

SUPPLEMENT TO
THE HISTORY OF
THE 336TH ASSAULT HELICOPTER COMPANY

1 SEPTEMBER THROUGH 31 DECEMBER 1966

PREPARED BY
1/LT JOSEPH G. MULHERAN JR
UNIT HISTORIAN

APPROVED BY
LOUIS H. JACQUAY
MAJOR, SIGC
COMMANDING

13TH COMBAT AVIATION (DELTA) BATTALION
UNITED STATES ARMY VIETNAM

SEPTEMBER 1966

September was a very active month for the "Warriors", and it found us participating in Combat Assault operations on 17 of the 30 days.

We started the month with a four day operation near the town of Vi Thanh in Chuong Thien Province. On the second day of the operation the "Warrior Slicks" were receiving intense mortar and automatic weapons fire in the landing zone, but thanks to the close and effective fire support from the T-Birds and USAF air strikes, only one slick was hit by hostile fire and it was flown back to the stagefield for minor repairs. This was a very successful operation and the final results were very impressive. 309 Viet Cong kill in action, 13 captured, 21 ARVN killed in action, 73 ARVN wounded in action.

A large arsenal of weapons and ammunition was captured to include 4 20mm cannons, over 168 small arms, 11,000 rounds of small arms ammunition and numerous grenades and recoilless rifle rounds.

The other operations during the month consisted of the normal resupply and command and liason type missions, and, of course, swatter.

September proved to be another bad month for DEROS, with the "Warriors" still losing quite a few people, but gradually getting "New Blood". Losing a lot of old timers in a short period always makes for increased hardship and longer hours for the other aircraft commanders. The "Warriors" flew a total of 2,201 hours; 1,717 flown by the slicks and 484.0 by the "T-Birds". The high aviator for the month flew 155.4 hours.

OCTOBER 1966

The middle of October found the "Warriors" in a bind for aircraft.

On the 18th, most of the "Warriors" were on routing Command and Liason and resupply missions, when about 1100 hours Paddy Control began issuing a recall for all "Warrior Slicks" to return to Soc Trang as soon as possible. We all began to wonder what was going on.

Upon arrival back at home base we were given a short briefing and were told that we would be carrying a raiding party of Chinese mercenary soldiers (Nungs) on a surprise raid; where exactly, none of us knew.

Within an hour after our briefing we were in the thick of battle with a Viet Cong regiment at the 'Infamous' Vi Thanh.

Almost immediately one of the units which has landed 1200 meters from the proposed landing zone because of bad visibility, came into heavy contact and the two American advisors were wounded. Help was requested and a med-evac shopper came into the landing zone, but came under heavy automatic weapons fire, and badly damaged, the aircraft returned to the stage field. Viking Lead then decided to attempt a medevac with his ship. On approach to the landing zone, a burst of machinegun fire shattered the right windshield killing the pilot instantly. With the controls shot out the armed helicopter went into a forest of mangroves and crashed. The three survivors, still under enemy fire, escaped the wreckage and crept away, only to spend a harrowing night evading the Viet Cong, killing four in hand to hand combat in the process. The next morning the three survivors were picked up by a "Dustoff" medevac chopper.

The results of the battle were: 100 Viet Cong killed in action. The 336th suffered 3 U.S. wounded in action, one seriously, with 6 armed trans-

ports and 2 gunships damaged enough to be declared unflyable.

This month found a change in the slang expression for troop carrying helicopters. The word "slick" has been deleted and replaced by armed transport.

On the 22nd at approximately 0030 hours the Viet Cong made an unsuccessful attempt to mortar Soc Trang Airfield, thereby breaking a two month dry spell. Six rounds were fired but all landed 200 meters short of the SW end of the runway, and no damage resulted.

The "T-Birds" were scrambled and put in several target attacks against the suspected mortar positions. Because of darkness it was not possible to determine the number of casualties inflicted on the enemy.

The remainder of the month was comparatively uneventful with most missions consisting of command and liason and resupply.

This month the transports flew 1752 hours while the T-Birds flew 547 hours for a company total of 2,299 hours. The high aviator this month flew 163.5 hours breaking an all time record for the Company.

NOVEMBER 1966

On November 19, 1966, a heavy fire team from the "T-Birds" was at Ben Tre in support of a 7th ARVN Division sector operation. The team was on standby at the stage field. About 1000 hours an armed transport from the 114th Assault Helicopter Company landed at Ben Tre and reported that he had received automatic weapons fire while resupplying Ba Tri outpost. Shortly thereafter word was brought that Sector Headquarters had not received any radio transmissions from an ARVN patrol and their two American advisors, that were supposed to be operating in the Ba Tri area and subsequently requested that the "T-Birds" take off and try to locate the patrol.

Upon arrival in the area the "T-Birds" observed an estimated 300 uniformed Viet Cong complete with helmets camouflaged, ammo bandoleers and automatic weapons, running down an abandoned road towards a heavy palm grove. At first it was hard to believe that this many Viet Cong had been caught in the open, but when they turned and began firing at the gunships, there was no longer any doubt about them being "Charlies". The "T-Birds" assumed their fighting formations and the free for all was on.

There was a furious twenty minute battle while the "T-Birds" expended all of their ordinance, and when the dust cleared the three gunships had killed a fantastic 167 hard core Viet Cong.

The three "T-Birds" limped back to the stage field to re-arm and refuel while "Warrior 6" stayed airborne over the scene of battle to keep an eye on the fleeing Viet Cong.

After landing, one of the "T-Birds" made a pedal turn to clear the active and experienced anti-torque failure. The aircraft spun around $1\frac{1}{2}$ times before the pilot could execute a successful hovering autorotation with no damage to the aircraft. The aircraft had taken 19 hits, one bullet partially severing

the tail rotor control cable causing it to fail on landing. The high professional competence with which the aircraft commander handled this emergency is indicative of all of the pilots in this company.

The other two gunships received 11 and 2 hits respectively. The pilots and crews of all three ships miraculously escaped without a scratch.

It was learned later that this battalion of Viet Cong had ambushed the ARVN patrol that hadn't reported in, killing one American advisor and capturing the other, and were about to attack the outpost at Ba Tri when the "T-Birds" spoiled their plans.

The remainder of the month both before and after Ba Tri was occupied by regular command and liason and resupply missions.

This month the armed transports flew 1,945.0 hours and the "T-Birds" 625.0 for a total of 2,579.0 hours.

DECEMBER 1966

On the 6th of this month two Naval aviators and their two enlisted air-crewmembers arrived at Soc Trang to begin training with the T-Birds in preparation for their assignment to the U.S. Navy Armed Helicopter Detachment, the Seawolves, in support of Operation Gamewarden. The "water soldiers", as they are affectionately called, have adapted themselves very well to their new Army environment and are very competent gunship pilots.

On the 22d, a heavy fire team was scrambled to Vi Thanh in response to an urgent call that a Vietnamese outpost and hamlet 5 miles north of the city were being overrun by a battalion of Viet Cong. The enemy was in the open when the gunships arrived and a fierce fire fight ensued resulting in quite a few Viet Cong being killed, but in the process the three T-Birds took several hits. T-Bird chief's ship took a round in the transmission oil line forcing him to return to the stagefield for a precautionary landing. Another light fire team of T-Birds was scrambled from Soc Trang to help out. On the second target pass the fire team lead took a hit in the main hydraulic line, after the bullet clanced off the gunners knee wounding him, and forcing that fire team to return to the stage field where the team leader executed a successful running landing. The wounded gunner was treated and the hydraulics hurriedly repaired. Another gunner was recruited from one of the other downed ships, and the team returned once again to the operational area. After one target attack the hydraulics again failed, this time due to faulty repair, and the team had to break off the attack and return to the stage field where the team leader once again executed a successful hydraulics off landing.

Soon airstrikes were called in on the target, and all the gunships returned to Soc Trang. An actual body count of Viet Cong killed by the gunships was not available but the crews estimated 18 Viet Cong killed by armed helicopters.

On the 23d, the T-Birds and Warriors were on a combat assault south of Ca Mau, Republic of Vietnam. During extraction the T-Bird fire team on station began receiving heavy automatic weapons fire, which has become almost the rule rather than exception when we have operations in this area. T-Bird chief flying the "hog", decided to put a target attack on the tree lines and wooded dike lines around the pickup zone. During the attack there was a malfunction in one of the rockets on the left side. After leaving the tube the rocket motor exploded, seriously wounding the crew chief and causing heavy structural damage to the door and left side of the aircraft. The pilots escaped with minor injuries.

Beginning Christmas and New Years Eve 48 hour truces were called by both sides, during which time there was a lull in the war with only minor Viet Cong instigated incidents occurring.

On the 29th, the Viet Cong mortared the ARVN training center 4 miles South of Soc Trang. The T-Birds scrambled and put several target attacks on the suspected enemy mortar positions. Because of the darkness it was not possible to determine the extent of damage inflicted on the enemy.

This month the Warrior transports flew 1,954.0 hours while the T-Birds logged 625.0 hours.