

THE DELTA AVIATION GROUP
HISTORY OF THE 164TH COMBAT AVIATION GROUP

20 DECEMBER 1967 - 13 MARCH 1973

CAN THO AAF, RVN

Prepared by

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VIA PAUL

ORGANIZATION

The 164th Aviation Group (Combat) was activated on 20 December 1967, at Dempsey Compound, Can Tho RVN. The 13th Combat Aviation Battalion and the 307th Combat Aviation Battalion, both comprised of companies that had seen duty in Vietnam prior to the activation of the 164th CAG, were assigned to the Group. The 164th was initially composed of the following units:

13TH COMBAT AVIATION BATTALION

| HHC | 13TH CAB |
|-------|----------|
| 114TH | AHC |
| 121ST | AEC |
| 175TH | AHC |
| 336TH | AHC |
| 271ST | ASHC |

307TH COMBAT AVIATION BATTALION

| HHC | 307TH CAB |
|-------|-----------|
| 199TH | RAC |
| 221ST | RAC |
| 235TH | AWC |
| 244TH | SAC |

ORGANIZATION

Organization of the 164th CAG as of April 1971:

| <u>13TH</u> | <u>CAB</u> | <u>214TH</u> | <u>CAB</u> | <u>307TH</u> | <u>CAB</u> | <u>7/1</u> | <u>ACS</u> |
|-------------|------------|--------------|------------|--------------|------------|------------|------------|
| HHC | | HHC | | HHC | | HHT | |
| 162D | AHC | 114TH | AHC | 147TH | ASHC | A/7/1 | ACT |
| C/16 | ACT | 175TH | AHC | 271ST | ASHC | B/7/1 | ACT |
| 18TH | CAC | 336TH | AHC | 235TH | AWC | C/7/1 | ACT |
| H/29 | ARTY | 135TH | AHC | 191ST | AHC | D/7/1 | ACT |
| | | 221ST | RAC | | | C/3/17 | ACT |

Organization of the 164th CAG as of January 1972:

| <u>13TH</u> | <u>CAB</u> | <u>7/1</u> | <u>ACS</u> |
|-------------|------------|------------|------------|
| HHC | | HHT | |
| 162D | AHC | A/7/1 | ACT |
| C/16 | ACT | B/7/1 | ACT |
| 147TH | ASHC | D/7/1 | ACT |
| H/29 | ARTY | C/3/17 | ACT |

Organization of the 164th CAG as of September 1972 until deactivation:

164TH CAG

| | |
|-------|-----|
| HHC | |
| 18TH | CAC |
| C/16 | ACT |
| 611TH | TC |

COMMAND and CONTROL

164th Combat Aviation Group Commanders from Activation - Deactivation:

| | |
|-------------------------|--|
| ROBERT L. McDANIEL | COL IN 15 January 1968 - 29 June 1968 |
| WORTEHINGTON M. MAHONE | COL IN 29 June 1968 - 11 December 1968 |
| JACK V. MACKMULL | COL IN 11 December 1968 - 7 June 1969 |
| J.H. TUMLINSON | COL IN 7 June 1969 - 7 December 1969 |
| WILLIAM J. MADDOK JR. | COL AR 7 December 1969 - 1 July 1970 |
| LEO E. SOUCIK | COL EN 1 July 1970 - 22 June 1971 |
| JAMES H. MAPP | COL IN 22 June 1971 - 2 May 1972 |
| WILLIAM B. BENTON | LTC IN 2 May 1972 - 27 October 1972 |
| FREDERICK E. COOPER III | LTC AR 27 October 1972 - 13 March 1973 |

DEFINITIONS

| | |
|--------|---|
| ACS | ARMORED CAVALRY SQUADRON |
| ACT | AIR CAVALRY TROOP |
| AHC | ASSAULT HELICOPTER COMPANY |
| ASEC | ASSAULT SUPPORT HELICOPTER COMPANY |
| AWC | AERIAL WEAPONS COMPANY |
| CAC | CORPS AVIATION COMPANY |
| CAG | COMBAT AVIATION GROUP |
| DRAC | DELTA REGIONAL ASSISTANCE COMMAND |
| EMU | EXPERIMENTAL MILITARY UNIT |
| HAC | HEADQUARTERS AND HEADQUARTERS COMPANY |
| ICCS | INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION of CONTROL and SUPERVISION |
| JMC | JOINT MILITARY COMMISSION |
| MR III | MILITARY REGION THREE |
| MR IV | MILITARY REGION FOUR |
| RAC | RECONNAISSANCE AIRPLANE COMPANY |
| RAN | ROYAL AUSTRALIAN NAVY |
| SAC | SURVEILLANCE AIRPLANE COMPANY |
| STZ | SPECIAL TACTICAL ZONE |

OPERATIONS

In 1968, Tet offensive operations dominated most of the activities of the newly formed Group. During the Tet offensive of 1968, Aviation Companies of the 164th CAG played vital and deciding roles in the liberation of Soc Trang, Can Tho, Bac Lieu, Vinh Long, and in preventing the VC from occupying many other major cities in the Delta. The following are selected examples of activities during Tet of 1968:

On 31 January 1968, at 1500 hours a fire team of AH-1G Cobras from the 114th AHC and a fire team of 2 UH-1Cs from the 175th AHC were scrambled to a known VC concentration southwest of Sa Dec. In excess of 150 sampans were destroyed and over 100 enemy troops were killed or wounded. Intelligence reports later indicated that this action had destroyed the main force which was to have attacked Sa Dec on the initial night of the Tet offensive.

On the night of 1 February 1968, combined assets from the 121st AHC and the 336th AHC conducted a dangerous and heroic night combat assault into Vinh Long AAF with decisive results. The airfield was in a critical situation and in imminent danger of being overrun. While on short final, the assault force began to receive heavy ground fire from numerous locations on either side of the Vinh Long runway. The troop transports were instructed not to use suppressive fire under any circumstance because of the close proximity of friendly troops. Disregarding the intense fire and danger, the transports continued their approach and successfully inserted the sorely needed reinforcements. This timely insertion allowed the defenders to turn the tide, reconstitute their defenses, and secure the airfield.

On 2 June 1968, the 7th Squadron, 1st Air Cavalry (minus B Troop) joined the 164th CAG and was stationed at Vinh Long AAF. The assignment of the 7/1st ACS greatly enhanced the aviation and operational capabilities of forces in MR IV.

The 7/1st ACS was employed primarily in the 44th STC (Special Tactical Zone) along the Cambodian border in the conduct of "Operation Blackhawk". The Cavalry Troops were to interdict and harass enemy movements across the border in specialized operations such as first and last light missions, Mohawk - Cobra "Hunter Killer" teams, people sniffer missions and ground listening posts.

On 8 December 1968, "D" Troop, 7/1st ACS was released from attachment to the 12th CAG and returned to its parent unit stationed at Vinh Long. Also, on this date, the 214th CAB was assigned to the 164th CAG and soon moved from Bear Cat, MR III, to Dong Tam to support the 9th U.S. Infantry Division. The 214th CAB was subsequently moved to Vinh Long during August 1969, to support Vietnamese units in MR IV. At the time of its movement to Dong Tam, the 214th CAB consisted of the following units:

EMC, 214th CAB
135th Assault Helicopter Company
336th Assault Helicopter Company
147th Assault Support Helicopter Company

The 191st AHG "Boomerangs" were activated on 1 December 1966, at Fort Bragg, North Carolina and joined the 164th CAG on 24 May 1968, at Can Tho, RVN.

On 1 November 1968, the 162d AHG "Vultures" relocated from MR III to Dong Tam, MR IV, and joined the ever increasing assets of the 164th CAG.

On 1 July 1969, the 164th CAG was tasked with training the 211th and 217th VNAF Helicopter Squadrons of the 7th VNAF Wing, Binh Thuy VII AFB in the principles and techniques of airmobile operations. This training was completed in mid 1969, and the two VNAF Squadrons are now actively supporting MR IV with aviation expertise.

"D" Troop, 3rd Squadron, 5th Cavalry "Light Horse" (later designated C/3/17) was attached to 7/1st ACS on 1 September 1969. Relocating from Dong Tam to Vinh Long AAF, they enabled the 7/1st ACS to provide MR IV with a reconnaissance capability unequalled in the RVN.

From the period of 29 April 1970 to 19 May 1970, at the direction of the Commander in Chief, the 164th CAG participated in numerous combat operations in Cambodia. The operations within Cambodia were designed to destroy enemy supply caches and base camps that were up to this time sanctuaries. During the cross-border operations, a total of 2810 enemy were eliminated, of which 957 were KBAs credited to the 164th CAG. Combined with other activities within MR IV, this gave the 164th CAG a record KBA count of 1444 enemy for the month of May 1970. In addition, the capture of 1396 individual weapons and 269 crew served weapons, 148 tons of munitions, 75 tons of rice, and 3 tons of med-

ical supplies did much to disrupt the enemys' logistical facilities and activities. For its outstanding efforts and accomplishments in support of "Campaign Rock Crusher" I and II, and "Cuu Long" I and II, the 164th CAG received the Presidential Unit Citation.

With increased emphasis on the Vietnamization program, the 164th CAG once again found itself tasked with the training of VNAF Helicopter Squadrons. After training both pilots and mechanics of the newly activated VNAF 225th and 227th Squadrons, the 121st AHC and the 336th AHC of 164th CAG were deactivated and their aircraft and maintenance equipment were transferred to the VNAF. In addition, on 1 November 1970, Soc Trang Airfield, the former home of the 13th Battalion, was turned over to VNAF. These events were milestones in the VNAF Improvement and Modernization Program.

During the month of January 1971, the 7/1 ACS, in a noteworthy operation, supported the 9th ARVN Division in reaching a beleaguered US Special Forces Team on Ta Boc Mountain. US troops of "D" Troop, 7/1 ACS were inserted to assist in the rescue. This is noted as the last time US Troops were employed in the Delta.

April 1971, saw elements of the 164th CAG involved in decisive actions against NVA units infiltrating from Cambodia to the U-Kinh Forest. ARVN ground troops were used exclusively and gave a good account of themselves in some of the most hostile action to date.

As the VNAF Improvement and Modernization continued, orders were issued for the decrease of U.S. Forces and Assets throughout Vietnam. The 307th CAB was the first unit of the 164th CAG to begin standing down in May 1971 and was deactivated 30 days later.

The 135th AHC was reassigned to MR III and was reorganized in the process. This ended a most unique Army aviation unit in Vietnam. The "EMU" (Experimental Military Unit) was organized as a mixed working force of US Army and Royal Australian Navy. When the 135th AHC was reassigned, the RAN assets left RVN for deployment to their home land.

In August 1971, the 235th AWC was reduced to a color detachment and assigned to Fort Knox, Kentucky.

Reassigned to Fort Meade, Maryland on 1 September 1971, the 271st ASHC had carried over 450,000 passengers and moved more than 150,000 tons of cargo during its three and one-half years in RVN, MR IV. Also, in September, the 191st AHC was deactivated and replaced by the 18th Corps Aviation Company, "Green Delta", which

now provides the primary aviation support to DRAC Headquarters and its US advisers.

The 336th AHC, the last aviation unit at Dong Tam Airfield, stood-down on 4 October 1971, for redeployment to Fort Riley, Kansas. On 10 October 1971, the 221st RAC flew its last mission ending the 164th CAG fixed wing support of the Delta.

On 10 November 1971, the 214th CAG Headquarters was ordered to reduce to "0" strength. This was accomplished on 30 November 1971 and the colors were transferred to Fort Stewart, Georgia. The two remaining units, the 114th and 175th AHCs' were transferred to the 13 CAG.

On 16 December 1971, C/7/1 ACF stood-down. The colors were transferred to Fort Knox, Kentucky.

On 1 March 1972, "C" Troop (Air) of the 16th Cavalry, the 18th Aviation Company (Corps), 774th Medical Detachment and the 345th Aviation Detachment (Divisional) were attached, and later assigned to the 164th CAG. On this date also, the deactivation of the 52d and 62d Quartermaster Detachments was completed.

The 175th AHC completed deactivation on 10 March 1972.

The 147th ASHC, having completed redeployment preparations and movement to port, was reassigned to Hawaii on 15 March 1972. The same day, the 162d AHC and Headquarters Battery, 29th Artillery were reassigned to the 164th CAG.

Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 13th Combat Aviation Battalion was reassigned to Fort Hood, Texas on 31 March 1972. On the same date, "A" and "B" Troops of the 7/1 Air Cavalry Squadron completed movement to port and were reassigned to Fort Lewis, Washington.

"C" Troop (Air) of the 3/17th Cavalry Squadron completed redeployment preparations, movement to port, and was reassigned to Hawaii on 1 April 1972.

Headquarters Battery, 29th Artillery completed deactivation on 5 April 1972. On this date also, Headquarters and Headquarters Troop of the 7/1 Air Cavalry Squadron moved to port and was reassigned to Fort Knox, Kentucky. "D" Troop of the 7/1 Air Cavalry followed the Headquarters Company on 20 April 1972.

During this tumultuous period, the 164th CAG was still supporting U.S. Forces and ARVN operations, and continued to do so through September with the two remaining operational aviation

units. However, the turmoil did not cease. Aircraft assets of the units were augmented, yet draw-down increments continued to remove personnel.

On 15 September 1972, the 611th Transportation Company was assigned to the Group in the role of Direct Support Maintenance. During the same time frame, all MR III CH-47 aircraft were assigned to the 164th Group along with the mission to provide all medium helicopter support to both MRs III and IV. Then the first news was released that a Cease Fire could possibly be effective on 31 October 1972. The cease fire failed to materialize on this date, but the most catastrophic loss in the Group history occurred. A CH-47, returning from MR III, was hit with an enemy SA-7 Surface-to-Air Missile which resulted in the death of 17 U.S. personnel. Of 43 known missile firings in the Delta, only one U.S. aircraft was hit.

Through November and December 1972, the Group continued their support of MR III and MR IV. During January 1973, the Group was tasked to furnish equipment and personnel to establish one Flight Detachment for the International Commission for Control and Supervision (ICCS) and one for the Joint Military Commission (JMC).

At 0800 hours, 28 January 1973, the long awaited cease fire became effective. However, the joy was short lived. At 0945 hours, a pilot of the 18th CAC, flying a marked JMC aircraft was killed by the continuing hostilities. This same date ended the mission of the last Combat Unit in the Delta. "C" Troop (Air) 16th Cavalry stood-down. After preparation and turning in equipment, the unit was deactivated on 17 February 1973.

On 16 February 1973 the 611th TC began phasing down and the 18th CAC continued to retrograde CH-47s. Both units continued their support missions. At 1015 hours, a CH-47, flying support for the JMC, was shot down approximately 3 miles south of An Loc, RVN. The pilot was seriously wounded and the crew chief evacuated in critical condition due to severe burns.

On 27 February 1973, the 18th Corps Aviation Company stood-down and began transferring equipment to VNAF, while continuing to support MR IV with 3 aircraft. Draw-down was completed on 13 March 1973 and the unit was transferred to Fort Bragg, North Carolina.

The 611th Transportation Company, 345th Aviation Detachment (Divisional), and the 774th Medical Detachment were deactivated on 13 March 1973 along with the 164th Headquarters and Headquarters Company.

During its five year existence, the 164th established the following noteworthy statistics:

Three of its nine former commanders went on to become General Officers.

21,240 decorations were presented. These included-

| | |
|-------|-----------|
| 1 | PUG |
| 1 | MUC |
| 15 | DSC |
| 252 | SS |
| 49 | LOM |
| 1,298 | DFC |
| 388 | BS w/V |
| 2,153 | AM w/V |
| 842 | ARCOM w/V |
| 947 | PH |

Thus, a very small era of American History has ended. An era of young Americans proving once again the ability, technical knowledge, desire, professionalism, and courage to perform and succeed in the face of all obstacles. An era of spirit and unity among men which cannot be retired. The spirit which nourished the 164th Combat Aviation Group through 61 months of continuous combat. The same spirit which will always be available to take up the colors and succeed again whenever the need arises.

"HONORABLE AND I - SWORN TO IT."