

ANNUAL SUPPLEMENT

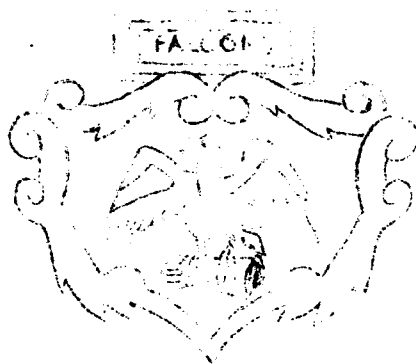
UNIT HISTORY

155 AVIATION COMPANY (ASSAULT HELICOPTER)

1 JANUARY - 31 DECEMBER

1969

A YEAR OF SERVICE



ANNUAL SUPPLEMENT
HISTORY OF THE
155TH ASSAULT HELICOPTER COMPANY
APO SAN FRANCISCO 96297
1 JANUARY 1969 - 31 DECEMBER 1969

Written By
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Approved By
GERARD H. LUISI
MAJ, IN
Commanding

FOREWORD

Serving in direct support of the Free World Forces and the Army of the Republic of Vietnam, the 155th Aviation Company is similar to the many other aviation units of the same size and structure. Formed originally as Co A, 1st Aviation Battalion, 1st Infantry Division at Fort Riley, Kansas, the unit arrived at Vung Tau, Vietnam on 1 May 1965. Moving immediately to Ban Me Thuot, with an aircraft complement of 24 UH-1D's the advance party was welcomed by LTC Delbert Townsend, Former Commander of the 52nd Aviation Battalion. After much preparation and many training hours through which the men of Co A became proficient in the new and demanding techniques of flying in a combat zone, the company was declared operational on 1 Jun 65. On 20 Nov 65, Co A was redesignated as the 155th Aviation Company (Air Mobile Light). Unofficially the 155th was directed by 1st Aviation Brigade to designate itself the 155th Assault Helicopter Company. At that time that designation was in effect for all Air Mobile Light Aviation companies throughout Vietnam. In 1969, the 155th was directed to redesignate itself the 155th Aviation Company (Assault Helicopter).

From the first, the 155th's two airlift platoons were known as the "Stage Coaches", while the Armed Platoon was called the "Falcons". Under these names the men of the 155th have spread their reputation for accomplishing their mission while maintaining the highest of safety standards and aircraft availability throughout Vietnam. Flying from Saigon in the south to Dak Pek and I Corps in the north, from the coastal plain to the Cambodian border, the Stage Coach - Falcon team has flown over 115,000 hours in support of the allied forces combating the threat of Communism in southeast Asia.

This history is dedicated to all those men who have served and are serving with the 155th Aviation Company and its attached unit since its arrival in the Republic of Vietnam, with special tribute to those officers, warrant officers and enlisted men who gave their lives for a free world.

PART I

MISSION AND RESOURCES

MISSION

The mission of the 155th Aviation Company is (1) to provide tactical air movement of combat troops in airmobile operations, (2) to provide tactical air movement of combat supplies and equipment within the combat zone, and (3) to provide combat assault support to combat troops.

ORGANIZATION

The 155th Aviation Company is organized under TOE 1-77C and has the following units attached:

8th Medical Detachment

255th Quartermaster Detachment (RD) POL

348th Aviation Support Detachment

CAMP CORYELL

Camp Coryell, home of the 155th Aviation Co (AH), and the facilities and atmosphere it provides are largely responsible for the success of the 155th. The 155th Company area, designed for tactical convenience, is abundant with banana trees, flowering plants and in general has a green garden-like atmosphere. There are three up-to-date, well equipped clubs in the company area to provide entertainment and relaxation for the personnel of the company. Sports facilities are present within the area, affording personnel the opportunity to play softball, basketball, and volley ball. Most treasured of the recreation-oriented facilities is the large swimming pool located in the center of the 155th area. A cool swim after a hard, hot day is one of the best morale builders available.

IN MEMORIAM

1965

1. PFC Michael E. Davis 21 Oct 65
2. WO1 Joseph S. Huyler 21 Oct 65
3. SP5 William J. Johnson 21 Oct 65
4. 1LT Harold A. Preisendefer 21 Oct 65

1966

1. WO Eugene W. Caswell 27 May 66
2. WO Michael W. Coryell 30 Nov 66
3. PFC Richard E. Dabney 27 May 66
4. WO Raymond L. Ford 29 Mar 66
5. PFC Gregory L. Miller 20 Dec 66
6. WO Phillip C. Smith 29 Mar 66
7. PFC James Walker 30 Nov 66
8. WO Wilmer J. Willingham 30 Nov 66
9. SP4 John W. Wood 30 Nov 66

1967

1. Sgt Keith D. Griffin 16 Mar 67
2. WO1 Terrance Nelson 23 May 67
3. SP5 James G. Patterson 16 Mar 67

1968

1. WO Wallis W. Smith 19 Apr 68
2. 1LT Dennis E. Painter 19 Apr 68
3. SP5 James Miculus 19 Apr 68
4. SP4 Frank L. Freedle 19 Apr 68
5. WO1 Paul N. Larson 19 Apr 68

6. WO1 Herbert Hayashida	19 Apr 68
7. SP4 John R. Brooks	19 Apr 68
8. SP4 Oran B. McCardol	19 Apr 68
9. 1LT Fred O. Pratt	26 Aug 68
10. WO1 William P. Harwood	8 Sep 68
11. WO1 Redlich S. Koppel	8 Sep 68
12. WO1 Richard C. Pugh	28 Dec 68
13. SP4 James D. Budahazy	24 Jun 68
14. SP5 Willian Eister	6 Feb 68
15. SP4 Edward Milan	4 Mar 68
16. SP4 James Swann	4 Mar 68
17. SSG Robert Pinkston	13 Mar 68

1969

1. WO1 Ronald McGary	3 Jan 69
2. SP4 Richard See	8 Jan 69
3. WO1 Terry L. Crawford	27 Feb 69
4. SP5 Armando Ramirez	23 May 69
5. PFC Santiago Quinitana	23 May 69
6. SP5 Rich R. Medaris	5 Nov 69
7. SP5 John A. Payne	5 Nov 69
8. SP4 Richard G. Bauer	5 Nov 69

..... this history dedicated to the men of the
155th; to those who fought and lived and to those who fought and died,
to those who gave much and to those who gave all.

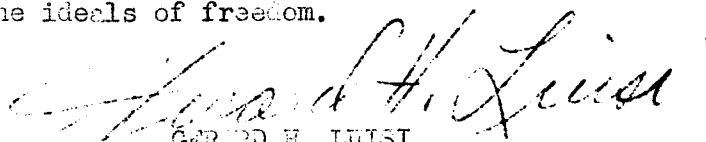
PREFACE

On 26 December 1969, I assumed command of the 155th Aviation Company (Assault Helicopter). Since that date, I never cease to be amazed by the professionalism, dedication and Esprit De Corps that exists within this unit.

A unit history is non-existent without the daily, often times mundane, activities of flying. These missions run the gauntlet from VIP support, command and control to providing a transportation service to indigenous tribesman. Periodically though, the ultimate test for any unit must be experienced-combat. Throughout the pages of this history for 1969, the officers and men of the 155th continually met the test and never faltered in denying the communist forces victory.

No unit is comprised of machines and equipment, but rather a unit consists of men. These men, for the most part non-careerist, come from all walks and stations of life. Their education, ethnic background and religious beliefs may differ but as soldiers they have arrived in the Republic of Vietnam and made this unit what it is-a cohesive, aggressive team.

It is to these men, who daily make history, that this document is dedicated. It is also dedicated to future members of the 155th so that they too may see what their predecessors accomplished and enable them to continue carrying forward the ideals of freedom.


GERARD H. LUISI
MAJ, IN
Commanding

REGIONAL ANALYSIS

TERRAIN

The II Corps Tactical Zone, in which Ban Me Thuot is located and in which the 155th Aviation Company renders the majority of its support, covers an area of 32,725 square miles or 49% of the land area of South Vietnam. Its western border is 342 miles long and in common with Laos and Cambodia. The eastern border is approximately 400 miles of coastline bordering the South China Sea. The area is 40 miles wide in the north and 342 miles wide in the south. This area is politically divided into the provinces of Kontum, Binh Dinh, Pleiku, Phu Bon, and Phu Yen in the 22nd ARVN Division Tactical Zone, and Darlac, Khanh Hoa, Quang Duc, Tuyen Duc, NINH Thuan, Lam Dong, and Binh Thuan in the 23rd ARVN Division Tactical Zone. Geographically, this area may be divided into three major areas.

1. The coastal plain is a narrow strip of long flat, often marshy terrain not more than twenty miles wide from the sea inland. This area is formed by a series of numerous river deltas interrupted by a rock ridge line running steeply to the sea. This area is almost entirely under cultivation, with four rice crops a year.

2. The mountain region extends from north to south almost the entire length of the II Corps Tactical Zone. Elevation range from 3,000 to 8,000 feet, with the eastern slopes quite steep and the western more gradual. Rain forests cover three quarters of this area with most of the remainder covered with open, deciduous growth. Cultivation is limited to small, cleared areas on relatively flat land. Flying in this area is very hazardous with forced landing areas practically non-existent, ceilings frequently very low and winds unpredictable.

3. The plateau region is located west of the mountains and is comprised of the Kontum Plateau in the north and the Darlac Plateau in the south. This

region has altitudes ranging from 1,000 to 3,000 feet with gently rolling hills and much open area. Where the soil is not under cultivation, a thick growth of grass, to a height of eight to ten feet, covers the ground. Where adequate drainage is provided, this area will support four vegetable crops yearly.

The principal cities of this area are Phan Thiet, Phan Rang, Nha Trang, and Qui Nhon on the coastal plain; Dalat in the mountains; and Ban Me Thuot, Pleiku, and Kontum on the plateaus. The major routes of this area are:

Route #1 Saigon - Danang (coastal route)

Route #11 Dalat - Phan Rang

Route #14 Saigon - Ban Me Thuot - Pleiku - Kontum

Route #19 Pleiku - Qui Nhon

Route #20 Saigon - Dalat

Route #21 Ban Me Thuot - Nha Trang

The Republic's major rail line parallels Route #1 along its entire length with one spur line from Phan Rang to Dalat. The logistical and communications complex at Cam Ranh Bay is located between Phan Rang and Nha Trang.

WEATHER

Weather throughout this area can be divided into the summer monsoon, June through September, and the winter monsoon, November through April, with the months of May and October as periods of transition. During the summer monsoon the wind is southwesterly, causing cloud buildups on the western slopes of the mountains. This results in a rainy season for the plateaus and mountainous areas during the summer months while the coastal provinces have clear skies and good flying weather. The winter monsoon brings a northeasterly flow with the conditions reversed. The coastal provinces of Binh Thuan and Nhin Thuan are little affected by either monsoon and have generally clear weather the year round.

Average rainfall in the mountain and plateau areas in 90 inches, and on the coastal plain 87 inches. The temperature on the coastal plain ranges from the mid 70's to the high 80's during the rainy season and low 80's to high 90's during the dry season. The mountains and plateaus experience temperatures from the mid 60's to mid 80's during the wet season, and low 60's to low 80's during the dry season. Winds are normally gusty at 10-15 knots with velocity increasing with altitude. Surface winds up to 25 knots are frequently encountered.

INDIGENOUS POPULATION

The II Corps Tactical Zone has a population of approximately 2.5 million people, or just over 20% of the population of the Republic of Vietnam. The majority of this population is located along the coastal plain in the vicinity of the cities. The majority of these people are Annamese.

The mountain and plateau regions are inhabited chiefly by Montagnard tribesmen. There are thirty-nine major tribes and some 150 subordinate tribal groups of these people living in the highlands of Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos. Ban Me Thuot is the traditional capitol of these people. The II Corps Area is inhabited by approximately 500,000 Montagnards. The largest tribe in this region is the Rade, whose influence extends from Kontum to Ban Me Thuot.

155 in Vietnam - 1969 - The Enemy
1 January - 31 March

The new year started off with a bang at Camp Coryell, in keeping with the expected pre-Tet offensive. At 2100 hours on 2 January 1969, Camp Coryell came under its first hostile attack of the year when ten rounds of 82mm mortar fire fell on or near the compound. This attack resulted in negative casualties or damage to equipment or structures. On 3 January, at 0150 hours, less than five hours after the first attack, four rounds of B-40 rockets struck the compound, also with negative damage or casualties.

On 6 January, Camp Coryell again came under enemy mortar attack, fourteen rounds of 82mm mortars struck the compound from unknown enemy positions. Six UH-1H's were damaged and one vehicle damaged in the attack. Attacked again on 8 January at 2310 hours, by an unknown size enemy force using 82mm mortars, twenty rounds struck the compound, damaging three structures and wounding two men, one of whom died as a result of his wounds.

During the month of February, Camp Coryell was relatively free from enemy attacks. However, on 23 February, at 0100 hours, 30 rounds of 82mm mortars impacted on the compound from unknown enemy locations. Negative damage resulted from this attack.

In March the tempo picked up again, with Camp Coryell receiving six mortar and rocket attacks. The first on 4 March, occurred at 2310 hours. Twenty mortars were fired with no casualties and no damage. Later that night, on 5 March at 0130 hours, fourteen rounds of 75mm recoilless were received, damaging five aircraft. At 2145 hours on 12 March the 155th again came under light attack. Negative damage resulted from the two B-40 rockets received. The same night, at 0045 hours on 13 March, we were attacked again. This time seven rounds of 82mm mortars struck the compound, resulting in damage to 5 UH-1H's and UH-1C.

On the morning of 21 March at 0130 hours, fifteen rounds of 75mm recoilless rifle landed in the compound, damaging one UH-1C. On Sunday, 23 March, the

155 was attacked in the midst of a company party. As personnel were broiling steaks and opening beer, six rounds of 122mm rockets landed in the compound. Four enlisted men were wounded during this attack.

During the entire year of 1968, Camp Coryell came under attack 28 times. During the quarter 1 January to 31 March 69, there were 12 enemy attacks directed at Camp Coryell, a 40% quarterly increase.

155 in Vietnam 1969 - The Mission
1 January - 31 March

The 155th Aviation Company during the period 1 January - 31 March 69 continued to provide support for the 23rd ARVN division and other units with operations in Lam Dong, Darlac, Tuyen Duc, Khanh Hoa, and Phu Bon provinces.

In addition, the 155th supported Special Forces, and 4th Infantry Division elements in the Pleiku-Kontum Province area.

Highlights of the period were:

On the third of January a 155 aircraft crashed into a mountain between Ban Me Thuot and Dalat, after going IFR in low clouds. The pilot died in the crash and the aircraft commander, crewchief and gunner were seriously injured.

On 5 January the 155th participated in a multibattalion combat assault just north of Ban Me Thuot. Providing ten slicks and four guns, the company airlifted 611 troops in 309 sorties in support of the 23rd ARVN Division and 2/35, 4th Infantry Division.

On 17 January the 155th provided nine slicks and two guns to the 45th ARVN Regiment, 23 ARVN Division for a combat assault south of Ban Me Thuot. The assault was continued on 18 January because of weather delays the previous day with six slicks and two guns. The 155th lifted 1041 troops in 446 sorties during the two day operation. Following up with daily logistic and gun support, the 155th Falcons were credited with 6 enemy Killed By Aircraft and four structures destroyed.

During the January - March quarter, the 155th provided combat assault support to units of B-23 (SF) and 45th Infantry Regiment (ARVN) in areas near Gia Nghia, Nhon Co, Duc Lap, Lac Thien, Bu Frang, Buon Ho, Buon Black, and Quang Nhieu. The result of the 155 support activities for the quarter ending 31 March are as follows.

HOURS FLOWN	6,235
SORTIES FLOWN	21,317
PASSENGERS	32,015

CARGO (TONS)	433
ENEMY KIA	72
STRUCTURES DESTROYED	24
SAMPANS DESTROYED	1
POW CAPTURED	1
EMERGENCY MEDIVAC	11

Growth Of The 155
1 January - 31 March 1969

In order that the 155th keep up with the ever-increasing workload and provide for optimum support capability, in addition to improving conditions for assigned personnel, the following programs and projects were initiated during this quarter.

Reopriming of the refueling area and airstrip

Continued improvement in perimeter defenses

Stepped up bunker construction

Renovation of the company dayroom

Expansion of 8th Med Det laboratory facilities

Increased emphasis on personnel training program

Initiation of night flight training program to increase each individuals' night proficiency and provide increased overall mission readiness capability.

155 In Vietnam 1969 - The Enemy
1 April - 30 June

On 6 April 1969, at 2320 hours, Camp Coryell came under enemy attack. Fourteen rounds of 82mm mortars, fired from unknown enemy locations, struck the compound, damaging eight UH-1H aircraft and two UH-1C gunships. Also damaged were two vehicles.

Again, on 25 April, the 155 was the target of enemy attack. Ten rounds of 82mm mortars struck the compound, damaging four UH-1H aircraft, two vehicles and two structures.

During the month of May, Camp Coryell fell victim to enemy mortar attack on only two dates, being hit three times in the same day in on instance. On 16 May, at 0005 hours, 14 rounds of 82mm mortar struck the compound, fired from unknown positions. Three UH-1H's and two UH-1C gunships were damaged at this time. One EH was wounded and medevaced. At 0130 hours, five rounds of 82mm were received, this time with negative damage. Again, at 2000 hours, the 155 received incoming mortars, 15 in number. In addition, small arms fire was directed at the compound. The POL storage facility received minor damage as a result.

On 22 May, at 0115 hours, Camp Coryell came under combined mortar and sapper attack. A total of 56 rounds of 60 and 82mm mortars, B-40 and B-41 rockets, and 75mm recoilless struck the compound. A small sapper team entered the compound in the PA&E area, and were able to damage or destroy eight structures and nine vehicles. Two aircraft received major damage, and two received minor damage. One civilian guard was slightly wounded.

June of 69 was the first month since September of 68 that the enemy failed to attack Camp Coryell. The 155 remained alert, however, because of the continuous attacks on Ban Me Thuot City and outlying areas.

155TH IN VIETNAM 1969 - THE MISSION

1 APRIL - 30 JUNE

In April, the 155th flew its aircraft in its normal support role for units throughout II Corps Tactical Zone.

The second half of April, however, was marked by a tremendous upsurge of enemy activity. This resulted in the 155th providing aircraft for 22 combat assaults for B-23, (SF) 45 Regiment, 23rd ARVN Division, and Darlac Sector. The 155th also began supporting B-50 Special Forces in their operations. Most of the support for Task Force Wood, operating in the vicinity of Bu Prang, came from the 155th.

May brought about the end of our support to Task Force Wood, with 155th "Stagecoach" Slicks and "Falcon" Gunships removing the last of TFW's troops from the Bu Prang area on 18 May. A total of 18 combat assaults were conducted throughout May in support of TF Wood, 2 MSF, B-23 (5 SFG) and 45 Regiment (23 ARVN Division).

On 23 May, three ships supporting B-50 (SF) were hit by ground fire, causing one to be a total loss with the loss of two crewmembers and two passengers. The company had a total of eight aircraft damaged on combat missions in May.

During the month of June, in addition to steady daily support of units in its normal area of operations, the 155th provided aircraft for a total of 16 combat assaults. The largest of these occurred on 21 June, when the 155th provided 5 slicks and two guns, moving over 900 troops to an area southwest of Ban Me Thuot.

The 155th also provided two Stagecoach slicks and two Falcon gunships in support of daily intelligence-gathering "Sniffer" operations.

Although Camp Coryell did not come under enemy attack in June, Ban Me Thuot City and outlying hamlets and installations were hard hit by the

enemy. These attacks necessitated the launching of four gunships and a flare ship on round-the-clock support of the besieged villages South of Ban Mo Thuot at Lac Thien.

During one of the night support missions, a command and control aircraft with several passengers on board ran into IFR conditions on approach to Lac Thien airstrip. The aircraft crashed into the lake and overturned. Miraculously, no one was injured, although the aircraft was completely destroyed. In a daring rescue, the 155th commander hovered near the wrecked aircraft and allowed the wet survivors to board his aircraft.

Statistics for support provided April-June 1969, are as follows:

Sorties	19,838
Hours	6,968
Cargo (Tons)	210
Passengers	32,689
Enemy KBA	71
Structures Destroyed	13

155TH IN VIETNAM 1969 - THE COMPANY

1 APRIL - 30 JUNE

The 155, during the second quarter of 1969, did much work aimed at improving living and working conditions for its assigned personnel at Camp Coryell. Some of the more significant improvements were:

The COC (Combat Operations Center) was renovated and further protected with a chain link fence.

All the structures on post were completely repainted.

Flare pots were installed to light the runway at night.

All the revetments were topped with SSP.

The defensive perimeter was strengthened with additional wire barriers and the introduction of a .50 Caliber machine gun on top of the Air Force observation tower.

Many new bunkers were constructed so that there is sufficient bunker space for all personnel during attacks.

The revetment area and many areas of the cantonment area were resurfaced with penoprime.

A gas chamber was constructed for gas mask tests.

A 25 meter small arms test firing range was instituted.

A new dayroom was built and stocked with recreational equipment and books.

The company swimming pool, inactive for the past year, was relined, refilled, and the area around it was repaved.

It was officially reopened the last week in May, with 155 Commander, Major Bobby L Moore, being the first to take the plunge. To his regret, he forgot to get his clothes off in time.

The above improvements plus additional internal improvements in operations, administration, and the service platoon, helped to increase the

pride of the individual in his unit and further mission accomplishment.

On 25 June 1969, Major Bobby L Moore relinquished command of the 155th Aviation Company (Aslt Hel) to Major Dean M Owen, formerly assigned to IFFV headquarters. The change of command ceremony was held at Camp Coryell and was attended by dignitaries of the 23rd ARVN Division, Darlac Sector, Detachment B-23 (5th Special Forces Group), Colonel Nelson Malone, Commanding Officer of 17th Aviation Group (Combat), and LTC David L Stanley, 10th Aviation Battalion (Combat) Commander. Major Moore was presented the Bronze Star for Service and the Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry.

155TH IN VIETNAM 1969 - THE ENEMY

1 JULY - 30 SEPTEMBER

After a period of seven weeks without an enemy attack on Camp Coryell, the longest period of respite the 155 had seen in two years, the night quiet was again broken by incoming rounds. On 23 July at 2333 hours, five B-40 rockets and ten 82mm mortars struck the compound. Due to increased bunker facilities, and the overdue nature of the attack, the rounds inflicted negative damage to personnel or equipment.

Again, there was a long period without enemy attack on Camp Coryell in July and August. Finally, the compound was attacked on 12 August. Early in the morning, a total of 37 rounds struck the compound, landing not only in the corral and dustbowl but in the billeting areas as well. Ten B-40 rockets and 27 82mm mortars impacted, causing damage to four UH-1H's, and one UH-1C, ten structures, and four vehicles. Eleven personnel were wounded during the attack. Falcon gunships and a flareship were launched, but because of difficulty encountered in getting clearance to fire, returned with negative results.

The 155 was not subject to enemy attack during the entire month of September.

In late August and early September of 1968, the 155-supported areas of Bu Prang and Duc Lap were the targets of a long, hard-hitting offensive by the enemy. Duc Lap in particular was the focal point of enemy activity in the 155th's area of operations during that year.

All sources of information gathered thus far in 1969 indicated that the enemy was planning a 1969 offensive aimed once again at Duc Lap.

The end of the summer monsoon and the beginning of the winter monsoon brought about a great increase in enemy activity in large parts of the 155's area of operation. Although the rainy weather precluded any large scale

enemy activity during July and August, toward the end of September the lessening rainfall afforded the enemy greater ease of mobility, as was indicated by large troop buildups in the border areas West and Southwest of Duc Lap.

155TH IN VIETNAM 1969 - THE MISSION

1 JULY - 30 SEPTEMBER

An enemy buildup quite similar to that which occurred just before the battle of Duc Lap in 1968 had been evidenced by intelligence reports received from the Duc Lap - Bu Prang area.

To increase our information concerning enemy activities in the areas around Bu Prang and Duc Lap, the 155 conducted numerous sniffer missions in those areas in support of the 23rd ARVN Division and B-23 (Special Forces). Much valuable intelligence was gathered and many significant sightings were made. Several ground operations were conducted by the supported units as a result of these sniffer findings, with good results.

As a result of information gathered regarding a probable enemy offensive in the Duc Lap area, the 155 was becoming increasingly committed in an attempt to provide adequate support to the units in the Ban Me Thuot support zone. Due to increased mission requirements, the 155 was given operational control of as many as twenty additional aircraft during this period. This more than doubled the mission capabilities of the 155, but put the 155 operations under a severe strain as a result.

July also marked the return of the company's support to B-50 operations. In addition a commitment to 2nd, 3rd, and 5th MSF (Mike Strike Force) was added at this time.

The resupply, sniffer, B-50, and command and control requirements placed on the 155 at this time precluded supporting any great number of combat assaults. A total of 27 were conducted within the July-September quarter. Some of the highlights of this period:

On 18 July, after being inserted by 155 aircraft south of Ban Me Thuot, two LRRP teams came into contact with an enemy force. One Stargococh and two Falcons were dispatched to the area. One gunship received damage from

ground fire but the Falcon team was credited with 13 enemy killed by air during the action.

On 25 July, while supporting four slicks on a B-23 troop movement, a pair of 155 gunships expended, killing five enemy soldiers.

The month of August was marked by the intensive increase of sniffer operations conducted for intelligence gathering purposes. Two sets of sniffer missions were run daily in and around Darlac and Quang Duc Provinces. These missions were given high priorities due to the need for gathering as much intelligence as possible on enemy movements and activities. Although hampered by deteriorating weather conditions, the results of these missions proved later to be of great assistance in planning for the coming enemy offensive.

In September the 155 was again given the commitment to support B-50 operations. Four slicks and four guns were provided each day for the entire month for this mission.

As in July and August, September was characterized by the presence of a great number of aircraft from throughout II Corps operating in the Ban Me Thuot area. This was due to the need to provide increased tactical and logistical aviation support to units operating in the Bu Prang - Gia Nghia - Duc Lap triangle. Consequently, as many as 35 aircraft from other units were working in the Ban Me Thuot area, with 155 operations acting as controlling agency, placing an additional workload on the 155 for operational and maintenance support.

155TH IN VIETNAM 1969 - THE COMPANY

1 JULY - 30 SEPTEMBER

The 155th continued in its efforts to improve facilities and conditions for its personnel during this quarter. Some of the notable improvements:

Old and inadequate bunkers were torn down and replaced with new and larger structures.

Concrete pavement was poured to connect all living areas with a paved surface.

A new above surface miniport area was constructed to replace the old underground system. A single line system with seven UH-1 and one CH-47 refueling stations was put in use. The miniport now has a 20,000 gallon capacity.

Renovation of the dog kennels in anticipation of the return of a K-9 security detachment.

Construction of guard bunkers along the south perimeter fence.

Installation of a minefield inside the northeast perimeter.

An interior guard tower was equipped with a 50 caliber machine gun and a xenon light.

Rewiring of all billets.

Morale during this third quarter decreased to a certain degree. This was caused by several factors. The NCO-EM club was closed in early August due to management difficulties, leaving the enlisted personnel without facilities for recreation during off-duty hours.

Additionally, many ships and crews from other units were staying with the 155 on an indefinite "RON" basis. The presence of these "OPCON" crews created a certain amount of friction between the men. Most of these problems were quickly resolved by introducing additional billeting facilities.

Although perhaps a contradiction in terms, the absence of the always expected enemy attacks on Camp Conryell made for an uneasy time of waiting. However, as external enemy activity increased, so did morale and spirit, with the men of the 155 anticipating participation in the tactical defense of the Ban Me Thuot - Duc Lap area.

During this period, a new set of requirements was devised for the awarding of AC (Aircraft Commander) orders. Since the unit is safety minded, and a direct parallel to aviation safety and pilot proficiency can be made, the requirements for becoming an aircraft commander were broadened to:

- 300 Hours In-Country

- Five Hours Minimum Night Time

- Five Hours Of Hood Time

- A Minimum Of Two Maintenance Test Flights

- A Grade of 90% Or Better on Each Of Two/Dash-Ten Tests.

- An Aircraft Commander Checkride With Company Instructor Pilot

- Two Mission Checkrides with Instructor Pilots

This program proved to be a basis for similar programs instituted in many other aviation units.

The 155th continued in its tradition of maximum support and highest aircraft availability within the 10th Aviation Battalion. Average UH-1H availability July-September was 97.1%. Average UH-1C availability for the period was 96.5%.

In addition to the unique requirements and increased pressure placed on it by the tactical situation, the 155th prepared for and passed with a satisfactory rating, the annual AGI (Annual General Inspection) which was conducted on 3 September.

In view of the increasing workload of the company in the area of tactical mission support, the passing of the AGI at this time was a tribute

to the general state of preparedness of the unit.

Statistics for 155 support for the July - September period:

Hours	7,033
Sorties	19,191
Passengers	29,307
Cargo (Tons)	321
Emergency Medevac	14
Enemy Killed By Air	20
Structures Destroyed	8

155 in Vietnam

The Enemy at Home

October - December

The last quarter of 1969 left Camp Coryell only slightly damaged by the enemy in relation to the first nine months.

Although attacked five times during the period the compound suffered comparatively little damage.

On 25 October, in the early morning hours, 15 rounds of 82mm mortars, fired from unknown positions, struck the compound. The result was two UH-1H's and one UH-1C gunship, two buildings and two vehicles damaged. Five personnel were injured, two of whom required medical evacuation.

On 10 November, the 155 was again attacked. Eight B-40 rockets and 17 82mm mortars struck the compound, damaging one UH-1H, five structures and one vehicle, and wounding six personnel.

The compound was attacked three more times during the quarter, on 16, 25, and 30 November. All three attacks resulted in negative damage, although a total of 37 mortar rounds impacted in the 155 area.

THE BUILDUP AND THE BATTLE-AVIATION SUPPORT AT ITS BEST

~~OCTOBER-DECEMBER~~

Due to the tremendous increase in enemy activity during the first part of October, and due to the buildup of resources and the strengthening of the defensive posture of friendly units, it is impossible at this time to divide the mission performed from the enemy situation.

Following is a background of friendly efforts to meet the coming offensive, included to offer a complete picture in order that the reader may fully understand the gigantic proportions of the preparations made. It must be remembered that the 155, being the local unit and main provider of aviation support in the Duc Lap-Bu Prang area, played a significant role in the building of a successful defense against the soon-to-come enemy onslaught.

The weather has been the most significant natural factor relating to the buildup of enemy forces. The summer monsoon, and the rain it brings, continued through August and September, hindering any large scale enemy activity. October brought with it good weather and a tremendous upsurge in enemy activity throughout the area of operations, and especially in the areas around Bu Prang and Duc Lap.

Intelligence reports indicated massive buildups of enemy forces along the western boundry of Quang Duc sector between Bu Prang and Nhon Co. Large size enemy units were reported in Cambodia north of Bu Prang and west of Duc Lap.

Great emphasis was put on gathering further information in these areas. This was accomplished by conducting two separate daily sniffer missions around Duc Lap, Bu Prang, and areas south in an extension of II Corps known as the "Death Valley of Bu Gia Map". Intelligence gathering by the 155

continued in an attempt to fix locations and sizes of individual enemy units.

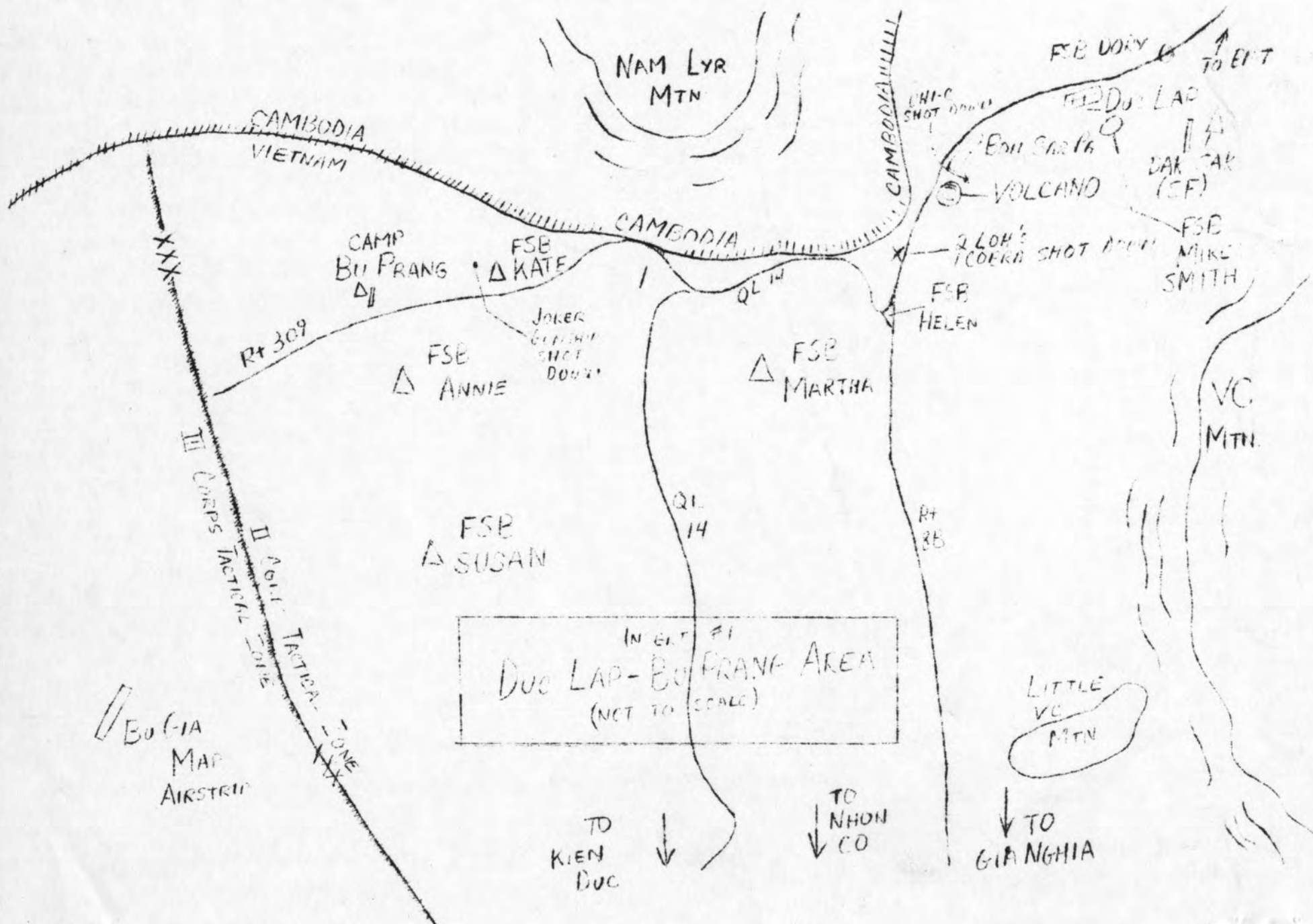
The questions of the intentions of the enemy were answered on 22 October when it became clear that the enemy was on the move. Large size units moved across from Cambodia into positions south of Bu Prang and south of Duc Lap. Large units were still massing along the Cambodian border posing a substantial artillery and standoff attack threat to the outposts of Bu Prang and Duc Lap.

On 25 October the enemy began his offensive. The entire sequence of events follows:

One of the 155-supported units in the area, 5/22 Artillery, in preparation for the offensive, built six firebases in the Duc Lap-Bu Prang-Gia Nghia triangle. Their positions can be determined from the insert. These fire support bases were named: Fire support bases Dory, Helen, Susan, Annie, Kate and Martha. These firebases provided support for Bu Prang and Duc Lap.

Work on these firebases began in early September and continued throughout October. Initial work was hampered by marginal weather and the difficulty of providing continuous Chinook support to transport loads and equipment.

Annie and Kate were set up within six kilometers each of Bu Prang. While these firebases could provide artillery support for Bu Prang, it became clear that they would be vulnerable to any determined enemy attack. In addition everything depended on resupply by air because the roads were not secure enough for transport. Security for these firebases was provided by CIDG (Civilian Irregular Defense Group) and elements of the Mike Strike Forces. All units in the area of operations were under the control of the 23rd ARVN Division and a divisional Light Command Post was set up at Gia Nghia. B-troop, 7/17 Cavalry was assigned the mission of conducting "Hunter-Killer" operations in the Bu Prang-Gia Nghia area. Thus the stage



was set for what developed during the last part of October.

The 155 and several other units in the 10th and 52nd Aviation Battalions were now responsible for inserting, exchanging and supporting the troops at these new firebases.

On 25 October, the enemy began his offensive. Helen (the firebases came to be known by the prefix LZ for landing zone) came under attack by a multibattalion sized unit which had begun crossing the border on 22 October. Personnel and equipment were extracted in total from LZ Helen on 29 October by the 155 and OPCON units. During the extraction a large size enemy force again attacked the LZ inflicting heavy casualties. The extraction was completed on the 29th and that afternoon a regimental size enemy element moved into Helen and claimed it as theirs.

During this time LZ Annie and LZ Kate were being threatened by another regimental size unit. 155 Stagescoach aircraft continued to make medevacs under heavy fire at these firebases. On the 30th, LZ Martha was to be removed to reinforce Duc Lap and because it was under constant small arms attack. On the evening of the 30th Martha was relocated to Duc Lap by aircraft of the 155 and OPCON units under heavy mortar fire. Every time a ship came in to remove troops the LZ was pounded with enemy mortars. The troops were moved into LZ Mike Smith, a new FSB located in Duc Lap.

LZ Kate then became the major target of the enemy. Enemy .50 caliber and 37mm antiaircraft positions were active all around the firebase, and they took their toll of aircraft. At 0930 hours on 30 October Kate came under sustained enemy ground attack by at least 500 NVA (North Vietnamese Army regulars).

Two Joker gunships from the 48th Aviation Company were diverted to LZ Kate. One Joker was shot down, crashed and was destroyed. There were no survivors. During that same day, three additional gunships and 1 CH-47 were hit by enemy ground fire in the vicinity of Kate.

The situation deteriorated rapidly and on the 31st Kate was low on food and ammunition.

Aircraft were not able to get into Kate due to heavy ground fire and mortars. One CH-47 was hit by heavy ground fire and had to abort its emergency resupply, dropping its load in the jungle short of Kate.

Thus the stage was set for an emergency night resupply into Kate. At 0200 in the morning of 1 November, five slicks and four gunships from the 155th Aviation Company departed Ban Me Thuot for LZ Kate. Each slick carried 1,000 pounds of the much needed resupply.

Under cover of darkness and heavy repressive fire by the gunships, the slicks made the resupply without incident. The month of October ended with LZ's Annie and Kate still under siege and the camps at Bu Prang and Duc Lap under eminent danger of attack.

On 1 November, LZ Kate began receiving continuous artillery fire from Cambodia. In addition, the enemy was conducting massive ground and mortar attacks. On the afternoon of the first, after all of Kate's big guns were damaged or destroyed by enemy artillery, the FSB was declared no longer capable of operation. The decision was made to evacuate Kate.

The 155 airlifted two companies of the 5th MSF into an area one kilometer northwest of Kate on the night of the first. The troops at Kate successfully walked out and united with these units. Immediately after the evacuation of Kate, 155 and OPCOM units extracted LZ's Annie and Susan, also while under continuous fire.

On 2 November, while 155 aircraft were providing suppressive fire for a convoy that had been ambushed just northeast of LZ Dory, an emergency call went out to all aviation support in the Duc Lap area.

While on a "Hunter-Killer" reconnaissance mission north of LZ Helen, two observation helicopters (Loachs) and one Cobra of the 7/17th Cavalry had been shot down within minutes of each other. All aircraft in the area responded. Cavalry ground troops were inserted and one pilot was extracted.

One pilot died in the crash, and two pilots and two observers were captured by the enemy. (One pilot and one observer were released some time later.)

Later on 2 November, four slicks and two guns from the 155 conducted an emergency resupply of 4,000 pounds of food and ammunition into LZ Dory, which was under attack and unable to be supplied by road.

The main offensive now shifted to Duc Lap, where LZ Mike Smith (set up from the extraction of Martha and Helen), began receiving 122mm rockets. At the same time Dak Sak (Duc Lap Special Forces Compound) received incoming rounds and recoilless rifle fire.

Late in the morning of the 6th, friendly units set up a defensive perimeter on the rim of the volcano overlooking Bon Sar Pa, south of Duc Lap.

On November 9th while flying a hot resupply into the volcano, two 155 aircraft were hit by .50 caliber fire and B-40 rocket fragments, resulting in one pilot wounded. He was later returned to CONUS.

On 11 November another aircraft was hit by 12.7 mm anti-aircraft fire southeast of Bu Prang, wounding one crewman. Later that morning one passenger was killed and two wounded when their aircraft took hits from 37mm anti-aircraft fire near Bu Prang.

One of the more significant actions took place on 17 November when 155 Falcon gunships expended five times on enemy locations near Bu Prang. As a result of Falcon gunship and Tac Air Support, 72 enemy were killed, more than half of which were credited to the Falcons.

In separate actions on the 17th, two Falcon gunships received damage from enemy fire.

On the 21st, Falcon guns expended three times on enemy locations, receiving credit for 23 enemy killed by air. During this action three gunships were hit by ground fire.

On 22 November, two Falcon gunships on standby at Gia Nghia were called to Duc Lap where they engaged enemy targets. Both ships took damage from

ground fire and the pilot of one ship was wounded in the leg, causing his return to CONUS.

On 25 November, another 155 ship took hits from ground fire while resupplying the volcano, wounding the pilot.

The activity at the volcano had now reached the point where the Stage Coach slick performing resupply to the troops on the rim would always receive ground fire, either enroute to or from the volcano, or from within the center of the volcano itself. Launching out of LZ Mike Smith, these resupply helicopters had to alter their routes and landing patterns every time they ran a mission. There were confirmed .50 caliber positions around three sides of the volcano, with heavy small arms and troop concentrations on the fourth side.

In addition there was only one small spot on the rim suitable for landing and this pad was constantly wracked with direct mortar, rocket, and artillery hits. An aircraft landing on the volcano had to be fast. If the cargo couldn't be kicked off or the wounded loaded within 27-28 seconds, they would have to wait for the next trip, because within 29-30 seconds after touchdown, a mortar round would strike the pad. Many a Stage Coach aircraft got an added boost on take-off from the concussion of a mortar round directly behind it.

This resupply and medevac mission put the crews under a great strain. Going into the volcano as many as four, five or six times in one day under these not-so-friendly conditions put the crews under so much pressure that the US ground commander insisted that the crews be changed daily so as not to overtax the same people day after day.

On 27 November, a gunship covering a volcano resupply mission received heavy ground fire and was forced to make an emergency landing in enemy territory. The crew destroyed the radios and cipher equipment before being

safely extracted by another gunship. The gunship was destroyed in place.

On 28 November, another pilot from the 155 was wounded when his ship received fire on the volcano.

On 4 December, while extracting a wounded ARVN from the volcano, the resupply command and control helicopter drew heavy ground fire, wounding a pilot.

It must be remembered that the battle of Bu Prang - Duc Lap was a full scale effort by the enemy. Although not mentioned in this history, the events and circumstances surrounding all operations 28 October - 28 December required aviators and crews to daily risk their lives in an effort to provide support to the besieged firebases and outposts.

Many more medevacs than are recorded were actually flown. Many more enemy were killed than the Falcons were given credit for. This is a result of the fluid maneuvering of both friendly and enemy units.

The constant enemy activity, the fact that if asked to pull a medevac a Stage Coach aircraft would go into an area that had been the target of over 200 enemy artillery rounds that day, the fact that though enemy mortars were sure to follow a resupply by seconds, all confirm that under the most severe of conditions the 155 Stage Coach-Falcon team can and will provide optimum support, without reservation and without delay to the units which it serves.

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155 in Vietnam 1969
The Company Pulls the Mission

The last and by far the busiest quarter of 1969 left in its wake a great sense of accomplishment, and a feeling of relief that the ordeal of two months was over. Although acting as controlling agency in conjunction with Vagabond Forward, the 155th operations had handled as many as fifty additional aircraft daily during November and December. This put quite a strain on 155 operations.

In addition, the company flew more hours than any other company in the 10th Aviation Battalion for long periods, still maintaining an extremely high aircraft availability record.

Although 28 aircraft from the 155 received damage from ground fire the knowledge of the enemy and terrain proved to be a major factor in minimizing damage to aircraft. Aircraft from other units, in trying to support the 155, proved that anything less than a complete knowledge of terrain and tactics creates a dangerous situation. Hour for hour, the 155 took less damage from ground fire than outside units unfamiliar with the area of operation.

Statistics for 155 support October - December

Hours	7,503
Sorties	19,156
Passengers	35,465
Cargo (tons)	424
• Emergency Medevac	79
Enemy IEDs	75
Structures destroyed	19

Aircraft availability was maintained through the quarter

October - December average UH-1H availability..... 97.5%

Average UH-1C availability for the period was..... 96.2%

On 26 December 1969 Maj Dean H Owen relinquished command of the 155 Aviation Company (AH) to Maj Gerard H Luisi, formerly assigned as Assistant Division Aviation Officer of the 25th Infantry Division.

The change of command ceremony was held at Camp Coryell and was attended by dignitaries of the 23rd ARVN Division, Darlac Sector, Detachment B-23 (Special Forces), COL Bill J. Wright, 17th Aviation Group (Combat) Commander, and LTC Samuel W. Patellos, Commanding Officer, 10th Aviation Battalion. Major Owen was presented the Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry by Colonel Khanh of the 23rd ARVN Division.