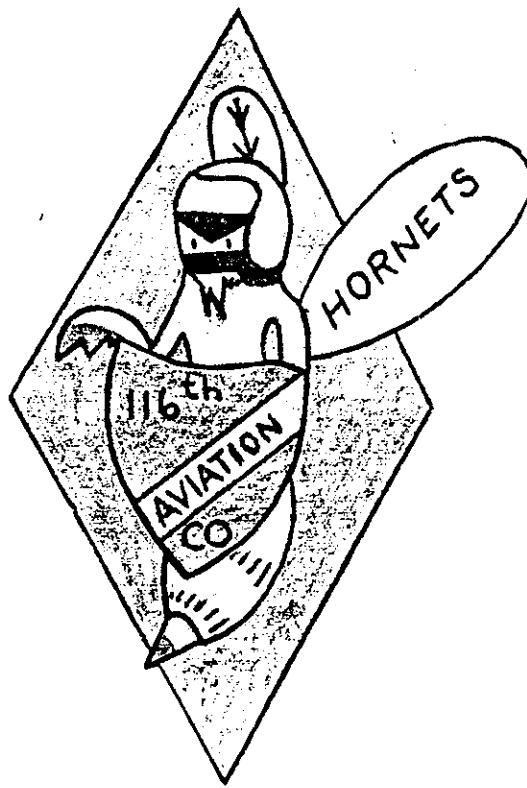


HISTORY
OF
116th AVIATION COMPANY



5 JULY 1965 - 31 DECEMBER 1965

HISTORY
of
116th Aviation Company (Airmobile) (Light)
5 July 1965 - 31 December 1965

Prepared By

Captain Robert D. Anderson

Unit Historian

Richard A. Humes

Major

Commanding

Headquarters

11th Aviation Battalion

APO San Francisco, California, 96345

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

All dates, orders and TO&E's indicated in the text were authenticated. All statements including facts, figures, and percentages made in the text were verified either from conversations with responsible individuals or extracts from authenticated records. The author has reviewed all comments with prudence and feels there is no doubt to their validity and accuracy.

ROBERT D. ANDERSON
Capt, Unit Historian

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE.....	II
I. MISSION AND RESOURCES.....	1,2,3
Organization.....	1,2,3
Personnel.....	1,2,3
Vehicles and Equipment.....	1,2,3
Areas and Facilities.....	2,3
II. OPERATIONS AND TRAINING.....	2,3
III. MAINTENANCE AND SUPPLY.....	3,4,5
IV. SPECIAL PROBLEMS.....	5,6
V. MISCELLANEOUS.....	6, thru 10

APPENDIX

Roster of Key Personnel.....	12
INCLOSURE #1 - Area Map.....	

116th Aviation Company (Airmobile)
11th Aviation Battalion
APO US Forces 96345

1. Mission and Resources

The 116th Aviation Company was activated at Fort Bragg, North Carolina on 5 July 1965 by Headquarters, 3rd United States Army General Order Number 200, dated 12 July 1965, as amended. Major Richard A. Humes was named commander of the organization, who in turn named Major Walter E. Parker as his executive officer. The 116th Aviation Company was organized under TO&E 1-77E, dated 15 July 1963. The mission of the 116th Aviation Company is to provide direct support to the 1st Infantry Division in the Republic of Vietnam. The 116th is under command of the 11th Aviation Battalion which in turn is assigned to the 12th Aviation Group. The 116th consists of a company headquarters, two (2) lift platoons, one (1) armed platoon, and one (1) service platoon. Personnel authorized consist of 14 officers, 41 warrant officers, and 115 enlisted personnel. The company equipment consists of 16 each UH-1D and nine (9) each UH-1B helicopters, 39 motor vehicles, and other equipment peculiar to an airmobile company. The company has the following units attached, which were activated by the same general order as the 116th:

¹
a. The 283rd Signal Detachment which provides avionics repair support. The detachment has one (1) officer and nine (9) enlisted men authorized.

1 TO&E 11-500D (para 12, RL Team)

2

b. The 392nd Transportation Detachment which provides 3rd echelon aircraft maintenance support. The detachment has two (2) officers and 70 enlisted men authorized.

3

c. The 431st Medical Detachment which provides medical support. The detachment has one (1) officer (flight surgeon) and eight (8) enlisted men authorized.

The four (4) units resided at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, from activation date until 27 September 1965. On 27 and 28 September 1965, personnel of the four (4) units were airlifted from Fort Bragg to San Francisco, California. The personnel were loaded aboard the USNS Barrett at Oakland Army Terminal. The USNS Barrett departed CONUS on 29 September 1965 and arrived in Vietnam on 20 October 1965. The units ⁴ unloaded at approximately 1530 hours on 20 October 1965, at Vung Tau, ⁵ Vietnam and were flown to Bien Hoa Airfield approximately 10 miles north of Saigon. The units were then trucked to a staging area ⁶ (University City) just outside of Saigon. The units remained at the staging area until 4 November 1965 when they again moved. The move was accomplished in stages and was completed by 9 November 1965. The ⁷ new and permanent location was Phu Loi airfield (also called Phu Cuong), approximately 12 miles northeast of Saigon. All personnel and operational elements (i.e. orderly room, operations, intelligence, mess facility, and

2 TO&E 55-500R (as changed by para 4, KI Team)

3 TO&E 8-500D (para 09, Team OA)

4 See Inclosure #1

5 See Inclosure #1

6 See Inclosure #1

7 See Inclosure #1

maintenance) were billeted in tents. Sleep vans were utilized for their intended purposes.

II. Operations and Training

The aviators assigned to this command contained a wealth of experience as the average time for all aviators was 2313 hours. However, flight training (limited by aircraft availability) was conducted at Fort Bragg, North Carolina with approximately 1200 hours being flown from 1 August to 26 September 1965. Manuevers that were covered in the training program were: gunnery training (M-6); fomation flying (both day and night); sling loads; and low level navigation. Upon arrival in Vietnam aviators of three (3) of the four (4) units were placed on temporary duty to the 145th Aviation Battalion for further training and country orientation. Extensive gunnery training (M-5, M-6, and XM-16) was conducted at Vung Tau for the gun platoon and other aviators of the company. Also, M-60 gun training was conducted for door gunners and aviators. In addition, decca and instrument training was conducted at and in the vicinity of Phu Loi, Bein Hoa, Vung Tau, and the Saigon areas.

The experience level of the helicopter crew chiefs and mechanics on the UH-1 helicopter and T-53 turbine engine left much to be desired. Approximately 40% of the mechanics lacked practical experience on the helicopter and the engine, although approximately 80% had been to a service school. This necessitated an AMTAP type course of 80 hours duration to be conducted at Fort Bragg, North

Carolina. Due to the late receipt of personnel, an additional class of 40 hours duration was conducted onboard ship enroute to our destination.

Although the unit became operational on 7 December 1965 the capability was seriously limited as discussed under Section III and IV. Missions accomplished were medical evacuation, battalion courier, combat assaults, direct and other combat support missions, fire team (gunships) support, liaison, and administrative.

On the morning of 26 December 1965 two fire teams (led by Major Mengran) from the gun platoon were dispatched to provide convoy cover for the 1st Brigade, 1st Infantry Division. The convoy was moving from the vicinity of Phouc Vinh to Ap Dong Sac. While the ⁹ convoy was enroute it was ambushed by an estimated squad of Viet Cong with automatic weapons. The fire team was immediately called into engage the V.C. After approximately 45 minutes using rockets and machine guns with assistance from TAC air the ambush was defeated with the V.C. breaking contact. A sweep by the US infantry revealed no confirmed V.C. KIA's or WIA's. There were no US casualties as result of the ambush. This incident was the 116th's first significant encounter with the V.C., although the unit's aircraft and pilots had participated in combat assaults with other units and had received sporadic ground fire.

The above missions were both in support of the 1st Infantry Division and the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN). Since

⁹ See Inclosure #1.

1 December 1965 101,400 pounds of cargo has been hauled and 1567 troops have been airlifted. Approximately 1576 sorties were flown with the aviators logging 479 hours to accomplish the aforementioned missions.

III. Maintenance and Supply

During the period 24 through 31 October 1965 the units aircraft availability was 15% for the D model and 3% for the B model. Factors that prevented higher availability percentages were (1) the deprocessing of both models and (2) the installation of the weapons system on the B model. During the period of 1 through 30 November 1965 the aircraft availability was 61% for the D model and 81% for the B model. On 18 November 1965 thirteen (13) UH-1D's and two (2) UH-1B's were grounded due to cracked longerons at station 163.0 and 151.5 respectively. Replacement parts did not become available in the theater until 9 December 1965. During the period of 1 through 31 December 1965 the aircraft availability was 24% for the D model and 83% for the B model.

a. The units maintenance capability is still hampered by the shortage of the following equipment:

1. Shop Set #6, Machinist
2. Shop Set, Grd Handling & Svc Fld Maint
3. Tool Set, Air Frame Repairman
4. Semi-Trailer, Van Shop, 6 Ton, 2 Whl
5. Thirty Eight (38) ea Tool Kits, General Mechanics

10 Station where aft cross tube attaches to the fuselage

11 Same as above

b. The unit did not receive the following equipment until 15 December 1965. This delay in receipt of equipment had a detrimental effect on the maintenance capability.

1. Shop Set, Elec Fld Maint
2. Shop Set, Welding Fld Maint
3. Shop Set, Hydraulic Fld Maint
4. Shop Set, Sheet Metal
5. Shop Set, Tool Crib
6. Shop Set, Flaw Detection

IV. Special Problems

Problem - The piece meal receipt of enlisted personnel particularly aircraft mechanics during the period of 5 July through 27 September 1965 precluded establishing a firm training program for skills concerned before deployment. By 11 September 1965 the 116th and ¹² the 392nd were still short approximately 65 skilled personnel, which negated any possibility to train the late arrivals.

Recommendation - That at least 80% of skilled personnel peculiar to each type unit be available at the outset of activation. This would allow maximum time for training plus the requirements necessary to accomplish the POR qualification.

Problem - Some key personnel were not assigned or available at the outset of activation. The 1st Sergeant (E-8) for both the 116th and the 392nd were not received by 27 September 1965. This

12 The 65 personnel amounted to over 40% of the skilled personnel. Such skills as helicopter mechanic, engine repairman, airframe repairman, powerplant repairman, rotor repairman, and technical inspector

necessitated pulling various NCOs from their respective jobs to fill the aforementioned vacancies. This not only deprived the NCOs of properly training their sections, but also resulted in much wasted effort in the orderly rooms. In addition, the unit supply technician (non-flying warrant officer) was not assigned for duty until 22 September 1965, which caused an aviator to assume this responsibility, thereby neglecting his flight training.

Recommendation - That all key personnel be made available either permanently or on loan basis (providing the loan personnel are qualified) to provide continuity and to prevent confusion at a most trying stage of activation.

Problem - Lack of correct orders assigning personnel to the newly activated units. Military personnel were not authorized to ship their household goods or to take their dependents to Fort Bragg, unless the dependents desired to reside in the vicinity of Fort Bragg during the absence of their sponsor. However, several military personnel reported in with their families and their orders had not stated otherwise.

Recommendation - That clear, precise and correct orders be issued from the highest headquarters down, to preclude undue hardship on military personnel and their dependents.

Problem - Lack of preferential treatment for personnel effected by the activation. Many headquarters did provide special assistance or give preferential treatment to the personnel required to report on short notice to the newly activated units. However,

many personnel did not receive such treatment. This caused undue hardship on getting families resettled especially for those personnel
13
who received extremely short notices.

Recommendation - That a code be utilized on orders to delineate personnel who are to receive preferential (VIP) treatment. This would expedite shipment of household goods, hold baggage, automobiles, clearing through customs, and preferential transportation for the effected military personnel and their dependents. The identity of this code would have to be disseminated down to all government (military and civilian) departments that either cause or assist in the move.

Problem - Unfamiliarity of activated units by the host or sponsoring unit. The 116th and the three (3) attached units were sponsored by the 7th Battalion 15th Artillery of the XVIII Airborne Corps Artillery, Fort Bragg, North Carolina, although, the CO and his entire staff of the 7th of the 15th assisted wherever possible, their lack of familiarity with the units they were sponsoring precluding providing little or no technical assistance in the following areas:

- a. Unable to provide assistance in setting up an interim training program (POI) as pertains to being aviation oriented.
- b. Unable to assist in providing guidance as to the requisition of tools and equipment required to support the UH-1 helicopter

13 4 days from original notice to departing overseas theater and 10 days from departure of overseas theater to reporting to new assignment

and the T-53 engine.

c. Could not put command emphasis on loaning of aircraft to newly activated units to assist in accelerated flight training program. Had sponsoring unit owned aircraft this problem area would have been simplified.

d. Inasmuch as the sponsoring unit was an artillery battalion it was unable to provide vitally needed OJT type training for the aircraft mechanics and crew chiefs of the 116th and 392nd.

Recommendation - That future activated units be sponsored by like or similar type units.

Problem - Receipt of unserviceable equipment (i.e. vehicles, signal shop van, and electronic equipment). This not only delays meeting the equipment readiness date, but increases the load on the already overburdened unit supply capability.

Recommendation - Insure that all equipment is in a serviceable condition before issue, especially equipment that is laterally transferred.

Problem - As stated before, personnel on MEE of the four units arrived in Vietnam on 20 October 1965. However, the bulk of the equipment (i.e. vehicles and the CONEX containers) less helicopters, was not unloaded until 19 November 1965. The helicopters were unloaded from 21 through 24 October 1965. With no equipment being available from 20 October to 19 November 1965, necessitated the beggling and borrowing of tools to maintain a semblance of maintenance on the aircraft. This delay in receipt of equipment was a primary factor in causing the operational date of this unit to be approx.

imately 47 days after arrival in the theater.

Recommendation - That a unit be shipped intact (i.e. personnel and equipment) or insure that the off-loading of personnel and equipment, if on different carriers, be simultaneous. If shipping is not available, shipment of unit should be deferred as a unit is of little value without equipment. Also, retention of unit in CONUS would allow further time for training where in all probability adequate training aids and facilities are available.

Problem - Although the 116th and 392nd had a 89% and 97% equipment fill respectively before departing CONUS, the remaining 11% and 3% represented critical tools (listed under Section III) necessary to maintain the UH-1 helicopter and the T-53 engine. This lack of adequate tools did and still is reducing the effectiveness of our maintenance capability. Also, this unit received only approximately 70% of its authorized PLL upon arrival in the theater.

Recommendation - That adequate tools, equipment, and spare parts be made available prior to departing CONUS or immediately upon arrival in the theater. To move a unit overseas before it can effectively accomplish its primary mission only tends to lower the morale of the personnel because of idleness. The term idleness is not to be construed to mean wasted time as the time was utilized to improve the living area and not towards mission accomplishment. However, idle time could have been better utilized in CONUS for training, processing, and the resettling of families.

V. Miscellaneous - Awards and Commendations

1. Capt Robert D. Anderson was awarded the White House Service badge on 24 September 1965.
2. Capt Abb W. Manprem (now Major) was awarded the Army Commendation Medal on 24 September 1965.
3. Major Owen V. Haxton was awarded the Air Medal on 31 December 1965.
4. Major Norman C. Toso was awarded the Air Medal and Army Commendation Medal on 31 December 1965.
5. Capt Billy G. Williams was awarded the Air Medal on 31 December 1965.
6. CWO Charles L. Smith was awarded the Air Medal on 31 December 1965.
7. CWO Billy J. Fowler was awarded the Air Medal with an Oak Leaf Cluster on 31 December 1965.
8. Major Harvey C. McCoy was awarded the Army Commendation Medal on 31 December 1965.
9. Capt Robert D. Anderson was awarded the 1st Oak Leaf Cluster to the Army Commendation Medal on 31 December 1965.
10. SFC Raymond D. Shanks was awarded the Army Commendation Medal on 31 December 1965.

Appendix I

ROSTER OF KEY PERSONNEL

CO, 116th Aviation Company.....Major Richard A. Hunes
XO, 116th Aviation Company.....Major Walter E. Parker
First Sergeant.....MSgt Joseph T. Garrett
1st Platoon Comdr.....Major Harvey C. McCoy
2nd Platoon Comdr.....Major Richard H. Marden
3rd Platoon Comdr.....Major Norman C. Toso
Service Platoon Comdr.....Major John P. Stapleton
Operations Officer.....Major Owen V. Haxton
Intelligence Officer.....Captain Billy G. Williams
CO, 235th Signal Detachment.....Captain Bonny L. Booth
CO, 392nd Transportation Detachment.....Major Robert E. Ainslie
CO, 431st Medical Detachment.....Captain Grover R. Tompkins