

ANNUAL SUPPLEMENT
HISTORY OF THE
155TH ASSAULT HELICOPTER COMPANY
10TH COMBAT AVIATION BATTALION
17TH COMBAT AVIATION GROUP
1ST AVIATION BRIGADE

1 January 1970 - 31 December 1970

prepared by
1LT JOSEPH PUBL
Unit Historian

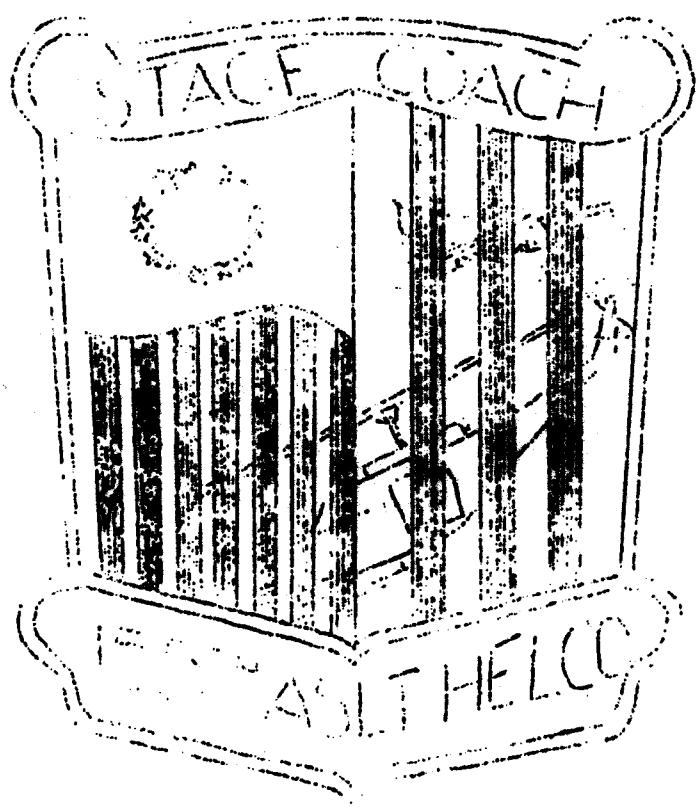
approved by
CHARLES E. MARKHAM
CPT, AR
COMMANDING

Ban Me Thuot, Republic of Vietnam

AF0 6627

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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 Company 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 Thot, 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 Company A became proficient in the new and demanding technique of flying in a combat zone, the company was declared operational on 1 June 1965. On 20 November 1965, Company A was redesignated as the 155th Aviation Company (Air Mobile Light). Unofficially the 155th was directed by the 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 Stagecoaches, 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 Pk in the north and from the coastal plains to Cambodia, the Stagecoach-Falcon team has flown

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over 130,000 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 units since its arrival in the Republic of Vietnam, with special tribute to those officers, warrant officers and enlisted men who gave their lives so that the Republic of South Vietnam and the Free World everywhere may look forward to the future with somewhat of a brighter ray of hope. Let us pray that those men did not die in vain.

IN MEMORIAM

1965

PFC Michael E. Davis	21 October 1965
WO1 Joseph S. Huyler	21 October 1965
SP5 William J. Johnson	21 October 1965
1LT Harold Preisondefer	21 October 1965

1966

WO Eugene W. Caswell	27 May 1966
WO Michael N. Coryell	30 November 1966
PFC Richard E. Dabney	27 May 1966
WO Raymond L. Ford	29 March 1966
PFC Gregory L. Miller	20 December 1966
WO Phillip C. Smith	29 March 1966
PFC James Walker	30 November 1966
WO Wilmer J. Willingham	30 November 1966
SP4 John W. Wood	30 November 1966

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1967

SGT Keith D. Griffin	16 March 1967
WO Terrance Nelson	23 May 1967
SP5 James G. Patterson	16 March 1967

1968

WO Willis W. Smith	19 April 1968
1LT Dennis E. Painter	19 April 1968
SP5 James Miculus	19 April 1968
SP4 Frank L. Freedle	19 April 1968
WO Paul N. Larson	19 April 1968
WO Herbert Hayashida	19 April 1968
SP4 John R. Brooks	19 April 1968
SP4 Oran B. McCullol	19 April 1968
1LT Fred O. Pratt	26 August 1968
WO William F. Harwood	8 September 1968
WO Redlich S. Koppel	8 September 1968
WO Richard C. Pugh	28 December 1968
SP4 James D. Budnazy	24 June 1968
SP5 William Eister	6 February 1968
SP4 Edward Milan	4 March 1968
SP4 James Swann	4 March 1968
SSG Robert Pinkston	13 March 1968

1969

WO Ronald McGary	3 January 1969
SP4 Richard See	8 January 1969
WO Terry L. Crawford	27 February 1969

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1969 (Continued)

SP5 Armando Ramirez	23 May 1969
PFC Santiago Quintana	23 May 1969
SP5 Rich R. Nodaris	5 November 1969
SP5 John A. Payne	5 November 1969
SP4 Richard G. Bauer	5 November 1969

1970

WO Marlin Johnson	20 April 1970
WO Derek Richardson	20 April 1970
1LT Jacob L. Kinser	8 March 1970
SP4 Wim Goeree	8 March 1970
WO David K. Erensteft	8 March 1970
SP5 William R. Rogne	8 March 1970
WO Paul E. Dolik	23 February 1970
SP5 David Nachtigall	23 February 1970
SP4 Calvin Serian	23 February 1970

..... this history is 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.

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155TH ASSAULT HELICOPTER COMPANY

COMMANDERS

MAJOR GERALD H. LUISI	1 January 1970 - 15 June 1970
MAJOR ROWLAND G. STEELE	15 June 1970 - 17 December 1970
CAPTAIN CHARLES E. MARKHAM	17 December 1970 - 31 December 1970

MISSION

The mission of the 155th Assault Helicopter Company is to provide general air support as directed by the Commanding Officer, 10th Combat Aviation Battalion in support of airmobile operations designed to search out and destroy the insurgent enemy and to extend Government of Vietnam control of the population.

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AREA OF OPERATIONS

Military Region 2, in which Ban Me Thuat is located and in which the 155th Assault Helicopter 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 400 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 Daklak, Kuhn Hoa, Quang 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.

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.

The mountain region extends from north to south almost the entire length of Military Region 2. Elevation ranges 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.

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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, Cam Ranh, Nha Trang, and Qui Nhon on the coastal plain; Dalat in the mountains; and Ban Me Thuat, 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 Thuat - Pleiku - Kontum
- Route #19 Pleiku - Qui Nhon
- Route #20 Saigon - Dalat
- Route #21 Ban Me Thuat - 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 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

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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 Ninh Thuan are little affected by either monsoon and have generally clear weather the year round.

Average rainfall in the mountain and plateau areas is 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.

Military Region 2 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 Thuat is the traditional capitol of these people. Military Region 2 is inhabited by approximately 500,000 Montagnards. The largest tribe in this region is the Rade, whose influence extends from Kontum to Ban Me Thuat.

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COMPANY OPERATIONS

The year opened relatively quiet with the 155th Assault Helicopter Company taking a long needed rest from the tension of heavy combat. The company continued to provide aviation support to the units with normal operations in the Daklak, Quang Duc, and Tuyen Duc Provinces. The required aviation support of the B-50 operations was terminated due to increased enemy activity in the northern part of Military Region 2. This mission was transferred to another aviation unit which was more closely based to the now B-50 area of operations.

In the month of January, there occurred a shift in the tactical situation in which the 155th was called on to provide support for the 4th Infantry Division operating in the Pleiku area. The 4th Infantry Division began receiving the priority of support and the daily commitment ranged from four to twelve UH-1H aircraft and from two to four UH-1C aircraft. The unit supplied assets for a total of twenty combat assaults with totals of 1884 troops and 11 tons of cargo lifted in these operations.

On the 6th of January at 0045 hours, Camp Coryell received five rounds of 82mm mortar. There were no personnel injured and only minor damage to one UH-1H. The remainder of the month was free from enemy mortar and rocket attacks.

With the arrival of February, the 155th resumed its support of the B-50 operations. This mission consisted of providing assets in support of reconnaissance patrols with a normal commitment of four to six UH-1H aircraft. The Air Force provided the FAC and gunship assets.

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Through out the months of February and March the unit continued to support the 4th Infantry Division in the Pleiku region as well as its commitments to the units in the Ban Me Thuat area of operation. A total of twenty-seven combat assaults were conducted with a combined hour total of 5838 for the two months.

Enemy activity around Camp Coryell remained negligible during this period of time. One very insignificant attack resulted in negative damage to personnel or material.

With the beginning of the second quarter came a build up of enemy activity in the Ban Me Thuat area. The 155th's aviation assets were called upon throughout the period to provide gun support, medevacs and resupply in support of the 23rd ARVN Division and its OPCON units. During this period the unit also continued to provide support of the local area of operation as well as B-50 and the 4th Infantry Division in Pleiku province.

The enemy opened the month of April with a literal "bong". A mortar attack on the 1st of April resulted in four WIA from the 219th RAC and three structures damaged. The compound withstood two more attacks during the month with damages to three UH-1C and five UH-1H aircraft.

On the 20th of April, four ships were conducting B-50 operations. A reconnaissance patrol came into contact with the enemy and an exfiltration was launched. LT Beaudreault and WO Wylie were piloting the pick up aircraft and as they touched down in the LZ they received intense enemy fire. Just as the aircraft lifted above the trees on take off, it was hit in the tail section by a B-40 rocket and crashed into the heavy canopied jungle. After climbing free of the wreckage,

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the crew began a running battle with the enemy that extended for better than thirty minutes. With gunship cover, they were able to find an LZ and were finally pulled from the jungle.

At approximately 1900 hours a second aircraft, piloted by WO Marlin Johnson and WO Derek Richardson, entered the area for extraction of a recon team. As they were about to touch down in the LZ they received a B-40 rocket in the cockpit, killing both pilots instantly. The crewchief and gunner survived the crash and were rescued but due to enemy fire the bodies were not recovered until a later date. This was truly a very dark day in the history of the 155th.

In May, a new offensive was launched against the enemy in the western regions of Military Region 2 and the Cambodian border areas. A major portion of the 155th's assets would be committed to this offensive over a period of three months. The first of such operations was conducted on 20 May, west of Due Lap. The 155th provided the bulk of the assets and a major portion of the planning. MAJ Gerald H. Inisi was the Air Mission Commander for the operation, controlling twenty-four lift aircraft, twelve heavy lift aircraft and eight gunships. The operation extended for a period of two weeks and was highly successful with the ground forces finding numerous caches of arms, medical supplies, food and vehicles.

The enemy continued his mortar attacks on the compound with two attacks during May. The compound took a total of eighteen rounds, resulting in minor damage of four UH-1H aircraft and negative casualties to personnel.

During the month of June the 155th AHC was called on to provide assets for two more assaults on the Cambodian border regions. These

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operations was weighed in the vast quantities of arms, supplies, and staging areas which were captured or destroyed.

The month of June also witnessed the innovation of the 2/1st Cavalry into the Ban Me Thuot area. With the 155th committed to supporting its local AO, B-50 and areas of Pleiku, the 2/1st was responsible for "Hunter Killer" tactics in the Ban Me Thuot provinces.

On the 9th of June, Camp Coryell once again came under mortar attack. A total of nine mortar rounds impacted in the camp area resulting in minor damage to two UH-1H and two UH-1C aircraft.

On the 11th of June, MAJ Gerald H. Luisi relinquished command of the unit to MAJ Rowland G. Steele.

The period of 1 July to 30 September reflected a change in tactical operations for the 155th. There was a general reduction in large scale operations and in turn an increase in smaller company or platoon size operations. This was also accompanied by a shift of support from the northern Pleiku regions to support of operations in the Tuyen Duc and Lam Dong provinces to the south. Aside from the normal assets in support of the 23rd ARVN Division, Detachment B-23 5th SFG, B-50 and units of the Ban Me Thuot-Duc Lap area, the 155th sent aviation assets in support of the 44th ARVN Regiment (Song Mon), 53rd ARVN Regiment (Di Linh), Division Light CP (Dalat) and Dalat MACV. There were also sporadic missions in support of Phan Rang MACV, Phu Bon Province, 129th AHC (Qui Nhon), Duc My Rangers, 25th Intell Team and G-2 Sniffer. During this period the 155th AHC earned a very definite membership in "Vagabonds of the Sky".

The enemy continued to harass Camp Coryell with mortar attacks during this period of operation. The first attack, and only attack for July occurred on the 18th of July and consisted of seven 82mm mortar rounds resulting in three damaged UH-1C aircraft.

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During the month of August, the 155th continued to support an AO extending from Pleiku and Qui Nhon in the north to Phan Thiet and Bao Loc in the south. There was a total of nine combat assaults conducted in the month of August but only one took on any aspect of a major assault. On the 17th of the month, the 155th assisted by the 281st AHC and the 243rd ASHC provided aviation assets for a 23rd ARVN Division assault on "Happy Valley", a long time stronghold of local Viet Cong and NVA. The operation was conducted without incident to aviation assets and with only limited contact on the part of the ground elements. The remaining assaults were conducted on a much smaller scale with normally a platoon size aviation unit in support.

The second attack for the quarter occurred on 1 August. The compound received approximately four to five rounds with negative damage to personnel or aircraft.

Along with the very diversified and far reaching "ash and trash" missions, the small scale assaults became the majority of the 155th support for the month of September. A total of nineteen combat assaults were conducted in support of the 44th, 45th and 53rd ARVN Regiments, B-23 5th SFG and 8th Cavalry. Of these assaults only two could be considered major. The first one took place on the 3rd of the month. This operation was in support of the 45th ARVN Regiment working in the "VC Mountain" region located southeast of Duc Lap. Weather on this particular day created a problem and delayed the take-off. When the assets were finally launched the weather was still somewhat marginal. All things went well until the lift platoon touched down in LZ #4, where they received intense semi-automatic fire. The Falcon gunships immediately suppressed the fire. However, one crewmember was wounded

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in the leg and was immediately medevaced to Ban Me Thuot and then to Cam Ranh Bay where he recovered from his wound.

On the 29th of September it was back into "Happy Valley" for the second major assault of the month. This operation was conducted entirely by the 155th and consisted of inserting 445 troops on a search and clear mission. The assault was completed without incident to aviation assets, and with relative success for the ground forces.

During the month of September Camp Coryell received three B-40 rockets on the 9th and light automatic and semi-automatic fire on the 27th resulting in negative damage or casualties.

The final quarter was characterized by a general reduction in operations for the 155th AHC. The unit continued to provide support for units operating in and around the Ban Me Thuot, Dac Lep, and Chia Nghiia with additional support to the Dalat, Di Linh, Bao Loc, Song Ma regions in the south and the Pleiku regions to the north.

The month of October was one of relative inactivity. The unit continued to conduct the normal "ash and trash" and direct combat support missions in its widely dispersed AO. In addition, the company conducted only four combat assaults during the month and all of these were platoon to section size aviation operations in support of the 53rd Regiment, 45th Regiment, 8th Cavalry and B-23 5th SFG.

Although the company's operations decreased in size and number, the enemy attacks against Camp Coryell increased somewhat in intensity. The first attack consisted of eleven mortar rounds fired into the compound. Neither of these attacks was effective, causing negative damage or casualties.

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October also witnessed a greatly needed internal improvement of the compound. During the month, the officers and enlisted men of the 155th cemented the bottom of the swimming pool. The pool previously had a polyvinyl chloride liner and due to rips in the liner, the pool had been closed for several months.

November opened with the future of the unit very much a question mark in the minds of all concerned. Rumor control was working overtime and had the company moving to all quadrants of the compass. Although the unit showed signs of apprehension towards its final destiny, it continued to provide support to units of its local and far reaching AO. The Stagcoach-Falcon team also began to frequent the Pleidjereng and Pleiku regions with and increasing regularity, usually to provide support for the 42nd and 47th ARVN Regiments.

The combat assaults for the month of November totaled four in number and continued on the smaller unit concept. One of these assaults, however, was a combined effort with the 52nd CAB in support of the 42nd Regiment. The assault was renewed offensive to rid the western border areas of the Pleiku region of a substantial enemy threat. The operation consisted of twelve lift aircraft, four heavy lift aircraft and six gunships in support of a ground element of approximately 450-500 troops. The ground operation lasted for over a month and was considered highly successful.

During the month of November, the compound remained free of enemy activity until the 30th when five sappers tried to breach the camp perimeter. The attack was repelled with possible enemy casualties, however these were unconfirmed by a gunship reconnaissance of the area.

With the close of November came the long awaited and disheartening word that the 155th AHC was going to deactivate and return to the states.

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The projected dates for the standdown and deactivation were given as 14 December 1970 to 15 January 1971.

With the onset of December, the Stagecoach-Falcon team entered its final fourteen days of operation. Although these were the last days of operations, they were far from the least active. The unit continued to support its normal missions, in addition to a daily commitment to the Pleiku area. During this final fourteen day period a total of 1049 hours were flown, logging 2835 sorties and 32 tons of cargo lifted. The majority of these statistics were in support of the nine assaults conducted in the Pleiku, Cheo Reo and "Happy Valley" areas. The greater portion of these operations were in support of units involved in saturation patrol tactics with a commitment of seven UH-1H and two UH-1C aircraft.

Enemy activity during the month of December consisted of two mortar attacks on the 2nd and the 19th of the month. On the 2nd of December, the compound received four 60mm rounds. There were no casualties among the personnel and only light damage to three aircraft. The attack on the 19th consisted of four rounds which over shot the compound and impacted in residential sections adjacent to the perimeter, resulting in several civilian casualties.

On 14 December 1970 at 2400 hours, the 155th Assault Helicopter Company ceased operations and began the massive task of deactivation. After a final company party the unit set to work on the Keystone turn-in with the same zealous and mission oriented attitude which had won its name and reputation over the past five and one half years of operations.

On 17 December, MAJ Rowland G. Steele relinquished his command of the company to CPT Charles E. Markham who would lead the company through

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its final days of existence as a unit in the Republic of South Vietnam.

The 155th compiled the following statistics during the year:

Hours Flown.....	25,251
Troops Lifted.....	113,538
Sorties.....	68,678
Cargo Hauled (Tons).....	1,560

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