

"It may interest you to know the reason for the parachute assault we made in Vietnam on February 22, 1967.

In late 1966, I was with the First Infantry Division. I knew, although it was not public knowledge, that I would join the 173d Airborne Brigade that December.

In my years on the General Staff in the Pentagon, I had observed first hand how the supporters of armor and mechanized units tried to eliminate the Army's airborne capability in the competition for the dollars allocated to the Army. I believed very firmly the Army needed the airborne capability and felt an airborne operation in Vietnam would strengthen the view that airborne operations were practical and useful. I feared General Westmoreland would not support the idea of conducting an airborne assault. It had certain risks and was not essential.

One night the Chief of Staff of the Vietnamese Army came to dinner at the First Division. I suggested to him a joint Vietnamese-U.S. airborne operation. He jumped at the idea. I suggested he get Westmoreland to lay it on. He did, so we made the jump as a result of my sneaky subterfuge. In Operation JUNCTION CITY, the air lift of one battalion saved over 100 helicopter sorties and thus the whole force of the operation was in place in far less time.

Later, I commanded the 82nd Airborne. At one point it appeared it might be necessary to make an emergency evacuation of American citizens from Amman, Jordan. We were given the mission of seizing the commercial airport at Amman so the Air Force airlift could land and evacuate our people. The only way it could be done was by parachute. Jordan has only one seacoast, a small strip of land on the Red Sea hundreds of miles from Amman where the Americans were located. We never had to execute the mission, but we had the capability. I did not hear any talk about how the armor could take care of it at that time, a time of the potential of a real life emergency, but I did feel the situation demonstrated clearly the need for Airborne. "

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