

HISTORY OF THE  
119th AVIATION COMPANY  
(AIR MOBILE LIGHT)  
APO SAN FRANCISCO, 96318

1 January 1965 - 31 December 1965

Prepared by

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Commanding

520 AVIATION BATTALION  
17th AVIATION GROUP  
Military Assistance Command, Vietnam  
United States Army Pacific, Ryuku Islands

VHPA 169

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D O N O T D

## FOREWORD

This history is respectfully dedicated to those officers, warrant officers, and enlisted men of the 119th Aviation Company and attached units, who gave their lives in the defense of their country.

1962

WO Charles E. Holloway 22 Dec Florida

22 Dec Florida

1965

Capt George Markos	7 Feb	Texas
SP/4 Ralph W. Broughman	7 Feb	Virginia
SP/4 Norman M. Garrett	7 Feb	Texas
PFC Theodore Lamb	7 Feb	Florida
Capt Robert D. Walker	19 Apr	Texas
Lt. Patrick P. Calhoun	19 Apr	Georgia
WO Douglas D. Mack	19 Apr	Texas
SP/4 Arthur L. Hennessey	19 Apr	Massachusetts
Maj. Scyward N. Hall	21 Apr	Maine
Capt Roberto Samaniego	19 Jun	Texas
Lt. John R. Ball	19 Jun	West Virginia
CWO James L. Purser	19 Jun	Tennessee
SP/5 Harold A. Atcher	19 Jun	Georgia
SP/4 Johnnie R. Tripolt	20 Jul	South Carolina
WO Don G. Knowlton	20 Oct	Minnesota
WO Ronald W. Macklin	20 Oct	California
SP/5 Wesley McDonial	20 Oct	Missouri
SP/5 Franklin D. Racine	20 Oct	Illinois

PREFACE

The purpose of this unit history is to outline the events which occurred in the 119th Aviation Company, during the calendar year 1965. It is intended to give an accurate portrayal of the Company, its personnel and equipment, as well as a concise picture of the combat operations in which the unit has participated. The information contained in this history has been gathered from Tactical Operational Reports, Quarterly Command Reports, newspaper accounts and personal interviews.

INTRODUCTION

The 119th Aviation Company of the 52nd Aviation Battalion is located at Camp Holloway near the town of Pleiku, Vietnam. Pleiku is near the center of the rugged Central Highlands of Vietnam and is the site of the ARVN Second Corps Headquarters. Camp Holloway is one of the oldest helicopter bases in Vietnam. It was opened in August 1962 by the 81st Transit Company (CH-21) which later became the 119th Aviation Company. Camp Holloway also has the distinction of being the highest permanent helicopter base in the country with a field elevator of 2460 feet MSL.

The year 1965 brought many changes to the 119th Aviation Company. During the year the scope of the war in Vietnam grew tremendously. In January only 21,000 U.S. troops were involved in the war, but by December the number had grown to 130,000, including some of the Army's front line combat divisions. At the start of 1965 the war was confined to South Vietnam, but the night of 7 February 1965 ended that confinement. It was on that night at 0200 that a Viet Cong mortar attack hit Camp Holloway and the 119th Aviation Company. The casualties at Camp Holloway included eight dead and more than one hundred wounded including Major Beyward N. Hall Commanding Officer of the 119th Aviation Company who died two months later. The next day President Johnson ordered retaliatory airstrikes on North Vietnam and the "escalation" began.

Throughout the year the 119th Aviation Company has proven itself to be one of the hardest working aviation units in Vietnam. It has been involved in operations all over the ARVN Second Corps Area, equal in size to the state of Florida. It has performed every conceivable mission from combat assault to VIP haul, and from tactical medical evacuation to road reconnaissance.

The 119th Aviation Company has been deeply involved in two of the biggest battles of the war, the seige at Ducco and Plei Me. Both of these Special Forces Camps are within 30 minutes flying time of Camp Holloway, and both were the scene of heavy fighting when the Viet Cong attempted to overrun the camps. The Viet Cong were defeated in both battles and perhaps history will show these two victories for the RVN to be the turning point in the battle for freedom in South Vietnam.

Part II

MISSION AND ORGANIZATION

Mission

The mission of the 119th Aviation Company is to provide tactical air movement of combat troops in air mobile operations and to provide tactical air movement of combat supplies and equipment within the combat zone. The company is attached to the 52d Aviation Battalion which provides direct aviation support to the Second ARVN Corps.

Organization

The 119th Aviation Company is organized under TO & E 1-77E dated Jul 63, augmented by CO 183 HQS USARPAC dated 29 Sep 64. The company consists of a Company Headquarters, two Airlift (slick) Platoons, one Armed Escort Platoon, a Service Platoon and a Gunner Platoon. The following units are attached:

545th Transportation Detachment (CHFM)

70th Signal Detachment (Avionics)

94th Medical Detachment

The Company owns, operates and maintains a total of 25 UH-1B helicopters and 2 O1-F airplanes.

### PART III

#### COMMAND

Throughout 1965 the 119th Aviation Company has been blessed with a series of outstanding commanders. Under the guidance of Major Seward N. Hall, who assumed command 4 November 1964, the unit progressed into the new year gaining experience and developing technique. Major Hall commanded the 119th Aviation Co. until the night of 7 Feb 65, at which time he was seriously wounded during the mortar attack on Camp Holloway. He died 21 April 65 as a result of those wounds.

Capt. Charles M. Crowe assumed command during the attack on Camp Holloway after Major Hall was wounded. Following the attack, Capt. Crowe initiated plans to expedite the repair of the units' damaged equipment and housing. Capt. Crowe had been the Maintenance Officer prior to the attack.

A time of challenge faced Major Carl E. Rhodes when he assumed command of the unit on 9 Mar 65. There was still the task of reconstruction and strengthening of defenses to prevent another occurrence of the February mortar attack. During his command, many new problems and operational requirements presented themselves. Major Rhodes and the 119th proved themselves equal to the task.

Major Charles W. Mooney assumed command of the unit on 10 Aug 65 and continued as C O into the following year. "Daddy Alligator" as he was affectionately known, was the spearhead which made the 119th Aviation Company a famed unit throughout the country. His quick

reaction to difficult situations were such as to demand respect from friend and enemy alike. New and effective tactics were devised, and prolonged field operations were encountered with few problems.

## PART IV

### WEATHER

The tropical climate and topography of South Vietnam produce only two basic seasons, the dry season and the monsoon. In the central highlands around Pleiku the monsoon season starts in May and lasts through September. During the monsoon the winds are generally out of the southwest and the humidity is high. Although there are periods of sunshine and scattered clouds, the weather is usually overcast and rainy. Flying is restricted in the early morning and late afternoon and often times flying is prohibited all day.

During the dry season the winds are out of the northeast and good flying weather prevails throughout the season. The temperature at Pleiku is always moderate due to its elevation of 2460 feet MSL. During the coolest nights the temperature may drop to 50° F, while 95° F is maximum on a hot afternoon.

PART V

OPERATIONS

Throughout the year the 119th Aviation Company has been called upon to fly every possible type of mission. The aviators and crew members always displayed a "can do" attitude and accomplished every mission big or small. Below is a summary of all the significant operations of the year 1965, in which the 119th Avn. Co. participated. There are hundreds of small missions not included. However, every one of these "unimportant" missions received the same 100% effort from the company.

JANUARY:

12 January: The 119th Aviation Company used ten UH-1B's and six Armed UH-1Bs to lift 120 troops of the Plei Mrong CIDG Company into a two ship LZ at YA 917300 for a search and clear operation. Six VNAF A1-Hs provided prestrike and air cover on this first assault of the year.

14 January: The 119th Avn. Co. as part of the 52d Aviation Battalion, participated in Operation Le Lei at Boun Mi Ga (BP 315835). Ten UH-1Bs and seven Armed UH-1Bs from the 119th staged out of Ban Me Thuot and carried 95 troops into an LZ at BQ 348707 in two lifts. Four A1-H fighters flew cover during the assault.

22 January: Ten UH-1B slicks and six armed UH-1B gun ships of the 119th staged out of Tan Canh carrying 103 troops of the ARVN 42d Regiment. Two lifts were made into a landing zone at ZB 1557. Air Force A1-H fighters provided a prestrike on the LZ for this search and clear operation. Heavy small arms and automatic weapons

fire was received near the LZ.

28 January: The 119th moved to Tuy Hoa where the 52d Avn. Bn. participated in Operation Ban Thi Wan. Before the airlanded assault, UH-1Ds and VNAF Skyraiders were used to disperse CS and CH chemical grenades and powder. The 52d Bn. then lifted 214 troops of the 23d ARVN Div. to an LZ at CQ 270320. Moderate ground fire was received, but no aircraft were hit.

FEBRUARY:

7 February: The 119th Avn. Co. joined the 52d Airlift Platoon in an airlanded assault and an Eagle Flight in pursuit of the Viet Cong force that had attacked Camp Holloway the previous night. The Eagle Flight was carried from Camp Holloway to an LZ at AR 930570. The airlanded assault was into an LZ at AR 930730. Contact was made with the VC, and by 9 Feb. when the operation ended, 28 VC KIA'S had been counted.

23 February: The 119th Avn. Co. staged out of Ankhe and lifted 63 troops of the 281st CIDG Company to an LZ at BR 600450. Intense automatic weapons fire was received during the lifts, and two ships were hit.

24 February: The 119th joined in a battalion sized troop extraction of the 281st CIDG Co. and elements of the 22d Ranger Bn. A total of 220 troops were extracted from an LZ on Highway 19 (BR 350465) east of the Mang Yang Pass, in three lifts. Intense automatic weapons, small arms and mortar fire was received in the landing zone. Two 119th aircraft received hits. Eight B-57 bombers and four A-1H fighters provided prestrike and air cover for this

operation.

MARCH:

5 March: An Eagle Flight was conducted from Camp Halloway to an LZ at ZA 230172. The 119th used 8 slicks and 4 gunships to carry 86 troops in two lifts. Later in the day an airlanded assault was conducted in support of the 1st ARVN Airborne Brigade. The company lifted 270 troops into an LZ (BR 410520) north of Ankhe. Twenty Air Force fighter-bomber aircraft flew close air support for the operation.

14 March: Operation Quyet Thang 127 was staged out of Qui Nhon in support of the 3d Battalion, 1st Airborne Brigade. The 119th joined other elements of the 52d Bn. to land 300 troops in three lifts at an LZ (BR 744532) northeast of Binh Khe.

23 March: The 119th Avn. Co. participated in Operation Le Dang Phung at Phan Thiet (BR 801065) as the 52d Bn. moved 384 troops of the 23d ARVN Div. in four lifts from Phan Thiet to an LZ at YT 960390. Eight Air Force B-57s provided close air support.

27 March: The 119th moved to Qui Nhon to conduct an air landed assault called Operation Quyet Thang 128. The 52d Bn. moved 332 troops of the 22d ARVN Div. in three lifts from Phu My to an LZ (BR 915825) southeast of Bong Son.

APRIL:

3 April: On Operation Quyet Thang 131 the 119th Avn. Co. joined a battalion sized operation which lifted a Marine Task Force into two LZs in nine lifts. The operation staged out of

Bong Son airfield. Semi-automatic and automatic weapons fire was received and grew more intense with each lift. One Armed UH-1B was hit. This operation was the largest lift the 52d Bn. had ever performed.

11 April: An Eagle Flight was lifted from Camp Holloway to a two ship LZ at YA 9641. The 119th carried 73 troops in two lifts using 6 slicks and 3 gunships.

19 April: Operation Quyet Thang 137 was conducted in support of the 22d Div. The 119th Avn Co. joined other elements of the battalion in lifting 320 troops from Phu Cat to LZ Alpha (CR 099410) on the peninsula north of Qui Nhon. An additional 100 troops were landed at LZ Bravo (CR 075495). Intense ground fire was received from LZ Alpha, and two armed UH-1Bs were shot down and exploded on impact. All crew members were killed. Four other aircraft were also hit with one additional crewman being killed.

28 April: The 22d ARVN Marine Task Force was airlanded at BS 855215. Three lifts carried 520 troops from Bong Son. The 119th joined the 52d Bn. in this assault which started with a prestrike by eight B-57s and four Skyraiders.

MAY:

5 May: Five slicks and one gunship of the 119th Avn Co. carried 101 troops of the 22d Div. from Bong Son southwest to an LZ at BR 740515. Five lifts were required on this search and kill operation which had eight F-100s and four A-1Es providing close air support.

24 May: Operation Quyet Thang 147 was a search and clear

operation which required five lifts. The 119th joined other elements of the 52d Bn. at Kontum to carry 450 troops of the 2d Bn, 40th Inf. (ARVN) west to an LZ at YA 985865.

JUNE:

1 June: The 119th Avn. Co. conducted an Eagle Flight in response to a convoy ambush on Highway 19 west of Pleiku (ZA 090305). Nine slicks escorted by four gunships lifted the reaction force into the ambush site. As the flight was returning to Holloway, the aircraft began drawing heavy ground fire from a second ambush site. Two of the armed UH-1Bs were hit by the ground fire and were forced to land. The crews were immediately rescued. There were no injuries sustained by any of the crew members, and the two downed aircraft were later recovered.

19 June: Two slicks escorted by two gunships carried cargo from Kontum to Dak Sut (BY 952516). As the aircraft entered the Dak Sut valley (YB 915355) the lead aircraft came under intense automatic weapons fire. The lead aircraft was hit and caught fire on the left side, near the tail boom. The aircraft entered auto-rotation. The tail boom separated from the aircraft at 300 feet above the ground and the aircraft hit the ground inverted and exploded on impact. No crew members survived.

28 June: The 119th made a troop lift from Tan Canh to Dak Sut carrying 130 troops in three lifts. Four Skyraiders provided air cover, but no ground fire was received.

JULY:

16 July: The 119th Avn. Co. joined the other units of

the 52d Bn. in Highway 19 road clearing Operation Dan Thion 109. The 119th staged out of Camp Holloway, while other elements of the battalion staged from Ankhe Airfield. Air Force B-52s bombed the ridges on both sides of Highway 19 at the Lang Yang Pass. This was the first time the B-52s had flown a mission in support of ground forces.

24 July: A combat extraction of the 1st Ranger Bn. (ARVN) was made from an LZ (BR 388552) south of Ankhe. Ninety-six troops were extracted in one lift to Camp Holloway without incident.

AUGUST:

3 August: Operation Dan Thang 5 was conducted by the entire 52d Bn. operating from Camp Holloway. The 3rd and 8th Battalions, 1st ARVN Airborne Brigade were carried in six lifts to the landing zone at Ducco airstrip. The Special Forces Camp at Ducco had been under seige for several weeks by an estimated VC battalion. Small arms and automatic weapons fire was received in the vicinity of the LZ, and two aircraft were hit.

10 August: The 5th ARVN Airborne Bn. was lifted from Camp Holloway to Ducco. The 119th and other elements of the 52d Bn. carried 450 troops in three lifts. On the third lift the 119th was diverted to YA 917269 to extract 45 ARVN KIAs to Pleiku. Small arms, automatic weapons and mortar fire was received in the landing zone. Two armed UH-1Bs received hits and one door gunner was wounded.

SEPT/OCTOBER:

10 September: The 119th Avn. Co. joined other 52d Bn. units

at Quang Ngai in I Corps and performed an airlanded assault and extraction in support of the 5th US Special Forces Group. Fifty USSF and 210 VTF Rangers were lifted from the stagefield at Quang Ngai, west to the LZ at BT 137003 in one lift, and later extracted from the same LZ in one lift. Air Force B-52s and B-57s were used in the prestrike while eight A-1Hs flew air cover during the landing.

OCTOBER:

20 October: US Special Forces, Det C-2, requested assistance from the 52d Avn Bn, for the Special Forces Camp at Plei Me, which was under attack. Two armed helicopters and a flare ship of the 119th Avn Co. were dispatched and gave illumination and air cover until the arrival of Air Force flare and fighter aircraft. Later in the morning two armed UH-1Bs of the 119th received intense automatic weapons fire from all quadrants, while escorting medical evacuation helicopters from the Plei Me Camp. One of the gunships was shot down with no survivors.

24 October: The 119th Avn. Co. joined other units of the 52d Bn. in deploying 400 troops of the 22d Ranger Bn. along the route of the armored Task Force enroute to the Plei Me Camp.

25 October: The 119th Avn. Co. assisted the 1st Bdo, 1st Air Cav Div., in a troop placement from Camp Holloway to an LZ on the road to Plei Me (ZI 245165).

28 October: The 119th Avn. Co. assisted in extracting the 42d ARVN Ranger Company from the airstrip at Plei Me to New Pleiku Airfield in two lifts.

NOVEMBER:

7 November: The 119th Avn. Co. and other units of the 52d Bn. conducted an airlanded assault. US Marine Helicopter Squadron HMM 363 was attached to the 52d Bn. for this operation which staged out of Tuy Hoa. Two Battalions of the 47th Inf. Regt. and two battalions of the Airborne Task Force were carried north-west to an LZ at BQ 905580.

9-12 November: The 119th Avn. Co. spent the period from 9- 12 Nov. as part of the 52d Bn. in support of the ARVN Artillery School in a Combined Arms Demonstration at the Duc My Training Center. Thirteen slicks and six gunships of the company were used in the demonstration. As part of the demonstration, a total of 546 troops were lifted on an airlanded assault.

18 November: The 52d Avn. Bn. staged II Corps Operation Than Phong 7 from Duc Co. Twelve slicks and six gunships of the 119th took part as 1500 troops were carried in five lifts, from Duc Co to an LZ at YA 841092. Two aircraft sustained light damage from ground fire received in the Ia Drang Valley south of Duc Co.

DECEMBER:

30 December: For the last combat assault of the year, the 119th joined other elements of the 52d Bn. to airlift 465 troops of the 23d Inf Div (ARVN), from Boun Ea Yang (BQ 010010) to an LZ at BQ 280045. The operation was conducted in three lifts, and ground fire was received. There were no hits, however.

## PART VI

### MAINTENANCE

As the 119th Aviation Company is busy so are the supporting units and the Service Platoon. The year 1965 was a time of great change from a relatively static situation to a highly mobile one in which movement of the company from one location to another required expeditious maintenance support. The heavy mission requirements necessitated close coordination among all maintenance personnel, and this is the outstanding feature of the units supporting this company. The 545th Transportation Detachment (CHFM) and the 70th Signal Detachment (Avionics) have done outstanding work with the aircraft of this company, and the average availability of aircraft for the year has been 83 percent.

Personnel arriving fresh from maintenance school required training, and the Service Platoon provided a sound program of on the job training from these young, inexperienced, but highly motivated men. Through a program of training in the maintenance hangar, these men learned enough to be selected as senior helicopter mechanics and crew chiefs. Attesting to their fine work is the fact that there have been no accidents or incidents attributable to faulty or negligent maintenance through this year.

In aircraft, vehicle, and communications maintenance, the 119th has been able to maintain its mission ready posture even though long hours of work were required on the part of each man in each section. Working both night and day during periods of heavy maintenance

requirements demonstrated the "can do" spirit which marks the excellence of these supporting units and the Service Platoon.

At the close of the year, the Service Platoon, in conjunction with the 545th and 70th Detachments helped the 119th to sponsor a Christmas program and party for 120 underprivileged war refugees from Pleiku Province. The success of this party could best be measured by the smiles on the faces of the children and the fine young men of the unit.

PART VII

SAFETY

In the field of Aviation Safety, the 119th Aviation Company has again shown itself to be the best. During 1965 the company sustained only two aircraft accidents, a record unheard of in Army Aviation. This record really becomes impressive when one considers that the company flew nearly 17,000 hours during the year, much of the time in tight formation, and from an airfield where the density altitude is 5000 feet almost every day. This safety record is being carried on into 1966.

Both accidents occurred on 10 September 1965, when the company was just 20 days short of establishing a record of one year without a single accident. Our O1-F was destroyed in a crash at Dak Pek while on loan to the 219th Aviation Company. UH-1B 589 had an engine failure at Tan Canh and was damaged by the subsequent hard landing. The following day 589 was completely destroyed when a recovery CH-37 lost power attempting to sling load the damaged aircraft and settled back on top of it.

Shortly after our September accidents the 52d Aviation Battalion started a program called "Snowball!" the idea behind the program was to build a safety record a little bit at a time letting the record grow much like a snowball grows. The 119th Aviation Company turned out the best team in the battalion and rolled up a 4400 hour snowball by the years end. The snowball continues to grow in 1966.

LINAGE AND HONORS

Constituted 14 June 1944 as 81st Transportation Corps Composite Company

Activated 5 July 1944 at Brisbane, Australia

Redesignated 1 March 1945 as 81st Transportation Corps Harbor Craft Company

Inactivated 15 May 1946 in the Pacific Theater

Activated 20 December 1946 in Manila with Philippine Scout personnel

Redesignated 9 August 1947 as 81st Transportation Harbor Craft Company

Inactivated 1 June 1949

Redesignated 16 August 1957 as 81st Transportation Company

Activated 12 September 1957 at Fort Riley, Kansas

Redesignated 14 June 1963 as 119th Aviation Company (Air Mobile Light) at Pleiku, Republic of Vietnam

(This Company is not related historically to the 81st Transportation Company (Boat))

CAMPAGN SILVER BAR DS:

A- P. WWII  
New Guinea

DECORATIONS:

None

COMMANDING OFFICERS 119th AVIATION COMPANY 1965

Major Seyward N. Hall	070743	1 Jan - 7 Feb
Capt. Charles M. Crowe	04021343	7 Feb - 9 Mar
Major Carl E. Rhodes	0941040	9 Mar - 10 Aug
Major Charles W. Mooney	082211	10 Aug - 31 Dec

119TH AVIATION COMPANY  
Roster of Key Personnel 31 Dec 65

Headquarters

Mooney, Charles W.	Major	082211	Company Commander
Johnson, Bradley J.	Capt	083300	Executive Officer
Thompson, David E.	Capt	091707	Operations Officer
Qualline, Charles E.	Capt	095143	Intelligence Officer
Zeek, Edward J.	1/SGT	R413245132	Co 1st SGT

1st Airlift Platoon

Blunck, Leo G.	Capt	05730930	Platoon Commander
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2d Airlift Platoon

James, Robert B.	Capt	05310618	Platoon Commander
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3rd Airlift Platoon (Armed)

Wright, Robert K.	Capt	05405585	Platoon Commander
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Service Platoon

Rhodes, Hugh H.	Capt	05300696	Platoon Commander
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545th Trans Det (CHFW)

Michelson, Fred R.	Capt	04059861	Det Commander
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70th Signal Det

Berry, Franklin W.	Capt	04045241	Det Commander
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94th Medical Det

Maxwell, John R.	Capt	05525942	Det Commander
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STATISTICS  
119th Aviation Company  
1965

COMBAT HOURS FLOWN	16,925
COMBAT SORTIES	35,415
TOTAL PASSENGERS	31,492
TOTAL CARGO	525 Tons
NUMBER OF AIRCRAFT HIT BY GROUND FIRE	68
* NUMBER OF AIRCRAFT ACCIDENTS	2

\* An O-1F of the 119th Aviation Co. was destroyed on 10Sept  
while on loan to the 219th Aviation Co.

Hours Flown and Availability Rate During 1965

UH-1B			O1-F	
Month	Hours	Availability	Hours	Availability
Jan 65	1827	90%	224	89%
Feb 65	1449	92%	219	80%
Mar 65	1865	90%	220	82%
Apr 65	1665	87%	185	92%
May 65	1525	94%	151	56%
Jun 65	992	80%	56	89%
Jul 65	950	77%	14	90%
Aug 65	951	79%	19	76%
Sep 65	1172	85%	36	75%
Oct 65	976	73%	0	N/A
Nov 65	1098	80%	0	N/A
Dec 65	1331	88%	0	N/A
Totals	15801		1124	
Average		84.6%		81%