

NIGHTHAWK -- A Cobra gunship from the 2nd Battalion, 20th Artillery's (AJA) B Battery joins the Nighthawk search ship, loaded with electronic detection equipment, to support 1st Air Cavalry Division ground units.



READY TO TACKLE ENEMY -- Armed with two mini-guns, a 40mm grenade launcher, machine gun and 76 rockets, the Nighthawk team of Huey (left) and Cobra helicopters are ready to tackle the enemy during night missions for the 1st Air Cavalry Division.



DETECTION EQUIPMENT -- Before the evening mission, SP4 Harold W. Boats (Alamosa, Ill.) inspects the heart of the Nighthawk's detecting system--a combination powerful Starlight Scope (top) and 50,000 watt searchlight mounted on the Huey's machine gun bracket.

NIGHTHAWK 1st Air Cav's Night Fighters

By CPT GERALD SHARPE
TRUOC VUNG, Vietnam
A hail of bullets and rockets streaking down a beam of light are only part of the Nighthawk's surprise waiting for Charlie operating during darkness in the 1st Air Cavalry Division.
Organized in late July, the Divarty team known as Nighthawk is composed of a Huey helicopter from Battery F, 82nd Artillery and a Cobra gunship from the 2nd Battalion, 20th

Aerial Rocket Artillery's Battery B, located at Camp Corval. The firepower available to this team includes two 7.62 mm mini-guns, each capable of firing 4,000 rounds per minute; a 40 mm grenade launcher, delivering 150 grenades in 50 seconds; and 76 2.75 inch rockets in a variety of weights, warheads and fuses.
The Nighthawk patrol the Cav's area each night with assistance from several target

detection teams, ranging from the infantrymen to sophisticated ground and air radar. When the Nighthawk beam is alerted to a possible enemy location, the crew is well equipped to find whatever is lurking in the shadows near friendly positions.
A powerful infra-red light and scope turn night into day for the keen-eyed target detection crewman. Also at his disposal is a night observation

device, which needs only starlight to operate effectively. Besides these two modern electronic detection systems, the crew uses the "ultimate finder" -- a 50,000 watt searchlight which not only serves as a locator but also as a marker of the enemy position.
The Nighthawk's specialty is giving close support to the infantry unit in a night defensive or ambush position. The moment that an infantry squad spots movement around its position, the word is flashed to the Nighthawk.
A typical mission is underway.

In a matter of seconds the unit alerts the pilots and marks the positions with a light that can only be seen from the sky. Usually, the Nighthawk begins searching the area with target detector SP4 Harold Boats picks up movement on his scope.
With a target in sight, WO1 John Showgren, piloting the Huey, banks to the left while co-pilot WO1 Ronald Baker increases the Cobra pilots circling above the Huey of the sighting.
As the searchlight beam hits the ground, the Stryker telescope relay their positions in reference to the light before the Huey's radio crackles with:

"Nighthawk Two, this is Dodge Six, you are clear to engage."
On the mini-gun, SP4 Stanley Cook pours a constant stream of fire and lead down into the small beam of light. Moments later, the Blue Max overhead rolls hot and releases a burst of mini-gun fire and a salvo of rockets from pods tucked under its sides.
The light goes dark, but infra-red scopes continue to probe the target area for an assessment of damage.
Mission completed for Nighthawk means that the enemy has been caught and stopped in the darkness before he can strike at Cav unit positions on the ground.



CHECKS AIRCRAFT -- Before the Nighthawk mission, WO1 John W. Showgren (Wismar, Minn.) checks out his Huey helicopter at Battery F, 82nd Artillery's Camp Corval headquarters.



MANNING SEARCHLIGHT -- SP4 Harold W. Boats (Alamosa, Ill.) mans the combination Starlight Scope and 50,000 watt searchlight which replaces the conventional machine gun on the Nighthawk search ship.

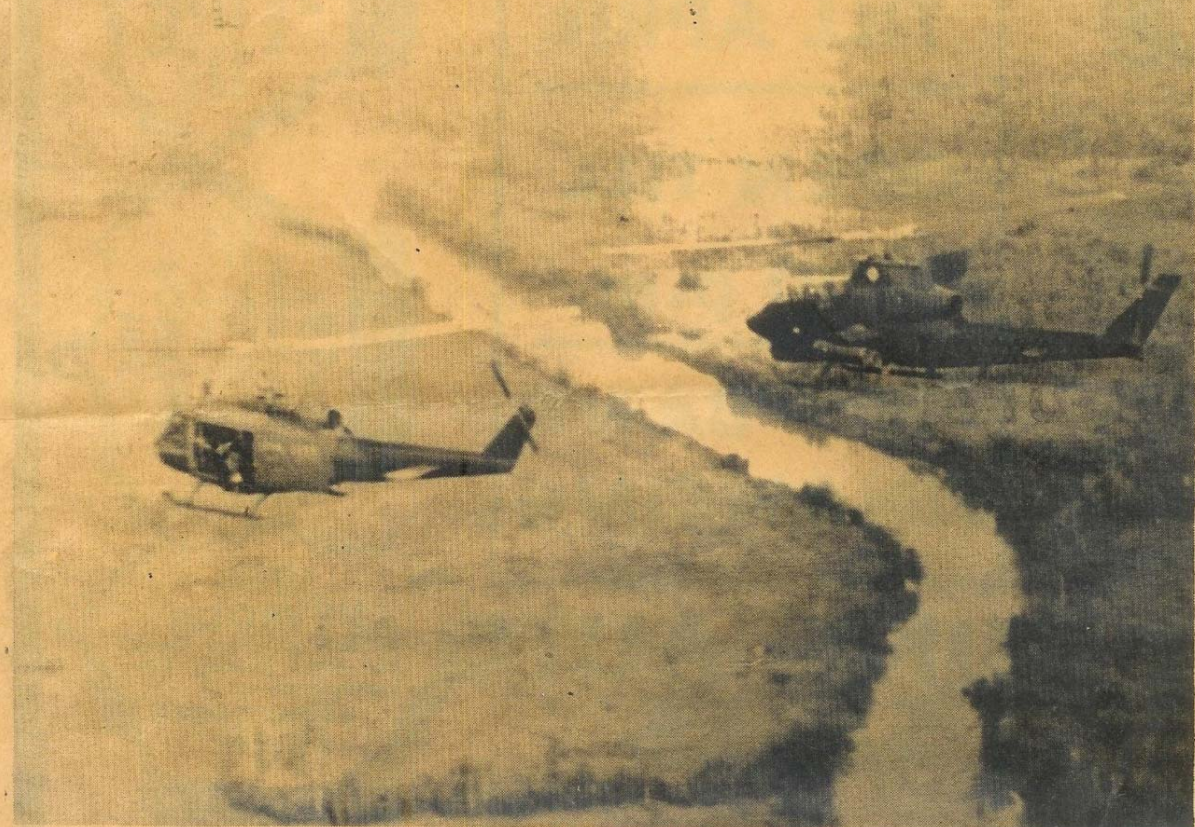
--Photos by SP5 TERRY MOON
1st Air Cavalry Division



PROWLING THE COUNTRYSIDE, the Huey "low bird" and Cobra "high bird" team up to find the enemy during darkness and stop him before he can strike at 1st Cav unit positions on the ground.



MINI-GUN -- Standing ready next to the target detection equipment is a mini-gun capable of firing 4,000 rounds per minute at enemy positions trapped by the ship's powerful searchlight beam.



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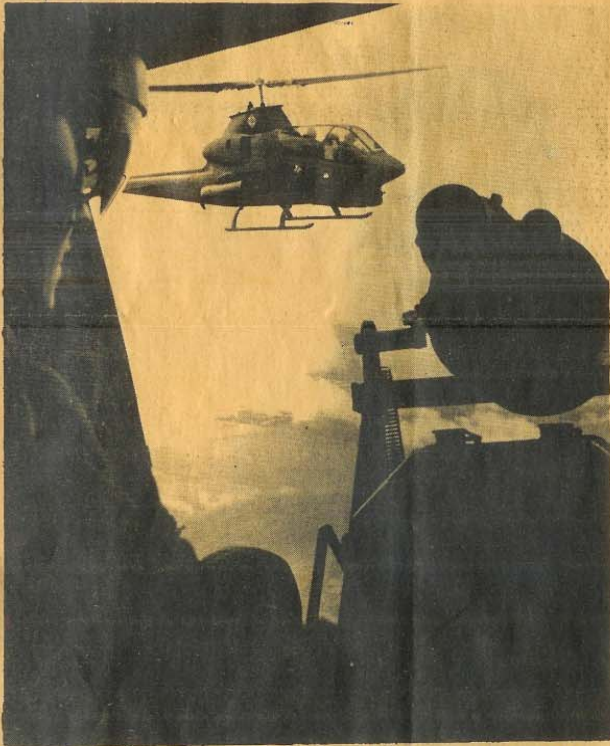
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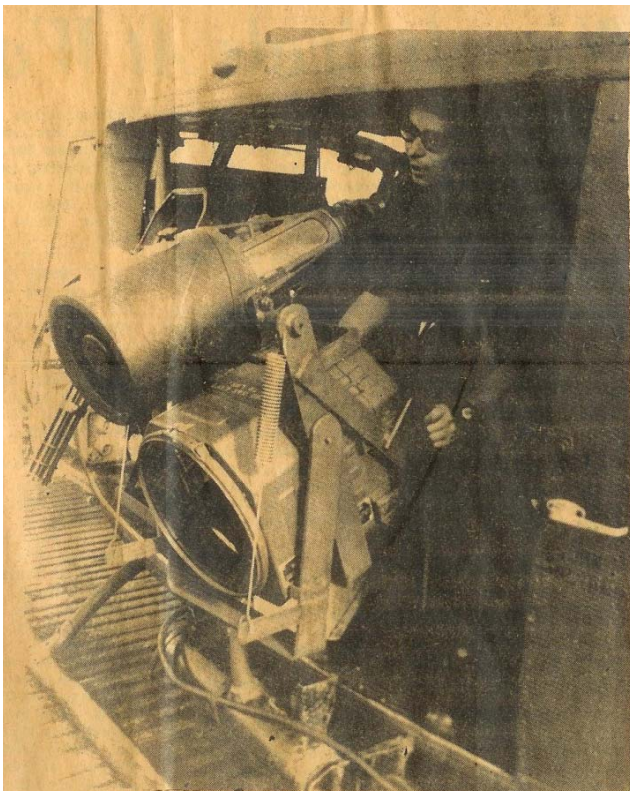
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1st Air Cav's Night Fighters



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CHECKS AIRCRAFT--Before the Nighthawk mission, WO1 John W. Snowgren (Wilmar, Minn.) checks out his Huey helicopter at Battery E, 82nd Artillery's Camp Gorvad headquarters.

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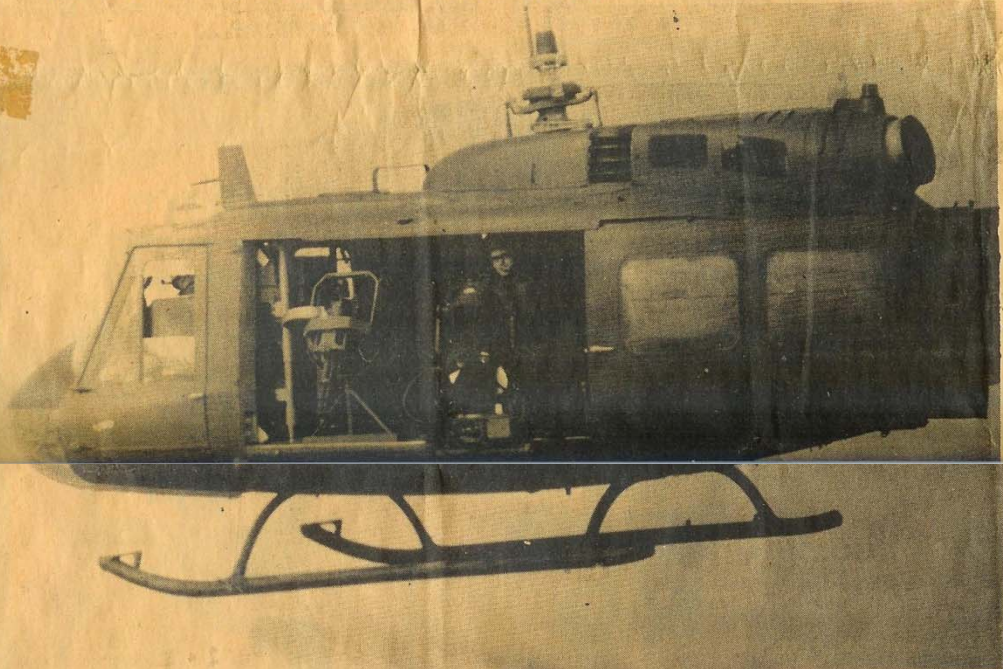
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