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As the Hueys dropped off soldiers from the 1st Battalion, 7th Cavalry into LZ X-Ray, no one knew for sure what would happen next. But as Hal Moore once said:

I don't know what will happen next. It's not my business. I'm a soldier and my job is to beat the enemy.

Beating the enemy, however, is difficult when the commander doesn't know where the enemy is. And, if the commander and his troops are put in harm's way (with no clue the enemy is within easy striking distance), favorable odds diminish drastically.

Such was the case with the battle of Ia Drang.

Within an hour after arrival at LZ X-Ray, 450 American and 2,000 North Vietnamese soldiers were engaged in a fierce battle in sweltering heat. To say that U.S. troops were understrength would be an understatement. Despite formidable odds against them, the 1st Battalion, 7th Cavalry troopers put up an incredible fight.

At one stage of the fire-storm battle, 200 Vietnamese soldiers surrounded a 29-man platoon (Company B) which had been cut off from the rest of the battalion. Against all odds, the Americans held on to the Landing Zones, even when they were "hot."

Huey pilots, under fire, airlifted many wounded out of LZ X-Ray. About 110 officers and men of the 1st Battalion, 7th Cav were casualties during the first day of fighting.

But horrors on the battlefield, for both sides, would get worse. And men in the largely unarmed helicopters were also at risk. As Colonel Paul Winkel put it:

A bullet will go right through this bird's skin, right through the pilot, and out the other side without stopping.

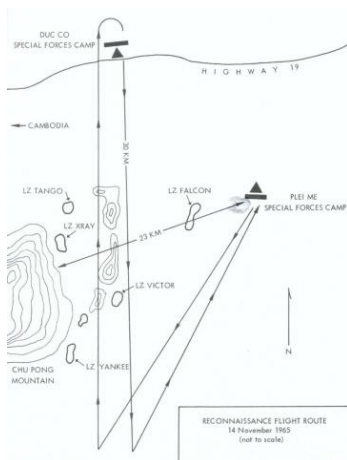
Sky troopers, who depended on choppers to airlift them to safety, quickly developed a love/hate relationship with the machines:

- Sometimes they transported soldiers to death zones.
- Other times they saved a soldier's life.

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:
<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/LZ-X-RAY-We-Were-Soldiers>

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:
<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/LZ-X-RAY-We-Were-Soldiers>

Media Stream



Flight Route for LZ X-Ray - Ia Drang Battle

Image online, courtesy the U.S. Army Center of Military History.

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Landings at LZ X-Ray - We Were Soldiers

Image online, courtesy the U.S. Army Center of Military History.

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In Harm's Way at LZ X-Ray - We Were Soldiers

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Map Depicting Seven Fire Fights during Vietnam War

Image online, courtesy the U.S. Army Center of Military History.

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Detail of X-Ray Perimeter

Image online, courtesy the U.S. Army Center of Military History.

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