

HEADQUARTERS
498TH MEDICAL COMPANY (AIR AMB)
APO San Francisco, Calif 96240

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SECTION I - SUMMARY OF PREVIOUS REPORT

The 498th Medical Company (Air Ambulance) was activated at Fort San Houston, Texas on 23 September 1964 by General Order 86, Headquarters, Fort San Houston. It was attached to the 67th Medical Group by General Order 88, Headquarters, Fort San Houston.

The company's mission is to provide: (a) aeromedical evacuation for selected patients, (b) emergency movement of medical personnel and accompanying equipment and supplies to meet critical requirements, and (c) to provide around-the-clock delivery by air of whole blood, biologicals, and medical supplies when critical requirements exist.

The company was organized under TOE 8-137D dated 24 February 1960, as changed. The company organization incorporates the following major elements: (a) the company headquarters; (b) an operations platoon consisting of a headquarters, an operations section, and an airfield service section; (c) a communications section; (d) a maintenance platoon consisting of a headquarters and four (4) maintenance sections; and (e) four (4) flight platoons. The authorized strength of the company is 28 officers and 139 enlisted men with 25 utility helicopters.

As of 31 December 1964 there were 7 officers and 43 enlisted men assigned. There were five (5) UH-19D helicopters and some basic maintenance equipment on hand, but nearly all other major items of equipment and supplies had not yet been received.

SECTION II - ORGANIZATION AND MISSION

From 1 January 1965 to August 1965 the company retained its original posture at Fort San Houston, Texas. In mid-August 1965 the entire company moved to South Vietnam and established its headquarters at Nha Trang. The platoons were disposed as follows: the first platoon and maintenance platoon adjacent to headquarters at Nha Trang, 2nd platoon at Pleiku, 3rd and 4th platoons and operations at Qui Nhon.

Upon its arrival in Vietnam, approximately 15 September 1965, the company was assigned to US Army Vietnam. On 24 September 1965, it was reassigned to the 43d Medical Group, which is under the 1st Logistical Command in Vietnam.

Since its arrival in Vietnam the company has performed its basic aeromedical evacuation mission in general support of all US Forces, third country forces, and Vietnamese forces located within the Army of Vietnam II Corps Sector.

SECTION III - PERSONNEL

On 1 June 1965, Lt Col Joseph P. Madrane, MSC, assumed command of the unit. The previous commander, from 21 December 1964 to 1 June 1965, was Major Donald L. Miller, MSC.

Effective 15 July 1965, key subordinate positions in the company have been filled by the following individuals:

| | |
|---------------------|---------------------------|
| Executive Officer | Major Glen W. Jones |
| Operations Officer | Major William R. Bentley |
| Maintenance Officer | Major John E. Persons |
| CO 1st Platoon | Major Avery M. Rogers |
| CO 2nd Platoon | Major Steven H. Kash |
| CO 3rd Platoon | Major Robert E. Thackston |
| CO 4th Platoon | Major Ralph H. McBride |

* On 11 November 1965, Major Thackston replaced Major Harland Burroughs, who was wounded by hostile gunfire and evacuated to the United States.

Until 1 June 1965, the company was in a unit training status at greatly reduced personnel strength. During June and July an accelerated influx of personnel brought officers and enlisted strength to 100% by 15 July 1965. However, many EM were found to be non-deployable and enlisted strength was only 88% when the main party departed CONUS on 17 August 1965.

As of 31 December 1965 total unit strength was 29 officers of 28 authorized and 117 EM of 139 authorized. The weakness in enlisted strength was all in the critical field of aircraft mechanics.

Although the assigned pilot strength appeared to be satisfactory in the light of TOE authorization, there was actually a critical shortage of pilots in the unit. This was due to the requirement in Vietnam that no flights may be conducted without a co-pilot. With 25 aircraft assigned, a pilot strength of at least 50 was required for the unit to be fully effective. This problem was partially alleviated by the assignment of pilots from other units for brief periods of temporary duty with this unit. With the approval by DA and SGO for the assignment of warrant officer pilots to medical aviation units, a gradual improvement in assigned pilot strength was to be expected.

A drastic imbalance in the unit's commissioned officer rank structure was expected to continue and to worsen. Authorized officer grades for the company are one (1) major, seven (7) captains, and twenty (20) lieutenants. Actual grades assigned were one (1) Lt Col, fourteen (14) majors, twelve (12) captains, three (3) lieutenants, and four (4) warrant officers. Most of the majors and all the captains were occupying positions normally filled by junior lieutenants and warrant officers. There appeared to be an impasse in the career development of nearly all field grade MSC aviators.

SECTION IV - TRAINING

The company conducted basic and advanced unit training cycles until approximately 1 June 1965. At that time a program of operational readiness training was initiated due to the accelerated influx of personnel and the imminent prospect of orders for overseas movement. This included a review of basic military skills for all personnel, advanced MOS training for EM, and instrument, navigation, and mission type flight training for pilots.

SECTION V - MATERIEL

Prior to 1 June 1965, the unit trained and operated with major shortages in aircraft and in all classes of other equipment and supplies. Subsequent to that date, all shortages were eliminated and the unit deployed to Vietnam with 100% of its TOE equipment and authorized supplies.

SECTION VI - OPERATIONS

Prior to deployment to South Vietnam, the company provided air evacuation services for patients at Fort Sam Houston, Texas and within the Fourth Army area. An interesting adjunct to this mission was to provide a 24 hour daily alert aircraft and crew ready for instant dispatch whenever President Johnson was at his ranch near Johnson City, Texas.

The first contingent of aircraft and crews arrived in South Vietnam on 15 September 1965. By 20 September 1965 operational flying missions were begun. From that date until 31 December 1965, the unit's activities and accomplishments may be summarized as follows:

| | |
|-------------------------------|------|
| Total patients evacuated | 4338 |
| Total missions flown | 1794 |
| Total flying time | 2470 |
| Average aircraft availability | 83% |

On 11 November 1965 one of the 3rd Platoon's aircraft crashed and burned while on a night mission near Qui Nhon. Enlisted crew members SP5 Gilivaldo Martinez, PFC Orin L. Allred, and PFC William Esposito sustained fatal injuries. The pilots, Major Richard H. Scott and Captain Edward A. Haswell received serious injuries including third degree burns. Major Scott's injuries were a direct result of his heroic action in pulling Captain Haswell from the wreckage and thereby saving his life.

On 11 November 1965 Major Harland Burroughs was wounded in the neck by hostile gunfire while flying near Qui Nhon. His co-pilot, 1st Lt Roger P. Hula is credited with extraordinary skill and heroism in gaining control of

the aircraft and landing it safely.

On 30 November 1965 an aircraft of the 4th Platoon crashed and was destroyed while on a night mission near Qui Nhon. The crew chief sustained minor injuries. Both aircraft which were lost were replaced through normal supply channels.

SECTION VII - AWARDS

The following awards have been recommended for members of this unit since its arrival in Vietnam:

| | <u>AWARDED</u> | <u>PENDING</u> |
|----------------------------|----------------|----------------|
| Silver Star | | 6 |
| Distinguished Flying Cross | | 9 |
| Bronze Star with V | | 25 |
| Bronze Star | | 0 |
| Air Medal with V | 3 | 7 |
| Air Medal | 29 | 170 |