

0. HELICOPTER WARFARE - Story Preface

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The concept of helicopters flying soldiers into combat zones is so common today no one gives it a second thought. Can it be done? Of course...it's done all the time. But that was not the case in 1965.

Following the Korean Conflict, Lt. General James M. Gavin had a vision. His 1954 essay, *Cavalry, and I Don't Mean Horses*, introduced the military to a revolutionary idea. Helicopters could make soldiers significantly more mobile than they had been in Korea. And if those choppers could be armed, the Army would have "highly mobile task forces with an improved ratio of fire power to manpower."

Gavin had a great idea. "Sky cavalry" soldiers could conduct air assaults never before possible. Instead of riding into battle on the backs of horses (like Custer and the 7th Cavalry did at the disastrous battle of Little Big Horn), "sky troopers" would fly into battle (like the 1st Cavalry Division would do, for the first time ever, at Ia Drang).

By 1963, the concept was being tested at Ft. Benning, Georgia. In 1965, the first air mobile division was organized and ready for duty in Vietnam. So were UH-1D helicopters (troop transports called "Hueys" after "HU-1," the first model) and CH-47 "Chinooks" (artillery and other heavy equipment transports).

Soldiers in Vietnam would soon develop a love/hate relationship with those choppers. While it was Hueys that took them OUT of battle, it was also the Hueys that brought them in. By the time the Vietnam War was finally over, America had lost over 6,000 helicopters and about 4,300 pilots.

See [Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:](http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/HELICOPTER-WARFARE-We-Were-Soldiers)

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General James M. Gavin

Image online, courtesy [The 82nd Airborne: World War II](#) website.

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General Custer

Image online, courtesy the U.S. National Archives.

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UH-1 Series Helicopters

Image online, courtesy the U.S. Army Aviation History website.

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Ch-47 Chinooks

Image online, courtesy [helis.com](#) website.

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UH-1D Hueys - Choppers Used in Vietnam

Image online, courtesy the U.S. Army Aviation History website.

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Helicopter Weapons - UH-1 Huey

Image online, courtesy the 68th Assault Helicopter Company website.

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Helicopter Firing Weapons - AH-1 Cobra in Vietnam

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