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06May66-II Corps-Well Covered by 52nd Avn. Bn.

**PLEIKU, (USARV-IO)**-Its headquarters and major base is 2500 feet above sea level in the Central Highlands, an old French airfield, now known to everyone as Camp Holloway. From it, the Army's 52nd Aviation Battalion flies in support of all American and allied troops in the II Corps Tactical Zone.

The II Corps area covers 84,000 square kilometers-more than 45 percent of South Vietnam's land mass - and contains every type of geography found in the coastal plains, jungle war in the dense rain forests of Binh Dinh and Kontum Provinces, mountain operations on the Annamite Chain and more orthodox warfare on the rolling plains of the central plateau.

The Winter Monsoon begins on the coast when the Summer Monsoon ends in the mountains and plateau. It is always raining somewhere in II Corps.

But the 52nd has been in the highlands a long time. Its pilots and crews have written the book on flying in this area.

The battalion arrived in Pleiku from Ft. Ord Calif in the spring of 1963. Pleiku was occupied then by the 81st Transportation Company (now the 119th Avn Co.), flying CH-21 "Shawnees," the old "Banana" choppers. Three other aviation units, the 8th TC (now 117th Avn. Co.) in Qui Nhon, the 18th TC in Nha Trang and the 23rd Special Warfare Aviation Detachment (armed OV-1 "Mohawks"), were assigned to the battalion.

The base was called Old Pleiku, to distinguish it from the new strip being constructed for the Air Force a few miles away. More informally, and with heavy irony, it was called the "Country Club."

On the Fourth of July, 1963, it was dedicated Camp Holloway, after CWO Charles E. Holloway, who was killed during an aerial assault with the 81st TC on Dec. 22, 1962.

During the summer of 1963 the 62nd [sic] replaced the CH-21s with UH-1B "Iroquios" helicopters. Half of each company underwent training and familiarization with the new choppers, the other half remaining operational with CH-21s. In this way the battalion completed all its missions during the transitional period.

Other changes were made during that summer. The 18th TC was assigned to another battalion and the 23rd SWAD went south, to the Mekong Delta. New units were added. The 117th Avn. Co. remained with the 62nd [sic] until the fall of 1965, when it went to Dong Ba Thin, near Cam Ranh Bay.

Today the battalion's aviation units are the 199th, 155th, 161st, 170th and 2nd Platoon, 172nd Aviation Companies, all chopper units; and the 219th Avn Co. flying more than 40 O-1F "Bird dogs."

As the war expanded, the battalion's operations grew larger. Company-side [sic] airlifts of the 9th, 22nd and 25th ARVN Divisions became battalion, then multi-battalion-size lifts. The enemy shifted his attention from the Delta to the highlands and the 62nd's [52nd] operations were no longer anonymous. More and more the battalion found itself in the spotlight.

In September 1964 more than 100 helicopters stood by at Ban Me Thuot, posed to evacuate American and Vietnamese during the great Montagnard revolt of that time. The revolt was broken by U.S. Army Forces advisors and few ships were used.

In February, 1965 Pleiku and Qui Nhon were hit 48 hours apart by mortars, demolitions and small arms fire. The 62nd [sic] lost nearly 30 men in the two attacks.

Later that month, Lt. James Bowers, of the 117th Avn. Co., spotted a camouflaged arms runner in Vung Ro Bay, north of Nha Trang. The ship was sunk by VNAF aircraft and ground troops later recovered more than 100 tons of weapons, ammunition and supplies-including 2500 rifles, 1000 submachine guns and 100 carbines. The ship and cargo were undeniably traced to Hanoi.

In September a company of 101st Abn. Div. soldiers was dropped into the center of a fortified VC battalion camp. During the furious battle which followed, a unit of the 52nd made three troop lifts, ending the day with one flyable UH-1D out of eleven. The enemy battalion was destroyed.

The 52nd relieved Duc Co in July and evacuated Dak Sut after it had been overrun in August. The 52nd relieved the Plei Me camp in October and airlifted 2500 troops during the 1st Cavalry Division's operation in the Ia Drang valley.

In 1965, men of the 52nd were awarded eight Silver Stars, seven Distinguished Flying Crosses, six Soldier's Medals, 29 Bronze Stars and 767 Air Medals. The flew more than 134,000 sorties, logged 76,000 combat hours in the air and carried nearly 114,000 passengers.

Recently the battalion supported the 1st Cav in Operation Masher/White Wing near Bong Son. In one engagement, gun ships of the 119th Avn Co. caught a large VC unit in the open and killed 172. During the 25th Infantry Division's Operation Taylor in late February, the 170th Avn. Co. flew 185 sorties in a seven-hour period, carrying 1100 troops and 8000 pounds of cargo.

The 52nd lifted ROK Marines during Operation "Tiger. In its latest operation, the battalion supported the 3rd Brigade, 25th Inf. Div. in Operation Lincoln, south of Pleiku.

The 52nd Combat Aviation Battalion is commanded by Lt. Col. Robert L. Cody.

**Photo - O1-F Birddog of 219th Avn Co.**

**- 170th Avn Co in Operation Lincoln near Plei Me.**

Personal Note: (The 161st AHC was the parent unit of the 123rd Aviation Battalion. Which included A/123rd, B/123rd, C/123rd, F/8th Cav, D 1/1st Cav, the 178th AHSC, 132nd AHSC helicopter companies. Support was provided by the 406th TC which later became E/723rd Maint. in order to allow DS maint. for the unit.)

03Sep66 **Bird Meets 'Bird' Pilot Loses Out (also in 17Sep66 issue)**

**NHA TRANG, (17TH AVN-IO)**

- Army chopper pilot George Harrison wants to know if you can get the Purple Heart for a bird wound.

Assigned to the 17th Aviation Group's 155th Assault Helicopter Co. 52nd Aviation Battalion, the lieutenant was in a formation of UH-1D's at low level over Vietnam's Central Highlands when he heard a sharp crack and felt a heavy jolt against his leg.

Looking down, Harrison saw broken pieces of his Huey's plexiglass chin bubble splattered over the cockpit floor. He also noticed blood trickling down his leg.

Harrison had been in Vietnam only about a month and said that at that moment he felt certain he'd taken his first enemy bullet.

"I felt that blow on my leg and saw the blood and I was sure I'd been shot," he recalled.

"We broke formation to avoid drawing any more fire, then I looked down again."

Further investigation revealed that it was not a bullet wound the 24-year old aviator had suffered by a direct bird hit. Crashing through the tough but vulnerable chin bubble of the aircraft, a large bird had been cut by the sharp fragments and then struck Harrison's leg.

Harrison couldn't identify the fowl by species, but smiled when he said, "It must have been one of theirs'."

08Oct66-52nd Avn. Bn. Making History; Calls Itself "Montagnard AF"

**PLEIKU, (I FFV-IO)**-Although the unit is carried on the Army's rolls as the 52nd Aviation Battalion, the men call themselves "The Montagnard Air Force."

If this is history-making, the name suits the battalion; for its men are making aviation history like the old-time Army Air Corps pilots who used to carry the mail back in the 1920's.

Almost everyone around the battalion knows that the unit arrived in Vietnam in March 1963, but that's ancient history. Right now the only history anyone around here is concerned with is tomorrow's history-being made today in Operation Paul Revere, for example.

The big job of the unit, commanded by Lt. Col Roy Rice, is supporting the 3rd Brigade of the 25th Infantry Division in its sweeps throughout the Central Highlands of Vietnam.

With three assault helicopter companies-the ubiquitous Huey's - an assault helicopter support company of Chinooks and part of a Bird Dog light plane aerial reconnaissance company, the "Montagnard Air Force" has been making life miserable for the Viet Cong since Paul Revere started.

All told, Colonel Rice has just under 100 choppers and planes in his command, and at any given time he probably has 70 of them in the air. The only time the pilots and crews can be sure of resting is when the rain is three-feet deep and the shotgun riders can't see the muzzles of their machine guns. During Paul Revere there's been little rest for anyone in the battalion.

Between May 10 and September 1 pilots and crews of the gunships, troop carriers, cargo choppers, and recon planes flew over 21,000 hours in over 64,000 sorties.

During that time they carried over 78,000 passengers -- fully equipped infantry soldiers, for the most part-and just under 5000 tons of cargo - artillery, ammunition, rations, water, gas, and other supplies and equipment.

As part of their work they also evacuated 291 wounded soldiers and killed 129 enemy.

Flying the helicopters calls for far more, however, than loading troops and cargo and depositing the load. It also calls for shooting and the choppers of the 52nd are equipped for assault work. Gunships are armed with combination of rockets, machine guns, and grenade launchers; and even the slicks, the troop-carrying Huey's mount a pari of M-60 machine guns.

During Paul Revere the pilots and gunners of the "Montagnard Air Force" fired over 9000 2.75-inch rockets , over one million rounds of machine gun ammunition, and about 13,000 40mm grenades.

When the big Chinooks carry the artillery, they carry it ready to fire and fight. A 105mm howitzer crew sits in the helicopter, the weapon is slung below, and the ammunition is carried below the howitzer. When the pilot drops the howitzer, he insures that the tube is already pointed in the general direction of the enemy.

Pilots even take prisoners. Near Ban Me Thuot a chopper crew of the 155th Assault Company spotted an enemy soldier on the ground waving a whit cloth. The chopper quickly landed and snatched up a VC sergeant, lost,

sick, and fed up with the war. As a result CWO Robert M. Lorette and CWO Harold C. Pauley are credited with one half a POW.

Every pilot in the battalion flies including the staff members, who fly combat missions daily. Recently the 52nd Artillery Group, a heavy artillery outfit, radioed that its gunners at Duc Co and Plei Me, both scenes of hot fighting, were out of food and water.

Flying six hours per chopper in weather so bad they had to circumnavigate rainstorms as well as Viet Cong, four "Montagnard Air Force" staff officers flew in 9000 pounds of water and C-rations to the hungry and thirsty cannoneers.

Higher headquarters has recognized the work of the men of the 52nd. So far during Paul Revere 2163 Distinguished Flying Crosses, Air Medals and Army Commendation Medals have been awarded officers and enlisted men of the battalion.

But probably the most unusual assignment of Paul Revere was that handed Capt. Richard L. Smith, now assistant operations officer of the battalion.

"I was flying a Huey with the 170th Assault Company and we were supporting a battalion of the Republic of Korea Tiger Division. In one day I made 69 sorties carrying 39,000 pounds of cargo and about 700 gallons of water in 55-gallon drums in addition to 160 soldiers.

"But what really made those Koreans happy was the delivery of rations. In addition to rice, I carried 55-gallon drums of kimchee for them. The job took eight hours and 35 minutes during which time the engines were never turned off.

08Oct66-Pilot Hears Of Son's Birth Over Radio

PLEIKU, (155th AVN-IO) -

Chief Warrant Officer Robert E. Weimer admitted to being a little concerned when his Commanding Officer ordered him by name to switch frequencies on the radio of his UH-1D helicopter, in flight.

"I knew there had to be something wrong," said Weimer, "especially when he called me by name."

Flying South of here for the 155th Assault Helicopter Company, 52nd Aviation Battalion, Weimer tuned to the designated channel and 155th Commander, Maj. Robert V. Atkinson, contacted him.

"Robert Weimer, Memphis, Tenn-wife Donna requests serviceman be notified she had a 7-pound, 13 ounce boy. Doctor advises both mother and child doing fine." This straight from the services of the International Red Cross.

Weimer's happy reply over the birth of his first born came back, "Thank you, Thank you."

Co-pilot John Frosting said Weimer's sun visor was down and hid any expression on his face. "I was standing by on the controls in case he dropped them, though" Frosting added.

11Nov66-Helicopter Blasted by Its Pilot

**NHA TRANG, (17th AVN-IO)** -All the Biffs, Bangs, and Pows of the entire Batman series rolled into a big Ka-whoom would not compare to what WO Bill Bruce pulled off when he blew up a helicopter the other day.

You might say the act was necessary. The Army Huey lay hopelessly broken on the hostile floor of the Chu Pong Valley in a jungle of 100-foot trees. There was just no way to pull it out. Using a winch from a Chinook helicopter, the big two-rotored chopper couldn't hover low enough to make its cable reach.

Bruce and his crew of maintenance men from the 155th Assault Helicopter could get the radios and some other light gear off the crumpled chopper without much trouble. But with night falling and only a handful of troops available to defend the ship, its metal hull and hard-to-remove equipment would be the enemy's by dawn if something were not done.

A check with the 52nd Combat Aviation Battalion field headquarters at Catecka gave Bruce permission to obliterate the chopper.

Packing a rocket launcher and an M79 grenade launcher, the maintenance chief and his team fell back to cover and blazed away at the wrecked chopper. The initial shell explosions were followed by a full-scale baroom as the fuel tank erupted, and the helicopter began burning briskly.

The pilot who delivered Bruce and company to the crash scene, Capt. Johnny L. McCullough, said he thought "it made a pretty bonfire."

Bruce, with an eye to taxpayers' sensibilities, emphasized that troops blow up their own equipment only in extreme cases, as a last resort.

31Dec66-**Choppers Lift Out Troops**

**NHA TRANG, (17th AVN-IO)** -Automatic weapons fire and grenade bursts, bore witness that the small Army patrol had established contact.

The outnumbered infantrymen had radioed for a liftout and were battling to keep the VC off their backs until Hueys of the 155th Assault Helicopter could get there.

Four days earlier, the 155th, of the 52nd Aviation Battalion, had carried this small force into some of Vietnam's roughest terrain, 50 miles northwest of Pleiku in Operation Paul Revere IV. Now airpower was needed to break the enemy attack so the men could be extracted.

Air Force Phantoms tore in, strafing the Cong positions. One dropped a 50 pound bomb that ripped a hole in the foliage just big enough for a line to be later dropped through by helicopter to lift out the ground troops.