

145TH COMBAT AVIATION BATTALION



FIRST IN VIETNAM

A PICTORIAL HISTORY



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FIRST IN VIETNAM

A PICTORIAL HISTORY OF THE 145TH COMBAT AVIATION BATTALION

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PFC Nicholas Piscioti



The Chieng or Great Bronze Gong is symbolic of the Golden Sun of the Far East and is used by Montegards Village Chiefs to summon villagers to village council meetings.

The Chieng or Great Bronze Gong of the 145th Combat Aviation Battalion will be used only as a part of official battalion ceremonies or to summon the members of the battalion to libations.

The Ghieng or Great Bronze Gong of the 145th Combat Aviation Battalion shall be under the care of the Nguoi Danh Chieng or Seneschal of the Great Bronze Gong, who shall be the Junior Birdman of the battalion and shall have the following duties:

- a. Preside as official ringer at all official ceremonies or functions.
- b. Oversee the security and polish of the Chieng.

The Chieng or Great Bronze Gong shall be rung by no person other than the Nguoi Danh Chieng, and then only for the explicit purpose of summoning members of the battalion for libations. The Penalty for a person, other than the Nguoi Danh Chieng, to ring the Great Bronze Gong shall be that said person furnish libations to all present.

The 145th Combat Aviation Battalion organization day (24 September 1963), New Years Eve, and Chinese New Years are hereby declared Free Ringing Dates and any member may ring at his pleasure.

The names of each Commander of the 145th Combat Aviation Battalion and his tenure shall be affixed to the Great Bronze Gong Stand by engraved plates.

An Honorary Nguoi Danh Chieng can be elected by the members at any time. One free ring of the Great Bronze Gong may be accorded such honored persons.



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BATTALION COMMANDER

Dec 66 - Aug 67

Lieutenant Colonel Howard M. Moore

Lieutenant Colonel Howard McKinley Moore, Artillery, 063387, Commanding Officer, 145th Combat Aviation Battalion, 12th Combat Aviation Group, APO San Francisco 96227.

Born 30 August 1920 at Condon, Oregon.

LTC Moore entered the Army in June 1942. World War II interrupted his civilian education at Eastern Oregon College. He enlisted in the Army and successfully completed Pre-Glider School, receiving a rating as a Liaison Pilot, before attending Field Artillery Officer Candidate School at Fort Sill, Oklahoma. He was graduated as a Second Lieutenant, Field Artillery on 27 May 1943.

Immediately after commissioning, he attended the Army's Liaison Pilot course at Fort Sill and was graduated two months later in August 1943.

Joining the 609th Field Artillery Battalion at Fort Carson, Colorado, he deployed with this unit to the European Theater of Operations. He earned his first Air Medal while flying in Europe for the 71st Division Artillery.

Following the war, he left the service for two and one-half years, coming back on active duty on 31 January 1949. He had remained on active duty ever since.

He served with various artillery units in Japan, deploying to Korea with the 61st Field Artillery Battalion, 1st Cavalry Division in July 1950. In successive assignments, he was the assistant battalion S3, liaison officer, S2, and a battery commander.

While serving as the Commanding Officer, Battery "C", 61st FA Battalion, LTC Moore was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross and the United Kingdom's Military Cross for conspicuous gallantry in action while withstanding an enemy assault on his position which threatened to isolate the British Commonwealth Brigade.

Returning from Korea, he was assigned to the Department of Gunnery at The Artillery School, Fort Sill as an instructor for two years before he was selected to attend the Artillery

Advanced Course in 1953-1954.

He was assigned to duty in Europe for three years after completing the Advanced Course and served with artillery units in Germany until 1957 when he returned to Fort Sill to assume instructor duties at the Artillery School. In 1959, he was assigned as the Assistant Army Aviation Officer with the US Army Artillery and Missile Center and remained there until August 1960. While assigned to this command, he went to Camp Wolters, Texas and became rotary wing rated.

In 1960, Lieutenant Colonel Moore was selected to attend the regular course of the Army Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. Upon graduation, he attended the University of Omaha under "Operation Bootstrap" to complete his college education which was cut short by WWII, eighteen years earlier.

Assigned to Headquarters, Sixth United States Army in 1962, LTC Moore was Operations and Training Officer in the Office of the Aviation Officer for a year before being transferred to the United States Army Aviation Center, Fort Rucker, Alabama in February 1963. He served as Assistant Chief of Staff, G-1, there for two years.

In July 1965, LTC Moore was selected to attend the United States Naval War College at Newport, Rhode Island. Upon graduation, he was assigned to the 12th Combat Aviation Group, Vietnam, where he served as the Deputy Commanding Officer.

He assumed command of the 145th Combat Aviation Battalion on 1 December 1966.

A Senior Army Aviator, LTC Moore has been awarded the Distinguished Service Cross, Distinguished Flying Cross, Army Commendation Medal, Air Medal with six oak leaf clusters, and the British Military Cross.

Lieutenant Colonel Moore is married. His wife, Phyllis, and two sons, Gregory and Russell, await his return at their home in Lawton, Oklahoma.

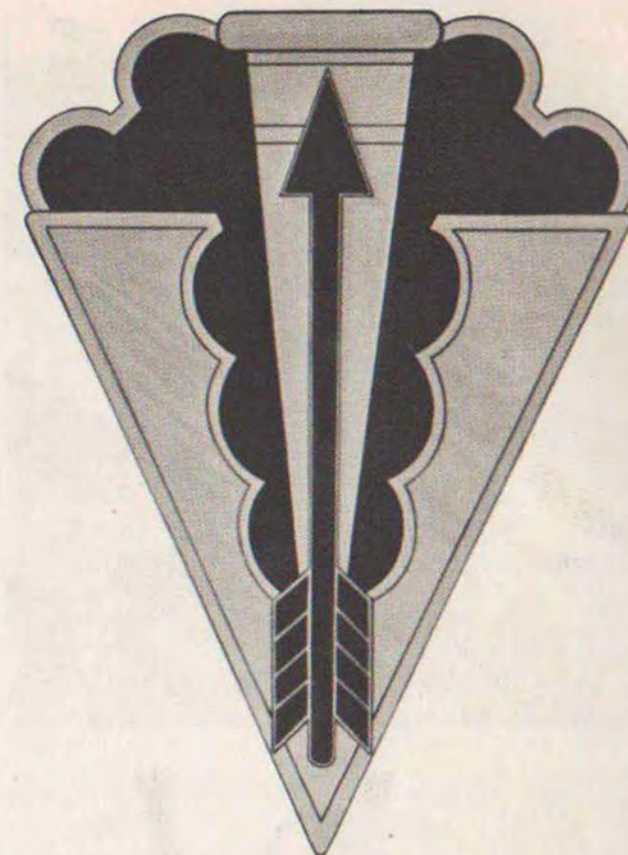
This is a pictorial history of the 145th Combat Aviation Battalion, "FIRST IN VIETNAM", covering the first four years. This book is designed to give everyone, soldier, and layman a feeling for what the battalion has done and how it has accomplished it.

Born in combat in the Republic of Vietnam, on 24 September 1963, the 145th Combat Aviation Battalion is truly "FIRST IN VIETNAM". The battalion was formed from the in-country assets of the 45th Transportation Battalion, and initially consisted of the 118th and 120th Aviation Companies equipped with CH-21C cargo helicopters. Since that time the battalion has grown to be one of the largest aviation units in Vietnam, consisting of five (5) helicopter companies, and one (1) fixed wing company.

The 145th Combat Aviation Battalion is the best aviation battalion ever fielded by the United States Army. It has been my pleasure to command this battalion during the period 1 December 1966 to 8 August 1967.

I am intensely proud of the Battalion's achievements. It has been the first in all it has done in Vietnam. It is my firm belief that it will continue to be first and extremely successful in all of its endeavors.

Lieutenant Colonel Howard M. Moore



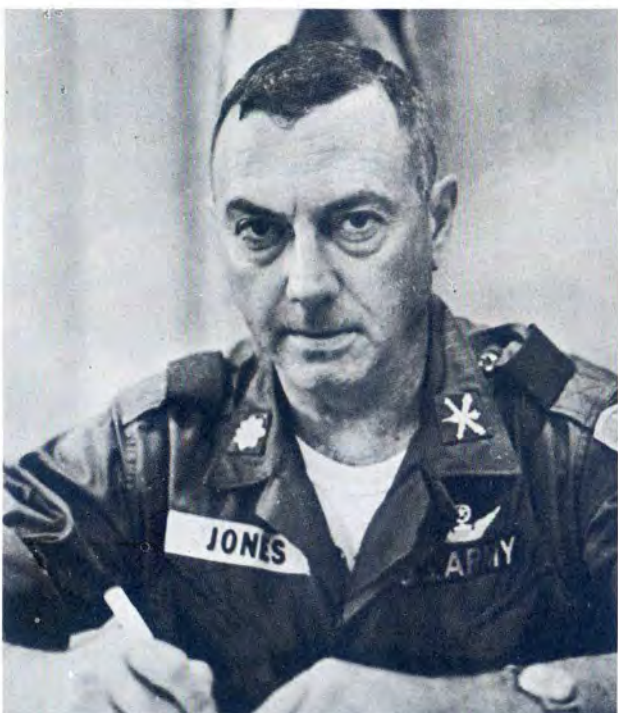
NEW BATTALION CREST

DESCRIPTION

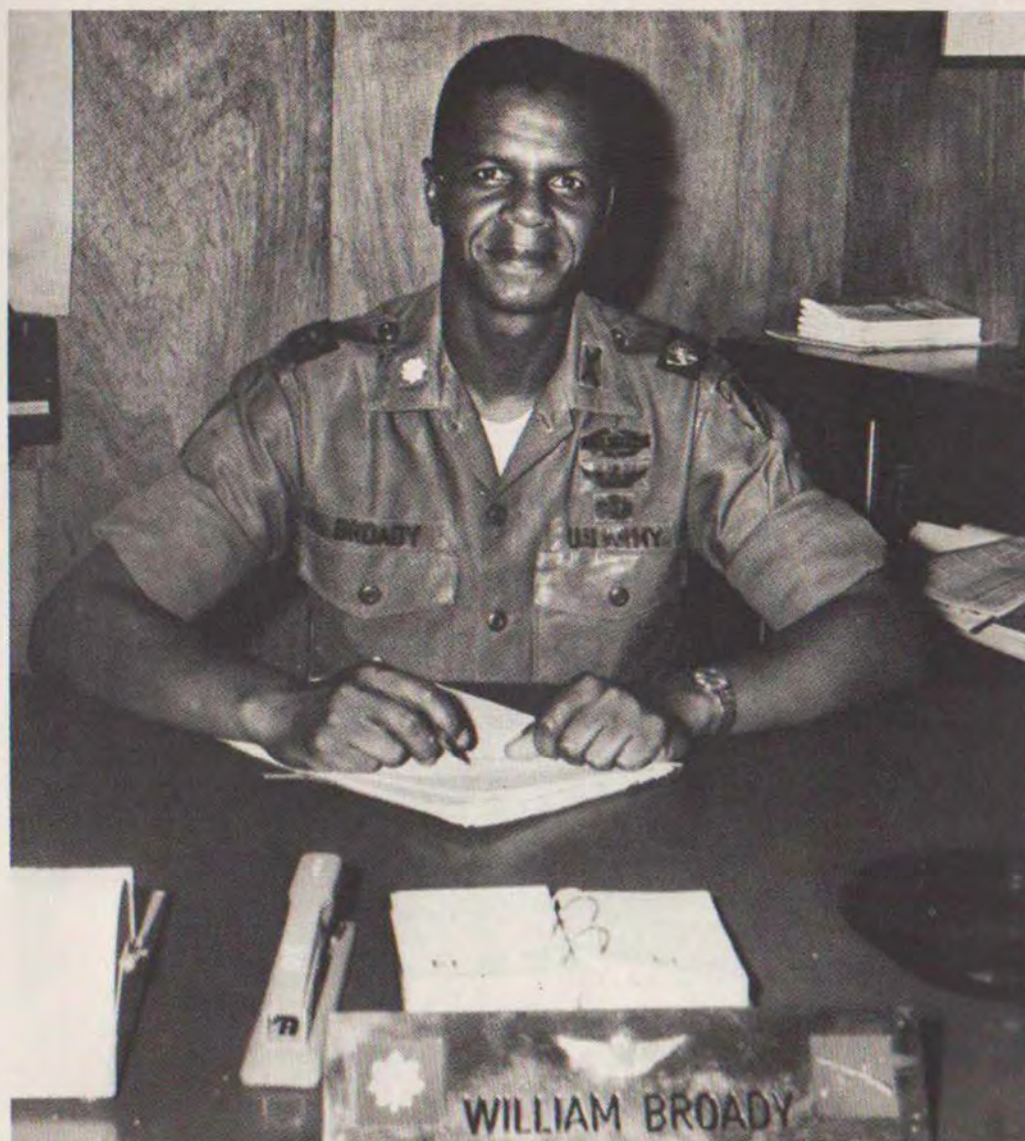
A gold metal and enameled colored device on a 1 1/8 inch overall measurement, consisting of a golden pheon (i.e., an heraldic arrowhead) point downward, on the neck of which is surmounted a complete blue arrow.

SYMBOLISM

A basis of the design revolves around the number 145. The blue arrow represents the number 1 (one); the blue arrow and the pheon together represents the number 4 (four); and the pheon on its own is the number 5 (five). The pheon and the arrow also represent the swiftness and sureness in flight of aircraft, and the blue above symbolizes the sky.



Since the 145th Combat Aviation Battalion was organized it has been commanded by eight outstanding and dedicated officers. The first two commanders, Lieutenant Colonel Mertel and Lieutenant Colonel Granadelli do not appear in this book. They were followed by Lieutenant Colonels' Hughes, Cunningham, Honour, Joost, Jones, and Moore. The many outstanding accomplishments of the "FIRST IN VIETNAM" aviation battalion is indicative of the devoted manner in which these commanders have lead the unit in support of the Free World Forces in Vietnam.



EXECUTIVE OFFICER
Lieutenant Colonel William Broady



SERGEANT MAJOR
Sergeant Major Ralph L. Bass

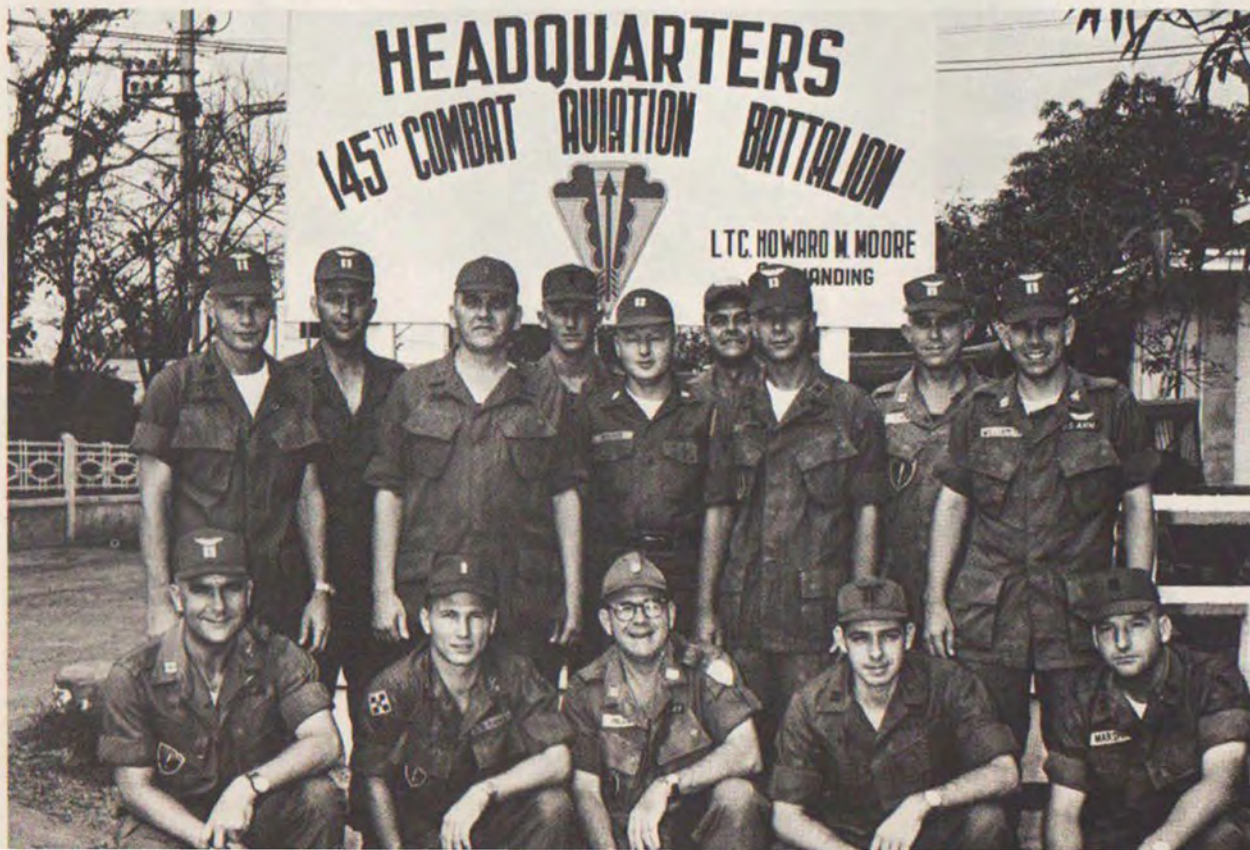


Standing L-R

Major Bell, L. A.	S-1/Adjutant
Captain McKean, R. E.	S-2
Major Covington, E. B. III	S-3
Major Pursley, C. C.	S-4
Major Asbelle, C. T.	Maintenance Officer

Kneeling L-R

Major Chritton, W. R.	Chief BOC
Major Tingler, W. N.	Safety Officer
Captain Freestone, W.	Signal Officer
Captain Schodowski, L. M.	S-5/Information Officer



Standing L-R

Captain Chenault, W.	Battalion Operation Center
Captain Ammons, D. C.	Assistant S-3
Warrant Officer Eash, R. N.	Personnel Officer
Captain Kramer, L. A.	Assistant S-3
Captain Rosser, R. L.	Assistant Adjutant
Chief Warrant Officer Luers, H. L.	Assistant S-4
Captain Tucker, W.	Battalion Operation Center
Captain Thomas, R.	Battalion Operation Center
Captain Williamson, H.	Battalion Operation Center

Kneeling L-R

Captain Gordy, J. W. Jr.	Assistant Adjutant
Lieutenant Peduto, R. P.	Awards and Decorations/Courts and Boards
Major Miller, L. H.	Chaplain
Captain White, M. W.	Flight Surgeon
Captain Marshall, W. K.	Assistant S-4

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY

THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT THE DATE

24 SEPTEMBER

SELECTED BY THE

145TH AVIATION BATTALION

AS

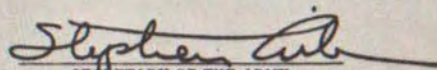
UNIT DAY

IN COMMEMORATION OF

its activation on 24 September 1963

IS HEREBY OFFICIALLY RECOGNIZED AND
RECORDED AS BEING OF ENDURING
SIGNIFICANCE IN THE HISTORY OF THE
ORGANIZATION.

Given Under My Hand in the City of Washington
this 9th day of September 1964


SECRETARY OF THE ARMY

ORGANIZATION

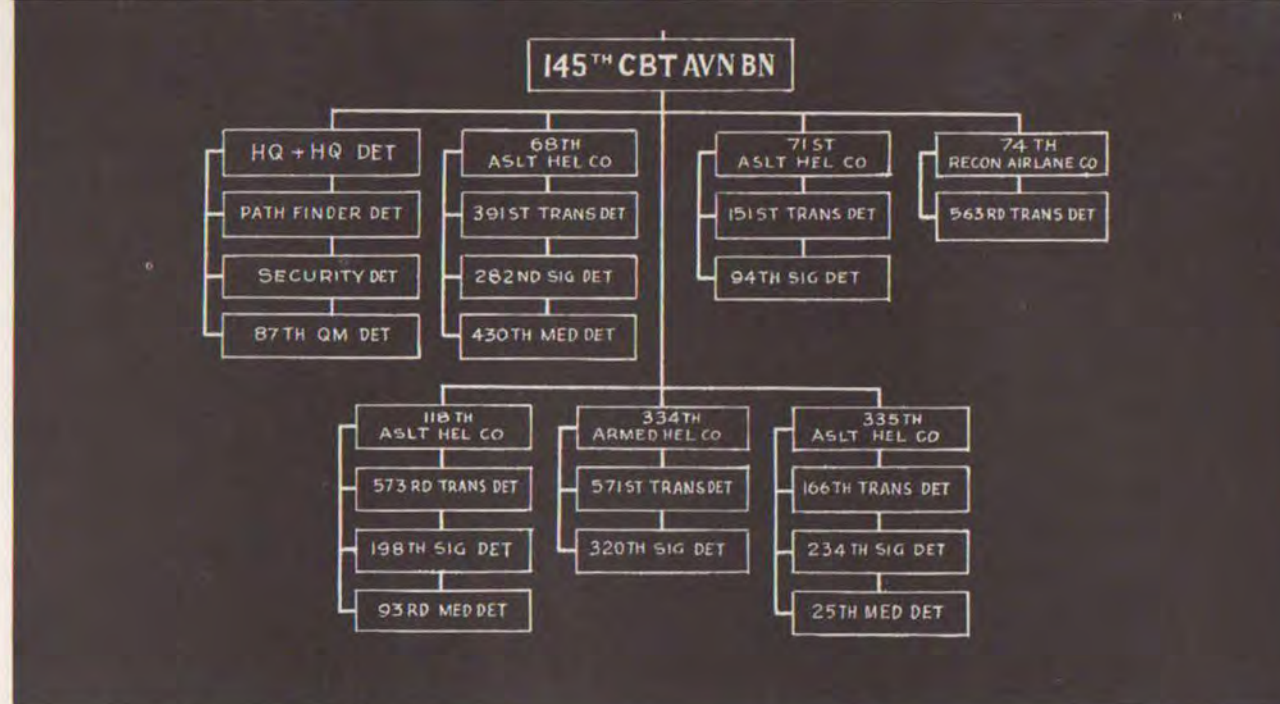
Born in combat in the Republic of Vietnam on 24 September 1963, the 145th Combat Aviation Battalion is truly "First in Vietnam". The 145th Combat Aviation Battalion was formed on that date from the in-country assets of the 45th Transportation Battalion (Trans Acft) and initially consisted of the 118th and 120th Aviation Companies which were then equipped with CH-21C cargo helicopters. The first commander of the newly formed battalion was LTC Kenneth D. Mertel who was replaced in December 1963, on his return to CONUS, by LTC Charles M. Granadelli.

During the final months of 1963, the 145th Combat Aviation Battalion conducted numerous "Eagle Flights" in Long An Province utilizing the 118th Aviation Company and troops of the Vietnamese Airborne Brigade. Joint heliborne operations were also conducted with CH-21's from the 120th Aviation Company teamed with VNAF CH-34's escorted by the UTT and T-28's, staging out of Tan Hiep. Troops of the ARVN 7th Division were utilized in numerous search and destroy operations.

In the early months of 1964 both the 118th and 120th Aviation Companies received UH-1B aircraft to replace their CH-21's. The 68th Aviation Company (previously designated Utility Tactical Transport Company and later to be redesignated 197th Aviation Company) was assigned in March 1964 greatly enhancing the capabilities of the battalion with their armed UH-1B's. On 30 March 1964 LTC Hughes took command of the battalion from LTC Buchanan who became deputy commander.

During the summer of 1964 the 145th Combat Aviation Battalion continued to support the ARVN III Corps and also sent elements to the mountains of II Corps and the delta of IV Corps to execute combat assaults.

Shortly after midnight on 1 November the Viet Cong staged a mortar attack on Bien Hoa Air Base. Four men were killed and 62 were wounded in the enlisted compound. An estimated



30 rounds of 82mm mortar fire were received. Troops of the 145th Combat Aviation Battalion reacted with courage and determination as standby fire teams were launched and defensive bunkers were manned. One of the UH-1B's rescued a VNAF aviator whose A1-E had crashed in flames during the attack, resulting in this battalion's first two Vietnamese Flying Crosses with star.

In December of 1964, A Company, 501st Aviation Battalion was assigned to the battalion and became operational very quickly due to an infusion and training program conducted by the 118th Aviation Company.

Early in 1965 both the 74th Aviation Company (SAL) and A Company, 82nd Aviation Battalion were assigned to the battalion and quickly became combat ready.

On 24 June LTC Charles M. Honour Jr. assumed command of the battalion at Tan Son Nhut Air Base.

At 2400 hours on 23 August 1965, the Bien Hoa Air Base came under a Viet Cong mortar attack with a total of 14 rounds falling in 145th Combat Aviation Battalion parking areas. The

emergency standby crews scrambled their helicopters under fire and shuttled aviators from their quarters to the aircraft. The standby fire team immediately began searching for the hostile force.

During the month of October 1965 the 145th Combat Aviation Battalion supported the 173rd Airborne Brigade in numerous search and destroy operations in the "Iron Triangle" and "War Zone D". The first combat assaults in support of the 1st Infantry Division were also made during the month of October. A Company, 82nd Aviation Battalion was re-assigned to the 173rd Airborne Brigade on 18 October.

In the months of November and December 1965 the 145th Combat Aviation Battalion participated in an allied operation called "Operation Rice Bowl". The object of the operation was to secure the rice fields in the valley North of Vo Dat, and deny the Viet Cong use of the freshly harvested rice. Also during this same period the battalion welcomed the 68th Aviation Company which was initially stationed at Vung Tau.

On 18 February 1966 the battalion commander, LTC Charles M. Honour Jr., was killed in a helicopter accident. He was succeeded by

LTC Horst K. Joost who came to the battalion from the 173rd Airborne Brigade. During the month of March the battalion participated in Operation "Silver City" in War Zone D in support of the 173rd Airborne Brigade. The 120th Aviation Company was re-assigned to the 12th Aviation Group on 15 March 1966, with the 145th Combat Aviation Battalion coming under 12th Aviation Group control on the same date. During the month of March the 145th Combat Aviation Battalion Headquarters moved from Tan Son Nhut to Bien Hoa. On 30 March the battalion began support of the 25th (US) Infantry Division's "Operation Circle Pines". The battalion also continued to support the III ARVN Corps, 173rd Airborne Brigade and 1st Infantry Division on a daily basis.

On 26 June 1966 LTC Walter F. Jones took command of the battalion from Colonel Horst K. Joost who was re-assigned to Combat Development Command at Fort Rucker, Alabama.

During the summer of 1966, the 145th Combat Aviation Battalion came under the control of II Field Force Vietnam through 12th Combat Aviation Group with a general support mission of all Free World Military Forces in the III Corps Tactical Zone. An important additional mission of the battalion during 1966 was the training and orientation of newly arrived aviators from other units to include the 1st and 25th Infantry Divisions, US Navy, select members of the Vietnamese Air Force, 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment and 199th Light Infantry Brigade.

Two special armed helicopter operations during 1966 scored heavily against the Viet Cong sampan traffic in both III and IV Corps Tactical Zones. The first, "Operation Seawolf" utilized Army UH-1B armed helicopters flying from Navy LSD's and LST's off the coast of III and IV Corps. These helicopters and crews from the 145th Combat Aviation Battalion hit the Viet Cong hard from April until September when Navy crews took over the mission.

The second special mission is operation

"Firefly" flown by armed helicopters of the 334th Armed Helicopter Company. Each night a light fire team with a searchlight mounted in one of the armed helicopters and a .50 caliber machine gun helicopter search the III Corps Tactical Zone for hostile sampan traffic. Their nightly kill rate has been exceptional. 111 sampans were destroyed in a single night.

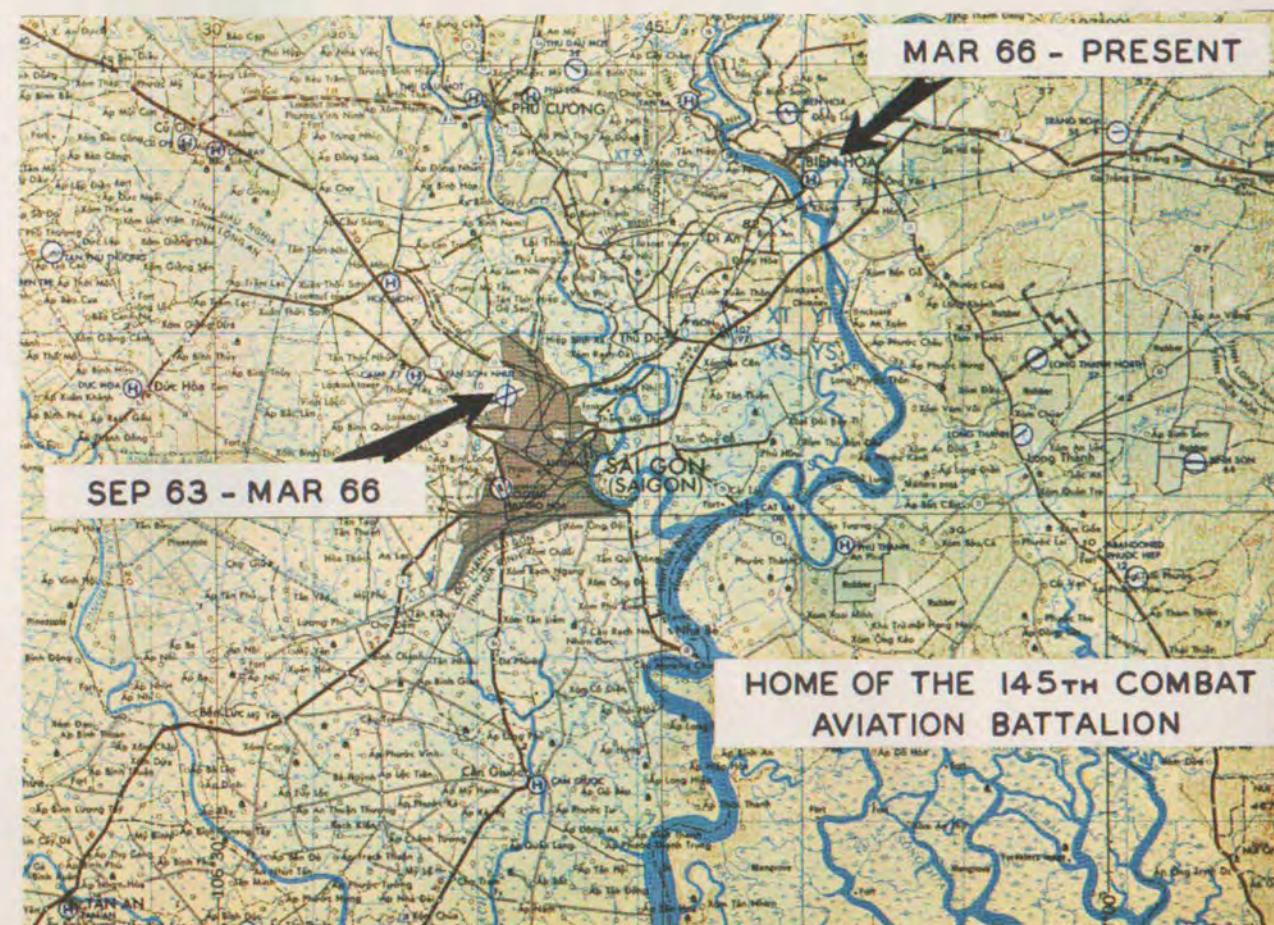
In September 1966 the 184th Reconnaissance Airplane Company joined the battalion and was stationed side by side with the 74th Reconnaissance Airplane Company, at Phu Loi.

On the first day of October both the 197th Armed Helicopter Company and A Company, 501st Aviation Battalion were redesignated. The

197th became the 334th Armed Helicopter Company and A/501st became the 71st Assault Helicopter Company.

During the month of November the 145th Combat Aviation Battalion established a forward command post at Tay Ninh West Airfield in support of Operation "ATTLEBORO". During this period the battalion controlled elements of the 11th, 13th, 25th and 52nd Aviation Battalions as well as its organic components.

At a change of command ceremony on 1 December LTC Howard M. Moore assumed command of the battalion from LTC Walter F. Jones who was reassigned to the USARV Aviation Section.





HEADQUARTERS 145TH COMBAT AVIATION BATTALION







**HEADQUARTERS
AND
HEADQUARTERS DETACHMENT**









68TH ASSAULT HELICOPTER COMPANY

TOP TIGERS

The "Top Tigers" were constituted in the Regular Army in March 1960, and were then known as the "Tigers". They were activated, inactivated and finally reactivated on 15 August 1964, in the Pacific as the first Utility Tactical Transport Helicopter Company in the history of Army Aviation. Again inactivated, the "Tigers" remained dormant until 12 July 1965, when they were activated as the 68th Aviation Company (Airmobile Light). On 1 September 1965, Major Weldon F. Honeycutt became the first Commanding Officer to lead the "Tigers" in combat operations. He was given 30 days in which to organize and ready the company for overseas movement. Arriving at Vung Tau, Republic of Viet Nam on 28 November 1965, the "Tigers" became the "Top Tigers" and flew their first combat mission on 4 December 1965, for purposes of orientation. On 16 December 1965, the 68th conducted its first unit size combat assault. In spite of one pilot being wounded and three ships receiving hits, all aircraft and personnel returned safely. The "Top Tigers" were here to stay!

Since that first assault in December 1965, the "Top Tigers" have supported at one time or another virtually every combat unit in III Corps area and several units located in II and IV Corps. They have participated in nearly every major combat operation in III Corps, as well as lending support to "Operation Masher" in II Corps,

North of Qui Nhon. It was this latter operation which earned the 68th a letter of appreciation from Colonel Francis Naughton, Senior U.S. Advisor, 1st Airborne Brigade. Due to the "Top Tigers" determination and courage in resupplying ammunition to Alpha Company of the 2nd Airborne Task Force, the unit was able to repulse several Viet Cong attacks. Without the resupply, the letter stated, Alpha Company would have certainly been overrun.

Also highlighting their first full month of combat operations was the "Top Tigers" participation in "Operation Crimp," a joint allied maneuver in the Plain of Reeds near Duc Hoa. During this operation the 145th Aviation Battalion, with the "Top Tigers" in the lead, transported 2000 men of the 1st Airborne Brigade (ARVN) into the V.C. stronghold west of Duc Hoa. Surprise caught the enemy off guard and the ARVN troops subsequently killed many of the Viet Cong. During the final two lifts, and later during resupply and Medevac missions, automatic weapons fire was received by nearly all of the 68th ships. Fortunately no personnel or aircraft were lost. Such events as these described above, occurring during their first 60 days in combat operations, attests to the fact that in the 68th the motto "Every Man A Tiger" applies to one and all!

During the next month a rapid reaction call was answered by the "Top Tigers" at 1600 hours

on 11 February 1966. A unit of the 25th Infantry Division (ARVN) had landed by river barge South of Tan Tru in the Mekong River Delta and were pinned down by intense enemy fire. The 68th flight met with heavy enemy fire on approach to the peninsula tip east of Tan Tru, landing only a few meters from dug-in enemy positions. Four aircraft were hit by small arms, automatic weapons, and mortar fire. Major George W. Owens and CWO Michael G. Lindell were among others who returned to Med-Evac badly wounded ARVNs. Owens and Lindell, in the thick of the fire, sustained considerable damage to their aircraft. Thirty-two (32) holes were inflicted, some by mortar shrapnel, but fortunately no personnel were injured. The actions taken by the 68th enabled the 25th Division to regain its footing and strike a telling blow to an estimated battalion of Viet Cong.

During the period from April through September 1966, the 68th supported combat operations conducted by the 173rd Airborne Brigade, the 25th U.S. Infantry and the 5th and 10th ARVN Divisions. During this time the "Top Tigers" were also selected to train "B" Company, 25th Aviation Battalion. After the 14 trainees had participated in 5 combat assaults with the 68th, B Company's Commanding Officer stated, "If we can take this training back to our own division and maintain the standards of the 68th, then we will have done our job well."



During October 1966, the "Top Tigers" supported Detachment B, 5th Special Forces Group with 42 combat sorties in connection with *Sigma*, a classified operation. Later that month and extending through mid-November, the 68th was requested by name to participate once again in the SIGMA operations. Although the operating conditions were new and difficult, the hostile fire continuous and one aircraft was lost with crew, the "Top Tigers" proved once again they were the right unit for the task.

On 9 December 1966, in support of the 2nd Brigade, 25th Infantry Division, the 68th encountered its first heavily mined landing zone. While conducting combat assaults and extractions for the 1/27 Infantry Battalion, three (3) "Top Tiger" aircraft detonated land mines and three (3) others sustained heavy combat damage due to intense enemy ground fire from both sides of the landing zone. Crews were soon evacuated from the downed aircraft, shaken but uninjured. After completion of the third lift it was determined that 6 of the 9 aircraft had sustained combat damage and were unable to continue flying. This fact initiated the placement of the 71st Assault Helicopter Company under the operational control of

the 68th. Despite the hazards involved, the remaining "Top Tiger" aircraft, along with the aircraft of the 71st, accomplished the mission.

Again on 19 March 1967, while in support of Operation Junction City II, conducted by the 4th U.S. Infantry Division, the 68th, supported by the 118th Assault Helicopter Company, lost several ships and crew members to command detonated Viet Cong land mines. The 118th was rendered non-operational on the 2nd lift, and the 68th was called upon to reinforce and resupply, as well as provide Med-Evac aircraft. This resulted in the loss of still another aircraft, yet despite the continuous automatic weapons fire, the mission was accomplished in the minimum amount of time.

Not all of the "Top Tigers" time was spent on combat or combat support operations. Civic action took top priority during spare hours. While stationed at Vung Tau, the 68th assisted the villagers of Can Gio, donating soap and clothing given the "Top Tigers" by civic organizations back home, and giving advice to the Vietnamese on civic matters. A MedCap team, headed by Dr. Quackenbush, also assisted the villagers by operating a bi-weekly sick call.

After the 68th moved to Bien Hoa, a civic action program was immediately initiated in the form of sponsorship of the village of Binh Co, located in War Zone D. Again donations were made and medical assistance given, which resulted in the villagers giving the "Top Tigers" a warm reception. On 24 December 1966, the 68th sponsored a successful Christmas party for the Binh Co hamlet, despite repeated warnings and threats made by the local Viet Cong, who deeply resented this obvious encroachment on their domain. Nevertheless, the 68th continued giving support to the hamlet. The "Top Tigers" of the 68th will continue giving their assistance to the Vietnamese.

Since its arrival in the Republic of Viet Nam in November 1965, the "Top Tigers" have received numerous personal awards and decorations for gallantry during combat operations. The award cherished most, however, must be the unexcelled reputation of the 68th, one earned through sacrifice, professionalism, and the untiring determination to accomplish the mission. The 68th "Top Tigers" continue to set the standards of Army Aviation.







71ST ASSAULT HELICOPTER COMPANY RATTLERS

Prior to 1 October 1966, the 71st Assault Helicopter Company carried the designation of Company "A", 501st Aviation Battalion. Company "A" was activated in December of 1964, and was deactivated 1 October 1966. The unit as organized consisted of a company headquarters, two lift platoons, and one service platoon. The 71st Assault Helicopter Company can trace its origin to 15 October 1962, when it was activated as the 71st Aviation Company at Fort Kobbe, Canal Zone. During this time it was assigned to the 193rd Light Infantry Brigade, where it remained until 1 November 1963. On 1 November the 71st Aviation Company changed location from Fort Kobbe to Fort Clayton, Canal Zone with operational activities at Allbrook Air Force Base. The company was organized under TOE 1-77E with a strength of 7 officers, 10 warrant officers, and 43 enlisted men. On 1 October 1966, Company "A", 501st Aviation Battalion, was deactivated from service in Vietnam, and became the 71st Assault Helicopter Company. Although the name of the company had been changed, the nickname "Rattlers" will remain and has been used since the unit came to Vietnam as the 501st.

To begin the New Year, 1 January 1966, Company "A" 501st Aviation, as a part of the 145th Combat Aviation Battalion, was in support of the 173rd Airborne Brigade as they began Operation Marauder. This operation was to run

in conjunction with the ARVN Airborne Brigade's operation to the North. The entire area had been controlled by the VC for over two years. The name of the game, once again, was "Search and Destroy". The Rattler flight, consisting of ten slicks and five armed ships, left the Snake Pit at 0700 hours with the first of ten loads of troops. Three landing zones on both sides of the Song Vam Co Oriental, Southwest of Bao Trai, were used to admit the 173rd into the area of operations. The Rattlers entered the landing zones receiving only sporadic ground fire, and the Firebirds, using suppressive fire, confirmed one VC killed.

During the month of April 1966, the Rattlers, were called on to support the 1st Infantry Division, in connection with Operation Birmingham. This large scale search and destroy maneuver was conducted in the Tay Ninh area. In one of the largest airmobile operations of the war the company was attached to the 11th Aviation Battalion. A total of ten airmobile companies (light) and one airmobile company (heavy) were staging from airstrips in the Tay Ninh area along with Army and Air Force fixed wing aircraft. The Rattlers flew over 4080 sorties and transported 8330 troops during the month of April 1966.

During the month of July, Company "A", 501st Aviation Battalion conducted six battalion and eleven company size operations. The 25th ARVN Division and the 173rd Airborne Brigade

received the majority of their support. The Rattlers, in providing this support ran up a very impressive flight record. During the month of July the Rattlers flew a total of 2003 flying hours, carried 8369 combat troops, and 49.6 tons of cargo. While compiling this record the Rattlers also reported that they had confirmed 32 VC killed, and had destroyed 46 structures and 4 sampans. The month of September saw the Rattlers very busy, particularly in support of the 173rd Airborne Brigade to kick off Operation Sioux City. They made five lifts carrying 290 troops into two separate landing zones, twenty two miles North of Bien Hoa to complete the first phase of Operation Sioux City.

During the months of October, November, and December the Rattlers supported the US 25th Infantry Division, US 1st Infantry Division, and the 196th Light Infantry Brigade in the Cu Chi, Tay Ninh, Dau Tieng, Ben Cat, and Iron Triangle area. While supporting these Free World Forces, during the three month period, the 71st Assault Helicopter Company flew more than 7,500 hours, and lifted over 18,000 troops.

On 18 April 1967, the 71st Assault Helicopter Company departed Bien Hoa, home of the 145th Combat Aviation Battalion, to support the 196th Light Infantry Brigade which had moved from Tay Ninh to participate in Task Force Oregon, at Chu Lai.

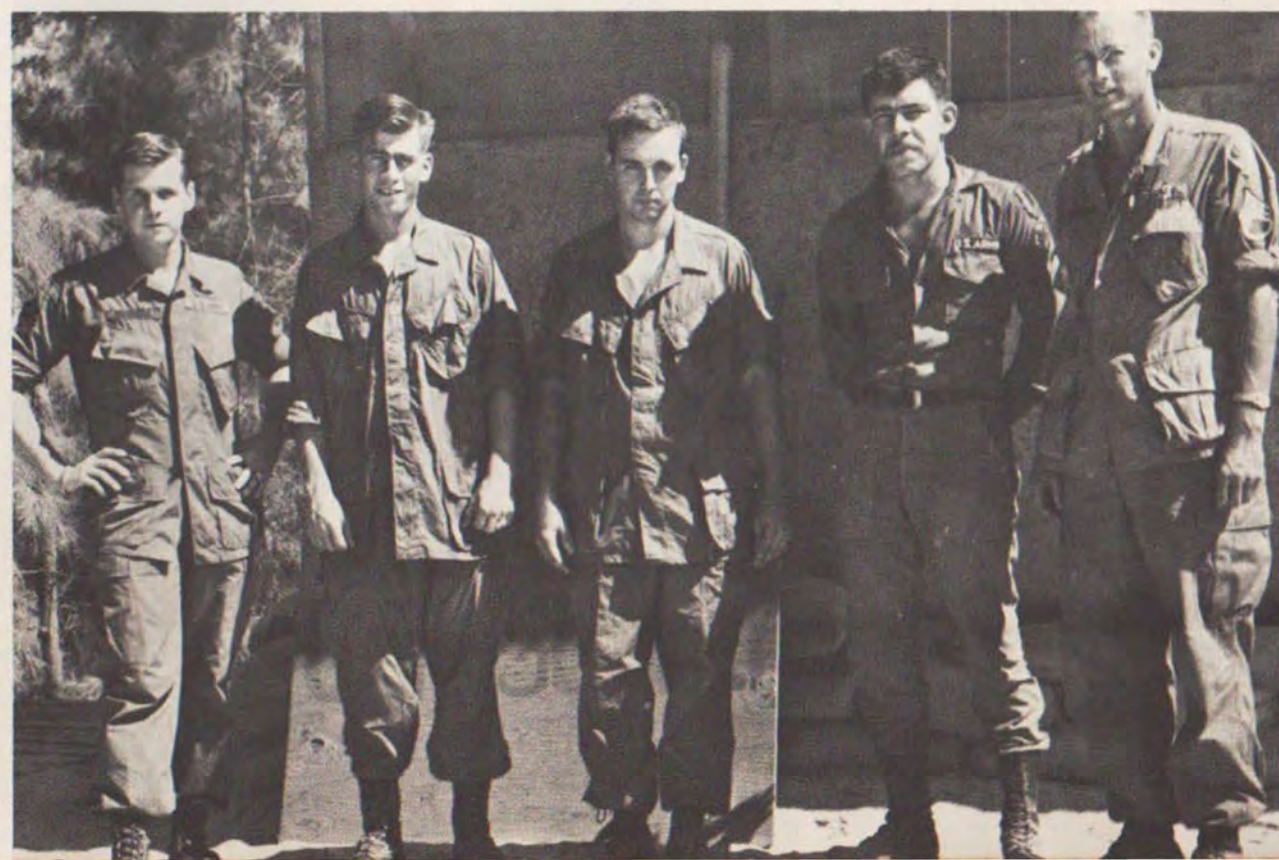
During the days that followed the Rattlers'



arrival they found that the Chu Lai area was almost completely under the control of the Viet Cong, for wherever they flew, sniper fire was received.

The company has made a big name for itself, even bigger than it had in the III Corps Area, by executing very effective offensive as well as defensive destruction on the Viet Cong. "Chu Lai Charlie" has certainly taken a hard blow since the 71st moved into the area and will continue to take the pounding as long as he exists.

The company has attached to it the 151st Transportation Detachment, and the 94th Signal Detachment. The mission of the 151st Transportation Detachment is to furnish aircraft maintenance support to the 71st Assault Helicopter Company. The detachment is authorized 2 officers and 70 enlisted men, and have tools and equipment necessary for the performance of maintenance, 1st through 3rd echelon. The detachment is capable of providing continuous (day and night) support. The 94th Signal Detachment performs 1st through 3rd echelon avionics maintenance for the Rattlers. The fine communications enjoyed by the Rattlers is a fitting tribute to the dedication of the 94th Signal Detachment.







74TH RECONNAISSANCE AIRPLANE COMPANY

ALOFT

The 74th Aviation Company (Surveillance Airplane Light), later redesignated 74th Reconnaissance Airplane Company by VOCC, 1st Aviation Brigade, was activated on 26 March 1965, by USARPAC General Order 80, dated 15 March 1965. The company was formed from the assets of the 1st, 13th, 14th, 52nd, and 145th Aviation Platoons (FW) (Prov). General Order 80 organized the 74th Aviation Company with four airplane platoons of eight O-1 aircraft each. The 74th Aviation Company was assigned to the 145th Combat Aviation Battalion by USARV General Order 574, dated 9 April 1965. The 1st, 2nd and 4th platoons were detached from the 145th and attached to the 14th Aviation Battalion, 52nd Aviation Battalion, and 13th Aviation Battalion, respectively. USARV General Order 1156, dated 22 October 1965, terminated these attachments and further attached the 2nd platoon to the 219th Aviation Company. The 1st and 4th platoons were returned to the 145th Combat Aviation Battalion.

The new year found the 74th Reconnaissance Airplane Company Headquarters, 563rd Transportation Detachment, 320th Signal Detachment, and fourth flight platoon in its new home at Phu Loi Army Airfield. The first flight platoon was located at Phu Loi ARVN, the second at Duc Hoa, and the third flight platoon at Xuan Loc. The unit, equipped with the O-1D Bird dogs, had a mission of providing direct combat support to

all infantry divisions, and general support to the III Corps Headquarters. During the course of any day, the Aloft pilots covered the complete III Corps Tactical Area rendering invaluable reconnaissance, adjusting artillery, providing convoy cover, and radio relay for ground units engaged against the Viet Cong.

During the month of February 1966, the 74th Reconnaissance Airplane Company began its daily coverage of the shipping channel in the Rung Sat Special Zone, and the Nha Be Tank Farm each night. It can be noted that the Viet Cong kept the soldiers in the sheet metal shop busy by recording eight hits on the units aircraft; however, no personnel were injured.

At the height of the dry season, during the months of March and April, the 74th Reconnaissance Airplane Company became very busy and recorded over 5,000 flying hours in support of III Corps ARVN, and United States units increasingly engaged in combat operations. The third platoon lost an aircraft to hostile fire on the 14th of March; however, there were no casualties. The company experienced one other aircraft loss during the month of April, while supporting the US 1st Infantry Division during an operation near Tay Ninh, in War Zone C. As the dry season neared its end, during the month of May, this unit continued its role of flying anywhere, anytime, for

anyone who needed the familiar O-1D with the red hand on the fuselage, signifying "Aloft" on the job. The company flew over 2,100 hours during the month, and also found time to train new aviators.

There were several June weddings in the 74th as ten new officers were married to the reliable old Bird dogs, in what could possibly be called shotgun weddings. The accumulated time for the month was over 2,300 hours, which was divided by the general support platoon and the three direct support platoons. It was during this month that the general support platoon added a daily reconnaissance of the Cambodian border along the III Corps Tactical Area of Responsibility.

August 1966 saw the arrival of the 184th Reconnaissance Airplane Company, thus doubling the reconnaissance capability within the III Corps Tactical Area. With another company of Bird dogs on hand the 74th returned to its original mission of supporting the III Corps ARVN units, and flying escort for the ships in the Rung Sat Special Zone. The 74th rendered valuable assistance in training the new aviators of the 184th, for their new assignment.

The last month of summer was one of the months that the 74th Reconnaissance Airplane Company would like to work at another time. The unit flew slightly over 1,600 hours during the





month. The low time was accounted by the loss of missions to the 184th Reconnaissance Airplane Company when they became fully operational, and also through the rainy weather which greatly curtailed flying throughout the III Corps.

With the month of November, and the approaching end to the rainy season, the 74th Reconnaissance Airplane Company expanded its support. The unit support the 145th Combat Aviation Battalion during Operation Attleboro,

through the battalion forward CP at Tay Ninh West. The general support platoon had its normal mission of escorting the ships to and from Saigon, and supporting naval gunfire missions. The company had its highest percent of available aircraft during this month, which was 95 . This was accomplished by the outstanding efforts of all the crew chiefs, and by the maintenance and avionics personnel.

This unit performed some other deeds which

can be added as footnotes to their record. Warrant Officer Cassaday and Lieutenant Seely accounted for the capture of a Viet Cong infiltrator at Tan Son Nhut Airbase. Maintenance never failed to come up with that ship that was needed for the last minute mission change from Battalion Operations Center, and of course the inevitable events where the men of "Aloft" marked targets for armed helicopters and in doing so sank or destroyed the same.





118TH ASSAULT HELICOPTER COMPANY

THUNDERBIRDS

Four years ago, on 25 June 1963, General Order 236, Headquarters, United States Army, Pacific, activated the 118th Assault Helicopter Company as one of the two helicopter units comprising the 145th Aviation Battalion.

Rising like a phoenix from the recently deactivated 33rd Transportation Company (Light Helicopter), which had arrived in Vietnam during the autumn of 1962, the 118th "Thunderbirds" immediately began to be typified by their motto—"It Shall Be Done."

Becoming fully operational as an assault helicopter company in July 1963, the Thunderbirds chalked up an impressive record of combat assaults during their first month of operation, without the benefit of an armed helicopter platoon. Flying dual rotor CH-21 helicopters, the pilots and crews had to resort to the use of personal sidearms when assaulting a hostile landing zone. One of the Thunderbirds' first confirmed Viet Cong kills was reported when a doorgunner shot one of the guerillas from the aircraft's landing gear with his pistol.

With the Thunderbirds' adoption of the UH-1 helicopter in September 1963, the "Bandits" armed helicopter platoon was created. During November 1963 the Bandits were credited with more than 150 enemy kills, a record that was not surpassed until the large buildup of American

troops in 1965.

Organized for heliborne operations over the myriad terrain features of the III Corps Area, the 118th Assault Helicopter Company was the model of assault helicopter companies that would follow it to Vietnam in another two years. The Thunderbirds were so highly regarded by the commanders of other helicopter units that the 118th was constantly training members of the new units as they arrived in Vietnam.

Known as "The First of The Assault Helicopter Companies," the 118th has actively participated in every major battle and operation in III Corps, distinguishing itself in the Battle of Dong Xoai, Operations Attleboro, Cedar Falls, and Junction City.

The measure of a helicopter unit, like the measure of any group, is in the measure of its men. Among the Thunderbirds' greatest claims to its reputation as a unit that is the first to arrive and the last to leave are the men who have done just that:

The Pilot who took his aircraft down into a hostile landing zone, from which he was drawing intense enemy fire, to evacuate a wounded American Advisor. On touchdown the pilot was killed by an enemy round, the copilot waited in the landing zone while rounds peppered the ground around his aircraft until the wounded man was loaded aboard

his helicopter and then flew him to safety through a withering hail of enemy fire.

And the entire crews of two helicopters who stayed on the ground in a hostile landing zone during an enemy assault to administer first aid to the wounded after their aircraft were shot down, crossing a known minefield to pull the wounded infantry soldiers to safety. When two helicopters landed in the hot landing zone to take the crews out they were loaded with wounded personnel.

And the two helicopters that snatched a company of Vietnamese CIDGs from an encircling battalion of Viet Cong. With no gunship cover each aircraft made six landings within 50 meters of the enemy, hovering down to their landing points through bamboo and small trees.

And the pilot who flew his entire crew to Saigon for medical attention after a mortar round exploded near the aircraft and seriously wounded the copilot, crewchief and doorgunner. After the damaged aircraft was landed it was discovered that the pilot, a 20-year-old Warrant Officer, was also seriously wounded in the face and arms.

And the officers and men of the 118th who daily know that they may be called upon to do the same, and agree to themselves that they will. "It Shall be Done"

This is the measure of a unit.









334TH ARMED HELICOPTER COMPANY

SABERS

The 334th Aviation Company was born on 22 September 1966, activated by USARPAC General Order 210, dated 1 September. The unit was formed from the assets of the 197th Aviation Company, whose colors and honors returned to Fort Benning. The 334th is a completely new unit designation without prior history, but a brief recapitulation of its predecessor units here might be in order.

The Utility Tactical Transport Helicopter Company ("UTT") was activated on 15 July 1961 on Okinawa. In its first year of existence it experimented with various jury-rigged armament systems to be mounted on its UH-1A helicopters. At the completion of its initial training period the UTT was sent TDY to Thailand in the summer of 1962 to participate in a large-scale SEATO exercise. The unit passed its first test with flying colors, and was ordered from Thailand PCS to the Republic of South Vietnam to meet the growing threat of communist insurgency there. Advance elements of the UTT arrived at Tan Son Nhut Air Base on 25 July 1962, and the company flew its first combat mission nine days later.

The armed helicopter was a totally new concept and in its first years in the combat theater the UTT developed tactics and techniques that are now standard procedures throughout the world. In October 1963 the UTT was awarded the

Hughes Tool Company's Army Aviation Unit of the Year award in recognition of its trailblazing role. In the following six months it trained several other armed platoons assigned to airmobile companies in the II, III, and IV Corps areas.

In its infancy, the company was the pet project of Brigadier General Joseph Stilwell Jr., who flew many combat hours as door gunner with the Saber (Headquarters) fire team. In the spring of 1964 the UTT came under the control of the 145th Aviation Battalion "First in Vietnam", with whom it had worked closely and effectively in the past.

In August of 1964 the UTT designation retired into the pages of history, and the company was redesignated the 68th Aviation Company. As the Viet Cong insurgents seemed to be moving into General Giap's much heralded "third phase" in late 1964 and early 1965, the 68th did its part to convince Giap that his troops weren't ready: In large-scale, stand-and-fight battles at Binh Gia, Duc Hoa, Song Be, Dong Xoai, and Bu Dop, the 68th fought as never before.

Another redesignation occurred in March 1965, when the 68th became the 197th Aviation Company. Under this name the unit was to have its finest hour. It was honored for its efforts at Duc Hoa 1 through 3 April 1965 with the first Presidential Unit Citation to be awarded since Korea (Department of the Army General Orders 30,

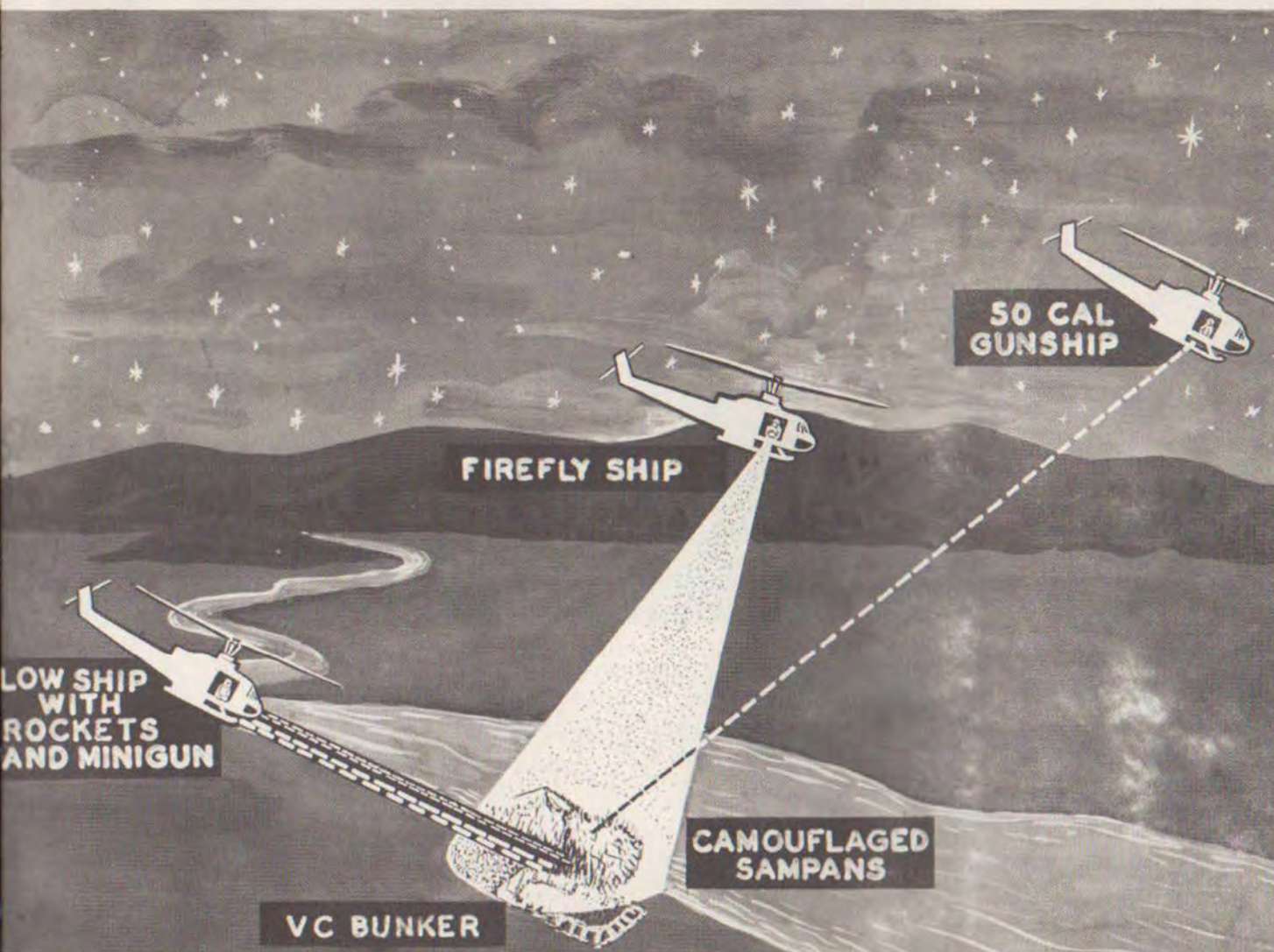
dated 30 August 1965). On 31 August 1966 the 197th received the Meritorious Unit Commendation for actions from May to November 1965.

The 197th moved from Tan Son Nhut to Bien Hoa in March 1966 without a break in stride, continuing to fly combat missions throughout the move by relocating only one platoon at a time. The redeployment went as smoothly as it did largely through the "above and beyond" efforts of the 118th Aviation Company, which went out of its way to provide assistance in logistics and other problem areas in our first days in the provinces.

On September 22, 1966, the 197th moved to Fort Benning to join the 197th Infantry Brigade but its officers, men, helicopters, and reputation remained in Bien Hoa as the new 334th Aviation Company. The Sabers, Playboys, Raiders, Dragons, and Gangbusters (Headquarters, first, second, third and fourth platoon call signs respectively) continued their outstanding support of counter-insurgency operations in the III Corps area and elsewhere whenever called. The company was under the command of Major Floyd C. Gober.

From its inception the 334th Aviation Company assumed the mission of the rotated 197th Aviation Company: to provide armed helicopter and a limited amount of transport helicopter support for the Republic of South Vietnam





as assigned by the 145th Combat Aviation Battalion. In practice, each of the three armed platoons had a three-week schedule that seldom varied: two weeks to day-time missions and one week of night missions. The day missions consist of overhead cover of the Long Tau River shipping channel from Saigon to Vung Tau in the Rung Sat Special Zone; emergency stand-by (five minute reaction time) at Bien Hoa, with two daily recons of the Dong Nai and Bien Hoa-Long Binh Areas; and other light fire team mis-

sions as required, such as landing zone pre-strike and reconnaissance, troops carrier escort, and overhead cover of ground operations. The night missions consist of emergency stand-by and Firefly, a search and destroy mission to inhibit Viet Cong water traffic, which was pioneered and developed by the 197th in the spring of 1965.

The fourth platoon, the Gangbusters, equipped with UH-1D slicks, was developing Task Force Gun-Slick at this time, utilizing an

infantry platoon from the U.S. 25th Division and Vietnamese national police in eagle flights against road blocks, Viet Cong tax points, and other such targets.

During the month of October 1966 the 334th added several new projects to its bag of tricks. The Sabers began experimenting with the Starlight Scope as a possible adjunct to the Firefly capability. The Gangbusters began infiltrating and exfiltrating recon teams, and the armed platoons on 2 October commenced a daily mission in support of the Australian Task Force at Nui Dat, North of Baria.

November saw the introduction of the XM-47 weapons system to the company inventory. Early Operations with the system were successful. In December the XM-21, mini-gun system, arrived which greatly enhanced the armed platoon's suppressive fire capability.

On 29 December the Gangbusters began training with Special Forces, near Thu Duc, for the Sigma mission. The following day Major Gober, flying with only three days remaining prior to relinquishing his command to his co-pilot, Major Gordon F. Ferris made a precautionary landing after taking several hits on a mission for the US 25th Infantry Division.

December was also the unit's most successful month for Firefly since its inception. On 11 December near Can Giouc the Raiders sunk 69 sampans; the Dragons escalated on the night of the 23rd, destroying 74. On the 26th the Raiders broke the record again with 111 sampans sunk, and five confirmed VC killed. Most of the boats seemed to be loaded with rice, although there was one large secondary explosion, and several minor ones during the evening. A total of 379 sampans were sunk during December.

The 334th Armed Helicopter Company, Sabers, is a new aviation company but its roots are deep in the history of the Vietnam conflict.





335TH ASSAULT HELICOPTER COMPANY

COWBOYS

Until 31 August 1966 the Cowboys of the 335th were members of Company A, 82nd Aviation Battalion. As of 1 September 1966 the Cowboys were redesignated. The 335th Aviation Company (Airmobile Light) came into being. Subsequently, this designation was changed to 335th Assault Helicopter Company (AML).

Throughout the year the mission of the unit, regardless of designation, was the same—to provide the 173rd Airborne Brigade (Separate) with the best, most professional airmobile support available anywhere in the world.

To provide this close support, the 335th was attached to the 173rd Airborne Brigade.

The organization of the company with its attached units remained the same. That is, internally, the 335th consisted of two airlift platoons, known as the Ramrods and the Mustangs, an armed helicopter platoon, known as the Falcons, and the service platoon which owned the well-known recovery ship, *Horsethief*. Attached to the 335th were the 25th Medical Detachment, the 166th Transportation Detachment and the 234th Signal Detachment. Additionally, the 173rd Aviation Platoon, the organic aviation element of the 173rd Airborne Brigade, was under the operational control of the company, and Casper was their name.

The area of operation for the company, in

support of the brigade, was the entire III Corps Tactical Area of the Republic of Viet Nam. Within this III Corps there were some sectors which caused anxiety in the hearts of the aviators such as War Zone D, the area around Song Be, and around Xuan Loc. But wherever the brigade went, the Cowboys of the 335th were always present.

To speak of the deeds of the Cowboys in an adequate manner, a short summary of the various operations and occurrences must be made.

1966 began in the appropriate manner—a combat lift on New Years Day to open Operation Marauder in the Bao Trai area. Then, becoming Operation Crimp, the Cowboys entered the Hobo Woods, just South of War Zone C. The greater part of January was spent in crushing the Viet Cong in the Hobo Woods. Miss Jo Collins, of Playmate fame, visited the Cowboys. Subsequent mention of this was made in *Playboy* magazine.

The majority of February involved supporting the brigade in its TAOR (Tactical Area of Responsibility) at Bien Hoa. Codenamed Uniontown, this TAOR work was continued by elements of the brigade during the remainder of the year. Additional support was provided the 1st Infantry Division at Di An.

Possibly one of the finest hours, to date, of the Cowboys occurred during Operation Silver

City, in March, in War Zone D. Specifically, on the evening of 15 March a force of two thousand VC encircled the 2/503rd Infantry, a battalion of the 173rd Airborne Brigade. Throughout the night the VC remained silent, but as the first resupply helicopter arrived just after sunrise, the attack began. The resupply helicopter was shot down, ammunition was critical. The Cowboys, responding to the emergency, sling-loaded ammunition into the LZ under withering hostile fire. At the time the first sling load of ammunition arrived, the battalion was using the last that it had on-hand. When the VC broke contact after a day-long battle they left behind four hundred of their dead. To say that the Cowboys saved the day would be an understatement.

On 27 March Major Larry J. Baughman took command of the company from Major Donald A. Champlin who returned to CONUS.

April was the scene of Operation Denver in Song Be area. For this, the company moved in its entirety to the Special Forces camp at Song Be. Numerous combat assaults were performed throughout the heavily jungled area. Very few hits were taken on this operation.

Operation Dexter, during May, took place in an area East of Bien Hoa, yet West of Xuan Loc. A search and clear operation, it was of short duration. Following this was Operation Hardi-





hood, by Xa Binh Gia, just North of Vung Tau. The purpose was to secure a base camp position for the newly-arrived Royal Australian Regiment. Many long range patrol missions were accomplished, to include the first recorded emergency night extraction of an LRRP under fire.

On 9 June Operation Hardihood became Hollandia, a search and destroy mission in the mountains on the seacoast just North of Vung Tau. Another first for the Cowboys—the first night combat assault in the III Corps Area of RVN ever—was the assault to begin the operation. 29 June saw Major Ernest H. Johnson take command of the company from Major Larry J. Baughman. After Hollandia, Operation Yorktown commenced. Again it was a search and destroy mission. It was during this operation that six hundred and forty U.S. troopers were helilifted from the area of operation, just South of Xuan Loc, to a shower point located near the Xuan Loc airfield. This proved the Cowboys flexibility.

The brigade returned in Operation Sioux

City to its stomping ground, War Zone D, during September and early October. The Casper platoon employed its armed OH-13 aircraft for the first time. The VC seemed to stay out of sight during this operation, probably remembering vividly their defeat in March during Silver City.

Operation Robin began on 10 October. Elements of the 4th Infantry Division were arriving at Vung Tau from CONUS and were to garrison at Bearcat, about ten miles Southeast of Bien Hoa. The operation was then a road security mission, keeping open highway 15 between Vung Tau and Bearcat. Concurrently, the Cowboys provided three UH-1D's and two OH-13s from the Caspers for Operation Winchester at Da Nang Airbase in the I Corps area. It was also during October that the VC sabotaged the Falcon helicopter parking area at Bien Hoa. Before the helicopters could be evacuated one gunship was destroyed and another severely damaged.

With ARVN units attached, the brigade began Operation Meridian in November. The area

was War Zone C above Tay Ninh. Making numerous combat assaults and Eagle Flights it was soon discovered that the VC were in the area in force. Thus Operation Attleboro, a multi-divisional operation was born. Despite the terrible terrain, over one thousand VC were killed. There were most constant combat assaults by the Cowboys throughout the period.

Upon the completion of Attleboro on 20 November the Cowboys reverted to their continual mission of supporting brigade elements in the TAOR at Bien Hoa. An eventual operation, Waco, developed from the TAOR mission in late November. A search and destroy mission, it covered the area between Bien Hoa and Xuan Loc.

The Cowboy element which was supporting the 4/503rd Infantry at Da Nang returned in early December to Bien Hoa. Operation Canary/Duck, again a mission of securing highway 15 between Vung Tau and Bearcat, began on 7 December. This time the road was secured for elements of the 199th Light Infantry Brigade and the 9th Infantry Division which were arriving from CONUS. Activities during the operation were normal until 23 December when the 4/503rd Infantry was to be withdrawn from PZ Stump because of the forthcoming Christmas truce. The battalion had had minor contact with unknown enemy forces, and no particular problems were expected during the extraction. However a surprise was in store. During the extraction a large enemy force made its presence felt by ruthlessly attacking both the troops on the PZ and the Cowboys who were making the extraction lifts. After thirteen lifts by the Cowboys under extremely heavy fire the extraction was complete. The Cowboy aircraft were riddled with holes and two crewmen were injured. This sort of action by the Cowboys was indicative of their skill, and their valor.

The Cowboys were awarded the Meritorious Unit Commendation for Achievement in the performance of outstanding service in the Republic of Viet Nam for the period May 1965—July 1966.





COMBAT ASSAULTS



OPERATIONAL DATA JAN 65 — MAY 67

BATTALION SIZE COMBAT ASSAULTS	596	PASSENGERS TRANSPORTED	702,037
BATTALION SIZE EXTRACTIONS	308	TONS OF CARGO LIFTED	15,984
BATTALION SIZE REPOSITIONINGS	139	AIRCRAFT HIT	1,006
COMPANY SIZE COMBAT ASSAULTS	2,808	AIRCRAFT LOST	38
COMPANY SIZE EXTRACTIONS	1,120	WOUNDED IN ACTION	318
COMPANY SIZE REPOSITIONINGS	249	KILLED IN ACTION	72
HOURS FLOWN	269,175	VC KILLED—BODY COUNT	2,669
SORTIES FLOWN	549,459	VC STRUCTURES DESTROYED	3,557
		VC SAMPANS DESTROYED	3,484

BATTALION OPERATIONS

DATE	UNIT SUPPORTED	AREA
9 Jul 66	173rd Airborne Brigade	Rice Bowl
10 Jul 66	173rd Airborne Brigade	Rice Bowl
12 Jul 66	173rd Airborne Brigade	Rice Bowl
16 Jul 66	173rd Airborne Brigade	Rice Bowl
18 Jul 66	173rd Airborne Brigade	Rice Bowl
19 Jul 66	173rd Airborne Brigade	Rice Bowl
21 Jul 66	7th ARVN Infantry Division	Phu Loi
22 Jul 66	43rd ARVN Regiment	An Loc
26 Jul 66	173rd Airborne Brigade	Rice Bowl
30 Jul 66	173rd Airborne Brigade	Rice Bowl
31 Jul 66	173rd Airborne Brigade	Rice Bowl
5 Aug 66	5th ARVN Division	Lộc Ninh
13 Aug 66	173rd Airborne Brigade	Xuan Loc
14 Aug 66	173rd Airborne Brigade	Xuan Loc
22 Aug 66	173rd Airborne Brigade	Xuan Loc
23 Aug 66	173rd Airborne Brigade	Xuan Loc
24 Aug 66	173rd Airborne Brigade	Xuan Loc
26 Aug 66	173rd Airborne Brigade	Xuan Loc
27 Aug 66	173rd Airborne Brigade	Xuan Loc
1 Sep 66	173rd Airborne Brigade	Xuan Loc
2 Sep 66	173rd Airborne Brigade	Xuan Loc
7 Sep 66	173rd Airborne Brigade	Xuan Loc
8 Sep 66	25th Infantry Division	Cu Chi
15 Sep 66	25th Infantry Division	Cu Chi
19 Sep 66	196th Light Infantry Brigade	Cu Chi
26 Sep 66	173rd Airborne Brigade	War Zone D
27 Sep 66	173rd Airborne Brigade	War Zone D
8 Oct 66	173rd Airborne Brigade	War Zone D
11 Oct 66	25th Infantry Division	Cu Chi
16 Oct 66	25th Infantry Division	Bao Trai
24 Oct 66	25th Infantry Division	Ben Luc
2 Dec 66	196th Light Infantry Brigade	War Zone C
5 Dec 66	196th Light Infantry Brigade	War Zone C
7 Dec 66	25th Infantry Division	Trang Bang
11 Dec 66	1st Infantry Division	War Zone C
18 Dec 66	25th Infantry Division	Can Ginoc

DATE	UNIT SUPPORTED	AREA
19 Dec 66	1st Infantry Division	War Zone C
21 Dec 66	2nd Battalion, 14th Infantry	Ben Luc
27 Dec 66	4th Infantry Division	War Zone C
30 Dec 66	25th Infantry Division	Duc Hue
26 Jan 67	3rd Battalion, 22nd Infantry	War Zone C
29 Jan 67	196th Light Infantry Brigade	War Zone C
30 Jan 67	9th Infantry Division	Automatic Alley
4 Feb 67	4th Infantry Division	War Zone C
12 Feb 67	9th Infantry Division	War Zone C
16 Feb 67	196th Light Infantry Brigade	War Zone C
17 Feb 67	173rd Airborne Brigade	War Zone C
17 Feb 67	4th Battalion, 9th Infantry	War Zone C
18 Feb 67	34th ARVN Ranger Battalion	Duc Hoa
19 Feb 67	196th Light Infantry Brigade	War Zone C
21 Feb 67	196th Light Infantry Brigade	War Zone C
22 Feb 67	196th Light Infantry Brigade	War Zone C
2 Mar 67	1st Battalion, 5th ARVN	War Zone C
4 Mar 67	25th Infantry Division	War Zone C
5 Mar 67	25th Infantry Division	War Zone C
18 Mar 67	25th Infantry Division	Duc Hoa
19 Mar 67	4th Infantry Division	Soui Tre
3 Apr 67	9th Infantry Division	Nui Dat
4 Apr 67	199th Light Infantry Brigade	North of Saigon
8 Apr 67	25th Infantry Division	Duc Hoa
11 Apr 67	9th Infantry Division	Nui Dat
12 Apr 67	9th Infantry Division	Tan An
16 Apr 67	9th Infantry Division	Tan An
18 Apr 67	9th Infantry Division	Tan An
19 Apr 67	9th Infantry Division	Tan An
27 Apr 67	1st Australian Task Force	Nui Dat
30 Apr 67	173rd Airborne Brigade	War Zone C
1 May 67	173rd Airborne Brigade	War Zone C
5 May 67	173rd Airborne Brigade	Xuan Loc
11 May 67	173rd Airborne Brigade	Xuan Loc
24 May 67	199th Light Infantry Brigade	Binh Chanh
25 May 67	9th Infantry Division	Tan An

THE BATTLE OF DONG XOAI

At 0100 hours, 10 June 1965, the 118th Aviation Company was directed by the III Corps Tactical Operations Center to send its standby fire team immediately to Dong Xoai. The two UH-1B armed helicopters with full crew, rockets and machineguns, took off within minutes after receiving the word to scramble. Once in the air, they radioed III Corps for more detailed information concerning their mission. They were told that the Dong Xoai Special Forces Camp had been under extreme heavy mortar and small arms fire since midnight. The tactical situation was still not clear when the fire team approached the town at 0130 hours. The fire team started to make firing passes once they were in position over the town. They were engaged by the Viet Cong as soon as they began firing and the tracers from their guns kept the enemy gunners aware of their position. Without the slightest hesitation, the two armed helicopters kept up a steady stream of fire to silence the enemy guns surrounding the Special Forces compound. Not until after they had expended all their ammunition, and the fire team leader's helicopter was hit by ground fire and the pilot wounded, did the two helicopters leave the battle area.

At the time that the light fire team was closing Bien Hoa, III Corps had decided to reinforce Dong Xoai by helicopters at first light with Vietnamese infantry. At 0430 hours, flight crews of the 118th Aviation Company were on the flight line preparing for the combat assault at day light.

The town of Dong Xoai is situated at the most important road junction in the heart of "War Zone D". The United States Special Forces has established a fortified compound and numerous strong points at strategic locations taking the entire area under their command. Many parts of the fortifications were still under construction when the first mortar shells awoke the defenders.

At 0600 hours, 10 June 1965, all flyable 118th Aviation Company aircraft departed Bien Hoa for a combat assault on Dong Xoai. The

morale of the company was high. They had grown fond of the Special Forces over the three years in which the company has served in Viet Nam. Many members of the Special Forces "B" Detachment at Dong Xoai were friends of the company. Although the tactical situation was extremely confused at Dong Xoai and only scattered intelligence as to the enemy's strength and positions had reached III Corps, the 118th was ready to do anything within their capability to aid the garrison under attack.

Phuoc Vinh, the nearest fortified town to Dong Xoai, was the staging area. Elements of the 1st Battalion, 7th Regiment, ARVN, were going to make the first assault with the 118th Aviation Company. Due to the urgency of the situation, there was little time to gather data on the enemy situation. The landing zone for the first assault was an open field two miles north of Dong Xoai and next to the road that led to the Thanh Loi Plantation. In case more ground troops were needed, two more landing zones were chosen at suitable strategic areas in the vicinity of Dong Xoai.

The formation of 118th helicopters began to receive fire as they began to descend east of Dong Xoai. On final approach into the first landing zone more fire was received. The flight held suppressive fire as it was not known at the time whether friendly troops were in the area. Seconds before the flight touched down the lead helicopter reported what appeared to be friendly civilians waving to them from the edge of the landing zone. The flight leader at once gave the order to the crews to hold their fire because there were friendly civilians in the area. As soon as the ships landed and the troops started unloading the civilians dove into concealed fox holes where they had their weapons hidden and immediately engaged the helicopters. Due to the fact the whole flight of helicopters were low on fuel and were able to become airborne and out of the range of small arms fire very quickly, no major damage to the flight element resulted. However, with the departure of the helicopters, the Viet Cong directed their fire on the assault

troops in the landing zone. The enemy had utilized the lack of intelligence on the part of the allied forces to their best advantage at that crucial moment by deceiving the heliborne force. Once the troops were committed, they were ambushed. The Viet Cong, from their well prepared positions, systematically cut down the lead elements of the 1st Battalion, 7th Regiment. Later, when the battle was over, it was disclosed that the 1st Battalion ceased to be a fighting unit twenty minutes after it was committed into the Viet Cong trap.

When the 118th Aviation Company returned to Phuoc Vinh for more soldiers and fuel, they were informed that the Viet Cong had anticipated heliborne reinforcements for the surrounded Special Forces Camp. The Viet Cong were employing strong units with heavy weapons and they intended to occupy Dong Xoai. It was also disclosed that all the friendly troops had been forced to reposition themselves inside the main compound that had the best defensive capability.

When the 118th helicopters, loaded with soldiers of the remaining elements of the 1st Battalion, 7th Regiment, ARVN, departed Phuoc Vinh, they sent their organic armed helicopter platoon ahead of the flight to conduct a reconnaissance of the intended landing zone. The armed fire teams made repeated passes over the air strip at the Thanh Loi Plantation. They carefully checked the entire plantation for traces of enemy concentrations but were able to find no evidence of the Viet Cong using the plantation to stage attack on Dong Xoai. The fact that the enemy up until the battle of Dong Xoai, had never used a plantation openly as a headquarters and staging area caused the flight elements to hold their suppressive fire power again as the helicopters approached to land.

As the 118th Aviation Company's formation of fourteen troop carrying helicopters approached the landing strip, a herd of cattle appeared and moved up the strip to the intended landing area. The lead helicopter made a decision to land the

troops short of the original intended area. The decision saved many lives. No sooner had the skids of the first helicopter touched ground when a tremendous explosion was seen, heard and felt. The enemy had detonated a huge claymore mine planted at the original landing area. The explosion of the mine was a signal. Within seconds of the explosion, reports of automatic weapons fire came from all members of the formation. The soldiers and helicopters were caught in a hail of bullets and exploding mortar rounds. The enemy fire was coming from everywhere. In the well-kept and beautiful plantation mansions they were firing from windows and roofs. Among the rubber trees fire from concealed bunkers and fox holes. At once, the armed escorts of the 118th Aviation Company charged in and fired everything they had on both sides of the helicopters still unloading their troops. At the same time the door gunners of the troops carriers were burning up the barrels of their machineguns to suppress the enemy fire. It was only a few seconds since the formation of helicopters had landed, and yet it was already an eternity for the helicopter crews and the ARVN soldiers on the ground. Scores of the brave little Vietnamese soldiers were falling in front of the eyes of the helicopter crews as they watched them leap from the aircraft, then fall as enemy bullets slammed into their bodies. The helicopters were also receiving heavy damage in those seconds on the ground. One of the troops carriers had a mortar round explode just outside the cockpit causing it to roll over immediately on its side. A split second later, it exploded in a ball of fire. The entire crew was killed. The remaining helicopters were taking off at this time. All guns were firing, but the enemy fire was not decreasing in intensity. From roof tops, windows, doorways and trenches, enemy bullets ripped into the helicopters. When at last the whole formation was out of range of the enemy weapons, only one helicopter reported negative damage.

The Viet Cong had planned the attack on Dong Xoai with superb care. There was no



question left in anyone's mind that further heli-borne assaults into available landing zones would mean annihilation to the majority of the ground troops and at tremendous risk to the aviation elements. The 118th Aviation Company commander, in temporary command of the entire Army Aviation efforts in Dong Xoai at that time, ordered the remaining elements with troops aboard back to the staging area. The last helicopters to

land at Phuoc Vinh were two armed helicopters from the 118th. The fire team had remained over the battle area to act as radio communications relay and fire support for the ground troops. The light fire team had expended all their ammunition and had lost all communications with the ground assault elements. It was not known at this time whether the Special Forces compound was still holding out after almost 18 hours of continuous attack.

The 118th Aviation Company's flight surgeon in charge of the medical aid station at Phuoc Vinh was at the communication center requesting Air Force C-130 transports to evacuate over a hundred wounded ARVN soldiers when a relayed radio message came through from Dong Xoai. It was one of the Americans in the Dong Xoai Special Forces compound. The message was tragic and heroic. It said "I am using my last battery for the radio and there is no more ammunition; we are all wounded, some of the more serious wounded are holding grenades with the safety pins already pulled. The Viet Cong are attacking in human waves. The last wave has been defeated but we are expecting the next wave now."

The commander of the 118th who was present and heard the radio message stood up and said, "I am going in." With that he went to the parked helicopters. Five other officers followed him and the enlisted crew members just climbed into their seats and waited for take off.

Three helicopters departed Phuoc Vinh for Dong Xoai to evacuate the brave soldiers who were holding out to the last grenade. When they were about to close Dong Xoai, a message to all air units in the Dong Xoai area came over the radio. Dong Xoai was declared a free strike area and everything that moved would be bombed and strafed. The three helicopters, nevertheless, pressed on without hesitation. Such was the morale present in the 118th Aviation Company. Had there been need for the entire company to go to Dong Xoai, the company would have volunteered to the man.

The 118th Aviation Company's own organic helicopters again played a vital role in the successful execution of the mission. The armed escort contacted Air Force fighter bombers in the area and asked for their fire support. While the Air Force made their bomb runs over the town the armed escorts went in from the south with all guns firing. One quarter of a mile south of the Dong Xoai compound was a water crossing. The Viet Cong had concealed in that area two French armored cars that were captured earlier in the battle. The armed helicopters were able to discover these mobile weapons platforms during their low reconnaissance by fire and engaged them with rockets. Their accurate fire effectively rendered the armored cars incapable of further combat. Had the .50 cal. machineguns on these armored cars not been put out of action, they would have taken a serious toll of the troop carriers as they approached Dong Xoai.

The three troop carriers now moved in from the south. They were fast and low and their door gunners were firing at any trace of Viet Cong activity in range. There was constant firing and marking of targets all along the flight route into the soccer field at Dong Xoai. With complete surprise they touched down in the soccer field outside the Special Forces compound. Hastily, the Viet Cong organized an attack. The crews reported enemy standing up on the compound walls and firing down at the helicopters not more than fifty feet away. While the helicopters were being hit from all directions and the door gunners firing at point targets at close range, a crew chief leaped from the helicopter and exposed himself completely to the enemy fire. He fired a full magazine from his M14 at the compound entrance, then with disregard for his own safety, fought his way into the compound and brought out the last defenders of the outpost. For this act of valor the crew chief was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross. There were nine wounded Americans and eight Vietnamese that were rescued from Dong Xoai that afternoon. They were the last survivors of the original defenders of Dong Xoai.

At the debriefing held at Phuoc Vinh after the three helicopters had returned, an interesting event came to everyone's attention. Within seconds after the take off of the evacuation helicopters, the area where they had landed exploded in mortar fire and was raked with large caliber machine gun fire in all quadrants. The fact that the helicopters were able to successfully complete their mission can be attributed to the element of surprise and the daring courage of the 118th helicopter crews. The Viet Cong were evidently expecting a landing in the heart of the town of Dong Xoai. The extra seconds it took them to reposition their weapons to bear down upon the helicopters that were making the evacuation allowed the successful accomplishment of that daring mission. For their courage above and beyond the call of duty, the three crews were decorated with one Distinguished Service Cross, five Silver Stars, one Distinguished Flying Cross and five Air Medals for heroism.

With the evacuation of the compound, the armed helicopters and Air Force fighter bombers were free to make strikes over the entire area. The armed helicopters made strike after strike stopping only to rearm and refuel. "There was constant rain of fire from the sky in the whole area" was the remark made by a III Corps advisor in a 118th Aviation Company command and control helicopter.

Late in the afternoon of 10 June 1965, the 52nd Ranger Battalion arrived in Phuoc Vinh. Plans were immediately put into effect to take them to Dong Xoai. Verbal orders were given to the aviation company commanders while the crews made last minute checks on their helicopters prior to becoming airborne. As the battalion-sized air-mobile force neared Dong Xoai, the final decision was made to put the Rangers into the soccer field where the successful evacuation was made a few hours before.

The 118th Aviation Company was again given the honor of leading the combat assault. The flight route was the same as was used on the previ-

ous evacuation mission. The helicopters slipped into the soccer field receiving only scattered small arms fire as they landed. Once on the ground, however, the Rangers were being shot down as they tried to move from the landing zone to the compound and towards the center of town. The enemy, nevertheless, must not have expected another daring assault that day and the air strikes must have done their job well. The Viet Cong hastily prepared a defense around the church in town which had become their forward command post. However, resistance was slowly put to an end, the compound was secured, the town reoccupied. Dong Xoai was under the control of the allied forces once again when darkness came that day. The success of the last assault must be attributed to the high degree of mobility and flexibility of the fighting force, and the determination and willingness of the flight crews in their helicopters.

The 118th Aviation Company returned to Bien Hoa after the lift of the 52nd Ranger Battalion on 10 June 1965. The day of heavy fighting had caused the loss of one entire helicopter crew and aircraft, plus almost every helicopter having received bullet and shrapnel damage. Ten Purple Hearts were awarded to members of the 118th "Thunderbirds" as a result of this action.

During the night, more detailed intelligence of the enemy situation was developed. The enemy had initially committed a full regiment of regular troops with heavy supporting elements. Seven Viet Cong anti-aircraft gun positions were destroyed by air in and around Dong Xoai. Hundreds of mortar rounds from enemy mortars had destroyed practically every fortification in the Special Forces Compound. But the devastation air strikes and bombardments had caused the Viet Cong to suffer heavy losses. During the day, a second regiment with headquarters at the Thanh Loi Plantation had to be committed for the attack on the compound. The Viet Cong used human wave attacks on the compound and was repeatedly beaten back before the defenders were evacuated when their

ammunition gave out. However, even though the Viet Cong occupied all of Dong Xoai by late afternoon 10 June 1965, it was not long before they were overwhelmed by allied forces. The arrival of the battle wise ARVN Ranger Battalion by helicopters was enough to break all organized resistance in the immediate vicinity of the town.

The next morning, 11 June 1965, 118th Aviation Company was back in full strength at Phuoc Vinh. There was to be a battalion sized combat assault with the 118th as the lead element. One hundred paratroopers of the 7th Air Borne Battalion ARVN were lifted by the 118th into the soccer field at Dong Xoai. Although fire was expected by the aviation units and the armed escorts flew low to draw fire from the enemy prior to the arrival of the troop carrying helicopters, no enemy fire was received. The assault was completed with the arrival of the remaining elements of the airmobile battalion.

Large scale medical evacuation of ARVN casualties began immediately after the air landing of the paratroopers on 11 June 1965. Hostilities were slowly coming to a halt in Dong Xoai except for isolated and rear guard action. The wounded were brought to the soccer field and loaded on helicopters. There were almost no medical facilities at Dong Xoai and all the casualties were taken to Phuoc Vinh where the 118th Aviation Company's flight surgeon had set up a clearing station. The doctor had been working for over forty hours with little rest when the mass evacuation of wounded ARVN soldiers began. Helicopters continued to bring to Phuoc Vinh seriously wounded and the medical personnel were overwhelmed with work. At one time there were over two hundred wounded awaiting treatment at Phuoc Vinh. The medical personnel worked diligently and many soldiers' lives were saved.

On 12 June 1965, again staging from Phuoc Vinh, Republic of Vietnam, the company lifted elements of the 1st Battalion, 48th Regiment, ARVN. The mission of the 1st Battalion was to reinforce the garrison already located at Dong Xoai.

The troop strength at Dong Xoai was approaching a thousand and sufficient strength was present to secure the town and pursue the enemy.

Except for isolated snipers and enemy soldiers that were trapped in the town itself, the main body of the enemy had vanished. There was only small unit engagements on 12 June 1965. The 118th provided armed helicopter support on a continuous basis to give fire support to the ground forces. There was enemy fire but no casualties were sustained by the flight crews. The armed helicopters also made an extensive reconnaissance and search of the areas where the elements of the 1st Battalion, 7th Regiment were committed to battle on 10 June 1965. They were unable to detect any signs of the ARVN unit. The 118th thus prepared for an assault on the following day.

After being in continuous operations for over 72 hours, the 118th Aviation Company still provided the majority of the helicopters for the assault on 13 June 1965. Despite the heavy casualties and excessive damage to the helicopters, the morale of the company remained extremely high. Many of the helicopters now carried volunteer gunners consisting of clerks and cooks from the company.

The company went to Xuan Loc to pick up soldiers belonging to the ARVN 43rd Regiment. A hundred soldiers were lifted into a landing zone a half mile north of the original assault area conducted on the first day of the operation. From the landing area, the soldiers were to move through the jungle and rubber trees to search for the troops that had disappeared shortly after they were landed. During the conduct of the assault, scattered small arms fire was received from the enemy hiding in the vast Thanh Loi Plantation. The company did not sustain any damage to helicopters, nor any casualties. The enemy in this assault, turned out to be the weather which became a serious hazard to flight.

The lift of the 43rd Regiment was conducted at night under minimum lighting conditions. All

during the daylight hours, fire teams searched for the 7th Regiment soldiers. Finally the situation became too urgent to not risk an air assault and ground search. The 118th was the only airmobile company experienced in night assaults. The assault was accomplished according to schedule. However due to the rapidly deteriorating weather on the return flight, the pilots were unable to hold their formation and helicopters were scattered all over "War Zone D". There were hidden thunderstorms through out the area. Heavy rain reduced visibility to bare minimum and winds gusting up to 40 knots made any helicopter flying extremely difficult. Only the high degree of training and professionalism of the aviators prevented sure disaster and the loss of crews and helicopters. The flight returned to Bien Hoa individually with every helicopter accounted for at 2330 hours. Many of the helicopters had but a few minutes of fuel remaining.

The Dong Xoai battle was to have a final chapter on 20 June 1965. On that date the largest heliborne operation in the III Corps area was to climax the closing of the battle. The 118th Aviation Company was again chosen to lead the assault of seventy-seven troop carriers and forty armed escorts. Staging for Hon Quan, the mission of the heliborne force was to conduct combat assaults to an area north of Dong Xoai where reconnaissance patrols and intelligence indicated a concentration of Viet Cong forces in a rubber plantation. It was believed that they were the remnants of the two enemy regiments that had attacked Dong Xoai. It appeared that the enemy was now attempting to withdraw and break contact.

One thousand and eighty-nine paratroopers which were the entire 3rd and 8th ARVN Airborne Battalions, cream of the Vietnamese Army, were landed by combat assault. Minor damages was sustained by a single helicopter which was caused by one enemy small arms bullet. There was no other incidents of enemy resistance that day.

On 20 June 1965, the battle of Dong Xoai came to a close for the 118th Aviation Company.

THE BATTLE OF SOUI TRE



reinforce the infantry at a later time. The hazards of this unsecured landing zone were known to be many as there were relatively few clearings in the dense jungle which were adequate for airmobile operations. Past experience indicated that when there were few clearings in an area, the Viet Cong either mine or establish ambushes on or near the potential landing zones. Professionalism and esprit de corps prevailed as the aviators of the 68th and 118th Assault Helicopter Companies eagerly awaited the termination of the twenty-minute artillery preparation which would mark the beginning of the first lift. The assault was under the control of the Commanding Officer, 145th Combat Aviation Battalion. The lift units were supported by gunships of both assault helicopter companies and those of the 334th Armed Helicopter Company. The first lift encountered little resistance upon entering the landing zone, but received automatic weapons fire upon departure. At the moment the aircraft of the second lift touched down, a command detonated 155mm artillery round was exploded. Two helicopters were completely destroyed and five others seriously damaged from shrapnel. More mines were detonated and the landing zone became a holocaust of fire and flying steel. The Viet Cong were in well established bunkers and had numeric superiority—it was later learned that major portions of two Viet Cong regiments were engaged in the battle. Heroism became the norm rather than the exception. Realizing the necessity for reinforcing the ground units already in the landing zone, the decision was made to land additional troops into a landing zone immediately adjacent to the initial landing zone. The 118th Assault Helicopter Company "Thunderbirds" and the 68th Assault Helicopter Company "Top Tigers" wasted no time getting another load of troops aboard and into the air. The tremendous urgency of the situation was realized by all. The lift approached through sporadic ground fire which culminated in the detonation of another mine which damaged the lead aircraft. The next element approached through a withering hail of automatic weapons fire and was

On 19 March 1967, the 145th Combat Aviation Battalion distinguished itself by exceptionally valorous actions in the prelude to what was to become known as the Battle of Suoi Tre—the most significant one-day battle to date in the III Corps Tactical Area. The 145th Combat Aviation Battalion was operating in direct support of 3rd Brigade, 4th Infantry Division, with the mission to conduct a combat assault into a landing zone located approximately five miles north of Suoi Da, Republic of Vietnam. The initial operational plans were made for the assault to take

place on 18 March 1967, several miles further north of the actual landing zone; however, obstacles prevented the 2nd Battalion, 22nd Infantry (Mech) and the 2nd Battalion, 34th Armor from securing the landing zone as planned. On the evening of 19 March, the assault was rescheduled for 19 March with the landing zone changed to the new location. The armored and mechanized elements were unable to meet this new schedule. It was then decided that the assault would be conducted into an unsecured landing zone with the armored and mechanized elements scheduled to

met with another mine upon landing. Initially, suppressive fire from escort gunships was impossible due to friendly elements scattered throughout the area. Showing the utmost in determination and a remarkable tactical grasp of the situation, the armed helicopters located the enemy emplacements and supported the troop-carrying aircraft by delivering accurate and deadly fire on the enemy. The armed helicopters were only able to accomplish the needed accuracy by flying directly into the barrage of fire. Their actions were instrumental in preventing the loss of additional lives and aircraft. Under the calm, inspirational leadership of the battalion commander, the companies performed in a manner that was in the highest traditions of Army Aviation. The courageous air crews flew eight lifts into the landing zone after the initial holocaust with individual acts of heroism being numerous as indicated by five individuals being awarded the Silver Star, 19 the Distinguished Flying Cross, 14 the Bronze Star for valor and 96 the Air Medal for valor. Four enlisted crew members of the first helicopters downed in the landing zone immediately began stripping the helicopters of radios, weapons and other valuable equipment. Realizing that the landing zone was in imminent danger of being engulfed in flames, they secured fire extinguishers and flack vests to fight the blaze. Failing to thwart the fire, they ran through the inferno looking for the wounded. As the blaze advanced, it set off hand grenades that had been dropped during the confusion of the initial mine explosions. These men began giving medical aid to wounded infantry soldiers and loading them onto helicopters which came back on successive lifts. They voluntarily remained in the landing zone under heavy fire throughout the morning and early afternoon. Another enlisted crew member braved the exploding mines and rescued his critically injured pilot and mortally wounded door gunner from their burning helicopter. He then carried the pilot under intense automatic weapons fire to an evacuation helicopter across the landing zone. He returned and re-



moved the radios and weapons from the helicopter prior to returning to the evacuation helicopter where he performed life-saving first aid to the wounded. A warrant officer's aircraft received extensive damage during the initial blast; however, he determined that the urgency of the situation warranted the helicopter being flown and he made three successive lifts in his damaged ship to deliver additional reinforcements to the beleaguered ground troops. These are but a few examples of the many

acts of bravery which occurred during this action. There were cases of downed aviators taking machineguns and providing suppressive fires in the landing zone for successive lifts instead of being immediately evacuated. In several instances, aircraft which were severely damaged were flown out of the landing zone to more secure areas so that they could be air lifted out without incurring additional damage.

OPERATION ATTLEBORO

The 145th Combat Aviation Battalion Forward Command Post at Tay Ninh (West) Airfield became operational at 111330 November 1966. The mission of the 145th Combat Aviation Battalion was to provide command and control, troop carriers, armed helicopters, pathfinders and rapid refueling support to the 25th Infantry Division during "OPERATION ATTLEBORO II" from 11 to 24 November 1966.

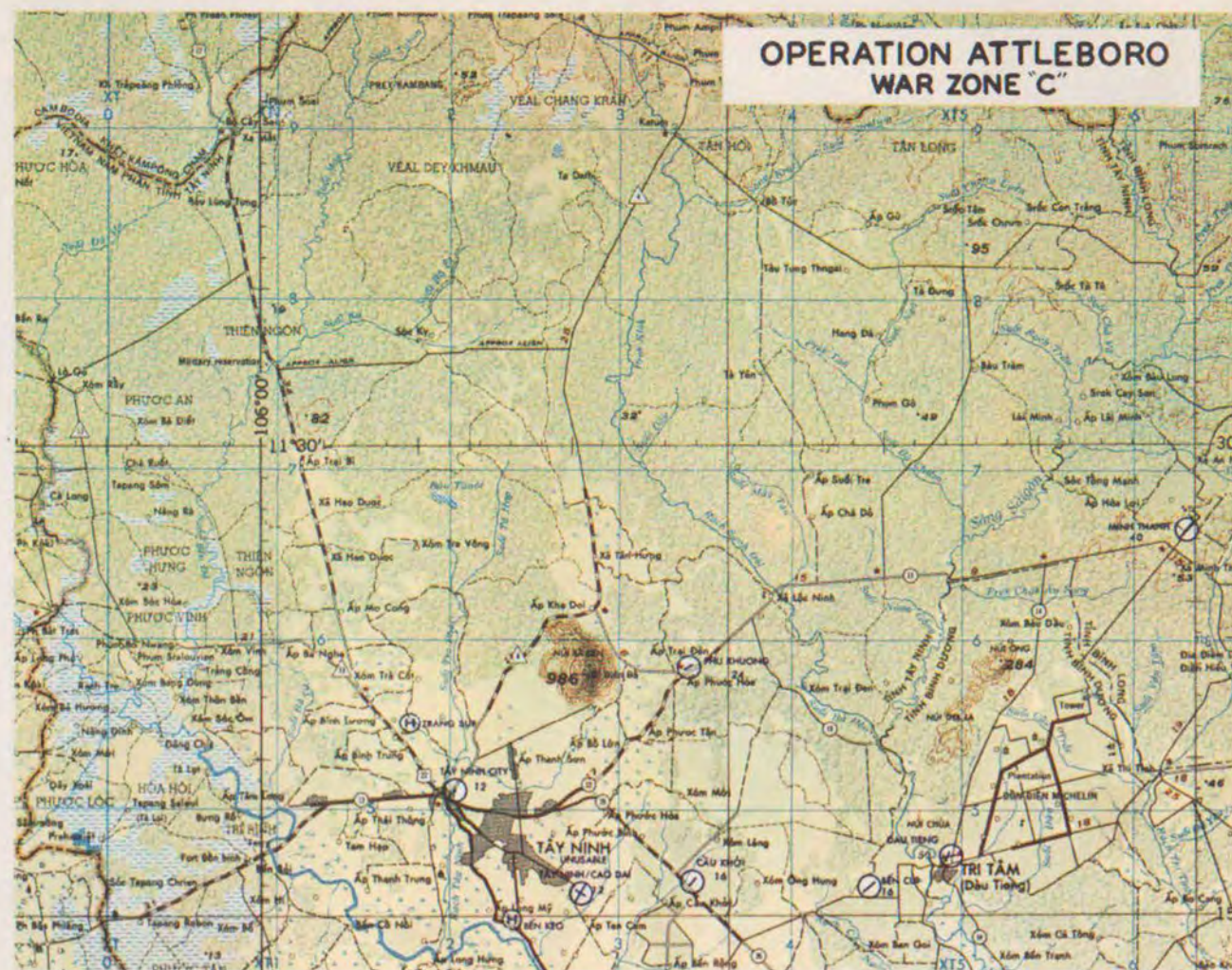
On 21 November the 145th Combat Aviation Battalion conducted two combat assaults, two extractions and one repositioning, all of battalion size. All of these operations utilized A Company, 25th Aviation Battalion and the 118th and 175th Assault Helicopter Companies. The first operation was a combat assault from Fire Support Base #1 (XT 275785) to XT 272962. This lift of the 2nd Battalion, 14th Infantry was completed by 0840 with 26 UH-1D's transporting 276 troops and flying 35 hours and 110 sorties. The second operation of the day was a combat assault of the 1st Battalion of the 27th Infantry from Fire Support Base #2 (XT 272861) to XT 272938. A total of 342 troops were carried in 20 UH-1D's which flew 15 hours and 162 sorties. The third operation was an extraction of the 2nd Battalion, 14th Infantry from XT 272962 to Fire Support Base #2 (XT 272861). A total of 276 troops were transported in 110 sorties and 35 hours by 25 UH-1D's. One helicopter from the 175th Assault Helicopter Company received one hit at XT 225685 however there were no casualties. The fourth operation of the day was the extraction of the 1st Battalion, 27th Infantry from XT 272940 to Fire Support Base #2 (XT 272861). This lift saw a total of 342 troops being transported in 15 hours



and 162 sorties by 20 UH-1D's. The final operation of the day involved repositioning the 2nd Battalion, 14th Infantry from Fire Support Base #2 (XT 272861) to Tay Ninh (West). 20 UH-1D's moved 276 troops in 108 sorties and 54 flying hours.

The 145th Combat Aviation Battalion conducted two operations on 22 November utilizing A Company, 25th Aviation Battalion and the 71st Assault Helicopter Company. The first operation was a combat assault for the 2nd Battalion, 27th Infantry from XT 270863 to XT 373854. 19 UH-1D's carried 330 troops in 158 sorties and 25 flying hours. In the afternoon the unit was extracted from XT 375857 to XT 272865. 19 UH-1D's carried 330 troops in 160 sorties and 25 hours.

On 23 November the 145th Combat Aviation Battalion conducted five tactical operations to include two combat assaults, two extractions and one repositioning. The following units were utilized on all operations: A and B Companies, 25th Aviation Battalion and the 71st and 116th Assault Helicopter Companies. The first operation was a repositioning of one company of the 2nd Battalion, 14th Infantry from Tay Ninh (West) to Fire Support Base #2 (XT 272861), with 26 UH-1D's transporting 120 troops in 20 sorties and 10 flying hours. The second operation of the day, a combat assault for the 1st Battalion, 27th Infantry from XT 285869 into three LZ's located at XT 198870, XT 193869 and XT 189869. A total of 360 troops were transported by 26 UH-1D's flying 28 hours and 132 sorties. Fire was received at XT 195870 however no aircraft were hit. The third mission was a combat assault conducted for the 2nd Battalion, 14th Infantry from Fire Support Base #2 (XT 272861) to XT 198806. 26 UH-1D's carried 264 troops in 100 sorties and 20 flying hours. The fourth mission of the day was an extraction of the 1st Battalion, 27th Infantry from three PZ's (XT 198870, XT 193869 and XT 189969) to Fire Support Base #2. A total of 26 UH-1D's carried 300 troops and flew 132 sorties and 28 hours. The day's fifth operation was the



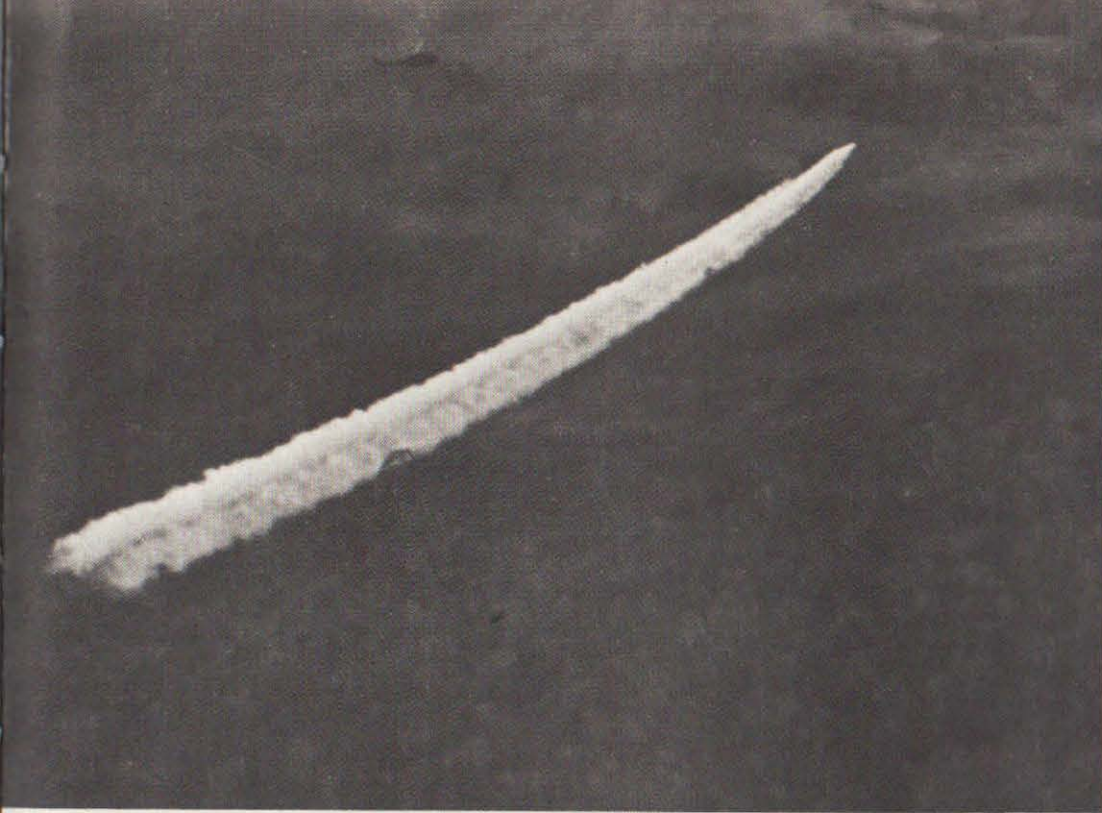
extraction of the 2nd Battalion, 14th Infantry from XT 198806 to Fire Support Base #1 (XT 275785) and from there to Tay Ninh (West). 26 helicopters carried 400 troops in 150 sorties and flew 40 hours.

On the 24th of November the 145th Combat Aviation Battalion conducted two tactical operations utilizing the 71st and 118th Assault Helicopter Companies and A and B Companies, 25th Aviation Battalion. 26 UH-1D's were utilized on both operations. The first mission was the repositioning of the 1st Battalion, 27th Infantry from Fire Support Base #2 to Tay Ninh (West). A total of

408 troops were carried in 208 sorties and 100 flying hours. The second operation of the day was the extraction of the 2nd Battalion, 27th Infantry from Fire Support Base #2 to Fire Support Base #1 and from there to Cu Chi. A total of 924 troops were transported in 1998 sorties and 128 hours flown.

In support of "OPERATION ATTLEBORO" elements controlled by the 145th Combat Aviation Battalion flew 1334 hours and 5857 combat sorties with 9105 troops being lifted. 13 aircraft took hits, however none had to be recovered.















THE PEOPLE

Vietnam, nearly 1,500 miles long, lies along the eastern coastal rim of the Southeast Asian Peninsula on the South China Sea. The width of the country varies from a little more than 25 miles to approximately 300 at the Northern border.

China borders the country in the North, and Laos and Cambodia lie on the Western boundaries. The Red River in the North, and the Mekong in the South, terminate in large, fertile deltas where great quantities of rice are grown.

Connecting the two fertile deltas is a region of mountainous plateaus and a fertile coastal strip. Approximately one-third of Vietnam is covered by forests. Nonforested parts of the country are under extensive cultivation except for the savanna areas.

At least 85 percent of the people of Vietnam are ethnically Vietnamese. As a group, they exert a paramount influence on the national life through their control of the political and economic affairs and their role as perpetuators of the dominant cultural tradition. Among the remainder of the population, the largest minorities are the Chinese, the great majority of whom live in the South, and various indigenous highland groups collectively known as Montagnards. In addition, there are smaller numbers of Khmers and Chams, both of whom figure prominently in the population of neighboring Cambodia, as well as Indians, Pakistani, Eurasians, French and other Europeans, and Americans all heavily concentrated in the cities of the South.





The majority of ethnic Vietnamese are nominal Buddhists, although their religious belief and practices include Taoist and Confucian elements as well as remnants of an earlier belief in spirits and magic. A sizable and influential minority is Roman Catholic.

Like their forebearers in Vietnam for well over a thousand years, the more than 25 million ethnic Vietnamese in the country are predominantly village-dwelling skilled rice cultivators or fishermen. A minority live in urban centers, such as Hanoi, Hue and Saigon, where they are engaged in a variety of occupations and occupy positions at all levels on the socio-economic scale. The educated elite of both North and South—composed of high government officials, military officers, professionals, and in the South wealthy landowners—consists almost exclusively of ethnic Vietnamese.

With 2,000 years of cultural and political history, Vietnam was, until the middle of the nineteenth century, a model of “traditionalist society.” Economic life was sustained by agriculture, and peasant communities were cohesive social units which prescribed the behavior of their inhabitants.

Through centuries of foreign contact, alien domination and military penetration, the Vietnamese have held tenaciously to their own national identity. The cultural impact of a long succession of Chinese invasions and periods of domination is evident in Vietnam.

The impact of French colonial rule, coming in the late 1800’s precipitated the decline of traditionalism





and gave rise to new ideas, new attitudes toward authority, and new social relationships.

Government in Vietnam traditionally has been authoritarian and highly centralized. The long period of Chinese rule was followed by an uneasy independence under a succession of Vietnamese emperors presiding over a powerful bureaucracy of the Chinese type.

The French, much more than the Chinese before them, remained alien to their subjects. The Vietnamese, as they always had, reacted to foreign control with reluctant acquiescence and, when they could, with open resistance. French rule exercised during World War II the representatives of the Vichy regime, continued at the sufferance of Japan until 1945 when it was ended by Japanese

imperial declaration.

After Japan's surrender, the French returned to a position which the events of the war years had made irretrievable. In the Indochina War, which broke out at the end of 1946 and ended nearly eight years later in French defeat at Dien Bien Phu, the French found themselves confronted by the skillful and determined leadership of the Viet Minh.

With the achievement of their independence and the partitioning of the country in 1954, the Vietnamese entered a new phase of conflict. The struggle is now between the non-communist government of the south, supported by the United States and its allies, and the communist regime in the North, backed by the Soviet Union and Communist China.











CIVIC ACTION





Winning the loyalty of the Vietnamese people for the legally constituted government at Siagon is as important for the successful completion of the war in Vietnam as the defeat of the Viet Cong and their North Vietnamese allies. For only when the people realize that their own government is sincere in its desire to pacify the nation, the build up the economy, and to administer the country justly, will the Viet Cong insurgency effort be deprived of the support of the peasants which it requires to stay alive.

To assist our Vietnamese allies in winning the peasant over to the South Vietnamese government, the 145th Combat Aviation Battalion has instituted a well-rounded civic action program in the Bien Hoa/Phu Loi area. Every unit of the "First In Vietnam" battalion is involved in some form of civic action—ranging from repairing schools down to distributing captured rice among the destitute villages and hamlets.

The Civil Affairs Section (S5) has overall responsibility for monitoring the civic action projects of the battalion, but the real effort is put out by each of the operational companies assigned to the unit. These units each have adopted some sort of civic action project which they undertake along with their combat operations.

The battalion civic action program has been highly successful. Battalion medical civic action programs (MEDCAP) have taken medical and dental treatment teams into various country hamlets to treat the wide range of disease and infections that are prevalent in the area.

Many of the people treated had not seen medical treatment for years before MEDCAP came into their villages.

Out of their own pockets, soldiers of this battalion have voluntarily supported several orphanages and hospitals in the area with contributions. Furthermore, their dependants in the states have sent tons of clothing and foodstuffs which were civic action program redistributed to needy Vietnamese.

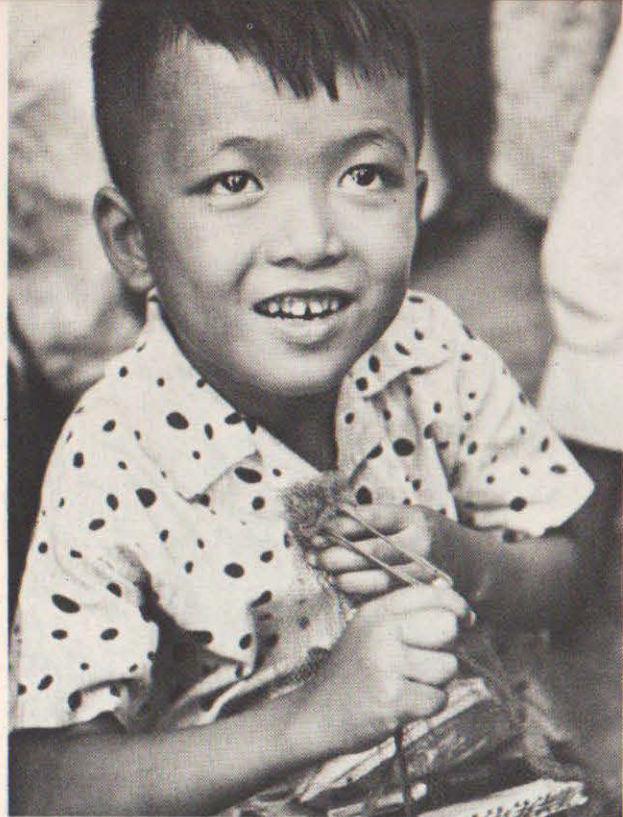
Wherever the battalion operated, the soldiers showed a deep concern for the health and welfare of the Vietnamese people and this concern is starting to show results. Smiles and looks of anticipation are beginning to appear where before only downcast eyes and sorrow was seen.







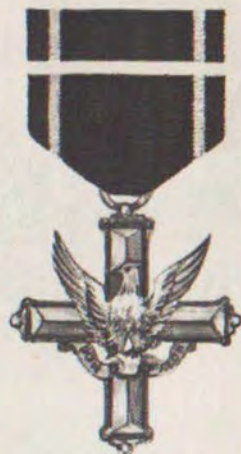






AWARDS RECEIVED BY MEMBERS OF BATTALION FROM JAN 1965

DISTINGUISHED
SERVICE
CROSS
2



SILVER STAR
22



LEGION OF
MERIT
7



DISTINGUISHED
FLYING
CROSS
207



SOLDIER'S
MEDAL
18



BRONZE STAR "V"
41
BRONZE STAR
266



AIR MEDAL "V"
24
AIR MEDAL
21475



ARMY
COMMENDATION
MEDAL
538



PURPLE HEART
196





General Westmoreland awarding the Distinguished Unit Citation to the 145th Combat Aviation Battalion, for its actions during the Battle of Dong Xoai.

THE DISTINGUISHED UNIT CITATION

THE DISTINGUISHED UNIT CITATION FOR EXTRAORDINARY HEROISM TO

THE 145TH AVIATION BATTALION, UNITED STATES ARMY
AND THE ATTACHED UNITS:

HEADQUARTERS AND HEADQUARTERS DETACHMENT
OF THE 145TH AVIATION BATTALION

74TH AVIATION COMPANY

118TH AVIATION COMPANY (AIRMOBILE LIGHT)

120TH AVIATION COMPANY (AIRMOBILE LIGHT)

197TH AVIATION COMPANY (AIRMOBILE LIGHT)

COMPANY A, 501ST AVIATION BATTALION

COMPANY A, 82ND AVIATION BATTALION

COMPANY A, 101ST AVIATION BATTALION

117TH AVIATION COMPANY (AIRMOBILE LIGHT)

57TH MEDICAL DETACHMENT

69TH SIGNAL DETACHMENT

573RD TRANSPORTATION DETACHMENT

93RD MEDICAL DETACHMENT

198TH SIGNAL DETACHMENT

98TH TRANSPORTATION DETACHMENT

129TH MEDICAL DETACHMENT

225TH SIGNAL DETACHMENT

8TH SIGNAL DETACHMENT

151ST TRANSPORTATION DETACHMENT

94TH SIGNAL DETACHMENT

571ST TRANSPORTATION DETACHMENT

166TH TRANSPORTATION DETACHMENT

234TH SIGNAL DETACHMENT

25TH MEDICAL DETACHMENT

63RD TRANSPORTATION DETACHMENT

320TH SIGNAL DETACHMENT

The foregoing units serving with the 145TH AVIATION BATTALION distinguished themselves by extraordinary heroism in action against insurgent forces in the Republic of Vietnam from 10 June to 13 June 1965. When the besieged defenders of Dong Xoai requested assistance in repelling a vicious Viet Cong attack, the units participating with the 145TH AVIATION BATTALION responded rapidly with support. Upon learning that a group of defenders of Dong Xoai were wounded, needed medical help, and were exposed to the danger of being overrun by the Viet Cong because of a shortage of ammunition, the crews of three helicopters volunteered to attempt a rescue. Although the insurgents had all approaches covered by .50 caliber machine guns and were directing heavy automatic weapons fire into the compound, the helicopters were flown through the withering fire and landed near the besieged defenders. The helicopter crews kept up a continuous stream of suppressive fire while ten Americans and eight Vietnamese were loaded aboard the aircraft and evacuated. The Vietnamese commanders who were evacuated gave valuable information which led to the daring plan to save the village of Dong Xoai. Helicopters of the battalion, standing by at a staging area, were loaded with Vietnamese troops and took off for Dong Xoai. When the Viet Cong met the flight with intense .30 and .50 caliber automatic weapons fire, one helicopter was shot down, killing the entire American crew and ten Vietnamese soldiers. As the fighting continued and three other aircraft were hit, the armed helicopters saturated the Viet Cong positions with rockets and machine gun fire. Although the Viet Cong were beaten back slowly, the helicopters from the 145TH AVIATION BATTALION continued to provide fire support and to perform combat assaults and medical evacuations. A total of 2700 sorties were flown and 3500 troops were airlifted or repositioned. The determination, indomitable courage, and extraordinary heroism demonstrated by these units participating with the 145TH AVIATION BATTALION are in the highest traditions of the military service and reflect great credit upon themselves and the Armed Forces of the United States.

REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM
MINISTRY OF DEFENSE

**AWARD OF CROSS OF GALLANTRY WITH PALM TO THE
145th US AVIATION BATTALION**

The 145th Aviation Battalion is cited for outstanding performance of duty and extraordinary heroism in action against the Viet Cong insurgents:

- At Binh Gia, Phuoc Tuy on 29 and 30 December 1964 and on 9 February 65.
- At Song Be, Phuoc Thanh on 11 May 65
- At Dong Xoai, Phuoc Long from 10 to 13 June 65,
- At Boi Loi jungle area bordering the provinces of Tay Ninh and Binh Duong on 4 November 1965.

In these large scale and decisive battles, the 145th US Aviation Battalion, successively under bold and outstanding command of Lt Colonels ROBERT K. CUNNINGHAM and CHARLES M. HONOUR Jr. had utilized armed helicopters to destroy the enemy positions and transported thousands of troops to reinforce and relieve attacked friendly units. Braving intensive 30 caliber and 50 caliber anti-aircraft fire which resulted in the loss and damage of helicopters on each entry into the landing zones, the 145th Aviation Battalion persistently and gallantly carried out its missions of aerial fire support, battlefield surveillance, medical evacuation to combat troops, thus enabling them to drive the enemy from their strongholds.

Always maintaining a high fighting spirit and a will to endure hardship, the 145th US Aviation Battalion has rendered the enemy afraid of its presence throughout all battlefields in South Vietnam and concurrently has promoted the gallant and unsubmissive military tradition.

Through the above mentioned brilliant feats of arms, the 145th US Aviation Battalion deserves to be congratulated by the Government, People and Armed Forces of the Republic of Vietnam.

—THIS CITATION INCLUDES THE ATTRIBUTION OF THE CROSS OF GALLANTRY WITH PALM FOR THE 145TH US AVIATION BATTALION AND FOR LT COLONELS ROBERT K. CUNNINGHAM AND CHARLES M. HONOUR.

CERTIFIED TRUE
TRANSLATION

/s/ Robert L. Moseley
/t/ ROBERT L. MOSELEY
Major, Infantry

KBC. 4.002, 7 December 1965

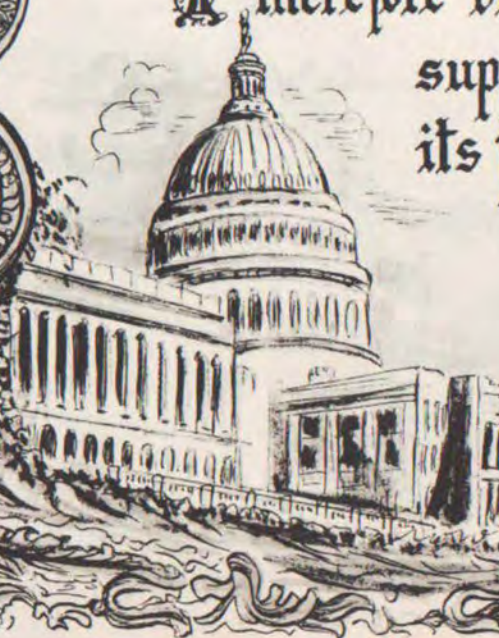
/s/ Gen Cao Van Vien
/t/ GEN CAO VAN VIEN
Commanding General
Vietnamese Armed Forces

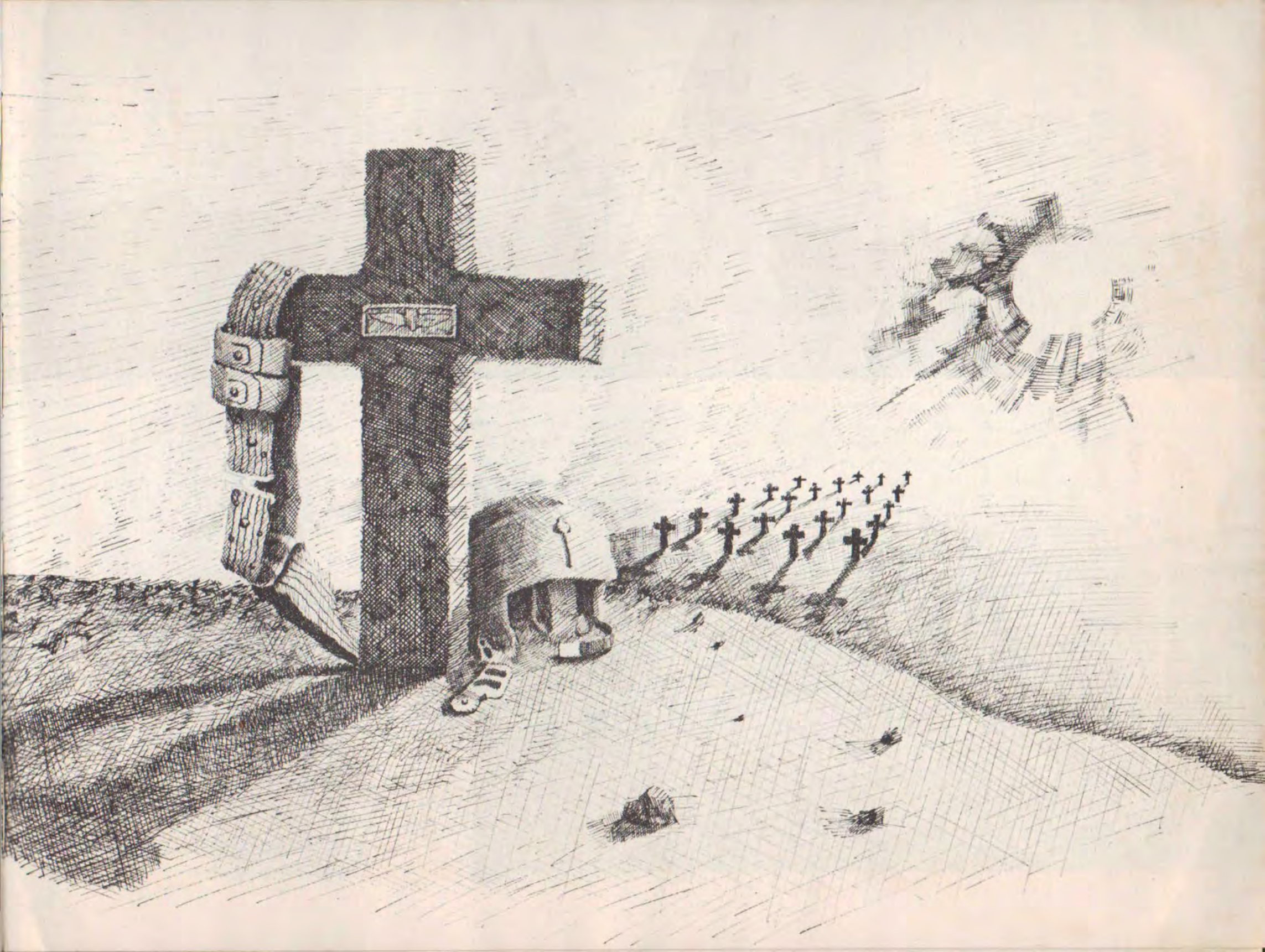


The American's Creed

I believe in the United States of America as a government of the people, by the people, for the people; whose just powers are derived from the consent of the governed; a democracy in a Republic; a sovereign Nation of many sovereign States; a perfect Union, one and inseparable; established upon those principles of freedom, equality, justice, and humanity for which American patriots sacrificed their lives and fortunes.

I therefore believe it is my duty to my country to love it; to support its Constitution; to obey its laws; to respect its flag; and to defend it against all enemies.







There are many unpleasant duties that are the lot of a soldier. One of the most difficult of these is to acknowledge the passing of fallen comrades. With these men we have shared a common cause in a land far from home, but more than this they were our friends. It is our duty to pay this respect to their memory. They have served our nation well; and in the loss of their lives they have given the ultimate that our country could expect from them. In these words of respect we represent a mighty nation; but, a nation that does not possess enough wealth to repay these men for what they have given for it. These men died as soldiers should in the performance of duty. This fact alone would give value to their death; but the fact that they were killed in the defense of freedom gives their death supreme value. It is indeed commendable when a soldier dies for his own liberty but when he dies for the freedom of a stranger that act is beyond value. May the cause for which they perished be carried through to victory by those of us who are still in the conflict. For these men and our country we can do no less.

LEONARD H. MILLER
Battalion Chaplain

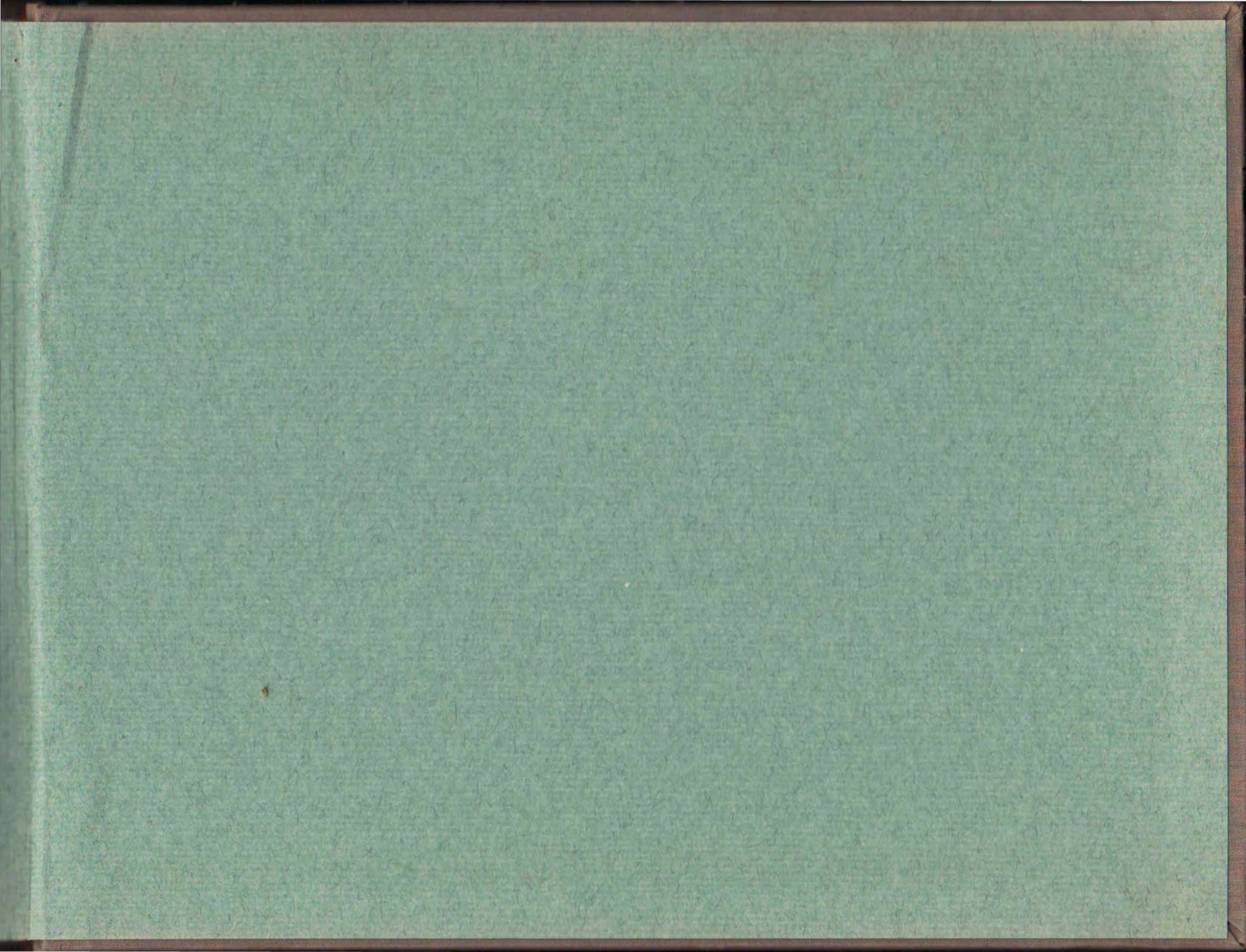
IN MEMORIAM SO OTHERS MAY LIVE

Captain L. H. Erwin
Private First Class A. L. Hornbuckle
Warrant Officer J. R. Urban
Specialist Four H. C. Collins
Private First Class J. W. Osborn
Chief Warrant Officer W. C. Sellers
First Lieutenant J. W. Irving, Jr
First Lieutenant P. D. Childers
First Lieutenant D. J. Fullers
Chief Warrant Officer E. R. Piper
Warrant Officer M. M. Pfoutz
Sergeant G. M. Frazee
Private First Class W. J. Oakley
Private First Class F. F. Triggs
First Lieutenant W. L. Hall
Chief Warrant Officer R. G. Galbraith
Warrant Officer D. R. Saegaert
Staff Sergeant J. J. Compa
Sergeant C. L. Hagen
Private First Class W. R. Batchelder
Chief Warrant Officer B. G. Hemmer
Warrant Officer M. L. Wildes
Staff Sergeant K. L. Reed
Specialist Five D. L. Baker
Specialist Five J. D. Lanelli
First Lieutenant C. J. Mangold
Second Lieutenant G. Gutierrez, Jr
Specialist Five W. H. Eberhardt
Private First Class D. L. Arcand
Second Lieutenant D. L. Foley
Warrant Officer D. L. Tooloose
Corporal D. E. Gill
Private First Class G. A. Zelinko
Warrant Officer W. J. La Grand
Chief Warrant Officer V. D. Sherrill
Private First Class H. D. Nelson

Captain D. R. Clark
Warrant Officer D. E. Brann
Warrant Officer J. T. Sticher
Chief Warrant Officer R. M. Dowling
Chief Warrant Officer R. N. Kistler
Specialist Four L. E. Rosenwasser
Lieutenant Colonel C. M. Honour, Jr
Captain A. M. Smith
Specialist Four G. R. Artman
Specialist Four C. J. Lantz
Private First Class R. P. Lancaster
Captain M. R. Frizzell
Lieutenant R. B. Lowe
Specialist Four K. N. Somere
Specialist Four R. W. McGee
Captain C. R. Williams
Chief Warrant Officer R. J. Kinkeade
Chief Warrant Officer D. A. Lambdin
Specialist Four W. R. Tate, Jr
Chief Warrant Officer H. C. Galbraith
Private First Class R. G. Kitner
Specialist Four M. J. Billero, Jr
Staff Sergeant R. D. Howell
Specialist Four E. P. Runnells
Chief Warrant Officer W. D. Perkins
Warrant Officer R. L. Banks
Specialist Four D. A. Dillon
Warrant Officer D. P. Kuhns
Warrant Officer W. B. Wilson
Captain C. S. Burns, III
Warrant Officer R. L. Pruhs
Specialist Four L. C. Turchi
Warrant Officer D. A. Haakensen
Specialist Four L. D. Moses
Private First Class W. A. Mc Collum
Private First Class H. J. Nece

Specialist Four E. Palmieri
Specialist Four A. P. Magistro
Specialist Four J. A. Harden
Captain E. J. Saffle
Warrant Officer W. J. Robbins
Private First Class T. Nowack
Warrant Officer R. E. Bradley
Warrant Officer M. S. Uhlig
Specialist Four D. Escalante
Specialist Four L. R. Soward
Specialist Four W. J. Mueller
Warrant Officer H. K. Ketner, Jr
Specialist Four W. G. Lacey
Specialist Four M. Caughman, Jr
Specialist Four R. Amison, Jr
Warrant Officer J. P. Barton
Captain R. A. Kirby
Specialist Four J. N. Sheffield
Specialist Four J. Washburn
Specialist Four G. N. Smith
Specialist Four J. R. Adams
First Lieutenant P. L. Stimpson
Lieutenant Colonel L. W. Brockwell, Jr
Chief Warrant Officer J. D. Legg
Major C. C. Jones
Warrant Officer J. M. Andrews
Specialist Four R. F. Quinn
Staff Sergeant E. E. Acord
Specialist Four P. Ortiz
Private First Class L. J. Fogler
Second Lieutenant R. L. Robbins
Specialist Four T. R. Lunn
Specialist Four G. L. Taylor
Specialist Four K. C. Hurse







The 1967 145th Aviation Battalion unit album has important information about the operations of the units that served with the Americal Division prior to Task Force Oregon. Therefore, the members of the Americal Veteran's Association very much appreciate that 71st AHC veterans, Chuck Carlock and Ron Seabolt shared their 145th Aviation battalion images with veterans of the ADVA. The scanned images of the album would not have been possible without their contributions.

Leslie Hines August 2013.



Standing L-R: Leo Tetreault (non-rated); Major George Jackson.



All pilots. Back row standing L-R: Capt. Michael Millett, WO-1 Michael Kretchmer, WO-1 Eugene Martin, WO-1 Randy Billings, WO-1 Bill Holgerson, unknown, Capt. Thomas Good, Kneeling L-R: WO-1 Wally Dunning, Capt. Harold Bowen, WO-1 Conrad Howard, unknown, WO-1 Ronald Rudolph, WO-1 Paul Teelin.



Standing L-R: (maintenance) Capt. Bob Magnum, Major Bob Treat, WO-1 Paul Bartlett, rest of row unknown.
Kneeling L-R: SP/5 Jerry Fairfield, rest of row unknown.



First platoon enlisted men. Standing L-R: PFC Tom Knapp, SP4 Dennis Newton, SP5 Stan Larson, Sp4 Marshall Ratliff, SP4 Richard Powell, SP4 Ron Seabolt, SP4 John Cervinski. Kneeling: L-R: John Calvacca, SP4 Larry Smith, SP4 Peter Perez, Plt. Sgt. SSG Larry Lackey, SP4 John Lynch, SP4 Jerry Tippitt, SP4 Don Profit.



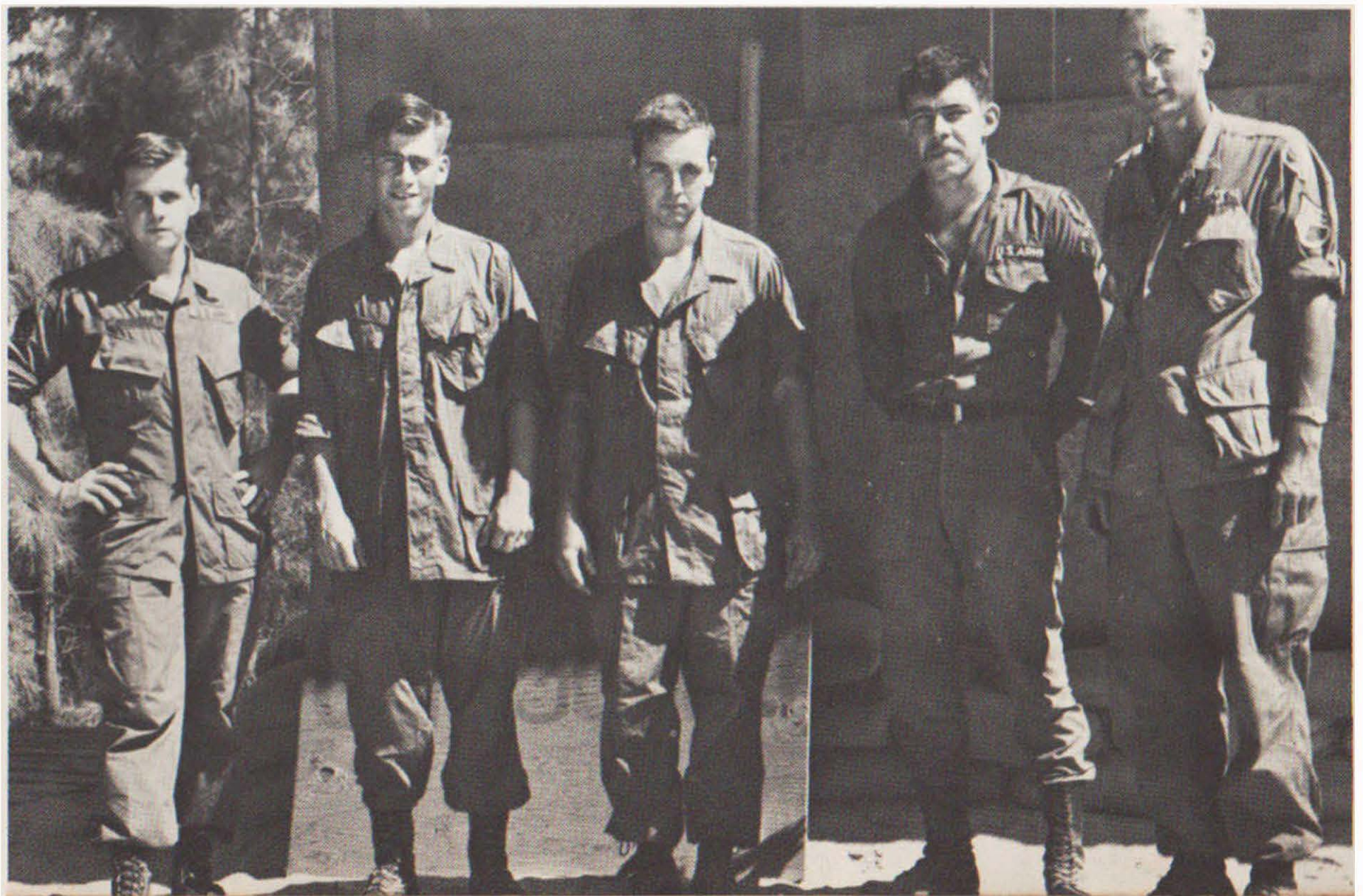
94th Signal Detachment



Firebird Platoon. Standing L-R: unknown, unknown, SP4 Ned Flecke, SP5 Leland Treversie, SP4 Felix Martinez, SP4 John Dailey, unknown, SP4 Charlie Sanders, SP4 Claude Kilby, unknown, unknown, SP4 Lindsay Harrington, Kneeling L-R: 1LT Mel Jones, unknown, WO-1 David Ellingsworth, WO-1 Frank Anton (POW 5 years), unknown, unknown, unknown, WO-1 Ken Wiegand.



Mess Hall personnel



Supply Section: Company Armorer SP4 David Dubose, unknown, unknown, SP4 Hyatt, unknown.

