
TOP GUN!

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point targets. Since we engage running VC in the open occasionally, and often must fire very close to friendly units, positive control of gunfire is vital.

- Firing machine guns into a water background shows graphically the dispersion pattern found in each set of aircraft weapons, good or bad. Zeroing over water is also an effective method to determine the size of "shot groups" of both rockets and machine guns for possible later correction of boresighting.

- The "top guns" had much better crew integrity and cooperation than the less effective crews. The pilots, for example, flew short teardrop courses, rather than the long racetrack patterns, and their door gunners fired longer and better.

- The "top gun" pilots held attitude and airspeed steady during their firing runs to give all of their gunners the best chance to find and hit the target. Pre-flight zeroing, boresighting, and weapons checks by the better ground crews contributed materially to keeping the weapons firing.

- The "top guns" also had made several ingenious modifications in the loading of ammunition, in the feed chuting and belt drives, and in the disposal of spent cases, each of which led to a material improvement in weapon effectiveness. They also determined that the M5 boresighting telescope, when used without its 40mm adapter, fits snugly into the flash hider of the M60 machine gun and permits the precise boresighting of that weapon.

- All units of the 12th need refresher gunnery training at regular periods, both to maintain a high degree of proficiency and to compensate for the large number of replacement personnel they receive daily.

We can't help but think that the advent of the new weapons systems for the UH-1B will be a blessing indeed for all gun ship crews. Then too, the use of the *HueyCobra* in Vietnam should prove revolutionary. We await both of these developments eagerly.

The idea of having an *Armed Helicopter Gunnery Competition* in CONUS along these lines seems to have much merit. We believe that the resultant training value and competitive spirit derived would far outweigh the cost. We believe that an uncomplicated, definitive scoring system in such meets is a *must*, and that shooting at barrels in water abets such a system.

Seeing is believing!

Of particular value is the fact that such meets would prove or disprove the many personal notions that crews develop as to "*better ways to do it*," which are different from the approved systems. All recognize that innovation is desirable and should be encouraged, but that any and all innovations should prove themselves in practice. This type of competition presents very convincing arguments for the best way.



First Place Gun Crew of the 118th Assault Helicopter Company "Bandits" were, left to right, CW2 Wyburn H. Burroughs, WO1 Marvin W. Schmidt, Crewchief Sp4 Richard Wehr, and Gunner PFC Payton Crawford, III.



Second Place Gun Crew of the 68th Assault Helicopter Company "Mustangs" included, l. to r., CPT Richard C. Ragland, CPT Sonny Blackburn, Crewchief SP5 Richard B. Bone, and Gunner SP4 John T. Hughes. (USA photos)