

17

JANUARY 1-31 DECEMBER 1969

As the year before, Camp Coryell was again subject to constant attacks from the local VC and the NVA.

Ay 0100 hrs. on 2 January 1969, Camp Coryell came under its first hostile attack of the year when 10 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 hrs., less than 5 hrs. after the first attack, 4 rounds of B-40 rockets struck the compound, also with negative damage or casualties.

Again on the 3rd of January, a Stage Coach aircraft crashed into a mountain side between Ban Me Thuot and Dalat, after going IFR in low clouds. The pilot, WO/1 Ronald S. McCrary was killed in the crash. The aircraft commander, crew chief, and gunner (unknown) were seriously injured.

On 6 January, Camp Coryell again came under enemy mortar attack, 14 rounds of 82mm mortars struck the compound from unknown enemy positions. 6 UH-1H's were damaged and one vehicle damaged in the attack. Attacked again on 8 January at 2310 hrs., by an unknown size enemy force using 82mm mortars, twenty rounds struck the compound, damaging three structures and wounding 2 men, one of whom, SP/4 Richard C. See, 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 hrs. 30 rounds of 82mm struck the compound from an unknown enemy location. Negative damage resulted from this attack.

In March the tempo picked up again, with Camp Coryell receiving 6 mortar and rocket attacks. The first on 4 March, occurred at 2310 hrs. 20 rounds of mortar fire entered the compound with no casualties or damage. Later that night, on 5 March at 0130 hrs., 14 rounds of 75mm recoilless was received, damaging 5 aircraft. At 2145 hrs. on 12 March the 155th again came under light attack. Negative damage resulted from 2 B-40 rockets received. The same night, at 0045 hrs. on 13 March, we were attacked again. This time 7 rounds of 82mm mortar struck the compound, resulting in damage to 5 UH-1H's and UH-1C.

On the morning of 21 March at 0130 hrs, fifteen rounds of 75mm recoilless rifle landed in the compound, damaging one UH-1C. On Sunday March 23, the 155th was attacked in the midst of a company party. As personnel were grilling steaks and opening beer, six rounds of

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122mm rockets fell on the compound at exactly 1805 hrs, just 5 minutes after the scheduled start of the company party, which was by the way, was being boycotted by Dai-Uy Fearless Frearson and Groovy Ghru Green who were leading a hippie style demonstration because the 2nd flight platoon was not invited to the party. 4 enlisted men were wounded during this attack and one VC rocketeer was captured. 2 minutes after the first round exploded the Starlight Ship and the Falcon guns were in the air. WO/1 Jeff Schrader piloted Falcon 077 alone because the crew, SP/5 Cecil R. McGee and SP/4 Tom Mullen were pinned down by the rocket fire.

Along with the step-up in enemy activity in the Ban Me Thuot area, the Falcons have been seeing their usual amount of action. The month of March started off with a series of visits to Dak To, and ended with a couple of skirmishes around the local area, resulting in a couple dozen KIA's. A light fire team headed by WO/1 Jeff Schrader and Falcon 077 crewed by SP/5 Cecil R. McGee and SP/4 Tom Mullen, gunner accounted for 7 of the kills when a Special Forces Platoon took on a company of NVA just south of Ban Blech. A midnight mortar attack was quited by the Falcon guns and produced three more kills.

During the entire year of 1968, Camp Coryell came under attack 28 times. During the quarter 1 January to 31 March 1969, there were already 12 enemy attacks directed at the compound, a 40% quarterly increase.

## 155TH 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, Khan Hoa, and Phu Bon provinces.

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

Highlights of the period were:

On the 3rd 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, crew chief and gunner were seriously injured.

On 5 January the 155th participated in a multibattalion combat assault just north of Ban Me Thuot. Providing 10 slicks and 4 guns, the company airlifted 611 troops in 309 sorties in support of the 23 ARVN Division and 2/35, 4th Infantry Division.

On 17 January the 155th provided 9 slicks and 2 guns to the 45th ARVN Regiment, 23rd 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 6 slicks and 2 guns. Following up with logistic and gun support, the Falcons were credited with 6 enemy killed by Aircraft and 4 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 Prang, Buon Ho, Buon Blech and Quang Nhieu. The result of the 155 support activities for the quarter ending 31 March are as follows

HOURS FLOWN	6,235	STRUCTURES DESTROYED	72
SORTIES FLOWN	21,517	SAMPANS DESTROYED	1
PASSENGERS	32,015	POW CAPTURED	1
CARGO (TONS)	433	EMERGENCY MEDIVAC	11
ENEMY KBA	72		

"GROWTH OF THE 155TH"  
1 JANUARY - 31 MARCH 1969

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

Penepriming of the refueling area and airstrip  
Continued improvement in perimeter defenses  
Stepped up bunker construction  
Renovation of the company dayroom  
Expansion of the 8th Med. Det. laboratory  
Increased emphasis on personnel training programs  
Initiation of night flight training program to increase each individuals night proficiency and provide increased overall mission readiness capability.

Others lost during this period are: WO/1 Terry L. Crawford 27 Feb. '69

THE 155TH IN VIETNAM 1969 - THE ENEMY  
1. APRIL - 30 JUNE

On April 6, 1969, at 2320 hrs, Camp Coryell came under enemy attack. 14 rounds of 82mm mortars, fired from unknown enemy locations, struck the compound, damaging 8 UH-1H aircraft and 2 UH-1C gunships. Also damaged were 2 vehicles.

Again, on April 25, 1969, the 155th was the target of an enemy attack. 10 rounds of 82mm mortars hit the compound, damaging 4 UH-1H aircraft, 2 vehicles and two structures.

During the month of May, Camp Coryell fell victim to enemy mortar attacks on only 2 occasions, being hit 3 times on the same day in one instance. On May 16, 1969 at 0005 hrs., 14 rounds of 82mm mortars struck the compound, fired from unknown enemy positions. 3 UH-1H slicks and 2 UH-1C gunships were damaged at this time. 1 EM, PFC Gomez was hit with shrapnel from the mortar attack and suffered severe chest injuries. First Aid was administered on the bunker which he was guarding and a short time later he was medevaced to the 8th Field Hospital in Nha Trang. At 0130 hrs., 5 rounds of 82mm mortars were received, this time with negative damage. Again, at 0200 hrs., the 155th 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.

In early May while supporting Combat Assaults near Bu Prang Falcons 077 and 484 lead by WO/1 Jeff Schrader crossed the Cambodian Border to investigate the sighting of some heavily used trails. A staging area, classroom area and structures were located by the light fire team. WO/1 Schrader decided to engage the structures and immediately came under intense enemy ground fire from all directions. The light fire team was then joined by 2 other Falcon gun ships as the enemy fire continued to intensify, several structures were destroyed as well as numerous enemy troops killed by this action. As a result of this engagement ARVN troops to include ARVN Marines were airlifted into the Special Forces Camp at Bu Prang. C-130 aircraft poured U.S. and ARVN troops onto the airstrip, combat assaults met with heavy resistance, and many aircraft took hits from the heavy ground fire.

An Australian ground unit took command and control of the engagement and directed operations under the intense automatic weapons and mortar fire while cutting down trees to make landing zones, hampered by

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1 APRIL - 30 JUNE 1969

constant incoming 82mm mortar fire from several locations, the Australians would direct in-coming aircraft to the LZ's between in-coming mortar fire. As the mortar tubes were identified, the Falcons would roll in and destroy them. On one occasion while a lift ship was attempting to off-load its troops, an Australian Officer, who was under fire and pinned down, came onto the radio and screamed at the Stage Coach Slick to get out of the landing zone, that mortars were coming in, before off-loading, the ship began to pull out just as the mortars landed, giving the lift ship an extra boost of power leaving the LZ, the Australian's actions surely saved the lives of the troops and crew of the Stage Coach aircraft. It was later learned that this area was part of the Central Headquarters of the North Vietnamese Army operating in the south.

On May 22, 1969, at 0115 hrs., Camp Coryell came under combined mortar and sapper attack. A total of 56 rounds of 60 and 82mm mortars, B-40, B-41 rocket propelled grenades 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 8 structures and 9 vehicles. One civilian guard was slightly wounded.

During this time frame, the 155th was engaged in B-50 missions. This was an operation with 5th Special Forces, Air Force and the 155th Aviation Company (AML). These operations included 4 slicks and 4 gun ships. The Air Force at first supplied the armed helicopter support but due to heavy losses, the hard hitting Falcons took on the task. The job consisted of inserting and extracting Long Range Reconnaissance Patrols. This was often accomplished in the face of intense enemy fire.

Related to the above named B-50 Missions, May 23, 1969 brought with it one of the saddest days in the history of the 155th Assault Helicopter Company. At approximately 1100 hrs., on May 23, 1969, while on Ban Me Thuot stand-by, Falcon gun ships 077 and 484 lead by WO/1 Jeff Schrader were scrambled to their ships. Once airborne they were told to expedite their flight to Duc Lap Special Forces Camp and upon arrival, re-arm if they expended and re-fuel definitely. As the re-fueling was completed

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the Falcon aircraft were contacted by special forces personnel from Duc Lap and received grid co-ordinates, radio frequency and call sign "Eagle 6" to contact when they arrived in the area. As the fire team closed in on the area, they contacted "Eagle 6" and learned that one of their slicks had been shot down in the PZ and crashed while receiving heavy enemy ground fire and that the ship hit so hard that the gunner had been thrown from the ship with his seat belt and the crew chief was pinned under the transmission.

As the Falcon guns arrived on station, they immediately came under attack from well entrenched NVA forces using 37mm anti aircraft and automatic weapons fire. The Falcons began to engage targets of opportunity which were many, and not well camouflaged, destroying many. The Green Hornet gunships had been covering the extraction from an altitude of about 1,500 to 2,500 feet and were not very effective in laying down cover for the lift ships.

Green Hornet lead contacted Falcon lead, WO/1 Jeff Schrader and advised him that 2 NVA soldiers had just entered a hooch in front of his flight, and to "hose them down", WO Schrader engaged the target with 2 2.75 inch rockets and destroyed the structure.

WO/1 Schrader assumed command and directed the low level flight operations. Special Forces and CIDG forces who were on the downed ship were desperately in need of assistance as the Falcon flight began to circle the downed unit providing 360° of cover fire for them and protecting the crew of the ship. Falcon crew chiefs were responsible for close in machine gun support for the unit on the ground and covering the inner circle while the gunners had the responsibility to cover the outside of the circle, behind the ship, under the ship and any other targets. Radio transmissions could be heard intermittently from the Aircraft Commander of Stage Coach 392, WO/1 Jerry Green as he cried for help, injured, in pain and pinned in the cockpit of his ship under a high volume of intense enemy automatic weapons fire.

The Green Hornet Gun Ships were relegated to the task of covering the Falcons outer perimeter and missed one almost deadly incident.

On one pass SP/4 Mullen, gunner on Falcon 077 noticed a farm tractor pulling what appeared to be a trailer loaded with hay approaching

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the area of engagement, on the next pass SP/4 Mullen observed 4 barrels pointing out through the hay, identified a quad .50 caliber machine gun, popped red smoke on the target and yelled at WO/1 Schrader who immediately kicked pedal, identified the target and engaged it with a volley of rockets and mini-gun fire completely destroying the it..

At this period of the action, the Falcon Guns were notified by "Eagle 6" that a medevac ship was enroute to this location from Song Be to extract the injured and downed personnel and to "just hold on". The automatic weapons and 37mm fire had intensified and contrary to other publications, had remained at a very intense volume throughout the entire mission.

The Falcons had identified bunkers and other structures, these targets were engaged resulting in some secondary explosions, were severely damaged or destroyed.

When the Dustoff arrived on station, the Falcon aircraft escorted it to the downed Stage Coach aircraft through a curtain of bullets. Dustoff's first attempt to hover over the PZ was aborted as the ship took several hits and was forced to pull out, the Falcons engaged those targets and Dustoff made its second attempt which was also futile as the ship took hits again, and again was forced to pull out, on the third attempt, a determined Dustoff pilot approached the PZ and settled in at a tree top hover, his radio transmission was "Falcons, we're in and we're staying". The Falcons began a 360° of cover of the medevac ship as the medic lowered himself to the ground on the jungle penetrator through a hail of bullets, on his return to the ship he carried 3 injured. To the credit and nerve of the Dustoff pilot and crew, they remained on station under constant heavy ground fire.

On the medic's 2nd retrieval, he again returned 3 WIA's to the ship and reported that one crew member was pinned under the transmission of the ship against the ground and believed to be KIA but he would try to get him aboard the Dustoff. The attempt to free SP/5 Armando Rameriz was not possible without heavy equipment and the medic returned to the Dustoff and assured the Falcon guns and the Green Hornets that the crew chief was KIA and that they were low on fuel and had to leave the area.

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As Dustoff pulled out and left the area of operations for Vietnam, emotions ran high between the 2 Falcon crews, one of our own was on the ground and now there was nothing they could do about it, there was nothing they could do to get him back.

A weather front was approaching from the west and the Falcons were were also low on fuel and ammo, a decision was made to return to Duc Lap to re-arm and re-fuel and return to engage the NVA, and attempt to free SP/5 Rameriz, as the flight turned to leave, all eyes were fixed on the battle area and the smoke from the fire caused by the destruction of the quad .50, there was no intercom or radio transmissions-

Once the Falcon flight landed at Duc Lap, the re-fueling and re-arming process began and crew chiefs checked their ships for damage, Falcon 484 took 37 rounds, Falcon 077 took 20 hits. Once the re-fueling re-arming process was completed the Falcon flight began to return to the original grid coordinates, 75 miles deep into Cambodia near highway 13. The weather front that had been approaching from the west had already passed the location of the downed Stage Coach aircraft and because of IFR conditions, the flight was forced to return to the 155th compound, it was there that the Falcon flight learned that PFC Santiago V.E. Quintana had been KIA, there was severe sadness concerning all 155th personnel over this situation.

On the morning of May 26, 1969 , the weather front which forced the Falcons to return to their compound had finally passed through the area and the mission to rescue SP/5 Armando Rameriz was in full force. The crews, both Stage Coach and Falcon were picked by hand for the operation, Falcons 077 and 232 were mini-gun ships and Falcons 484 and 732 were hogs with 40mm grenade launchers and 38 rounds of 2.75 inch rockets each, each ship was loaded with 17 pound and white phosphorus warhead rockets, and the gunners and crew chiefs were over-loaded with door gun ammo.

The flight again re-fueled at Duc Lap and headed back into Cambodia. Anxiety was high because of the battle just 3 days prior. As the flight arrived at the crash site anticipating another ferocious engagement, they encountered nothing, there was nothing to be found, no

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downed Stage Coach, quad .50 and no SP/5 Armando Rameriz, the area was clean except for the creators made by the rockets, damaged structures and a road to the crash site that had just been cut off of highway 13 to the ship, tire tracks could be seen from the air. It was obvious that the North Vietnamese had made a hasty retreat and that they left no signs that they had been there, they were in no hurry to combat the Falcons again.

WO/1 Jerome Green and WO/1 Richard Menzel, both survived.

SP/5 Armando Rameriz-MIA

PFC Santiago V.E. Quintana, Died of injuries/wounds

5th S.F. GP Team Members Phillip W. Strout and Howard S. Hill,  
both Died of injuries/wounds

5th S.F. GP Team Members Arthur Dolph and Mark Schneider,  
both survived.

June of '69 was the first month since September of '68 that the enemy failed to attack Camp Coryell. The 155th remained alert however, because of the continuos attacks on Ban Me Thuot and outlying areas. Flare ships with Falcon cover were called again and again to repulse the enemy from the local area.

Because of intense night flying, flare pots were installed to light the runway at night. While the lighted runway lifted their spirits they also felt depressed with the construction of a gas chamber. This was used to keep all personnel current and also served as a testing area for the newly issued gas masks.

The company swimming pool, inactive for the past year, was relined, filled and the adjacent area repaired. It was officially reopened during the last week of 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 155TH IN VIETNAM 1969 - THE MISSION

1 APRIL - 30 JUNE 1969

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) 45th 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 the 155th "Stagecoach" slicks and "Falcon" gunships removing the last of TFW's troops from the Bu Prang area on May 18. A total of 18 combat assaults were conducted throughout May in support of TF Wood, 2nd MSF, B-23 (5th SFG) and 45th Regiment (23rd 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 passengers, SP/5 Armando Rameriz, MIA, PFC Santiago V.E. Quintana, KIA, Special Forces personnel, SP/4 Phillip W. Strout, KIA and Sgt. Howard S. Hill, KIA. The company had a total of 8 aircraft damaged on combat missions in the month of May.

During the month of June, in addition to the 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 2 guns, moving over 900 troops to an area southwest of Ban Me Tuot.

The 155th also provided 2 Stagecoach slicks and 2 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 4 gunships and a flare ship on round-the-clock support of besieged villages south of Ban Me 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 the Lac Thien airstrip.

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1 APRIL - 30 JUNE 1969

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 helicopter.

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

SORTIES	19,838
HOURS FLOWN	6,968
CARGO (TONS)	210
PASSENGERS	32,689
ENEMY KBA	71
STRUCTURES DESTROYED	13

RESULTS OF THE MAY 23, 1969 ENGAGEMENT ARE NOT INCLUDED IN THIS SUMMARY.

THE 155TH IN VIETNAM 1969 - THE COMPANY

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The 155th, 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 structures on post were completely repainted.

Flare pots were installed to light the runway at night.

All reventments were topped with SSP.

The defensive perimeter was strengthened with additional wire barriers and the intorduction 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 revement area and many areas of the cantonment area were re-surfaced with peneprime.

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 re-lined, re-filled, and the area around it was renovated.

It was officially reopened the last week of May, with the 155th 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 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 the 17th Aviation Group (Combat), and LTC. Davey L. Stanley, 10th Aviation Battalion (Combat) Commander. Major Moore was presented the Bronze Star for service and the Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry.

THE 155TH IN VIETNAM 1969 - THE ENEMY

1 JULY - 30 SEPTEMBER 1969

Having conducted Sniffer mission after Sniffer for the last 14 consecutive days in the area southwest of Ban Me Thuot, the heavy readings registered have resulted in heavy contact on the ground.

On the first of July, a B-23 unit inserted by the 155th was in heavy with a large NVA force and in need of extraction of severly wounded troops. A light fire team headed by WO/1 Jeff Schrader on Falcon 077 crewed by SP/5 Cecil R. McGee and SP/4 Tom Mullen accompanied by Falcon 484 crew unknown except for crew chief Sp/5 Dave Nightigall, and a medevac ship were dispatched to the area to complete the extraction. Encountering heavy enemy automatic weapons fire, the Falcon team laid down devistating suppressive fire as the Medevac attempted to make the rescue, weather conditions consisted of fog and low clouds with a light rain. The ground unit was in close combat with the enemy force and sorely out numbered as the Falcon gunships attempted to cover the rescue attempt and give the B-23 unit a perimeter. The weather had closed in on the flight and they were begining to have IFR conditions. The ground unit commander confirmed that a medevac could not be completed at that time and the mission had to be aborted.

At approximately 2215 hrs. that same night, Falcons 077 and 484 with a ship from the 568th Med. Det. Again was dispatched to attempt to complete the earlier rescue. Flare support was provided by the Stagecoach platoon. Weather conditions were bad and the attempt had to be quick, under the light from the flares dropped by the Stagecoach ship, the Falcon gunships covered the medevac ship as the crew began to lift the injured personnel on board. Muzzle flashes could be seen in all directions and the crews of the Falcons were laying down cover fire as close as 3 feet to the ground unit, according to their unit commander. Weather conditions were worsening and the extraction was completed under heavy fire with the Falcon guns taking several rounds.

Aircraft Commanders of all 4 ships have been put in for the Distinguished Flying Cross.

After a period of 7 weeks without an enemy attack on Camp Coryell, the longest period of respite the 155th had seen in 2 years, the night quiet was again broken by incoming rounds. On July 23, at 2333 hrs, 5 B-40 rockets and 10 82mm mortars struck the compound. Due to the increased bunker facilities, and the overdue nature of the attack, the rounds inflicted negative damage to personnel or equipment.

THE 155TH IN VIETNAM 1969 - THE MISSION

1 JULY - 30 SEPTEMBER

An enemy build-up 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 155th conducted numerous sniffer missions in these areas in support of the 23 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 unites 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 155th 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 155th was given operational control of as many as 20 additional aircraft during this period. This more than doubled the mission capabilities of the 155th, but put the 155th 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 155th at this time precluded supporting any great number of combat assaults. A total of 27 were conducted within the July-September quarter. Some highlights of this period:

On 18 July, after being inserted by the 155th aircraft south of Ban Me Thuot, 2 LRRP teams came into contact with an enemy force. One Stagecoach and 2 Falcons were dispatched to the area. one gunship received damage from ground fire but the Falcon team was credited with 13 enemy killed in action, Falcons 077 & 484.

On 25 July, while supporting 4 slicks on a B-23 troop movement, a pair of Falcon gunships expended, killing 5 enemy soldiers, Capt. Robert Gardner and WO/1 Les Davison.

THE 155TH IN VIETNAM 1969 - THE ENEMY

1 JULY - 30 SEPTEMBER 1969

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 the Dustbowl but in the billitting areas as well. 10 B-40 rockets and 27 82mm mortars impacted, causing damage to 4 UH-1H's, and 1 UH-1C, 10 structures and 4 vehicles. 11 personnel were wounded during the attack. Falcon gunships and a flare ship were launched but because of difficulty encountered in getting clearance to fire, the flight returned with negative results.

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

In late August and early September of 1968, the 155th supported areas of Bu Prang and Duc Lap which were 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 a great increase of enemy activity in large parts of the 155th areas of operations. 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 build-ups in the border areas West and Southwest of Duc Lap.

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1 JULY - 30 SEPTEMBER

The month of August was marked by the intensive increase of sniffer operations conducted for intelligence gathering purposes. 2 sets of sniffer missions were conducted 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 155th was again given the commitment to support B-50 operations. 4 slicks and 4 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 the 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 the 155th operations acting as controlling agency, placing additional workloads on the 155th for operational and maintenance support.

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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 quarters with a paved surface.

A new above surface mini-port area was constructed to replace the old underground system. A single line system with 7 UH-1 and 1 CH-47 refueling stations was put in use. The mini-port now has a 20,000 gallon capacity.

Renovation of the old 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 mine field inside the northeast perimeter.

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

Rewiring of all billets.

Morale during this quarter decreased to a certain degree. This was caused by several factors. The NCM-EM club was closed in early August due 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 155th on 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 Coryell made for an uneasy time of waiting. However, as external enemy activity increased, so did morale and spirit, with the men of the 155th anticipating participation in the tactical defense of the Ban Me Thuot - Duc Lap area.

THE 155TH IN VIETNAM 1969 - THE COMPANY

1 JULY - 30 SEPTEMBER

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

5 hours Minimum Night Time

5 hours of hood time

A minimum of 2 Maintenance Test Flights

A grade of 90% or better on each of 2/ Dash-Ten Tests

An Aircraft Commander Checkride With Company Instructor Pilot.

2 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 work load 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 FLOWN	7,033
SORTIES	19,191
PASSENGERS	29,307
CARGO (TONS)	321
EMERGENCY MEDEVAC	14
ENEMY KILLED BY AIR	20
STRUCTURES DESTROYED	8

THE 155TH IN VIETNAM - THE ENEMY AT HOME

1 OCTOBER - 31 DECEMBER 1969

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

Although attacked 5 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 2 UH-1H's and 1 UH-1C gunship 2 structures and 2 vehicles damaged. 5 personnel were injured, 2 of them required medical evacuation.

On 10 November, the 155th was again attacked. 8 B-40 rockets and 17 82mm mortar rounds struck the compound, damaging 1 UH-1H, 5 structures and 1 vehicle, and wounding 6 personnel.

The compound was attacked 3 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 155th company area.

THE 155TH IN VIETNAM - 1969  
THE BUILD-UP AND THE BATTLE-AVIATION SUPPORT AT ITS BEST  
1 OCTOBER - 31 DECEMBER 1969

Due to the tremendous increase in enemy activity during the first part of October, and to the build-up 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 155th, being the local unit and main provider of aviation support in the Duc Lap area, played a significant role in the building of a successful defense against the soon-to-come enemy onslaught.

The weather had been the most significant natural factor relating to the build-up 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 build-ups of enemy forces along the western boundary 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 155th 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.

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

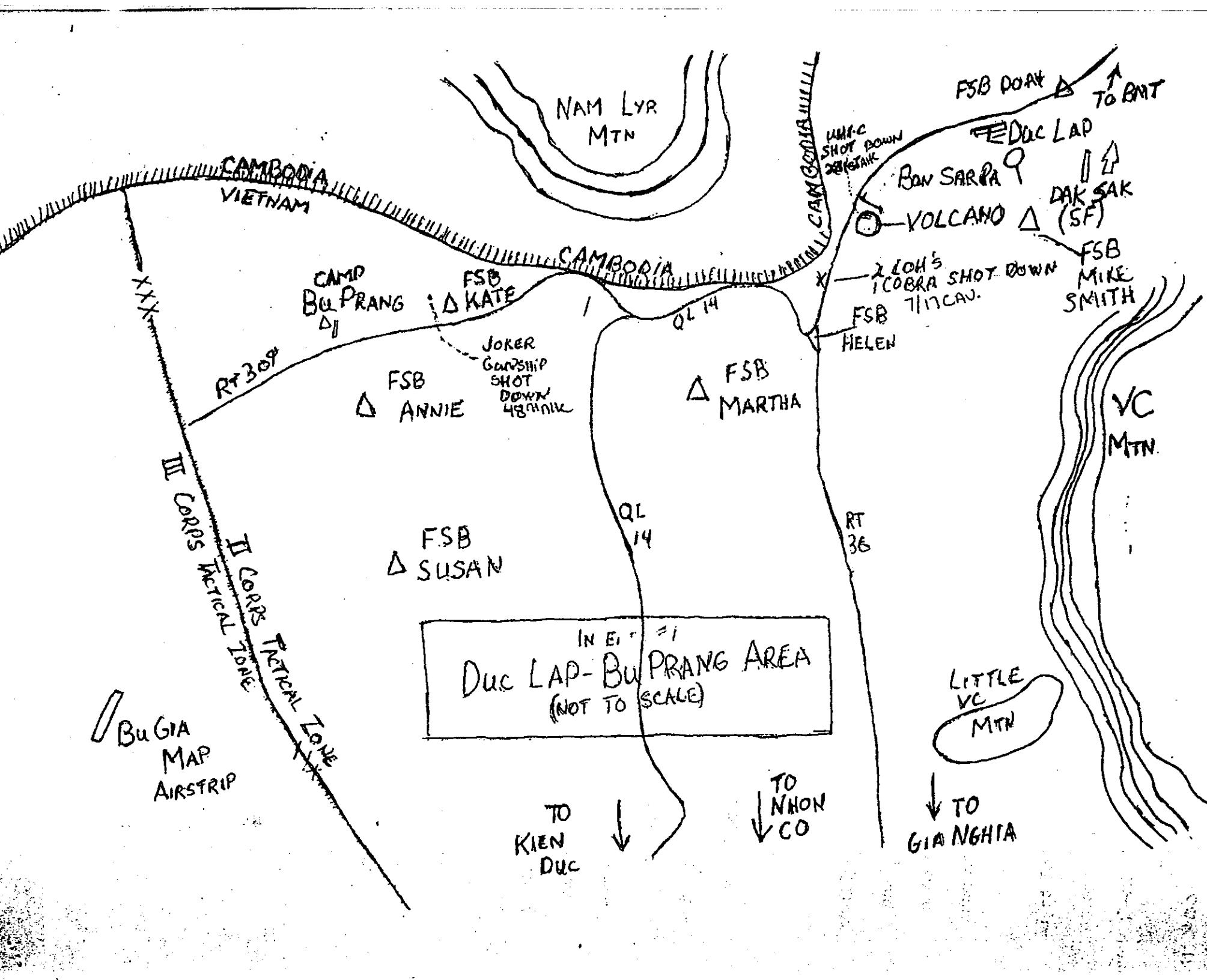
One of the 155th supported units in the area, 5/22 Artillery, in preparation for the offensive, built 6 fire bases in the Duc Lap-Bu Prang-Gia Nghia triangle. Their positions can be determined by the insert. These fire support bases were named: Dory, Helen, Susan, Annie, Kate and Martha. These firebases provided support for Bu Prang and DucLap.

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 transplant loads of equipment.

Annie and Kate were set up within 6 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 re-supply 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 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 155th and several other units in the 10th and 52nd Combat 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 155th 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 in to Helen and claimed it as theirs.



THE 155TH 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 2 months was over. Although acting as controlling agency in conjunction with Vagabond Forward, the 155th operations had handled as many as 50 additional aircraft daily during November and December. This put quite a strain on the 155th 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 155th received damage from ground fire, the knowledge of the enemy and terrain proved to be a major factor in minimizing damage to our aircraft, during this action, not one 155th Stage Coach - Falcon aircraft was shot down. Aircraft from other units, in trying to support the 155th proved that anything less than a complete knowledge of terrain and tactics creates a dangerous situation. Hour for hour, the 155th took less damage from ground fire than outside units unfamiliar with the area of operation.

Statistics for the 155th support October - December:

HOURS FLOWN	7,503	EMERGENCY MEDEVAC	79
SORTIES	19,156	ENEMY KBA	75
PASSENGERS	35,465	STRUCTURES DESTROYED	19
CARGO (TONS)	424		

Aircraft availability was maintained throughout the quarter:  
October - December average UH-1H availability.....97.5%  
Average UH-1C availability for the period was.....96.2%

On 26 December, 1969 Major Dean M. Owen relinquished command of the 155th Aviation Company (AML) to Major 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. Patellous, Commanding Officer, 10th Combat Aviation Battalion. Major Owen was presented the Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry by COL. Kanh of the 23rd ARVN Division.

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The constant enemy activity, the fact that if asked to pull a medevac a Stage Coach aircraft would go into the 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 re-supply by seconds, all confirm that under the most severe conditions the 155th Stage Coach-Falcon team can and will provide optimum support, without reservation and without delay to the units which it serves.

Others lost during this period are: SP/5 Rick R. Medaris, SP/5 John A. Payne and SP/4 Richard G. Bauer.

192 AHC & Former Stage Coach Flight Platoon Leader Capt. Alfonso R. castro.

192 AHC Crew: Co-pilot CW/2 John S. Anderson, SSG Marion L. Roach, and SP/6 Alan G. Kennedy

VHPA Reports: Crashed in Duc My pass going from Dong Ba Thin to Dalat, missing 3 years, crew of 4 and 2-3 passengers.

UH-1H aircraft lost that day 66-16681 and 67-17792



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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 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 Stage Coach aircraft got an added boost on take off from the concussion of a mortar round landing directly behind it.

These re-supply and medevac missions put crews under a great strain. Going into the volcano as many as 4,5, or even 6 times in one day under these not-so-friendly conditions put crews under so much pressure that the U.S. ground commander insisted that the crews be changed daily so as not to overtax the same people day after day.

On 27 November, a Wolfpack gunship from the 281st Assault Helicopter Company piloted by WO/1 Ken Miller, covering a re-supply at the volcano, 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 Wolfpack gunship was destroyed in place.

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

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

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

On November 9, 1969, while flying a hot re-supply into the volcano, 2 155th aircraft were hit by .50 caliber fire and B-40 fragments, resulting in one pilot, WO/1 Ahearn receiving wounds, he was later returned to CONUS.

On 11 November, another aircraft was hit by 12.7 mm anti-air craft fire southeast of Bu Prang, wounding one crewman. Later that morning one passenger was killed and two were wounded when the aircraft, from the 170th Assault Helicopter Company took hits from 37mm anti-aircraft fire near Bu Prang.

One of the more significant actions took place on 17 November when 155th Falcon gunships commanded by WO/1 Les Davison and WO/1 Cosmos expended 5 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, 2 Falcon gunships received damage from enemy fire.

On the 21st, Falcon gunships expended 3 times on enemy locations, receiving credit for 23 enemy killed by air. During this action 3 gunships, 1 which was commanded by WO/1 Marvin and WO/1 Coonce were hit by ground fire.

On 22 November, 2 Falcon gunships, commanded by WO/1 Les Davison and WO/1 Simpson while on stand-by at Gia Nghia were called to Duc Lap where they engaged enemy targets. Both ships took damage from ground fire and the pilot, WO/1 Simpson was wounded in the leg, causing his return to CONUS.

On 25 November, another ship took hits from ground fire while re-supplying the volcano, wounding the pilot, WO/1 Brown.

The activity at the volcano had now reached the point where the Stage Coach flight performing re-supply 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 re-supply helicopters had to alter their routes and landing patterns every time they ran a mission. There were confirmed .50 caliber positions around 3 sides of the volcano, with heavy small

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

The 155th airlifted two companies of the 5th Mike Strike Force into an area 1 kilometer northwest of Kate on the night of the 1st. The troops at Kate successfully walked out and united with these units. Immediately after the evacuation of Kate, 155th and OPCON units extracted LZ Annie and Susan, also under continuous fire.

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

While on a "Hunter Killer" reconnaissance mission north of LZ Helen, 2 observation helicopters (Loachs) and 1 Cobra gunship of the 7/17 Cavalry had been shot down within minutes of each other. All aircraft in the area responded. Cavalry ground troops were inserted and 1 pilot was extracted. 1 pilot died in the crash, and 2 pilots and 2 observers were captured by the enemy. (1 pilot and 1 observer were released some time later)

Later on 2 November, 4 slicks and 2 Falcon gunships lead by WO/1 Les Davison and WO/1 Cooncē conducted an emergency re-supply 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 Marth and Helen), began receiving 122mm rockets. At the same time Dak Sek (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.

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During this time LZ Annie and LZ Kate were being threatened by another regimental size unit. 155th Stagecoach aircraft continued to make medevacs under heavy fire at these firebases. On the 30th, LZ Martha was to be removed to reinforce Duc Lap because it was under constant small arms attack. On the evening of the 30th, Martha was relocated to Duc Lap by aircraft of the 155th and OPCON units under heavy mortar fire. Every time a ship came to the LZ to remove troops, the LZ was pounded by enemy mortars. The troops were moved to LZ Mike Smith, a new FSB located at 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 on aircraft. At 0930 hrs. on October 30 Kate came under sustained enemy ground attack by at least 500 NVA (North Vietnamese Army regulars).

Two Joker gunships from the 48th Assault Helicopter Company were diverted to LZ Kate. One Joker gunship 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, among them was a Falcon gunship piloted by WO/1 Les Davison while escorting a CH-47 into the LZ.

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 enemy ground fire and had to abort its emergency re-supply, dropping its load in the jungle short of Kate.

Thus the stage was set for an emergency night re-supply into Kate. At 0200 in the morning of 1 November, 5 Stagecoach slicks, lead by WO/1 Abbott, who fell asleep after the briefing, and 4 Falcon gunships lead by WO/1 Les Davison with Falcons WO/1 Cosmos, WO/1 Fenlon and WO/1 Coonce, departed Ban Me Thuot for LZ Kate. Each slick carried 1,000 pounds of much needed re-supply.

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