

UNIT HISTORY

48

ASSAULT HELICOPTER
COMPANY



VHPA27 5 JUL 65 - 12 OCT 70

UNIT HISTORY
48th Assault Helicopter Company
5 July 1965 to 12 October 1970

The 48th Aviation Company (Airmobile) (Light), with support detachments, the 390th Transportation Detachment, 279th Signal Detachment, and 286th Medical Detachment, was activated at Fort Benning, Georgia by General Order 200, Headquarters, Third United States Army, on 5 July 1965. The only name listed on the 5 July morning report was that of Major Keith L. Groom the first Commanding Officer. The first enlisted entry on the morning report was Specialist Five Joseph R. Pearcey, which appeared on the 21st of July 1965. At that time, authorized personnel strength was fourteen officers, forty-one warrant officers, and 115 enlisted men.

All personnel and equipment were to be obtained from locally available resources. The primary source of personnel and equipment was the result of the 11th Air Assault Division and 2nd Infantry Division being reformed into the First Air Cavalry Division at Fort Benning, Georgia. Seventy-five percent of the equipment was received through lateral transfer from reorganizing units at Fort Benning.

Major Charles H. Drummond assumed command of the 48th Aviation Company on 1 September 1965, the same day the first pilots signed in at Headquarters, 10th Aviation Group. Nearly all the aviators reporting for duty with the 48th Aviation Company were reassigned from European assignments and their tours had been curtailed as a result of the Vietnam build up.

The 48th Aviation Company and detachments were directed overseas on 8 September 1965. The next five weeks were spent PCR qualifying of all personnel, drawing, processing, and packing TO-44 and TA50 equipment for overseas shipment. An advance party of six officers and 20 enlisted personnel departed 18 October 1965 for Oakland, California. There they signed for 16 UH-1D and 9 UH-1B helicopters and accompanied them over to Vietnam on the USNS Kula Gulf, a baby aircraft carrier. Upon arriving at Cam Ranh Bay 16 November 1965, the 48th Aviation Company was assigned to the 10th Aviation Battalion, located at Dong Ba Thin, and was to set up base camp at Phan Rang. At this time, the call sign "Blue Star" was given to the 48th Aviation Company by Major Smith, Commanding Officer, 611th Transportation Company. The remaining personnel of the 48th departed the continental United States on 5 November 1965 aboard USNS Geiger, a Navy Troop Carrier, which arrived at Cam Ranh Bay on 26 November 1965, and the men and equipment disembarked into LCU's that transported them to the beach.

The advanced party encamped with the Air Force, who at that time also amounted to an advance party in Phan Rang with only a few tents erected. The advanced party measured off and staked out the company area. They arranged from the Air Force to have cots, tents and water for the company upon their arrival. They coordinated with the 1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division (also new in Phan Rang). A field kitchen, complete with fire unit, pots and pans, was obtained. Rations were also drawn from the 101st.

The remaining personnel were convoyed from Dong Ba Thin to Phan Rang in 2½ ton trucks. One truck received sniper fire near Phan Rang. This was the first incident where the 48th Aviation Company received hostile fire. Throughout the first few weeks while the 48th was clearing the land and building their camp the monsoon rains were in full force and they worked, ate, and slept in mud up to their knees. Foxholes were dug, tents erected, and some limited flying missions were done in the weeks that followed.

On 21 December 1965 the 48th conducted its first company sized airmobile operation when it administratively lifted A Company, 2nd Battalion, 502nd Airborne Infantry. The 48th's first engine failure occurred on 23 December and was brought safely down in a rice paddy by Major Broman and CW2 Geer. The first operational combat mission was on 29 December with the extraction of bodies from a crashed aircraft. Captain Arthur Moen and 1LT Robert E. Smith successfully accomplished this mission under extremely hazardous conditions and enemy fire. Both received the Air Medal with "V" device and were the first members of the 48th Aviation Company to be decorated for heroism.

On 1 January 1966 the 48th Aviation Company (AML) was declared combat operational by the Commanding Officer, Major Charles H. Drummond. The company was in-country a total of only 36 days before it was declared combat operational. And what a declaration -- the company underwent a mortar attack of 21 mortar rounds within the camp the same day.

After rehearsing for three days, the 48th Aviation Company pilots put out a 1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division, Long Range Reconnaissance Patrol team (LRRP) in an area 10 miles south east of Phan Rang on 4 January 1966. The helicopters orbited 15 minutes after insertion and started back toward home base when the LRRP team made an emergency call requesting extraction as they were heavily engaged in a fire fight. The gunships suppressed the enemy fire and the slicks extracted the team. This was the first time the 48th Aviation Company personnel actively engaged the enemy.

On 8 January 1966 the 48th Aviation Company helped support the 117th Aviation Company at Tuy Hoa during Operation Jefferson in conjunction with the ROK (Republic of Korea) Brigade. This was the first support given to Koreans by the 48th Aviation Company. The 48th Aviation Company also supported the 1st Brigade of the 101st Airborne Division, the 47th ARVN's, and gave support to Headquarters, 1st Field Force in Nha Trang at this time.

Major Harry Roper assumed Command of the company from Major Drummond on 4 April 1966. Shortly after assuming command, Major Roper designed a company crest. The background for the crest is a "Blue Star" bordered in gold, derived from the original and still-in-effect unit call sign. Centered inside the Blue Star are the numerals "48" in white letters with black trim. Lettered in dark red on a white scroll below the Blue Star is the unit motto "Skill Not Luck" also contrived by Major Roper.

Upon arrival in country and prior to assuming command of the 48th, Major Roper was repeatedly told of the many successful operations by the newly formed 48th Aviation Company, of which most sources contributed their success to pure luck. After but a brief period with the company, Major Roper realized that it was skill, not luck which accounted for the 48th Aviation Companies success and hence the company motto originated. The Blue Star has become a symbol of strong pride among the members of the 48th Aviation Company. Each aircraft adorns a Blue Star trimmed in gold on its tail section, and men in the company proudly wear the Blue Star patch on their right breast pocket.

During most of 1966 the 48th Aviation Company moved its base camp numerous times and engaged in sustained combat operations at Phan Rang, Dong Ba Thin, Tuy Hoa, Dak To, Nhon Co, and Cheo Roo. In the fall of 1966 the 48th returned to its permanent base camp at Phan Rang and assumed the mission of general aviation support to the 1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division. In late November the 1st Brigade, 101st Airborne departed for Kontum. For the first time in many months, the 48th found itself not in support of the "Screaming Eagles," but instead in support of the 1st Brigade, 4th Infantry Division.

On 8 February 1967 USAFPAC General Order Number 30 officially redesignated the 48th Aviation Company (Airmobile) (Light) as the 48th Assault Helicopter Company. At the same time, the 48th was given a change in aircraft authorization, now reflecting 23 lift ships, or "slicks", and 8 gun ships.

During the early months of 1967 the 48th Assault Helicopter Company remained at Phan Rang, gradually providing support now to 9th Republic of Korea Infantry Division (White Horse). On 1 May 1967 the unit was assigned the mission of providing aviation support to the 9th ROK Division and a forward base of operations was established at Ninh Hoa. As of today the mission of the 48th Assault Helicopter Company remains unchanged, that of providing direct support to the 9th ROK Division.

On 29 October 1967, the Ninh Hoa installation was mortared for the first time. A total of six rounds landed in the compound, none of which were in the 48th Assault Helicopter Company Area. The Koreans sustained nine casualties, one fatality.

The remainder of the rear support elements of the 48th Assault Helicopter Company moved to Ninh Hoa from Phan Rang on 1 November, 1967. On the 9th all flyable aircraft were flown to Pleiku in order to escape a typhoon forecast to enter Ninh Hoa on the 10th. The typhoon did strike and nearly all the tents and frames in the 48th Assault Helicopter Company area were destroyed, along with considerable equipment and personal belongings. No serious injuries though.

Two armed helicopter light fire teams (Jokers) on 21 May 1968 of the 48th performed escort duty for General William C. Westmoreland, Commanding General MACV, on a visit to the Commanding General of the 9th ROK Division. The 48th was also called upon to provide transportation

and escort for General Greighton W. Abrams on his visit to the MACV Duc My training Center on 10 July 1968.

The 48th Assault Helicopter Company maintenance platoon (known as the "Hanger Rats") were awarded the 17th Combat Aviation Group Best Maintenance award for the months of September and October 1968. This recognition of outstanding achievement in aircraft maintenance reflects a high degree of professional knowledge and devotion to duty by the members of our maintenance platoon.

To everyone, happiness was when the new containment area was completed sufficiently to allow all personnel to move out of tents into their new quarters during the month of October 1968. Spare time was spent in the next few months doing things as leveling, ditching, planting sod, painting buildings and improving drainage.

Also during the month of October we had four ROK Army Pilots complete their training and were returned to their parent organizations with aircraft commander orders. The pilots were given an opportunity to experience every aspect of flying the UH-1 that normally is handled by any member of this unit.

The aircraft maintenance personnel of the 48th Assault Helicopter Company once again proved their expertise and sense of mission accomplishment in keeping aircraft in a flyable status. On 14 November 1968, they reported 100% flyable mission ready aircraft. This feat was repeated on January 2nd and 3rd, 1969. Maintenance reported 100% available and the 48th flew 100% on the two consecutive days!

During the month of March 1969 "Worthington Compound" became the new name of the Blue Star area at Ninh Hoa in honor of WO Lawrence F. Worthington who was killed in hostile action on 11 January 1969.

On May 1 1969 the 48th had its grand opening for the new PX. The Blue Star dispensary acquired an added attraction, a brand new dental chair. No dentist at the time, but a nice chair.

The 48th Assault Helicopter Company continues its direct support of the 9th ROK Infantry Division to include daily resupply, combat assaults, extractions, administrative troop movements, transporting VIP's, overhead troop cover, convoy cover, reconnaissance missions, and tactical emergency missions. In addition, the 48th has provided support as required to the surrounding American and Vietnamese units in II Corps Tactical Zone. We were proud to serve in the Cambodia operation of May and June of this year. At the time of this writing the 48th Assault Helicopter Company has experienced 224 days and 14,012 flying hours without an accident which more than amplifies our motto: "Skill Not Luck".

48th AHC
Blue Stars

1-31 August 1971

"FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY"

ARMOUR	17		McCABE	205	
BIRO	331	PIC	MCGARRY	292	AC
BURKE	320	AC/IP	McFARLAND	141	
BUSH	289	AC	MILLER	330	
CARLE	212	AC	MITTAG	27	
CHALK	172	AC	MOYER	139	
COLE	104	AC	NEWTON	277	AC
CREWS	333		NICHOLS	22	AC
ELMORE	134	AC	NIEBUHR	206	
FERNANDEZ	170	AC	OLDRIDGE	173	AC
GASSON	291		PACE	207	
GOUIRAND	251	AC	PALUMBO	105	
GROSSMAN	116	AC/IP	PHILLIPS	166	
GUNTER	336		POWELL, REX	327	AC
HILL	326	AC	POWELL, RON	360	
HOELTZEL	169		PRAZMA	334	
HOLDRIDGE	286	AC	SCHAUB	132	AC
HOLZIER	25		SEXTON	335	
KELLY	238		SEYMOUR	142	
KIRKPATRICK	128	AC	SMITH	284	AC/IP
LAWRENCE	328		STROL	287	AC
LIMGREN	290		TOAL	332	PIC
MALONEY	156	AC	WARD	249	AC
MARSHALL	318	PIC	WHIPPLE	323	

21 AC's
3 PIC's
3 IP's