

ANNUAL HISTORICAL SUPPLEMENT

for

C Battery

4th Battalion(Aerial Artillery)

77th Artillery(Airmobile)

1969

VHPA130

PREFACE

Although I was not one of the original Griffins, I also formed with an ARA unit in the States before coming to Vietnam. I joined C Battery shortly after their arrival at Camp Evans. I have attempted to write the history as I saw it, and as an aviator I recognize my limitations in this respect. All the photographs included were taken with a 35mm Canon FTQL camera with a 50mm, 1.8 lens, and I assume full responsibility for them.

I extend my thanks to WO Stephen H. Scheiding [Removed/Archive] who prepared the Dedication, CWO Billy R. Hartbarger [Removed/Archive] who wrote the section concerning forming and training at Fort Bragg, and CWO Richard W. Freeman [Removed/Archive] who handled the narrative of the ferry flight.

Specialist Five William S. Hallom [Removed/Archive] deserves a special thanks for the long hours he spent sorting and condensing information from the Operations section. I also wish to thank Captain Robert B. Williams [Removed/Archive] and WO Joseph J. Milhone [Removed/Archive] for proof reading the drafts, and offering helpful suggestions and criticisms. Last, but not least, my thanks goes to [REDACTED] for typing the final copy.

CWO Loren W. Gee [Removed/Archive]

DEDICATION

During C Battery's brief stay in Vietnam, the Griffins have accomplished, and exceeded, the goals established in the development of Aerial Rocket Artillery. C Battery's record is unexcelled. If taken at face value, credit might be given to the aviators who fly the aircraft and fire the rockets, but behind each pilot there are several enlisted men ~~xxxx~~ who, together, form the backbone of the unit. Many a night an armament man or a crewchief remained at his job until the wee small hours of the morning to assure that his aircraft would be mission ready for the next day. During major engagements ammo personnel often had to work well into the night to keep pace with the munitions being expended...at our forward locations enlisted personnel remained on duty to coordinate communications, and supplies, and provide aircraft maintenance. Maintenance and transportation working together as a precision machine kept the aircraft, and vehicles, operating, and the clerks and typists maintained control over the massive amounts of paperwork necessary for the completion of C Battery's mission. Without these enlisted men behind the scenes, any mention of C Battery would be an afterthought.

For this reason, this history is dedicated to all the enlisted personnel who made C Battery, 4th Battalion(Aerial Artillery), 77th Artillery(Airmobile) possible.

Fort Bragg

Fayetteville, North Carolina is a military town. One of those places where the civilian and the military meet. It is a good union with the town benefitting commercially from the soldiers and their families, and in return providing entertainment and shopping facilities. It was to this town one morning early in August that the first members of C Battery, 4th Battalion(Aerial Artillery), 77th Artillery(Airmobile), came--and the "Griffins" were born.

Time was a factor and none was wasted in those early days of C Battery's conception. Everyone had his share of duties, and many worked night and day. Spirit and cooperation were the words, and all problems were tackled with determination and willingness. One problem that required a lot of time was that of obtaining all the publications we would need. This job fell to our Publications Officer, WO1 Richard Freeman. It was rather humorous to watch Mr. Freeman learn his job as he performed it.

Of course the biggest job, and one that concerned everyone, was training. Captain Joe Coyner, our training officer, under the guidance of Major Edward Miller, arranged our schedule.

WO1 Bill Hartbarger was sent to Fort Rucker for a three week instruction period, making him a qualified instructor pilot in the Bell UH-1C helicopter. After his return, he set about transitioning ~~the new~~ ^{all the} pilots into the UH-1C. ~~Helping in this were instructor pilots from the~~ ^{near st. were} ~~2nd Aviation Battalion.~~ ^{Major Miller, Major Taylor, and Capt Rison}

An AAF ~~A~~ firing range was constructed, and training in the use of the aircraft armament systems was initiated. Each pilot was instructed on firing techniques, and then given numerous chances to apply what he learned on the range. Day and night the range echoed to the blast of rockets and the chatter of machine guns, as the door gunners, too,

along with Major Miller, Major Taylor, and Capt Rison

our first annual Army Training Test.

increased their skill. Time passed, the days grew cold, and the Griffins evolved into a team with teeth.

December came, and C Battery readied itself for a week in the field. For winter, the temperature was comfortable and the skies were clear that first week. Major Edward Miller's birthday was on the seventh and we celebrated by moving into the woods bordering an isolated field in North Carolina. Our first night out it snowed, and the temperature dropped to nine degrees.

Elements of the 82nd Airborne and Special Forces stationed at Fort Bragg were participating in a coincident field problem, and C Battery worked in support of them for four days. Our last three days were spent conducting simulated fire missions, maintaining hot sections day and night, and being graded on such things as reaction time, accuracy, target effect, etc. Poor weather and hard work combined to make it a gruelling week, *especially for the maintenance and support personnel*, but the Griffins were developing into professionals, and perfection was their goal.

The Christmas holidays brought a short lull in our work, but after returning from holiday leave, our main effort was put into readying equipment for the move to the Republic of Vietnam. Finishing touches were put to training schedules, with the last period of training consisting of the coast-to-coast aircraft ferry mission. All of the new pilots gained immeasurable experience in cross-country navigation, radio procedures, and airfield operations. Flight planning and filing was spread among the pilots so each had a chance to practice. An important lesson learned was the effect that terrain, temperature, and weather conditions have on helicopter operation.

An actual account of the ferry trip from one of those who was there follows:

"On 24 Jan 69 C Battery departed Simmons Army Air Field at 0730 hours Eastern Standard Time, two days behind schedule. There were eleven UH-1C helicopters in the flight with XM-3 armament subsystems mounted. Our final destination was Sharp Army Depot at Stockton, California, where the aircraft would be packed for overseas deployment.

"When the aircraft and thirty-three crew members arrived at Fort Gordon, Georgia, the first refueling stop, the lead aircraft blew an engine reducing our troupe to ten. This aircraft followed ten days later after repairs were completed.

Meridian, Mississippi, was reached without further difficulty except for a brief moment of terror while negotiating the approach to Lawson Army Air Field at Fort Benning, Georgia, with thirty knot crosswinds! With the first leg of the journey complete, the flight remained overnight at Meridian.

"The following day took us to Dallas Love Field. The high~~x~~ point of the day being engine trouble experienced by one bird in Longview, Texas. The problem was corrected in a short time, however. The night spent in Dallas was far superior to the previous one in Meridian, and most of us hated to leave.

"The third night we spent in Odessa, Texas. I can not say much about that leg. Most of the pilots were tired, and Odessa did not offer much. We needed rest for the next day, though, as the itinerary included El Paso, Texas, and Juarez, Mexico.

"That leg was also uneventful. The flight made El Paso by noon and Juarez by 1400 hours.

"After spending the next morning rounding everyone up the ships lifted off for Phoenix, Arizona, our fifth stop. By this time the weaker ships were having a hard

time maintaining the pace, so the stronger ships took on part of their load. The higher altitudes cut performance greatly.

"At Phoenix, our Battery Commander, ~~Major Edward Miller~~, met a student from Thunderbird International School of Foreign Trade. The student convinced ~~Major Miller~~ to ~~head~~ land there the following morning for coffee and doughnuts. The school was on the old Thunderbird Army Air Field, a WWII training field outside Phoenix.

"The next morning around 0900 hours after departing Phoenix International, ~~Major Miller called for the flight to go trail formation~~ we made a high-overhead approach into Thunderbird Field. About fifty curious students and the Dean of Men met us. The dean had served with the 1st Air Cavalry Division in Korea, and most of our returning pilots had served with the 1st Air Cav in Vietnam. The dean noticed their patches on their right sleeves. One thing led to another and we really did get our coffee and doughnuts! After brief explanations concerning our aircraft and mission, and inquisitive inspections by the students, many of whom were Vietnam veterans, we departed for Bakersfield, California.

"We arrived in Palm Springs after low-leveling across the desert chasing coyotes and one brief fuel stop. The trip from Palm Springs to Bakersfield took us through the San Fernando Valley where the visibility dropped to one-half mile because of the smog. We followed the road, and had planned on flying through the pass, but due to bad weather and icing rotor blades we retreated to Air Force Auxiliary Field 42 at Lancaster, California.

"On our last day we flew west to the coast, and headed north. Refueling at Santa Barbara, California, and Fort Ord, we turned East for Sharp Army Depot at Stockton.

"The trip was an outstanding experience, and provided good training for our pilots by going into so many new and different airports."

Much of the success of this early operational capability was due to the advanced party who arrived approximately ten days ahead of the rest of the battery. Their first night in Vietnam was an exciting one as they experienced their first rocket attack ~~while~~ shortly after dusk at Camp Eagle. Upon arrival at Camp Evans they quickly organized the battery area, deciding what would go where. ~~the~~ mess was put in working order, also, and when the remainder of ~~the~~ battery arrived, ~~the~~ mess were waiting for them, ~~the~~ When the main body arrived, they found their hootches ready and waiting, and the mess hall functioning.

ADVANCE PARTY Activities

CW2 Glenn Farmer and ~~four~~ three
unlisted personnel departed
Charleston South Carolina on 28
February ~~with~~ ~~without~~ ~~but~~ accompanying
the battery and Ordnance equipment
to Da Nang. They spent thirty days
enroute ~~and~~ ~~and~~ ~~by~~ ~~sea~~ ~~to~~ ~~Da~~ ~~Nang~~
Harbor, RVN.

Over
Major Craig Lyda and 1SG Oscar
Svensson led the advance party
of consisting of 556 Pitt Reges, Supply
Sergeant, 556 Ralph Farris, 1st Cook,
SP45 Dale Bowen, Carpenter, SP14
Albert Pena, communications, ^{and} SP14
Pvt Paul Tangman and SP14
Sam Bass served as "mattress
expeditors.

ARRIVAL IN-COUNTRY
Republic of Vietnam
Camp Evans

C Battery, 4th Battalion(Aerial Artillery), 77th Artillery(Airmobile), arrived at DaNang, Republic of Vietnam, at 0700 hours 22 Mar 69. Their destination, Camp Evans which is located ten miles west of Hue, was reached at 1300 hours the same day. The Battery Commander was Major Edward J. Miller, ~~and~~ the Battery Executive Officer was Major Craig H. Leyda Removed/Archive. The Operations Officer was Major William F. Prow Removed/Archive, and the First Sergeant was Oscar L. Svenson Removed/Archive. At Camp Evans the job of unpacking and the problems of becoming operational faced the personnel whose training had been completed at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. ^{about 30 days prior} The job was attacked with vigor, and on 3 Apr 69 the first mission was accepted at 0755 hours. The entire battery became operational 5 Apr 69.

OPERATIONS KENTUCKY JUMPER AND MASSACHUSETTS STRIKER

During the period 22 Mar 69 to 10 May 69, C Battery acted in a general support role to the 101st Airborne Division. Operations Kentucky Jumper and Massachusetts Striker were being conducted at this time.

In-country training began on 26 Mar 69. This included briefings on the area of operations, contact mission requirements, deployment and tactics, radio procedures and security, and the care and handling of heavily loaded ships in the high density altitudes encountered in Vietnam. Maintenance and support personnel had their special problems also in the new environment. Handling of food in the mess hall was complicated by the high temperatures. Electrical problems were intensified by the high humidity. The

On 10 Apr 69 the first aircraft was lost on an administrative flight to Camp Eagle. Two people were hospitalized as a result, and the aircraft was evacuated to the 5th Transportation Battalion at Phu Bai. On 24 Apr 69 a second aircraft crashed while enroute to a fire mission near the Ashau Valley. WO1 James A. Brown #3162045 was killed, and two other persons were injured. Warrant Officer Brown received the Bronze Star Medal (Posthumous) (General Order number 4305), and Captain Chester J. Uszynski 05420016 and Specialist Five Danny R. Smock US56589807 received the Purple Heart (General Order number 48) in this action. Specialist Smock was also awarded the Silver Star (General Order number 6582) for his heroic actions on this date.

troops drew upon detail and addition to their regular duties, but soon a workable schedule evolved.

In the early morning hours of 27 Mar 69, Fire Support Base Jack came under heavy ground attack. CWO Thomas P. Workman **Removed/Archive**, aircraft commander of the UH-1C helicopter, received the Distinguished Flying Cross (General Order 4185), and his two crewmembers, Specialist Four John S. Banetti **Removed/Archive** and Specialist Four Charles A. Ellis **Removed/Archive** each received the Air Medal with "V" Device (General Order 7441 and General Order 7442, respectively) for their heroic actions displayed against

the enemy attack force.

W/C Thomas A. Johnson [Removed/Archive] received the Air Medal with "V" Device (General Order 12835), W/C James A. Jennings [Removed/Archive] received the Air Medal with "V" Device (General Order 12603), and WO Roger C. Sadler

[Removed/Archive] received the Air Medal with "V" Device for their actions on 19 Apr 69 while attacking a target near the Song O Lau River.

The first three pilots to attend Cobra transition school were Major Edward Miller, Major Thomas Glenn, and Captain David Barkes. They left the battery area 17 Apr 69, and returned 9 May 69. The first two Cobras (Bell AH-1G) arrived 15 May 69. Soon they were equipped with rocket pods and joined the mission-ready C-model Hueys.

The first enemy kill for C Battery was recorded 19 Apr 69, and was credited to the First Platoon. Griffin 61 and 61A were the call signs of the aircraft in the section. The Griffin call sign was used when the battery first arrived in Vietnam, and its use has continued ever since. Calling cards were purchased and they can be found everywhere any of the "Griffins" have visited.

Infusion began early for C Battery. The first in this program were four experience pilots from A Battery: Captain John Moore, CWO Ben Sorrells, WO Ronald Dressler, and WO Loren Gee. These same pilots also ferried C Battery's UH-1C helicopters from DaNang to Camp Evans. The first people infused out of the battery left 15 Apr 69. On 21 Apr 69 Major ~~Greg H. Leyda assumed the position of Executive Officer.~~ C Battery recorded 712 hours of flight time in 1,602 sorties during these operations firing a total of over 6,600 rockets. Support of Allied Forces totaled 32 hours of flight time in 80 sorties with 327 rockets fired. Results of these fires included five enemy killed, eleven structures damaged or destroyed, and four sampans destroyed.

Battalion

A forward operations base was established at Landing Zone Blaze in the middle of April. This provided more readily available support to the infantry in this area, but left a bit to be desired as the take-off and approach lanes were considered minimal and caused many tense moments among the pilots. Operations personnel manned their post around the clock, but no aircraft were left overnight at LZ Blaze. No provision had been made there for night operations. The weather varied greatly--rain, fog, and hot sunny days--but the greatest problem encountered by the aviators was the heat and humidity.

Engine performance was below normal, so loads had to be decreased accordingly. *Operating from a forward area increased the work load on personnel, and much of the work was done during the nights when they aircraft were on the ground.* Yet the mission requirements were still met.

The first week in May was occupied with plans for Operation Apache Snow. On 7 May 69 the forward operations base was relocated at LZ Ann. Problems at LZ Ann were the same as those at LZ Blaze with the addition of dust. It became even more serious when one of the C-models made a precautionary landing due to fuel contamination. Consequently all the ships were grounded for a day while the maintenance personnel pulled all the fuel filters in each ship and checked them. As soon as this problem was cleared up, C Battery was ready for the kickoff of Operation Apache Snow.

OPERATION APACHE SNOW

The **first** day of this operation, 10 May 69, five landing zones were established along the Laotian border at the west edge of the Ashau Valley. C Battery fired the "preps" for the combat assaults and capped nearly all the LZ's. Enemy contact was made on or near two of the LZ's that day, and it was a prelude of things to come.

C Battery was the first unit to maintain a section of aircraft in the Ashau Valley overnight to react to missions in that area. A pad was constructed on FSB Currahee complete with a refueling capability and armament points. *POL and permanent personnel did an outstanding job in their support roles, working around the clock on many, many occasions.* Many times ARA was called to react to an attack on a friendly position in the valley in the middle of the night. If further support was required, sections were launched from Camp Evans, and a "round-robin" tactic was employed so at least one section of ARA was on station at all times to provide fire for the threatened position.

To support this capability a forward operations base was set up at FSB Currahee, and a POL crew and an ammunition crew were required in addition to the operations personnel. During a night attack on Currahee itself, both the POL dump and the ammunition storage area were destroyed. Three thousand gallons of JP-4 fuel and eleven hundred rockets were destroyed. Cleanup took several days, and the final event was destruction of the damaged rocket warheads and motors.

Currahee was the forward operational base that was used by the Griffins in support of the assault on Dong Ap Bia, or Hamburger Hill as it was termed later. During this period the ARA traffic in and out of Currahee was almost steady. Close coordination between the forward

operations and "rear" was a must, and all during the operation everyone worked very hard to maintain this coordination. In the night attacks on Currabee itself, infantrymen on the perimeter even volunteered their services to help the hard-working ammo and POL sections to rearm and refuel ARA aircraft to keep them on the job with as little ground time as possible.

LZ 2 on this operation was located on the northwest slope of Hill 937(Dong Ap Bia). It became the focal point of operation Apache Snow from 10 May 69 until 23 May 69 when a large enemy force was encountered by the 3rd Battalion, 187th Airborne Infantry. The Griffins fired over 400 rockets on the first day, and as the action on Dong Ap Bia continued, over 4,400 rockets were fired in the thirteen-day period in support of the three US infantry battalions on the hill as well as one ARVN battalion.

On 12 May 69 20 Carl A. Rajotte [Removed/Archive](#) and 20 Richard J. Freeman [Removed/Archive](#) both received the Air Medal with "V" Device(General Order 13226 and 12554, respectively) for actions in support of the 3rd Battalion (Abn), 187th Infantry, on Dong Ap Bia when receiving fifty-caliber ~~amm~~ aircraft fire, and after rearming and refueling, answered a call to Fire Support Base Airborne which was under attack by sappers shortly after dusk. The same day, Captain John E. Moore [Removed/Archive](#) received the Air Medal with "V" Device(General Order 8503) when he experienced a loss of power with his UH-1C helicopter, yet continued to attack the hostile force until he could no longer maintain altitude in his crippled aircraft.

While enroute to a secure area the engine failed completely, and Captain Moore found himself and his crew on the ground in hostile territory about 11½ miles south of Camp Evans. The crew of the UH-1C consisted of Captain Moore, aircraft commander; 1O Don Bisson, pilot; Specialist Four Hal Stone, crewchief; and Specialist Four Herbert Grissom, gunner.

Major Edward J. Miller [Removed/Archive] earned the Air Medal with "V" Device (General Order 12558) for actions on 12 May 69 by going into the hostile area and picking up the crew of Captain Moore's aircraft. Major Miller's UH-1C was heavily loaded, and while on the ground draining fuel to lighten his load, he came under heavy sniper fire. He continued to drain fuel until the aircraft was able to move, then executed the hazardous night take-off with Captain Moore and his crew safely aboard.

From 10 May 69 to 1 Jun 69, C Battery was created with 19 enemy killed and 12 structures damaged or destroyed.

During this time changes were taking place in the battery area at Camp Evans as the heliport area was enlarged and paved, the aircraft hanger was completed, the road system in the area was completed, the day room and mess hall were improved, and movies were acquired and shown. Major Thomas J. Glenn [Removed/Archive] assumed the Executive Officer's position on 20 May 69.

April

OPERATION MONTGOMERY RENDEZVOUS

This operation was a continuation of Operation Apache Snow. Inclusive dates were 6 Jun 69 to 14 Aug 69. C Battery continued support in the same area of operations. The forward operations base remained at Fire Support Base Currahee. ARVN elements were supported throughout the northern I Corps tactical area. Operational outlook was extended as visual reconnaissance missions and convoy cover missions were accepted by the Griffins, which added considerably to the flight time totals for the operation. More flight time meant more maintenance, yet the ground crews continued to keep the aircraft flying.

On 9 Jun 69 FSB Currahee received incoming mortar rounds followed by a ground attack estimated at two North Vietnamese Army companies. C Battery reacted quickly to the attack firing counter mortar targets and direct fire missions. Logging over thirteen hours of flight time, the attack helicopters fired 390 rockets to break the attack. The UH-1C's used by the Griffins came under heavy enemy fire, yet continued to press the attack, firing in close support of the friendly forces. Receiving the Air Medal with "V" Device for their actions were Captain Daniel J. Petrosky [\[Removed/Archive\]](#) (General Order 12540), CWO Loren J. Gee [\[Removed/Archive\]](#) (General Order 12379), and CWO Edward G. Jenner III [\[Removed/Archive\]](#) (General Order 9723). First Lieutenant James R. Smith [\[Removed/Archive\]](#) received the Army Commendation Medal with "V" Device (General Order 12369) in the same attack.

Earlier the same day a convoy was ambushed on Route 547, and Captain Daniel J. Petrosky Removed/Archive earned the Air Medal with "V" Device (General Order 12602) for his valorous actions in protection of the convoy while flying his aircraft low over enemy positions in order to mark them for the section of ARA aircraft arriving on station to relieve him.

14 Jun 69, C Battery answered a call from FSB Berches-gaden which was engaged with an enemy ground force. The Griffins were credited with breaking the attack. The next day in the early morning hours, FSB Currahee was once again assaulted by an unknown-sized enemy force. During the attack the operations bunker was hit by a 60mm mortar shell, and the Noncommissioned Officer in charge sustained a severe head injury. Neglecting his wound Staff Sergeant Robert R. Hafton Removed/Archive continued to coordinate ARA fires until he was ordered to be medically evacuated. Sergeant Hafton received the Bronze Star Medal with "V" Device (General Order 10384) for his efforts in the successful defense of the fire base. ARA was credited with breaking the attack, firing 144 rockets.

Fire Support Base Currahee came under a heavy mortar barrage on 17 Jun 69. Despite mortar rounds falling all around them, the crews of the ARA ships left the safety of the operations bunker and manned their aircraft. All of the ships effected successful take-offs, and once airborne placed accurate rocket and machine-gun fire on the enemy mortar positions, silencing them. For their courage and determination under fire, the pilots and crewmembers were awarded the following medals: The Distinguished Flying Cross to Major Edward J. Miller Removed/Archive (General Order 12359); the Bronze Star Medal with "V" Device to First Lieutenant William H. Campbell Removed/Archive (General Order 13174); the Air Medal with "V" Device to Specialist Four Hal Stone Removed/Archive (General Order 13227) and Specialist Four Jerry E. Taylor Removed/Archive (General Order 13224); and the Army Commendation Medal with "V" Device to CWO Edwin D. Billet Removed/Archive (General Order 13158), CWO Richard J. Freeman Removed/Archive (General Order 12997), and CWO Thomas A. Johnson Removed/Archive (General Order 12939).

Later that evening the ammunition dump at Currahee was set off by a white phosphorus shell. The resulting fire and explosions spread to the fuel dump. 1,100 rockets and 6,000 gallons of fuel were destroyed. During the holocaust the pilots raced to their helicopters, started them, and flew them to safety, orbiting above the fire base to provide cover against attack. For their personal bravery, the following medals were awarded: the Distinguished Flying Cross to Captain David H. Barkes [Removed/Archive] (General Order 12497), CWO Glenn C. Farmer [Removed/Archive] (General Order 12498), CWO James A. Jennings [Removed/Archive] (General Order 12360), and JO Kenneth P. Havran [Removed/Archive] (General Order 12496).

The priority of the Aerial Rocket Artillery was found to be quite high on "Charlie's" list of targets as an attack was mounted against ARA helicopters on C Battery's "hot spot" at Camp Evans the night of 23 Jun 69. The enemy fired fifteen to twenty rocket propelled grenades at the helicopters just as they were shutting down. Four casualties were sustained, several helicopters were damaged, and minor damage was inflicted on a few hootches. Major ~~Miller~~ launched his AH-1G off the "hot spot" immediately followed by two aircraft parked on the flight line and one other from the "hot spot". Base defense was notified of the situation, and although a flare ship was put up to illuminate the area, the Viet Cong force broke contact and escaped.

ARA was credited with saving Phong Dien on 16 Jul 69 when the District Headquarters there came under a sapper attack. Major Edward J. Miller [Removed/Archive] received the Distinguished Flying Cross (General Order 12467) for his valorous actions while serving as aircraft commander of an AH-1G helicopter. Also on 16 Jul 69 the Griffins attained their 100th enemy kill since arriving in Vietnam.

OPERATION LOUISIANA LEE

The operation dates from 15 Aug 69 to 28 Sep 69, and started off with the Griffins firing the landing zone preparations on seven LZ's.

On 21 Aug 69 the forward operations center was established at FSB Rendezvous on the east ridge of the Ishau Valley. Facilities for ARA aircraft were meager at Rendezvous. A small bunker for the forward operations section was constructed from used rocket boxes on the landing pad which was outside the perimeter of the fire base. This meant all the equipment used there had to be moved into the fire base itself every night. There were no provisions whatever for night operations for ARA aircraft, so night support had to come from Camp Evans. The refuel pad at Rendezvous was also located poorly in relation to prevailing winds if loaded, armed aircraft were considered.

While ARA was still operating out of Currahee, a rocket attack was made on the fire base on 16 Aug 69. The pilots left the safety of the bunker while one crewchief prepared his helicopter for flight. Both aircraft launched as more rockets landed nearby--so close that one aircraft flew through shattered boards and debris from the blast. Once airborne the crewchief/gunner aboard the UH-1C spotted a rocket being launched. The section engaged the target forcing the enemy to flee, and halting the attack. Cited for heroism were the following: Captain Daniel J. Petrosky [REMOVED/ARCHIVE], CWO Neal T. Hupper [REMOVED/ARCHIVE], CWO Richard W. Freeman [REMOVED/ARCHIVE], WO Stephen H. Scheiding [REMOVED/ARCHIVE], and Specialist Five Roger L. Olson [REMOVED/ARCHIVE] who each received the Army Commendation Medal with "V" Device (General Orders 380, 524, 378, 532, and 443, respectively).

Later in July one UH-1C became the target of an enemy .50 caliber weapon. It received four hits, but no one on board was injured.

During a combat assault in the Ashau Valley on 18 Jul 69, the first two troop ships into the landing zone received intense ground fire, thereby disrupting the assault and leaving a small group of soldiers stranded. The ARA ships supporting the assault engaged the enemy at close range to provide close support for the stranded element. Even after the aircraft had expended their ammunition they continued to employ diversionary tactics so the landing zone would not be overrun. Awards to these crewmembers for their precise flying ability and personal bravery were: the Silver Star to CWO Thomas P. Workman [Removed/Archive] (General Order 11623); and the Distinguished Flying Cross to Captain Daniel J. Retrosky [Removed/Archive] (General Order 11925), CWO Roger C. Sadler [Removed/Archive] (General Order 11609), WO Steven P. Wood [Removed/Archive] (General Order 11611), and Specialist Four Jerry E. Taylor [Removed/Archive] (General Order 11617).

On 25 Jul 69 CWO Richard A. Freeman [Removed/Archive] completed jungle survival school at Subic Bay, Phillipines.

During a three-day period in August ARA received credit for destroying thirty hootches, seven bunkers, six sampans, and one footbridge.

On 10 Aug 69 C Battery flew sixty-one hours in support of 3rd Brigade operations. Ten landing zone preparations were fired, and troops in contact were supported on six occasions. On one of these contact missions on hill 937, Dong Ap Bia, Captain James F. Barnett [Removed/Archive] was awarded the Silver Star (General Order 197) for personal bravery when he hovered near a friendly unit in contact to mark their position while his wingman expended his ordnance on the enemy.

The second week in August was spent preparing for Operation Louisiana Lee (Division name was **Richland** Square).

During Operation Montgomery Rendezvous, ten aviators from C Battery graduated from AH-1G Transition School at Vung Tau. Night and weather training also continued for the pilots.

In the battery area the aircraft hangar was completed, which helped the maintenance personnel a great deal. The mess hall and Jayrcam were both improved, and movies were shown five times weekly with the advent of a better film program.

During Operation Montgomery Rendezvous the Griffins chalked up quite a record. The final tally shows 1,914 hours flown on 3965 sorties. Ammunition expenditures were 21,245 2.75" folding fin aerial rockets, 170,273 rounds of 7.62mm, and 6,228 rounds of 40mm. The results of these expenditures were 53 enemy killed, 39 enemy probably killed by ARA, 1 enemy wounded, 12 sampans destroyed, 113 structures destroyed, 7 structures damaged, 1 mortar damaged, 1 AK-50 assault rifle captured, 1 footbridge destroyed, 1 122mm field gun destroyed, 1 truck destroyed, and 6 secondary explosions.

During the extraction of a long range reconnaissance patrol west of Khe Sanh on 22 Aug 69, one of the troop ships for which an ARH section was providing cover encountered an engine failure. The section reacted immediately firing rockets into the intended landing zone or the stricken aircraft, and flying low in increasing darkness and intense rain showers to cover it until the crew could be extracted. The extraction completed, the section continued its mission in the extremely hazardous weather, and returned only after the patrol had been recovered safely. Cited for valor were: Captain Daniel J. Petrosky [Removed/Archive], CWO Thomas P. Workman [Removed/Archive], CWO Glenn C. Farmer [Removed/Archive], and WO Steven F. Wood [Removed/Archive] who each received the Air Medal with "V" Device (General Orders 66, 305, 71, and 70, respectively).

On 23 Aug 69 another long range reconnaissance patrol was extracted. As the troop ship hovered above the dense jungle and lowered ropes to the patrol they came under heavy fire. The ARH ships reacted immediately firing rockets with skill and accuracy in close proximity to the patrol and hovering aircraft. The Air Medal with "V" Device was awarded to Captain James T. Barnett [Removed/Archive] (General Order 300), CWO John E. Sorrells [Removed/Archive] (General Order 573), CWO Billy R. Hartbarger [Removed/Archive] (General Order 568), CWO Loren W. Gee [Removed/Archive] (General Order 567), WO Stephen H. Scheiding [Removed/Archive] (General Order 69), and WO Steven F. Wood [Removed/Archive] (General Order 14462).

The next day action centered in the Ashau Valley for the Griffins as they supported both FSB Currance and FSB Berchesgaden. Several enemy were killed as targets were fired upon near Berchesgaden. ~~Several ones were killed~~

Again early in September Berchesgaden called for the ARA. Five aircraft were utilized to complete the mission, with the end result of several more enemy killed. Troops in contact were supported several days later, and as the infantry swept the area they found some bodies and a large hootch complex destroyed.

Attempting to insert a long range reconnaissance patrol northwest of the Sanh, the unarmed helicopters to which the ARA section was providing support came under intense fire. The insertion was attempted three times with the Griffins displaying outstanding courage while protecting the unarmed aircraft. The Distinguished Flying Cross was awarded to Captain James T. Barnett [Removed/Archive] (General Order 14778) and CWO Loren A. Gee [Removed/Archive] (General Order 15349).

In mountainous terrain west of Fire Support Base Vandergrift, despite nightfall, poor weather, and heavy enemy ground fire, an ARA section provided very close support to a besieged long range reconnaissance patrol so that it could be extracted. Making dangerously low firing passes to cover the lift ships, the AH-1G's were highly vulnerable to enemy fire. For their outstanding display of courage in the face of intense ground fire, CWO Edwin D. Billet [Removed/Archive] received the Distinguished Flying Cross (General Order 14776), and CWO Billy R. Hartbarger [Removed/Archive] and CWO Charles J. Racine [Removed/Archive] both received the Air Medal with "V" Device (General Orders 15009 and 299).

During the 44 days of Operation Louisiana Lee C Battery flew ~~xxx~~ 1,097 hours on 2,231 sorties firing 10,136 rockets, 130,110 rounds of 7.62mm, and 9,663 40mm grenades. Results were 33 enemy killed, 20 structures destroyed, 2 pigs killed, and 12 water buffalo killed.

Captain Robert E. Smith [Removed/Archive] assumed the duties of Battery Executive Officer on 9 Sep 69. Major Glenn departed the battery to assume command of D Company, 158th Assault Helicopter Battalion located at Camp Evans.

OPERATION NORTON FALLS

This operation was in effect from 29 Sep 69 to 6 Nov 69. Mai Loc, a village and small airstrip west of Juang Tri, was the focal point of operation Norton Falls. Here C Battery established their forward operations base. ^{Amico personnel were brought forward as well as an operations section.} As the operation got underway, the Griffins covered nine combat assaults.

On 21 Oct 69 an AH-1G received one .50 caliber round in the main rotor blade. No injuries were received, and the ship was flown back to Camp Evans.

During this operation the Griffins covered the insertion and extraction of many troops. Much of their ~~xx~~ artillery fire was in support of ARVN units. C Battery also worked closely with the 2nd Squadron, 17th Air Cavalry, in operations along the Demilitarized Zone.

The airfield at Lai Loc was the best forward area that C Battery had seen since in-country arrival. The POF area was excellent, until it was relocated, and a control tower was even constructed for the Pathfinders. The parking area was adequate, and the rearming point also proved workable. ^{C Battery's hard-working ammo people were always on the pad ready to} Night operations were possible ^{pad ready to} as lights were set up on the runway each night, and a ^{re-arm the} non-directional beacon was erected. The Griffins spent many nights at Lai Loc, though few missions came down after dark.

Training for weather flying was increased during this period. Classes were held on all phases of instrument flight, and practical experience in the form of hood flights, ground controlled approaches, and automatic direction finder reaches. Lists of frequencies for the various radar facilities in the area were provided to the pilots. All in all the training was comprehensive and proved very valuable on isolated occasions.

Demonstration classes to the infantry maneuver battalions were expanded to more thoroughly acquaint them with ARA, so they could more fully utilize the potential at their disposal.

WO Steven F. Wood Removed/Archive completed jungle survival school at Subic Bay, Phillipines, and passed on survival information to the pilots at informal discussions.

Ammunition expenditures during this operation were 5,192 rockets, 98,150 rounds of 7.62mm, and 7,518 rounds of 40mm grenades. A total of 730 flying hours was recorded on 1781 sorties. Surveillance included 14 enemy killed, 31 structures destroyed, 2 sampans destroyed, 1 ferry destroyed, assorted automatic weapons and small arms captured (including one 60mm mortar), and 3 secondary explosions.

During this operation there were two major changes in the chain of command. Major Craig H. Leyda ^{sec 2000-486-12-1586} assumed the position of Battery Commander on 3 ~~Nov~~ ^{Oct} 69, and Captain Henry C. Miller, Jr. Removed/Archive became the Executive Officer on 24 Nov 69.

*Captain Robert Smith
departed the battery on 23 November 1969 to assume
command of Headquarters Battery, 101st
Air Defense Artillery at Camp Enzal.*

OPERATION REPUBLIC SQUARE

Inclusive dates on this operation were 9 Nov 69 to 6 Dec 69. C Battery continued its general support-reinforcing role to the 3rd Brigade. During the first portion of this operation, the Griffins worked out of Mai Loc, but later returned to Camp Evans with no forward operations base.

The early part of November C Battery supported the 1st Battalion, 5th Mechanized Infantry near the Demilitarized Zone. ARVN units were also supported in this same area and elsewhere in the area of operations. Several enemy killed are credited to the Griffins in these actions.

On the 1st of December an artillery raid was conducted. Many hootches and bunkers were destroyed. Two days later the 100,000th rocket was fired by ARA, while attacking an NVA 5-ton truck. *CW2 Edwin Bielet fired the rocket on the morning of the 3rd, killing* Instrument flight training continued during this operation. Two aviators renewed Standard Instrument qualifications, and continued to provide instruction to other aviators in the unit.

Summary for operation Republic Square shows the following totals. 636 flying hours were logged on 1,386 sorties. 5,249 rockets, 86,850 rounds of 7.62mm, and 3,261 rounds of 40mm grenades were fired. Results were 7 enemy killed, 49 structures destroyed, 9 structures damaged, 2 water buffalos killed, 2 elephants killed, 1 5-ton truck destroyed, and 7 secondary explosions recorded.

OPERATION RANDOLPH GLEN

This operation began 29 Dec 69, and is presently in progress. The Kickoff date is so near the beginning of the new year that this operation will be covered in the next annual supplement.

see
unit location

OPERATION RANDOLPH GLEN 7 Dec 69 to 31 Mar 70

This operation began on 7 Dec 69 and lasted until 31 Mar 70. The Griffins supported an artillery raid to start off the operation, destroying 20 hootches, 5 sampans, and 2 bunkers in the vicinity of the Salient. The ARA was busy even with the poor weather, flying 39 hours on the 14th of December.

Units supported were scattered far and wide over northern I Corps. On 15 Dec 70 support was furnished to 1/5 Mech along the RNZ, and a week later most of the missions flown were about 15 miles southwest of Camp Evans where B/3/187 Infantry, and the 3rd Brigade's Mini-Cav were given a helping hand. On Christmas day two Loh's from 3rd Bde drew ground fire, and called for ARA. Results were 4 enemy killed, 1 captured, 4 bunkers destroyed, 4 AK-47's captured, and maps and assorted equipment captured.

On 28 Dec 70 C Btry participated in another artillery raid with the 108th Arty, and the following week supported ARVN units, B/187 Infantry, 3rd Bde Mini-Cav, 1/506 Infantry, CTroop 2/17th Cav, and Catkiller elements throughout the area of operations. 6 Jan 70 was day of heavy contacts for the Griffins, and nearly every ship was utilized.

On 31 Dec 70 an ARA section was called into the Ashau Valley in deteriorating weather to provide security for troop ships attempting to extract a friendly element. Several enemy anti-aircraft positions opened fire on the troop ships, at which time the Griffins placed their aircraft between the enemy positions and the element on the ground and attacked the enemy weapons, destroying them. For their bravery Major Craig H. Leyda [Removed/Archive] and Captain Henry C. Miller [Removed/Archive] received the Distinguished Flying Cross (GO 0079 and 3327, respectively), and 1st Lt. Marcell Ozcnbaugh and 1st Lt. Stephen Scheiding received the Air Medal with "V" Device.

The 10th of Jan a patrol conducting a reconnaissance in force operation southwest of Camp Evans engaged an enemy force of unknown size, and suffered two casualties in the initial encounter. Unable to gain fire superiority, the patrol called on ARA. Heavy clouds obscured the area, but the ARA section was able to reach it. Once there the section instructed the squad leader on the proper adjustment of rocket fire, and engaged the enemy position. The section also guided a med-evac chopper into the patrol's position, followed by a command and control chopper. For their devotion to duty and personal bravery, the following received the Air Medal with "V" Device: CW2 Bill R. Hartbarger, CW2 James A. Jennings, 1st Lt. Leroy A. Christensen, and 1st Lt. William J. Critcher.

CW2 Neil Hupper was critically wounded in action north of FSB Sheppard on 14 Jan 70 when he was struck by a .50 caliber round. 1 Lt. Terrence P. Fowler, the copilot, quickly assumed control of the AH-1G helicopter, and, although he was not fully familiar with the aircraft, flew the damaged aircraft unassisted from the target area to the 18th Surgical Hospital where he executed a successful landing. For his personal bravery, 1 Lt. Fowler was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross. Mr. Hupper was med-evacuated from the 18th Surgical Hospital to the Hospital Ship Sanctuary, and later returned to the US.

On the 16th of Jan, Cpt. Robert B. Williams became the Executive Officer of C Battery. Captain Williams replaced Cpt. Daniel J. Petrosky.

On 18 Jan 70 General Smith and Colonel Pollard visited C Battery for an awards ceremony. General Smith presented Captain James T. Barnett with a Distinguished Flying Cross for his actions on 12 Sep 69.

Excitement ran through the entire Btry on 20 Jan 70 when seven aircraft were launched to Quang Tri in response to a possible sighting of a battalion of enemy soldiers near the DMZ. However, the prospect failed to materialize, and the ships returned at dawn.

The last days of January were busy ones for C Btry. The Griffins fired numerous landing-zone preparations, and participated in an artillery raid with the 2/319 Arty. Results of the raid: 13 hootches destroyed, 8 bunkers destroyed, and 4 damaged, 2 cultivated rice fields damaged, 2 rafts destroyed, 1 boat destroyed, and 2 secondary explosions observed.

Also during this period one enemy armored personnel carrier was attacked and destroyed in the vicinity of the Ashau Valley. Battle damage became somewhat of a problem as two aircraft received hits in the canopy, one took a round through the landing gear, and a fourth suffered damage to both main rotor blades. Maintenance personnel were hard-pressed to keep the aircraft mission-ready, and they worked day and night to get the job done. Many radio and electrical problems were encountered due to the damp weather, and avionics personnel and electricians worked around the clock to correct them.

A personal interview was conducted on 31 Jan 70 after a rather unusual fire mission near the DMZ. A complete copy of it will be found at the end of this chapter.

February broke with poor weather, though the Griffins still answered many contact missions. On 4 Feb 70 Captain Henry C. Miller received the Purple Heart.

The next day on a mission near the DMZ a Cobra piloted by CW2 James Jennings and WO1 John Milhone was hit by a .50 caliber round in one of the main rotor blade grips. There were no injuries and the two pilots returned the aircraft safely.

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An artillery raid was conducted in the vicinity of the north end of the Ashau Valley on 7 Feb 70. Then the weather deteriorated, and a second raid was postponed. Few contact missions were flown for the next ten days.

On 19 Feb 70 Major Craig H. Leyda and CW2 Loren W. Gee were shot down near the Laotian border. CW2 Edwin D. Billet and CW2 John P. Carter jettisoned their aircraft's wing stores, and picked up the downed crew on the ammunition-bay doors, utilizing an old bomb crater for a landing zone. For their personal bravery Mr. Carter received the Distinguished Flying Cross, and Mr. Billet received the Air Medal with "V" Device.

The very next day the entire ARA Battalion participated in an artillery raid south of Khe Sanh. The target was a major infiltration route which was being used heavily by the enemy. Colonel Pollard, the Battalion Commander, personally led the attack, and after the attack, led the entire flight in formation over Camp Evans, FSB Sally, and Camp Eagle on the return trip. C Btry put up seven ships for the mission and fired 114 fleschette rockets, 109 white phosphorus rockets, and 124 17-lb. high explosive rockets for a total of 12 hours of flying time. Almost no surveillance was obtained from the raid because of intense ground fire encountered in the area.

Contact missions were flown back to back on 21 Feb 70 until late in the afternoon when the pace finally slackened. Ammo personnel were very busy supplying the ships with rockets and turret ammunition, as the after-action reports piled up in Operations.

Major Eick Hale assumed command of C Btry from Major Craig H. Leyda on 27 Feb 70. Major Leyda DEROS'ed at this time. The next day C Btry was granted a "stand-down" for the entire day. A steak feed was organized, followed by games of softball and volleyball.

The latter part of February saw many changes in the Btry area. The "hot spot" and roads received a fresh coat of penaprime, and bunkers were covered with cement. Several officers and enlisted men attended the armament school during February.

CW2 Richard W. Freeman experienced a lateral servo failure in his Cobra, but landed it safely on the T-24 Pad at Camp Eagle.

Maintenance experienced difficulties due to a lack of available parts, and the slow return of others from C Btry's support facilities. Many parts were rotated among ships as the aircraft came in for periodic inspections.

Vehicle maintenance had their share of problems, too, due to a shortage of parts and the adverse weather. On many occasions one could see lights in the motor pool until very late at night.

The first two days in March were filled with landing-zone "preps". And the following day the entire ARA Bn executed another raid. This one took place on the west side of the Ashau Valley in the vicinity of Tiger Mountain. Some anti-aircraft fire was encountered, but all the aircraft escaped damage.

The same day two of the Griffins' Cobras were involved in a freak accident at FSB Sally's refueling point. Both aircraft were completely destroyed, but the four pilots--CW2 James Jennings, CW2 Richard Freeman, CW2 Loren W. Gee, and WO1 John Milhone--escaped injury.

The first two weeks in March there were many fire missions. 1/5 Mech and ARVN units accounted for most of these. Fighting was also heavy southwest of Camp Evans, and C Btry aircraft saw an abundance of action in the mountainous terrain.

On 12 Mar 70 Captain James E. Mitschke and CW2 Edwin D. Billet received the Distinguished Flying Cross for their outstanding display of personal courage in the recovery of a lone member of a reconnaissance team that was left deep in enemy territory. They navigated through extremely adverse weather, and mountainous terrain to reach the location, and came under intense enemy fire while they performed the emergency extraction.

In the latter part of March maintenance still had its share of headaches--and they were many. Parts difficulties still hampered the hard-working mechanics, and main rotor heads were wearing out much faster than they could be replaced. A team from B Company, 5th Transportation Battalion arrived to solve electrical problems in the turret weapons subsystem, and armament personnel benefitted immeasurably from the experience gained. Throughout March maintenance personnel continued to work around the clock on damaged aircraft.

27 Mar 70 marked the beginning of a small but complex operation that was not resolved for several days. It began with a call from an ARVN unit that wanted ARA to attack a suspect Mortar position. Later that day near FSB Barbara, an OH-58 helicopter was shot down while performing a reconnaissance mission. Heavy resistance was encountered by rescue teams, and later that night, in very poor weather, WO1 Stephen H. Scheiding led a flight of troop ships into the area, and supported them while they inserted US infantry elements. For his actions, Mr. Scheiding was recommended for the Distinguished Service Cross, and the other pilots of his section and recommended awards are as follows: Captain Henry C. Miller, Jr.,--the Distinguished Flying Cross; WO1 James M. Borland--The Distinguished Flying Cross; and WO1 Joseph J. Milhone --The Air Medal with "V" Device.

The following day while supporting an infantry element trying to reach the scene of the crash, WO1 Scheiding was wounded by an AK-47 round that came through the slot in his armored seat. For this he received the Purple Heart.

On 29 Mar 70 three more aircraft received damage from enemy ground fire. There were no injuries, but once again maintenance personnel were hard-put to repair the damaged ships, and return them to mission-ready status.

The same day a section of ARA supported an ARVN element which engaged an unknown sized enemy force near FSB Fuller. The mission was carried on despite deteriorating weather, low clouds, and intense enemy fire. The aircraft had to be flown low over the enemy positions on account of the clouds, which more fully exposed them to the enemy weapons. Decorated in this action were 1 Lt. Thomas A. Johnson, Distinguished Flying Cross; WO1 Darrell D. Ozenbaugh, Distinguished Flying Cross; Captain William B. Roberts, Air Medal with "V" Device; and WO1 Ronald A. Gutterud, Air Medal with "V" Device.

Another section supporting an ARVN unit flew through low clouds, mountainous terrain, and intense small arms and automatic weapons fire to enable an ARVN element to reorganize and counter-attack the enemy force that had gained an advantage on them. The ARA aircraft made several rocket attacks just above tree-top height to place accurate fire on the enemy positions. Decorated for bravery were CW2 Kenneth M. Havran and CW2 James A. Jennings who received the Distinguished Flying Cross, and Captain James E. Mitschke and WO1 James M. Borland who received the Air Medal with "V" Device.

A third section of aircraft in support of an ARVN element northeast of FSB Fuller were providing very close rocket fire in adverse weather and mountainous terrain when one of the aircraft received multiple hits by an enemy machine gun. The section refused to leave the outnumbered ARVN unit, however, until they were relieved by another section of ARA. Shortly thereafter, the damaged aircraft was forced to land in enemy territory. The following pilots were awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for their outstanding bravery: CW2 Steven F. Wood and WO1 Charles J. Racine, and 1 Lt. Donald L. Scott and WO1 William W. Critcher received the Air Medal with "V" Device for courage under fire.

During this operation continued emphasis was placed on IFR flight instruction. Two aviators renewed their Standard Instrument tickets, and provided IFR flight training to the other aviators.

The Griffins also continued ARA orientation classes, demonstrations, and forward observer training for infantry units. One class was even presented to B Company, 158th Aviation Battalion(Amb). Operation Randolph Glen lasted 114 days. C Battery flew

2,268 hours on 5,460 sorties, or nearly twenty hours per day on the average. Ammunition expended included 33,414 2.75" rockets, 239,560 rounds of 7.62mm, and 15,889 rounds of 40mm. This ammo accounted for the following: 100 enemy killed by ARA, 70 hootches destroyed, 57 bunkers destroyed, 7 bridges destroyed, 5 trucks destroyed, 2 .51-caliber weapons destroyed, 8 sampans destroyed, and 3 secondary explosions observed.

INTERVIEW

The following is a personal interview that took place in the evening following a successful attack by the 1st ARVN Division closely supported by Aerial Rocket Artillery, on 31 Jan 70. The pilots interviewed were WO1 Stephen H. Scheiding, who served as a pilot in an AH-1G helicopter, and WO1 Joseph J. Milhone, who served as a pilot/gunner. The action centered around a small hill in the vicinity of grid YD 043635. The mission came through C Btry from its higher headquarters, from the 1st ARVN Div. Other units participating in the action were A/4/77, H&H/4/77, D/158th Avn. Bn, B/158th Avn. Bn., and an Air Force forward air control aircraft (commonly called FAC.).

The fire mission came down at 1100 hours, and the Griffins arrived on station at 1130 hours. The weather was good; partly overcast with a ceiling at 2000 feet, 20 knot wind from the North, and excellent visibility. The target area consisted of steep hills with deep ravines, covered by low-growing shrubs. The area had been shelled and bombed many times in the past, leaving only a few dead trees standing. Many bunkers could be seen from the air.

While enroute, the Griffins had contacted the Dragon section, who was working the area at the time, and also established communications with the ARVN element on the ground. The Dragon aircraft passed the Griffins off the Air Force FAC, who directed them into the specific area of the contact. Two Redskin aircraft were firing at the time, so the Griffins orbited and received a sitrep from the FAC. The FAC then rolled in and marked the target with white phosphorus rockets. The Griffins had already identified the friendly positions, and rolled in on a rocket attack, firing 3/4 of a load. While the section was firing on the initial target, one of the pilots saw an unknown unit on a hill approximately 85 meters from the target. These troops were confirmed as enemy by the ground unit and the FAC, and Griffins engaged them at close range with the 40mm. and minigun. One of the aircraft received battle damage on the second pass at the hill.

The Griffins held off until they received the ground commander's permission to fire rockets on the enemy position. The ground commander cleared them, and the section expended its remaining ordnance.

As the ARVN's advanced they received heavy automatic weapons fire and small arms fire from the nearer bunker complex, but the ground commander would not let the ARA fire turret weapons because of the proximity to his own troops. The ARVN's continued to engage the complex with M-16, M-79, and 57mm. recoilless rifle fire. The section of Griffins was relieved by another Griffin section led by Cpt. James Barnett. The first section then returned to Quang Tri for fuel, and on to Camp Evans for more ammunition.

The section was scrambled again at 1500 hours to return to the same area. When they arrived, all the other helicopters had departed station. As the Griffins covered the ARVN troops assaulting the hill, the pilots kept their eyes open for any sign of heavy enemy resistance. The ARVN's were in constant contact, using M-16's and fragmentation grenades to destroy the enemy in the bunkers. The ARVN's had approximately six POW's at this time. Their assault continued into the bunker complex from the North, South, and East.

At this time Cpt. John Morris spotted enemy troops on top of the hill. Some of these were dead, others were wounded, and the rest were trying to defend their position against the advancing ARVN's. The section received clearance from the ground commander to utilize their turret weapons, and fired them until the guns were either jammed or expended. The section then received clearance to use rockets. Each ship fired about four pair, and then continued to orbit at a low altitude so they could observe the advance of the ground element as well as the enemy positions. More enemy were observed, but the ARVN's were too close for the Griffins to fire rockets. ARVN soldiers were observed entering bunkers, locating enemy bodies, clothing, weapons, pots, pans, and other assorted equipment.

The section finally was forced to leave station for lack of fuel. They returned to Quang Tri, refueled, reloaded the turrets, and departed for the area again. But approximately five minutes out of Quang Tri, the wing aircraft experienced an electrical fire in the cockpit which resulted in a partial control loss. This aircraft returned to Quang Tri, while the lead aircraft continued to the target area where he was joined by "King Cobra," the ARA's Battalion Commander. They continued to provide close ground support to the ARVN's who had now taken the hill and were encountering sporadic pockets of resistance. One of these was a very large bunker which held for approximately fifteen minutes under concentrated attack.

As the aircraft passed over the advancing ARVN troops, they held up captured weapons which included assault rifles and machine guns. At this time the ground commander reported an estimated 14 POW's and 45 enemy killed. The lead ship remained on station approximately one hour while the ARVN's secured the area, and continued searching for more enemy and supplies. During this hour two "slicks" from B/158th Avn Bn were covered while they went in to extract POW's and captured documents, and one Medevac ship was covered as it picked up wounded troops--both friendly and enemy.

The lead aircraft was relieved on station by his wing man, who was in a replacement aircraft flown up to Quang Tri by the maintenance officer. Then the Section leader refueled at Quang Tri, and returned to the target area while the wing man escorted another B/158th ship into the friendly position to pick up casualties. The ARVN adviser reported to his headquarters that over sixty enemy had been killed.

The Griffins escorted two more Dustoff aircraft which made casualty pick-ups, and continued air cover for the ARVN's while

they withdrew and set up night defensive positions around the area. Darkness was approaching, and at this time the Griffins were given an end-of-mission. The adviser also informed the ARA that over sixty enemy were killed, fourteen were captured, and the ARVN casualties were light. No ARVN soldier was lost. The section returned to Camp Evans, where a hot meal awaited them.