

HISTORY
OF
178TH ASSAULT SUPPORT HELICOPTER COMPANY
1 January 1967 - 31 December 1967

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VHPA 166

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1 Missions and Organization:

From 1 January 1967 until 21 April 1967 the 178th ASHC stationed at Phu Loi RVN was assigned to the 12th Aviation Group. In April 1967 the unit was assigned on a TDY status to Task Force Oregon located at Chu Lai, RVN. On 21 April the advance party consisting of 10 Chinooks departed Phu Loi for Chu Lai. The flight up the eastern coast of Viet Nam was made in 7½ hours, using two flights of five Chinooks with a ½ hour separation time. Upon arrival at Chu Lai, living areas were set up and the unit became operational on 26 April 1967.

The main body of personnel along with the company's 6 remaining Chinooks arrived at Chu Lai on 1 May 67. A small detachment of personnel was left behind to handle administrative and supply problems.

The 178th was attached to Task Force Oregon for all support except promotions and replacements. This situation soon produced a critical shortage of personnel due to normal rotation and lack of replacements. An infusion with the 213th ASHC, 200th ASHC, 243rd ASHC, and 205th ASHC helped to alleviate certain personnel shortages, however the unit still lacked trained personnel in all areas.

By June of 1967 it was decided to permanently assign the 178th ASHC to Task Force Oregon (now the Americal, 23rd Infantry Division). At the time the 178th came under operation control of 17th Group with the effective date of 21 April 1967. Although this placed the unit in an assigned status as opposed to a TDY status, replacements were still untimely and personnel shortages remain a problem.

A large construction program was initiated with the help of the Navy Seabees. A new Orderly Room, EM Club, Supply Room, and living areas were constructed. This has added much to the morale of the unit and made living conditions much more comfortable.

Organization Day saw a company party with the afternoon off for those crews not participating in operational missions.

II Operations and Training:

From 1 Jan 1967 until 21 April 1967 the 178th participated in operations Cedar Falls, Junction City I, and Junction City II. During Cedar Falls this unit evacuated the entire city of Ben Suc, RVN, located in the Iron Triangle. During this period the 25th Infantry Division, 1st Infantry Division, 173rd Airborne Brigade (Separate), 11th Armoured Cavalry Regiment, and 196th Light Infantry Brigade were supported.

In February 1967 the 213th ASHC arrived in country and was stationed at Phu Loi, RVN. On 22 Feb 1967 operational control of the 213th ASHC was given of the 178th ASHC for in-country training and orientation. -- On that day the 213th and 178th moved 2 Battalions of the 173rd Airborne Brigade (Separate) with 12 ships.

A mobile training team organized by the 178th visited all supported units on scheduled basis for training in Chinook operations. The training program has resulted in an increase of tons per flying hour from 3.9 in Dec 1966 to 5.1 in March 1967. The efforts of the mobile training team resulted in a publication which has become the "Bible" for Chinook operations in Vietnam.

The move from Phu Loi to Chu Lai produced some serious problems in the area of training. Supported units had not worked with Chinooks before and much time was wasted due to lack of knowledge about Chinook operations. Once again the Mobile Training Team made regularly scheduled visits to all supported units. This intensive training program resulted in an increase in tons per flying hour from 4.7 in April 1967 to a record high of 6.2 in October 1967.

The shortage of sling equipment in supported units has been the cause of dropped loads due to sling equipment failure. Units claim that this equipment has not been available in sufficient a quantity to meet operational requirements. As a result unservicable equipment is being used and has resulted in dropped loads.

Poor utilization of the Chinook is still a major problem. Sorties from Airfield to Airfield could be better accomplished by fixed wing aircraft and thus save valuable blade time. Convoys could further save time by moving equipment between LZ's and PZ's where a useable road exists.

From the day the 178th ASHC joined the Americal Division it's commitments have steadily increased. Since April 1967 this unit has participated in operations Malheur I & II, Lake, Hood River, Benton, Cook, Wheeler, Wallowa, and Wheeler-Wallowa. During these operations the 178th supported the following units: 101st Airborne Division, 25th Infantry Division, 196th Infantry Brigade, 198th Infantry Brigade, and the 11th Infantry Brigade.

The Chu Lai, Duc Pho, and Tam Ky areas proved to be the most hostile yet encountered by crews of this unit. During the first three months in the area of operations this unit took more aircraft hits than the previous 12 months in country.

During June 1967 this unit took 88% of all Chinook hits in country. Since 21 April 1967, this unit has had 185 reported incidents of hostile fire resulting in 62 hits.

II Operations and Training - (cont'd)

The statistics for this unit for the period 1 January 1967 to 31 December 1967 are as follows: Hours flown-11,855, Cargo airlifted (tons) 67,210; passengers airlifted 111,653. During this period the unit has also recovered 168 downed aircraft, to include the following types: O-1, CH-47, CH-34, UH-1E, UH-1C, UH-1B, OH-13, OH-23. To date this unit has recovered 334 downed aircraft in Vietnam.

III Maintenance and Supply:

The professional maintenance personnel of the Service Platoon and the 400th Trans Det have been responsible for the exceptionally high aircraft availability rates with an exceedingly complex machine. Although all work is still performed in the open during weather conditions due to a lack of hangers, the unit set a record in November 1967 with an aircraft availability rate of 82.5%. In spite of this many maintenance and supply problems still exist.

Blade and engine erosion became a serious problem due to the sand at Chu Lai and surrounding areas. Many landing areas were badly in need of police and caused FOD damage to the engines and resulted in replacing 21 upper boost actuators during the month of June. The parts supply problems can best be explained by our EDP rate in June of 20% as compared to that in March 1967 of 10%. During March all of our aircraft parts were supplied by the 605th Direct Support maintenance Company at Phu Loi. An EDP request sent to the 605th usually resulted in a "Fill" in approximately 5-8 days. Since our move to Chu Lai and our subsequent change to the 335th Direct Support Company, EDP request now takes 15 to 20 days to effect a "fill". This can partly be attributed to a lack of a Chinook supply parts build up in the 335th. The result of this lack of parts made it necessary to remove parts from aircraft in intermediate and put them on other aircraft to keep them flyable. When EDP parts came in they were put back on the cannibalized aircraft, thus doubling the work load. Blade erosion caused many lateral vibrations. FOD and hostile fire were also responsible for many of the blade problems encountered.

The average age of the aircraft is now approaching 1200 hours. Four aircraft have already reached the 12th P.E. Due to the age of the aircraft and lack of maintenance personnel, the work loads placed upon the maintenance sections are increasing to a critical point. This unit desperately requires more new aircraft at a faster rate in order to meet its mission requirements.

IV Special Problems:

A. Education of all supported units in Chinook operations is a continuing problem. A highly effective training team has alleviated many of these problems.

B. Lack of trained personnel and an adequate infusion program continued to compound an already serious personnel shortage problem. This was due in part to this units move from Phu Loi to Chu Lai and the TDY status the unit remained in for several months. It still remains a serious problem which needs immediate corrective action.

C. Supported units need a better supply system for obtaining needed sling equipment. Use of old and unserviceable equipment has been the cause of too many dropped loads.

D. Most aircraft in this unit are approaching 1200 hours. It is requiring for to much maintenance time to keep the aircraft flyable. It is now a necessity that this unit receive new aircraft at a faster rate in order to continue to accomplish the assigned missions.

/ Miscellaneous:

A. Inspections: The unit was inspected by the 1st Aviation Brigade CMMI team on 30 Nov 67 and received a satisfactory rating. The numeral score for this inspection was 84..

B. Awards and Decorations: Numerous awards and decorations were earned by unit personnel during the subject period. Awards are listed below:

a. Distinguished Flying Cross

Major John M. Kalina
Major James P. McCormick
Major Malcolm D. Rixon
Major Helmut A.G. Roeder
Captain Robert G. Black
Captain Robert E. Cuyler
Captain Conrad W. Davis
Captain Albert L. Stratton
CW4 Arthur J. Ulm Jr.
CW3 Ellis E. Brabec
CW3 Vincent Serio
CW2 Robert M. Bloch
CW2 William J. Gault
CW2 John D. Green
CW2 William B. Kimbrough
CW2 Walter F. Morris (Posthumous Award)
CW2 Sanford E. Parr
SP6 Robert Enlow

b. Soldier's Medal

SP4 James W. Timmer Jr.

c. Bronze Star with "V"

LTC Joseph F. Rutkowski

d. Air Medal with "V"

Major Roy A. Crews
Major John G. Harris
Major John M. Kalina
Captain Robert G. Black
CW4 James Delaney
CW3 Granvil C. Thurmond
CW2 Ricardo D. Aguilar
WO1 Michael T. Markowski
SP5 Charles Amos
SP5 James L. Billingsby
SP5 Lyman D. Harvey
SP5 Richard P. Navas
SP5 Robert Telford
SP4 James H. Clark

miscellaneous - (cont'd)

SP4 Robert P. Coughlin Jr.
SP4 Ronald R. Dickenson
SP4 William W. Frey Jr.
SP4 Edwin B. Gage
SP4 Ignatius Gonzalez
SP4 Joseph D. McGlone
SP4 Daniel C. Scellato
SP4 William K. Sly
SP4 David Wallen
SP4 David M. Walker
SP4 Donald Weaver
SP4 Henry E. Wilkens Jr.

e. Army Commendation Medal with "V"

CW2 William B. Kimbrough
WO1 Michael T. Markowski
SP6 Donald Kroger
SP5 Jose A. Figueroa
SP5 Daniel Kaser
SP5 Richard P. Navas
SP4 John E. Davis
SP4 Edward Keenan
SP4 Donald Weaver

f. Bronze Star Medal

Major Davis Clark
Captain Robert E. Cytle
Captain Robert W. Johnson
Captain Albert L. Stratton
CW4 Arthur J. Ulm Jr.
CW3 Frank W. Cross
CW3 William J. Francis
CW2 David R. Ammons
CW2 Robert M. Bloch
CW2 William B. Kimbrough
CW2 Roger L. Lichte
CW2 Sanford E. Parr
SFC Floyd T. Clair
SFC Donald Horton
SFC Raymond Mitchell
SP4 Dennis L. Muckey

g. Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry

Major Roy A. Crews
Major Clyde F. Klick
Captain Robert E. Cytle
CW2 Roger L. Lichte

h. Air Medals: For Sustained operations each regular crew member earned an average of 12 Air Medals during the period. Due to the high turn-over of personnel, it would be impractical to list each member's individual awards.

V Miscellaneous (Cont'd)

i. Purple Hearts

Captain Fred W. Sass
CW3 Ellis E. Brabec
CW2 John D. Green
CW2 Walter F. Morris (Posthumous Award)
SP5 James L. Billingsby
SP4 John E. Davis

j. Good Conduct Medals:

All enlisted personnel who earned Good Conduct Medals were awarded the medal.

g. Civic Actions: Civic Actions has always played an important part in the activities of the 178th ASHC. While located at Phu Loi the 178th supported the members of the Refugee Center at Vinh Son, RVN. The company obtained 250 tons of cement and building materials to construct homes, wells, and showers. A full time dispensary was also opened.

After arrival at Chu Lai the 178th ASHC continued an active Civic Action Program. In a two week period during June 1967, the "Boxcar" aircraft evacuated over 10,000 refugees from Viet Cong infested areas to new home-sites located near Duc Pho. On one occasion, 164 refugees were lifted by a single "Boxcar". Most recently this unit along with the 1st Cavalry Division flew over 200,000 pounds of food to the Que Son district headquarters from Hoi An, Quang Nam, and Tam Ky. On 25 Dec 67 the "Boxcar" crews from this unit gave 50 pounds of Christmas candy to the children of the refugee center at Tam Ky, RVN. At present the members of this unit have freely donated \$189.00 to the An Tan Protestant-Evangelical Church. Their orphanage will house, feed, and clothe, up to 60 orphaned Vietnamese children.

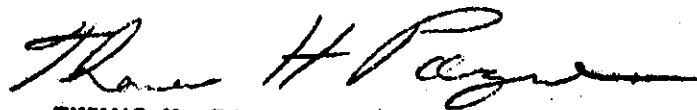
VI Change of Command

COMMANDERS DURING 1967

1 Jan 67 - 7 Jun 67 - MAJ CLYDE F. KLICK
8 Jun 67 - 18 Oct 67 - LTC JOSEPH F. RUTKOWSKI
19 Oct 67 - 18 Dec 67 - MAJ JOHN M. KALINA
19 Dec 67 - 31 Dec 67 - MAJ ERNEST M. WOOD

BYBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

All dates, Orders, and Tables of Organization and Equipment indicated in the text were authenticated. All statements including facts, figures, and percentages made in the text were verified — either from conversation with responsible individuals or extracts from authenticated records. The author has reviewed all comments with providence and feels there is no doubt to their validity and accuracy.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Thomas H. Payne".

THOMAS H. PAYNE
CW2 AVN
Unit Historian