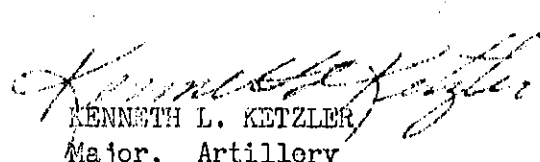


HISTORY OF THE
117TH ASSAULT HELICOPTER COMPANY (UH-1) (A)
APO 96377

1 January 1966 - 31 December 1966

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APO 96377

VHFA201

UNIT HISTORICAL REPORT

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117TH ASSAULT HELICOPTER COMPANY (UH-1) (A)
APO SF 96377

2 March 1967

SUBJECT: Unit Historical Report

1. MISSION AND RESOURCES

A. The 117th Aviation Company (Air Mobile Light) was activated effective 25 June 1963 by USARPAC General Order Number 236, dated 14 June 1963. This same General Order assigned the 117th Aviation Company (AML) to US Army Support Group, South Vietnam. The personnel and equipment for the 117th Aviation Company (AML) were based at Qui Nhon, home of the "Old 8th", until 22 September 1965, when the 117th moved to Dong Ba Thin as advance party for the 10th Aviation Battalion. The 10th Aviation Battalion arrived at Dong Ba Thin on 15 December 1965, finding the 117th completely mission ready. The 10th Aviation Battalion was redesignated in July 1966, to the 10th Combat Aviation Battalion and all subordinate Air Mobile Companies to Assault Helicopter Companies (UH-1) (A).

B. The primary mission of the 117th Assault Helicopter Company is to provide tactical air movement of U.S. and Allied troops in connection with counter-insurgency operations against armed hostile forces in the Republic of Vietnam.

(1) The secondary mission of the 117th is to provide tactical air movement of supplies and equipment within the tactical area of responsibility.

(2) An alternate mission of increasing importance, has been the immediate availability and effective suppressive fires of

the 117th's Armed Helicopter Platoon, to include close aviation support for Assault Helicopters, Infantry units, motor convoys and ground units under attack.

(3) Some of the other missions accomplished by the 117th are: Armed Reconnaissance, Reconnaissance by fire, Surveillance, Artillery Adjustment, Psychological Warfare, Chemical, Biological and Radiological Warfare, Command and Control, Emergency Extractions, and Medical Evacuations.

2. ORGANIZATION

A. The 117th Assault Helicopter Company (UH-1) (A) was commanded by Major Harbin A Constance, Infantry until 28 February 1966, when Major Harry J Zellmer, Infantry, assumed command and who, in turn, was succeeded by Major Kenneth L Ketzler, Artillery, on 26 October 1966.

B. The 117th Assault Helicopter Company (UH-1) (A) was re-organized on 10 November 1966, under Modified TO&E 1-77G by General Order Number 249, Headquarters USARPAC, Dated 1 November 1966. The present authorized strength is fifteen (15) officers, fifty-two (52) warrant officers, and one hundred and seventy three (173) enlisted men.

C. The units attached to the 117th at the beginning of the year were: the 140th Transportation Detachment (Cargo Helicopter Field Maintenance), the 130th Medical Detachment (Organizational Augmentation), the 256th Signal Detachment, and the 22d Quartermaster Detachment (POL).

(1) The 130th Medical Detachment was commanded by

Captain David T Casey, Medical Corps, until his departure on 15 September 1966. Under the expert guidance and leadership and superb professional ability of Captain Casey, the 117th's officers and enlisted men were able to stay in top flying and fighting shape. As a result, Captain Casey was recommended for a Bronze Star for meritorious achievement and was awarded the Air Medal for frequent aerial flights into hostile areas. Captain Casey and his medical detachment were responsible for continuous medical support during all operations both at Dong Ba Thin and in the field, under the most extreme hardships, winning his detachment the greatest respect from the 117th Assault Helicopter Company. Since Captain Casey's departure, the detachment has been under the supervision of SSG John J Kelle and has continued to operate very efficiently without an assigned Flight Surgeon.

(2) The 140th Transportation Detachment has provided the 117th with consistently superior third echelon maintenance both at Dong Ba Thin and in the field. During operations throughout the Republic of Vietnam, they have distinguished themselves by outstanding performance of duty in keeping the average aircraft availability over 80% under the most hazardous conditions in the field. Captain Louis J Lerda, Transportation Corp, commanded the detachment until 15 March 1966, when Captain John R Smith, Transportation Corp, assumed command.

(3) On 25 January 1966, the 256th Signal Detachment, formerly part of the 117th, was further assigned to the 10th Combat Aviation Battalion and redesignated a member of the battalion con-

solidated Signal Section. By combining all company Signal Detachments into one organization the 117th was able to receive much greater avionics support both at Dong Ba Thin and in the field.

(4) The 22d Quartermaster Detachment, responsible for supporting the 117th Assault Helicopter Company with POL for aircraft and vehicles was released from attachment on 24 June 1966, when the responsibility for POL was taken over by the 117th's service section. The service section's POL personnel have provided the 117th with continuous POL support during every operation they were engaged in. During many of the operations the POL section placed itself in strategic points in the tactical area of responsibility and established refueling points so that aircraft not only from the 117th but from the entire battalion could refuel without returning to home base thus saving valuable time and consequently aiding greatly in the accomplishment of the mission. During several of the company operations the 117th's POL section installed a newly devised "Mini-Port" aircraft refueling point that was capable of refueling four running aircraft at once. This eliminated the waste of valuable time which was formerly spent shutting down the aircraft and refueling them one at a time by a tanker. The use of this new "Mini-Port" gave the 117th the capability of refueling its entire complement of aircraft within a few minutes.

3. EQUIPMENT AND FACILITIES

A. At the beginning of the year the 117th was comprised of two assault helicopter platoons with eight (8) UH-1D's each and one armed helicopter platoon with nine (9) armed UH-1B's. Due to a

modification of the TO&E effective 10 November 1966, the two air-lift platoons are now authorized eleven (11) UH-1D's each with one (1) UH-1D assigned to the service platoon. The armed helicopter platoon is now in the process of exchanging its eight (8) UH-1B's for the newer and faster UH-1C's. The armament systems of the armed platoon have also been improved with the recent addition of the new "mini-gun" weapons system. Six of these "mini-guns" are authorized along with two M-5 kits and two M-3 kits.

B. On 11 March 1966, the 117th Assault Helicopter Company (UH-1) (A), moved from their field quarters east of the Dong Ba Thin Runway to its assigned area within the new aviation complex west of the airfield, where more permanent type structures were constructed. The move was made in the minimum of time possible, with 12 structures already completed, including the orderly room, supply office and storage room, improved arms and mail room and flight operations. In July 1966, a seventy-six (76) space asphalt and concrete heliport was completed to accomodate the entire 10th Combat Aviation Battalion. This addition has greatly facilitated maintenance and made the landing and parking of aircraft much easier and safer.

4. OPERATIONS

A. The function of the operations section is to plan, coordinate and insure the smooth operation of all flight requirements placed upon the 117th Assault Helicopter Company (UH-1) (A). Due to the untiring efforts of the company operations section under the supervision of first, Major Augustus L Sheider Jr, Artillery, until

July 1966, when succeeded by, Major William E Ault, Infantry, operations throughout the year have been accomplished in a timely, efficient, and professional manner.

(1) Operation Jefferson - The 117th Assault Helicopter Company (UH-1) (A), was the sole aviation support for the 2d Republic of Korea Marine Brigade and the 47th ARVN Regiment throughout operation Jefferson, from 1 January 1966 till 16 January 1966, near Tuy Hoa, Republic of Vietnam. This support consisted of massive combat assaults, resupply missions, and numerous medical evacuations. These missions were conducted primarily during daylight hours, however, on several occasions the 117th was required to accomplish these missions during the hours of darkness. The cooperation between the 117th and the allied units and the Espisit de Corps of everyone engaged in the operation was truly outstanding. This close harmony between the 117th and the supported units was to become readily apparent in all future operations.

(2) Operation Van Buren - Initially, Operation Van Buren, 19 January - 21 February 1966, near Tuy Hoa, Republic of Vietnam, began with the 117th and sister units of the 10th Combat Aviation Battalion supporting the 2d ROK Marine Brigade and the 47th ARVN Regiment. The most noteworthy actions involved two simultaneous company lifts into extremely confined landing zones. Enemy resistance was encountered and immediately engaged by the armed helicopter escort, who effectively neutralized the resistance and the combat assault was successfully completed. Throughout the night, however, increased enemy activity required the 117th to provide lift

helicopters for emergency medical evacuations and armed helicopters for suppressive fire support. The dedication to duty in the face of known dangers and intensive hostile fire inspired the ROK Marines to display their appreciation to the pilots and crews of the 117th by presenting to them certificates of heroism from the Republic of Korea. It was during the latter phase of the operation, when the 117th was in direct support of the 1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division, and enemy activity was relatively light, that the 117th learned to appreciate and respect the aggressiveness and professionalism of the Infantrymen of the 101st. There emerged from this operation a unique and close knit fighting force of Aviation and Infantry, with thier joint Esprit de Corps, that was destined to excel throughout the year.

(3) Operation Harrison - The 117th Assault Helicopter Company (UH-1) (A) accomplished a combat first during Operation Harrison, 26 February - 24 March 1966, near Tuy Hoa, Republic of Vietnam, by conducting a major combat assault. They airlifted an entire Infantry Battalion of the 1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division in two lifts, during a chemical attack utilizing non-toxic tear gases, on a hostile area. This phenominal feat required all crew members to perform their flying duties while wearing the newly developed M-24 aviator protective mask throughout the mission. These tactics were completely successful despite the considerably reduced visibility within the landing zone as a result of smoke, gas vapors, and exploding ordnance. Enemy contact steadily increased throughout the day, requiring the commitment of all available aircraft of the 10th Combat Aviation

Battalion. The veteran 117th was called upon to lead every combat assault, airlifting combat Infantrymen to critical points throughout the battle area in order to effectively press the attack against a determined enemy. In addition to these assaults, crews of the 117th completed three emergency ammunition resupply missions into areas never before penetrated by allied forces. The results of this action have been compiled and documented by the 10th Combat Aviation Battalion and at the request of the Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, have been forwarded to their office for inclosure in the curriculum of the school.

(4) Operation Filmore - From 25 March - 9 April 1966, the 1st Brigade of the 101st Airborne Division and the 47th ARVN Division, with the support of the 117th Assault Helicopter Company, succeeded in protecting the rice harvest throughout the Tuy Hoa Valley, marking the first time in more than ten (10) years that rice was not imported into this area to support the local population. In addition to assuring an ample food supply for our allies and denying the enemy of his source of supply, these units, spirited by the veteran 117th, blunted the attack of a North Vietnamese Army Regiment and routed them so as to cause the complete dispersion of all their units. In order to exploit this dispersion, the 2d Battalion, 502d Airborne Infantry, with the support of the 117th, developed special recondo teams to pursue the fleeing Viet Cong. These tactics proved successful and continued until the close of Operation Filmore.

(5) Operation Austin II - The 1st Brigade, 101st Airborne

Division and the 44th ARVN Regiment, supported in part by the 117th Assault Helicopter Company, experienced numerous enemy probes and hand grenade attacks throughout Operation Austin II near Phan Thiet, Republic of Vietnam, from 11 April - 26 April 1966. The 117th was required to place both airlift and armed helicopter crews on continuous alert to support the emergency medical evacuations and combat assaults, both day and night, that were conducted throughout this operation. On the night of 21 April 1966, the entire 10th Combat Aviation Battalion cantonment area and parking area became the target of enemy mortar fire. Fortunately no ground attack followed and due to the excellent individual bunkers and perimeter defensive positions no casualties were sustained and the only result was minor damage to the parked aircraft. This was a lesson well learned and strict individual protective measures were required in all future operations. On 27 April 1966, the enemy was reported to have withdrawn inland toward the west. In order to block this movement into the central highlands, all units, minus a handful of reserves, were redeployed to new base camps located near the South Vietnam and Cambodian border.

(6) Operation Austin VI - The 117th Assault Helicopter Company provided support for the 2d Battalion, 502d Airborne Infantry in its efforts to halt the Viet Cong infiltration along the "Ho Chi Minh" trail in the rugged central highlands near Gia Nghia, approximately eight miles east of Nhon Co, Republic of Vietnam, from 28 April - 17 May 1966, during the conduct of Operation Austin VI. Some of the more important lessons learned during this period were the techniques

required for flying at high density altitudes, maximum gross weights, and under severe weather conditions in the early morning and late afternoons caused by the rapidly approaching monsoon season for this area. In order to best accomplish its mission, the 117th placed volunteer crews and helicopters in the forward infantry command post. These crews, actually living with the infantry units were available to the supported units much earlier each day since they did not have to wait for the weather between Gia Nhia and the field locations to clear up enough to fly. In addition, the armed helicopter support was immediately available at all times and proved invaluable to the continuous combat operations. Midway through Austin VI, the tactical emphasis shifted to the area of Bu Gia Map. From this small landing strip, Infantry, Artillery, Army Aviation, and Air Force activities increased to a high peak. Close fire support by the 117th "Sidewinders" armed helicopter platoon was commonplace, requiring the addition of an ammunition and POL resupply point to be located at Bu Gia Map. The rough jungle terrain between the Cambodian border and the forward command post was literally impossible to land in. Time after time, 101st Airborne Division Recon teams attempted to blast areas in order to provide sufficient clearings for the helicopters, but the task was fruitless. Therefore, the assault helicopter pilots of the 117th were forced to hover more than 60 feet in the air above the tree-tops in order to accomplish the wide variety of missions, including resupply of ammunition, food, and high explosives and occasionally

the extraction of critically wounded personnel. Operation Austin VI was the most aggressive battle action for the 2d Battalion, 502d Infantry, 101st Airborne Division since its arrival in Vietnam. The data on enemy casualties is as follows: Killed In Action (by body count) 95, Killed in Action (estimated) 85, Wounded (estimated) 17, Captured 15. An extract of the After Action Report of the 2d/502d Infantry for Operation Austin VI reveals that: "The assignment of the 117th Assault Helicopter Company command and control aircraft in direct support of the Infantry was invaluable to the success of the operation. A command and control helicopter was used for liaison, communication with subordinate units, assisting units to pinpoint their own locations, guiding units to terrain objectives, and the location of potential landing zones. This flexibility facilitated routine unit supply and airdrops and expedited emergency airdrops of chainsaws, demolitions, food and ammunition. Stationing the helicopters forward at Bu Gia Map provided much greater utilization."

(7) Operation Paul Revere - The professionalism and combat proficiency of the 117th Assault Helicopter Company was again displayed when in only four (4) hours, the entire company moved, on order, from Qia Nhia to Pleiku, Republic of Vietnam, for an immediate 48 hours participation in a major combat exercise, Operation Paul Revere IV, 31 March - 1 June 1966. Reinforcements were required to assist the 1st Air Cavalry Division in an aggressive attack on Viet Cong Forces surrounded in an isolated battle area. In less than 24 hours the 117th had compiled 152 hours of combat flying,

airlifting 654 American soldiers and over 10 $\frac{1}{2}$ tons of supplies. All missions were successfully completed without incident.

(8) Operation Hawthorne - At the same time that the 117th was engaged in Operation Paul Revere IV, the 10th Combat Aviation Battalion issued explicit orders for the 117th to be combat operational at Dak To, Republic of Vietnam, no later than 2 June 1966 for participation in one of the most intricately planned campaigns to date, Operation Hawthorne, 2 June - 20 June 1966. Without hesitation an advance party was airlifted to Dak To to establish the forward command post and a temporary cantonment area for the operation. This advance party, under the command of Major Scheider, accomplished its mission in a truly outstanding manner and due to its efforts, the 117th Assault Helicopter Company was prepared to commence the support of the operation on the day of their arrival. Operation Hawthorne, 2 June - 20 June 1966, was one of the most significant and decisive battles fought in Vietnam. American and Republic of Vietnam forces succeeded in completely stopping the planned attack by the 24th North Vietnamese Army Regiment against the villages of Dak To and Tan Cahn. This operation succeeded not only in stopping the attack, but also routed the North Vietnamese Regiment which resulted in its complete dispersal throughout the dense jungle battle area. The infantry pressed the attack against the enemy by deploying company sized elements into strategically located positions in order to effectively block the exits into Cambodia and the dense jungles to the north. These tactics required maximum aviation effort in order to rapidly move large infantry and artillery elements

throughout the battlefield. In addition, numerous special reconnaissance teams required immediate airlift into the areas separating the larger allied units. Many of these areas were known enemy resupply and withdrawal routes and several times during the operation members of the 117th were called upon to effect an emergency extraction of one of these reconnaissance teams under intense enemy fire to prevent its complete annihilation. The success of this operation would not have been possible without the determined, highly professional aviation support rendered, of which the 117th Assault Helicopter Company played a major decisive role. Feats of individual, crew, and team heroism were common throughout the operation. Members of the 117th continued to support, assist, and even save their infantry comrades at great personal risk and sacrifice. Particular tribute is paid to Warrant Officer (W1) Richard J. Fedorowicz who distinguished himself and the service he represents on two separate occasions within a period of only four days. On 10 June, 1966 he completed a night resupply of a beleaguered force near Dak To. While hovering above the trees, at night, in very poor weather conditions, his aircraft became the target of numerous enemy small arms and automatic weapons fire. In spite of this extreme danger Warrant Officer Fedorowicz successfully accomplished his mission. On the night of 13-14 June, 1966, he again displayed exceptional courage and devotion to duty when he was called upon to extract a small special forces team from a hostile area where they were being pursued by a platoon-plus sized enemy element. He once again successfully accomplished his mission. For the above actions Warrant Officer

Fedorowicz was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross with oak leaf cluster. Three complete crews of the "Sidewinders", the armed helicopter platoon, also earned the everlasting gratitude and respect of our allies, when, on the evening of 3 June, 1966, they were called upon to aid a company of ARVN troops who had been ambushed, pinned down by enemy fire, and eventually surrounded by an enemy regiment. During the resulting engagement, even though two of the pilots, Chief Warrant Officer (W2) Harold R. Heber and Warrant Officer (W1) Raymond G. Fritz, became seriously wounded and all aircraft became the target of intense automatic and small arms fire, these dedicated soldiers remained on station and attacked the enemy time after time with effective and devastating suppressive fires. The American advisor later reported that as a result of this action, his forces met no further resistance and were able to continue and accomplish their mission. As a result of this action, CWO Heber was recommended for the Silver Star, CPT Richard D. Akre, Artillery, 1Lt Homer R. Jordan, Infantry, Warrant Officers (W1) Harold O. Crooks and Edwin R. Constant were all recommended for the Distinguished Flying Cross and all other crew members were recommended for the Air Medal for Valor. In order to pay tribute to the extraordinary achievements performed in the conduct of Operation Hawthorne sixty-five percent of the enlisted men were recommended for the USARV Certificate of Achievement. All told, Operation Hawthorne was one of the most successful operations conducted in Vietnam during 1966. This success was the result of a truly professional

team effort, in which the 117th Assault Helicopter Company played a major role.

(9) Operation Beauregard - The 117th continued to provide support for the 1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division, in the same general area around Dak To from 24 June - 14 July, 1966 during the conduct of Operation Beauregard. This operation was conducted to exploit the success of Operation Hawthorne and the 117th continued to provide professional aviation support required by the infantry units to enable them to accomplish their mission.

(10) Operation John Paul Jones - the 117th once again returned to the coastal area of Tuy Hoa to provide support for Operation John Paul Jones from 21 July - 25 August, 1966. Once again in support of the 1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division, as well as their old friends and allies from the 2d ROK Marine Brigade, 22d ARVN Division, and Special Forces elements, the 117th continued to provide airlift and armed helicopters for combat assaults, routine and emergency resupply, command and control, and, as always, medical evacuation of sick and wounded. Once again the 117th was included in several night lifts by company and battalion sized task forces. During this operation, the gunships of the 117th had 10 confirmed Viet Cong killed and approximately 45 structures damaged or destroyed.

(11) Operation Seward - With no break and fortunately, without moving from its location in Tuy Hoa, the 117th once again provided support for Operation Seward from 26 August - 15 October, 1966. The 117th once again provided support for the 1st Brigade,

101st Airborne Division, and the newly arrived 1st Battalion, 22d Infantry, 4th Infantry Division as well as providing 10 airlift helicopters to aid the 14th Aviation Battalion in support of the 1st Air Cavalry Division from 12 September - 18 September 1966. The highlight of Operation Seward was a 10th Combat Aviation Battalion lift in which an infantry battalion was extracted, lifted to a staging area, and then airlifted in a combat assault. This lift commenced in the afternoon and terminated with the final extraction and assault being conducted with the use of artificial illumination after dark. It was during the final extraction of the recondo element of the 2d Battalion, 502d Infantry that one of the airlift helicopters, piloted by CPT Leslie J. Hepler, Transportation Corps, was taken under fire in the pickup zone and received one round in the transmission, thereby disabling the aircraft. Additional troops were immediately returned to the area, and due to this rapid reaction, no losses were sustained and the aircraft was recovered. From 26 September - 13 October, 1966, fifteen aviators from D troop, 1st Squadron, 10th Cavalry, 4th Infantry Division, who were new arrivals in Vietnam, trained with and flew operational missions with the 117th in order to gain experience in combat operations.

(12) Operation Paul Revere IV - The 117th was alerted on 15 October, 1966 to move from Tuy Hoa to Pleiku to reinforce the 52d Combat Aviation Battalion in support of the 4th Infantry Division and the 3d Brigade, 25th Infantry Division engaged in Operation Paul Revere IV. By 17 October 1966, the entire unit was operational in Pleiku and commenced operations immediately. The 117th conducted

numerous combat assaults as well as other support missions, alone and in conjunction with other units of the 52d. During Operation Paul Revere IV, the 117th was faced with the problem of conducting combat assaults into dense jungle terrain held by very determined enemy and no suitable areas for landing zones. By taking lighter loads to allow the helicopters to hover out of ground effect, the 117th overcame this problem and conducted the assaults into areas where it appeared to be impossible. Trees, stumps, bamboo, and high elephant grass kept the helicopters from landing, but as they hovered over the area, the infantry men of the 4th and 25th Infantry Divisions would jump out, sometimes from as high as fifteen to twenty feet, and immediately secure the area and clear a place for subsequent helicopters to land. On numerous occasions, landing zones were cut by the infantry in the middle of jungles in order for the helicopters to bring in replacements, resupplies, or evacuate wounded. The flying conditions faced by the aviators of the 117th placed demands upon the entire crew that the mere act of accomplishing any mission assigned was a task requiring the utmost in flying skill. It was during this period that the 117th lost two helicopters to a very determined enemy. The first loss occurred on 29 October, 1966, when 1Lt John W. Manchester, Armor, was called upon to resupply ammunition to a rifle company that had been in continuous contact with the enemy for several hours and was in dire need of the ammunition. As Lt Manchester approached the drop area, the aircraft was fired upon and began to burn. Only through exceptional flying skill was Lt Manchester able to fly

the burning aircraft to a small river several miles away, and execute a perfect landing enabling the entire crew to escape unharmed. For this action, Lt Manchester has been recommended for the Distinguished Flying Cross. The second loss occurred on 11 November, 1966, and resulted in the only combat casualties for the 117th for the year. On this day, the 117th was called from another mission to provide airlift aircraft and armed escort to participate in an emergency combat assault of elements of the 4th Infantry Division to provide reinforcements for one of their units that was in contact with a superior force and had already suffered heavy casualties. It was during a lift into one of the landing zones that one of our armed helicopters, piloted by CPT John J. Livingston, Artillery and Warrant Officer Terrence M. Rooney, Aviation, was called upon to provide cover for another armed helicopter which was making a run on known enemy targets. Without hesitation CPT Livingston dove his aircraft toward the target where one other helicopter had already been shot down, and as he broke away from his run, his aircraft became the target of numerous automatic weapons that were emplaced in the target area. The helicopter burst into flame and came down among the enemy positions. It was not until later, after the enemy had been cleared from the area, that the bodies of CPT Livingston, WO Rooney, SP5 Maynard J Humes, crew chief, and SP4 Loren S. Reeves, gunner, were able to be recovered. For the unquestionable heroism and sacrifice above and beyond the call of duty, CPT Livingston has been awarded the Silver Star, Warrant Officer Rooney, SP5 Humes, and SP4 Reeves the Distinguished Flying Cross. Despite the losses suffered during this operation the 117th

was able to accomplish every assigned mission in a truly professional manner.

(13) Operation Attleboro - Operation Attleboro, in Tay Ninh Province, rapidly developed into one of the major combat operations of 1966. As more and more American Infantrymen were committed to the operation, the need for more helicopter support became apparent and the 52d Combat Aviation Battalion was called upon to provide some of this support. At this time the 117th was attached to the 52d and received the mission of reinforcing the 170th Assault Helicopter Company for operation in support of the 1st Brigade, 25th Infantry Division in the area just north of Tay Ninh, RVN. During the period 10 November - 17 November 1966, one airlift platoon and part of the armed helicopter platoon participated in massive combat assaults, resupply missions, medical evacuations, and command and control missions for the infantry units. Although the flat terrain, with huge landing zones free of obstacles, gave the pilots and crews a relative break from the rigorous flying around Pleiku, the Viet Cong would not. He posed a constant threat to all aircraft flying anywhere in the area and it was only by extremely good fortune that the 117th aircraft were able to return to Pleiku without loss or incident. During their stay at Tay Ninh, the combat-wise veterans of the 117th were again subjected to enemy mortar attack, but, due to their preparation for such an eventuality, no one was injured.

(14) Operation Pickett - On December 7, 1966, the 117th Assault Helicopter Company again packed its bags and moved to Kontum, RVN,

where it joined the Headquarters of the 10th Combat Aviation Battalion and its sister unit, the 129th Assault Helicopter Company, in support of the 1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division. The operation got under way early on the morning of 9 December, 1966, when all the tactical units of the brigade were moved in a series of combat assaults into positions approximately 30 miles west of Kontum, near the Cambodian border. After these initial assaults, the 117th continued to provide aircraft for command and control, resupply, medical evacuations, and the insertion and extraction of long range reconnaissance patrols throughout operations in this area. Just prior to the Christmas Truce period, the 117th and the 129th extracted all the tactical elements from their field positions and returned them to base camp at Kontum where they were able to celebrate Christmas. As a fitting end to a highly successful year, the 117th, along with its sister company the 129th, and four CH-47A Chinooks, completed what is believed to be the largest non-illuminated night combat assault yet held in Vietnam. On the night of 27 December, more than 1100 men and 6,000 pounds of cargo were lifted into a deep valley approximately 15 miles northeast of Kontum. Despite the extremely hazardous mountainous terrain and unimproved landing zones, coupled with strong winds and severe turbulence, the entire lift was completed without incident or accident in a very professional manner by the veteran aviators and crews of the 117th Assault Helicopter Company.

Inclosure I: Awards and Decorations 1966.

<u>AWARD</u>	<u>NUMBER RECOMMENDED</u>	<u>NUMBER AWARDED</u>
Silver Star	3	1
Legion of Merit	1	1
Distinguished Flying Cross	36	25
Bronze Star for Valor	3	2
Bronze Star	31	14
Air Medal for Valor	50	39
Air Medal	1588	1147
Army Commendation Medal for Valor	16	7
Army Commendation Medal	25	41
Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry	20	1

Inclosure II Aircraft Flying Hours and Availability, 1966

<u>MONTH</u>	<u>HOURS FLOWN</u>	<u>AIRCRAFT AVAILABILITY</u>
January	1658	73.5%
February	1174	64.5%
March	1500	77.0%
April	1406	80.5%
May	1332	81.0%
June	1253	83.0%
July	1585	93.0%
August	2078	86.5%
September	2002	85.5%
October	1817	85.7%
November	2090	89.2%
December	1976	85.9%
Total Flying Hours 1966		19,871
Average Flying Hours per Month		1,656
Average Aircraft Availability per Month		82.1

Inclosure III The major operations that the 117th Assault Helicopter Company (UH-1) (A) has been engaged in during 1966.

<u>NAME</u>	<u>DATE</u>	<u>LOCATION</u>	<u>UNIT SUPPORTED</u>
Jefferson	1 Jan-16 Jan 66	Tuy Hoa	2nd ROK Marine BDE. 47th ARVN Regt.
Van Buren	19 Jan-21 Jan 66	Tuy Hoa	1st Bde. 101st Abn.Div. 2nd ROK Marine Bde. 47th ARVN Regt.
Harrison	26 Feb-24 Mar 66	Tuy Hoa	1st Bde. 101st Abn.Div. 2nd ROK Marine Bde. 47th ARVN Regt.
Filmore	25 Mar- 9 Apr 66	Tuy Hoa	1st Bde. 101st Abn.Div. 2nd ROK Marine Bde. 47th ARVN Regt.
Austin II	11 Apr-26 Apr 66	Phan Thiet	1st Bde. 101st Abn.Div. 44th ARVN Regt.
Austin VI	30 Apr-20 May 66	Nhon Co/ Gia Nghia	1st Bde. 101st Abn.Div.
Paul Revere	31-May- 1 Jun 66	Pleiku	3rd Bde. 25th Inf. Div. 2d Bn. 5th Cav./ 1st Cav Div.
Hawthorne	1 Jun-20 Jun 66	Dak To	1st Bde. 101st Abn.Div.
Beauregard	24 Jun-14 Jul 66	Dak To	1st Bde. 101st Abn.Div.
John Paul Jones	21 Jul-25 Aug 66	Tuy Hoa	1st Bde. 101st Abn.Div. 2nd ROK Marine Bde. 22nd ARVN Div.