

HIGHLIGHTS OF BLACKHAWK COMBAT OPERATIONS - REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM

In the day to day combat operations of an Assault Helicopter Company, certain events stand out above all others. These happenings relate to us the extraordinary achievements, the courage, the humor and the tragedies that come from the men of an Assault Helicopter Company; together they present us with a picture of the unit's character and spirit. The Blackhawks have a story to tell; a story about the making of the finest Assault Helicopter Company in Vietnam.

On 31 March 1967 the Blackhawks returned to their Tay Ninh Roost after two weeks of training with the 11th and 145th Combat Aviation Battalions. On 1 April 1967, with from 50 to 60 hours experience under their belts, the Blackhawks began flying as Aircraft Commanders and Pilots in their own ships for the very first time. That wasn't so easy; it took a lot of cools to assume command of that ship with only 50 hours experience and that not being in the left seat. Artillery wasn't so easy to translate yet, the tactical approaches were still uncoordinated abortions, emergency procedures were greased on the windshields, all those maps were unmanageable, and Charlie was down there just waiting!

The Blackhawks learned fast. With five slicks and a light fire team (LFT) under the operational control of the Hornets (116th Asslt Hel Co), the Blackhawk crews performed on combat assaults and on every kind of ash and trash mission conceivable.

3 April 1967

The first tragedy to beset the Blackhawks happened on this day. In the traditional Blackhawk effort to give of themselves 120%, Warrant Officer Corbett and Thornburg, crew chief SP4 Hodge, and door gunner PFC Matthews, volunteered to carry a load of radio equipment to the top of Song Be Mountain. They crashed on top of that mountain. The cause - inexperience, too much of a load, and moderate turbulence on top of a 3500' mountain. Warrant Officer Corbett sustained a broken nose; Warrant Officer Thornburg sustained a compound fracture of the arm and a damaged nerve. They were both evacuated to Japan. Warrant Officer Thornburg was further evacuated to the States. SP4 Hodge broke a bone in his foot and PFC Matthews sustained some deep cuts; they are both back on duty as Blackhawks. The aircraft was totaled.

6 April 1967

The Blackhawks were programmed to provide only five slicks and two guns until 10 April, but they were fast improving and requests for their support were growing. On this day they committed 10 and 4. This was the beginning of a trend that would prove the Blackhawks maintenance team to be the finest in keeping the "mostest up the longest".

8 April 1967

The Rat Pack gets its first sampan! While test firing their weapons west of Tay Ninh, Captain Kunde, Major Bauman, Captain Derosier, and Warrant Officer Stahlecker discovered a VC sampan. Alas! A moving target! The fun didn't last long; the two gun ships disintegrated the sampan after only two passes.

10 April 1967

The Blackhawks go fully operational. Flying in support of the 2d Bde, 25th Inf Div at Dac Hoa and the 36th RVN Ranger Bn at Tay Ninh, the Blackhawks committed 12 and 4, carried 624 troops, 68 tons, flew 148 hours on 322 sorties.

12 April 1967

The Blackhawks take their first hits. Warrant Officer Conde and Warrant Officer Taylor take 14 hits on the way out of the French Fort PZ. These two Blackhawks will go on to establish themselves as the biggest "magnet asses" in the company.

13 April 1967

2LT Jackson and WO Smith, flying a UH-1C, were making their second firing pass on a suspected VC headquarters when they were hit with intense automatic weapons fire. One round hit and exploded a 2.75" rocket as it was leaving the pod. The explosion nearly severed PFC Howell's arm. SP4 James T. Hester, the crew chief, immediately went to his gunner's aid. The wound was so devastating and bleeding so profusely, that SP4 Hester literally thrust his hand into Howell's chest cavity to pinch the artery off. His courageous action saved PFC Howell's life. The explosion also knocked the hydraulics out and severely damaged the control linkage. The engine temperature rose to above the red line. LT Jackson and WO Smith should have landed the aircraft immediately before the hydraulics completely froze or before the engine blew up. Rather than risk the loss of Howell's life both pilots elected to fly the crippled ship back to Da Nang. There they made a perfect, no hydraulics running landing on their very first try. PFC Howell's arm was saved and he was evacuated to the States. The Doctor's statement attested to the soundness of the pilots' decision to fly to Da Nang. If they hadn't PFC Howell most likely would have bled to death. SP4 Hester was recommended for the Silver Star. LT Jackson and WO Smith were recommended for the Distinguished Flying Cross.

14 April 1967

The first of many counter mortar standbys for the Rat Pack began tonight. So far they haven't been needed at Tay Ninh.

15 April 1967

At 2030 hours Major William F. Bauman received an emergency request for a Blackhawk Command and Control ship to aid in the defense of Prek Klok Special Forces Camp which was under a heavy mortar and ground attack. Major Bauman, Warrant Officer McGrady, Sergeant Stoewe and SP4 Dolan volunteered their services to crew the ship. These Blackhawks flew through IFR weather conditions for several hours as they assisted the Prek Klok Commander. During this time they landed outside the Prek Klok perimeter and evacuated eleven wounded back to Tay Ninh. They also assisted a LIFT in finding their way out of the weather and back to Tay Ninh. For their courageous actions and devotion to duty the pilots have been recommended for the DFC and the crew for the Air Medal with V Device.

16 April 1967

A big day for the Blackhawks. Four gun ships and five slicks displayed the courage and flying ability that would have been expected only of people with six to eight months combat experience. A Civilian Irregular Defense Group was ambushed near the Cambodian border. They were about to be overrun when Captain Kunde's and Captain Weaver's fire teams came to the rescue. Once again Blackhawks flew through thunderstorms where visibility was less than a quarter of a mile. The guns even lifted some Special Forces advisors into the beleaguered LZ. Captain Clarke then led five slicks of his third platoon into the LZ where they hovered around while under fire to pick up 23 wounded and KIA personnel. Once again the Blackhawks were recommended for a fist full of DFC's and AM v/"V"s.

20 April 1967

The Blackhawks experience their first Tac R at 1930 hours. Prek Klok is out of ammunition and the Blackhawks are called to conduct a night resupply. The mission went without a hitch.

21 April 1967

The Blackhawks receive their first RRF mission for II Field Forces. They weren't committed - a day of much needed rest!

23 April 1967

Black Baron executes its first Battalion lift. The Hornets lead, followed by the Blackhawks, while the Top Tigers bring up the trail. Thirty-six lift ships carry the 1st and 2d Bde of the 25th and the 1/34 Ranger Bn. The Blackhawks committed 15 and 3.

24 April 1967

Three slicks and one heavy fire team participate in the Blackhawks first Eagle flight for the 1st of the 9th Infantry.

25 April 1967

The Blackhawks are traveling far these days - the 9th Royal Australian Regiment at Vung Tau. The Rat Pack teaches the Vung Tau VC that it doesn't pay to shoot at helicopters with a big white rat painted on the front. When they did the Rat Pack retaliated by destroying 18 structures, 1 mortar position, 1 storage area, and 10 sampans.

27 April 1967

Another bump on a rough road to stardom. Warrant Officers Henry and Meade catch a tail rotor as they are going into a tight LZ. The aircraft is totaled and the crew sustains some bruises, but they are soon back in action.

30 April 1967

The Blackhawks finish April by committing 16 and 4 in support of the 9th at My Tho. They fly 456 sorties in 182 hours and carry 893 passengers. 2622 hours for the Blackhawks for their first month!

5 May 1967

A tactical emergency was relayed to Blackhawk Operations requesting a medivac and a light fire team when a Special Forces Camp at XE 165554 was overrun by the VC. Eleven casualties were evacuated to the 45th Surgical Hospital at Tay Ninh.

6 May 1967

On this day a Blackhawk was performing a Command and Control mission for the 25th Div. At 1500 hours the ship took a hit and was forced to make a precautionary landing to check for damage. At 1600 the same Blackhawk was again hit by enemy fire, however, he continued to fly his mission until 1620 hours when another hit forced him to make a precautionary landing. He again returned to the air to complete his mission without further incident.

8 May 1967

Warrant Officers Seale and Meade were taking off from Tay Ninh POL on a south departure, closed right traffic to the Roost, when either their engine failed or a short shaft failed. They were at about 40' in the air with less than 35 knots. Before they were aware of the problem they had lost most of their RPM. They fell to the ground and totaled the aircraft. WO Seale is flying again, WO Meade has been evacuated to the States.

12 May 1967

WO Tanner had an engine fail while at a high hover in POC. He did a good job of setting it down even though the skids did a split.

23 May 1967

The Blackhawks had their first, and probably last, maintenance stand down.

24 May 1967

The Blackhawks committed 15 and 4 and flew 200 hours.

27 May 1967

At approximately 1330 hours the Blackhawks were rallied for a tactical emergency. All Blackhawks left whatever resupply mission they had been on and headed for Bao Troi. In twenty minutes 10 ships were sitting on the strip waiting to be deployed.

30 May 1967

At dusk the Rat Pack discovered three gun or rocket positions 2' by 8' just off the Tay Ninh perimeter. They were destroyed.

The Blackhawks flew 3479 hours in May while the Hornets flew 3,352 hours.

9 June 1967

The 188th placed five UH-1H helicopters under Blackhawk control for training purposes. The Blackhawks and 5 Blackwidows supported the 1st, 2d Bds of the 25th Div. near the horseshoe at Das Hoa. Six Blackhawks received 50 caliber hits; two were evacuated and the rest continued to fly. Captain Presson was wounded in the arm, however, he courageously continued to lead the flight until the mission was accomplished. He received the DFC. Fourteen VC KIA's were confirmed and 10 more were possible's.

17 June 1967

The Blackhawks were on RRF status when at 1430 they were called on a Tac II at Lai Khe. They were released at 1900 hours.

22 June 1967

At 1900 hours 5 slicks and 2 guns were called out on a Tac II for the 25th Div.

23 June 1967

One scout dog was evacuated for injuries from NT 525020 to the Veterinary Hospital at Chu Chi.

24 June 1967

Tac II at Lai Khe at 1300 hours.

Chapter IV

Unit Operations

2 July 1967 - The Blackhawks were involved in a combat assault mission in which they received intense enemy automatic weapons fire. Warrant Officer John Lindeman and his co-pilot Warrant Officer Paul Walker were wounded simultaneously in the legs and the crew chief SP5 John Mackey rushed forward and removed the pilot from his seat and flew the aircraft to the medivac facility at Cu Chi. For his bravery and exceptionally outstanding skill which saved the lives of everyone aboard the aircraft, he was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross.

5 July 1967 - While conducting eagle flights for the 25th Infantry Division our "Rat Pack" gunships received enemy fire. They were cleared to return the fire and were credited with 14 Viet Cong KIA. They also destroyed four bunkers and four sampans.

7 July 1967 - A UH-1D helicopter flown by Major Charles E. Sauer and Captain Thomas A. Derosier was reported missing. Crews were scrambled immediately upon report of the missing Blackhawks. The aircraft was found in the vicinity of Minh Thanh and it had crashed and burned beyond recognition. No one knows the cause of the mysterious tragedy which took the lives of the four crew members aboard. Major Sauer, Captain Derosier, PFC Tatum and PFC Simon were the first members of the 187th Assault Helicopter Company to die in the Republic of Vietnam.

12 July 1967 - The Rat Pack gunships received enemy fire while supporting the 116th Assault Helicopter Company on a tactical emergency. One of the gunners was wounded by the deadly assault.

15 July 1967 - The Blackhawks responded to an emergency and evacuated nineteen U.S. troops and one ARVN during the darkness of night. The gunships fired 2.75 rockets at the enemy and were credited with three Viet Cong KIA.

16 July 1967 - While on a general support mission, Major Wolfe and WO1 Eckle experienced engine failure in their aircraft. The crew performed marvelously by landing the aircraft safely without damage or injuries.

26 July 1967 - The Blackhawks noticed for the first time since arrival in country, a new type of enemy aircraft fire (airburst) while on a combat assault mission.

August

1 Aug 1967 - The 187th flew combat assault missions for Second Brigade 25th Infantry Division. They carried 946 passengers and performed seven medivac missions. The Rat Pack killed one Viet Cong in the course of the action and were credited with two possible Viet Cong KIA. They also destroyed five huts, five bunkers and three sampans. Four Viet Cong were wounded by the Rat Pack and later captured by the ground troops.

4 Aug 1967 - What a day for the Rat Pack! They were credited with 18 Viet Cong KIA as the Blackhawks continued combat assault missions into an area four miles southwest of Cu Chi.

7 Aug 1967 - The Blackhawks were called upon to support the 199th Light Infantry Brigade in a combat assault which developed into the fiercest battle in the history of the 187th at that time. ^{4/12} Major William F. Bauman flew the command and control aircraft ⁶⁵ as his flight of UH-1D helicopters descended into the LZ and immediately encountered intense heavy automatic weapons and ²⁰⁰ small arms fire. ^{7 US} Four aircraft were immediately hit. More aircraft were requested to arrive on the scene seven miles north of Saigon to assist with the insertions which were to be continued. More insertions into the area were executed and the enemy's ground assault continued to lash at the Blackhawks flight. Several aircraft had been shot down in the LZ. Lieutenant David Eshelman flew into the hot LZ to rescue a ^{3 TOP} downed crew and received heavy automatic weapons fire. He managed to rescue the crew but his aircraft was shot down after departing the LZ. The 187th used 15 helicopters in the action and thirteen of these aircraft were hit, damaged or destroyed as a result of the intense enemy ground fire. The Blackhawks slept over night in Cu Chi following the battle. ¹¹ ^{AVN CO}

8 Aug 1967 - The Blackhawks assembled in the company area for a spot awards ceremony. Major General George P. Seneff, Commanding General of 1st Aviation Brigade awarded the Silver Star to Major William F. Bauman, Lieutenant Charles D. Eshelman, Captain Jerry T. Wagner, Captain Billie Pfessan, and Captain Gerald R. Kunde for demonstrations of gallantry in action in the battle of 7 Aug 1967. This was the largest awards ceremony ever held by the 187th. Five Silver Stars and 23 Distinguished Flying Crosses were awarded.

12 Aug 1967 - The 187th Finally began combat assault missions after recuperating from the aircraft shortage suffered following the action of 7 August 1967. They flew assaults for the 1st Infantry Division operating from Phuoc Vinh and Quan Loi.

30 Aug 1967 - While conducting combat assault missions in the vicinity of Phu Hoa Dong four miles east of Cu Chi, the Blackhawks received intense enemy ground fire from three sides of the LZ. Eleven aircraft were damaged by the ground fire and three Blackhawks were wounded. Another busy day for the Awards and Decorations Officer.

September

1 Sep 1967 - This day was established as "Unit Day" for the 187th Assault Helicopter Company, since the unit was activated at Fort Bragg, North Carolina exactly one year ago on the 1st of September. The Blackhawks celebrated the day with Pomp and Circumstance followed by steak dinners at the club. A CBS camera team was on hand to film the occasion as well as to cover the Blackhawks in action while they flew combat assault missions for the 25th Infantry Division on the same day.

11 Sep 1967 - The 187th was involved in a battalion size combat assault mission in the Hobo Woods. Major William Bauman led the flight of twenty helicopters into the LZ with full suppression. Following the Battalion operation, the Blackhawks supported the 25th ARVN Division in a combat assault training mission two miles east of Cu Chi.

20 Sep 1967 - Captain Billie Presson a flight platoon leader of the 187th was killed during the last extraction from what appeared to be a secure PZ. He had led the Blackhawk flight through out the day conducting Eagle Flights for the 25th Infantry Division in the Hobo Woods. Four ships were hit by enemy ground fire throughout the mission but continued to fly. Captain Presson Captain Presson died from a bullet wound in the head while sitting in the PZ as the troops loaded.

25 Sep 1967 - While operating from a PZ in the Hobo Woods, a flight of five Blackhawk aircraft led by Captain Jerry T. Wagner was subjected to an enemy mortar attack as the troops scrambled aboard. The flight departed before the mortar barrages were adjusted towards the point of touchdown, and there were negative injuries or damage. New aviators in the flight earned their Blackhawk patches that day.

28 Sep 1967 - The Blackhawks participated in a six company combat assault into an LZ ten miles southwest of Go Dau Ha. Major William Bauman led the formation and went in for a single ship rescue of a downed Blackhawk crew in an insecure area.

29 Sep 1967 - Warrant Officer Eric Mercer establishes a Blackhawk record - Two forced landings in two days. He managed to land safely without damage or injury on both occasions.

October

11 Oct 1967 - Captain Ellis M. Bailey died when his aircraft crashed into the water and sank with six people on board, while on operations south of Saigon with U. S. Navy Riverboats. Captain Bailey was the only person unable to get out of the aircraft, and it settled in 30 feet of water.

16 Oct 1967 - While operating in the vicinity of Duc Hoa, the Blackhawk flight received automatic weapons fire on short final to an LZ. They continued through the ballistic assault with negative suppression and discharged the troops. Two aircraft sustained bullet damage but continued to fly. Warrant Officer Frank Kurinec is officially designated the "Magnet" of the unit since his aircraft had received ten hits in two days of combat assaults.

18 Oct 1967 - Warrant Officer Joseph Henry and 1Lt Jerry Adams were flying general support missions for the 25th Infantry Division three miles northeast of Dau Tieng when they received enemy automatic weapons fire at 1400 feet. The crew chief Specialist fourth Class Richard Krawczyk realized that the ship had been hit but he did not realize that his flight helmet had taken a round also. He discovered this forty-five minutes later when he attempted to pull his visor down. The single enemy bullet had penetrated his visor and continued through the top of his helmet. A close shave for Krawczyk.

November

1 Nov 1967 - Major Bauman is promoted to Lieutenant Colonel.

6 Nov 1967 - Major Joseph C. Burns, formerly the executive officer of the 187th becomes the new Blackhawk commander in a change of command ceremony in Blackhawkland. Lieutenant Colonel Bauman became the Operations Officer of the 12th Combat Aviation Group. Major Thomas L. Hester became the Executive Officer of the 187th.

30 Nov 1967 - The Blackhawks complete an accident-free month. The maintenance officer Major James Stewart, compliments the officers and men of the 187th for the safety record.

December

6 Dec 1967 - The 187th was summoned as the Ready Reaction Force to support the 199th Light Infantry Brigade in the vicinity of Tan Uyen, RVN. The flight of trooper carrying helicopters received automatic weapons fire on short final to an LZ ten miles north of Bien Hoa. The "Rat Pack" pounced upon the enemy positions immediately with 2.75 rockets and miniguns. The enemy fire was silenced and the troops were inserted. Extractions began late in the afternoon and continued into the hours of darkness. Warrant Officer William A. Britt experienced an engine failure at 1915 hours and autorotated into an insecure area. He and his crew plus equipment were immediately evacuated from the area. The Blackhawks regrouped and performed a night insertion of security troops into the narrow LZ to protect the downed gunship over night. That was certainly a long day for the 187th.

22 Dec 1967 - The "Rat Pack" gunships were scrambled for counter mortar in the vicinity of Bo Tuc, 30 miles north east of Tay Ninh. The fire support base received a mortar and ground attack after dark and the "Rat Pack" interrupted the enemy assault with rockets and machine gun fire. They were credited with 10 Viet Cong KIA by actual body count at the location.

25 Dec 1967 - Christmas Day and the Blackhawks flew general support missions for the 25th Infantry Division. The crews delivered food, gifts, and tidings of great joy to U.S. and ARVN soldiers throughout the Third Corp Tactical Zone. The mess hall experienced the Yule tide spirit in grand style, for the flight crews returned for dinner which included a choice of chicken, steak, or lobster or even all three if one so desired.

January

1 Jan 1968 - The 187th gets a maintenance stand down. What a way to celebrate the new year. Everyone enjoyed the relaxation with the exception of the maintenance personnel of course.

2 Jan 1968 - The Rat Pack gunships killed six Viet Cong when they responded to a call for gunship cover in the early morning hours at Fire Support Base Burt twenty five miles northeast of Tay Ninh. The base had been hit by an enemy mortar attack and a ground attack was underway when the Rat Pack arrived on the scene and disrupted the enemy assault.

BATTLE
OF
SOVI CUT
3rd BDE 35th

ATTACKED BY
2 NVA REGIMENTS

B.C.O.
4/9TH INF
25TH I

5 Jan 1968 - The Blackhawks became involved in a fierce battle with a large NVA force while on short final to an LZ, thirty five miles northeast of Tay Ninh. Two helicopters were shot down by the heavy enemy automatic weapons fire. One crew member SP5 Kenneth Scruton was killed and the three remaining crew members Warrant Officer Mercer, Warrant Officer Jordan and SP4 Seitz were down in an enemy infested area for two hours before they were rescued. The only weapon among them was one .45 caliber pistol. The Blackhawks continued the combat assault missions into the hostile area and later that afternoon, they returned for extractions. Again they received heavy enemy resistance. The flight was mortared while shut down at a nearby fire support base. Throughout the day, ten crew members were wounded and eleven aircraft sustained damage from the ballistic assault.

6 Jan 1968 - The 187th gets a maintenance stand down in an effort to repair the heavily damaged aircraft from the previous day's action.

9 Jan 1968 - While inserting troops in an LZ thirty two miles northeast of Tay Ninh, the 187th received enemy anti aircraft fire. One gunship was hit by a .50 caliber round and wounded the pilot Warrant Officer Thomas Eatmon. The flight of troop carrying helicopters received air bursts while executing low level approaches into an LZ.

17 Jan 1968 - Warrant Officer John T. Jordan earned his second Oak Leaf Cluster to the Purple Heart. He was wounded twice by enemy ground fire within eleven days during the month of January and once in October 1967. On the 17th he was wounded in the leg by a .30 caliber round while flying on a general support mission at 2400 feet. After checking with the medical attendants at Dau Tieng, he remarked that it was only a scratch and continued to fly his mission.

February

16 Feb 1968 - Major Russell J. Folta became the commander of the 187th Assault Helicopter Company. The Blackhawks conducted a combat assault mission in an area five miles north of Saigon. The flight encountered enemy automatic weapons fire and Lieutenant Henry L. Wyatt II escaped serious injury when a round penetrated the floor and lodged in a book under his seat entitled "The Source". He wrote to the author, James Michener, about the incident. Within a week he received a letter from the author and an autographed copy of the novel. The Tay Ninh Base Camp was hit by an enemy rocket and mortar attack that night. Three helicopters were damaged by flying shrapnel. One crew member SP4 Dennis J. Lulof was killed and eight other Blackhawks were wounded. The attack continued until 0400 in the morning.

Chapter IV

JANUARY

1 Jan 1968 - The 137th gets a maintenance stand down. What a way to celebrate the new year. Everyone enjoyed the relaxation with the exception of the maintenance personnel of course.

2 Jan 1968 - The 7 T PACK gunships killed six Viet Cong when they responded to a call for gunship cover in the early morning hours at Fire Support Base Burt twenty five miles northeast of Tay Ninh. The base had been hit by an enemy mortar attack and a ground attack was underway when the 7 T PACK arrived on the scene and disrupted the enemy assault.

FEBRUARY

17 Feb 1968 - The 137th was granted another maintenance stand down so that the maintenance personnel could work on the damaged helicopters. All other personnel spent the day filling sand bags and digging deeper holes. Again that night, the base camp was hit by a rocket and mortar attack.

MARCH

1 Mar 1968 - The 137th begins a campaign to find another name for the unit. Another aviation unit arrived in Vietnam with a heritage to the name "Blackhawks" which dates back to 1832; the 7th Squadron, 1st Air Cav arrived in Bien, RVN.

3 Mar 1968 - Nine aviators from the 7th of the 1st Cav arrived for "in-country" training with the 137th. Regardless of the unit name conflict, the guests were accepted warmly in a manner for which the 137th has always been noted.

9 Mar 1968 - The aviators of the 7th of the 1st Cav Blackhawks returned to their unit after training with the 137th in combat assault and general support missions. New aviators have always been accepted warmly by the members of the 137th, but never in the past have any of them returned with our name.

10 Mar 1968 - The 137th Assault Helicopter Company voted on a new unit name. The name "Crusaders" met approval and a vigorous program was initiated to spread the word. New signs and symbols were placed in the company area.

23 Mar 1968 - On this day an official ceremony was conducted to publicly announce the new name of the 137th Assault Helicopter Company. From this day on the unit will be the "Crusaders". Television and radio personnel covered the event and the 25th Infantry Division Band added to the pomp and circumstance. The 137th served as a Ready Reaction Force and the ceremony was interrupted when the flight received an urgent call to respond immediately to an assault mission near Phuoc Vinh, RVN. The "Crusaders" scrambled to their helicopters and departed for the mission which continued through the hours of darkness. The ceremony was never finished.

DUC HOA

27 March 1968 The Crusaders flew Combat Assaults around the Duc Hoa Area. They flew 304 sorties, carried 525 passengers and 5 tons of cargo, they did not encounter any enemy fire.

APRIL

1 April 1968 Ap Bao The Crusaders working with the 199th Lt. Inf. Brigade flew 256 sorties and carried 302 passengers. The flight encountered light semi automatic fire from grid XT 300290, the Rat Pack was credited with 4 kills by actual body count and 1 estimated, with 9 structures and 7 sampans destroyed around the Ap Bao Area.

6 April 1968 The Crusaders working with the 199th Lt. Inf. Bdg. had another long day, they flew 406 sorties, carried 669 passengers and 4 tons of cargo. The flight logged a total of 119.1 hours.

11 April 1968 The Crusaders had another long, but fulfilling day. They worked with the 5th Ranger Gp. 101st ABN, with II Field Force as alt. The Crusaders flew a total of 539 sorties, carried 531 passengers and 10 tons of cargo, logging a total of 114.1 hours.

The flight encountered heavy small arms fire in the area due South of Tay Ninh along the river, but did not receive any hits. The Rat Pack was credited with 3 kills by actual count, with 2 sampans destroyed.

12 April 1968 A sad day for the Crusaders. While flying support for 3 BDE 25th Inf. Div. the Rat Pack received 670 hits from moderate anti-aircraft fire, resulting in 3 KIA's and 1 WIA. The Area of operation was North East of Dau Tieng at the Northern tip of the Michelin Rubber Plantation. The flight flew 351 sorties, carried 695 passengers and logged a total of 89.6 hours.

29 April 1968 The Crusaders worked again, with the 3 BDE 25th Inf. Div. in the Michelin Rubber Plantation East of Dau Tieng. The flight received light small arms fire, resulting in 1 WIA, who was medevaced to Long Binh.

The flight flew 293 sorties, carrying a total of 683 passengers.

1 MAY

1 May 1968 The Crusaders supporting the 1 BDE 25th Inf. Div. flew 320 sorties, carried 617 passengers and logged 81.4 hours. The flight received one hit from light small arms fire at XS 555937, West of Saigon at the horse shoe.

8 May 1968 The Crusaders again supported the 1 BDE 25th Inf. Div. flying 349 sorties, carrying 429 passengers. The flight received 3 hits from light small arms fire in the Ap Ria between Trang Bang and Trung Lap, grid XT 542213.

11 May 1968 The Crusaders flew 396 sorties, carried 744 passengers and logged 112.7 hours while supporting the 3 BDE 25th Inf. Div. the flight again received small arms fire, from the Michelin Rubber Plantation grid XT 542539, resulting in 1 hit on a UH-1D aircraft.

14 May 1968 The Crusaders supporting 1 BDE 25th Inf. Div. and 3 BDE 25th Inf. Div. flew 275 sorties carried 814 passengers and logged a total of 102.3 hours.
The flight received heavy anti aircraft fire 3 klicks East of Trang Bang along Hwy 1, grid XT 533187, which resulted in 2 aircraft hits and 1 crew member wounded. The flight was credited with 1 kill by actual body count.

15 May 1968 The Rat Pack, while working for 1 BDE 25th Inf. Div., spotted a 122 mm rocket launcher North of Tay Ninh Base Camp grid XT 091545, the rocket launcher was brought under fire by the Rat Pack and destroyed.

19 May 1968 The Crusaders, while flying for the 1st BDE 25th Inf., flew 318 sorties and 549 passengers. They encountered enemy fire and was cleared to return fire. One UH-1D helicopter received shrapnel from a 2.75 and two enemy bunkers were destroyed.

25 May 1968 While supporting the 1st Bde. 25th Inf. Div., the Crusaders flew 501 sorties and carried 788 passengers. Enemy fire was received and 3 UH-1-D's received hits from automatic weapons fire.

29 May 1968 While flying Combat Assaults for the 2nd Bde 25th Div., the Crusaders received enemy fire. After obtaining clearance the Rat Pack rolled in and soon claimed possible 10 killed and one sampan.

JUNE

1 June 1968 The Crusaders while flying CA for the 2nd Bde flew 362 sorties and 468 passengers. They received moderate automatic weapons fire and took 4 hits. They quickly responded and claimed 2 VC killed by body count.

19 June 1968 While working for the 3rd Bde 25th Div., the Crusaders flew 392 sorties and carried 720 passengers. Three enemy bunkers were spotted and destroyed.

24 June 1968 The Crusaders, supporting the 101st ARB, flew 363 sorties and carried 687 passengers. Total hours flown was 122.5; another long day for the Crusaders!

28 June 1968 Flying for the 101st ARB, the Crusaders encountered heavy small arms fire from the area North of Trang Bang. They received one hit and quickly responded killing at least one VC.

JULY

12 July 1968 While flying Combat Assault for the 101st Airborne, the Crusaders received small arms fire. The Rat Pack rolled in and destroyed 4 structures and killing at least 2 VC. They got one secondary explosion from their attack.