

# **KOREAN WAR PROJECT**

**OPERATION CIRCUS, REPORT ON; PILOT  
BRIEFING FORM 23 APR 52]; FLIGHT  
SCHEDULE [N.D.] OPERATION CIRCUS  
STATISTICS [N.D.]**

664-5

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

ELB:lfm  
A4-3  
Ser 0204  
26 Apr 1952

UNCLASSIFIED

[REDACTED]

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

Subj: OPERATION CIRCUS, report on

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

Encl: (1) Pilot Briefing Form  
(2) Flight Schedule  
(3) Statistics

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

1. MISSION:

To airlift by helicopter the 1st Battalion, 7th Marines (Reinf), and Regimental H&S Company, across the Imjin River in the vicinity of Bridge X-Ray (CT 097013).

2. PURPOSE:

To determine if a helicopter transport squadron can airlift the Reserve Regiment, 7th Marines, minus the 2nd and 3rd battalions, across the Imjin River in the vicinity of Bridge X-Ray in a predetermined time so they (troops of the 1st/7th and H&S Co) can move into a blocking position on the defense line.

SUPPOSITION: That Bridge X-Ray has been destroyed.

3. PLANNING PHASE:

a. Upon receipt of orders from the Commanding General, First Marine Division, to conduct OPERATION CIRCUS, HMR-161 effected liaison with the Commanding Officer and the Operations Officer, 7th Marines, and established the following:

- (1) That the operation would commence at 0830 on 23 April, 1952.
- (2) That all available aircraft would be employed.
- (3) That the maximum payload for each aircraft would be 1,200 pounds.
- (4) That each load would consist of five (5) fully equipped combat troops or four (4) fully equipped combat troops and a crew-served weapon.
- (5) That four (4) loading sites, five (5) unloading sites, and one (1) refueling site would be established.
- (6) That mine detection teams would clear all mines from the loading and unloading zones before actual landing sites were selected and prepared.
- (7) That loading sites would be to the East of the North-South road in the loading zone and as close to the road as practicable.

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(8) That troops would utilize the road in the loading zone as a staging area.

(9) That mine detecting teams would clear and mark safe avenues of approach and exit from all sites.

(10) That the road in the loading zone would be closed to all but essential traffic during the hours from 0600 to 1100 on D-Day.

(11) That several "ducks" would be standing by to effect rescue of personnel in the event an aircraft landed in the Imjin River.

(12) That the FAC of the 1st Battalion, 7th Marines, would be at the unloading zone to observe the unloading and relay any pertinent information to the Operations Duty Officer or the pilots as required.

(13) That the 7th Marines would provide a telephone line connecting all loading sites.

b. After completion of the above planning phase, the Commanding Officer of the 1st Air Delivery Platoon was contacted and the following plan established:

(1) That the Commanding Officer, Air Delivery Platoon, would assist in choosing the sites to be used in the operation.

(2) That Air Delivery Platoon personnel would be flown to the operation area prior to D-Day to prepare and mark all loading and unloading sites.

(3) That three (3) Air Delivery Platoon personnel would be stationed at each loading and unloading site to direct the pilots and assist in the loading and unloading of troops.

(4) That the Commanding Officer of the Air Delivery Platoon would be at each loading zone to act as liaison between the aircraft and the units being airlifted.

c. After formulating plans with the Commanding Officer, Air Delivery Platoon, the following decisions were made within the squadron:

(1) That fuel would be airlifted to the refueling site prior to D-Day.

(2) That at 0630 on D-Day, the Operations Duty Officer; Commanding Officer, Air Delivery Platoon; Air Delivery Platoon personnel, Communications personnel with telephones, and Engineering personnel with spare parts and tools would be flown into the operation area to make final preparations.

(3) That at 0630, on 23 April, 1952, the radio jeep would be dispatched to loading site #3.

(4) That the briefing for all pilots would be held at 1830 on 22 April, 1952.

4. PREPARATIONS:

On 21 April, 1952, an aerial reconnaissance was made of the operating area. Loading and unloading zones and the refueling site were chosen. Mine detecting teams were notified and the sites were subsequently cleared.

On 21 and 22 April, Air Delivery Platoon personnel prepared and numbered each site and hung colored panels from wires and other obstructions near the sites.

During the afternoon of 22 April, 14 drums of fuel and one (1) drum of oil were airlifted in external slings to the refueling site.

5. D-DAY:

a. PRE-PHASE:

At 0630 eight (8) aircraft carrying men and equipment (Encl (2)) departed the helicopter home base for the operation area. Upon returning to the helicopter home base, the aircraft were refueled and made ready for the lift.

At 0815 the first four (4) aircraft departed the helicopter home base and landed at their respective loading sites at 0825.

At 0818 the remaining six (6) aircraft departed the helicopter home base and arrived at the loading zone at 0828, orbiting East of their respective loading sites. Since the operating area was within the enemy's field of view, it was deemed advisable to have the second group of aircraft orbit instead of land as previously planned. (See Encl (1).)

b. H-HOUR EXECUTION:

OPERATION CIRCUS was conducted as planned with the following exceptions:

(1) One aircraft had gone out of commission the evening prior to D-Day, and could not be repaired in time for the operation. Consequently, two (2) aircraft utilized site #2 instead of three (3) aircraft as previously planned.

(2) At approximately 0930 all troops assigned to loading site #1 had been transported to the unloading zone. The two (2) aircraft operating from site #1 were diverted to sites #2 and #3.

(3) One aircraft operating from site #2 developed mechanical trouble and was temporarily out of the lift. Upon rejoining the operation, this aircraft was deployed to site #4.

(4) At approximately 0945 one (1) aircraft operating from site #3 developed mechanical trouble and was forced to return to the helicopter home base. This aircraft did not rejoin the operation.

(5) The remainder of the operation proceeded smoothly and the last aircraft had dropped its load and returned to the loading zone at 1000.

6. DISCUSSION:

a. The original order initiating this operation stated that 1,294 "boat spaces" would be airlifted in one and one-half ( $1\frac{1}{2}$ ) hours. In the actual operation, 1,185 troops plus crew served weapons were airlifted during the allotted time and with one (1) less aircraft than anticipated.

b. With 11 available aircraft it was estimated that the average round trip per aircraft would have to be about three and one-half ( $3\frac{1}{2}$ ) minutes in order to fulfill the assignment. Such short trips necessitated locating the loading and unloading zones in close proximity to one another.

(1) The straight-line distance between loading site #1 and unloading site #1 ABLE was approximately 850 meters. Such a short pattern required alert flying with constant attention toward maintaining the proper interval between aircraft. Two (2) aircraft were assigned to pattern #1 and occasionally the aircraft returning for a load would be starting his flare as the aircraft ahead of him was beginning his take-off.

(2) The distance between loading site #2 and unloading site #2 ABLE was almost 1,100 meters. Two (2) aircraft were assigned to pattern #2 and the pilots reported no difficulty in maintaining a proper interval. When one (1) of the aircraft from pattern #1 was diverted to pattern #2, it was found that three (3) aircraft had difficulty operating efficiently in such a pattern. On several occasions, aircraft returning for a load had to hover while the aircraft ahead completed its loading and became airborne.

(3) The distance between loading site #3 and unloading site #3 ABLE was about 1,600 meters. The three (3) aircraft originally operating in pattern #3 experienced no difficulty in maintaining a proper interval. When four (4) aircraft were assigned to pattern #3, the aircraft returning for a load occasionally had to hover while the aircraft ahead completed its loading and became airborne.

(4) The straight-line distance between loading site #4 and unloading site #4 ABLE was about 1,350 meters. Due to the indirect route flown in pattern #4, four (4) aircraft experienced no difficulty in maintaining the proper interval.

7. CONCLUSIONS:

a. That a helicopter transport squadron can airlift a battalion with attached units across the Injin River in a predetermined time.

b. That for safe and efficient operation there is a minimum distance required between loading and unloading sites. That careful consideration must be given to the distance required between respective loading and unloading sites and to the number of aircraft assigned to each traffic pattern.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS:

That until further study can be made and figures compiled, the following thumb-rule can be used as a guide when choosing the relative location of loading and respective unloading sites:

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"In flat terrain where a direct route between sites can be flown, the minimum one-way straight line distance between sites should be approximately 450 meters per aircraft in the pattern."

K. B. MC CUTCHEON

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CMC  
CINCPACFLT  
COMNAVFE  
CG FMFPAC  
CG FMFLANT  
CG AIRFMFPAC  
CG AIRFMFLANT  
CG 1STMAW  
ASS'T C/S (G-3) 1STMARDIV  
CMCS (5)  
PAC FLT COMBAT EVAL BD  
CO, MAG-16  
CO, HMR-261  
CO, HMR-262  
CO, HMR-162  
CO, HMR-163  
CO, HMR-361  
CO, HMX-1

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

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AA-3  
23 Apr 1952

PILOT BRIEFING FORM

1. PURPOSE:

To determine if a transport helicopter squadron can airlift the Reserve Regiment, 7th Marines, minus 2/7th and 3/7th Battalions across the Imjin River in the vicinity of Bridge X-Ray in a predetermined time so that they can move into a blocking position on the defense line.

2. MISSION:

To airlift the 1st Battalion, 7th Marines (Reinf), and Regimental H&S Company, across the Imjin River in the vicinity of Bridge X-Ray.

SUPPOSITION: That Bridge X-Ray has been destroyed.

3. H-MINUS HOUR:

a. Breakfast: 0530

b. Take-Off: 0630 for the first eight (8) aircraft with the Operations Duty Officer, Air Delivery Platoon, Engineering, and Communications personnel to loading and unloading zones and gas sites. (Return to helicopter home base, and standby.)

c. H-Hour Take-Off: 0830

4. LANDING SITES:

a. There are four (4) loading and five (5) unloading sites as follows:

(1) Loading sites coordinates (East side of Imjin River):

Site #1	CT 103014	Site #3	CT 102006
Site #2	CT 103010	Site #4	CT 100003

(2) Unloading sites coordinates (West side of Imjin River):

Site #1 (ABLE)	CT 094012	Site #4 (ABLE)	CT 086003
Site #2 (ABLE)	CT 092009	Site #5 (ABLE)	CT 073015
Site #3 (ABLE)	CT 085012		

b. All aircraft will operate from a particular loading and unloading site as follows:

- (1) 1st and 5th aircraft on sites #1, #1 (ABLE), and #5
- (2) 2nd, 6th, and 9th aircraft on sites #2, and #2 (ABLE)
- (3) 3rd, 7th, and 10th aircraft on sites #3, and #3 (ABLE)

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(4) 4th, 8th, and 11th aircraft on sites #4, and #4 (ABLE)

c. The first four (4) aircraft will depart the helicopter home base at 0810 and go directly to their respective loading sites. The remaining seven (7) aircraft will depart the helicopter home base at 0815. The 5th, 6th, 7th, and 8th aircraft will orbit behind their respective loading sites. The 9th, 10th, and 11th aircraft will orbit behind their respective loading sites or around the gas site.

5. AIR DELIVERY PLATOON:

a. Three (3) Air Delivery Platoon men will be assigned to each loading and unloading site to direct the pilots and assist in the loading and unloading of aircraft.

b. The Commanding Officer of the Air Delivery Platoon will be at the loading zone and will act as liaison between the pilots and loading teams. He will have communications with the aircraft via the radio jeep on 142.02 (Channel RED.) His call sign will be FRINGE UNCLE.

6. There will be one (1) Operations Duty Officer at the loading zone to coordinate the problem. He will have communications with the aircraft on 142.02 (Channel RED.) His call sign will be FRINGE UNCLE. At the end of the problem he will have positive control of all aircraft.

7. The Forward Air Controller of the 1st Battalion, 7th Marines, will be at the unloading zone to relay any pertinent information to the Operations Duty Officer or the pilots as required. He will be on 142.02 (Channel RED) and his call sign will be SORROW 14.

8. PRE-PHASE:

The Operations Duty Officer, Engineering, Communications, and Air Delivery Platoon personnel will be flown to the loading and unloading zones prior to H-Hour. Aircraft involved in this pre-phase of the operation will return to the helicopter home base immediately after unloading their passengers and refuel.

9. COMMUNICATIONS:

a. Primary Frequency - 142.02 (Channel RED).

b. Secondary Frequency - 3410.

c. Call sign of ODO and CO, ADP will be FRINGE UNCLE.

d. Call sign of FAC, 1st Battalion, 7th Marines, will be SORROW 14.

e. Aircraft call sign will be FRINGE (Modex No).

10. REFUELING AND AIRCRAFT REPAIRS:

a. All aircraft will depart from the helicopter home base with 600 pounds fuel and will return to the gas site with a minimum of 75 pounds aboard.

b. Refueling during the airlift is not contemplated but pilots are cautioned to remain constantly aware of their fuel supply. Any aircraft

Enclosure (1)



requiring more fuel will check-out with FRINGE UNCLE and proceed to the refueling site at CT 098000. At the end of the problem it is expected that all aircraft will refuel at the gas site.

c. Any aircraft requiring mechanical attention during the lift will check out with FRINGE UNCLE and proceed to CT 098000.

11. ROUTES TO BE FLOWN:

a. The route from the helicopter home base to the loading zone will be direct on a heading of approximately 355 degrees.

b. Aircraft which load on site #1 will unload at site #1 (ABLE), etc. Route from the loading zone to the unloading zone and return will be as follows:

(1) West wind:

(a) Fly direct route from all loading sites to respective unloading sites. Aircraft operating from sites #1 and #2 will fly a right hand pattern at both loading and unloading sites.

(b) Aircraft operating from sites #3 and #4 will fly a left hand pattern at both loading and unloading sites. Aircraft taking off from unloading site #4 (ABLE) will make a left turn out and proceed South-west up the valley for a distance of about 200 meters and then turn South-east and follow the valley down to the Imjin River and return to loading site #4.

(2) East wind:

(a) Aircraft operating from sites #1 and #2 will fly a left hand pattern at both loading and unloading sites.

(b) Aircraft operating from sites #3 and #4 will fly a right hand pattern at both loading and unloading sites. The route followed by aircraft operating from site #4 will be the reverse as for a West wind.

c. Aircraft carrying the last eight (8) loads from loading site #1 will go to unloading site #5 (ABLE). Air Delivery Platoon team on site #1 will notify the pilots when to go to site #5 (ABLE).

(1) East wind:

(a) Make left turn after take off, proceed along North edge of valley, make left turn to unloading site #5 (ABLE). Return to loading site #1 via South edge of valley until opposite unloading site #3 (ABLE), then direct to site #1.

(2) West wind:

(a) Proceed direct to the Southern edge of valley opposite unloading site #3 (ABLE), then follow Southern edge of valley to site #5 (ABLE). Make right turn after take off and proceed to loading site #1 via Northern edge of valley.

d. Altitude - clear all obstructions.

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d. Airspeed - 65 knots or as practicable.

11. GENERAL INFORMATION:

- a. Number of troops to be airlifted - 1,294
- b. Number of troops per load - 5 (or 4 troops and crew served weapon).
- c. Total number of trips required - 260.
- d. Estimated time to complete operation: w/
  - (1) 12 aircraft - 1 hour 30 minutes
  - (2) 11 aircraft - 1 hour 40 minutes
  - (3) 10 aircraft - 1 hour 50 minutes
- e. Maximum aircraft gross weight - 6,970 pounds.
- f. Pilots will wear life jackets.
- g. One (1) amtrack will stand by to effect rescue if necessary.

E. L. BARKER  
Operations Officer

Enclosure (1)

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FLIGHT SCHEDULE

OPERATIONS DUTY OFFICER  
SQUADRON DUTY OFFICER  
LOADING ZONE ODO

CAPTAIN KNUTSON  
LIEUTENANT ADAMS  
CAPTAIN KNUTSON

<u>TIME</u>	<u>HR NO.</u>	<u>PILOT</u>	<u>DUAL PILOT</u>	<u>REMARKS</u>
0630	5	URELL	DYER	6 ADP to Sites #1 & #2
	69	HERRIN	ALLEN	6 ADP to Sites #3 & #4
	7	ALSTON	BASS	4 Eng. Personnel to Gas Site ODO, CO, ADP TO Site #3
	8	WESSEL	BOUTTE	4 Eng. Personnel to Gas Site
	9	MAC CORMACK	CAUSER	4 Eng. Personnel to Gas Site
	11	RADOLINSKI	WYDNER	6 ADP to Sites #1 ABLE & 2 ABLE
	13	SAMIS	ROBERTS	6 ADP to Sites #3 ABLE & 4 ABLE
	14	GREEN	KEW	Comm. Men & Equip. to all sites to connect phones. Comm. man to Site #3.
0810	2	MC CUTCHEON	ROBERTS	Loading Site #1
	4	WINES	QUINN	Loading Site #2
	5	WINTERS	SAMIS	Loading Site #3
	69	WESSEL	WYDNER	Loading Site #4
0815	7	RATLIFF	RADOLINSKI	Loading Site #1
	8	LESAK	URELL	Loading Site #2
	9	BARKER	CAUSER	Loading Site #3
	11	DYER	KEW	Loading Site #4
	13	ALLEN	ALSTON	Gas Site, Operate on #2
	14	GREEN	HERRIN	Gas Site, Operate on #3
	15	COX	BOUTTE	Gas Site, Operate on #4

After completion of the operation, aircraft will proceed as follows:

2	Pick up ADP personnel at #1 ABLE & #2 ABLE, return to base
5	Pick up ADP personnel at #3 ABLE & #4 ABLE, return to base
7	Pick up ADP personnel at #1 & #2, return to base
14	Pick up ADP personnel at #3 & #4, return to base
13	Pick up Comm. Man at #3, proceed to all sites to retrieve phones. Pick up ADP personnel at #5 ABLE, return to base
9	Pick up CO, ADP at #3, spare gear at gas site, return to base
69	Standby to retrieve gasoline drums and return to base
8	Standby to retrieve gasoline drums and return to base
11	Standby to retrieve gasoline drums and return to base
4	Standby to retrieve gasoline drums and return to base
15	Pick up 6 Eng. personnel at gas site and return to base

NOTE: If FRINGE UNCLE is inoperative, Major BARKER will take charge of  
retrieving. Any aircraft can expect to be notified by ODO to make  
a second retrieving trip.

Enclosure (2)

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OPERATION CIRCUS STATISTICS

NUMBER OF FLIGHTS	246
NUMBER OF TROOPS CARRIED	1,185
FIRST AIRCRAFT TOOK-OFF	0830
LAST LOAD DELIVERED	1000
TIME TO COMPLETE LIFT	1 hour 30 minutes
TOTAL AIRCRAFT TIME	14 hours 40 minutes
TOTAL FUEL CONSUMED	900 gallons
NUMBER OF AIRCRAFT PARTICIPATING	10 for 1 hour 10 minutes 9 for 1 hour 30 minutes

Enclosure (3)

STANTON