



Operation Desert Storm: Apache Helicopter Was Considered Effective in Combat, But Reliability Problems Persist: Nsiad-92-146

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Pursuant to a congressional request, GAO reviewed: (1) how well the Apache Helicopter performed its roles and missions during the Operation Desert Storm air campaign and ground war; and (2) whether previously reported component reliability and logistical support problems adversely affected the Apache's combat effectiveness.

GAO found that: (1) during Operation Desert Storm, Apaches proved their combat effectiveness by destroying 278 tanks and about 900 other targets; (2) during the air campaign, Apaches primarily flew armed night reconnaissance missions in enemy territory because of their night vision and videotape capabilities, which provided timely intelligence information to Army division commanders; (3) Apaches flew only a total of 83 missions during the war, primarily because of the perceived enemy threat to low-flying helicopters during the air campaign and because the use of Apaches could have divulged the location of allied forces; (4) Apache use was also limited during the ground campaign, because ground commanders, who controlled the Apache's use and roles, chose not to use it more and the Army was restricted in where it could use the Apache due to agreements with the Air Force; (5) the Apache was capable of performing its assigned missions during the war, but component problems, sometimes intensified by harsh desert conditions, adversely affected the performance of the Apache's essential weapons and other subsystems; (6) during the 100-hour ground campaign, little maintenance was performed on the Apaches because units advanced through enemy territory so rapidly that maintenance support could not keep up with the aircraft; and (7) Apache pilots and maintainers cited the lack of spare parts as the most frequent reason some aircraft were not available to carry out missions.

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