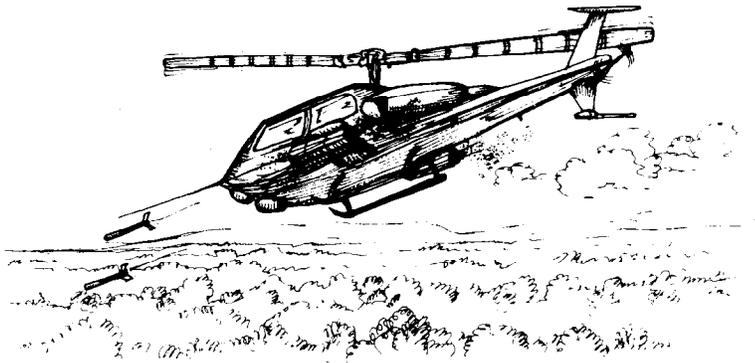


AIRMOBILE FORCES EMPLOYMENT

Airmobile forces, including troop carriers and attack helicopters, offer effective means to fix and destroy guerrilla forces. Airmobile combat patrols may be used to reconnoiter suspected areas and to capture or destroy located guerrillas. Small numbers of troops and aircraft can patrol extensive areas, while centrally located reserves can reinforce units in contact. Attack helicopters can engage guerrilla forces and maintain contact until other forces are deployed. Airmobile forces exploit their mobility by attacking guerrillas located in difficult terrain. During large-scale offensive operations, airmobile forces may be employed to block avenues of escape. The ability of aircraft to deliver assault forces quickly on guerrilla forces enhances tactical surprise.



Detailed plans for airmobile operations are prepared to cover as many contingencies as practicable. As soon as possible after units move into areas of operation, aviation unit commanders determine the location of potential landing areas, pickup zones, drop zones, and assembly areas throughout the area of operations. If possible, detailed reconnaissance is made of these areas to determine suitability and capability. A catalog of these areas, together with all other available information, assists in planning airmobile operations in strike or consolidation campaigns.

Operational control of transport aircraft is retained at the lowest level of command commensurate with requirements which constitute full employment. Whenever possible, sufficient aircraft will be provided to the brigade for routine support missions and for the immediate lift of the entire brigade reserve. Under unusual circumstances, aircraft may be placed under operational control of battalions or companies for prolonged periods of time. When the reserve is committed, it receives priority for the employment of transport aircraft. Aviation elements may be in an alert status within combat bases or at locations convenient to supported forces. When practicable, reserves and aircraft are held in the same general location.

After the initial mission is completed, the airmobile forces may continue in a variety of other operations. These include linkup, pursuit, establishment of new combat bases, or withdrawal from the area. Combat forces and logistical support are air-delivered as required. During operations, supporting aircraft continue to deliver troops, supplies, and equipment directly to the using ground units, thus reducing the requirements for stocking supplies or maintaining vulnerable land lines of communications. See FM 17-50, FM 57-35, FM 71-101, and FM 90-4 for detailed discussion of airmobile operations.