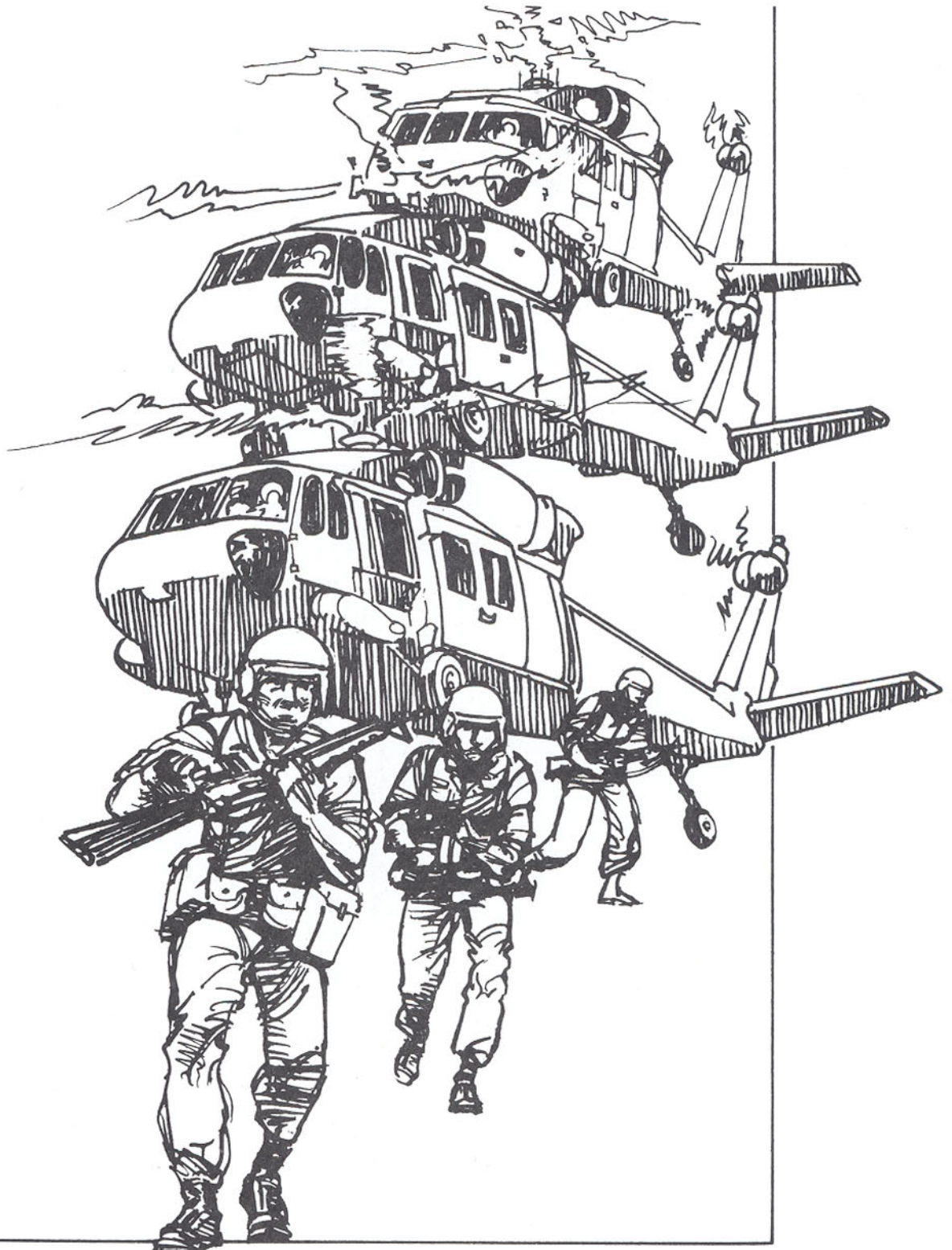


FM 90-4



AIR ASSAULT OPERATIONS

HEADQUARTERS, DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
MARCH 1987

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AIR ASSAULT OPERATIONS

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Preface

This manual describes how infantry and aviation units plan and conduct air assault operations. It emphasizes the coordination necessary between these organizations concerning the planning sequence and tactical employment of both elements. It is written primarily for aviation and infantry units and is applicable to combat support and service support units with a need to plan for and use Army aviation support.

Air assault operations are conducted with speed, secrecy, and precision by a well trained, proficient combined arms team. To gain proficiency, individuals and units habitually conduct combined arms training in air assault operations before being committed to combat.

The proponent of this publication is HQ TRADOC. Submit changes for improving this publication on DA Form 2028 (Recommended Changes to Publications and Blank Forms) and forward it to: Commandant, US Army Infantry School, ATTN: ATSH-B-ID, Fort Benning, GA 31905-5593.

The provisions of this publication are the subject of the following international agreements: 2351, Procedures for Marshalling Helicopters in Airmobile Operations; 2860, Principles of Engagement for the Landing Sites; 2861, Procedures for the Recovery of Downed Aircraft/Helicopters While Engaged in Airmobile Operations; 2863, Minimum Navigational Facilities for Multi-National Airmobile Operations; 2876, Planning and Coordination Procedures for Airmobile Operations; 2904, Airmobile Operations (ATP 41); 3117, Aircraft Marshalling Signals; 3345, Data Forms for Planning Air Movements; 3468, General Rules Covering the Transport of Loads by Helicopter; 3532, Transport of Troops by Helicopter; 3570, Drop Zones and Extraction Zones; 3597, Helicopter Tactical or Nonpermanent Landing Sites; 3619, Helipad Markings; 3627, Helicopter Day and Night Formation Flying; and 3630, Helicopter Tactical Operations at the High Hover.

Unless otherwise stated, whenever the masculine gender is used, both men and women are included.

CHAPTER 1

Air Assault Operations in the AirLand Battle

Section I

AVIATION AND INFANTRY**1-1. General.**

Army aviation and infantry units can be fully integrated with other members of the combined arms team to form powerful and flexible air assault task forces that can project combat power throughout the entire depth, width, and breadth of the modern battlefield with little regard for terrain barriers. The unique versatility and strength of an air assault task force is achieved by combining the capabilities of modern rotary-wing aircraft - speed, agility, and firepower - with those of the infantry and other combat arms to form tactically tailored air assault task forces that can be employed in low-, mid-, and high-intensity environments.

1-2. Control.

Air assault operations are those in which assault forces (combat, combat support, and combat service support), using the firepower, mobility, and total integration of helicopter assets, maneuver on the battlefield under the control of the ground or air maneuver commander to engage and destroy enemy forces or to seize and hold key terrain. Air assault operations are not merely movements of soldiers, weapons, and materiel by Army aviation units and must not be construed as such. They are deliberate, precisely planned, and vigorously executed combat operations designed to allow friendly forces to strike over extended distances and terrain barriers to attack the enemy when and where he is most vulnerable.

NOTE: Air movement operations are those operations involving the use of Army airlift assets for other than air assaults. These operations are used to move troops and equipment, to emplace artillery pieces and air defense artillery (ADA) systems, and to transport ammunition, fuel, and supplies. The same general plans used for air assault operations may need to be prepared for large-scale air movement operations. In these operations, aviation is not task-organized with other members of the combined arms team to engage enemy forces. When an airlift is completed, the air movement operation is terminated and, unless otherwise specified in the order, aviation units are released to return to their parent units.

1-3. Commanders.

To take advantage of the opportunities offered by an air assault task force, commanders and leaders must develop an insight into the principles governing their development (organization) and employment.