

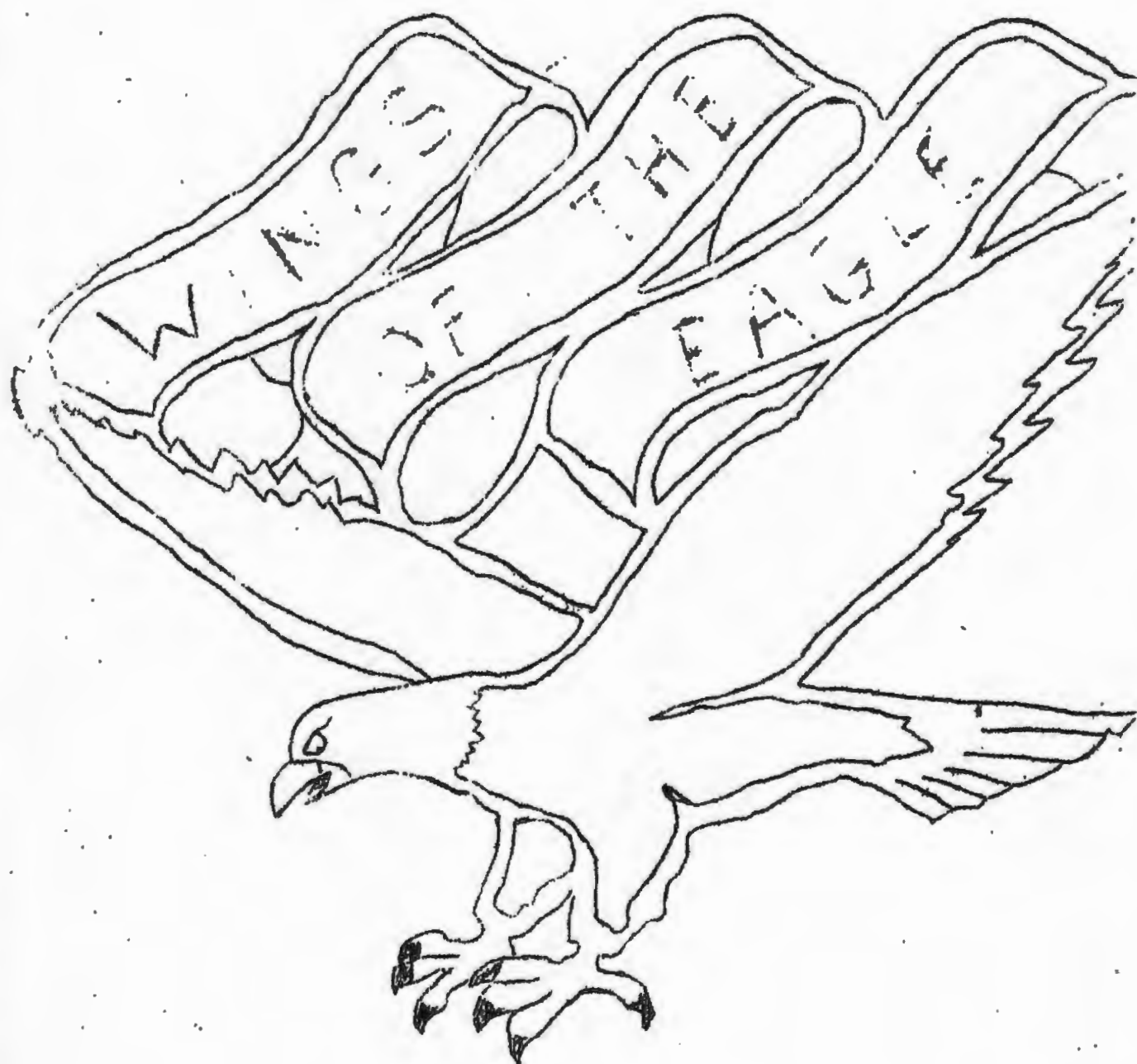
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1968


801ST  
AVIATION BATTALION (AH)



ANNUAL SUPPLEMENT TO  
THE HISTORY OF THE  
101ST AVIATION BATTALION

1 JANUARY 1968 THROUGH 31 DECEMBER 1968

PREPARED BY ORDER OF  
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CPT ARMOR  
UNIT HISTORIAN

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## PREFACE

This Annual Historical Supplement for the calendar year 1968 was prepared between 26 July 1969 and 7 August 1969. At that time the material that was available for the supplement was incomplete. The historical records, in compliance with current policy, are unclassified and do not include the information contained in the classified quarterly Operational Reports-Lessons Learned (ORLL), after action reports pertaining to specific operations, and other classified material. These documents contain a wealth of information that at such time as they are made available, will explain in detail the way the battalion conducted the combat operations covered in this text. In addition they cover many problem areas in the fields of administration and logistics that are treated in general manner in the text. When these documents are declassified, a copy should be attached to this supplement and kept in the historical file until such time as a complete unit history is prepared.

CPT Leekley,  
I've picked out a few  
excerpts. Should be provided next  
carefully before being sent to Washington  
Lt. Krum  
Dir AG



## MISSION

The 101st Aviation Battalion was reorganized during the period covered by this supplement. The mission statements applicable to both the period prior to and after this reorganization are listed below.

1. a. The mission of the 101st Aviation Battalion (Abn Div) as defined by TOE 1-55G, is as follows:

1. To provide aviation support for division headquarters, division support command, and other divisional units without organic aircraft.

2. To provide General support and reinforcement to units possessing organic aircraft.

3. To provide an aviation special staff section for the division headquarters.

b. The mission of Headquarters and Headquarters company, as defined by TOE 1-56G, is as follows:

1. To furnish command, control, administration, battalion level organizational maintenance, communications, and supply for the Aviation Battalion.

c. The mission of Company A (light airmobile) as defined by TOE 1-57G, is as follows:

1. Provide tactical air movement of combat troops in airmobile operations.

2. Provide tactical air movement of combat supplies and equipment in airmobile operations.

d. The mission of Company B (General Support) as defined by TOE 1-58G is as follows:

1. Provides Aviation support for the division headquarters, division support command, and other units without organic aircraft.

2. Provides medium range aerial surveillance to acquire combat intelligence and target information required by the division.

3. Provides general support and reinforcement to units with organic aircraft.

4. Provides limited aerial escort for airmobile operations and limited supplemental aerial fire support to combat elements of the division.

2. a. After the reorganization of the Battalion under TOE 1-55T the mission is as follows:

To provide tactical mobility for combat troops, supplies, and equipment of the 101st Airborne Division during the conduct of airmobile operations.

b. The mission of Headquarters and Headquarters Company as defined by TOE 1-156T is as follows:

To furnish command, control, administration, battalion level organizational maintenance, communications, and supply for the aviation battalion.

c. The mission of Companies A, B and C as defined by TOE 1-157T is as follows:

To provide tactical mobility for combat troops, supplies and equipment of the division during the conduct of airmobile operations.

d. The mission of Company D as defined by TOE 1-157T is as follows:

To provide security for airmobile forces, and to participate in offensive defensive, and delaying actions as part of a highly mobile combined arms team.



## Summary of Events-Calendar Year 1968

### The Beginning

The year 1968 began with the 101st Aviation Battalion located at Bien Hoa Army Base where it had arrived from the United States in the last month of 1967. Although the battalion had hardly become settled into its new home, operations against the enemy commenced almost immediately. On the 2d of January a combat assault was conducted by the 3d Brigade of the 101st Airborne Division in the vicinity of Phoo Vinh. Operations continued in this vicinity, with a routine of logistics, administrative, and fire support missions becoming quickly established. On 23 January the emphasis abruptly shifted to operations in the Song Be area. The pathfinder section from the headquarters company moved to take control of the rotary wing aircraft refueling area at Song Be, although the aircraft and crew remained based at Bien Hoa. As January drew to a close both Song Be and the battalion's main base camp at Bien Hoa came under repeated mortar and rocket attacks.

### TET

The intelligence build up during the closing weeks of January had indicated the enemy's intent to attack, among other locations throughout the country, the Saigon-Bien Hoa area during the TET holiday period with an eye toward inflicting maximum damage and casualties to allied forces, and causing irreparable harm to the prestige of the Saigon government and of the other powers of the free world who sought to assist them. As the ominous warnings from G-2 channels became more strident, security measures increased. At 0145 hours on 31 January the battalion went on 100% alert, and when, at 0300, the first rounds from the enemy's mortars landed on the base at Bien Hoa, the battalion had already deployed its forces to defend its own facilities within the base, and be ready to perform such missions as necessary to assist in the fight elsewhere.

As the situation developed, hostile forces broke through the outer perimeter of the base and drove for the main airfield. Others approached the helicopter pad of the 101st Aviation Battalion; both were halted by ground fire, and as they were pinned there, they were hammered from the air. Jet aircraft, still using the main strip, did not even bother to clear the traffic pattern before dropping their ordnance. The Black Angels of Company B contributed to the destruction of the enemy pocket with rockets and minigun fire.

The most remarkable accomplishment of the Battalion during the TET offensive was achieved not at Bien Hoa, but in the city of Saigon at the American Embassy. Communist forces had attacked the Embassy itself, and, in spite of heroic resistance by the Embassy guards, were in control of parts of the complex, including a section of the main building. The eyes of the world turned toward this bizarre battle, and the call went out to the 101st to reinforce the beleaguered garrison of MP's and others who were attempting to drive the enemy from their grounds. The fastest way to move troops to the area was by the helicopter, but where to land? The grounds and buildings were partially overrun, and friendly and hostile forces were mixed with one another. The decision was made to land on the only available spot - the roof of the Embassy building itself. This operation was fraught with unusual characteristics. No preparatory fires were possible. The assaulted area was full of friendly troops as well as being composed of a highly critical complex of buildings whose political importance was enough to induce great caution, not to mention the records and equipment within the complex that were subject to damage as the battle increased in ferocity.

A rifle infantry platoon was carried by 5 UH-1H "slicks" to the embassy. The lead ship was commanded by LTC John R. McGregor the battalion commander, who was also the air mission commander. Two attempts were made to land, but ground fire was too intense. The door gunners on the slicks could not respond, because of the proximity of friendly troops. As the third attempt was made, the MP's on the Embassy grounds provided covering fire. Only one ship could land on the roof top at a time, and as they came in and the troops dismounted from the aircraft, the pilots maneuvered their aircraft to shield the infantry as they moved across the exposed roof and down into the building.

The operation began with the request for aid at 0500. At 0834 the first ship landed and by 0845 the operation was complete. One casualty was suffered by the 101st Aviation Battalion when the door gunner on the lead ship was wounded. Once the insertions were complete, the battle at the Embassy continued to sputter on for a short time but what may be the most unique airmobile combat assault in the Viet-Nam war was over.

### INFUSION

During the period of the first and second months of 1969, the Battalion underwent a shuffling of personnel with other aviation units. This, known as the infusion program, was designed to provide a leveling of more experienced aviators and other personnel to obtain a more even level of experience between the units involved in the program. This program had another benefit, in that it meant that partial elimination of the "hump" or mass exodus that would occur on the anniversary of the battalion's arrival in Vietnam as the members of the Battalion would, without this program, come up for rotation at the same time.

### MOVE TO EAGLE

In February, the Battalion began its move to Camp Eagle near the old imperial city of Hue. A small advance party went north on the 11th while the remainder of the fallen into a routine pattern as members of the battalion became "Old Hands" at the business of combat assaults and the other missions they were required to perform. From the 19th to the 22d of February the battalion supported an operation by the 3d Brigade in the vicinity of San Thuy. On the first day of this operation, 14 kills were credited to B Company's "Black Angel" gunships. On the 28th of February, a C-130 transport was shot down by ground fire in the vicinity of Song Be. A "slick" sent out to recover the crew was fired on and hit. For the better part of the afternoon, gunships rained fire on the enemy near the downed aircraft while slicks brought troops in to secure the area and evacuate personnel and equipment.

From the 9th through the 12th of March the bulk of the battalion was loaded aboard ship in the Saigon harbor. On the 11th this ship, the seatrail Maine, departed for DaNang. On 13 March 40 personnel and two vehicles were flown via C-130 Transport from Bien Hoa airbase to the Phu Bai airfield near Hue and Camp Eagle to join the advance party, and assist in the final preparation of the camp for the arrival of the main body. The Maine docked at DaNang on 14 March and on the same day the 1st detachment from Bien Hoa arrived at DaNang. On the 29th all of the battalion had closed Camp Eagle with the exception of 5 aircraft and ten crews which remained behind to continue support for the Third Brigade in the Song Be/Bien Hoa area.

Even while a large portion of the battalion was still enroute to their new base at Camp Eagle, others had taken up the fight in the new area of operation. On the 23d of March, the "Black Angels" were called to assist in a running battle north of Hue. An estimated NVA Battalion had been flushed, and as the gunships arrived over the battle area, a large number of enemy soldiers were caught in the open. In the brief sharp skirmish that followed, the gunships of B/101st were credited with 63 enemy killed in action.

The first two days of April found the pathfinders of HHC 101st establishing aircraft control towers at Camp Eagle and Fire base Bastogne. Operations were generally routine through April, even the commencement of operation Garentan II did not mean an extraordinary increase in activity for the battalion.

On the 6th of May however, "Black Angel" gunships, of B Company under the command and leadership of Major Eugene T. Randall were credited with 57 NVA killed during operations in support of the 3d Brigade of the 82d Airborne Division.

#### NEVADA EAGLE

In Mid-May operation Nevada Eagle commenced, which was to continue throughout the remainder of 1968 and well into 1969. The operation was subdivided into many smaller operations and the Battalion was called upon to conduct combat assaults, resupply missions, fire support missions, and extractions at an ever increasing tempo. Administrative activity grew in intensity also as the July 1st date for conversion of the 101st to an airmobile division approached. The 17th and 188th assault Helicopter companies which had been attached to the Division for some time, were assigned to the Battalion.

New personnel arrived and were attached to the Battalion prior to the organization of the 160th Aviation Group headquarters.

In the midst of this activity the enemy chose to make a serious attempt at damaging Camp Eagle. On 21 May, covered by a heavy Rocket and mortar fire, a ground attack was pressed against parts of the camp's perimeter. The sector occupied by the 101st Aviation Battalion was never severely pressed; however the shelling did some damage. The battalion mess hall received a direct hit from a 122 mm rocket, and was nearly destroyed. Also three men were wounded on the bunker line by shell fragments. On 23 May, LTC Paul B. Snyder assumed Command from LTC John E. McGregor, and on 27 May, the Battalion received it's Annual General Inspection. In spite of the strain incurred by combat operations, the moves from the states and then from Bien Hoa, and the personnel turmoil of the infusion program, the battalion had no difficulty in meeting the requirements to successfully pass the inspection.

On the 14th of June the 160th Aviation Group was formally organized. It was at this time that the Battalion bade farewell to its pathfinders, as they moved to become part of the Group headquarters. On 15 July the formal reorganization of the 101st Aviation Battalion took place.

In a picturesque ceremony at Camp Eagle, the members of the 17th and 188th Assault Helicopter Companies removed their old insignia to reveal the 101st Patch. The 17th became B Company, and the 188th became C Company. The "Black Angels" that were B Company plus the gun platoons of the slick companies became the "Hawks" of D Company.

In early August, the most significant portion of Nevada Eagle was undertaken. A force of two brigades, US and ARVN, was inserted into the infamous A Shau valley in an attempt to disrupt the enemy's supply channels and deny this critical route to his use. The operation was called Somerset Plain. The 101st Battalion bore the brunt of the effort of both the initial insertions and the resupply of the infantry units in the valley.

The initial lift was one of the most massive in the war. Every available transport in the battalion was utilized along with numerous aircraft from supporting units. Near the end of August the campaign in the valley came to an end with the extraction to the allied forces.

With the beginning of September, the weather began to change. In the northern part of South Viet-Nam the onset of Autumn means the start of the rainy season. On the 4th of September typhoon Bess struck Camp Eagle. This storm accompanied by rains that were very heavy even for Viet-Nam, and winds up to 120 mph posed a severe threat to the Battalion. Although some damage, and considerable discomfort, resulted from the storms, no aircraft were lost or severely damaged, due largely to the efforts of their crews to secure them against possible harm. In spite of the bad weather, the 101st continued to conduct airmobile operations. In early September a series of operations commenced, that while continuing to pursue the general objective called for in operation Nevada Eagle of grinding down the enemy, denying him his supplies, and breaking up the infra structure, took into account the effects of the weather and its limitations on operations. The Vin Loc operation commenced during the period, and at about the same time the battalion was called upon to support the withdrawal from the western part of the area of operations. Fire bases deep in the mountains such as Veghel, Eagle's Nest and Bastogne were abandoned and the personnel, equipment and everything of value was airlifted back to locations that would be accessible during the rainy season. On the 15th of September a combat assault was conducted near Noun Hoa. On 20 September during an extraction conducted near Vin Loc which brought the operations of the same name to an end, gunships of D company were credited with 10 confirmed kills when enemy forces attempted to disrupt the maneuver.

In early October the 3d Brigade of the 82d Airborne Division began its move to the south. At the same time the 3d Brigade of the 101st, the "nomad" Brigade, returned to its parent unit. By 12 October the Brigade had occupied Camp Evans, the former base camp of the 1st Cavalry Division, which had departed for III Corps area shortly before.

An extensive training program began at once for the 3d Brigade, and the 101st Aviation Battalion found itself flying mission after mission as operations were conducted over the flat ground in the northeastern portion of the area of operations by the Brigade as they became familiar with their new environment and the Division's methods of operating.

On the 20th of October, the Battalion was augmented by the attachment of four aircraft maintenance detachments. One was assigned to each company. (The 499th TC Det to A Company, the 510th TC Det to B Company, the 516th TC Det to C Company, and the 527th TC Det to D Company.) These detachments provided direct support maintenance and supplemented the company's organic capabilities.

The weather continued to deteriorate into November, and operations became more and more limited. A major problem that arose was in the form of the DEROS hump mentioned above. In spite of the infusion program and tour extensions, the battalion lost 200 personnel over five week period. This meant a time of stress for those who were left behind as the new replacements had to be trained and indoctrinated in the procedures followed by the Division and the conditions peculiar to the area of operations.

On 21 December, with a break in the weather, a massive operation was conducted as the 3d Brigade and an equivalent force of ARVN troops were lifted into the mountains west of Camp Evans.

During the Christmas truce the Battalion had the distinction of being shot at by the enemy 18 minutes after the truce began. In addition to being possibly the first intended victim of a cease fire violation, other more pleasant activities included hearing Evangelist Billy Graham speak, and providing an airmobile taxi service for screen star Carolyn Devoe who toured fire bases in the 101st's area.



### YEAR'S END

As the year ended the 101st Aviation Battalion continued to develop. In the closing weeks of the year, the first of the cobra gunships were delivered to replace the old UH-1C (Huey) aircraft that had served so well through the previous months. As the relative hush of the New Year's truce settled over the area of operation, the members of the Battalion looked back with pride on a year of struggle and accomplishment, and forward with confidence toward the future struggle.

COMMANDING OFFICERS

1968

101st Aviation Battalion

1 January 1968 through 13 May 1968	LTC John E. McGregor
13 May 1968 through 16 November 1968	LTC Paul B. Snyder
16 November 1968 through 31 December 1968	LTC John D. Kennedy

Company A

1 January 1968 through 6 January 1968	MAJ Leon H. Stone Jr.
6 January 1968 through 1 July 1968	MAJ Benjamin J. Mendes Jr.
1 July 1968 through 21 December 1968	MAJ Alexander Balbarde Jr.
21 December 1968 through 31 December 1968	MAJ Kenneth L. Wall

Company B

1 January 1968 through 14 July 1968	MAJ John S. Joyce
14 July 1968 through 13 December 1968	MAJ Daniel A. Addiss
13 December 1968 through 31 December 1968	MAJ Vernon C. Griggs Jr.

Company C

14 July 1968 through 20 December 1968	MAJ Henry E. Dreher
(Promoted to LTC 18 November 1968)	
20 December 1968 through 31 December 1968	MAJ Wayne C. Boles

Company D

14 July 1968 through 31 December 1968	LTC Ronald C. Perry
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Headquarters Company

1 January 1968 through 18 February 1968	CPT Robert K. Bennett
18 February 1968 through 4 May 1968	CPT Robert R. Lefebvre
4 May 1968 through 1 August 1968	CPT John S. Williams
1 August 1968 through 27 November 1968	CPT Stanley S. Souvenier
27 November 1968 through 31 December 1968	CPT Kelly M. Robinson

AVERAGE PERSONNEL STRENGTH

(1968)

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
OFF	30	32	34	31	28	29	49	62	68	63	67	69
WO	40	41	38	37	40	42	89	117	118	120	125	128
EM	282	268	270	278	281	287	698	673	681	679	625	680

FLYING HOURS 1968

	<u>Jan</u>	<u>Feb</u>	<u>Mar</u>	<u>Apr</u>	<u>May</u>	<u>Jun</u>	<u>Jul</u>	<u>Aug</u>	<u>Sep</u>	<u>Oct</u>	<u>Nov</u>	<u>Dec</u>
Co A	1195	1230	1303	1350	1580	1733	2040	1613	1591	1370	1517	1501
Co B	642	520	400	530	813	342	2042*	1849	1620	1638	1610	1703
Co C	0	0	0	0	0	0	2435	2483	2753	1249	1487	1480
Co D	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	842	651	789	1004	585
Bn	1837	1750	1703	1880	2393	2075	6517	6787	6615	5046	5618	5269

NOTE: \*In the figure for B Company in July includes the gunships that became D Company as of 14 July 1968.



PROMOTIONS

(Enlisted)

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
E-9	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
E-8	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
E-7	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
E-6	6	5	2	3	1	4	3	1	1	3	2	1
E-5	5	4	3	0	7	2	4	6	3	2	5	4
E-4	40	19	11	1	25	15	31	10	4	33	15	14
E-3	2	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	2	0	0	2
E-2	0	1	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	1	0

(Officers)

LTC	1
MAJ	2
CPT	18
1LT	2
CW4	0
CW3	1
CW2	71

# R&R ALLOCATIONS - CALENDAR 1968

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Hawaii	8	8	9	8	7	14	15	15	15	15	15	16
Sydney	6	5	4	6	5	6	9	9	9	10	10	9
Hong Kong	5	5	5	5	6	4	9	8	8	8	9	8
Tokyo	2	2	3	2	2	2	3	4	4	4	4	5
Manila	1	2	2	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	2
Bangkok	4	4	3	4	4	4	8	8	8	8	8	9
Kuala Lumpur	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	2
Singapore	2	2	2	4	2	3	5	6	5	5	6	6
Taipei	3	3	3	3	2	3	6	6	5	6	6	7
Penang	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1

NOTE: The above figures reflect the allocations granted to the battalion. These were broken out to the companies. Some were traded with other units for other allocations to satisfy, as much as possible, individual's preferences. A small number were not used due to varying circumstances.

# DECORATIONS AWARDED IN 1968

Bronze Star	436
Army Commendation Medal	513
Silver Star	14
Gallantry Cross with Silver Star	9
Gallantry Cross with Bronze Star	8
Good Conduct Medal	14
Purple Heart	37
Bronze Star with "V"	26
Air Medal with "V"	111
Distinguished Flying Cross	116
Army Commendation Medal with "V"	24
Air Medal	1684