

HAWK

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281st Intruders are always

BUTTING IN

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“Listen, this unit has worked with the Special Forces for quite a few years now and has performed excellently in every type mission we could give them. And believe me, we have all sorts,” says SGT Michael E. Jones of the 5th Special Forces.

What unit is this which can elicit such high praise from a member of one of our nation's finest fighting units? The sergeant was referring to none other than

A Wolf Pack gunship provides lethal protective cover near Nha Trang.



A 281st slick pulls away from



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the 281st Assault Helicopter Company located at the Special Forces base in Nha Trang.

At one time the 281st's sole mission was to support the Green Berets; now that mission has been expanded to general support of the entire II Corps area. The "Intruders" continue to fly for the Berets but also support the "White Horse" and "Capital" Divisions of the Republic of Korea, the 4th Infantry Division, the 22nd and 23d ARVN Divisions and Task Force South.

The II Corps area itself is no haven for helicopters and their crews. High mountains and dense fog banks come out of nowhere to constantly plague aviators as they attempt to complete difficult missions.

A Central Highland's pilot has not only to contend with hazardous flying conditions, but placing his passengers on the ground can also prove difficult. The impenetrable triple-canopy jungle that covers much of II Corps often makes it impossible to set a helicopter down. Openings barely wide enough to accept a helicopter are often the

only recourse.

"In a hover-hole, when your crew-chief or gunner tell you to move your tail rotor two inches one way or another that's exactly what he means. Any more or less and you'll have yourself a blade strike," says WO1 Donald L. Green, a 281st aircraft commander.

There are times when no landing zone is needed. Providing the passengers are trained in the art, the only equipment needed to place men on the ground is a long rope. Rappelling out of a hovering helicopter from a height of 70 to 100 feet takes a fair amount of skill on the parts of the rappeller and the pilot controlling the aircraft. It is no easy task to keep a helicopter hovering steadily while a team of six men slide one by one down a rope from one side of a helicopter.

Most assault helicopter companies fly the normal combat assault, but it is the small, one or two ship mission which the 281st's two slick platoons, the "Rat Pack" and the "Bandits" and the gunship platoon, the "Wolf Pack" like best. It is the unique missions which they perform for the Special Forces that are their forte. "We enjoy supporting the Berets. They do some things a little differently and it keeps things exciting," says MAJ Darryl M. Stevens, former commanding officer of the Intruders.

A mission which provides excellent practice for the Peter Pilots and keeps the experienced ones in practice is that of supporting the Special Forces Recondo school outside Nha Trang. The school trains allied servicemen from all over Vietnam in the finer points of small team reconnaissance.

Just before graduation, a Recondo class puts all they have learned together on a real three-day reconnaissance patrol. Everything is strictly realistic, sometimes even the bullets fired from enemy weapons. The six-man teams are flown by the 281st slicks to differ-



Men depart slicks on insertion—advisor gives motivating yell to ARVN "Ranger."

LZ on Hon Tre Island after insertion of troops.



ent points in the jungles around Nha Trang.

The insertion procedure followed is exactly the same as the real thing. Performing this mission week after week enables the Intruders to instruct the new people in how small team insertions should be conducted. The Recondo mission keeps the rust off the older pilots in the exacting technique used to put small reconnaissance teams on the ground.

Whether it is supporting the "interesting" missions of the Green Berets or performing a combat assault for the tough Korean Infantry, the men of the 281st Assault Helicopter Company continue to fly the treacherous skies of II Corps with a confidence of hard earned experience which few other helicopter companies can match.