

HISTORY OF THE
129TH ASSAULT HELICOPTER COMPANY (UH-1) (A)
APO 96377

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HEADQUARTERS
10TH COMBAT AVIATION BATTALION
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FORWARD

The following historical record of the 129th Assault Helicopter Company is dedicated to Lt. Edwin S. Brague Jr., Artillery, 05623617. Lt. Brague was killed in combat 7 January 1967. Lt. Brague was the Unit Historical Officer prior to his death. The bulk of the company history that follows was written by Lt. Brague.

PREFACE

This account of the activities was gathered in the field, from organization records and personal on the scene reports. The purpose of this history is to preserve the events in which the 129th Assault Helicopter Company was involved. The conditions under which the research was conducted were not conducive to absolute accuracy or completeness, but the history presents a view of the company which otherwise might be forgotten.

129TH ASSAULT HELICOPTER COMPANY (UH-1) (A)
APO SF 96377

SUBJECT: Unit Historical Report

1. MISSION AND RESOURCES

The primary mission of the 129th Assault Helicopter Company is to provide tactical air movement of U.S. and allied troops in connection with counter-insurgency operations against hostile forces in the Republic of Viet Nam.

The secondary mission of the 129th Assault Helicopter Company is to provide tactical air movement of supplies and equipment within the tactical area of responsibility.

The additional mission of providing suppressive fire support from the armed helicopter platoon for the ground troops, assault helicopters and motor convoys is of increasing importance.

Some other missions of the 129th are; Armed Reconnaissance; Reconnaissance by fire; Surveillance; Artillery Adjustment; Psychological Warfare; Chemical, Biological, and Radiological Warfare; Command and Control; Emergency Extractions; and Medical Evacuation.

2. ORGANIZATION

The 129th Assault Helicopter Company was reorganized on 10 November 1966, under modified TO&E 1-770 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 fifty two (152) Enlisted Men.

The units attached to the 129th are the 394th Transportation Company (Cargo Helicopter Field Maintenance), and the 433rd Medical Detachment (Organizational Augmentation).

3. OPERATIONS

1966

The month of January found many of the 129th Assault Helicopter Company's aircraft and crews scattered throughout the II Corps area flying with our sister companies the 117th and 148th Assault Helicopter Companies, and with "Dust Off". Some of the places where a "Bite & Striker" could be found were; Nha Trang, Qui Nhon, Tuy Hoa, Bong Son and Dong Ba Thin. The purpose of this was to give the pilots and crews some combat experience while flying with experienced units. As a result the 129th saw a lot of the II Corps area. Most of the unit operations around Tuy Hoa.

Major Robert Stearns joined the 129th on the second of January as our new commanding officer. Major Stearns led the 129th on its first combat assault at Tuy Hoa in support of the 2nd Republic of Korea Marine Brigade during Operation Jefferson. Everything went smoothly and the company conducted itself admirably on its first operation.

On 11 January Bulldog 536 became the first aircraft to be hit by enemy fire, it was struck by one round on a flight from Nha Trang to Tuy Hoa. The crew didn't realize it until a post flight by the crew-chief made the discovery.

During the third week in January six slicks and three gunships joined with the 148th Assault Helicopter Company in support of the 1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division at Tuy Hoa. In that week the 129th flew a total of 14 combat assaults and logged over 200 hours.

The end of the month found the 129th still scattered with some crews at Qui Nhon working for "Dust Off" and the Koreans, some at Nha Trang flying VIP missions for I Field Force Victor and some went to Bong Son to

see the First Cavalry Division in action for a few days. Everyone was getting into the swing of things and gaining much in the way of combat experience. The pilots averaged 68 flying hour per month with Captain John Boysen being the high man for the month with 130 hours. With all the various places the crews had been, naturally there were quite a few war stories to be told over a cold beer.

The month of February was a busy month for the company and one in which the company was called together to operate as a unit. Many new experiences were had by the crews this second month of combat operation. Most of the month was spent in support of the 101st while they were preventing the rice crop of the Tuy Hoa Valley from getting into the hands of the Viet Cong.

The 129th recorded another first for itself on the third of February when it lost it's first aircraft. Cobras 937 crashed and was destroyed while providing gun support during a skirmish between ARVN Regional Forces and the Viet Cong. No injuries were sustained by the crew, however they had a nice five hour walk out of the jungle before they could be picked up by a waiting helicopter. The crew was pretty happy about the whole experience as they were able to walk away unscratched and had a wild war story to relate that night.

On 9 February all the aircraft from Qui Nhon returned to Dong Ba Thin and joined the rest of the company in a move to Tuy Hoa. Tuy Hoa was destined to be our second home for quite a while. The other crews and

aircraft filtered back to Tuy Hoa about this time. We were to support elements of the 101st ABN DIV, 2D ROK Marine Brigade, and the 47th Infantry Regiment ARVN. We shared these duties with the 117th and 48th Assault Helicopter Companies.

The third week in February the Cobras became fully initiated when they received credit for their first Viet Cong killed. Needless to say much commotion was made of this by our "Vicious" Cobras.

On the 24th of February we teamed up with the 48th, 117th, and 155th Assault Helicopter Companies to conduct a battalion sized demonstration and airlift. We provided the mission commander for this and things went very smoothly. It was quite an impressive sight with all the helicopters in the air at one time.

The afternoon of 27 February, WO-1 Newhouse, flying in Bulldog 508, became our first combat injured pilot when he was wounded in the right leg while on a resupply mission for the 101st northwest of Tuy Hoa. The aircraft was flown home safely by the co-pilot and Mr. Newhouse was evacuated to the states. He was the first crew member to be injured in both the company and the newly created 10th Combat Aviation Battalion.

The month of February was indeed an exciting one and one that gave the company an insight to what was ahead for an airmobile company serving in Vietnam. Everyone in the 129th was fully initiated and all were becoming "Combat Experienced Veterans". The company flew 1,655 hours accomplishing 1,391 tasks in 6,120 sorties. A total of 4,375 troops were carried as well as 604.2 tons of cargo.

The 129th remained as a unit at Tuy Hoa during the entire month of March. During this time the company received it's first replacements

fresh from the states, three new aviators and an experienced Major. Much to the chagrin of the new aviators, the old-timers constantly reminded them of the long time they had left before DEROs. The saying that month was; "If I had that long to do I would shoot myself"! In addition to the normal days missions, some of the lucky crews would make a trip to a US Navy Destroyer off the coast of Tuy Hoa for a little rest and ice cream. It provided a welcome break in the month for many.

The next month started out fast and furious with an extraction of elements of the 101st on 4 March. On the last lift out, the Bulldogs received a hail of automatic weapons fire. Three of the aircraft were hit with one round just missing a pilot's head and striking crew chief Staff Sergeant Sanford in the neck. He was the only one injured and he was evacuated to Nha Trang. He later joined the unit in good health.

On 6 March three other aircraft were hit by ground fire. The company was conducting a combat assault with the 101st when these hits occurred. Door gunner PFC Deloe was wounded in the hand slightly, but returned to duty the next day. It looked like it would be an interesting month! On 13 March, the 129th along with the 48th and 117th Assault Helicopter Companies made a battalion sized night combat assault in support of the 101st. This was the first night combat assault of this magnitude to be conducted in the country. The landing zone time was at 0140 local and black out approaches were made to two flashlights held in the landing zone by the Pathfinders who were inserted at dusk. The landing zone was located in a series of rice paddies and was surrounded by a series of low hills. Aside from some nerve racking moments as when the outgoing flight passed right

through the incoming flight at the same altitude, the operation was successful. Many a man breathed a sigh of relief when the night was over! Major Burnett Saunders, who recorded the event in the company journal, described the flight as an extremely "Hairy" one and the best birthday present he received that day was to get safely on the ground.

Combat assaults were almost a daily occurrence in the remaining days of the month as the 129th continued their support of the ground units. In addition the company became involved in a series of Long Range Reconnaissance Patrol (LRRP) insertions and extractions. CWO George Dent and WO Ronald Griggs had their team surrounded by 17 Viet Cong and called for an immediate extraction. Their slick, escorted by the Cobras, made a successful extraction under fire. The Cobras were given credit for 12 Viet Cong KIA's as they poured deadly rocket and machinegun fire into a group of advancing Viet Cong. The LRRP team was extremely happy with the crews and their fine job of getting them out of a tight situation.

Towards the end of the month, two "Dust Off" aircraft were downed in the Vung Ro Pass, just south of Tuy Hoa. Within twenty minutes of getting the word, the 129th had lifted a security platoon into the crash site. Later more elements were lifted into the area as a fire-fight developed. We had one aircraft hit during the mission, but no one was injured, just scared as usual!

The last day in March, Major Ronald Merritt's LRRP team came under fire shortly after being inserted at dusk. They called for an extraction and Major Merritt and co-pilot Ron Griggs, along with three of the Cobras made a night extraction, Major Merritt had to land to

burning C-4 while under fire. The Cobras provided excellent fire support as usual, getting credit for a machine gun nest when their rockets literally tore it apart. Again the LRRP's expressed their gratitude for the competent and brave pilots and crews for getting them out of another tight spot.

The month of March ended with the company still at Tuy Hoa helping protect the rice harvest. In addition to the unusual incidents recorded above, the company continued it's outstanding aviation support to the ground units by bringing hot chow, ammunition, mail and other necessities to them. It was a full and busy month for the company and the four new replacements got in some good first hand combat flying.

The month of April started off with a bang, but fortunately ended quietly. It was Lt. George Becketts month for bad luck, and for a while it looked like the company would suffer too. On the 3rd of April, another LRRP team was in trouble and called for extraction. Major Merritt, who happened to be at Dong Tre taking a lunch break, was requested to make the extraction. Since the patrol was widely separated, and was in a pretty confined area, one man was left in the landing zone. However, Bulldog 749, piloted by Lt. Beckett and WO Ron Griggs was circling over head and went in to make the pick up. A stray shot from the Viet Cong struck their tail rotor and the aircraft spun and crashed. No one was hurt, but now there were five people on the ground. A Cobra, covering the extraction emptied the remainder of his ammunition in a hurry on the suspected Viet Cong position, jettisoned its rocket pods, and went in to pick them up. It was done successfully and everyone was gotten out safely.

The next day the 129th had a combat assault into a real confined area, and Lt. Beckett's ship fell through on approach and turned over. Again nobody was injured. After this Lt. Beckett was given the day off to regroup. 6 April found Lt. Beckett back in the seat again, this time sitting in a landing zone waiting for a battalion commander to finish his business, when a snipers bullet struck him in the arm, necessitating his evacuation back to the states. Thus ended Lt. Beckett's short thirty day tour with the company. One of the Cobra gunners, SP4 Alfred Hough was wounded in the right hand on a firing pass, but continued firing with one hand knocking a VC out of a tree. Things were getting pretty hot around Dong Tre.

The Seventh of April started out quiet, but ended up as "A Bad Day at Black Rock" for the 2nd platoon. Four slicks and 2 gun crews were eating lunch at Dong Tre while on a reaction force mission when they were called out. The infantry had "Charlie" on the run and wanted to set up blocking positions. After an artillery prep, airstrike and gun ship prep, the slicks where called in. The first lift was cold, but on the second lift the Viet Cong opened up with 3 automatic weapons shooting down Bulldog 508. WO Marvin Hardison was hit in the leg and WO Ron Griggs hurt his neck. Both were evacuated back to the states. All other three aircraft were hit at least twice. Then as Bulldog 748 piloted by Captain Phil Saunders and WO Carl Doherty attempted to land to pick up the crew of the downed aircraft it was raked by machine gun fire from nose to tail (24 holes) and Capt. Saunders and the crew-chief were both wounded but were eventually returned to duty. The aircraft lost its

hydraulics and was flown to Tuy Hoa by WO Doherty. Three hours later after the infantry had taken the hill and wiped out the machine guns, the remaining crew of 508 was picked up.

On the 8th of April, the second platoon moved to Dong Ba Thin and on the 9th they were moved to Nha Trang where they provided 4 "D" models and 1 "B" model for IFFV. The 1st platoon and the remaining guns stayed at Tuy Hoa playing musical chairs as they moved from one side of the runway to the other. The rest of the month was spent transporting VIP's around the II Corps area by the 2nd platoon and "ash and trash" missions conducted by our elements at Tuy Hoa.

The month of May was rather uneventful for the Bulldogs as they continued to support IFFV at Nha Trang, the ROK's and a Battalion of the 101st at Tuy Hoa. The company received four new replacements this month who were sorely needed. The Cobras had an outstanding month conducting fire missions against the Viet Cong. The company did manage to get together as a unit for several combat assaults with the 45th ROK Marines during the period 6 May to 13 May.

WO "Hoot" Gibson and Specialist Quiambo were both slightly wounded on a gun run on 9 May, both were returned to duty the same day. On the 10th during a CA with the ROK's, a slick crew chief was credited with 2 VC kills and the Cobras got four kills. None of the aircraft were hit by fire.

On the 13th of May, the Cobras had a fine day working with Head Hunter, and on 3 different missions they were credited with 9 VC kills and 29 buildings destroyed.

One of the Nha Trang slicks was hit by a sniper on the 15th during a road recon through Vung Ro Bay and a passenger, L/Cpl Ernest Lane, 39th Engineer Battalion was fatally wounded in the stomach. The Post at Vung Ro subsequently was named in his honor. Our Cobras were active again, destroying 70 buildings. A night medical evacuation was also made. The 18th was another busy day for the Cobras as they were credited with 10 VC killed by body count, and another 29 VC estimated killed. They also destroyed 14 buildings. This action took place in the morning while our Bulldogs extracted two Hawk teams of the 101st who were under fire.

The rest of the month was spent conducting daily platoon combat assaults and resupply missions at Tuy Hoa. There was no battalion operations at Tuy Hoa so the infantry coordinated directly with the company. No difficulties were encountered along this line as we continued to support them in our usual Bite & Strike manner. The 4 slicks of the 2nd platoon continued to provide VIP transportation for IFFV at Nha Trang and the pilots and crews really got a chance to tour II Corps area as they flew to every area from where American troops were operating. During the month we also received six aviators from the 1st Cav as they started their infusion program. After arriving with the Bite & Strike "Gypsies" they couldn't make up their mind whether or not to be happy with their new home.

At approximately 2000 hours on 8 June 1966, the 129th Assault Helicopter Company, at that time located in Tuy Hoa, Republic of Vietnam, was ordered to Dak To, Republic of Vietnam to close NLT 091800 June 1966. The mission of the 129th was to support the First Brigade, 101st Airborne

Division with the additional mission of providing the necessary aircraft to insert and extract the Special Forces/GIDG Apache teams in the Dak To area. The 129th Assault Helicopter Company closed into new Dak To air-strip with one airlift platoon and one armed helicopter platoon at 091745 June 1966. At this particular time the situation and deployment of the ground forces had expanded to the point that there was no base or airfield security in the area assigned to the 129th. Since all available ground forces had been fed into the pitched battle of Operation Hawthorne, the 129th found it necessary to establish a perimeter outside the Special Forces Camp perimeter at new Dak To. The company immediately deployed on the ground as infantry. Aircraft were dispersed and a perimeter established and manned by officers and enlisted men alike. The armed helicopters were implaced on the perimeter taking advantage of available fields of fire and the armament systems mounted on the aircraft. The door guns of the airlift platoon were then emplaced on the perimeter to fill in the gaps left by the armed helicopters. The first night proved to be uneventful and a reconnaissance was conducted during the early morning of 10 June to select a more tenable area for the company to occupy. An area was selected adjacent to the MACV compound and the 129th relocated at 1000 hours on 10 June 1966. Again it was necessary to establish a perimeter to be manned by Officers and Enlisted men. At this point morale was extremely high and remained so throughout this operation. Immediately upon relocation the 129th was called on to augment the 117th and 48th Assault Helicopter Companies in support of Operation Hawthorne. The days that followed proved to be quite eventful as aircraft commitments

were extremely heavy and airlift support was necessary from early morning hours until after darkness each day. In an effort to increase intelligence gathering resources the 129th was committed on or about 12 June to insert a CIDG force to evaluate enemy activity along known routes of infiltration near the Dak Sut area. Although the weather had deteriorated to near zero-zero in most areas and improved only to $\frac{1}{4}$ mile visibility with a ceiling of 100 feet or less in the entire local area, it was deemed vital that this force be emplaced. Adding to the weather hazards was the fact that this team would have to be positioned on the ground at last light and in a known enemy controlled area. Security restriction had prevented this unit from making the desired reconnaissance of its point of insertion, thus another limitation was imposed. The mission commenced as briefed and the flight commanded by Major Richard Cline proceeded to its destination. Due to the poor weather and the necessity of inserting these personnel without being detected the entire route was flown at tree top level without lights. Deceptive measures were employed by feinting into several landing zones and the team was inserted at last light at the briefed LZ. At this time the flight then pulled out to a safe distance from the team to again confuse the enemy as to the LZ location. After approximately 15 minutes the Apache Team radioed that it was in position and had not been detected and the flight proceeded back to Dak To. Two days later a call was received by 129th Operations that this team was heavily engaged and unable to break contact. An immediate extraction would be necessary and the pick up point could not be selected since the enemy was in pursuit of the team. The flight was airborne within minutes and upon reaching

the area of extraction it was learned that there was no pick up area large enough even for a single helicopter. The Apache Team immediately began hacking a pick up zone from the jungle, and, as this was taking place, the gun platoon leader provided cover and suppressive fire for the hard pressed and desperate ground elements. The armed helicopters repeatedly struck the areas around the team's position with rockets, 40mm grenades, and machine gun fire until the enemy pursuit was broken. It was then decided to attempt the extraction even though the LZ preparation was not complete. The pick up was made from the extremely confined one aircraft LZ with aircraft separation of only 20 to 30 seconds. The take off path was directly over enemy positions. Again the Cobra Guns displayed their tenacious capabilities and laid rocket fire and grenades directly under the lift aircraft as they departed the LZ. The team work by Captain Wilson's Cobra Guns and Major Cline's lift aircraft was effective in extracting every team member and reducing the enemy pressure to a complete silence with not one friendly casualty. The Cobra platoon again distinguished itself later in June in an area ten miles Southwest of Dak Pek. While supporting two lift ships resupplying an outpost, an enemy force of unknown size began delivering deadly accurate fire on the resupply ships and the outpost as well. The outpost could offer little assistance in pin pointing the enemy so Captain McCracken, who was leading his section of guns, proceeded to use his own method of finding the enemy. This proved to be difficult, however, Captain McCracken resorted to searching out this enemy by flying at extremely low altitudes until they were detected. To perform his mission of protecting the airlift ships Captain McCracken

perform his mission of protecting the airlift ships Captain McCracken voluntarily exposed himself flying low level and when the enemy was located he then directed repeated gun ship strikes using rockets and machine guns to eventually reduce the enemy threat. Every enemy weapon was silenced and the resupply mission was completed and the outpost was relieved of the enemy pressure. On 13 June Captain McLaughlin prevented what might have been an otherwise disasterous event while escorting a convoy on Highway 14 just South of Dak To. When the convoy commander reported receiving fire from his flank at a range of less than 200 meters Captain McLaughlin immediately engaged an enemy force of undetermined size as he advised the convoy to continue its move. He remained over his target and made multiple gun runs delivering deadly accurate fire until the enemy firing was silenced and the convoy had cleared the area. Captain McLaughlin was repeatedly praised over the radio by the ground commander for his fearless attack on the enemy position and as a result of his quick action the ground unit sustained no casualties. Most all of the Apache support was classified in nature and as such cannot be expounded upon. It is however worthy of note that this unit participated with a total of five crews in a highly classified mission and the details can only be documented in classified files. This mission was in the Dak To area and envolved Free World Forces supported for the first time by United States Army Aviation assets. Only the aviators of the crews were briefed and since participation was strictly voluntary the personnel were not briefed until they accepted the mission. The members who were approached for this mission volunteered to the man and proceeded in the exceptional manner which has given the 10th Aviation Battalion its outstanding reputation.

The company finally got back together as a unit in July. We also started the moving business again as the 129th almost moved three times during the month. The first 3 weeks were spent at Dak To and were relatively quiet. The first platoon and gun platoon accomplished the every day missions of the ground units, bringing them their ammo, equipment, chow and various other items. Numerous small combat assaults were conducted mostly on a platoon size level. The weather started to deteriorate as the monsoon season moved into the highlands.

On the 15th of July word was received that the company would move to Pleiku on the 22nd. At 0100 hours on the 16th we were ordered to move to Tuy Hoa. As the first ships touched down at Tuy Hoa they were told to return to Dak To and that we would be moving to Kontum or Pleiku about the 28th. Finally on the 15th we moved to Holloway at Pleiku for 60 days in support of the 3rd Brigade, 25th Infantry. We conducted one combat assault before the company left. One of the gunships piloted by CWO Walt Fisher, had its rocket pods catch fire. They were jettisoned with no damage. The company finally left Pleiku on the 19th with all our elements. The four slicks at Nha Trang joined us then. The 129th was finally together as a whole unit again.

The 22nd found the company completely operational as it conducted two company sized CA's north west of Kontum. The weather was terrible and only one combat assault was completed, the second one was cancelled because of weather. CWO's Hoot Gibson and Ralph Schoelkopf had engine failure in their gun ship, but landed it in the jungle with only incidental damage. The weather continued to get worse as the monsoon moved into

the area. The rains came more often and visibility and ceilings dropped. Flying became extremely hazardous and the aviators had to resort to low level flying to accomplish their missions.

On the 30th Of July the company received word to move on the 1st of August to Tuy Hoa. We broke camp and had everything loaded and palletized by the 31st ready for the move on the 1st as the month ended.

As the month of August commenced it appeared that the 129th would move from the rain and mud of Pleiku to the dry sands of Tuy Hoa. Such was not the case, when the first lift arrived at Tuy Hoa they were again ordered to return. The unit was kept at Pleiku when the 3rd Brigade, 25th Infantry became heavily engaged during operation Paul Revere. Unfortunately the mess hall and part of the maintenance support had already been flown to Tuy Hoa. As a result we ate "G's" for 5 days until they returned.

The monsoon season was now in the highlands and weather was bad. Missions couldn't get started until about noon when the fog lifted. As a result the company often flew into the night accomplishing their missions. All the flying was at low level and aviators did a tremendous job in navigation.

On the 6th of August, the company received a warning order to move to Tuy Hoa on the 7th for a period of 3 days. The 129th sent 14 Deltas and 5 Bravos which landed and were operational at 1500 on the 7th. Since it was for only 3 days two GP large tents were brought, one for officers and one for enlisted men. Unfortunately the company remained at Tuy Hoa for 3 weeks. It was a little "Close" after 3 weeks with 33 men packed into one GP large.

The company was in support of the 101st again who were conducting operation John Paul Jones. The 129th flew several combat assaults as soon as it arrived with no unusual happenings. On the 10th the company was sent to Phu Tai to augment the 11th Bn in support of the 22nd ARVN Division which was exploiting an Arc Light Strike North West of Qui Nhon. The 129th left the morning of the 10th at 0400 and spent the day there. Upon arrival back at Tuy Hoa the company was notified that it would depart for Pleiku on the 11th, at approximately 1200 hours. Again the move was cancelled. By this time it was old hat and no one got excited.

The 129th commenced to extract some of the elements of the 101st about the 15th and it looked as if the company might move again. However the company was told to start bringing it's remaining equipment down from Pleiku as it would be staying at Tuy Hoa. Fortunately the company was heavily committed and didn't get much of a chance to move personal belongings from Pleiku to Tuy Hoa because it was ordered to move ASAP to Pleiku at 1600 hours the 19th of August. The 129th spent the 20th getting camp set up in the rain. It was a sorry mess as both officers and enlisted men tried to fill sand bags with mud in a driving rain. Nothing would stay dry and the water flowed through the tents like a river. The Cobras built a new shower that featured hot water in the form of an immersion heater in the tank. The Dodge house was built by Captain Dodge and at least it kept the toilet paper dry! Many improvements were made by the officers and men of the company in spite of the conditions we were living in.

The remainder of the month was spent flying missions with the 52nd Battalion. Most of the time the company flew normal resupply and administrative missions. The weather was still a problem. Captain

Howard Stiles joined the unit as the new operations officer. Everyone was getting close to DEROs who came over with the company. All the aviators who had come from the 1st Cav left. They had some trouble getting orders but all left on time.

The beginning of September found the company still at Tuy Hoa, but there would be many a move made before the month was over. On the first day of the month six new aviators, fresh out of flight school reported for duty and were heartily welcomed with cries of "Short" from the many aviators who were due to rotate at the end of the month. The new pilots immediately got a taste of Vietnam, flying five days of combat assaults, maximum effort support missions and emergency resupply missions. During this time two aircraft received hits from automatic weapons fire, but no one was injured. The 5th of September saw the beginning of a mission to recover a crashed O-1 which lasted through the 9th. The company picked up a CIDG force at Plateau Gi and dropped them into a clearing three miles from the downed aircraft. Finally the aircraft was recovered on the 8th, but we were not able to return the troops to Plateau Gi until the 9th because of bad weather. During this period the company also flew normal support missions.

Now things started happening fast and furious. On the 9th the 129th was alerted for a move to Tuy Hoa. On the 10th five ships from the 1st platoon and two gun ships were sent to Nha Trang in support of the 5th Special Forces Group. On the 11th the company minus broke camp for another Sunday move. We arrived in Tuy Hoa at 1630 and put up camp. Meanwhile, back at Nha Trang, the 129th element there was supporting the Long Range Reconnaissance Patrol training school of the 5th Special Forces

Group. This consisted of ten days of first light and last light LRRP team insertions and extractions and can only be generally described as "Hairy". On 15 September the remainder of the Company from Tuy Hoa joined the 1st platoon at Nha Trang for a maximum effort lift of over 200 Montagnard villagers who walked 50 miles to a LRRP team they saw inserted and asked to be resettled. This extraction was made from a one ship landing zone which was on top of 5000 foot high, fog shrouded mountain. More "Hairy" and "Scary" experiences, but it was a real professional job. That part of the company which came to Nha Trang for the mountain top extraction returned to Tuy Hoa on the 21st and resumed normal support activities.

The company received four aviators from the 4th Infantry Division on the 23rd. The 129th was to train them for a few weeks since their company was new in the country. Also received two aviators from the 14th Battalion for our very own.

Would you believe another move! Five miles South on the beach at Tuy Hoa to make room for the construction of a jet runway. The rest of the month was spent flying normal Battalion missions and improving the new company area. The month ended on somewhat of a sad note. The 1st platoon returned from Nha Trang on the 30th (they really liked it there), and PFC Joiner was shot in the neck on a mission. He was evacuated to the states and made a satisfactory recovery. Also the end of September saw the departure of twenty five aviators and forty crew chiefs and mechanics. This left the company with only fourteen aviators and sadly understrength in the maintenance department. It also hinted of the many 150 hour flying time months that were to come in the next five months.

The month of October saw the 129th remain at Tuy Hoa all month much to the disbelief of the entire company. During this time the company was used almost entirely in support of the 1st Battalion, 327th Infantry, 2nd Battalion, 502nd Infantry and 2nd Battalion, 320th Artillery which made up the 1st Brigade of the 101st Airborne Division. The 129th supported them in operations John Paul Jones and Geronimo. The company also received a number of badly needed aviators, crew chiefs and mechanics and staged two night combat assaults.

On the first day of the month the 129th had a company sized mission at Ban Me Thout in support of the Special Forces. It was a very smooth mission. Also, Captain Pratt joined the company and assumed command of the service platoon. The next few days were spent flying the normal type Battalion missions and Eagle flights for the 101st. There was no significant action during this time.

The 129th flew a combat assault for the 2/327 on 7 October and it was a very smooth operation. However, upon our return to base camp at Tuy Hoa, the company was shocked and saddened to hear that four of our comrades had been killed that afternoon. A Jobra gun ship was shot down on an independent mission between Dong Ba Thin and Phan Rang while engaging an enemy .50 caliber machine gun which had a friendly unit pinned down with its deadly fire. Killed were Captain Whetzel, WO Chamberlain, SP/5 Gilliam and PFC Neal. They truly exemplified the fighting spirit of the 129th Assault Helicopter Company by engaging in a deed above and beyond the call of duty while giving their all to support the ground troops.

On the 10th of October the 129th extracted the 2/327 from the field in another professionally smooth operation in which the company heli-lifted

550 troops. The 11th saw the company's call signs changed for the third time this month. The 13th brought four more aviators to us and things were looking brighter. Also we conducted a combat assault with the 2/502. On the 14th we received a warning order to move back to Pleiku but amidst groans of "What, move again"? the warning order was cancelled and calm returned to the 129th. Through 21 October the company flew normal Battalion type missions and happily welcomed five more aviators into the fold. Major Merritt joined the 129th in the field for a few days and we even sent four pilots to Pleiku to help out the 117th. Also an Instructor Pilot program was initiated which proved to be very successful.

Despite terrible weather conditions the company staged a combat assault on 22 October, again with the 2/502, and it was a great success. Due to the extremely bad weather, the assault caught the enemy napping and the 2/502 enjoyed a field day with the enemy which resulted in a number of KIA's and many prisoners and captured weapons and supplies.

All during the month, utilizing every spare moment, the company worked on beautifying the new company area. By the last week of the month it was complete with walkways, officers and enlisted latrines and showers with hot water, a movie area with large screen, volleyball court and EM, NCO, and officers clubs. The officers club became known as the swingingest place between Nha Trang and Qui Nhon and was frequented by the 10th Aviation Battalion Staff, other companies in the 10th Battalion and the 101st and 4th Infantry Division.

On 26 October the command of the 129th passed from Major Bindrup to Major Merritt. During the ceremony Major Bindrup received a Distinguished Flying Cross and Colonel Harrison, the Battalion Commander, passed

the command to Major Merritt. Afterwards, a fantastic party was held at the Officers Club to which all were invited. It brought even more renown to the clubs reputation.

The month closed on an exciting note with a practice diversionary night combat assault on the 30th and a real thing on the 31st. On the 30th 12 UH-1D's and 3 UH-1B's took off at 2100 and conducted the diversionary night combat assault. There were landing zone prestrikes by the gun ships and flare ships kept the area well illuminated. The company landed into one area and feinted into two others.

The next night 7 D's and 3 B's took off at 1835 to insert the Pathfinders and their security force. At 2230 12 Deltas and 3 Bravos took off and flew two sorties each into three different landing areas. With the help of the 48th Aviation Company the 129th heli-lifted two entire battalions of the 101st in a highly successful night operation which kicked off Operation Geronimo I. The assault was preceded by a Tac Air Strike and gun ship pre-strokes. There were no flare ships used, the troop lift helicopters landing to the Pathfinders flashlights. The 129th was joined on the night assault by Colonel Marr, the 17th Aviation Group Commanding Officer who had only words of praise for the 129th at the missions conclusion.

November was highlighted by the arrival of the 1st Brigade of the 4th Infantry Division at their new base camp at Tuy Hoa. This meant that the 129th would be supporting the 101st, the 4th Infantry Division and also the 9th ROK Division. It looked like a busy month ahead and it was. However, the company continued to receive new aviators, eight to be exact, and this took some of the load off the "Old Timers" who had

been in country two to five months.

On 3 November the third platoon gave rides and a class to troopers of the 2/502. Afterwards there was an open discussion of the best means of employing helicopters, helicopter tactics and their capabilities. There was a good exchange of information and knowledge and all greatly benefited from these classes.

An officer of the 129th went to an orphanage in Tuy Hoa on 4 November and distributed candy and soap to the children. It was received with much joy and this brought a good feeling to the company.

The 5th was to be the day of another big night combat assault, but on the first lift at 1830 the mission was cancelled due to bad weather. The next day the company was up at 0430 for a 0535 crank time. The 129th participated in moving the entire 1st Brigade of the 101st Airborne Division and logged 139 hours and carried over 800 troops. The company finished off the operation in grand style with a night combat assault and had a total of seven combat assaults for the day.

The 8th was another busy day as the first platoon had an extraction of the 1/8 Infantry of the 4th Division while the second platoon had a LRRP insertion. Later the entire company staged out of Dong Tre for these combat assaults with the 1/8. The second platoon pitched tents at Dong Tre and remained there as a reaction force for both the 4th Division and the 101st.

On 10 November while on a CS gas mission that was being flown in conjunction with a jet air strike, a CS bomb canister exploded in Lt. Sexauer's ship. Lt. Sexauer executed an autorotation and did an outstanding job which resulted in the saving of seven lives.

The first platoon relieved the second platoon of their reaction force standby on 11 November and the next day began a rash of aircraft crashes and aircraft receiving hits from enemy fire. On the 12th 745 received a hole in the tail rotor drive shaft while on a extraction for the 4th Division. The aircraft sustained only minor damage and was quickly repaired. Two days later 673 took a hit in the bottom of the aircraft, the bullet finally being stopped by the bottom of the aircraft commanders armored seat. There were two combat assaults flown on the 15th, one from Dong Tre and the other from Tuy Hoa and the 1st Platoon returned from Dong Tre as the reaction force mission was terminated. The next day 672 crashed while trying to get into the 2/502 TAC CP and minor injuries were sustained by the crew. A crew from the service platoon sent out to recover the aircraft spent the night in the boonies because of bad weather, a rather hairy experience for no one knew the enemies exact whereabouts. Then on the 17th during a combat assault with the 1/8 in extremely bad weather, 530 lost its 90 degree gear box and crashed in the landing zone. Again, no one was hurt. Finally 672 was destroyed and the service platoon crew happily returned. The company flew 110 hours. The next day 842 received one round in the ammo box while on a combat assault for the 101st and one passenger was wounded.

On the 20th the company flew a combat assault with the 3/12 of the 4th Division and on the 22nd there were combat assaults flown with the 1/8 and the 3/8 of the 4th Division.

The 23rd saw plans being made for the erection of a bigger and better 129th Officers Club to handle the now overflowing crowds arriving for rest and relaxation each night.

Thanksgiving Day was a tremendous success with a fabulous meal of turkey and all the trimmings. It was a big morale booster for all.

The next two days were spent flying combat assaults for the 9th ROK Division in terrible weather. All went well considering the poor conditions.

The remainder of the month was spent flying normal battalion missions. Things were quiet, too quiet. The 129th felt that there was something in store for them in the month ahead. Something like a move.

The month of December proved to be a fairly quiet one with the Xmas and New Years truce. The company was committed quite heavily at times and managed to conduct a few more night CA's. The 129th was destined to leave Tuy Hoa after being there the longest time in one place for the unit.

The first day of Dec started out badly when the engine on Bulldog 842 failed and it crashed into the trees. WO Figueria and Major Rockey were flying. Nobody was hurt but the aircraft was destroyed. The crew was involved in a platoon CA when the accident occurred. The following day we flew over 100 hours in bad weather as the monsoon continued to pound the Tuy Hoa Valley. We started bringing the 101st out of the field as we received a warning order to move to Kon Tum on or about the 5th of December.

The company continued to extract the 101st from the field and on the 5th we moved to Kon Tum. The 129th was located right next to the runway in a brushy area so much work had to be done before the area was livable. The company was given two days to set up camp and we put them

to full use. By the time the company commenced operations on the 8th we had everything completed, from shower to mess hall.

On the 9th of December the company put the 101st into the field west of Plei Kleeng. It was a busy day for the company. Weather was beautiful, especially after the monsoon of Tuy Hoa. WO Wells ran out of fuel on a mission and made a perfect autorotation. Major Otto also lost an engine and made an autorotation with only incident damage to the aircraft. It was a long day for the crews. Operation Pickett had started.

On the 11th of December it was decided that the company would reorganize into 5 platoons. A 3rd lift platoon was created giving the company 3 lift platoons, 1 armed platoon and the service platoon. The third platoon became known as the 3rd Herd.

The next few days were spent supporting the 101st and conducting combat assaults with the ARVNs. When the company was not conducting operations it was on standby as a reaction force. The terrain was rather bad in the area and turbulence was moderate. As a result it was hard to conduct operations in certain areas during different times of the day. The company accomplished all it's missions in spite of these hardships though.

On the 19th of Dec the 129th received 13 new WO's. A grand ceremony was held and everybody given a chance to drink a "green gasser". A good time was had by all and the new aviators were welcomed into the company. With these additions the company was up to TO&E strength as far as aviators were concerned and most of the old timers were able to take a well deserved rest.

The company started extracting the 101st from the field on the 22nd of Dec so they could celebrate Xmas at Kon Tum during the cease fire. It was a long 2 days, but by the evening of the 24th we had brought everybody in from the field. Bulldog 673 with WO Doherty and WO Ferguson at the controls had a engine failure and crashed on final during an extraction. No troops aboard, but WO Doherty and Ferguson were banged up a little, but returned to duty in a few days. They made good use of the URG-10 emergency radio, with which they were located.

Christmas Eve was very quiet around the camp as everyone opened packages from home and relaxed. Xmas day the 129th hosted the nurses and doctors from Doctor Smith's Hospital in Kon Tum. As usual the mess hall outdid themselves and provided an outstanding meal. Everyone enjoyed a relaxing day with good food and quiet relaxation. The only missions the company had were hot chow runs to the perimeter defences which the "Bite & Strikers" were more than glad to do.

The Xmas truce ended with a night combat assault as the holidays came to an end. Everything went very well as the company performed another Bite & Strike special. The rest of the month was spent supporting the 101st in the field up until the New Years truce.

Inclosure I The major operations that the 129th Assault Helicopter Company (UH-1) (A) has been engaged in during 1966.

<u>OPERATION</u>	<u>TIME</u>	<u>PLACE</u>	<u>UNIT SUPPORTED</u>
Jefferson	31Dec65-17Jan66	Tuy Hoa	47th ARVN Regt. 2nd ROK Marine BDE.
Tyler	13Jan-20Jan66	Phan Thiet	101st Abn Div 2/327
Van Buren	20Jan66-20Feb66	Tuy Hoa	1st BDE 101st Abn Div 2nd ROK Marine BDE.
Harrison	21Feb66-24Mar66	Tuy Hoa	1st BDE 101st Abn Div 2nd ROK Marine BDE 47th ARVN Regt.
Filmore	25Mar66-30Apr66	Tuy Hoa	1st BDE 101st Abn Div 2nd ROK Marine BDE 47th ARVN Regt.
Hawthorn	10Jun66-28Jan66	Dak To	1st BDE 101st Abn Div
Beauregard	28Jun66-14Jul66	Dak To	1st BDE 101st Abn Div
Paul Revere	15 Jul66-1Aug66	Pleiku	REINF 52 Cbt Avn Bn
John Paul Jones	8Aug66-19Aug66	Tuy Hoa	1st BDE 101st Abn Div
Paul Revere	19Aug66-11Sep66	Pleiku	REINF 52 Cbt Avn Bn
Seward	11Sep66-25Oct66	Tuy Hoa	1st BDE 101st Abn Div
Geronimo	25Oct66-4Dec66	Phu Hiep	1st BDE 101st Abn Div
Pickett	5Dec66-31Dec66	Kontum	1st BDE 101st Abn Div

Inclosure II Aircraft Flying Hours and Statistical Data, 1966.

DATE	HOURS	PAX	SORTIES	CARGO
Dec 65	1155.0	4456	1154	48.0
Jan 66	1599.0	6054	4658	178.7
Feb 66	1655.0	4375	6120	604.2
Mar 66	1708.0	6718	6583	410.2
Apr 66	823.0	4572	4717	223.5
May 66	1499.0	6015	4421	577.5
Jun 66	1520.0	6332	5008	648.6
Jul 66	1620.0	5167	4875	433.0
Aug 66	2007.0	6787	5095	330.0
Sep 66	1504.0	5637	4132	233.0
Oct 66	2030.0	9505	6554	294.0
Nov 66	2344.0	11899	7490	407.0
Dec 66	1825.0	8466	4982	198.0
TOTAL	21359.0	86083	65789	4584.7