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Submission: ADF Helicopter Force .

Helicopters provide the ADF with great combat power.  
A very expensive but critical capacity.

Light Aviation.

The USMC maintains light aviation squadrons, effectively one per brigade. They consist of attack AH-1 and utility UH-1, simplifying training, maintenance and logistics (aircraft have common power plants). 9 Squadron RAAF, fulfilled this role in Vietnam.

1st Aviation Regiment when Tiger helicopters are delivered will only have two six aircraft squadrons. This is token, and unlike the CH47, the Army cannot slot into US Army aviation to obtain support for small deployments. Also, 3&7 brigades will not have Tiger assets integral to its structure or planning.

Brigades need a light aviation unit integrated into its structure. Ready brigades now have three battlegroups. Each needs not only a "top-cover" armed-recce element, but also a light utility helicopter asset. Before Tiger, 1st Aviation Regiment retained the UH1H for command and control, emergency ammunition resupply (eg Battle of Long Tan) and Medievac.

Following the USMC model, each brigade have a light aviation squadron (using RAAF terminology), under 1st Aviation Regiment (expanded to "Wing" with a Colonel Commander). 161 & 162 Squadrons become unit sized.

Squadrons contain three troops each of 4 Tigers and 4 light utility helicopters. Ideally this should be based on the Tiger ("Tigress"??) or the AB-139. The light utility needs a rear cabin 2.3 x 2.0 meters; big enough to carry 4 aircrew and a six man brigade recce team, command team or a stretchers.

Troops are attached to battlegroups and capable of deployment rotations with a battlegroup. As company size units, are big enough to deploy independently and their own OC, "standardisation officer", ATC, etc.

A fourth flight holds brigade command and Medivac troops staffed by Intensive-Care Paramedics. 163 Squadron acts as 7 Brigade aviation unit and regimental training squadron. Approximately 16 extra Tiger will be required and creates a critical mass of Tigers.

Corps Aviation

The arrival of the MRH90 is the greatest leap forward for 25 years. Unfortunately the ADF not purchase the "high-roof" version that Sweden ordered. This would allow personnel to stand upright, and use the rear ramp as the main entry. Medical specialists could treat patients standing and carry stretcher upright preventing back injuries.

By changing to "high-roof" variants, the side doors will be less used. Loadmaster positions could be moved to the far forward cabin and .50 machineguns located. Current MGs are located over sponsons lacking downward vision. Combat experience with the Chinook shows the need for a ramp gunner. MRH90 crews would increase to five, but still carry 18 soldiers seated. Two MRH90 carry a full platoon of 36 infantrymen; a squadron of 12 lifts a company group, half the number required for the Blackhawk.

British forces in Afghanistan are using Chinook for Medivac. Each MERT carries a specialist doctor, emergency nurse, two medical technicians and section of infantry.

The MRH90 "high-roof" can perform this task. The area adjacent to the sponsons is permanently equipped to hold resuscitation stations, eg O2, monitors, and stretcher holders. Any MRH90 could be used for Medivac.

When helicopters were under the RAAF, the force was under three units. Today, 5th Avn Regt is a huge unit. Like proposed above, 5th Avn Regiment be expanded to "Wing" size under a Colonel, squadrons to unit size.

Squadron's have its own long-range medivac/CSAR troop and air-trooper infantry troop for ground defense, pathfinder and personnel recovery duties.

172 Aviation squadron is to be elevated to unit size. The unit can retain its title and lineage instead of creating a new 6th Aviation Regiment.

#### Army pilot training

All army helicopters are two pilot aircraft, a junior pilot and pilot commander / gunner. Australia follows the British "CRISTA" system of pilot development. The new graduated pilot flies as junior pilot solely concentrating on flying for their first tour. As the pilot evolves then they can move to PC / gunner, section commander, etc.

During Vietnam, pilots completed Scheyville officer's course and graduated as 2nd Lieutenants. As Direct entry Officers, pilots graduates should start as 2nd Lieutenants and be promoted to full Lieutenants as fully trained PC / Gunners.

#### Naval Aviation.

The decision not to buy a second squadron of Seahawk for RAN ships has hamstrung naval aviation. FAA should have had a Seahawk unit on coasts, easing maintenance and streamline training. MRH90 has been chosen for fleet support, forces the RAN to purchase MRH90 (maritime) for its ships. A decision to buy any other aircraft will repeat the mistakes of the past.

The FFG-7 had capacity for two helicopters with two hangers. Two aircraft allowed for the 95% guaranteed air asset, while still completing maintenance. Present RAN ships (ANZAC and AWD) only have one hanger. A nominal single aircraft detachment has two crews and full ground staff. Two aircraft detachments have three crews and almost the same number of ground crew.

The MRH90 (maritime) is very capable of carrying out all maritime helicopter roles, surface strike, anti-submarine and boarding party egress. Two aircraft provides full 24/7 asset for each ship. ANZAC frigates and the new AWD need to be resigned to have two hangers. The current purchase of low roof MRH90s could be redirected to FAA as maritime variants

#### FAA pilot training.

Unlike the Army, FAA aircrews are divided between pilots and observers. For squadrons embarking as small detachments, the lack of multi-skilling makes flexibly impossible. By training senior pilots as "airborne tactical officer", many of the issues of FAA are solved. Instead of three pilots and three observers, six pilots are sent, allowing great flexibly. Using the "CRISTA" system, junior pilots can be sent to ships knowing there is training support aboard. New pilots can concentrate on flying only. The senior pilot acts as "Tacco" and aircraft commander.

The streamlining of training to all pilots would save money, and boast career opportunities within FAA.

All basic helicopter training would the same, whether Army or RAN.

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