

**14<sup>th</sup> Avn Bn (Cbt)**  
**Unit History**  
**October 1971**

**Preface**

October 1971 brings to a close a proud and gallant record of combat service in Vietnam for the 14<sup>th</sup> Combat Aviation Battalion. Members of the Battalion have engaged the Enemy from Nha Trang to the Khe Sanh and into the Kingdom of Laos over the past seven years. These engagements have taken their toll. One hundred and fifty four men have died gallantly for the cause of freedom and countless more were wounded. The high spirit and "can do" attitude remains with the unit up to and through the "stand down" phase. To some "stand down" is the demise of a unit, to current and former members of the 14<sup>th</sup> Combat Aviation Battalion it is merely a change in mission and preparation for a new challenge. The 14<sup>th</sup> Combat Aviation Battalion has on countless occasions proven its versatility as is so appropriately emblazoned on the Unit crest. The mission of the Battalion in CONUS, be it training or support, will be accomplished in the same spirit as the combat mission. To have served on two occasions with the "Arabs" has for me been a privilege, challenge and one of extreme satisfaction.

Joseph F Rutkowski  
LTC, IN  
Commanding

The 14<sup>th</sup> Aviation Battalion was constituted on 2 Sept 1964, in the Regular Army as Headquarters, Headquarters Company, 14<sup>th</sup> Aviation Battalion and was activated on 3 Sept 1964, (1) at Ft Benning, Georgia. The Battalion Headquarters arrived in Saigon, RVN on 14 Oct 1964, (2) and was assigned to the United States Army Support Command Vietnam. On 21 Oct 1964, Headquarters, 14<sup>th</sup> Aviation Battalion moved from Saigon to Nha Trang. The Battalion was declared operational on 17 Nov 1964. The 14<sup>th</sup> Aviation Battalion was composed originally of the following companies and supporting detachments.

|                                   |   |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| 18 <sup>th</sup> Aviation Company | 51 <sup>st</sup> Trans Detachment (3)     |
| 92 <sup>nd</sup> Aviation Company | 2 <sup>nd</sup> Signal Detachment         |
| 339 <sup>th</sup> Trans Company   | 8 <sup>th</sup> Field Hospital (attached) |
| 87 <sup>th</sup> QM Detachment    | 19 <sup>th</sup> Signal Detachment        |

Later the following units were assigned:

|                                    |                                      |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| I Corps Aviation Company           | 20 <sup>th</sup> Aviation Detachment |
| 54 <sup>th</sup> Aviation Company  | 131 <sup>st</sup> Aviation Company   |
| 61 <sup>st</sup> Aviation Company  | 134 <sup>th</sup> Aviation Company   |
| 220 <sup>th</sup> Aviation Company | 135 <sup>th</sup> Aviation Company   |
| 57 <sup>th</sup> Aviation Company  |                                      |

As a fixed wing battalion the 14<sup>th</sup> controlled assets throughout RVN and was responsible for numerous long distance cargo, regular VIP passenger flights as well as surveillance of various areas. Effective 15 April 1965, the 14<sup>th</sup> was assigned to the US Army Aviation Group Vietnam. The Group was then renamed the 12<sup>th</sup> Aviation Group 31 Aug 1965. By April 1966, the Battalion had been divested of most of its fixed wing assets. Many of the Companies were redeployed to the States. The 61<sup>st</sup>, 92<sup>nd</sup>, and 134<sup>th</sup> Companies were refitted with UH-1H and UH-1C Helicopters and returned to RVN on 1 Nov 1966. Later in 1966, the 14<sup>th</sup> Battalion moved to Lane Army Heliport (West of Qui Nhon) to begin operations as a combat aviation battalion. The 161<sup>st</sup> and 174<sup>th</sup> Assault Helicopter Companies were assigned 1 June 1966. The 282<sup>nd</sup> AirMobile Company was assigned to the 14<sup>th</sup> on 12 June 1966. In September 1966, the remaining fixed wing components were detached. During the spring of 1967, the 176<sup>th</sup> AHC and the 196<sup>th</sup> ASHC joined the 14<sup>th</sup> Battalion. The 196<sup>th</sup> afforded the Battalion its first organic CH-47's.

The assets of the 14<sup>th</sup> while at Qui Nhon were used to support the famed 9<sup>th</sup> White Horse and Capitol ROK Infantry Divisions. This association lasted until April 1967, when the Battalion displaced to unprepared tactical field sites in and around Chu Lai to support Task Force Oregon. Task Force Oregon became the Americal Division and the 14<sup>th</sup>

remained to provide Aviation Support for this unique combat organization.

While beginning their new task of supporting Task Force Oregon the 14<sup>th</sup> welcomed two more Assault Helicopter Companies to it's command, the 71<sup>st</sup> and the 176<sup>th</sup> AHC's. In April of 1967, the 71<sup>st</sup> arrived at Chu Lai from Ben Hoa to support the 196<sup>th</sup> Light Infantry Brigade. Later in the year, November 67, the 176<sup>th</sup> was released from it's mission supporting the 101<sup>st</sup> at Duc Pho and Joined the 14<sup>th</sup> CAB at Chu Lai. The primary mission assigned to the 176<sup>th</sup> was to provide aviation support to the 196<sup>th</sup> Light Infantry Brigade.

### **Present Configuration and Mission**

The 14<sup>th</sup> Battalions present mission is to provide command, control, and staff planning and administrative supervision for three to seven transport aviation companies. (4) Presently the 14<sup>th</sup> Combat Aviation Battalion is providing timely direct and general aviation support to the 23<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Division (Americal) and selected units within the I Corp Tactical Zone, on a 24 hour basis. At Chu Lai the 14<sup>th</sup> fulfilled this mission by providing the following types of support; resupply, reconnaissance, combat assaults, artillery displacement, administrative unit moves, command and control, medical evacuation, armed helicopter escort and other assigned missions to the 23<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Division and the 2<sup>nd</sup> ARVN division.

Headquarters Company, 174<sup>th</sup> AHC, 176<sup>th</sup> AHC, and the 178<sup>th</sup> ASHC were officially attached to the Americal Division in January 1968. On 6 Jan 1968, the 14<sup>th</sup> Combat Aviation Battalion was reassigned from the 17<sup>th</sup> Combat Group to the 16<sup>th</sup> Combat Aviation Group.(5) During this period the 161<sup>st</sup> AHC was released from the 14<sup>th</sup> Battalion and became A Co. 123<sup>rd</sup>, the nucleus of the 123<sup>rd</sup> Combat Aviation Battalion.

The 14<sup>th</sup> CAB now consisted of three assault helicopter companies and one assault support company. In Dec 1968 another company was attached to the 14<sup>th</sup>, it was the 132<sup>nd</sup> Assault Support helicopter Company. The capabilities of the 14<sup>th</sup> Battalion were greatly increased with the addition of this support helicopter unit.

During December 1969, the 14<sup>th</sup> CAB was tasked to support "operation Holly". On this operation they were in support of the Bob Hope Show. They transported several thousand soldiers from Fire bases into Chu Lai and return, so they could view the show. Bob Hope and his Troupe were flown in from an Aircraft Carrier to Chu Lai.

The year 1970 had several significant events pertaining to the 14<sup>th</sup> CAB. The 116<sup>th</sup> AHC was placed under the operational control of the Battalion on 7 July 1970. On 1 Jan 1971 they were assigned to the Battalion, making it the largest aviation battalion in Vietnam.

Until September 1971, the 14<sup>th</sup> CAB consisted of it's headquarters and Headquarters Company and it's attached 14<sup>th</sup> Security Platoon and 534<sup>th</sup> Medical detachment; the 71<sup>st</sup> Assault Helicopter Company ( Rattlers and Firebirds); the 174<sup>th</sup> Assault Helicopter Company ( Dolphins and Sharks) and it's attached 756<sup>th</sup> Medical Detachment; the 176<sup>th</sup>

Assault Helicopter Company ( Minutemen and Muskets); The 116<sup>th</sup> Assault Helicopter Company (Hornets and Stingers); the 132<sup>nd</sup> Assault Support Helicopter Company (Hercules) and the 178<sup>th</sup> Assault Helicopter Support Company (Boxcars).

### **Recent Significant Operations**

#### **A. General Support**

During November and December 1970, the 14<sup>th</sup> CAB was in direct and general support on a daily basis with operations involving elements of the 198<sup>th</sup> Light Infantry brigade, 196<sup>th</sup> Light Infantry Brigade, 11<sup>th</sup> Light Infantry Brigade, 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> ARVN Regiments and LRRP operations with G Company, 75<sup>th</sup> Rangers. These units were involved in the following operations:

11<sup>th</sup> Infantry Brigade – Iron Mountain  
196<sup>th</sup> Infantry Brigade – Frederick Hill  
198<sup>th</sup> Infantry Brigade – Geneva Park and Nantucket Beach

#### **B. Operation Holly**

On 24 Dec 1970 the 14<sup>th</sup> CAB was once again in support of "Operation Holly", in which units provided aircraft to transport troops from the field to Da Nang for the Annual Bob Hope Christmas Show.

#### **C. Lam Son 719**

On 23 January 1971, the Battalion was notified two Assault Helicopter Companies and one Assault Support Helicopter Company would be redeployed in support of operation Lam Son 719.

On the morning of 29 January 1971, the men and ground support equipment of Headquarters 14<sup>th</sup> CAB, 71<sup>st</sup> AHC, 174<sup>th</sup> AHC, and the 132<sup>nd</sup> AHSC departed by convoy. All units deployed to Quang Tri, RVN, with the exception of the 132<sup>nd</sup> ASHC, they were under the operational control of the 159<sup>th</sup> Aviation Battalion, 101<sup>st</sup> Division at Hue/Phu Bai, RVN. Lam Son 719, incorporated the initial incursion into the Kingdom of Laos.

Some of the most intense anti-aircraft fire of the war was experienced during Lam Son 719. Later elements of the 116<sup>th</sup> AHC and 176<sup>th</sup> AHC supplemented the units at Quang Tri in order to make up for battle field losses.

From 1 Feb 1971 to 7 Feb 1971 the elements of the 14<sup>th</sup> CAB that were involved in Lam Son 719 also participated in Dewy Canyon II. A battalion forward base was set up at Khe Sahn. This facilitated better communications and flight following with forward aircraft.. On 8 Feb 1971 the 14<sup>th</sup> CAB participated in the initial insertion into Laos. The 174<sup>th</sup> AHC supported this combat assault into LZ Hotel (XD25344).

Combat Damage had caused availability of aircraft to decrease significantly. While flying support for Hill 30 in Laos, during Lam Son 719 on February 27 1971, the CH-47 flown by Cpt Seeger and CW2 Cook was forced down by NVA small arms fire damaging the Aircraft controls. All five crewmembers managed to safely exit the aircraft just after it crashed and were picked up by a UH-1 flying escort for the flight. The 132<sup>nd</sup> ASHC helicopter was one of ten supporting the surrounded South Vietnamese Paratroopers on Hill 30, despite continuous Mortar and small arms fire by two NVA regiments.

On 3 March, the 71<sup>st</sup> and 174<sup>th</sup> were in support of the 1<sup>st</sup> ARVN Division and the 1<sup>st</sup> Vietnamese Marine Division. During the initial insertion into LZ Lu Lu, seven aircraft were hit and two shot down, with both crews extracted. The combat assault was temporarily delayed due to intense enemy fire. On the second attempt to combat assault into LZ LU LU assets of both the 71<sup>st</sup> and the 174<sup>th</sup> were utilized. One aircraft attempted to land in the wrong landing zone and was immediately shot down. All crewmembers were missing in action. Two UH-1C's enroute to cover the downed aircraft were immediately shot down. The crews from the two UH-1C's were recovered safely.

The 4<sup>th</sup> of March, both the 71<sup>st</sup> and the 174<sup>th</sup> were involved with combat assaults, one for the 1<sup>st</sup> ARVN Division and one for the Vietnamese Marines. During this time the 116<sup>th</sup>, made up of aircraft and crews from the 116<sup>th</sup> and 176<sup>th</sup> departed Chu Lai for Quang Tri and arrived at 1210 hours. Lt Flemer, who had been listed as MIA as of the 4<sup>th</sup> was extracted with four ARVN's and returned to Quang Tri.

On 5 March the 174<sup>th</sup> and 116<sup>th</sup> AHC's inserted the 1<sup>st</sup> ARVN Division into LZ Sophia. The insertion met with fierce anti-aircraft fire. Three aircraft were shot down. Two crews were extracted. Lt Elliot and six members of his crew remained on the ground.

On 6 March, Cpt Bishop and SP4 Rhodes, shot down on the 4<sup>th</sup> of March, walked into a firebase and were extracted. Rescue efforts continued for Lt Elliot and his crew.

On 7 March, Lt Elliot and six members of his crew were safely extracted. Although remaining on the ground for three days they sustained no injuries. Lt Elliot was promoted to Cpt via radio transmission by Maj. Spratt, while on the ground in Laos.

From the 18<sup>th</sup> until the 23<sup>rd</sup> of March, the Battalion was engaged in resupplying and finally the extraction of LZ Delta and LZ Delta 1. From the start to the finish enemy anti-aircraft fire, mortar fire, and small arms fire from around the LZ's made resupplying almost impossible. The lack of aircraft availability was again supplemented by assets of the 116<sup>th</sup> and 176<sup>th</sup>, which arrived on the 20<sup>th</sup> at Quang Tri and departed on the 24<sup>th</sup> of March for Chu Lai. On the 24<sup>th</sup> of March, the 71<sup>st</sup>, 174<sup>th</sup>, and 132<sup>nd</sup> extracted LZ Hotel without incidents.

The 71<sup>st</sup> AHC on 28 March went into stand down for the return trip to Chu Lai. Headquarters and Headquarters Company stood down on 3 April and departed Quang Tri. The 132<sup>nd</sup> ASHC returned to Chu Lai on 4 April and the 174<sup>th</sup> AHC returned on 7 April.

D. Operation Quick Town 20B was a major relocation and insertion of combat forces of the 5<sup>th</sup> ARVN regiment. The 38<sup>th</sup> NVA regiment was attacked and aggressively pursued by the 5<sup>th</sup> ARVN Regiment during this operation. Elements from the 14<sup>th</sup> CAB provided air support for the 5<sup>th</sup> ARVN Regiment.

E. Operation Finny Hill was conducted in the southern portion of the AO. The 174<sup>th</sup> AHC provided resupply, visual reconnaissance, C&C and Combat Assaults for this operation.

The 14<sup>th</sup> CAB's current area of operation extends from Da Nang on the Northern border to, to Military Region II on the Southern border. The South China Sea borders the operational area to the East and the Kingdom of Laos borders it on the West. On special operations elements of the 15<sup>th</sup> CAB have worked in other areas of Military Region I.

### **Recurring Missions**

#### **A. Flight Companies**

Currently the 15<sup>th</sup> CAB provides air support daily for the 11<sup>th</sup>, 196<sup>th</sup> and 198<sup>th</sup> Brigades of the 23<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Division. The type of missions flown are combat assaults, airmobile control, command and control, visual reconnaissance, resupply, psyops, medical evacuation and administrative flights. MACV and the 2<sup>nd</sup> ARVN Division, including the 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Regiments are supported by the 14<sup>th</sup> CAB. The following is a list of capabilities.

1. Airmobility
  - a. Combat Assaults
  - b. Command and Control
  - c. Aeromedical Evacuation
  - d. Emergency Ammunition Resupply
2. Logistical Movement
  - a. Personnel
  - b. Supplies
  - c. Equipment
3. Armed Helicopter Operations
  - a. Landing Zone Preparation
  - b. Combat Assault Escort
  - c. Close Fire Support
  - d. Reconnaissance
  - e. Escort
4. Special Operations
  - a. LRRP Insertions and Extractions
  - b. Airmobile Raids
  - c. Flame Drop
  - d. Eagle Flight
  - e. Radio Relay

- f. Chemical (CS-Insecticides)
- g. Psyops (Loudspeakers-Leaflets)
- h. Illumination (Flare-Firefly)
- i. Search and Rescue

During the past year a typical days activities would consist of 43slick missions (UH-1H), flying a total of 250 flight hours. Normally 12 Gunships would be committed to fly 30-40 hours per day. The two CH-47 companies fly approximately 70 hours per day in support of artillery and firebase resupply.

B. Pathfinder Operations consist of airtraffic control, operation of LZ's during Combat Assaults and Aircraft recovery. During Lam Son 719, the Pathfinders assisted the operations of combat assaults. They operated three airstrips and conducted recovery missions in the Kingdom of Laos and RVN.

Upon returning from Lam Son 719, the Pathfinders resumed their normal duties of aircraft recovery, operation of Oasis Tower and Quang Gnai Tower, sling loads operations into LZ's and PZ's. The Pathfinders also participated in a program of providing instruction to the 2<sup>nd</sup> ARVN Division on Airmobile Operations and Aircraft Control.

## Projects

### A. ARVN Training

Commencing 16 July 1971, coordination was made to provide the 2<sup>nd</sup> ARVN Division airmobile training. It was decided that officers and cadre of the 2<sup>nd</sup> ARVN Division should be able to control and co-ordinate all of their airmobile activity. A 25 hour block of instruction was planned, each five hour block to be given by a separate company of the battalion. The companies provided instruction by the following schedule; 174<sup>th</sup> – Control of Gunships, 176<sup>th</sup> – Control of UH-1 resupply, 116<sup>th</sup> – Combat Assaults, 54<sup>th</sup> Medical Detachment – Medical Evacuation, 178<sup>th</sup> ASHC – Control of CH-47's. Classes were given to Headquarters, 2<sup>nd</sup> ARVN Division, 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Regiments. The positive affects of this training are already reflected in the current operation.

### B. Hosting VNAF

Coordination was made with the 232<sup>nd</sup> Helicopter Squadron, 51<sup>st</sup> Helicopter Wing, VNAF, located at Da Nang for relocation of elements of their unit to Chu Lai. The Battalion staff, assisted the VNA personnel in obtaining billets, hangar space, aircraft parking revetments, communications, rations, and personnel items of comfort. The first VNAF elements arrived and began performing at Chu Lai on 16 September 1971. Six aircraft and crew initially arrived to take up residence at Chu Lai. Few problems were encountered with the arrival of VNAF. The VNAF officers billeted in the HHC officer's area and the enlisted were housed in a building on the flight line.

### C. Civil Affairs

While combat support was the 14 CAB's primary mission, much individual time and effort was given to supporting the Tabitha Children's Orphanage at An Tan.

RVN. The Battalion supported the orphanage by donating money, food, clothing and equipment.

### **Redeployment**

As the 14<sup>th</sup> CAB redeploys to the United States the curtain draws close to it's performance in the Vietnam Campaign. The 14<sup>th</sup> now has a history of providing aviation support to the free world forces in Vietnam for 7 years. In all areas of Vietnam from Nha Trang in the south to the DMZ in the North, the 14<sup>th</sup> CAB has played a leading role in the Free World Forces counter insurgent activities.

#### **"The tumult and the shouting dies, the Captains and the Kings depart"**

-Kipling, "The Recessional"

The first company to depart the 14<sup>th</sup> CAB was the 71<sup>st</sup> AHC. The "Rattlers", and their "Firebird" Guns. The company joined the Battalion on the 18<sup>th</sup> of April 1967. They participated in many operations with the 14<sup>th</sup> CAB, Lam Son 719, Dewy Canyon II, and Heip Duc just to name a few. While with the 14<sup>th</sup> CAB, the Rattlers primary mission was to support the 196<sup>th</sup> Light Infantry Brigade. The 71<sup>st</sup> AHC's last day with the Battalion was 30 September 1971. As of 30 September 1971, the 71<sup>st</sup> Assault Helicopter Company was deactivated from active duty.

The next unit to receive stand down orders was the 132<sup>nd</sup> ASHC, "Hercules". Hercules joined the 14<sup>th</sup> CAB in December of 1968. They provided the battalion with resupply and aircraft recovery capabilities. They also deployed to the North, Hue/Phu Bai, during operation Lam Son 719. The 132<sup>nd</sup> as of this date is preparing for Deactivation. The 14<sup>th</sup> CAB received official notification of stand down on 20 September 1971. HHC is at this time started on a two-fold mission. They maintained their normal operational load of supporting all units of the 14<sup>th</sup> CAB and then immediately began the difficult and arduous task of out-processing and redeployment of the Battalion Headquarters.

This process involved all of the officers and staff of the Headquarters to work closely and effectively with each other. All personnel actions must be completed and paperwork prepared for out-processing. Logistic support must be arranged for transportation during the deactivation, as well as other logistical problems solved. All of the staff were involved in bringing their activities to a climax. During this entire time all of the sections still maintained the normal and efficient support of the units in the 14<sup>th</sup> CAB.

On 14 September 1971, the 14<sup>th</sup> CAB began the first day of stand down and directed all of their efforts to finalize the out-processing of personnel, closing all records and accounts and the orderly and efficient shipment of equipment. On 16 October 1971, the Headquarters and Headquarters Company conducted their awards and decorations/redeployment ceremony. On October 1971, all vehicles and MTOE equipment of the unit was loaded on an LST and shipped to Da Nang for the final cleaning and turn in to Keystone processing points. Many long, hard hours were spent at Chu Lai preparing the equipment for turn in prior to shipment so that the operation would



progress smoothly and efficiently. This finalized the logistical part of the Standown. During that time the S-1 office continued to close all records and out-process personnel assigned to HHC. All personnel were processed out by 25 October 1971, the final day of stand down.

During the time of the first notification of the 71<sup>st</sup> AHC to the final day of stand down, the 14<sup>th</sup> CAB maintained a Keystone operation and liaison section in the S-4 office. Its prime mission was to coordinate and assist all of the units assigned to the 14<sup>th</sup> CAB in any and all of the problems associated with a stand down of this size and complexity. Close coordination was constantly maintained with the 16<sup>th</sup> CAG and the 23<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Division during the entire standown operation. Their assistance was a vital key to the smooth and efficient standown of the 14<sup>th</sup> CAB and its subordinate units. An additional mission of the liaison section was to keep a daily record of the units progress so that any problems could be recognized and solved before they became critical.

The final curtain closes on the 14<sup>th</sup> CAB's activities in Vietnam as LTC Rutkowski, the Commanding Officer and SFC Thompson return with the unit's colors to the United States. The 14<sup>th</sup> CAB's new home will be at Ft Sill, Oklahoma. At Ft Sill the unit will receive new personnel and equipment. There it will serve once again with honor, dignity and courage as it did in the Republic of Vietnam.

#### Footnotes

1. General Order Number 242, Headquarters, Third United States Army, Fort McPherson, Georgia 30330 dated 9 September 1962, as changed by General Orders Number 254, Headquarters, Third United States Army, Fort McPherson, Georgia 30330, dated 24 September 1964
2. History of the Fourteenth Aviation Battalion 3 September 1964-31 December 1964 -- LTC John R Goodrich, page 2
3. See- Footnote 2, organizational charts
4. Modification Table of Organization and Equipment Number 1-256GP01 dated 21 August 1970, Department of the Army Headquarters, United States Army, Pacific APO San Francisco 96558
5. General Orders Number 77, Headquarters, 1<sup>st</sup> Aviation Brigade APO San Francisco 96384, dated 6 January 1968.

#### References:

1. Le Clerc, Dale R. Captain "History of the fourteenth Aviation Battalion", 3 Sept 64 - 31 Dec 71
2. History of the 71<sup>st</sup> Assault Helicopter Company, 71
3. History of the 116<sup>th</sup> Assault Helicopter Company, 23 September 71
4. History of the 174<sup>th</sup> Assault Helicopter Company, 15 Jan 71
5. History of the 176<sup>th</sup> Assault Helicopter Company, 15 Jan 71
6. History of the 132<sup>nd</sup> Assault Helicopter Company, Oct 67- May 71
7. History of the 178<sup>th</sup> Assault Support Helicopter Company, 30 Sept 71
8. "Operations Reports Lessons Learned", 14<sup>th</sup> CAB, RVN, Period ending 30 April 71