

# 121<sup>ST</sup> AVIATION COMPANY

(ASSAULT HELICOPTER)

"SOC TRANG TIGERS"

## YEARBOOK



Donated to the 121st, AHC  
By The last "Tiger" 1SG in  
combat with the Tigers,  
15 Oct 1970

**John K. Carpenter**  
**United States Army**

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**Since 14 June 1775**

***The Senior Service***



YEARBOOK FOR THE  
**121<sup>ST</sup> AVIATION COMPANY**  
ASSAULT HELICOPTER  
"SOC TRANG TIGERS"  
**YEARBOOK**  
SOC TRANG, REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM

**13TH COMBAT AVIATION BATTALION  
164TH COMBAT AVIATION GROUP  
1ST AVIATION BRIGADE  
UNITED STATES ARMY, VIETNAM**

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## PREFACE

The airmobile concept has in many ways been the keystone in the effort for the defense of freedom in the Republic of Vietnam. The 121st Assault Helicopter Company and its parent unit, the 13th Combat Aviation Battalion, have been instrumental in the formulation and ensuing employment of this concept throughout the Mekong Delta. The many awards, both for unit and individual accomplishment, which were presented during this year, attest to their outstanding success in this regard.

## **\* FOREWORD \***

This yearbook adds another chapter to the history of a unit famed for its esprit, respected for its bravery, and known throughout the Mekong Delta of South Vietnam for its vital and timely support of both U.S. and Vietnamese units engaged in combat against the Viet Cong forces. This year, 1969, was indeed a very challenging one to the 121st Assault Helicopter Company, and the "Famed Soc Trang Tigers" rose to meet these challenges, individually and collectively. Challenges of the future will be met and overcome as history is being written in Southeast Asia. During the preparation of this yearbook, the Viet Cong launched a massive offensive on 31 January 1968 to disrupt the allied effort throughout Vietnam. The "Tigers" and "Vikings" rose valiantly to this challenge and flew far and wide, night and day to assist in curbing the VC action. Because of the scope and magnitude of this action, the chronology of the 1969 yearbook has been extended to encompass the 1968 "Tet Offensive".

EDITOR



## FROM THE COMMANDER

Soc Trang, RVN

Time has wrought many changes in the U.S. Army over the past thirty years, but as the names, faces, places and equipment fade with time, the indomitable spirit of the U.S. fighting man continues to grow in stature, unsurpassed by that of any nation on the globe.

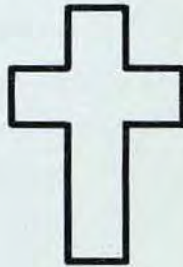
It is this fighting spirit which permeates the "Soc Trang Tigers" and has led them to greater heights of achievement and combat effectiveness here in Vietnam. Although the lineage of today's "Tigers" dates back to the activation of Company H, 2nd Battalion, 47th Quartermaster Truck Regiment on 10 February 1936, it was not until the unit was redesignated as an aviation element in 1954 that the spirits and performance of the unit literally "took to the air".

There may be other units at Soc Trang and there may be other "Tigers" in Vietnam, but the record and performance of the "Famed Soc Trang Tigers" is known far and wide. The Tiger flight supported by the famous "Viking" armed helicopter platoon has participated in almost every major battle in the Mekong Delta and has won the plaudits of both U.S. and Vietnamese Officials at all levels. The Commendations and Decorations received by the 121st Assault Helicopter Company and its personnel are too numerous to mention, but each "Tiger" stands a little prouder and taller with the greatest reward a man can have—self satisfaction that he is a U.S. fighting soldier, proud to serve and prouder yet that he has earned a "Well Done" for his service to God and Country.

As the pages of history turn, demands may continue to rise, faces and equipment will change, but the "Esprit-de-corps" of the "Famed Soc Trang Tigers", long instilled, will continue to place the 121st Assault Helicopter Company front and foremost as one of the best recognized and most effective aviation units in the continuing annals of Army Aviation History.

"TIGER 6"

## IN MEMORIUM



This book is respectfully dedicated to all those who have served and are now serving with the 121st Assault Helicopter Company and attached units. Our heritage is rich with the blood of those who died valiantly in the defense of freedom. While serving in Vietnam the following named officers and enlisted men of the 121st have made the supreme sacrifice and gave their lives in defense of their country. We the living herewith pay tribute to these our fallen comrades.

PFC	LOYE T. CHRISTMAS	22 JAN 64
PFC	DALE E. UMBENHAUER	17 MAY 66
SP4	PRESTON J. SNYDER	18 MAY 66
1LT	JAMES Q. ADYLETT	11 JUL 66
WO1	JACKIE P. JONES	11 JUL 66
SP4	ANGELO J. SFERRAZZA	11 JUL 66
CW2	JAMES W. HARGROVE	18 OCT 66
CW2	FRANCIS L. GRIFFIN	1 FEB 68
CPT	FRANKLIN S. BRADLEY JR.	9 FEB 68
WO1	RICKEY HULL	9 FEB 68
SP5	PAUL R. ANZELONE	9 FEB 68
SP4	DAVID B. ANDERSON	5 APR 69

DUTY.....HONOR.....COUNTRY

THEY HAVE NOT DIED IN VAIN



## **PAST HISTORY OF THE 121ST ASSAULT HELICOPTER COMPANY**

The lineage of the famed 121st Assault Helicopter Company had its beginning on 10 February, 1936 when Company H, 2nd Battalion, 47th Quartermaster Truck Regiment was formed. World War II and the Korean Conflict saw the company expanding and on 1 April 1954 it was redesignated as the 93rd Transportation Company. CH-21 transport helicopters became the primary vehicle of the company which would write its name in the annals of Army Aviation History. The unit grew in fame and reputation as one of the most decorated peacetime companies. It played significant roles in offering assistance both in the mid-air collision over the Grand Canyon in July 1956 as well as in the Illinois blizzard of 1958. Acclaim for the unit grew as reports of its accomplishments spread throughout the United States.

On December 15, 1961 the 93rd was called to a combat role in the Republic of Vietnam. First stationed at Da Nang, its fame grew as it helped develop the heliborne assault techniques, resupply methods and medical evacuation operations. The unit made a permanent move on 19 September 1962 when it moved to Soc Trang and became the first helicopter unit in the Mekong Delta. The CH-21s soon gave way to the newer and more efficient UH-1B helicopters and the name "Tigers" became associated with the 121st Aviation Company. Today the UH-1Ds have assumed the transport role while the UH-1Bs have remained as gunships. The name has again been altered to the 121ST ASSAULT HELICOPTER COMPANY (UH-1) but as in the past, each day another page is added to the glorious history of the "Famed Soc Trang Tigers".

## **"SOC TRANG TIGERS"**

On June 14th, 1963 the 93rd Transportation Company was redesignated as the 121st Aviation Company and the nickname "Tigers" was adopted. The unit patch is a shield outlined in red to signify the bravery and rich tradition of the 121st. The wings with five pointed star, badge of a Senior Army Aviator, strategically located at the top of the shield signify the high degree of professionalism and proficiency in the 121st. A white banner with red lettering holding high the proud name of the 121st Aviation Company is located immediately below the Senior Aviator wings. Below the banner, a Tiger shows its teeth to attest to the determination and strength of the men of the Soc Trang Tigers. A lightning bolt, half white, half blue designates the Blue and white Tiger airlift platoons and the strike capability of the Vikings, the famous armed platoon of the 121st. This patch is worn proudly on the right breast pocket of the uniforms of all Soc Trang Tigers.



## **\* MISSION \***

The mission of the 121st Assault Helicopter Company is to provide tactical air movement of US and Vietnamese combat troops in airmobile operations in the Republic of Vietnam. In addition, it provides tactical air movement of combat supplies and equipment within the IV Corps Tactical Zone.

The company also conducts aerial surveillance, medical evacuation of wounded and search and rescue missions for downed aircraft and missing personnel. The great advantages of air mobility and speed in tactical operations are utilized to the maximum extent by supported Vietnamese units.

Logistically, the company provides a means of rapid transportation for Vietnamese personnel, supplies, and equipment from one tactical location to another. The command and liaison efficiency of Vietnamese military and civilian authorities, as well as American Advisory personnel is augmented by the use of the Company's aircraft for transportation.

Additional responsibilities of an administrative nature are found within the 121st Assault Helicopter Company's stated mission requirements. It assists in providing internal security of the airfield and post facilities, using the manpower resources from its organic and attached personnel.

The company, in addition to having operational control, provides administrative and logistical support to attached units.

## **\* ORGANIZATION \***

The strength and ability of the 121st Assault Helicopter Company comes from a unified structure composed of five (5) platoons. Each in its own right has a particular job and yet each is an integral part in the effectiveness of the unit as a team.

The headquarters platoon is responsible for all administrative work of the 121st. A staff of clerks handle the hundreds of pieces of paperwork which come to the 121st daily. Such varied areas as efficiency reports, orders, promotions, awards and decorations, clearance forms, preference statements and command correspondence pass through the orderly room daily. In the operations section, mission scheduling, after action reports, daily mission logs, flight records and flight safety are the major areas of responsibility.

The Service platoon's main area of responsibility is aircraft maintenance, and the outstanding performance which has been a part of this platoon has kept the aircraft ready at all times to meet mission requirements.

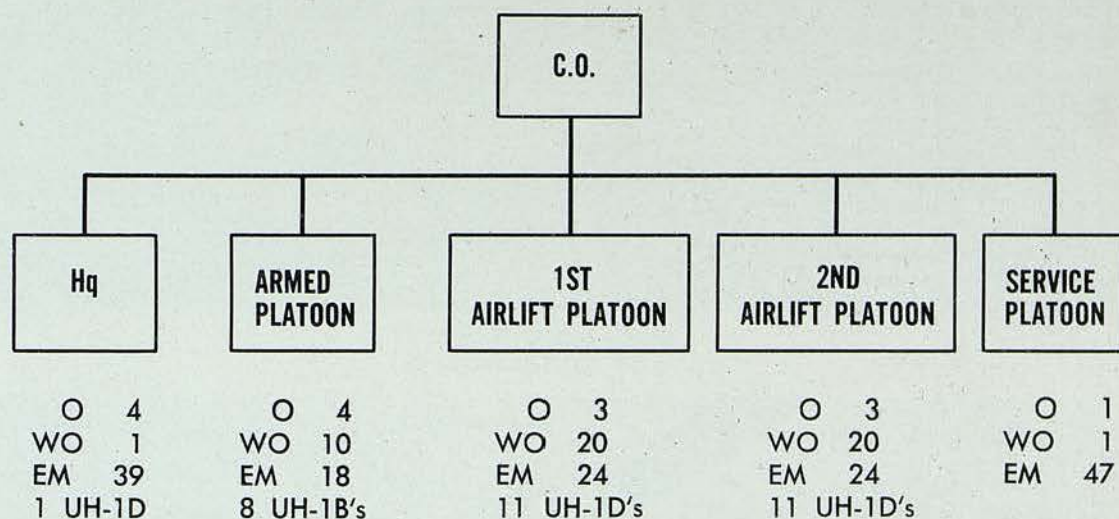
The Blue and White Tiger platoons include the pilots, crew chiefs, and gunners for the UH-1D transport helicopters. On all combat assault missions the crews of these platoons fly the aircraft which carry the ground maneuver elements into the operational area. They are the workhorses of the company and are responsible for everything from outpost resupply to VIP flights.

The Viking platoon, "Blue Diamond Devils of the Delta", is the gunship platoon.

The armed platoon has UH-1B gunships as their primary aircraft. They are employed on a variety of support missions including transport escort, landing zone reconnaissance, target engagement and airfield defense. The skill and dedication of this group has been a decisive factor in almost every major battle fought in the Mekong Delta.



Each platoon is an integral part of the total operation and the effectiveness of the unit is largely determined by the strength and coordination of each platoon. The Tigers have the strength and coordination which has established the reputation of "The Famed Soc Trang Tigers".



TOTAL: OFFICERS	19
WARRANT OFFICERS	51
ENLISTED MEN	218
UH-1B	8
UH-1D	23





UH-1D SLICK TIGER SHIP



UH-1B GUNSHIP VIKING SHIP





CAPTURED ENEMY WEAPONS



DOWN WIND TAKE OFF



THE 121 AVIATION COMPANY  
ORDERLY ROOM



THE FAMED SOC TRANG TIGERS  
RETURN FROM A COMBAT  
ASSAULT MISSION



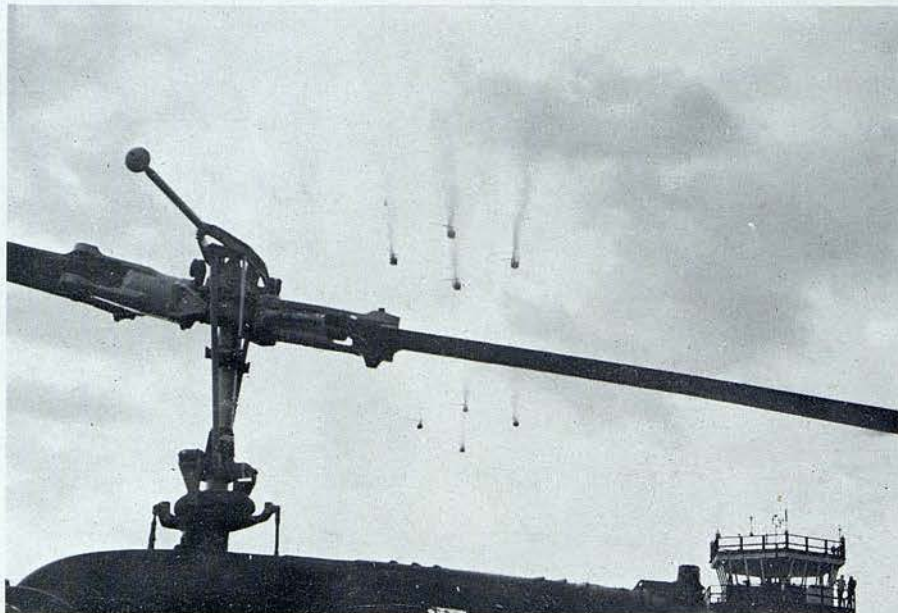


VIKINGS PROVIDE FIRE SUPPORT FOR TRANSPORTS AND GROUND TROOPS DURING OPERATIONS



TIGER OPERATIONS AND THE COMPANY ARE A FROM THE TOWER.





THE FAMED SOC TRANG TIGERS  
PERFORM A FLYBY.



AVIONICS AND 336TH AVN CO. AREA





THE WORLD FAMOUS WRECKER



C&C WITH TIGER "6"





THE VIKING LINE AND THE COMPANY  
AREA FROM THE TOWER



THE HANGAR FROM THE TOWER



MAINTENANCE PERSONNEL WORK  
LONG HOURS REPAIRING ENGINES...



...ROTOR HEADS...



...AND TRACKING BLADES.







THE MEN WORKING IN THE MOTOR POOL KEEP THE COMPANY'S VEHICLES OPERATIONAL.

DAILY CHECKS HELP KEEP A VEHICLE IN WORKING CONDITION



THE CRASH RESCUE STATION.





A WELL EQUIPPED REPAIR  
SHOP ENABLES AVIONICS  
TO KEEP RADIOS IN WORKING  
CONDITION.



A LINE CREW PROVIDES IMMEDIATE  
ON THE SPOT REPAIRS.

## AREA OF OPERATIONS

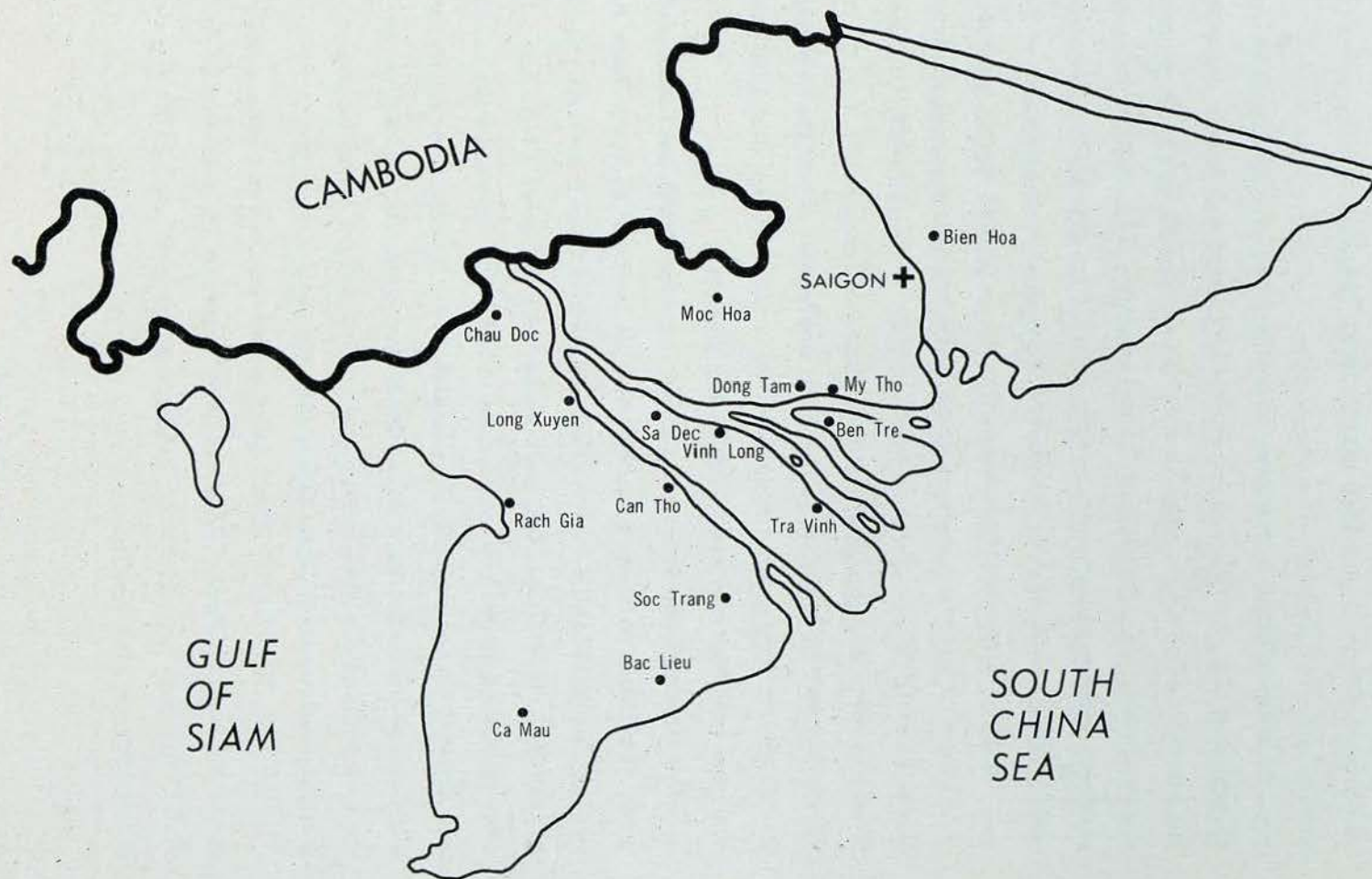
The 121st supports the ARVN IV Corps Tactical Zone which covers nearly all of the Mekong Delta, south and west of Saigon. There are three major ARVN units in the IV Corps: The 7th Infantry Division with headquarters at My Tho, the 9th Infantry Division with headquarters at Sa Dec, and the 21st Infantry Division with headquarters at Bac Lieu.

The primary area of responsibility for the 121st is the 42nd Division Tactical Area under the control of the 21st Infantry Division. However, the "Tigers" often journey to other areas in support of the 7th and 9th Infantry Divisions and the 44th Special Zone along the Cambodian border during major operations. Regardless of the geographical area per se, the supported units all know. "If there is an air-mobile mission to be done, the Tigers can do it."

In addition to supporting the ARVN units, the Tigers also render support to the American 9th Infantry Division operating out of Dong Tam. Whatever the assignment, the Tigers pursue their missions with increasing aggressiveness, efficiency, and perseverance, thereby adding constantly to the growing reputation of the "Soc Trang Tigers"



# MAP SKETCH OF THE MEKONG DELTA



## THE MEKONG DELTA

The Mekong Delta is that area of the Republic of Vietnam which is South of an east-west line stretching across the country just above Saigon. It is bordered on the east by the South China Sea and on the west by the Gulf of Siam and the Cambodian border. The Delta area is approximately 175 nautical miles long on a northeast-southwest line and varies in width from 150 nautical miles at its widest point to 20 nautical miles as it tapers to a point at its southernmost extremity.

The Delta is an almost absolutely flat stretch of land having a mean elevation of less than 20 feet MSL. Much of its shore line has a narrow strip of dense foliage and trees extending in places as much as four to five kilometers inland. Other shore line areas are characterized by swamps and marshes.

Inland may be found large rice fields which cover almost the entire region. Numerous canals, streams and rivers mark the countryside and along the streams and rivers are tree lines and small villages and hamlets.

The Mekong Delta is transversed by two major rivers, the Bassac and the Mekong. The Bassac is the most southerly of the two and it comes down from Laos through Cambodia and enters Vietnam just north of Chau Doc flowing southeasterly past Long Xuyen, Can Tho and empties into the South China Sea. The three cities mentioned above are major cities in the Delta region sharing in importance with Sadec, Vinh Long and My Tho located on the Mekong River which runs generally parallel and to the northeast of the Bassac, Rach Gia located on the coast of the Gulf of Siam, Ca Mau located toward the southern tip of the country and Soc Trang located just south of the Bassac near the eastern coast line.

Bac Lieu, Tra Vinh, Vi Thanh, Ben Tre and Go Cong are other cities of importance. The Mekong River divides into three branches just southeast of Sadec near Vinh Long. Each branch, as characteristic of the main parts of the two rivers, contains numerous small islands.



The rivers together with the numerous streams and canals and the flooded rice paddies in the wet season give the impression to one observing from the air that the country is predominantly under water. This effect is minimized during the dry season which lasts from December to late in May when the smaller streams and canals dry up with the rice paddies.

The Mekong Delta is a rice growing region producing over two-thirds of the food produced in the Republic of Vietnam and having over half of the country's population. It is an area rich in natural resources which is tremendously important to the Vietnamese people. This is the operating territory of the 121st Aviation Company, (Assault Helicopter) —"The Famed Soc Trang Tigers".



FROM THE AIR THE ENTIRE DELTA APPEARS TO BE UNDER WATER



SMALL CANALS ARE FOUND THROUGHOUT THE DELTA AND THE PEOPLE MAKE THEIR HOMES ON THESE CANALS



## SUMMARY OF OPERATIONS

Operations of the 121st Assault Helicopter Company during 1967 soared to new heights. Daily the Tigers supported the ARVN and American personnel in the Mekong Delta, often reacting at a moments notice to give the needed support. Time and time again the airlift capability and quick reaction force provided by the 121st spelled the difference between defeat and victory. The Tigers were always there to do their job in a professional manner, never failing to give their best. Many times bullets struck the aircraft and on occasion crew members were wounded or killed, but the crews continued to do their job in an unflinching, persevering manner. Their actions during the "Tet" offensive attested to the professional ability of each man in the 121st.

During 1967 the Tigers flew 33,586.5 hours while completing 74,240 sorties. They carried 211,091 passengers and 1,792.1 tons of cargo. This impressive total was climaxed by a new monthly flying hour high for the 121st with 3388.9 hours flown in December. In February 1968, during the "Tet" offensive", the Tigers put out maximum effort which was very instrumental in repelling the Viet Cong attacks. The record set in December was broken as the 121st flew 3,840.0 hours while completing 6,993 sorties during the period from 30 January—29 February 1968. Whatever the challenges or whatever the demands, the "World Renown Soc Trang Tigers" always accomplished their missions in a professional manner.



WHAT AWAITS IN THE TREE LINE?



FRIENDLY PATROL



A PICTORIAL RECORD  
OF A  
COMBAT ASSAULT



IT IS STILL DARK WHEN THE TRANSPORTS BRING THE  
COMMAND GROUP TO THE STAGE FIELD



THE TRANSPORTS LINE UP AND THEN AWAIT THE TROOPS AT  
DAYBREAK THE LIFTS BEGIN





THE GUNSHIPS PREPARE THE LANDING ZONE FOR THE  
INCOMING TRANSPORTS



A LITTLE SUPPRESSION HELPS TO KEEP THE VIET CONG FROM  
SHOOTING AT THE TRANSPORTS



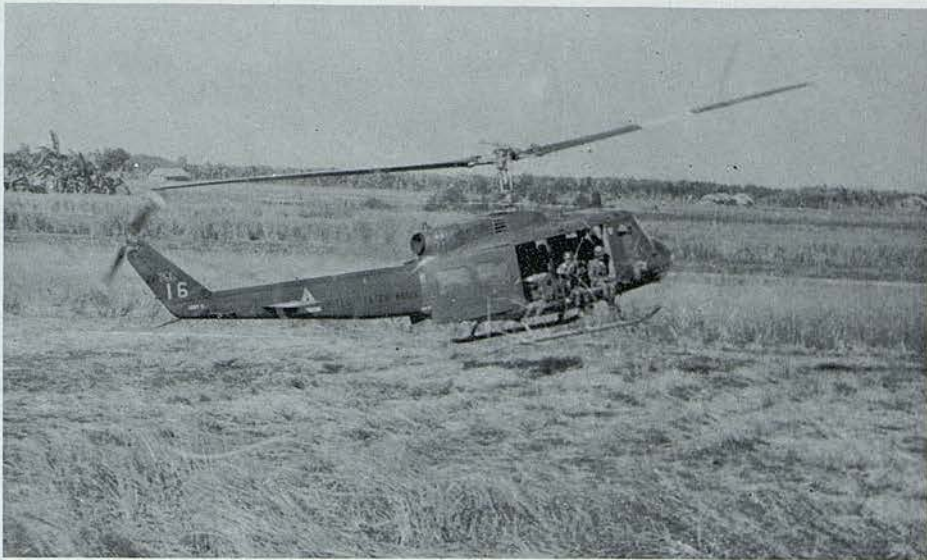


ARVN TROOPS ARE AIRLIFTED TO THE LANDING ZONES WHERE THE DAYS ACTION WILL TAKE PLACE



SOMETIMES THE ACTION GETS HOT RIGHT AFTER UNLOADING AND IMMEDIATE MEDEVACS ARE NECESSARY





THE FIRST SHIP TOUCHES DOWN IN THE LANDING ZONE



THE TROOPS UNLOAD



AND THE AIRCRAFT ARE AIRBORNE AGAIN WITHIN TEN SECONDS



SOMETIMES THE FLIGHT HAS TO STAY LOW TO AVOID ENEMY GROUND FIRE





UPON RETURNING TO THE STAGEFIELD THE DOOR GUNNERS REFUEL THE AIRCRAFT



SOMETIMES THE CREW CHIEF COMES OVER TO OFFER LITTLE ASSISTANCE



FORMATION IS V S OF FIVE AS THE TRANSPORTS RETURN TO PICK UP TROOPS.



THE FORMATION THEN CHANGES TO STRAIGHT TRAIL AS THE TRANSPORTS DESCEND





A PILOT'S-EYE VIEW OF THE PICK UP ZONE. THE TROOPS LOOK READY.



THE AIRCRAFT CROWD INTO THE PICK UP ZONE AS THE TROOPS PREPARE TO LOAD.



WATER AND TALL GRASS SOMETIMES HAMPER THE LOADING PROCESS.



AFTER A LONG DAY THE TRANSPORTS RETURN TO HOME STATION





IF AN AIRCRAFT GOES DOWN AT A FIELD LOCATION A CHINOOK WILL SLING IT OUT.





## THE LONG DAY

It was pitch black as the pilots walked across the runway enroute to their ships. There was a weary look on their faces since this was the fourth day in a row that the pilots had to get up at 0300. The first three days at Ca Mau had been very disappointing and the trip to Vi Thanh certainly didn't look very promising. The early rising was necessary in order to transfer the command group from headquarters at Bac Lieu to the stage field at Vi Thanh.

At 0700 the first transport was loaded and as the turbines began to whine everything was ready to go. The morning briefing indicated that the day would consist of a few "eagle flights" in an effort to locate Viet Cong positions in the local area.

Soon after take-off, Tiger lead lost UHF radio communications and the Trail ship took charge of the flight. The new flight lead thought it would only be a short flight so the fact that he had never flown in the lead position before didn't bother him too much.

The first LZ changed everything!! As soon as the troops unloaded they began to receive intense fire from the tree line to their left front. The flight immediately returned to Vi Thanh for more troops. Lift after lift were put into LZs on both sides of the tree line where the VC were dug in and then the report came back telling what was there; one full battalion of the VC 309th and a large number of personnel from the "Tado" and U Minh 10 Battalions, three of the toughest hard core main force Viet Cong units in the Delta. Lifts continued all morning and into the late afternoon. No less than 40 airstrikes pounded the tree line as gunships and ground troops prevented the VC from moving out of the area. The fighting raged on and casualties mounted. Several gunships were hit as they supported the ground troops. One ship was shot down but due to the quick and heroic actions of the maintenance crew, it was evacuated within 45 minutes.



At 1700 hours that evening the transports began to resupply and make medical evacuations. Troop lifts continued to be made until midnight. To prevent pilot fatigue, the crews who had been there since early that morning were replaced by fresh crews. Medevacs and resupply continued through the night and all the next day. As the fighting eased up, the first unit put in was extracted and replaced by fresh troops. The second day was as long as the first as resupply replacements, and extractions kept the transports airborne. Several loads of captured weapons and munitions were flown out of the operational area. Late that evening a few permanent extractions began. At 2300 hours the crews were again rotated and several ships returned to Soc Trang to allow maintenance personnel to work on them.

At 0230 hours on the 12th, the airstrip at Vi Thanh was mortared and the pilots at Soc Trang were scrambled to the area. At 0335 hours, the first troops were inserted in the vicinity of the mortar sites but the VC had already departed the area. The search yielded only a few mortar stands and confirmed that the VC had indeed evacuated the area. The remainder of the fiendly troops were finally extracted terminating the "Long Day".

#### STATISTICS:

Aircraft hours 8 — 10 December .....	391.6
Viet Cong Losses .....	456 Dead 100 Wounded 16 Captured
121st Avn Co. ....	No injuries, 3 Aircraft damaged
Captured .....	130 Weapons of various size and caliber.
Ordnance Expended .....	218,400 7.62 rounds 1582 rockets (2.75)
	2,125 40mm rounds.



## \* THE "TET" OFFENSIVE \*

"The "Tet" holiday is celebrated each year by the Vietnamese people. During the three day celebration the people worship their ancestors and discontinue all work. An all out truce was declared at 1800 the day before it began and was to continue until 0600 the morning after "Tet". The truce went into effect at 1800 on 29 January, 1968 and all fighting was to be discontinued until 0600 on 1 February. Everything was very quiet as far as armed conflict was concerned even though the fireworks kept the noise level at a maximum. The "Firefly" team orbited the airfield until 0300 on the 31st and then landed to remain on a standby status. At 0330 the "Tet" holiday ended with a bang.

The silence was shattered by a loud crack and then several others followed. The gunship pilots ran at top speed to their aircraft as everyone else rolled under their beds or headed for bunkers. Within one minute the gunships were airborne and looking for "Charlie's" mortar positions. When the all clear was sounded and it looked safe, the personnel left their bunkers. The usual procedure at this time is for maintenance and other non-flying personnel to man perimeter defense positions while the flight crews may return to their rooms to get their much needed sleep. Forty-five minutes later the mortar rounds began to fall again. Something was drastically different now since this was the first time the Viet Cong had mortared the compound twice in the same night. Sporadic small arms fire began to resound from the direction of downtown Soc Trang and the volume slowly increased. Reports began to filter in from other areas and soon we knew that "Tet" was over for good as a holiday. The Viet Cong had attacked almost every major city or military installation in Vietnam.

Downtown Soc Trang soon became the location of a pitched battle between ARVN and Viet Cong troops. The MACV Compound, the National Police Headquarters, and the A&L Compound were the primary targets of VC infiltration.



On the airfield all personnel were involved in a concerted effort to man the perimeter and set up an impregnable wall. Sandbags were taken from revetments and utilized in bunker construction. Each outer revetment wall grew into a full fledged bunker as personnel began to strengthen our defenses. Bullets whistled down the runway as snipers snapped scattered rounds into the compound. SP5 Bobby LeBouef was hit in the head by one round but it wasn't very serious and shortly thereafter he returned to his position. WO1 Larry Babyak heard a bullet skip off the runway and felt something strike his ankle only to find a spent bullet lying next to his leg.

Downtown the battle grew more intense. Gunships were overhead trying to aid the personnel of the 78th Artillery Detachment who were being slowly overrun. The Viet Cong used B40 rockets and automatic weapons to destroy defenses and advance on the last building. The nine man detachment from the 78th Artillery fought valiantly but the overwhelming manpower superiority was proving to be too much. The Viet Cong backed the group into a building and finally burst in on them. Staring at the Viet Cong, CW3 Stanley Strumsky, Commander of the detachment, described the scene by saying, "They had us and we knew it but they were just kids, 13 and 14 years old, and seemed confused. For a moment I thought they would shoot us and then they left." The entire detachment somehow escaped and got back to the Soc Trang Airfield.

Throughout the day the gunships continuously put strikes into Viet Cong strongholds in downtown Soc Trang. The transports shuttled troops from Bac Lieu to Can Tho in an effort to help reinforce Battalion Headquarters and the Can Tho Airfield. That evening crews were assigned to aircraft and everyone manned the perimeter. The gunships continued to make target attacks 360 degrees around the airfield and in downtown Soc Trang.

At midnight the mortar rounds began to fall again. No one slept since the possibility of Viet Cong infiltration was high and sleep was far from anyone's mind. Sniper fire continued to zing down the runway and the fighting downtown raged on.



The next morning the transports continued shuttles as fresh troops were put into the battle and exhausted troops extracted. Constant battles in the Soc Trang area began to push "Charlie" out of town. At two o'clock that afternoon a flight of F 100's roared overhead and began bomb runs on the outskirts of Soc Trang. The gunships made numerous target attacks expending all their ammunition and then rearming in such short periods as ten minutes and returning to the battle. At approximately 1800 that evening CW2 Francis L. Griffin was struck in the side by a bullet while engaging a target just east of the airfield. He was immediately rushed to the hospital but it was too late. His outstanding feats during the first days of the offensive were an inspiration to all the men of Soc Trang and his death deeply saddened everyone, but the job of repelling the Viet Cong continued. The mortar attacks continued each night but the gunships were taking their toll and attacks became less frequent.

On 9 February the transports put troops into landing zones outside of Can Tho all day and that evening they began to resupply outposts scattered throughout the 42nd DTA. It was during one of these resupply flights that Tiger 782 was downed by enemy fire. The crew, consisting of Captain Franklin S. Bradley, WO1 Rickey Hull, SP5 Paul R. Anzelone and SP4 Michael Lynch, had worked since before dawn to aid the ARVN troops.

Captain Bradley, White Tiger platoon leader, was well liked by everyone and his efforts in helping to develop the strong airfield defense had given Soc Trang one of the best defended airfields in the Mekong Delta.

Daily the Tigers began to resupply all outposts throughout the Delta. WO1 Victor Beaver and his crew were shot down and had to remain at Tieu Can outpost for five days. Several aircraft were hit by ground fire while landing or taking off. The Viet Cong, finding Soc Trang extremely well defended moved toward Bac Lieu. A two day battle at Bac Lieu pushed Charlie even farther south. The Vikings provided accurate and devastating fire support that gave the ARVN forces the advantage in the battle. Time and time again they forced the Viet Cong into poorly defended positions where the 21st Division was able to inflict heavy casualties.



As the battles raged throughout the Delta, more and more intelligence about the VC battle plans enabled the ARVN troops to gain the upper band. At Can Tho the ARVN troops were aided by the American 9th Infantry Division and began to push the VC out of the area. On the 17th of February an intelligence report told of a planned mortar attack on Soc Trang Airfield. As a result all aircraft were evacuated late that night and as they orbited at 4000 feet the mortar attack hit. As the rounds pounded the airfield the gunships rained lead and rockets on the enemy positions. The timely intelligence saved several aircraft from damage or destruction. The next evening all aircraft were evacuated to Vung Tau with the exception of gunships and the flare ships. At 0030 an extremely concentrated attack poured recoilless rifle and mortar rounds on the airfield once again. The VC kept the attack going for several minutes and were located in four different positions. The gunships began to make target attacks only to find that the enemy positions were heavily defended by .50 caliber machine guns. The accurate enemy fire forced the gunships to make their attacks from 1500 feet.

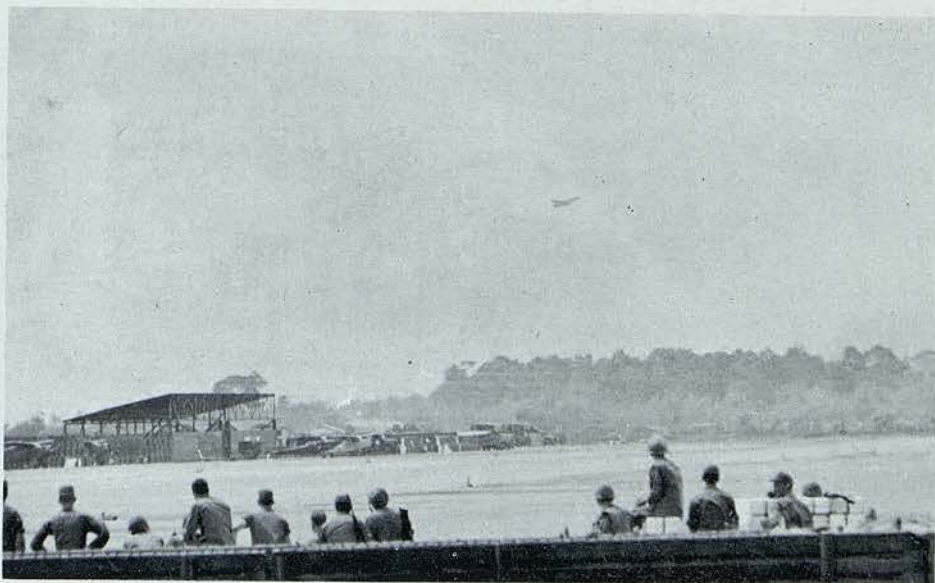
Viking Surprise proved to be of great value at this time as it rained .50 caliber fire on the positions stopping several mortars.

Ca Mau was the last all out battle of the "Tet" offensive. On 6 March an estimated two battalions of Viet Cong tried to overrun Ca Mau. Gunships, slicks, and ARVN troops used every available weapon to push the Viet Cong back. The gallant efforts of everyone involved finally pushed "Charlie" back and as they retreated, the gunships and door gunners on the slicks rained fire upon them. It was during this period that "Tiger 6" received several hits in his fuel cell and was forced to land at Ca Mau. The battle continued for three days and in the end was an overwhelming victory for the allied troops.

The "Tet" offensive was definitely a surprise to the allied forces but their quick reaction and fantastic bravery turned the tables on the Viet Cong. The enemy was beaten in every major battle and the support rendered by gunships and transports proved once again to be the deciding factor.

During the period from 29 January until 29 February the pilots flew a combined total of 7,860 hours while the aircraft were in the air for 3,840 hours. The combined efforts of the gunships accounted for 416 Viet Cong KBA and 10 WBA. In addition they sank 141 sampans and destroyed 152 structures. The action took place under extremely adverse conditions and often these air crews went several days without sleep. The ground crews kept their heavy work loads in addition to manning the perimeter each night. The outstanding performance of the pilots and crews proved once again that no matter what the conditions, "If there is a Job to do, The Tigers will do it".



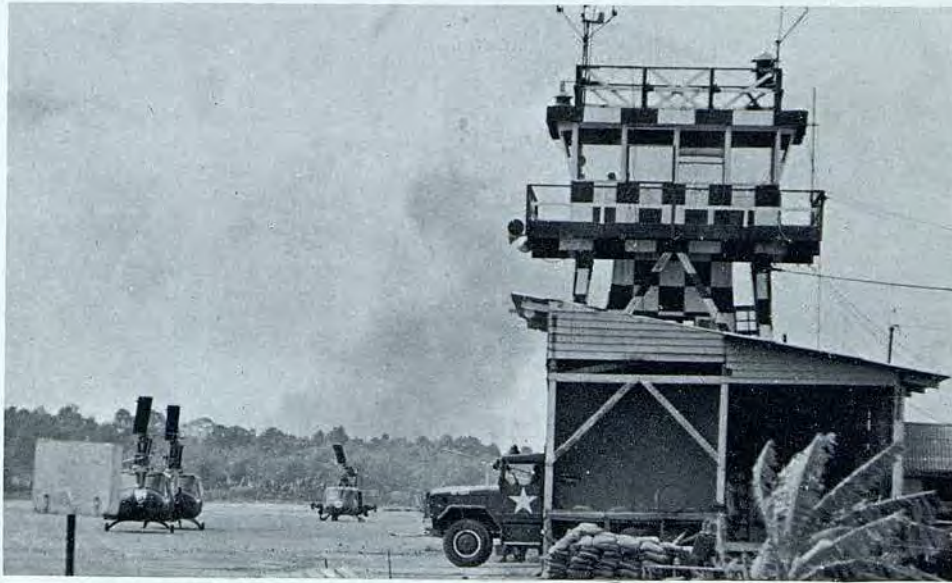


PERSONNEL WATCH AS HIGH PERFORMANCE AIRCRAFT DROP NAPALM INTO THE TIGER'S TAIL.



BLACK SMOKE RISES FROM THE NAPALM BOMBS AS VIET CONG POSITIONS IN THE TIGER'S TAIL ARE DESTROYED.



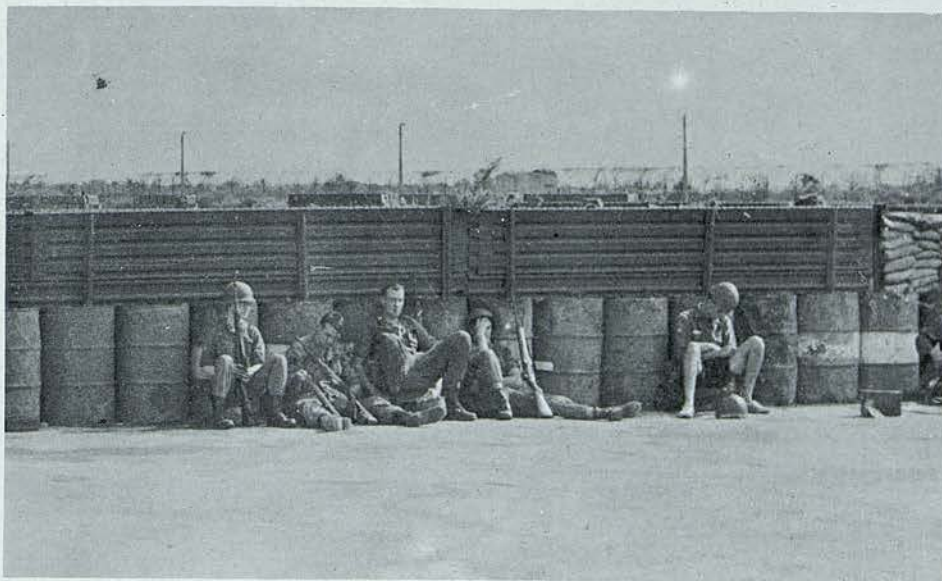


FIRES RAGE IN THE TIGER'S TAIL AND "CHARLIE" IS FORCED TO RETREAT



IN DOWNTOWN SOC TRANG THE ARVN FORCES, WITH FIRE SUPPORT FROM THE GUNSHIPS, SLOWLY PUSH THE VIET CONG OUT OF TOWN. MUCH OF THE CITY IS BURNED DUE TO VIET CONG USE OF THE BUILDINGS FOR PROTECTION





AIRFIELD PERSONNEL UTILIZED THE AIRCRAFT REVETMENTS FOR PERIMETER DEFENSE. FOR THREE WEEKS EVERYONE SPENT THEIR NIGHTS IN THESE DEFENSIVE POSITIONS.



AT DAYBREAK THE WEARY TROOPS FOUND A COMFORTABLE POSITION AND HAD NO DIFFICULTY SLEEPING.

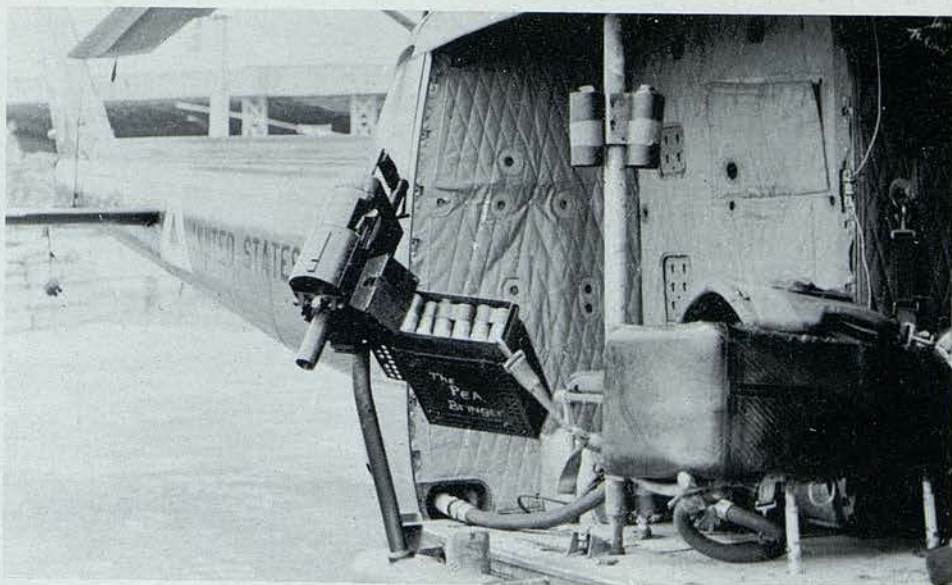
## **FIREFLY**

The "bug" completed another very outstanding year as it proved once more that "Charlie" can be stopped at night. Their constant vigilance during the hours of darkness often broke up Viet Cong attacks on friendly outposts or units while their lightning quick reactions prevented the Viet Cong from continuing mortar attacks on Soc Trang Army Airfield.

The devastating firepower packed by "Viking Surprise", with its .50 caliber machinegun, two M60s and 40mm grenade launchers, often surprised the Viet Cong in a very unpleasant manner. When the big searchlight on "Surprise" put VC sampans or units in the spotlight, the gunships would roll on target providing timely and unbelievably accurate fire on targets.

This highly successful techniques used by the firefly team have taught "Charlie" that he is not safe at night and enabled the friendly personnel to relax a little at night when they knew the "bug" was overhead. Firefly accounted for hundreds of sampans and Viet Cong casualties during the past year, and their outstanding performance has been a great asset in the struggle for freedom in the Mekong Delta.





A 40MM GRENADE LAUNCHER PROVIDES VIKING SURPRISE WITH AN ADDED PUNCH



PLARES ASSIST THE GUNSHIPS DURING THEIR SEARCH FOR VIET CONG MORTAR POSITIONS





### **LIFESAVING EQUIPMENT**

The 121st provides each crew member with certain equipment designed to save him from serious bodily injury during dangerous missions. This equipment consists of: a ballistic flight helmet which will deflect a bullet away from the individuals head, flight gloves to prevent hands from being seriously burned in case of fire, and body armor designed to stop small caliber rounds from injuring the crew members. Each piece of equipment has proved invaluable on several occasions and many crew members walking around today owe their lives to this equipment. The picture above serves to vividly illustrate this point.



## RECREATIONAL FACILITIES

Realizing that rest and relaxation are essential to the efficiency of a unit, the 121st provided its men a wide variety of opportunities for leisure time enjoyment.

The sports minded individuals found ample opportunity to exhibit their talents on the basketball and tennis courts. Of course there were always a few individuals with a football and daily games of touch-football were played. Volleyball soon gathered a fair share of interest and inter-company rivalry made it a very popular team sport. After a tiring game of basketball or tennis etc., several individuals found themselves drawn to the cool depths of Soc Trang's swimming pool. The cool water offered a pleasant relief from the tropical heat of the Delta and also gave the "short-timers" a chance to get the much worshipped tan before they left.

Not everyone was interested in sports and these individuals found their chance to relax in a quieter manner. A very well equipped hobby and wood working shop offered the men a chance to ply their woodworking talent, get advice on their particular projects or work on a special hobby. Several hundred chairs, shelves, desks and other pieces of furniture were made in the shop as people used their talents to improve their living quarters.

When the men didn't feel like moving there was a well stocked library available and its air-conditioned confines attracted many people. The PX kept an excellent supply of magazines and paperback novels in stock, for those who preferred to read in their rooms. These books and magazines usually found their way to the platoon libraries so that every one could read them.

In the evenings the Officer's Club and EM Club were crowded as people gathered to tell stories about the day's action, play cards, or just have a sociable drink. The EM theatre and the Officer's Club showed movies to capacity crowds each night, and the new Special Services Club offered nightly activities so that there was always something to do with spare time. Whenever possible the Officer s



Club and EM Club brought special shows to the post. Entertainment usually consisted of a group of highly talented musicians who always managed to play "San Francisco". When imported talent was not available, the men would use the instruments from the Special Services Club to create their own music.

The men of the 121st worked hard during the day and when evening approached they played hard. The essential relaxation was always there and morale soared throughout the past year.



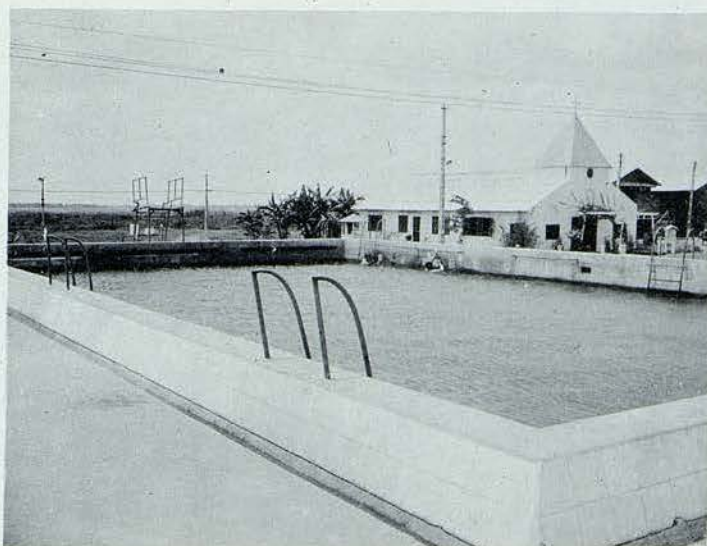




THE SOC TRANG PX (ONE OF THE BEST IN THE DELTA) IS ALWAYS CROWDED.



THE POST CHAPEL OFFERS REGULAR SERVICES FOR ALL DENOMINATIONS.



A LARGE SWIMMING POOL OFFERS SOME RELIEF FROM THE EXTREMELY HUMID CLIMATE



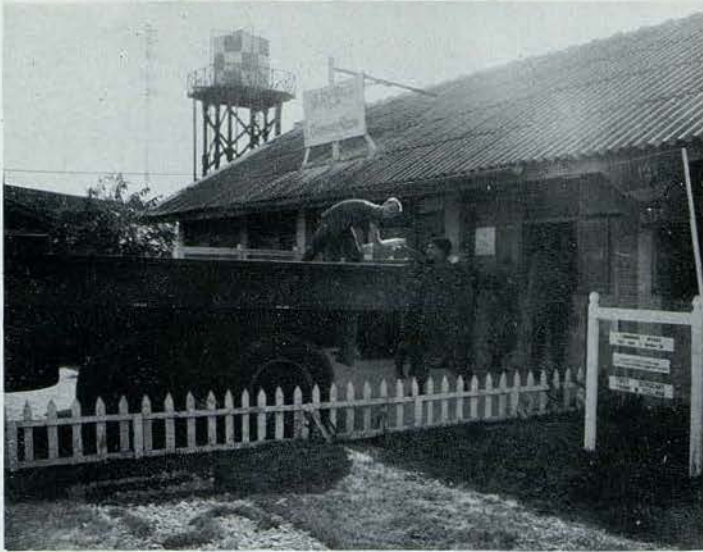
THE TIGER'S DEN PROVIDES  
THE VIKINGS A CHANCE TO  
RELAX.

OF COURSE THEY HAVE TO  
RESUPPLY EVERY NOW AND  
THEN.



WELL!! AT LEAST THE RADIOS  
STILL WORK.





WHEN MAIL ARRIVES IT IS IMMEDIATELY UNLOADED AND SORTED OUT.

OF COURSE IT NEVER STAYS IN ONE PLACE VERY LONG. MAIL IS THE BIGGEST EVENT OF EACH DAY.



ON THE OTHER HAND THE MESS HALL USUALLY GATHERS A FAIR SHARE OF THE PERSONNEL.

## CIVIC ACTION

The Civic Action Program at Ba Xuyen Province is a very worthy project. The 121st helps support the Providence Orphanage by giving donations sent from home. Families, Churches, and Fraternal Orders of members of the 121st send boxes of light clothing, soap and other hygiene articles to Viet Nam, where the 121st takes them to the Orphanage for the small children and babies.

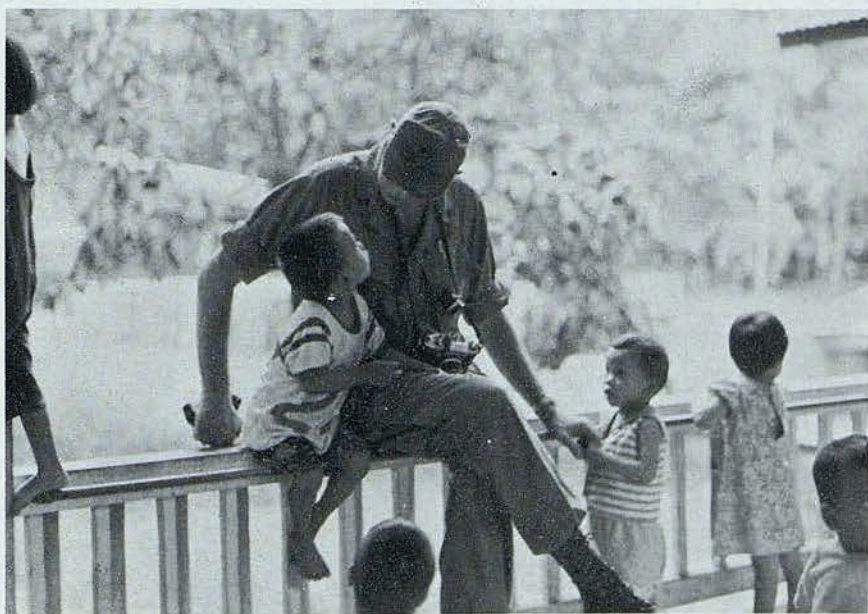
The children are visited and loved by members of the 121st. On special occasions they are brought out to the airfield for a party and the great affection shown by the men of the 121st.







CHOW TIME AT THE ORPHANAGE





EASTER PARTY





"NOT SO CLOSE"



"CATCH"

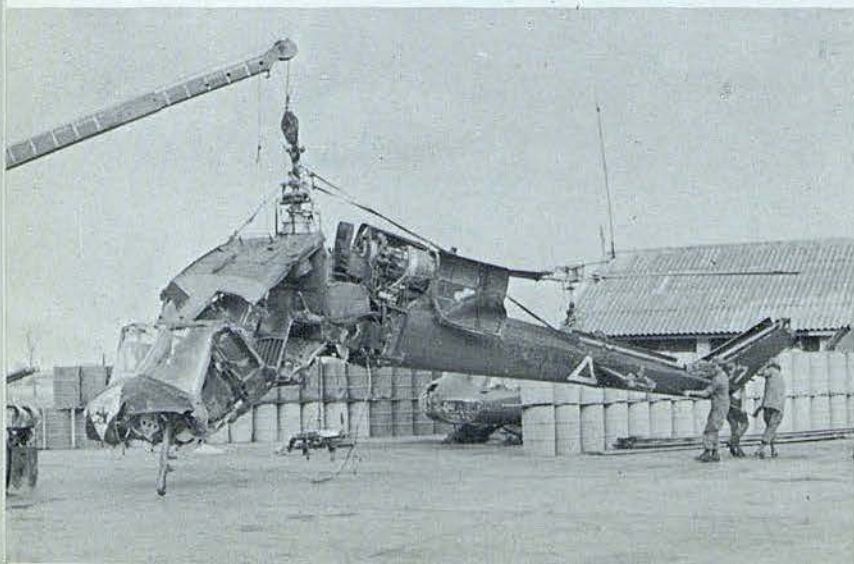




"NOBODY KILLED"

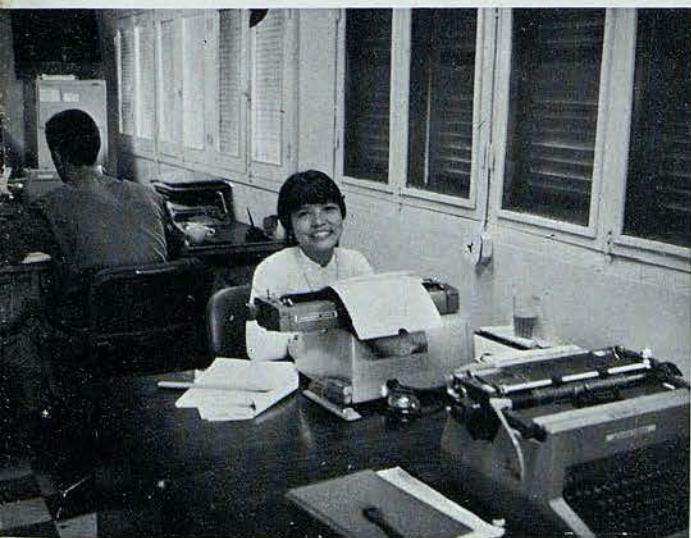


"CHEERS"

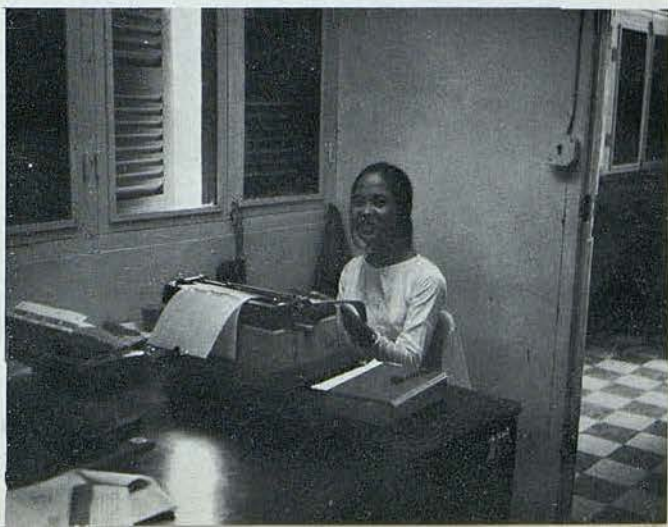




4TH OF JULY PARTY



Miss PHUC



Miss TRANG

