

KOREAN WAR PROJECT

OPERATION PRONTO, REPORT ON MARINE HELICOPTER TRANSPORT SQUADRON 161

654-5

MARINE HELICOPTER TRANSPORT SQUADRON 161
1STMAW, C/O FLEET POST OFFICE
SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA

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22 Apr 1952

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From: Commanding Officer, Marine Helicopter Transport Squadron 161
To: Commanding General, First Marine Division

Subj: OPERATION PRONTO, report on

Ref: (a) Map, AMS L-751 Korea, 1:50,000, Sections 6527 I, II, and III

Encl: (1) Statistics

DOWNGRADED AT 3 YEAR INTERVALS;
DECLASSIFIED AFTER 12 YEARS.
DOD DIR 5200.10

1. MISSION:

To airlift by helicopter 622 fully equipped combat troops of the 2nd Battalion, 7th Marines, from CT 105056 to BS 917764.

2. PURPOSE:

To determine if HMR-161 could efficiently airlift one (1) infantry battalion with a minimum of notice, and with no previous liaison between the units concerned.

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3. PLANNING PHASE:

a. At 0210, 5 April 1952, the Commanding Officer received a telephone call from the 1st Marine Division ordering HMR-161 to airlift 622 men of the 2nd Battalion, 7th Marines, from CT 105056 to BS 917764, commencing at 0545.

How many
7th

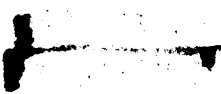
b. At 0225 the Operations Officer, Intelligence Officer, Engineering Officer, Flight Officer, Communications Officer, and the Commanding Officer of the 1st Air Delivery Platoon met and established the following:

- (1) That the 0545 deadline could be met.
- (2) That all available aircraft would be employed.

(3) That one (1) hour would be required to complete the round trip distance of 55 miles. That with an estimated average availability of nine (9) aircraft it would require approximately 14 hours to complete the airlift.

(4) That each aircraft would carry five (5) fully equipped combat troops and that the maximum gross weight of the aircraft would be about 6,900 pounds.

(5) That two (2) loading and two (2) unloading sites would be established and that three (3) Air Delivery Platoon personnel would be employed at each site to direct the pilots and assist in the loading and unloading of troops. The Commanding Officer of the Air Delivery Platoon was to be stationed at the loading zone to coordinate the loading and to



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act as liaison between the 2nd Battalion, 7th Marines, and HMR-161.

(6) That Air Delivery Platoon personnel were to be transported by helicopter from the base to the loading and unloading sites and that they would immediately, upon arrival at the zones, start marking them with panels.

(7) That three (3) refueling sites would be established at the helicopter base.

(8) That an estimated 4,000 gallons of aviation gasoline would be required for the lift.

(9) That since the squadron fuel dump contained only 3,500 gallons of aviation gasoline, immediate steps would be taken to procure more fuel.

(10) That the Intelligence Officer was to be prepared to brief the pilots on the known locations and potentialities of enemy positions, and the location of friendly fire and known mine fields along the route to be flown.

(11) That rotation of pilots was to be effected at each refueling stop and that two (2) pilots were to be aboard each aircraft throughout the lift.

c. Arrangements were made to have breakfast prepared at 0430 for all hands concerned.

d. At 0500 the following briefing was given to all pilots:

(1) They would be supporting the 2nd Battalion, 7th Marines, and that 622 fully equipped combat troops would be airlifted.

(2) The loading zone was beside the road on the North bank of the Imjin River at CT 105056, and the unloading zone was on Kimp'o Peninsula at BS 917764.

(3) Air Delivery Platoon personnel would be transported as follows:

(a) The Commanding Officer of the Air Delivery Platoon and three (3) men to the loading zone in the first aircraft.

(b) Three (3) Air Delivery Platoon personnel to the loading zone in the second aircraft.

(c) Six (6) Air Delivery Platoon personnel to the unloading zone in the third aircraft.

(4) The fourth aircraft off would carry three (3) spare pilots to the squadron Rear Echelon at Ascom City (Taejong-ni) to retrieve three (3) reserve aircraft.

(5) The route to be flown from the loading zone to the unloading zone was as follows:

(a) South from CT 105056 to the helicopter base then South-west to BS 917764. The same route would be followed on the return trip.

(b) Pilots were cautioned to avoid the Munsan-ni Peace Camp neutrality zone.

(6) Each aircraft would carry 600 pounds of fuel on the first flight, making an estimated one and one-half (1½) trips before refueling, but all were cautioned to return to base with a minimum of 75 pounds fuel remaining in the tanks.

(7) Communications would be on 142.02 (Channel Red). The FAC of the 2nd Battalion, 7th Marines, would be at the loading zone guarding that channel. His call sign was DIFFICULT 14. Visual signals would be employed at the unloading zone.

(8) Friendly and enemy artillery and mortar positions, and the location of all known mine fields along the flight route were given.

(9) Parking spots for HR-3, HR-69, and HR-15 would be used for refueling.

(10) It was pointed out that in the event of an emergency landing, particularly near the Imjin River, every attempt should be made to land on a road or well beaten path because of the extensive mine fields there, and the limited knowledge of mine fields along the rest of the route.

(11) Aircraft would remain in defilade as much as possible.

(12) In the event of serious enemy opposition, the operation would be postponed pending decision of higher authority.

(13) As each aircraft loaded for refueling, the dual pilot would replace the pilot, and a fresh pilot would take-over as dual pilot. The replaced pilot would then stand-by for re-assignment.

(14) The aircraft departing for the loading zone would take-off in pairs with a five (5) minute interval between pairs.

4. EXECUTION:

The operation began as planned. Of the nine (9) aircraft available when the airlift commenced, one (1) aircraft with six (6) Air Delivery Platoon personnel aboard was dispatched to the unloading zone and one (1) aircraft with three (3) pilots as passengers was sent to the Rear Echelon at Ascom City (Taejong-ni) to pick-up the three (3) aircraft in reserve.

Of the seven (7) aircraft dispatched to the loading zone, the first carried three (3) Air Delivery Platoon personnel and their Commanding Officer. The second aircraft carried three (3) Air Delivery Platoon men. At 0545 the first aircraft arrived at the loading zone and immediately started the lift.

The aircraft (HR-8) sent to the unloading zone never arrived due to mag-neto trouble en route, and landed at 0550 at a KMC company CP on Kimp'o Peninsula. All six (6) Air Delivery Platoon personnel proceeded to the unloading zone by truck.

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HR-11, on its second trip, picked-up a mechanic, spare magneto, and tools from the base and was diverted to the downed aircraft. HR-11 subsequently developed carbureter trouble and made an emergency landing at 0810 at the 1st Armored Amtracks on Kimpo Peninsula. The mechanic and equipment destined for HR-8 were sent the remainder of the way by jeep. HR-8 was repaired and joined the lift at 1100.

HR-4, with a mechanic, spare carbureter, and tools aboard was dispatched to HR-11's position. The necessary repairs were effected and HR-11 rejoined the airlift at 1100.

The aircraft which carried the three (3) spare pilots to Ascom City returned and joined the lift at 0700. At 0715 the three (3) reserve aircraft arrived from Ascom City and joined the airlift.

At 0900, HR-9 went out of commission with high frequency vibrations and for a 120 hour check. The aircraft was back in commission at 1600.

At 1315, HR-7 was reported down at the loading zone with malfunction of the servos. An Engineering crew was flown to the loading zone and temporary repairs were completed. The aircraft was back in commission at 1700.

The next aircraft to go out of commission was HR-10 which landed at the helicopter base at 1310 with ignition trouble and was declared AOG awaiting parts.

At 1400, HR-4 landed at the helicopter base with a bad magneto. There were no more spares available so a magneto was removed from HR-10 and installed in HR-4. The exchange was completed and the aircraft was back in commission at 1630.

On several occasions pilots reported minor troubles with the aircraft when they landed for refueling. These were repaired immediately and the aircraft were back in the lift after very short delays. The Engineering Section functioned efficiently and effectively. Due to their excellent efforts, the squadron was able to maintain exceptional availability of aircraft throughout the entire operation.

During the afternoon, the fuel supply became alarmingly low. The 1st Marine Division Service Battalion fuel dump is the normal source of supply for this squadron, but by this time their stock of aviation fuel was exhausted. Emergency steps were taken to procure fuel from other sources.

After numerous contacts with G-4 it was found that fuel was available at the Army Quartermaster Supply Point #10 at Yong Dong Po, and one (1) squadron truck and two (2) Division trucks were dispatched. Fuel was also borrowed from VMO-6, an Army tank unit, and the Air Force dump at the UN Peace Camp, Munsan-ni. The fuel thus acquired assured completion of the lift with an ample reserve remaining.

During the latter part of this operation, a request was received for an airlift of 10,000 pounds of "A" Rations from the loading zone to a new unloading zone located at BS 875743 on Kimpo Peninsula. This cargo lift was to follow the completion of the troop movement. Eight (8) air-

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craft made one (1) trip each to airlift this cargo.

During the airlift, a maximum of twelve (12) aircraft and a minimum of six (6) were in operation continuously. The airlift was started at 0545 and the last load of cargo was delivered to the unloading zone at 1905. The last aircraft landed at the helicopter base at 1925 and OPERATION PRONTO was secured.

5. DISCUSSION:

1. This operation was successfully accomplished through the wholehearted cooperation and coordination of all units involved. All hands extended every effort to carry out their respective assignments. The experience gained by all personnel in previous large scale operations proved indispensable.

2. On the initial take-off, aircraft to the loading zone were dispatched in pairs with a two (2) minute interval between pairs. However, it soon became apparent that due to the excellent visibility and length of the route to be flown, the pilots could establish their own intervals.

3. During the last several months a program has been in effect to gradually replace the original pilots of HMR-161. Seven (7) of the pilots utilized in this operation had arrived from the United States only five (5) days before. An attempt was made to schedule the flights in such a way that an "experienced" pilot was teamed with one (1) of the new pilots at all times. The capable flying exhibited by the new pilots reflected their adequate previous training.

4. This airlift, more than any other in which HMR-161 has participated, proved that a Marine Transport Helicopter squadron can successfully operate intact as an "on call" tactical tool. In all previous large scale operations sufficient notice was given for detailed planning and to effect liaison between HMR-161 and the units concerned.

5. This airlift also proved the necessity of troop commanders having a general working knowledge of the capabilities, requirements, and limitations of the transport type helicopters.

6. A new record was set in this squadron for the number of flight hours flown in any one day's operation. The previous record was 103.2 hours. The record set during OPERATION PRONTO was 114 hours.

6. CONCLUSIONS:

That HMR-161 can successfully airlift an Infantry battalion with only three (3) hours notice and with no previous liaison between the parties concerned.

That an Infantry battalion, with proper supervision, can efficiently be airlifted upon short notice with minimum effort and time.

That longer notice before an operation would be beneficial but not absolutely necessary. Lack of time for liaison between HMR-161 and the 2nd Battalion, 7th Marines, necessitated both organizations concerned

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to enter the operation without so much as a telephone call.

K. B. MC CUTCHEON

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CMC
CINCPACFLT
COMNAVFE
CG FMFPAC
CG FMFLANT
CG AIRFMFPAC
CG AIRFMFLANT
CG FMAW
CMCS (5)
PAC FLT COMBAT EVAL BD
CO HMX-1
CO HMR-261
CO HMR-262
CO HMR-162
CO HMR-163
CO HMR-361

[REDACTED]

STATISTICS

NUMBER OF FLIGHTS	155
AVERAGE ROUND TRIPS PER AVAILABLE AIRCRAFT	17.2
NUMBER OF TROOPS CARRIED	670
WEIGHT OF CARGO CARRIED	10,000 pounds
FIRST LOAD OF TROOPS AIRBORNE	0545
LAST LOAD OF CARGO DELIVERED	1705
AIRCRAFT TIME	114 hours
TOTAL TIME TO COMPLETE OPERATION (From the time the first aircraft took-off from FRINGE BASE until the last aircraft landed at FRINGE BASE.)	13 hours 55 minutes
TOTAL FUEL CONSUMED	4,050 gallons
AVERAGE NUMBER OF AIRCRAFT PARTICIPATING	9
PILOTS' AVERAGE TIME	8 hours
NUMBER OF REFUELINGS	92
DISTANCE FROM LOADING TO UNLOADING ZONE	27.5 Nautical miles

Enclosure (1)

[REDACTED]