

164TH GROUP CAMBODIAN OPERATIONS
(29 APRIL - 19 MAY 1970)

VHPA118

164th Aviation Group (Combat), 1st Aviation Brigade, US Army

MISSION:

Provide aviation support as directed to US, GVN and other Free World Military Assistance Forces for the conduct of combat and logistical counter-insurgency operations in Cambodia, while continuing to support this extension of pacification and essential combat task throughout the IV Corps Tactical Zone.

CONCEPT OF OPERATION:

164th CAG supports the 7th, 9th, 21st and 44th STZ, operations with Task Forces Blackhawk, Cougar, Guardian and forces in search and destroy operations in Cambodia. Seeking elimination of VC/NVA forces, storage sites, and sanctuaries.

EXECUTION:

During the period 29 April-19 May 1970, the 164th Aviation Group (Combat) supported the Army of the Republic of Vietnam and other Government forces of the IV Corps Tactical Zone in operations in Cambodia. On 29 April, a task force under the control of the 9th ARVN Division invaded Viet Cong and NVA sanctuaries in the Crow's Nest area of Cambodia. Ground forces were supported by the D 3/5 and B 7/1 Air Cavalry Troops and gunships of the 235th AWC. Aero-scouts and gunships inflicted 122 KIA on the enemy and the supported ground troops killed 380 of the enemy.

From 2 May-6 May, A and C Troops of the 7/1 Armored Cavalry Squadron and elements of the 235th AWC flying gunship with VNAF elements, supported the 9th ARVN Division in Operation Rock Crusher II. This operation was aimed at sanctuaries in the Parrot's Beak area.

Pockets of heavy enemy resistance were encountered, but accurate gunship strikes disorganized and demoralized the VC forces. In all, the gunships killed 277 enemy personnel, out of a total body count of 1202.

Beginning on 9 May 1970, GVN ground, air and naval forces began operation Cuu Long I, a concerted drive up the Mekong River to Phnom Penh, with associated search and destroy operations along the banks of the river, particularly in the vicinity of the Ferry Crossing (WT 3144). During the 11 days of operation Cuu Long I, from 9-19 May, elements of the 164th Aviation Group (Combat) flew 16,000 hours of combat assault support missions. The Group killed a total of 558 of the enemy, which was over fifty percent of the total 1106 enemy eliminated in the operation.

Throughout the period 29 April-19 May, Chinooks of the 271st and 147th Assault Support Helicopter Company provided troop redeployment and resupply capability in support of the operations in Cambodia. Assigned and attached maintenance personnel worked around the clock to meet aircraft commitments. The headquarters element established a forward CP and provided the necessary communications and command functions to coordinate an extended and complex operation in an unfamiliar AO. The efficiency and spirit with which all members of the 164th CAG performed their duties is indicated by the fact that group aircraft flew over 47,700 hours during the month of May, more than any previous month by over 2,000 hours.

The 164th Aviation Group (Combat) provided professional aviation support in furtherance of the objectives of the President of the United States. A total of 1909 enemy were killed in the Cambodian operation, of which 1190 were KBA3 credited to 164th Group elements. Another 270 enemy were captured.

and 329 suspects detained. These severe losses disrupted enemy pressure on the government of Cambodia. Enemy logistical facilities and activities in the border areas were dislocated. Captured supplies included 1896 individual and 269 crew served weapons, 148 tons of munitions, 75 tons of rice, and 3 tons of medical supplies. The capture of these supplies and especially the denial of the enemy's long-hold sanctuaries will inhibit enemy activity in the IV CTZ for months and allow CVN to make accelerated progress in pacification of the IV CTZ.

At the direction of the President of the United States and the government of the Republic of South Vietnam, Free World Forces in April 1970 commenced offensive operations in Cambodia directed at VC and NVA troop sanctuaries and logistical facilities. During the period 29 April to 19 May, IV Corps forces mounted two operations, Rock Crusher I, and Rock Crusher II, against VC sanctuaries, and one deep probe into Cambodia along the Mekong River and Highway 1, Operation Cuu Long I. The objectives were to destroy and disorganize enemy troops and logistical activities and relieve Communist pressure on the government of Cambodia. In accordance with its mission of providing aviation assets in support of combat and logistical counter-insurgency operations to forces of the IV CTZ, the 164th Aviation Group (Combat) furnished airmobile assault, aerial reconnaissance and fire support capabilities to the troops engaged in the cross-border operations. This crucial support was rendered while elements of the 164th Group continued to provide assets for normal counter-insurgency operations within the Delta. Operation Rock Crusher I began on 29 April 1970 under the operational control of the 9th ARVN Division, with one armored cavalry squadron, three companies of Civilian Irregular Defense Group forces of

the B-41 Special Forces Detachment and five companies of Regional Force troops of the Kien Tuong Province. Flying in support were the following elements of the 164th Aviation Group (Combat): D Troop, (AIR) 3d Armored Squadron, 5th Cavalry and B Troop, (AIR) 7th Armored Squadron, 1st Cavalry. In addition, elements of the 235th Aerial Weapons Company, 307th Combat Aviation Battalion, flew gunship cover for the 211th VNAF Squadron.

On the first day, task force elements staging north of Moc Hoa (XS 0290) assaulted suspected VC and NVA base camps and supply points inside the Crow's Nest area of Cambodia. OH-6A aero-scouts of D Troop provided flank security and reconnoitered the way ahead of the advancing allied columns, discovering enemy troops and positions. The enemy, initially taken by surprise, soon mounted stiff resistance. AH-1G Cobra gunships, called in to attack enemy strong points and troop concentrations and often flying into the face of sustained enemy fire, placed rocket and mini-gun strikes that broke the back of the VC resistance. This results testify to the efficiency and accuracy: 65 enemy HBA credited to D Troop and another 30 to the 235th gunships.

Action on the second and third days of Rock Crusher I was directed toward the removal of enemy supplies and the destruction of base camp facilities. Throughout this period, groups of fleeing VCs were encountered and sharp fire fights resulted. Again, helicopter gunships supplied timely aerial fires. On 30 April, B Troop eliminated 23 of the enemy in scattered actions.

On 1 May, friendly forces withdrew to Vietnam for refitting, their objectives achieved. A total of 502 VC/NVA were killed, including 122 by 164th Group elements. Thirteen more enemy troops were captured and suspects detained. Enemy material losses included 183 individual weapons, 32 crew-served weapons, 127 mortar rounds of various calibers, 2,000 rounds of small arms ammunition, 67 tons of rice and one Chinese Communist telephone switchboard. Allied losses were 56 KIA and 350 WIA, of which two were U.S. Also, the 164th Group suffered two aircraft hit by enemy fires and one aviator wounded. As allied forces involved in Rock Crusher I redeployed back into Vietnam, a larger force prepared to launch Operation Rock Crusher II, aimed at VC and NVA sanctuaries along the southern and southwestern sides of the Parrot's Beak area of Cambodia. Again under the operational control of the 9th ARVN Division, the invasion forces included that Division's 14th and 15th Regiments, four Ranger Battalions and five Armored Cavalry Squadrons under the following task organization: Task Force Alpha with the headquarters element of the 4th Armored Brigade, the 1st Battalion, 15th Regiment, 41st Ranger Battalion, 12th and 16th Armored Cavalry Squadron; Task Force Bravo with headquarters, 14th Regiment, the 1st, 2nd and 3d Battalions of the 14th Regiment, and the 2nd and 6th Armored Cavalry Squadrons; Task Force Charlie with headquarters element and 2nd and 3d Battalions of the 15th Regiment and the 9th Armored Cavalry Squadron; Task Force Delta, in reserve, with Headquarters, 4th Ranger Group and the 42nd and 43d and 44th Ranger Battalions. Elements of the 164th Group which participated in the five day operation included A and C Troops (AIR)

7th Armored Squadron, 1st Cavalry, the 114th Assault Helicopter Company, 214th Combat Aviation Battalion, and the 235th Aerial Weapons Company, 307th Combat Aviation Battalion, again flying gunship cover for the 211th and 217th VNAF Squadrons. Artillery support was supplied by two forward fire support bases emplaced especially for the operation. All equipment and supplies, including the 105mm guns, has to be slung in by Chinook heavy cargo helicopters of the 147th and 271st Assault Support Helicopter Companies.

In the pre-dawn darkness of 2 May 1970, the armored personnel carriers of the five cavalry squadrons pulled into position. The 250 APC's on line abreast of each other at 25 meter intervals, created a front over six kilometers in length. Operations commenced at first light with an airmobile assault into WT 2002. Armored cavalry elements raced across the border to secure other objectives and link up with the airmobile assault forces. The moving front of massed armor kicked up trails of dust that clouded the sky in scenes reminiscent of the great armored battles of World War II.

Once again friendly forces achieved initial surprise. The enemy was unable to rally his forces into a coordinated defense, but scattered enemy units put up local resistance. This was particularly true at the landing zones near WT 2002. While the VNAF transports were inserting a total of 824 troops into the landing zones, gunships of the 235th placed devastating airstrikes on the enemy defenders. Gunship pilots flying with the 211th VNAF Squadron destroyed 14 enemy by aerial fire, while

their comrades supporting the 217th VNAF Squadron accounted for another 19 VC. The landing zone was secured and ground troops pursued the now-broken enemy.

At the same time, ground striking forces were crossing the border. Aero-scouts and Cobra gunships of A Troop flew flank security and armed aerial reconnaissance sorties ahead of the armored columns. Especially savage resistance developed around coordinates XT 1304 and XT 1801. Gunships rolled in again and again to hit enemy positions and troops. The VC were ultimately routed, leaving behind 165 dead credited to A Troop.

This was the highest one-day KBA total ever achieved by a company/troop size unit flying in support of IV Corps forces. In all, Air-troopers of the 164th killed 198 of the enemy on 2 May.

At the conclusion of the fighting on 2 May, friendly forces had reached their prime objectives. The enemy resistance had largely been broken and his troops were fleeing towards the northwest. On the second day of Rock Crusher II, however, further pockets of resistance were encountered sporadically. Throughout the morning and afternoon of 3 May, ground troops made contact with the VC. When contact was made, friendly troops withdrew to allow air strikes, artillery and gunships to blast a way through.

Aviators of the 235th and C Troop effectively demonstrated the fire power of their AH-1G Cobra gunships, slaying a total of 46 insurgents.

In a separate action in the same area, at XT 1508, the 114th Assault Helicopter Company supported B-41 Special Forces and Kien Tuong Province Regional Forces. The gunships here killed another 31 VC, boosting KBA total for 164th Group elements in cross-border operations to 77 for the day.

By 4 May, the third day of Operation Rock Crusher II, the enemy as an organized fighting force had been effectively destroyed. Nevertheless, allied activity intensified. Aero-scouts and gunships roamed the skies, searching for pockets of resistance and small group of fleeing VC. On 4 May, A Troop gunners killed two of the enemy.

The ground forces remained occupied in sweeping the area for caches of enemy supplies. As these were uncovered, helicopters were called in to transport the booty of war to rear areas. APC's were pressed into service also, so great was the amount of captured equipment that an hour per day was required to resupply and refit expanded APC's.

The last two days of Rock Crusher II were employed in removing the captured weapons and ammunition back to Vietnam and redeploying friendly troops back across the border. The amount of captured weapons and supplies was truly impressive; a total of 1146 individual weapons and 174 crew-served weapons were taken, along with 86.5 tons of ammunition and 45 tons of rice. Enemy personnel losses were also severe; 1202 VC lost their lives, 277 of them killed by 164th Group elements. Another 265 suspects were detained. By contrast, friendly losses were 70 killed and 329 wounded. Two aviators of the 235th Aerial Weapons Company were killed when their aircraft and a VNAF command-and-control ship collided in mid-air and exploded.

Even as Operation Rock Crusher II wound to a close, intensive preparation began for the most ambitious undertaking yet, Operation Cuu Long I. The Operation was to take place in two phases and employ four task forces

across a front nearly 90 kilometers long. The task organization included Combat Group Alpha with the 1st, 2nd and 3d Battalions, 14th Regiment, 9th ARVN Division, and one battery of 105mm artillery support; Combat Group Bravo with the 211th Task Force (Riverine), the 1st, 4th and 5th Battalions of the B Marine Brigade, and one battery of 105mm artillery support; Combat Group Charlie with the 1st, 2nd and 4th Battalions of the 15th Regiment, 9th ARVN Division, the 41st Ranger Battalion, and the 2nd, 6th, 12th and 16th Cavalry Squadron; Combat Group Delta with the 4th Ranger Group, the 9th Cavalry Squadron, 42nd Ranger Battalion, the 3d Battalion, 15th Regiment, 9th ARVN Division and the 14th, 15th and 16th Reconnaissance Companies. This impressive task organization was to employ airmobile assaults, cross-country maneuver by armored cavalry elements, and a naval-marine assault up the Makong River. Their objectives were to seize and occupy the Prak Satt Ferry Site (MF 9144), destroy the headquarters of Military Region 2, the headquarters of the 88th NVA Regiment and any enemy units or logistical facilities encountered. To support Operation Cuu Long I, the 164th Group furnished the largest air armada ever assembled in the IV Corps Tactical Zone for a single operation. On D-Day, air assets from the 164th Group included four air cavalry troops (A, B and C Troops (AIR), 7th Armored Squadron, 1st Cavalry and D Troop (AIR), 3d Armored Squadron, 6th Cavalry), six assault helicopter companies, (the 114th, 135th, 175th and 335th Assault Helicopter Companies, 214th Combat Aviation Battalion, and the 162nd and 191st Assault Helicopter Companies, 13th Combat Aviation Battalion), and two VNAF Squadrons (211th

and 217th) supported by gunships of the 235th Aerial Weapons Company, 307th Combat Aviation Battalion.

Most of the assault helicopter companies provided abnormally large lift packages, so the days preceding D-Day saw assigned and attached maintenance personnel working around the clock to prepare the air fleet to a peak of combat readiness. Nor was maintenance the only area which required unusual and diligent preparations. Command posts and forward supply depots for the ground troops were established with the bulk of the supplies transported by CH-47 Chinook aircraft of the 147th and 271st Assault Support Helicopter Companies. During Operation Cuu Long I itself, the aviators of these two companies flew hundreds of troop movement and resupply sorties to include flying in the guns and equipment for four forward fire support bases.

Headquarters Company of the 164th Group established a forward command post at An Long Airstrip (WS 4384). This seldom-used airstrip became a hub of activity. Personnel from the S-4 section of Group Headquarters established the POL and rearming points necessary to sustain extended operations far from familiar stagefields. The Group Communications Section put in radio and teletype facilities to assure communications with operational elements in Cambodia and Group Headquarters in Can Tho. D Troop, 7th Armored Squadron, 1st Cavalry provided perimeter security.

In addition to the logistical preparations, aerial reconnaissance and surveillance missions were flown on a daily basis prior to D-Day. OV-10 Mohawk aircraft of the 244th Aviation Company (Surveillance Airplane), 307th Battalion, supplied the imagery that was an important basis for operational

planning. In the days preceding D-Day, 244th Mohawks flew 14 photographic sorties. They continued to support the operations after D-Day by flying a total of 95 hours of flight time. Air cavalry troops flew reconnaissance missions along the border. On 8 May, B Troop surprised a company of VC in the open at coordinates WT 5015. In a short but fierce engagement, the Air Troops killed 40 of the enemy.

D-Day was 9 May 1970, and operation Chu Long I commenced with a four pronged assault into Cambodia. Two armored columns and a navel column crossed the border and hastened to link up with the airmobile assault force. Helicopter transports of the 164th Group inserted a total of 2425 troops into nine landing zones in the vicinity of the Ferry Site. All the LZs were cold, but ground troops soon established contact. Air cavalry troops, which had earlier flown reconnaissance of the landing zones, now returned to support the ground forces with rocket and mini-gun strikes. Enemy resistance broken and pushed aside, the ground troops moved forward to secure their objectives and await the approach of the ground columns.

The two armored columns had crossed the border at first light and proceeded generally along Route 1. Other air cavalry troops flew flank security and forward aerial reconnaissance. The enemy seemed intent on withdrawing rather than mounting a coordinated defense, but VC units trapped by the speed of the allied advance resisted tenaciously from tree lines and prepared defensive positions until routed by superior fire power. Again and again gunships expended their armament, retreated to refuel and rearm, and return to the scene of battle to harass and punish the enemy. The cost was

not cheap. Subjected to intense enemy fire, five aircraft were hit and one destroyed at a loss of four aviators killed in action and two wounded. But Group elements inflicted a much higher toll on their foes: a total of 136 VC/NVA were killed by 164th Group flyers on 9 May.

On 10 May, operations began with airmobile assaults on secondary objectives as ground armored elements fanned out to conduct search and destroy operations and the riverine task force proceeded to Phnom Penh to assist Vietnamese refugees in returning to their homeland. With key objectives already captured, enemy resistance was more scattered, but sporadic contacts were made and occasional firefights broke out. Again gunship strikes proved the allies most effective weapon in dislodging enemy resistance. But the change in the level of fighting is reflected in the day's total of KBAs: 33.

On 11 May, ground elements continued to maneuver in search of enemy supply caches and troop units. 164th Group forces made 19 insertions of 1575 troops into 10 landing zones. Fighting was generally light, but at WT 6721 ground elements of the 4th Ranger Group ran into a stiff fight. Air troopers of D Troop, 3/5 Cavalry killed 56 of the enemy. Cobra gunships of the 114th Assault Helicopter Company, also flying in support of the Rangers, killed another five at WT 6330. A Troop, flying serial reconnaissance for the 4th Armored Brigade, accounted for three more VC, bringing the days total for 164th Group elements to 64 KBAs.

By May 13, enemy resistance had dwindled to virtually nothing. Nevertheless search and destroy operations continued, discovering numerous supply caches. Several airmobile assaults were conducted and 164th Group elements airlifted 1160 troops in offensive operations. Another 940 were extracted to staging

locations for the impending Phase II of Operation Cuu Long I. Two KBA's were credited to Group elements on 13 May.

Operations on 14 May were directed toward consolidation and resupply. At dusk, however, a sharp firefight occurred between VC and Vietnamese Marines at WT 436435. Gunships of B Troop, supporting the Marines that day, were called in and put in strikes, but their effectiveness was reduced by the lowering darkness. A hastily call for help was sent out, and a Nighthawk system and a flare ship responded. With flares providing artificial light, the gunships again rolled in to put their rockets on the enemy. The VC broke contact at this point, but in their retreat, left behind their comrades who had fallen to the aerial fusillade.

Bad weather on 15 May severely restricted combat operations. In addition, units took advantage of the lull in Cambodian fighting to make an intensive maintenance effort to assure full combat readiness for Phase II. Again on the 16th, the preponderance of the effort lay not in supporting combat operations, but in completing preparations for Phase II. Group assets moved a total of 2500 troops to staging areas and CH-47 Chinooks aircraft carried over two hundred tons of combat supplies.

Phase II of Operation Cuu Long I included offensive operations in south-eastern Cambodia utilizing three task forces under the overall control of IV Corps Headquarters. The task organization included: one task force under control of Headquarters, 44th Special Tactical Zone with one armored cavalry squadron, two Ranger battalions and one provincial Lien Doi, a Regional Force Company Group; one task force under control of Headquarters, 9th ARVN Division, with one regimental headquarters, five infantry battalions,

the 4th Armored Cavalry Brigade and the 2nd Armored Cavalry Squadron, and one Lien Doi from Chau Doc Province; one task force under control of Headquarters 21st ARVN Division, with one regimental headquarters, five battalions, two armored cavalry squadrons and one Lien Doi from Kien Giang Province. Each battle group was assured one Air Cavalry Troop and two Assault Helicopter Companies on the first day, and one of each on subsequent days, provided by the 164th Group. In addition, a navel task force off the South-eastern coast of Cambodia furnished fire support and interdicted enemy attempts to exfiltrate the area by sea. Seven forward fire support bases were emplaced to provide additional artillery support.

Plans called for the 44th STZ task force to seize the enemy logistical facilities at Prey Logen (VT 959356) by airmobile assault, while cavalry and Ranger elements made an overland assault along Route Q4 to link up with the airmobile assault force. The 9th Division task force was to relieve pressure on Takeo City (VT 770155), capital to Takeo Province, by airmobile assault and hold the city until relieved by cavalry elements attacking along Route 2. Forces controlled by the 21st ARVN Division were to seize and hold Trek Meas (VS 525780) and Kampong Trash (VS 430665) by airmobile assault while overland elements effected link up. Upon achievement of initial objectives, all forces were to exploit opportunities to capture enemy supplies and destroy troop formations. D-Day was 17 May 1970.

Operations commenced on 17 May at 0730 hours with airmobile assaults against key objectives. From the start, fighting was heavy. Forewarned by the previous operations in Cambodia, the enemy expected an attempt to deny him his long-held sanctuaries in the southeastern corner of Cambodia. Still, the power of the allied offensive and particularly the fire power and omnipresence of helicopter gunships, stunned him. Aerial gunners from the

164th Group roamed the skies, raining fire on troop concentrations and defensive positions. The action was heaviest in the 21st Division area. Gunships flying in support of the 21st Division accounted for 140 KBAs; C Troop, 16th Cavalry had 65 KBAs, and D Troop 3/5 Cavalry another 25, while the 121st Assault Helicopter Company added 15 and the 336th Assault Helicopter Company 35. A Troop, flying security and reconnaissance missions for the 9th Division, killed 20 of the enemy. B and C Troops, supporting the 44th Special Tactical Zone forces, killed another five and four VC respectively. In all, 164th Group elements destroyed 169 VC in operations in Cambodia on 17 May. Group elements also moved the astounding total of 522.7 tons of cargo to support the offensive.

On 18 May, the scene of heaviest contact shifted to the 9th Division area of operations. The 14th Regiment encountered a determined body of VC and battled them all afternoon. Flying for the 14th Regiment, A Troop gunners remained on station until well after dark when the enemy withdrew. Their diligence paid off with 63 KBAs credited to the Troop. C Troop, 16th Cavalry killed another five VC while in support of the 32nd Regiment, 21st Division.

On 19 May the level of fighting was reduced somewhat, but the 14th Regiment again ran into heavy contact. A Troop, flying in support, killed 26 VC during the day. C Troop, 16th Cavalry added five KBAs to bring the days total to 31.

After 19 May, several of the ground elements remained in Cambodia to continue search and destroy operations aimed primarily at enemy supplies. Elements of the 164th Group also remained to support their Vietnamese

allies, but the preponderance of the Group's strength returned to support combat operations against the enemy within the Delta. For the period 9-19 May, the Group was credited with 558 KBA out of a total of 1106 enemy eliminated by all allied forces. In addition, 65 suspects were detained. Captured supplies included: 738 individual weapons, 86 crew-served weapons, three tons of medical supplies, 29.7 tons of rice and 56.9 tons of ammunition. The cost was 34 allied personnel killed and 129 wounded. The 164th Group suffered fifteen aircraft hit and one destroyed by enemy fire, resulting in four personnel wounded and four killed in action. One other aircraft suffered major damage and a second was totally destroyed in operational losses in Cambodia. In these accidents, five members of the Group lost their lives.

Despite the commitment of a significant percentage of its assets to operations in Cambodia, the 164th Group also met its mission of providing air assets for combat and logistical operations within the IV Corps Tactical Zone. It continued to support normal combat operations and furnished assistance in combat emergencies. Thus, Group elements also contributed significantly to maintaining the progress of pacification within the Delta while dealing heavy blows to the Communist in Cambodia.

On 29 April 1970, in the Upper Delta Divisional Tactical Area, 7th ARVN Division troops and sector forces of Dinh Tuong Province gained significant contacts. A Troop, 7/1st Cavalry supported Dinh Tuong provincial forces on a search and clear operation in the vicinity of XS 6644. Aero-scouts spotted a reinforced platoon of VC and engaged them while the transports inserted four lifts of 103 troops to exploit the contact. As the ground troops moved

forward driving the enemy before them, the gunships rolled in and decimated the fleeing enemy with rockets and mini-guns. In the hour long battle, ground troops killed two VC and the gunships 15.

The 335th Assault Helicopter Company supported the 10th Regiment of the 7th ARVN Division on a large search and clear operation in Kien Hoa Province. During the morning and afternoon, transports inserted 640 troops into six landing zones without results. At 1500 hours, however, ground forces made contact with a large enemy force. The ensuing battle lasted until the enemy broke contact at dark. At the end of the engagement, the VC left the bodies of 31 of their comrades on the field, 17 of which were credited to the 335th gunships.

On 30 April, there was heavy contact in three provinces. During the morning elements of the 162nd Assault Helicopter Company supported sector forces of the Chuong Thien Province. On the day's first insertion, troops made heavy contact with VC forces, resulting in five enemy killed by 162nd gunners. Subsequent insertions in the vicinity located small groups of enemy soldiers. The accurate aerial fires harassed and disorganized the enemy and the 162nd received credit for four more kills at scattered locations. That afternoon, the 162nd flew in support of sector forces of the An Xuyen Province. Again the allies discovered the enemy on the first insertion, at coordinates VR 8312, at the southeastern corner of the U Minh Forest. The landing zone was hot, but suppressive fire from the gunships killed four VC and routed the others. The ground troops pursued the retreating VC to coordinates VR 8208, where the enemy made a stand. This proved to be a costly mistake. Rocket strikes by the gunships killed 15 of them and the rest fled, darkness

precluding further pursuit. The 162nd had killed a total of 28 VC during the day.

In Kien Phong Province, sector forces supported by the 114th Assault Helicopter Company found a small enemy force at coordinates WS 8745. They chased the outnumbered Communist for one kilometer when the 114th Cobra gunships caught the VC in a tree line and killed 10 of them.

Elements of the 21st ARVN Division's 31st and 32nd Regiments gained significant contacts on 2 May 1970. In Phong Dinh Province the 32nd Regiment, was supported by the 114th Assault Helicopter Company. Troops inserted in a landing zone at WR 7778 immediately came under fire. An hour long battle raged before the landing zone was secured. The elusive enemy faded away, but left 18 of his soldiers in the tree lines surrounding the LZ, victims of the 114th's aerial firepower.

On the same day in Phong Dinh Province, elements of the 18 B NVA Regiment attempted to use the diversion of allied forces to Cambodia to exfiltrate from their base on Nui Coto, southernmost of the Seven Mountains, to the U Minh Forest. Aero-scouts of C Troop, 16th Cavalry, making an early morning visual reconnaissance prior to supporting the 31st Regiment, caught them in the open. In the ensuing thirty minute engagement, aerial gunners decimated the enemy force, killing 35 of them. On 4 May, C Troop, still working for the 31st Regiment, again found elements of the 18 B Regiment and inflicted four additional deaths on them.

One of the missions run on a daily basis in the Delta by the 164th Group is the IV Corps Special, a command and control aircraft and a light fire team of gunships which respond to intelligence targets. The extraordinary demands

of Cambodia did not interrupt the fulfillment of these missions. On 5 May, the IV Corps Special package was provided by the 162nd Assault Helicopter Company. Attacking suspected VC positions in Ba Xuyen Province, the gunships discovered a platoon of the enemy. Firing rockets and door-guns, the 162nd killed 12 Communists. On the following day, 6 May, the 162nd again performed the IV Corps Special mission, hitting intelligence targets in Vinh Long Province. Striking shortly after dawn, the gunships surprised a small force of VC moving in the early light. The lethal gunships rolled in sowing death among the terrified Communists. In all, 15 of them were killed by the 162nd gunners, on 6 May.

Throughout the period 29 April to 19 May, as always, aviators and observers flying the O-1 "Birddog" aircraft of the 199th and 221st Reconnaissance Airplane Companies, were the "eyes" of the Delta. These ubiquitous airplanes monitored Communist movement, cover convoys, and call in and adjust tactical airstrikes and artillery fires. They also carry a lethal sting with their armament of four 2.75 inch rockets. On 10 May, an O-1 of the 221st spotted a group of VC seeking to avoid observation. With four well-aimed rockets, the pilot killed 10 of the enemy. On the 13th another aircraft of the 221st patrolling in the Chuong Thien and Bac Lieu Provinces killed six VC, four in the morning, and two others during the afternoon. On 19 May, a 221st aircraft patrolling the northwest corner of the U Minh Forest saw several armed individuals in a sampan. Engaging the target, the pilot destroyed the sampan and five of its occupants. The same day, another O-1 killed three VC in Ba Xuyen Province with one well-placed rocket. Not only have these light aircraft accounted for an impressive

total of enemy eliminated, but their very presence in the skies over the Delta impedes enemy movement and disrupts his preparations for offensive activity.

The 164th Group provides on a daily basis a Corps Reserve standby light fire team. Even when these assets are not working, they are an important factor in the IV Corps tactical situation because the knowledge that they are always on call bolsters the morale of GVN troops. Frequently their assistance is the margin between victory and defeat.

On 11 May, the Corps Reserve package, furnished by the 162nd Assault Helicopter Company, was scrambled to coordinates WR 6256. The fire team was needed to cover an aero-evacuation of Vietnamese personnel wounded in a firefight. While covering the evacuation, gunners killed four VC. The gunships returned to the contact after rearming and killed another four of the enemy, thereby turning the tide of battle.

Another specialized mission which the 164th continued to provide during the period of cross-border operations was the Night Phautom South Package. This package consists of the light fire teams of AH-1G Cobra gunships and a command and control aircraft equipped with flares. The package is vectored into intelligence targets by radar. Additional targets are acquired by an OV-10 Mohawk. Infra-red returns are plotted out and the Night Phantom package vectored to them.

During the night of 13-14 May, the Night Phantom guns placed strikes at WR 4500 which resulted in six enemy eliminated, a figure confirmed by body count. The Night Phantom package usually expands its ordnance in areas that are never swept by ground troops, so that confirmed body

counts are seldom established. But prisoner and Hoi Chanh interrogations testify to its effectiveness in interdicting enemy night activity.

In addition to flying combat assault missions, the 164th Group is required to perform a variety of direct combat support missions. The bulk of these is in the area of logistics, and resupply. Because of the nature of the transportation network in the Delta, the road net in particular being inadequate, helicopters carry the greatest part of the resupply burden. During the period 29 April - 19 May, this burden fell on the 147th and 271st Assault Support Helicopter Companies of the 307th Combat Aviation Battalion. They were required to resupply allied forces remaining in the Delta, while at the same time performing virtually all of the logistical activities necessary to support the complex and sustained cross-border operations. During this time frame, the two companies flew 1865 hours and transported the herculean total of 22,036 troops and 6348 tons of supplies and equipment.

Thus, the members of the 164th Aviation Group (Combat) performed their mission within the Delta while also sustaining combat operations in Cambodia. Their impact on the enemy was devastating: elements of the 164th Group eliminated 1467 of the enemy during the period 29 April to 19 May. They fulfilled their enlarged responsibilities in a manner that displayed the highest standards of competence, professionalism and dedication to duty.