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THE *Sioux* are making their presence felt in the jungles of Malaysia. These unlikely, slightly ridiculous, glass bubbles on a skeleton frame are the Army's newest and most revolutionary helicopters.

They are revolutionary not in design but in concept. For the *Sioux* is just a straightforward addition to unit transport. Every Infantry battalion, Cavalry and Gunner regiment is to be issued with them. They will be flown by unit pilots and will come under the complete control of the unit commander.

Was it really such a short time ago that a helicopter was a wondrous spectacle? In Borneo, tribes that have never seen a wheeled vehicle consider helicopters to be very ordinary machines.

Recently a unit of Australian Sappers toiled through the jungle in appalling

conditions hacking a road into the interior. When, to their great pride, the first *Land-Rover* ceremonially drove up the road it was greeted with a hearty kick and general disgust from the natives who scorned a machine that couldn't fly!

The *Sioux* brings the helicopter into the general "run-about" field for the Army. It is a significant step in these golden days of Army aviation.

The first *Sioux* arrived in Malaysia at the beginning of the year. Now they are a common sight, skimming the jungle on a thousand different errands.

At Kluang in Malaya, 4 Wing Army Air Corps, runs a three-week "theatre conversion course" at which Army pilots—the lowest rank is sergeant—learn to fly *Sioux* helicopters in the exacting and exhausting conditions of the jungle.

Dropping on to a landing pad in a jungle clearing is a job for expert judgement and steel nerves. With trees up to 200 feet high it is like edging down into a vertical cylinder. If the rotor blades hit the trees something has to crash—and it probably will not be the tree.

Also at Kluang is 75 Aircraft Workshops, Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers, where many of the *Sioux* are assembled—they arrive in pieces from Italy and Britain. The specialist mechanics at the Workshop are largely responsible for keeping the *Sioux*—and all the other Army aircraft in

the Far East—in the air, although major repairs are done by the Royal Air Force.

A 90-hour working week is not unusual as mechanics race against time to service and repair the *Sioux* so that they can get back into the operational area.

Most of the Infantry battalions in Borneo now have their own air platoons operational. An air platoon has two *Sioux*, two pilots and its own Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers mechanics to carry out "first line" maintenance.

The 4th Royal Tank Regiment in Brunei has its own Air Troop of six *Sioux* which create an extension to the Regiment's reconnaissance role. Gunner regiments, too, are using *Sioux* helicopters in an air observation role.

Costing about £22,000, the *Sioux* can carry two men in addition to the pilot. Its bubble cockpit gives extraordinarily good visibility. Apart from its major reconnaissance role, the *Sioux* in Borneo is used for putting small patrols down in the jungle, picking up casualties and many other urgent unit errands.

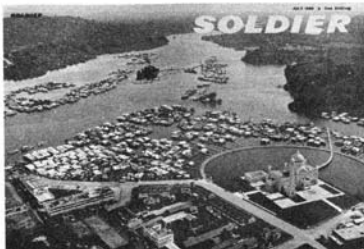
Unfortunately at the moment there are few regiments with sufficient trained pilots for their air troops or platoons to be exclusively regimental. But with intensive training going on all the time at the Army Air Corps Centre at Middle Wallop, the day is not too far off when every unit will have its own pilots flying its own helicopters.



Above: REME mechanics work on a recently assembled *Sioux* at 57 Aircraft Workshops. They often have to work a 90-hour week.

Top: Air-to-air elevation of a *Sioux* in flight. The "bubble" cockpit gives perfect visibility for both the pilot and passenger.

◀ A *Sioux* gingerly prepares to drop into a jungle clearing. It is being flown by one of the pilots on the conversion course at Kluang in Malaya. Landing in tiny holes in the jungle requires plenty of confidence.



COVER PICTURE

Clattering over the famous golden dome of Brunei Town mosque, a *Sioux* piloted by Captain Lindsey Smith, commanding 4th Royal Tank Regiment's Air Troop, moves off on another mission up country. Surrounding the £2 million mosque is Kampong Ayer, a sprawling stilted water village housing more than 13,000 people. This graphic picture was taken from another *Sioux* by SOLDIER cameraman Frank Tompsett when two of the Troop's six helicopters were off into the jungle to visit remote longhouses inaccessible by road. Their task, part of the "Hearts and Minds" campaign, was to make friends with the tribes and let them know the Army was available to help if required. Yet another job for which the little *Sioux*s are invaluable.