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Actual Cockpit Audio, From Lam Son 719 Laos

From 30 Jan - 24 Mar 1971

The objective of Lam Son 719 was to disrupt an ongoing North Vietnamese Army supply buildup at Tchepone Laos. American Helicopter Units supported and provided all transportation of ARVN troops/supplies into and out of Laos during this operation. The US Helicopter Crewman went against the heaviest anti-aircraft barrage incurred in the War.

The US helicopters that supported Lam Son 719 received fire from rocket propelled grenades, enemy tanks, mortars and small arms fire. The US helicopters were regularly opposed by NVA 23mm, 37mm, and 57mm anti-aircraft weapons along with .51 caliber machine guns arranged to provide mutually supporting anti-aircraft fire. The enemy opposition comprised a permanent logistical force of engineers, transportation, and anti-aircraft troops, together with elements of five divisions that included 12 North Vietnamese infantry regiments, a NVA tank regiment, an NVA artillery regiment, and 19 NVA anti-aircraft battalions.

The South Vietnamese government claimed that 13,341 NVA had been killed against 5,000 ARVN KIA/WIA. American estimates put the ARVN losses at 10,000 which amounted to half of ARVN forces committed to the operation.

The losses to US Helicopter Forces were 65 Helicopter Crewmen KIA, 818 WIA, and 42 MIA. 618 US Helicopters were damaged, including 106 totally destroyed, from 30 Jan - 24 Mar 1971.