

3.22.63

## The Army Takes to the Air

The angry Air Force general had a few words for the Army: "They're after our mission—and they're just using this air-mobility line to get it."

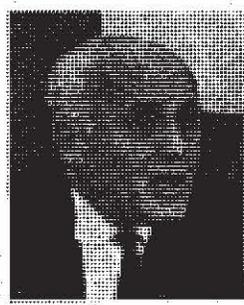
He had in mind an extensive test at Fort Benning, Ga., that has touched off one of the most bitter interservice squabbles in months. In it, the Army's newly created 11th Airborne Assault Division, and eventually some 15,000 men, will check the feasibility of a plan initiated by Defense Secretary Robert McNamara to increase the mobility and striking power of ground troops—mainly by getting them off the ground.

Under the plan, the Army division will have aircraft designed to move into the field with the troops: the Mohawk, a light observation plane equipped for day or night reconnaissance; the Chinook and the Iroquois, heavy-duty helicopters that can carry combat squads; and the Caribou, a 150-m.p.h. transport plane that can haul up to 32 men. The choppers will be armed with machine guns and 2.75-in. rockets; the Mohawk observation planes may carry conventional bomb racks and napalm as well.

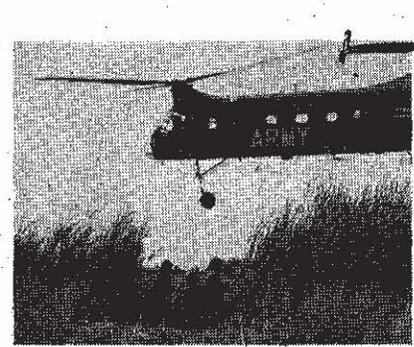
**Leap Overland.** In theory, the Mohawks would sweep low over the battle area to seek out the enemy troops. Guided by information from the Mohawks, the U.S. soldiers organized into the Air Cavalry Troop (so named because its function is similar to the deep penetration and surveillance missions of oldtime horse brigades) would leap over rivers, hills and forests in their choppers, land in strategic striking spots. As they attacked, the aircraft would support them with airborne firepower. The whole operation would be directed by the troop commanders, thus providing close air-ground coordination in battle.

The Army is enthusiastic about the plan. Army Secretary Cyrus Vance already considers the concept historic in its potential. "If the history of warfare shows one constant," he says, "it is that victory on the battlefield goes to the side that can best maneuver and employ its firepower. This has been demonstrated by Caesar and his legions, by Genghis Khan, by Stonewall Jackson in his valley campaign." Similarly, Lieut. General Dwight Beach, chief of Army Research and Development, rates the experiment as significant as "the introduction of the first tank and chemical warfare in World War I or the Panzer-Stuka team used by the Germans in World War II."

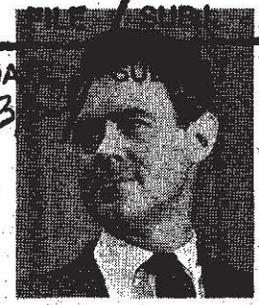
**Shooting Ducks.** The Air Force is having no part of such talk. Air Force Secretary Eugene M. Zuckert protested the plan in a letter to McNamara. An Air Force general describes the Army plan in one word: "Hogwash." Says another: "These Army guys want to create a whole new olive-drab air force of their own. It's ridiculous." Declares still another: "We're not against the Army's being air mobile, but you sure can't land soldiers right on top of an armed enemy. Shooting a helicopter is like shooting ducks."



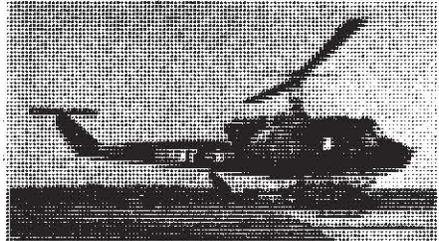
ZUCKERT



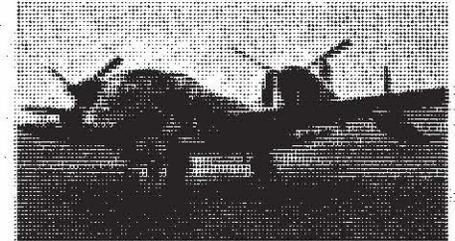
U.S. CHOPPER IN SOUTH VIET NAM



VANCE



THE IROQUOIS



THE MOHAWK

The Air Force snorted, but the cavalry kept on flying.

Both sides point to U.S. experiments with helicopters in the Viet Nam fighting to bolster their cases. The Army notes that its aviation units flew more than 50,000 sorties last year, lost only four choppers to enemy ground fire. The Air Force argues that this is no test, since the Viet Cong have only .30-cal. machine guns to fire at planes. At that, says the Air Force, the Army has had to call for Air Force help to get out of a number of tight spots. Claiming that their ground support has proved efficient in combat, Air Force brass also cites history, quotes Army General Douglas MacArthur as saying in 1951: "The support that our tactical air has given to our ground troops in Korea has perhaps never been equaled in the history of modern war."

As undeterred as usual, McNamara is going ahead with the Fort Benning test. But the argument is just beginning. For after the results of the experiment are in, Air Force experts will sit in on the evaluation panel—and undoubtedly will try to show that the Air Force could have done the same job better. The Army, meanwhile, seems unworried. It recently announced that 18-year-olds can enlist in the Army and be assigned directly to flight training.

### DASH IT ALL!

The Navy, turning to a new use of helicopters, is equipping each of its 250-odd destroyers with two unmanned, remote-controlled choppers to attack submarines. Developed by Long Island's Gyrodyne Co. of America, Inc., the 1,600-lb., all-weather, buglike aircraft can lift off a destroyer, reach sonar-detected subs as far as 15 miles away, unleash two homing torpedoes and land back on the ship—all at the electronic command of ship-board officers. Called DASH (Drone Anti-Submarine Helicopter), the system is designed to strike submarines before they get within torpedo range of the destroyers.

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