

Deputy Assistant Chief of Staff for Force Development

Q: After you left Vietnam in June of 1963, you became special assistant for tactical mobility to the assistant chief of staff for force development. What did that involve?

A: My job was to head a special division within ACSFOR to further air mobility in the Army. I was charged with integrating the ideas which had been tested by the Howze Board with the results of the helicopter experiments in Vietnam. I was established in the job by Secretary of the Army Cyrus Vance who was intent on pushing the idea of air mobility.

I was allowed to recruit some 15 officers who had worked on the Howze Board and another 15 who had served with me in Vietnam. Our task was to write doctrinal manuals for teaching the air mobility concept and to design air mobility units to go to Vietnam.



Major General Edward L. Rowny, 7962.

Q: Who headed ACSFOR at that time?

A: The chief of ACSFOR was Lieutenant General Ben Harrel. He had two deputies, Major General Creighton Abrams and Major General Ralph E. Haines, Jr.

Q: Can you describe some of your accomplishments while you were in ACSFOR?

A: One of my accomplishments was to oversee the writing of Army doctrine for air mobility. We circulated these ideas throughout the Army staff and also fanned them over to a number of think tanks for comment. The second accomplishment was to design organizations to incorporate air mobility into the Army. The units we designed were of two types. The first was a unit of helicopters and trained people which could be attached to a standard division having the need for tactical air mobility. The second was a light division which integrated helicopters throughout the entire division. Some of these helicopters were for reconnaissance,

some for fire support, some to transport soldiers and supplies, and some, of course, for command and control purposes.

Q: Wasn't the 11th Air Assault Division (Test) formed about this time?

A: Actually, the test division had already been formed. The 11th Airborne Division was recalled to active duty on February 15, 1963, and redesignated the 11th Air Assault Division. The Secretary of Defense had instructed the chief of staff of the Army to form this unit so it could carry on experiments which had been conducted by the Howze Board and by our ACTIV team in Vietnam. General Earle Wheeler, then the Army's chief of staff, issued the necessary orders to activate the division.

Q: Was it organized as a full-blown division?

A: No. The concept was that it would grow by stages. Taking men and equipment from the active Army, it was to start out as a battalion, then build up to a brigade and then finally to a division. The first battalion to join the division was the 3d Battalion of the 187th Infantry, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel John J. Hennessey, who had commanded the battle group of the 82d Airborne Division that conducted our Howze Board tests.

Q: Who commanded the division, and had he taken part in the Howze Board tests?

A: The test division was commanded by Major General Harry W. O. Kinnard. Kinnard had not been a member of the Howze Board but was an ideal choice for the job. He was a paratrooper and a highly decorated war hero who had jumped into Normandy. A wax statue of him exists in a museum in Bastogne, where he had been a hero of the Battle of the Bulge as a 29-year old colonel. Kinnard was highly intelligent, aggressive, and a real believer in air mobility. He came to the division from the 101st Airborne Division, where he had been an assistant division commander under Major General Charles Rich. Kinnard prevailed upon Rich to give him some of the 101st Division's best officers and enlisted men to get started, including Colonel E. B. Roberts who became Kinnard's chief of staff.

Q: Did the 11th Air Assault Division carry out the same kinds of tests you had conducted in Vietnam?

A: No, not initially. The Army's idea was to organize and test a light division which could take its place in Germany to fight a conventional war. Having just come back from Vietnam, I was more interested in having the division organize and train

to fight counterinsurgency operations. A year later, sometime in 1964, Kinnard was instructed to include tests simulating action against the Viet Cong.

Q: Were these tests successful?

A: Yes, they were highly successful. The test division conducted simulated attacks and defense in Europe where they were pitted against the 82d Airborne Division and other regular U.S. Army units. When it branched out into counterinsurgency operations, it was also highly successful. Kinnard read the Howze Board and ACTIV test results carefully and tried to get as many officers and men as possible who had been in these tests assigned to his division.

Q: Well, to get back to your time at ACSFOR, can you tell me something about the dynamics within the Army staff?

A: General Ben Harrel, chief of ACSFOR, was very ambitious. He was a friend of General Johnson who was then DCSOPS. Harrel knew that Johnson was a protege of General Bus Wheeler, the chief of staff. Harrel was right; Johnson followed Wheeler as the chief of staff of the Army. General Ralph Haines, one of Harrel's deputies, was also quite close to Johnson. Haines was an armor officer who came to ACSFOR under a cloud of criticism. He had been charged by the General Accounting Office [GAO] with doing a poor job when he commanded a division in Europe. However, Haines was very clever. With the help of the ACSFOR staff and with the backing of Johnson, Haines turned the report around so the GAO report was quashed. General Abrams, the other deputy to Harrel was, like Haines, an armor officer. But Abrams was a straight-shooter and much easier to work with than Haines or Harrel.

One of the difficulties of my position was that Secretary Vance wanted to keep abreast of the work being done on air mobility and sent for me often to be briefed. Even though I reported to Harrel whenever I was sent for, and always debriefed him and his two deputies, I was accused by Harrel of end-running my immediate superiors. I explained this to Secretary Vance, but he refused to believe that these officers would put obstacles in my way or accuse me of jumping channels. I asked Vance to let me brief Harrel and let him in turn brief Vance; but Vance would have none of it. He wanted his reports from the "horse's mouth?"

Vance, in what he thought was a promotion, directed the Army to make me a third deputy to Harrel. On paper this looked like a good idea. It was supposed to give me access to the entire ACSFOR organization which was theoretically to support me. But in practice it did not work that way. My staff of about 30 officers was

broken up and scattered throughout ACSFOR, leaving me with only a deputy and two other assistants. When I called upon the other sections within ACSFOR to do something for me, they refused saying that they had jobs assigned them which were of higher priority. The net effect was that most of my work dried up. What I got done I had to do myself with the help of the three officers who worked for me directly. It was a serious blow to trying to carry out the tasks assigned me to further tactical air mobility.

Q: So then, for the next two years, you were essentially fighting a losing battle, were you not?

A: Yes. I had to fight a losing battle. It was obvious that the Secretary of the Army couldn't get the Army staff to help me. Besides, the DCSOPS, General Johnson, and the chief of staff, General Wheeler, were not favorably disposed toward the concept of tactical air mobility. The situation only got worse when Harold K. Johnson became the chief of staff of the Army and General Earle Wheeler moved up to become the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. This occurred in July of **1964**.

Q: I understand that General Creighton Abrams favored creating a light division. Was this a light division in the general sense of lighter equipment, or was it in the sense of an air mobile division?

A: What Abrams was promoting was a lighter division in the traditional sense and not an air mobile division. Army units were becoming heavier and heavier, adding more tanks, more armored personnel carriers, and more vehicles in general. This was making the division harder to transport by water and much harder to transport by air. As a result, there was a concerted drive within the Army-which Abrams led-to make Army divisions lighter. But this was in a generic sense and not a move to tactical air mobility.

Q: What did the Army division look like in terms of personnel and the number of vehicles? Can you give me ballpark figures?

A: Abrams was trying to cut the standard division down from 13,000 to 10,000 people and the vehicles from 3,500 to **3,000**.

Q: And what about the air mobile division? How was its formation coming along?

A: General Kinnard inherited a set of tables of organization and equipment [TOE] which were quite rough. Neither the Howze Board nor my actions in ACSFOR were very refined. **As** a result, Kinnard added to and trimmed men and equipment from the 11th Air Assault Division as his tests progressed. He was not able to cut the personnel because maintenance of helicopters was costly in terms of people. But he was able to cut the vehicles down drastically, from 3, 500 to 1,500. Moreover, the vehicles were all light; he tried to make do with nothing larger than a 1/4-ton jeep. The number of helicopters grew as time went on. Whereas the standard Army division had about 100 helicopters, the 11th Air Assault Division wound up with about 430.

Q: What about fire support in the 11th Air Assault Division?

A: Most of the fire support was furnished by the 2.75-inch rockets and .50-caliber machine guns with which the helicopters were equipped. More fire support came from the 24 Mohawks which were equipped with 5-inch naval rockets. [The division had 30 Mohawks, but 6 were strictly for surveillance and carried no weapons.] In addition, the division had three battalions of M-102 howitzers. The M-102 was a lighter version of the 105-mm howitzer. And finally, it had a Little John Battalion which was equipped to fire conventional and atomic rounds.

Q: Wasn't the other equipment in the 11th Air Assault Division also lighter?

A: Yes. Engineer bridging equipment, for example, was lighter. Every piece of equipment had to be carried within, or slingloaded by, a helicopter. Even small pieces of equipment were made lighter. For example, plastic water cans replaced the heavier metal ones. Ladders for descending from helicopters were made of aluminum, gas tanks were replaced by rubber bladders, and so forth. Kinnard encouraged his men to think up ideas for making equipment lighter and they responded admirably. In addition, Kinnard was given a slush fund of about \$1.5 million by General Art Trudeau, the chief of research and development. Trudeau was a great believer in air mobility, and just as he had done for the Howze Board, gave the 11th Division funds with which to purchase items on the open market. There was no need to develop a lot of equipment which already existed. It was the best \$1.5 million investment the Army ever made.

Q: Let me jump ahead. Later, when you took over the 24th Division in Germany, wasn't there an opportunity for developing a better conventional army as opposed to simply relying on nuclear weapons?

A: There was not as much opportunity to do things in the 24th Division as there had been in Vietnam or with the 11th Air Assault Division tests. Europe was more stable and concentrated on trying to contain attacks launched by the Warsaw Pact. But wherever we could, we tried to add more mobility, and I tried to get more helicopters than the 100-odd assigned to the division. A number of us who commanded units in Europe also pushed for lighter vehicles and lighter armored personnel carriers. But the situation didn't lend itself to a lot of free-wheeling or experimentation. Changes had to be made slowly, and then only after a great deal of study and staffing. We did, however, have a sympathetic Army commander in the person of General Andrew P. O'Meara. He believed that at some stage nuclear weapons would be used tactically, and as a result constantly pushed the idea that we had to be ready to exploit tactical nuclear weapons. And in this connection, he believed that helicopters would be highly useful on a nuclear battlefield. But there was very little sympathy in the Army staff for the notion of using tactical nuclear weapons. In addition, once we left Vietnam, the Army's enthusiasm for helicopters began to wane.

Q: Well, let me get back to your tour in ACSFOR. How did your work and that of Kinnard with the 11th Air Assault Division progress?

A: My work in ACSFOR, despite the handicaps, continued to progress. I had a small but highly loyal staff. In addition to Frank Clay, I had an outstanding officer, Colonel William "Bill" Terrell, who worked wonders. These officers helped me get others within the Army staff to moonlight for us. We held frequent meetings to which we invited Harry Kinnard, Jack Norton, Phil Seneff, John Tolson, Bob Williams, and others. I also encouraged a number of McNamara's whiz kids like Harry Rowan and Alain Enthoven, to pay frequent visits to Kinnard's division, especially when they were conducting exercises.

Once the Secretary of Defense decided in early 1965 that he wanted the 11th Air Assault Division to go to Vietnam, things went into high gear. Tests were accelerated and equipment designed for Europe, for example, the Little John Battalion, was dropped from the division's TOE. To dampen criticism from the Air Force, the division was stripped of its Mohawks. Tests now concentrated on how the division would operate in the central highlands of Vietnam. However, some tests simulated operating in the Delta and I and III Corps areas.

On June 11, 1965, Secretary McNamara announced at a nationally televised press conference that the 11th Air Assault Division would be redesignated an air mobile division and deployed to Vietnam. It would become the 1st Air Cavalry Division, carrying the colors of the 1st Cavalry then in Korea. The 2d Infantry Division

would replace the 1st Cavalry in Korea and the 1 lth Air Assault Division colors would be retired.

Speculation grew as to who would take the 1st Air Cavalry to Vietnam. Major General Jack Chiles, who commanded the 2d Division and had furnished most of the troops for the 1 lth Air Assault Division, wanted the job. But he made the mistake of making his ambitions known to a reporter and that killed his chances.

The natural choice was Harry Kinnard, and to the Army's credit, it selected him in early July to take the 1st Air Cavalry to Vietnam. He was ordered to bring the division to Red Con 1, the highest state of readiness, by July 28th. He did so, and on that date President Johnson ordered the division to Vietnam. The bulk of the division was moved by the Military Sea Transport Service, the first ships leaving on August 15th. On September 14th, the first ships landed at Qui Nhon harbor. The 3d Brigade kicked off the first operation in combat on October 10th. The division performed admirably, and became the pacesetter for professional military operations in Vietnam. The rest of the story, as the saying goes, is history. Kinnard had the division rolling in good style and I was free to be reassigned to another job.

Q: Before we leave the air mobility story, let me ask one last question. Steven Ailes took over from Cyrus Vance as Secretary of the Army. Was he sympathetic to your stand?

A: Yes. But Ailes was not a man who devoted his attention to Army mobility and tactics. These were not his strong suits. Ailes was a personnel specialist. He believed that his job was to recruit good soldiers, improve the standards of training, and raise the Army's morale. So while he was not unsympathetic to air mobility, he was not as zealous a pusher of the concept as Vance had been.

Q: All right. But would you briefly sum up for me your characterization of Vance?

A: Vance was a successful Wall Street banker who had decided to move into the public sector. He took a broad view of world affairs and had been active in the Foreign Affairs Council and the Trilateral Commission. He was very dedicated to the Army, but he thought the Army was ultra-conservative and moved too slowly to adopt new concepts like air mobility. He wanted to change the Army's doctrine and its hardware, and had a fair amount of success at it. While he was a good conceptualizer, he was poor at following through on his ideas. He thought that if he assigned an officer a mission it would be accomplished. He failed to realize

what a difficult job it was to change the Army's old methods. As a result, I was only one of a number of officers who were not fully supported from the top but left to fight our own battles.

Family Life

Q: Now let me ask you a few personal questions. First, when you came back from Vietnam was your family still living in Washington?

A: Yes. I had put my family into a rented house in Washington because I thought it would be easier logistically for my wife. It would be simpler to get the five children to and from school and my wife would not have to take care of our big house in Virginia. But when I got back from Vietnam we moved back into our Virginia home.

Q: When you received orders to go to Germany, what did your kids say?

A: The older children did not want to leave their friends. The younger two were eager to move. The middle child was ambivalent.

Q: And your wife, what did she say?

A: My wife was a good soldier and accepted my assignments philosophically. She felt that an Army career was a mixture of good and bad and was ready to take whatever came along. She always considered herself a part of the Army team and always highly supportive of whatever I had to do. But this time she was ready to get out of Washington. She thought that I had to pay too big a price in my fight to see new ideas, like air mobility, adopted. She didn't like the internecine warfare within the Army and thought my battles with Johnson, Harrel, and others had taken a heavy toll on my disposition and outlook on life. She didn't like to see me constantly fighting in the bureaucratic trenches. She also wanted our children to have the benefit of a normal family life and felt I worked too hard and neglected them.

Q: I understand you sent your children to good private schools. How could you afford it on an Army officer's salary?

A: I was very fortunate. During the early days of World War II my wife went to work as an engineer at General Electric and made more money than I. We lived