

Aviation Position Paper for Cyrus Vance

In August 1962 the Army was in a roles and missions fight with the Air Force. Army aviation units were beginning to flow into the Vietnam war. The Air Force was trying to exploit Vietnam, deploying low-flying slow-flying aircraft organized into Jungle Jim squadrons. The Air Force was not happy about the Army getting into air mobility. It was opposed to the Army having large numbers of helicopters.

To define the roles and mission of Army aviation. I wrote an eight-page position paper on Aviation Responsibilities of the Three Military Departments. It was to be for Vance's signature to Secretary McNamara.

The paper said that responsibility for development of aviation systems which operate in the environment of the ground soldier should be assigned to the Department of the Army. It spelled out that environment in general and for Vietnam in particular. The paper discussed counterinsurgency aviation at length, saying that it was largely in the ground soldier's environment.

The paper was well received within the Army. Cyrus Vance, already an enthusiast, sent the paper off to McNamara and a copy to the Chief of Staff. Its nine pages follow.

25 August 1962

MEMORANDUM FOR ✓ THE CHIEF OF STAFF, U. S. ARMY
 ✓ THE UNDER SECRETARY OF THE ARMY
 ✓ THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF THE ARMY (FM)
 ✓ THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF THE ARMY (I&L)
 ✓ THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF THE ARMY (R&D)
 THE GENERAL COUNSEL
 THE ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT ←

SUBJECT: Aviation Responsibilities of the Three Military Departments

1. The Secretary of the Army has transmitted the attached expression of his views to the Deputy Secretary of Defense.
2. Mr. Vance also intends to transmit the memorandum to the Secretary of Defense when the latter returns from leave.

Inclenure

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 Secretary of the Army

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MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Aviation Responsibilities of the Three Military Departments

In order to provide a contribution to the judgments on military departmental responsibilities in the field of aviation which will of necessity be made in the next few weeks, I should like to set forth the basic views of the Department of the Army in this field.

Basis of Army Thinking

Army thinking is predicated upon two fundamental concepts:

First, under the direction, authority and control of the Secretary of Defense, each of the three military departments makes use of aviation systems to perform its assigned departmental responsibility, which is to organize, train and equip military forces for the performance of combatant functions.

Second, the integration of aviation systems in a theater of operations is the responsibility of the unified commander in the theater.

From these two concepts, there flow two fundamental problems:

First, to delineate to the degree possible the criteria for determining the aviation systems which are appropriate to each military department. There exists today a kind of loose framework along these lines, established by law, precedent, DOD directives and memoranda, and other actions, both formal and informal. I believe that it is to the advantage of the Department of Defense that this conceptual basis of departmental responsibilities remain reasonably loose, not overly specific, and perhaps "unwritten" as it is today. But, at the same time, I believe it also desirable for this conceptual basis to be continuously up-dated so that it is assured to be both organically sound and consistent with modern technology.

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Second, to establish (1) the conceptual and technical guidance whereby the three military departments can cooperate in the generation of aviation systems for their respective forces and (2) the joint operational doctrine whereby the forces, including aviation, provided by the military departments can work together in the field. Again, there is an organizational framework toward these ends which exists today, but which must be up-dated to keep abreast of requirements.

Principles

Toward the resolution of these two problems, the Army believes that the following principles should govern:

The first principle is that:

I. Responsibility for development and operation of aviation systems which operate in the environment of the ground soldier should be assigned to the Department of the Army.

The Army believes that if an aviation system has characteristics such that its aircraft can take off from and return to rough fields in the division and field army area, and if the aircraft is designed to be capable of missions entirely within the combat zone, such an aviation system by definition operates in "the environment of the ground soldier." We consider that the Department of the Army should develop the aircraft which operates therein, and that Army forces should operate these aircraft in the field.

The Army strongly believes that only with such a concept will the Army be able to take advantage of the opportunity afforded by new aviation technology for the improvement of the capabilities of Army forces. We agree wholeheartedly with the judgment expressed by the Secretary of Defense in his memorandum of 19 April 1962, "Army Aviation," which stated that "air vehicles, operating in the environment of the ground soldier but freed from the restrictions imposed by the earth's surface, may offer the opportunity to acquire quantum increases in mobility, provided technology, doctrine, and organization potentials are fully exploited." I believe that the work of the House Board, which has operated under the concept outlined, will result in a major improvement in the capabilities of Army forces.

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For more than sixteen years the U. S. Army has been integrating aerial mobility into its structure. The Army has now reached a point where entire tactical units place a primary reliance on air vehicles. Herein, air vehicles are employed to integrate Army maneuver elements in the air with Army maneuver elements on the ground; to integrate air firepower with ground firepower; to integrate air surveillance with ground surveillance; and, to integrate air supply with ground supply. Of especial significance is the fact that these air mobile operations are planned, executed and controlled by the Army ground commander.

This "first principle" is in effect a restatement of the principle which has governed the past development of Army aviation systems. As a result the Army has available today for quantity procurement a modern family of short field, rough field, low flying, relatively slow flying aircraft which, by reason of their simplicity, relatively low cost, ruggedness and lack of dependence on complex base facilities are uniquely suited for the environment of the ground soldier. This present family includes the Mohawk, and Caribou fixed wing types and the Chinook and Iroquois helicopters. The Army is looking toward follow-on generations of these and other aircraft to enhance the capability of Army aviation systems to operate in the environment of the ground soldier.

Again, our criteria for Army aircraft are essentially the same as are set forth in the OSD study which was forwarded as an inclosure to the memorandum of 19 April 1962 by the Secretary of Defense and which stated that organic Army aircraft should meet the following criteria:

1. The Army should have a full time use for the aircraft.
2. The aircraft should be suitable, performance-wise, for inclusion in Army units and be compatible with Army support capabilities.
3. The mission the aircraft performs must require close coordination with Army activities.

The second principle is that:

II. Responsibility for the development and operation of aviation systems which operate in "the environment of the sailor/marine" should be

assigned to the Department of the Navy; and responsibility for the development and operation of aviation systems which operate in "the environment of the airman" should be assigned to the Department of the Air Force.

This principle would establish the conceptual criteria for the aviation systems of the other two military departments, and would thereby recognize that each of the three military departments is, both by law and by its natural orientation, geared to providing military forces to perform a particular operational function in an overall environment appropriate to that function.

We consider that the "environment of the sailor/marine" is essentially the sea and the amphibious beachhead. We believe that the Department of the Navy should continue the development of aviation systems, both sea and land based, for this environment, and that Navy and Marine Corps forces should continue to operate these systems.

Naturally, Marine Corps landing forces, being "ground soldiers with one foot in the sea," will often require Army-type aviation systems. However, the Army believes that when such aviation systems are designed specifically for landing forces (e. g., with characteristics required for carrier operation, such as wings or rotor blades that fold), they should be developed by the Department of the Navy.

While the "environment of the airman" inherently includes part of the other two environments, it is particularly identified by the characteristics that the airman can operate independently; that is, the airman can execute a large part of his missions of air defense, air superiority, airlift, reconnaissance, interdiction, and other air strikes on ground targets without entering the environment of either the sailor/marine, or the ground soldier. For example, he need not take off from and land on an aircraft carrier, on one hand, or take off from, fly his mission in, and return to a rough field in a forward area, on the other.

Again, these criteria are essentially the same as are set forth in the OSD study which accompanied the 19 April 1962 memorandum of the Secretary of Defense and which stated that Air Force aircraft should be used to support the Army when either of the following situations prevail:

1. The Army requirement is a part time or variable requirement, and the aircraft can be used to meet other Service requirements when not supporting the Army or to render a strategic airlift role.

2. The aircraft has characteristics that require special or extensive support facilities not normally found in the Army.

The third principle is that:

III. In developing their aviation systems, the three military departments, and particularly the Department of the Army and the Department of the Air Force, must find new ways in which they can work together in the closest harmony, under the authority, direction, and control of the Secretary of Defense.

While the Army considers that the "environment" concept described above will reasonably well establish the general boundaries between the aviation systems of the three military departments at a place where the interfaces are least complex, we believe that more effective arrangements must be made to provide that the aviation systems of all Services will mesh closely in the field. We favor expanded use of present mechanisms, such as those in the JCS Organization, and believe that the possibilities of new mechanisms should be explored.

This requirement especially applies to Army-Air Force teamwork, since the Army, as it increasingly moves to air mobility, will rely even more heavily on the Air Force in the future than in the past. Army forces will require especially responsive, reliable, and closely coordinated Air Force support as expanded use is made of air lines of communication.

To this end, the Army considers that the capabilities of the U. S. Strike Command for field test, experimentation, and the development of joint doctrine should be strengthened.

Counterinsurgency Aviation

One of the issues which is being presented for early resolution has to do with military departmental responsibilities for counterinsurgency aviation.

The Department of the Army considers that each military department has aviation assets which are useful and necessary in counterinsurgency. However, we also believe that counterinsurgency aviation is primarily Army aviation. We hold this view because of our conviction that aviation operations in counterinsurgency take place primarily in "the environment of the ground soldier." That is, they take place in the closest coordination with the Special Forces team, the reconnaissance patrol, and the outpost, with the platoon, company and battalion commander, and with the district or sector chief and other "ground soldiers." The aviation systems which have thus proven to be naturally suited for counterinsurgency are the rough field, short field, low flying and relatively slow flying aviation systems of the Army. This practical fact is being illustrated today in Vietnam, where the great bulk of aviation engaged in actual operations is Army, or Army-type, aviation.

We feel that it is quite natural that, for example, the Mohawk, Caribou, Iroquois and H-21 are so useful in counterinsurgency, since counterinsurgency aviation operates primarily in the environment of the ground soldier, and this is also the environment of Army aviation.

It also follows that we believe that, when there is determined to be a need for an improved Mohawk-like aircraft for armed-surveillance in counterinsurgency operations, the responsibility for the development of this aircraft should be assigned to the Army, and Army forces should operate this aircraft in "the environment of the ground soldier."

Similarly, the Army considers that responsibility for an improved Caribou-like aircraft for counterinsurgency transport should also go to the Army.

Any new type aircraft to be used for support of Army Special Forces in close-in operations will also, we believe, be operating in the "environment of the ground soldier," and should be developed by the Army and operated by Army forces. For example, the Howze Board has recommended that the L-28 Helicourier aircraft be incorporated in the Army Special Warfare Aviation Squadrons which will be organic to our Special Activities Forces, to operate with Special Forces in close-in operations.

We believe that to introduce aviation systems of another military department permanently and full time into the environment of the ground

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soldier, either for counterinsurgency alone or for other forms of military operations, would not be in the best interests of the Department of Defense. It would complicate considerably the problems both of generating military forces, and of operations in the field, by requiring that mechanisms be established in the JCS, the OSD, and in unified commands to resolve operational and technical problems which the Army is largely capable of resolving within its own structure. Time and effort would be spent working on problems within the environment of the ground soldier, rather than at the interfaces of the three departmental environments, where the interests of the OSD, JCS, and unified commanders more appropriately lie and where there is a great deal to be done which the three departments cannot do acting alone.

As to the counterinsurgency aviation responsibilities of the other military departments, it is our view that the Department of the Navy will continue to generate aviation systems for Marine Corps landing forces which will also be capable of operating in the counterinsurgency environment of the ground soldier. We believe that this is natural in view of the orientation of the Marines toward the ground soldier.

On the other hand, we believe that, while the Department of the Air Force has, with its Jungle Jim units, met an urgent need for counterinsurgency aviation by use of existing trainer, cargo and off-the-shelf aviation, the development of Air Force counterinsurgency systems should be aligned to conform to the environmental concepts which are expressed above.

We believe that, when Navy, Marine Corps, and Air Force aviation operate along with Army aviation in the environment of the ground soldier, they should operate in consonance with doctrine already coordinated and established by the Army.

We consider that the converse is also true. That is, whenever Army aviation operates in the environments of the other Services, the operation of Army aviation should conform to the other Service doctrines.

Where the environments and capabilities of the Services overlap, jointly developed doctrine should prevail. While we consider that

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counterinsurgency aviation doctrine is largely the field of the Army, we believe that there is a need to determine those few aspects of counterinsurgency aviation doctrine which are joint in nature and to move expeditiously toward their resolution.

(signed) Cyrus R. Vance

Cyrus R. Vance
Secretary of the Army

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