six years the 34th General Support Group has provided avionics, armament and aircraft maintenance support to aviation units that were rapidly deployed to Vietnam to meet the enemy threat. This challenge was met with unqualified success.

Now we have entered into a new era. The United States accomplished its objective of stabilizing the situation thus enabling the Vietnamese to develop their sovereignty and commerce nation building. This success has enabled the United States to begin phasing out its military units in Indo-China. The challenge has become even greater, since in many cases, we have less resources to accomplish our important mission. The success of future operations and the Vietnamization program will be strongly dependent upon our ability to "Keep 'Em Flying" through the transition to US withdrawal of our military forces.

Operation Lam Son 719 was a splendid example of the Group's ability to meet a difficult challenge. The alacrity, dedication and skill by

Colonel Donald H. Jersey
which the military and civilians assigned to the Group responded to providing maintenance and supply support for over 750 aircraft during this operation is without precedence.

Many of our other achievements are highlighted in this magazine and you can be justly proud to have been part of this effort. As your Commander, I extend my deepest appreciation and sincere thanks for your truly outstanding support and dedication. I am confident that you will continue to provide the same outstanding support to the Army Aviation mission in the future.

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The Laotian Incursion was designed to be an assault upon North Vietnamese supply depots and also to close the routes thru which these supplies were moved. It was thought that if enough supplies were destroyed, the enemy would be unable to advance into South Vietnam. The helicopter was instrumental in this operation as transportation for South Vietnamese troops and also for the devastating firepower of the gunships. Without an adequate aircraft supply and maintenance system, Operation Lam Son 719 would not have been as effective as it was. The mission of the 34th General Support Group (AM&S) was to set up a maintenance information system which would bring the maintenance and supply effort under centralized control of the 34th Group Headquarters (forward) at Quang Tri. This system, devised by Colonel Donald H. Jersey, Commanding Officer of 34th General Support Group, was effective in the relocation of supplies and maintenance personnel from outlying areas to where they were most needed. The plan was to keep as many aircraft as possible in the air by expediting maintenance procedures on the ground. One of the steps designed to expedite maintenance was a forward Quick-Stop, which was an armament and avionics repair shop in Khe Sanh. This facility enabled aircraft with inoperative radio equipment or faulty weapons to get the work done in the field without returning to Quang Tri. Another phase of the maintenance plan was an engine cleaning team consisting of 18 men, who cleaned the engines of 700 aircraft on a scheduled basis. The average number of aircraft serviced per day was 14.

LTC Franklyn Goode, Commanding Officer of the 58th Transportation Battalion, was assigned the responsibility of acting as technical advisor for 22 company sized maintenance units involved in support of Lam Son 719. In a similar capacity, LTC Tommy Mansfield, Commanding Officer of the 14th Transportation Battalion, assisted 9 units of the same size. Their function as technical advisors was to insure that maintenance authorized at these levels was accomplished.

Relocation of maintenance and supply personnel, military and civilian NHA Inc. employees, began in early February 1971, and reached its peak in early March when approximately 400 personnel were affected. Military personnel came from all units of the 34th Group including the 765th Transportation Battalion and the
520th Transportation Battalion.

Since the maintenance facilities at Quang Tri were a direct support activity, only work that did not require prolonged maintenance was undertaken there. Maintenance problems requiring more time were sent to the 5th Transportation Battalion at Hue/Phu Bai. All extensive maintenance problems that could not be completed in 10 days were redirected to the 58th Transportation Battalion at Da Nang. When the ships arrived in Da Nang they were reassigned to the 58th Transportation Battalion so that the prior owning units could request replacement aircraft. As little as 2 per cent of all aircraft serviced at the 58th Transportation Battalion remained there more than 14 days. This is unusual because of the longer length of time normally required for repair at this level. To accomplish this rapid maintenance, the 58th began working two shifts on a round the clock basis.

The 1st Transportation Battalion (Seaborne), stationed aboard the USNS Corpus Christi Bay, moved to the harbor of Da Nang in order to provide depot level maintenance for the aircraft involved in the operation. The “FAMF” (Floating Aircraft Maintenance Facility), a reconverted Naval seaplane tender, performed virtually every aspect of aircraft component maintenance from investigative analysis to heat treating components. Its mobility was an immeasurable asset to 34th Group’s efforts of providing expedient repair to damaged aircraft.

The 34th General Support Group’s past experience in aircraft maintenance and supply procedures proved to be invaluable to the overall success of the Laos incursion. Its highly trained specialists in the field of aviation served as key members in the repair of damaged aircraft. By providing rapid maintenance of aircraft, it truly kept with its motto “Keep Em Flying”.

Frequent briefings were necessary to insure coordination at all levels.