

125th ATC(Air Traffic Control) Company  
125th ATC(Air Traffic Control) Battalion

The 125th ATC, the only unit of its kind in all of Vietnam and S.E. Asia in the U.S. Army, began on 5 Nov 65 and was stood down on 20 Sept 7. Its primary mission was to provide all non-divisional air traffic control and flight following for the entire country of Vietnam. Initially, it was a Company sized unit but, quickly grew to a very large unit of approximately 350 personnel. Its deployment and areas of responsibility were:

HQ and HQ Platoon	Bien Hoa Air Base	
1st Platoon	I Corps	Danang Center
2nd Platoon	II Corps	Cam Ranh Center
3rd Platoon	III Corps	Capital Center
4th Platoon	IV Corps	Delta Center

The 125th ATC provided flight following(VFR and sometimes IFR), Control Tower operations for tactical LZ's and Airfields, Beacon installation and operation tactically and at airfields, RAPCON's and GCA's, plus many many Radios for flight following all over the country(Tay Ninh Radio, Dalat Radio, Pleiku Radio, Kontum Radio, Danang Radio and Quang Tri Radio)

Organic aircraft of the 125th ATC were initially Beaver fixed wing aircraft. Then in 1970 the old Beavers were replaced by UH-1 D's. One UH-1D was assigned to each Platoon whose Platoon Leader (usually a Captain) used it to coordinate and command his platoon. Each platoon was quite large (usually about 75 plus men) and covered a whole Corps. Most times the platoon members were attached to an Army Advisor HQ, Airfield and even the USAF for support but not OPCON.

In Sept 1970, while on my 2nd tour to RVN, I was transferred from the 120th Asslt Hel Co (Deans, located at Sanford Army Airfield at Long Binh and, also part of the 165th Combat Avn Group) to the 125th ATC Co. located on the NW side of Bien Hoa Air Base. The 125th ATC Co. was then in the process of turning in all of the old Beaver Fixed wing AC. The new Company Commander was LTC John Falbo, Sig Corp, who was newly assigned and pushing very hard for the 125th ATC Company to be upgraded to Battalion (probably due to its size and very wide deployment and mission). On 1 Jan 1971 (I don't have official orders) all of our orders and headings on correspondance began to reflect 125th ATC Bn (Prov.) Thus, its upgrade and birth. 1st Platoon (I Corps) became A Company, 2nd Platoon (II Corps) became B Company, Etc.

I was sent to 1st Platoon in Hue/Phu Bai in Dec. 1970 after having been 3rd Platoon Commander for 2 months. When

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the 1st Platoon became A Company on or about 1 Jan 71. I became the 1st Commander of A Co., USATC Bn(Prov.). This lasted only a few weeks until Maj. Earl Malchow was sent as A Company Commander after having been Airfield Commander at an I Corps Airfield named Duc Pho about 50 miles south of Chu Lai along the coast. I became XO of A Company and finished out my 2nd tour as XO in May of 71. Maj. Malchow had been in RVN for 2 straight years and had extended again for 6 months.

During my tour of duty with A Company as XO we operated many ATC facilities in I Corps. A tower and Beacon at Hawk Hill, a FSB and Base Camp for the 197th Light Infantry Brigade located 35-40 miles SW of Chu Lai; Danang Radio, co-located atop Monkey Mountain beside Danang Bay at Danang; Control tower and advisors at Phu Bai Airfield along with the Phu Bai Beacon, GCA and RAPCON(Radar Approach Control); Quang Tri Radio and Control tower; Dong Ha Airfield, control tower, Beacon and GCA. I was even the Airfield Commander and OIC at Dong Ha for 30 days during Lam Son 719.

A partial list of missions and deployment of the 125th ATC while I was assigned is as follows:

<u>A Company(I Corps)</u>	Beacon	Twr	GCA	Flt	Follow	RAPCON
Dong Ha	x	x	x	x		x
Hue/Phu Bai	x	x	x	x		x
Danang Center (collocated USAF rdr)					x	
Hawk Hill	x	x			x	
Quang Tri Radio					x	
<u>B Company(II Corps)</u>						
Qui Nhon	x	x	x	x		
Pleiku Radio					x	
Kontum	x	x			x	
Cam Ranh Center					x	
Ban Me Thout Radio					x	
Da Lat	x	x			x	
<u>C Company(III Corps)</u>						
Capital Center (Co Located USAF rdr)					x	
Phan Thiet Radio	x				x	
Tay Ninh Radio					x	
Song Be Radio					x	
Vo Dat Radio and Radar( mortar and Rocket tracking)					x	
Xuan Loc Radio					x	

<u>D Company (IV Corps)</u>	<u>Beacon</u>	<u>Twr</u>	<u>GCA</u>	<u>Flt</u>	<u>Follow</u>	<u>RAPCON</u>
Delta Center	x	x	x		x	
(Vinh Long)						
Ben Luc Radio					x	
Soc Trang Radio					x	
Ca Mau	x	x			x	
Can Tho	x	x	x		x	

I am sure that there were other locations where elements of the 125th ATC were operational. Some were moved and changed over the life of the unit. Maybe many VHFA members would remember and fill in the blanks at the RENO reunion. All in all, the 125th ATC was a very unique unit, the only one of its kind in Vietnam, which provided all sorts of Air Traffic Control to U S Army Aviation elements of the 1st Aviation Brigade as well as Divisional, USAF, NAVY and Marines. Its history needs to be remembered and placed in the history of the Vietnam conflict.

by: Thomas H. Payne  
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PS - Hello Bill - Thanks for reminder of what I know of 125<sup>th</sup> ATC from 70-71 time period. Please find herewith a little about unit. I note in the 1990 Roster Newsletter that on page 156 (Section IX) that 125<sup>th</sup> ATC began 5 Nov 65 & continued in service till 20 Sept 71. Could this date be when 125<sup>th</sup> ATC became USA ATC BN (Prov) under 165 CAG? I don't know, but maybe official DA Records will reflect.

I checked on the guy, James E. Thompson at 921 Lynnwood Lane, Broken Arrow, OK. I talked to his wife & she said she would have him call me. She said he was in RVN in 70-71 time & flew with what sounded like an INFANT unit (in special night scopes etc.) So, sounds like it is not your James E. Thompson. See you in RENO & thanks for your work. Tom Payne

Never called  
back