

ANNUAL SUPPLEMENT
HISTORY OF THE
273d AVIATION COMPANY (HEAVY HELICOPTER)
AND
652d TRANSPORTATION DETACHMENT (HEAVY HELICOPTER MAINTENANCE)
222d AVIATION BATTALION (COMBAT)
1st AVIATION BRIGADE

1 January 1969 to 31 December 1969

PREPARED BY
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UNIT HISTORICAL OFFICER

APPROVED BY

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WARREN R. SILVA
Major IN
Commanding

LONG BINH POST, REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM
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VHDA 87

FOREWARD

This Annual Supplement covers the second year the 273d Aviation Company (Heavy Helicopter) and 652d Transportation Detachment (Hvy Hel Maint) has served the ground and air elements of the III & IV corps operational area, Republic of Vietnam. During this period the unit has held steadfast to it's reputation of efficient and professional service in it's heavy lift missions. This professional attitude is indicative of the pride and esprit de corps shared by every member of the 273d Aviation company, to advance a step further among the U.S. Army's elite.

LINEAGE AND HONORS

The 273d Aviation Company (Heavy Helicopter) was constituted 28 March 1967 in the Regular Army. It was activated 25 April 1967 at Fort Sill, Oklahoma.

CAMPAIGN PARTICIPATION CREDIT:

Duty Stations

Fort Sill, Oklahoma 25 April 1967 to 20 December 1967

Vung Tau, Republic of Vietnam 20 December 1967 to 20 November 1968

Long Binh Post, Republic of Vietnam 20 November 1968 to present

Campaigns

Vietnam Counter Offensive, Phase III

1 June 1967 to 29 January 1968

TET Counter Offensive Campaign 30 January 1968 to 1 April 1968

CHAPTER 2
COMMAND AND CONTROL
273D AVIATION COMPANY (HEAVY HELICOPTER)
652D TC DETACHMENT (Hvy HEL MAINT)

The first unit commander of the 273d Avn Co (Hvy Hel) was MAJOR James E. Rogers, at Ft Sill, Oklahoma, 11 September 1967 until 27 February 1968. Lt COL Gary R. Heffner assumed command on 28 February 1967 until 25 June 1968 at Vung Tau, Republic of Vietnam. Major Robert L. Stinnett assumed command on 26 June 1968 until 13 December 1968 at Vung Tau, Republic of Vietnam. MAJOR William K. Kuykendall assumed command on 14 December 1968 until 21 May 1969 at Long Binh Post, Republic of Vietnam. MAJOR Robert Wilhelm assumed command of the 273d Avn Co (Hvy Hel) 23 May 1969 until 27 November 1969. MAJOR Warren R. Silva assumed command of the 273d Avn Co (Hvy Hel) 28 November 1969 until present.

The first 652d Transportation Detachment Commander was Robert F. Sternat from 28 August 1967 until 31 August 1968. CW4 Jesse Leonard assumed command on 1 September 1968 until 13 December 1968. MAJOR Robert S. Wilhelm assumed command on 14 December 1968 until 15 February 1969, at Long Binh Post, Republic of Vietnam. Lt Pharies B. Petty assumed command on 16 February 1969 until 25 November 1969. Lt John S. Justice assumed command of the 652d Transportation Detachment 26 November 1969 until present.

THE COMMANDER
273D AVIATION COMPANY (HEAVY HELICOPTER)
MAJOR WARREN R. SILVA

MAJOR Silva graduated from The Citadel, the Military College of South Carolina on 6 June 1959 and was commissioned into the Regular Army as a Second Lieutenant, Infantry on the same date.

From June 1959 to December 1959, MAJOR Silva served as Rifle Plt Ldr, Co. B, 2d Battle Group, 501st Airborne Infantry, 82d Airborne Division, attended basic airborne school and the Infantry Officer Basic Course, Ft Benning, Georgia. From December 1959 to December 1962 was assigned to the 25th Infantry Division, Schofield Barracks, Hawaii serving as Rifle Plt Ldr, Wpns Plt Ldr, and Company Executive Officer with 2d Battle Group, 21st Infantry and 2d Battle Group, 35th Infantry. Upon return to CONUS, MAJOR Silva attended the "Fixed Wing Aviator Course at Ft Rucker, Alabama and was rated as an Army Aviator in November 1963. Upon graduation he was assigned to Company B, 501st Aviation Battalion, 1st Armored Division, Ft Hood, Texas and served as Asst. Div Avn Officer, Helicopter Pilot, and Gen Spt Plt Commander. During this assignment MAJOR Silva attended Rotary Wing Qualification Course at Ft Wolters, Texas and became Rotary Wing qualified. Transitions while in this unit included the OH-13E, G, H, and S Model Observation Helicopter and the CH-34C cargo helicopter as well as qualifying as an Instructor Pilot in the OH-13 series helicopter. June 1965, saw MAJOR Silva reporting to Ft Benning, Georgia for attendance at the Infantry Officer Career Course, followed by UH-1 Transition. From July 1966 to July 1967 he served as a helicopter pilot in the Republic of Vietnam while assigned to Company B, 1st Aviation Battalion, 1st Infantry Division. Following his return to CONUS MAJOR Silva reported to Ft Wolters, Texas and was assigned to the U.S. Army Primary Helicopter School as Commanding Officer, 7th Warrant Officer Candidate Company. In February 1969 MAJOR Silva attended CH-54 Transition while enroute to a second tour in the Republic of Vietnam. Upon arrival in RVN in May 1969 he was assigned as Asst. G-3, Headquarters, 1st Aviation Brigade and on 25 November 1969 assumed Command of the 273d Aviation Company (Heavy Helicopter) "Slycranes."

ASSIGNMENTS

1959: Co B, 501st Abn Inf, 82d Abn Div, Rifle Plt Ldr
1959: The Infantry School, Basic Infantry Officer Course
1959-1962: 25th Inf Div, Rifle Plt Ldr, Wpns Plt Ldr, Company Executive Officer
1962-1963: U.S. Army Aviation School, Fixed Wing Aviators Course
1963-1965: Co. B, 501st Avn Bn, 1st Armad Div, Rotary Wing Aviator, Gen Spt Plt Commander
1965-1966: The Infantry School, Infantry Officer Career Course
1966-1967: Co. B, 1st Avn Bn, 1st Inf Div, RVN, Rotary Wing Aviator
1967-1969: U.S. Army Primary Helicopter School, Company Commander
1969: Headquarters, 1st Aviation Brigade, RVN, Asst. G-3
1970: 273d Aviation Company (Heavy Helicopter), Company Commander

CHAPTER 3

The 272d Aviation Company and 652d Transportation Detachment began its second year as a proven veteran in support of the Free World Forces in the Republic of Vietnam. With the highlights of a prosperous first year behind it, the unit began to move forward in an effort to establish an even more combat effective support element. Realizing the concept of this type unit and aircraft were new to the military mission in Vietnam, the officers and men paused to review the lesson learned in its short history to effect an even more productive year for the heavy lift concept.

The month of January was characterized by the unit successfully completing the annual I.G. Inspection. The Team Chief had many laudatory comments on the units administrative mission. Also during the same month Mr. Harry S. Pack, special assistant to the general manager, Vertol Division, visited the unit for a day, gathering pertinent information for developing a larger and more powerful heavy lift helicopter. This afforded the aircrews and maintenance personnel a rare opportunity, as the user, to voice a constructive opinion on future heavy lift aircraft. Mr. Pack and his assistant were favorably impressed by the pertinent data compiled by the unit while operating in a hostile environment.

The unit witnessed its second TET offensive in as many years during the month of February. The unit evacuated aircraft up to a period of thirty days and operated effectively from two satellite bases. Although the flying hours dropped during this period to a low of 471 hours, the lowest since the unit has operated at full strength, the close coordination of mission planning by the operations personnel and the extra around the clock effort of the 652d Transportation Detachment, the unit demonstrated its increasing versatility. February also witnessed the departure of MAJOR Robert S. Wilhelm, 652d TC Det. Commander to the 222d Avn Bn, as the Bn S-4 Officer. He was replaced by Lt Pharies B. Petty with an extensive maintenance background.

The flying hour program for the month of March matched the programmed flight level, with an increase in maintenance parts and operating from a fixed base after TET, the aircraft availability started a marked up swing. On 17 March 1969, CW4 Jacobs and CW3 Metzger experienced transmission failure in aircraft 443 north of Tay Ninh City. The aircraft was a total loss, but due to the experience and professional judgment of the aircraft commander and pilot, only one crewmember sustained any injuries and they were minor. This was the second transmission failure in less than a year. An extensive investigation was initiated to show cause due to material failure.

April was characterized by a definite lull in mission hours requested by the support units. The brief pause allowed the 652d TC Detachment to scale that long ladder of availability, a word well known to all aviation units in Vietnam. Still feeling the pressure of the TET offensive, the maintenance detachment attained a 67.0% as opposed to the 56.2% at the close of TET.

Also during this month, operations released the staggering figure on aircraft recovered during the first quarter of this calendar year. A total of nineteen aircraft were recovered by the "Superhooks" of the 273d Aviation Company. Eleven CH-47's, one CH-34, one CH-54, one AH-1G, two AH-1E's, one OV-1 and two OV-10 aircraft. These nineteen aircraft represent an estimated 23.3 million dollar savings to the allied military forces, Republic of Vietnam.

May brings with it the beginning of the Monsoon season, known to well to every member of the Armed Forces serving in the Republic of Vietnam as the "wet" season. However, the pilots crews and maintenance personnel of heavy helicopter units welcome the relief from the dust storms in the landing zones and the unnecessary wear on the many moving parts of a rotorcraft. Winds up to 135 knots encountered by the CH-54A rotorwash can produce many unwanted characteristics in a hot, dry climate. The wet season effected the units flying hour program somewhat, but close coordination with weather personnel and operations of supported units, the mission of the 273d Aviation Company (Heavy Helicopter) continued to be an efficient operation.

The month of May also witnessed a change in command of the Superhooks, MAJOR William K. Kuykendall having completed a rewarding tour as commanding officer of the 273d Aviation Company (Heavy Helicopter) prepared to return to CONUS and the long awaited reunion with his family. His replacement MAJOR Robert S. Wilhelm, having served the unit previously as Commanding Officer of the 652d Transportation Detachment, assumed command 28 May 1969.

The 652d Transportation Detachment pushed the units aircraft availability to a record high for the month of June with an outstanding 82.7%. To maintain an availability of 82.7% and fly 499.5 hours is a record to be envied by any heavy helicopter unit serving in Vietnam. This is truly "a job well done" by the officers and men of the 652d Transportation Detachment in support of the 273d Aviation Company (Heavy Helicopter) mission in the Republic of Vietnam.

Another bright spot in the units short history was the feature article in Hawk magazine (1st Aviation Brigade) June issue, "Skycranes - King of the Copter." The article written by CW3 David Walters, unit P.I.O., is very descriptive pointing out the versatile capabilities of the CH-54A (TAREE).

In July the unit exceeded the previous five months flying hours by flying 503.7 hours while maintaining a 74.2% availability. The only month flying hours have exceeded this figure was January, when the unit flew 536.7 hours but only maintained a 67.5% availability. This is indicative of the professional support maintenance and close coordination by the unit operation personnel to insure efficient use of aircraft flight time.

Also during the month of July the unit learned an important factor while in support of the U.S. Navy, small boat airlift operation. Due to the extreme rotorwash created by the CH-54A, small rivercraft must be beached prior to hookup. The rotorwash up to 135 knots rendered the small craft uncontrollable and hook-up impossible. Procedures were initiated through AAE to the River Marine Force to insure all personnel were aware of the new techniques used in small boat airlift operation in the future.

Closing out the month of July, flight operation issued a revised copy of the units radius of action and type loads for the CH-54A. Also aircraft recovered by the Superhook for the second quarter. Of eleven aircraft recovered, four were CH-47 helicopter's, one UH-1H helicopter, four OV-10 fixed wing, one C-123 fixed wing and one F-100 jet aircraft, for an estimated 9.8 million dollars.

August passed virtually without incident. Only the monsoon rain hampered the unit's activities and this to a small extent. But the Superhooks maintained it's programmed flight hours.

The 273d Aviation Company (Heavy Helicopter) reached a milestone in it's short history the first of September 1969. The crew, CW2 George W. Baker, CW2 David Postun, and SP5 George Northup, flew aircraft #427 through the units 10,000th flight hours. In less than two years in-country and 10,000 flight hours, the unit has yet to suffer it's first fatality, a record held by few units in Vietnam.

The Commander, MAJOR Robert S. Wilhelm, interested in maintaining the units outstanding record, issued a command letter to all aviators, "Overgress Flight Operations," this to insure that all aviators remain aware of the capabilities and limitations of the aircraft. Another step to promote professionalism within the unit.

The unit continued it's normal support mission in the Tay Ninh, Song Be, Xuan Loc, area and carried missions elsewhere throughout the III and IV Corps, compiling 471.6 hours with a 78.7% availability.

October was characterized by receiving the quarterly safety award for the last quarter fiscal year 69 and the first quarter fiscal year 70. The unit received the award from MAJOR GENERAL Allen M. Burdett, Commanding General 1st Aviation Brigade, Republic of Vietnam. This award is shared with pride by every member of the unit, a true reflection of teamwork.

The unit also received recognition in the newspaper, The Army Reporter for it's efforts in support of the Free World Forces, Republic of Vietnam. Although brief, it depicts the basic role of the heavy lift helicopter CH-54A.

The unit exceeded the years flying record again this month by flying 642.6 hours, exceeded only in November 1968 with 690 hours, but carried a 73.4% availability as compared to 64.4% in November 1968.

November saw the beginning of the end for the monsoon season. With the lack of rain fall to control the dust clouds created by the rotorwash of the CH-54A, the unit operations found it necessary to initiate a program through the support ed units to clean up and oil down all landing zones used daily by the Superhooks. Every precaution is taken during the dry season to prevent damage to aircraft servicing dusty fire support bases in remote areas.

On the first of November 1969, the unit received the mission to support the Army Concept Team in Vietnam for a Fog Dissipation Project. The unit provided a project evaluator, and one CH-54A with aircrew. CW2 Russ Neilson was selected as project evaluator, CW2 Robert H. Scott, and CW2 William Montgomery were test pilots. The project is scheduled for completion in late December. The findings of the project will be published at a later date in the unit history.

Also November witnessed a large changeover of personnel within the unit. The commanding officer of the 273d Aviation Company and the 652d Transportation Detachment respectively and two flight platoon leaders, the 1SG, and many other key personnel in maintenance and aircraft crewmen.

At the change of command ceremonies 28 November 1969, MAJCR Warren R. Silva assumed command of the 273d Aviation Company from MAJCR Robert S. Wilhelm.

The month of December was characterized by the unit completing the annual I.G. inspection. Although numerical ratings are not given, the team chief had many outstanding comments on the professional manner and teamwork the personnel of the 273d Aviation Company excersized in preparing for this inspection.

Also during this month astronaut Frank Borman visited the unit on his Vietnam good will tour. Col. Borman expressed a great interest in the mission and capabilities of the CH-54A (Tarhe). Eventhough an astronaut and qualified in many aircraft Col. Borman was amazed by the complexity of the aircraft and the ease by which an aircraft this size can be maintained.

The unit maintained a 76.9% availability while far exceeding the programmed months flying hours, a total of 656.5 hours, second highest in the unit history.

Flight operations also released the annual statistics for missions flown. The "Superhook" recovered 51 downed aircraft for a estimated total of \$78,038,951.00. With an annual average availability of 71.4%, the unit flew 6,129.3 hours moving 36,871 tons of supplies for a grand total of 1,049,569.5 ton miles. Type aircraft recovered by the CH-54A are as follows:

CH-47 -21	F-100 -1
CH-54 -1	A-1E -2
CH-34 -1	AH-1G -2
CH-46 -1	UH-1H -6
C-123 -1	OV-10 -7
C-46 -1	OV-1 -7

Of these statistics 13,724 sorties and 6,657 tasks were flown, and of the total 6,129.3 hours, 4,116 were mission hours, 2,013.3 deadhead hours.

The above statistics and the entire history of the 273d Aviation Company (Heavy Helicopter) stands with pride among the U.S. Army Aviation element in support of the Free World Forces, Republic of Vietnam. This pride and esprit de corps is shared by every member of the unit as we press forward among the U.S. army's elite.

CHAPTER 4 OPERATIONS

During the calendar year 1969 the 273d Aviation Company (Heavy Helicopter) and the 652d Transportation Detachment (Heavy Helicopter Maintenance) were assigned to the 12th Aviation Group (Combat), 222d Aviation Battalion (Combat), further assigned operational control to the 1st Air Cavalry Division, Republic of Vietnam. Operational missions for all allied forces operating within the III and IV Corps area were approved through A&E, 1st Air Cavalry Division. This procedure has been in effect since 20 November 1968 to better coordinate mission requests for the using units, to insure proper techniques were used in rigging loads for heavy lift helicopters and provide efficient use of the programmed flying hours for the CH-54A.

CHAPTER 5 REFLECTIONS

- A. The Following is a list of Major Awards presented to unit members during the year 1969.

DISTINGUISHED FLYING CROSS

MAJ Robert S. Wilhelm

CW3 David E. Walters

BRONZE STAR FOR MERITORIOUS SERVICE

MAJ Robert S. Wilhelm

CW3 Harry W. LeMonte

CPT Edmund H. Israel

CW3 Douglas W. Niles

CPT Pharies B. Petty

1SG Robert W. Pelfrey

CW4 James M. Jacobs

SFC Bobby A. Cooley

CW4 Alva W. Kepner

SSG Wallace B. Bacon

CW4 Richard N. Rex

SP6 Ernest Phinney

CW3 Fred D. Burrell

ARMY COMENDATION MEDAL

MAJ Charles H. VanDusen	SP5 Edward J. Enos
CW4 Ian C. Irvine	SGT Charles R. Estes
CW3 Philip H. Carrier	SP5 William R. Foyt
CW2 Stanley A. Becker	SP5 Robert Frazier
SFC Thomas R. Woodard	SP5 Eddie L. Gaines
SP6 Jimmie W. Blackwell	SP5 Joseph Gray
SSG Donald G. Briggs	SP5 Philip R. Hammonds
SSG Edward Burns	SP5 Francis E. Keiller
SSG Casper G. Gustafson	SP5 Henry M. Lewis
SP6 Lenzie E. Jones	SP5 John M. Marek
SP6 James McNally	SP5 Glenn J. Mawhinney
SP6 Lawrence Mille	SP5 Michael E. McClue
SP6 Ernest Phinney	SP5 Douglas W. McGhee
SSG Clifford H. Smith	SP5 William J. Menzel
SP6 Jimmie Summers	SP5 Bryson K. Miller
SP6 Hartwell B. Wilson	SP5 Jerold Moore
SP5 Joseph Brimmer	SP5 Kent Nakashima
SP5 Pedro A. Burgos	SP5 David E. Pashby
SP5 David H. Brown	SP5 Rudolf B. Passion
SP5 Steven D. Bryant	SP5 Stephen R. Riley
SP5 Richard C. Calvert	SP5 Jose R. Rodriguez
SP5 George R. Clarke	SP5 Dietrich Schoenemann
SP5 David H. Diver	SP5 Beasley Surles Jr.
SP5 Franz J. Dobler	SP5 James Stone
SP5 Donald E. Dulancy	SGT Bruce J. Smith
SP5 William R. DuRette	SP5 Daniel Smith

SP5 Ernest B. Vick	SP4 David Jones
SP5 Raymond G. Volk	SP4 Michael Kelly
SP5 Welzy Winston	SP4 Ronelle D. Kroll
SP4 Richard L. Andres	SP4 Clinton O. Larson
SP4 Ray O. Bernard	SP4 Alfred Lauterio
SP4 Jimmie Branson	SP4 Edward Lopez
SP4 John Cacace	SP4 John Maglioacchetti
SP4 James Camp	SP4 Robert H. Marshall
SP4 Darrell W. Chapman	SP4 Laurent H. McCall
SP4 Thomas Dugan	SP4 George A. Northup
SP4 Charles F. Edwards	SP4 Thomas P. Ore
SP4 William G. Gabel	SP4 Richard Paulson
SP4 Antone P. Gaug	SP4 John H. Pedigo
SP4 Arthur H. Growden	SP4 Vincent Randino
SP4 Larry Helmer	SP4 Lloyd E. Ross
SP4 Kenneth Hoepfner	SP4 Leonard Sodrosky
SP4 Clifton Ivey	SP4 Van Stalworth Jr.
SP4 Clayborn Johnson	SP4 Steven A. Striga
	SP4 John Weestra Jr.

B. This unit did not suffer any fatalities during the year 1969.