

HAWK

DECEMBER 1967





1ST AVIATION BRIGADE

HAWK

DECEMBER 1967

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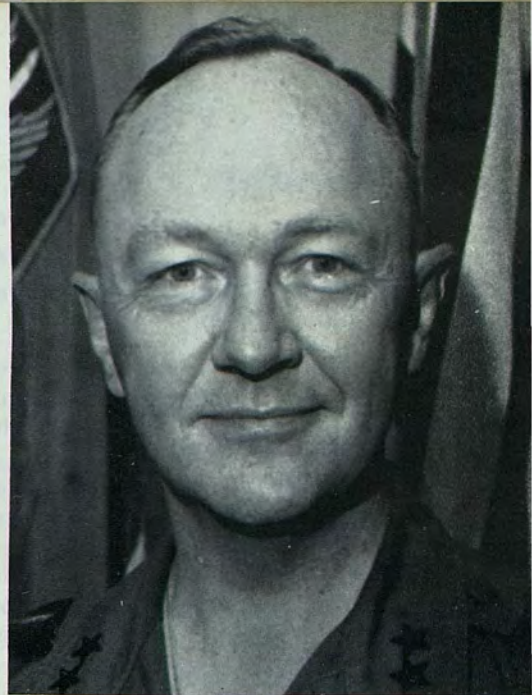
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A Christmas Message

From the Commander



DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
HEADQUARTERS 1ST AVIATION BRIGADE
APO SAN FRANCISCO 96384



AVBA

To the Officers and Men of the 1st Aviation Brigade

"Peace on earth, good will toward men."

That message from God, as proclaimed by the angelic chorus, has symbolized the true spirit of this holy season for generations. Peace on earth is still the desire of men everywhere. It is the special hope for men such as we, who are engaged in a hostile action. It is my special prayer for you during this Christmas Season.

I need not remind you that the Christmas Season is traditionally a family time and that you and I would much rather be with our loved ones. I would point out, however, that it is a season dedicated to the peace of men the world over.

Let us therefore dedicate ourselves anew to our mission of helping to bring that God-promised peace to all men who join us in a love of freedom. This cause, I sincerely believe is worth all the loneliness, hardship and danger we are sharing.

May God bless you--with peace.

Robert R. Williams
ROBERT R. WILLIAMS
Major General, USA
Commanding

Editorial

CHRISTMAS IN VIETNAM

Christmas. A good time of year. The celebration of the birth of Christ. A time of peace and good will. A time of jovial spirits, busy shoppers, giving and receiving. Good times; visiting old friends and meeting new ones.

In Vietnam, Christmas will be a time for remembering. Remembering Christmases past; trimming the tree and hanging stockings. Watching the light in the eyes of our loved ones. Perhaps reminiscing about a particularly warm and meaningful Christmas of our childhood. And realizing that we have to fight to keep it that way.

Christmas is no fun 10,000 miles from home in a land that is strange and unfamiliar. A land that few of us will ever forget. We are here to help the Vietnamese people in their fight for an ideal. An ideal that we have enjoyed in our country for 191 years. Freedom.

We did not obtain our freedom alone, and alone we cannot keep it. To insure our own freedom, we must help other people obtain theirs. On this Christmas, let us give Freedom--and the Vietnamese people who desire it,--our best effort.

'Tis better to give than to receive.

Chaplain's Corner

Chaplain (Cpt) A. Jay Althouse



Psychologists tell us that when a certain word is used with frequency, it gives an indication of what our thoughts and lives center on--either consciously or subconsciously. The word "peace" has been repeated often throughout man's history. This would indicate that since man's beginning, peace has in one way or another been the center of our thoughts and lives.

The Gospel of Luke tells us that after the angel of the Lord told the shepherds of the good news of Jesus' birth, a multitude of heavenly hosts joined the angel and together they sang, "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, good will toward men."

The Christmas season is one when temporary truces are made, conflicts cease, and hate is subdued or forgiven. It is a time when men give to and share with one another; when an effort is made to understand each other; and a time when men seek to live in peace. One wonders: If this can happen for a short time, why can't it happen for a long time--maybe even for good?

What might happen if all of us in Vietnam paused for five minutes on Christmas Day to pray for peace? God's will is peace on earth among men. Peace in our nations, peace in our families, and peace in our lives.

from the

CAREER COUNSELOR

Do you know that the average soldier in the U.S. Army would have to save about \$45,000 to get the same annual income he will receive in Army retirement pay after 20 years' service? (The figure is based on the average enlisted grade, not the highest.)

The retired soldier also receives full medical care in Uniformed Service hospitals, travel privileges on government carriers and purchasing privileges at most Army post exchanges and commissaries.

The U.S. Army man who retires with 20 years of service immediately to receive his retirement pay, regardless of his age. For example, if he entered the Army at the age of 18, he would be eligible for retirement at 38.

And if he should desire to seek civilian employment, his Army training, schooling and experience are a valuable asset.

For the man who thinks about his future, these facts should present food for thought.

For further details--see your unit career counselor.

NEWSLETTERS

VICE-PRESIDENT HUBERT HUMPHREY made the following remarks during his recent visit to Vietnam:

"First I want to bring to the American Military Forces the gratitude, the respect and the admiration of your President and your Vice President and your fellow Americans. And through you General Westmoreland, I ask that you convey this to every man, every officer in the field and in your command...in the Army, the Navy, the Air Force, the Marine Corps and the Coast Guard, every branch of our military...I ask that you convey our deep gratitude and appreciation for service beyond the call of duty. And let it be known from this platform that the men and the women of the Armed Forces of the United States today represent the finest generation of Americans that this Nation has ever known.

Never have men worn the uniform of the United States of America who have done a better job as soldiers, as airmen, as sailors and marines and coast guardsmen than those that are here today serving in this struggle as an ally to the Republic of Vietnam. I'm proud of them, the President is proud of them, and I want them to know that we are humbly grateful."

SOLDIERS IN SOUTHEAST Asia will be issued new type combat hats to replace the O-G 106 field cap commonly called baseball cap. The new hat, designed for use in tropical areas, provides protection from the sun, rain and insects. The full-brimmed hat can be outfitted with mosquito netting. (Army Digest)

OCT. 1 TO BE EFFECTIVE DATE for 5.6% military pay raises—Congress has been asked to make the 5.6% increase in military base pay effective Oct. 1, as was requested by President Johnson in his message on all Federal pay.

The request was made before the House Armed Services Committee by Assistant Secretary of Defense (Manpower) Thomas D. Morris. Base pay increases for all pay grades, E-1 through O-10, make up about 74% of the total raise.

HAWK

The stress was placed on base pay because it affects all personnel, while increasing allowances would benefit only those who are furnished quarters and subsistence. DOD also favored base pay increases because they increase future military retirement income, thereby offering long-term value and incentive to the career force. (COMMANDERS DIGEST)

ENLISTED PERSONNEL SEEKING Inter-Theater transfer must have enough time remaining on enlistment to complete new assignment. Soldiers going to Europe, Alaska or Southern Command must have at least 12 months. Korea, Thailand or Vietnam transferees need nine months remaining in service. Persons without adequate time remaining in service may extend, reenlist or sign a statement of intent depending on their situation. (Army Digest)



VIETNAM'S FIRST HUEYCOBRA GRADUATING CLASS received diplomas and certificates of achievement in graduation ceremonies at Bien Hoa Oct. 7. The 12 pilots, all members of the 1st Aviation Brigade, attended a two-week familiarization course on the HUEYCOBRA, the newest addition to the Army's inventory of aircraft. During the ceremony each of the graduates received a certificate of achievement from Bell Helicopter, which produces the HUEYCOBRA, and a certificate of training from the Department of the Army.

Perspective:

12th COMBAT AVIATION GROUP



Consider a unit which integrates fire power, mobility and communications with flexibility, versatility and ingenuity, and the result is the 12th Combat Aviation Group.

The 12th Group, commanded by Colonel Nicholas G. Psaki, Jr., has demonstrated the importance of Army Aviation to the men on the ground throughout the four corps areas since its inception in 1965. Its five Combat Aviation Battalions and 23 Aviation Companies have repeatedly set new highs in flying hours, troops lifted and cargo carried, then turned around and broken their own records through even greater efforts. The story of the 12th Combat Aviation Group is the story of Army Aviation in Vietnam.

The 12th Group is the offspring of three years of air mobility testing. It was conceived and authorized as a "child of necessity" during the intense buildup between 1 April and 1 December 1965 to meet the Communist onslaught. The first unit in Vietnam which subsequently became a part of the 12th Combat Aviation Group was the 18th

Aviation Operating Detachment which arrived in Vietnam in Oct. 1961. The first battalion which became a part of the 12th Group lineage was the 45th Transportation Battalion, redesignated the 145th Aviation Battalion which appropriately adopted the motto "First in Vietnam".

To control the onrushing tide of new units arriving in RVN during the spring and summer of 1965 more organization was needed. The challenge was met in the form of the USA Aviation Group (Prov) activated 15 April. The Aviation Group assumed command on 15 May 1965 of the 13th, 14th, 52nd and 145th Aviation Battalions, the 765th Transportation Battalion, the 73rd Aviation Company, the 18 AOD, the 57th Medical Detachment and I Corps Aviation Section (Prov). The Group encompassed an area of 66,000 square miles, transcending all Corps areas.

By 1 June 1965 the strength of the Aviation Group was 1135 officers and warrant officers, of whom 1,048 were aviators, and 5,184 enlisted personnel. Within six months these figures would nearly double. During the im-

mense spring and summer buildup of 1965 aviation units continued to arrive in RVN in ever increasing numbers to support the counterinsurgency effort. On 31 August 1965 Headquarters Company 12th Combat Aviation Group, arrived in RVN and assumed command of all the units of the de-activated USA Aviation Group.

By mid-December the 12th Group controlled 34 aviation units composed of nearly 14,000 personnel. Assigned aircraft numbered 862.

On 1 March 1966 the 12th Group was reduced to a more manageable organization with the activation of the 1st Aviation Brigade and the subsequent assignment of the newly activated 17th Aviation Group along with the 34th Support Group. On 2 April 1966 the 178th Aviation Company (Airmobile Medium) became operational and for the first time in the III and IV Corps Tactical Zones CH-47 aircraft were introduced in quantity into the forward battle area. The troop lift capability provided by CH-47 Chinooks marked a new concept in counterinsurgency operations.

"firepower, mobility communications...

At the first change of command ceremony on 2 May 1966 the 12th Group colors were presented to Colonel Raymond P. Campbell Jr. Colonel Campbell enriched the command with his broad aviation background, garnered through direct personal contact with the airmobile concept during its inception stages.

The feasibility of the airmobile concept has been clearly demonstrated in RVN. The 12th Group has fortified this concept by contributing to the counterinsurgency efforts in virtually every operation in RVN, including Abilene, Birmingham, El Paso, Lani Kai, Charleston, Attleboro, Cedar Falls, and most recently Junction City, which is the largest air assault ever conducted. Over 5,100 troops were airlifted by helicopters into ten separate landing zones.

Not only does the number of aircraft in the Army inventory clearly approach that of all other services, but also these aircraft fly more sorties than all other

services combined. The 12th Group is the most productive military aviation unit in the world, providing daily support to the infantry divisions and separate brigades in the III Corps Tactical Zone. To support this performance, a reference to the 12th Group's enviable record is most pertinent.

During a six month period from 1 July to 31 December 1966, the firepower of 12th Group was felt as 744 confirmed VC were killed in action. The 12th Group was credited with an estimated 670 more kills. During this period, 700 structures were destroyed by 12th Group aviators. Also, 859 sampans were destroyed and 86 damaged. With the advent of the new Firefly technique, developed by the 334th Armed Helicopter Company, a total of 490 sampans were destroyed during the month of December alone, 111 in a single night. An additional 300 sampans were sunk during the balance of the six month period. Considering that sampans are one

of the Viet Cong's primary means of transportation, the total devastation dealt the VC in this vital area becomes even more significant.

Remarkable as the offensive role is, the main job of the 12th Group remains airlifting troops and cargo to any location on the battlefield. Flying in all types of adverse weather conditions, aviators of 12th Group registered over 425,000 flying hours from 1 October 66 through 30 September 67 while supporting every American Army and ARVN unit in the III Corps area. Hundreds of combat assaults were executed as Group aircraft flew over one million sorties.

Almost 2 million troops were airlifted during the same one year period with a weekly average of more than 35,000. In the cargo capacity, 12th Group aviators flying versatile UH-1's and Chinooks, transported approximately 200,000 tons.

In order to sustain an oper-

Slicks from the Group's 210th Combat Aviation Battalion on a combat assault operation.



...Flexibility versatility, ingenuity."

ation of the dimensions which the 12th Group is called upon to support, ingenuity is often displayed. To keep abreast of the demands made by an ever changing tactical situation, new developments are constantly demonstrated. An example of this was the recent breakthrough in developing a means of airlifting the 155mm howitzer by CH-47. Previously the CH-54 was the only aircraft in Army inventory utilized to airlift the 155mm howitzer. Through the diligent efforts of the 12th Group personnel a means was developed to employ the CH-47 Chinook, allowing the 155mm howitzer to be displaced to forward areas, and in many cases into inaccessible regions.

A second innovation by 12th Group to enhance the counterinsurgency efforts is the development and refinement of the Firefly technique. Employing UH-1 helicopters, one equipped with miniguns, rockets, and 50 cal machine guns, and another equipped with a cluster of seven

For heavy loads, the CH-47...



high intensity lights, the Firefly technique quickly proved its value. During the month of December 1966 the 334th Armed Helicopter Company, utilizing the Firefly technique, surpassed the previous month's performance by more than twelve times.

While establishing its outstanding performance the 12th Group also participated in joint service operations. In March 1966 aviators from the 145th Combat Aviation Battalion began landing on the 7th Fleet's USS Bell Grove. From this simple beginning, Task Force Seawolf became a reality. Transition training for US Navy helicopter pilots began in June. At the completion of the training program on 15 September 1966, the Navy assumed complete control of the operation, bringing to a close the "seagoing 12th Group support."

Another joint service operation was initiated in August 1966. Pilots from the U.S. Air Force arrived to begin Operation Red Leaf. Aviators from the 222nd Aviation Battalion trained Air Force personnel in the CV-2 Caribou prior to the Air Force assuming control of the aircraft on 1 January 1967.

Not only has 12th Group conducted transition training for Air Force and Navy pilots, but also has transitioned VNAF pilots into the UH-1D. Beginning in August 1966 VNAF pilots arrived in 12th Group for transition training. The training program included both formal and ground instruction and on the job training, flying combat assaults under the tutelage of 12th Group instructor pilots.

For their efforts, units of the 12th Group have been duly re-

cognized. On 27 August 1966 the 11th Combat Aviation Battalion received the Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry from Major General Khang, Commanding General, III ARVN Corps. The "Rely on Us" battalion was cited for outstanding performance of duty and extraordinary heroism in action in support of RVNAF and Allied Forces units in the III Corps Tactical Zone.

The 145th Combat Aviation Battalion received the Distinguished Unit Citation from General W.C. Westmoreland in December 1966. The "First in Vietnam" battalion distinguished itself in combat operations in June 1965.

Judged by any criteria or standard, the 12th Group sets the goals which the other units strive to accomplish. It is little wonder that providing "Direct Support II FFV, General Support of the World" is the motto and mission of the 12th Combat Aviation Group. No other unit can accomplish the task.

...or her big sister the CH-54



HAWK HONEY



Requel Welch



View of Sydney skyline

AUSTRALIA:

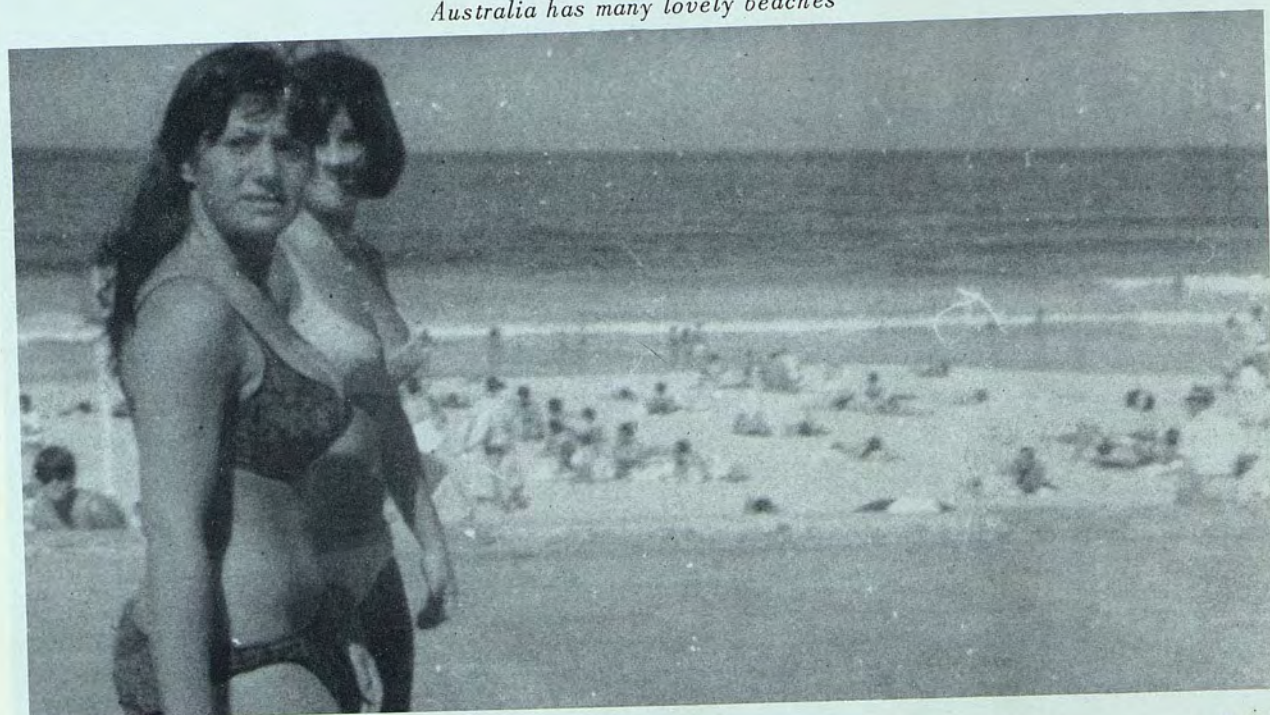
Newest R and R Spot

It's almost like going home. The moment you step off the plane at Syfney Airport, you're greeted by an atmosphere of open friendliness. Recognizing your uniform, people on the observation deck wave a welcome--a welcome that will stay with you throughout your six days in Australia.

A short bus ride downtown, an official greeting and orientation at the R&R Center, a room at one of the hotels, and you're on your own for the next six days and nights.

It is immediately evident that Sydney has gone all out to make you and other "Yanks" feel at home. You are welcome at many of the private clubs. Through the Australian-American Association, you are invited to enjoy the hospitality of an

Australia has many lovely beaches



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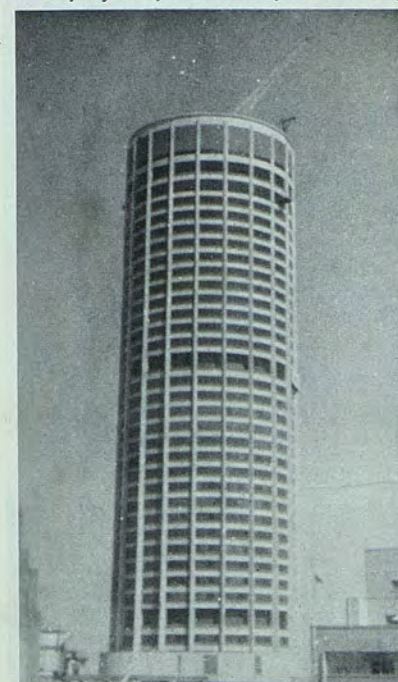
Australian family, including a good home cooked meal with all the trimmings.

You can pack your days full of activity. Skin-diving, surfing, water skiing, deep sea fishing, tours of Sydney and the surrounding "bush" country and parties galore are available.

Or you can just settle back and relax, and enjoy your R&R in leisure.

But no matter how you spend your time, you undoubtedly get back on the plane for the return trip to Vietnam with mixed emotions. You feel a little exhausted from trying to do and see as much as possible in such a short time. You feel a tremendous letdown at having to leave. But you also feel content, because for a brief six days, you've had a taste of home.

One of Sydney's beautiful buildings



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There's always a friendly smile to make one feel at home.

View of the Sydney Bridge



THEY KEEP 'EM FLYING



The significance of the role of Army Aviation in Vietnam cannot be overemphasized. The aviators, crew chiefs and gunners have done, and are doing a tremendous job of providing combat and logistical support to the men on the ground.

But those who work "behind the scenes" providing maintenance and administrative support to the men in the air are equally deserving of praise. Their skills and long hours of hard work make the successes of those who fly possible.

Such a group of men are the members of the 98th Transportation Detachment.

The Sheet Metal Shop



The 98th Transportation Detachment was the first transportation detachment in Vietnam, arriving in January of 1961. Its mission was providing direct support maintenance for the first aviation company in Vietnam, the 57th Aviation Company.

The 57th at that time was equipped with CH-21 "Flying Banana" helicopters. In December of 1964, however, the 57th was reequipped with UH-1 helicopters and was redesignated the 120th Aviation Company. To this date, the 98th still provides skillful,

efficient maintenance for the 120th.

To provide the best possible maintenance support for the 120th, the 98th, commanded by Major Lyman B. Harris, Jr., is divided into two well-coordinated sections: the helicopter repairmen and the allied shops.

The helicopter repairmen are responsible for much of the routine maintenance of the helicopters, often making "on the spot" repairs of downed aircraft. These repairs include everything from complicated en-

gine repair to replacing minor items, such as indicators.

The allied shops perform the major repairs on aircraft. These shops include the sheet metal shop, which replaces aircraft structural members, sheet metal and plastic parts, the electrical shop, which check and repairs all malfunctions in aircraft electrical systems, and the engine repair shop, which disassembles, replaces or repairs engine parts and components.

Presently, the 98th services UH-1B, C, and D model helicopters. The detachment performs 1/3 of all periodic inspections for the 120th to release more maintenance personnel at organizational level to handle the high volume of unscheduled maintenance. In addition to the allied shops, the unit has four separate maintenance teams to provide even more efficient maintenance support for the 120th.

But the 120th is not the 98th's

only responsibility. In addition, the maintenance unit supports aircraft of the USARV Flight Detachment, the 1st Aviation Brigade Flight Detachment, and Vice President Nguyen Cao Ky of the Republic of Vietnam. All totaled, the 98th Transportation Detachment supports approximately 2,200 flying hours per month.

And it has provided outstanding support, as evidenced by the numerous awards and commendations it has received. While serving as an attached unit to the 145th Combat Aviation Battalion, the detachment was awarded the Distinguished Unit Citation for extraordinary heroism in action against insurgent forces in RVN during the period 10-13 June 1965.

But perhaps the most glowing tribute has come from commanders in Vietnam who have been supported by the 98th. In a letter co-signed by General W. C. Westmoreland, Vice President Nguyen



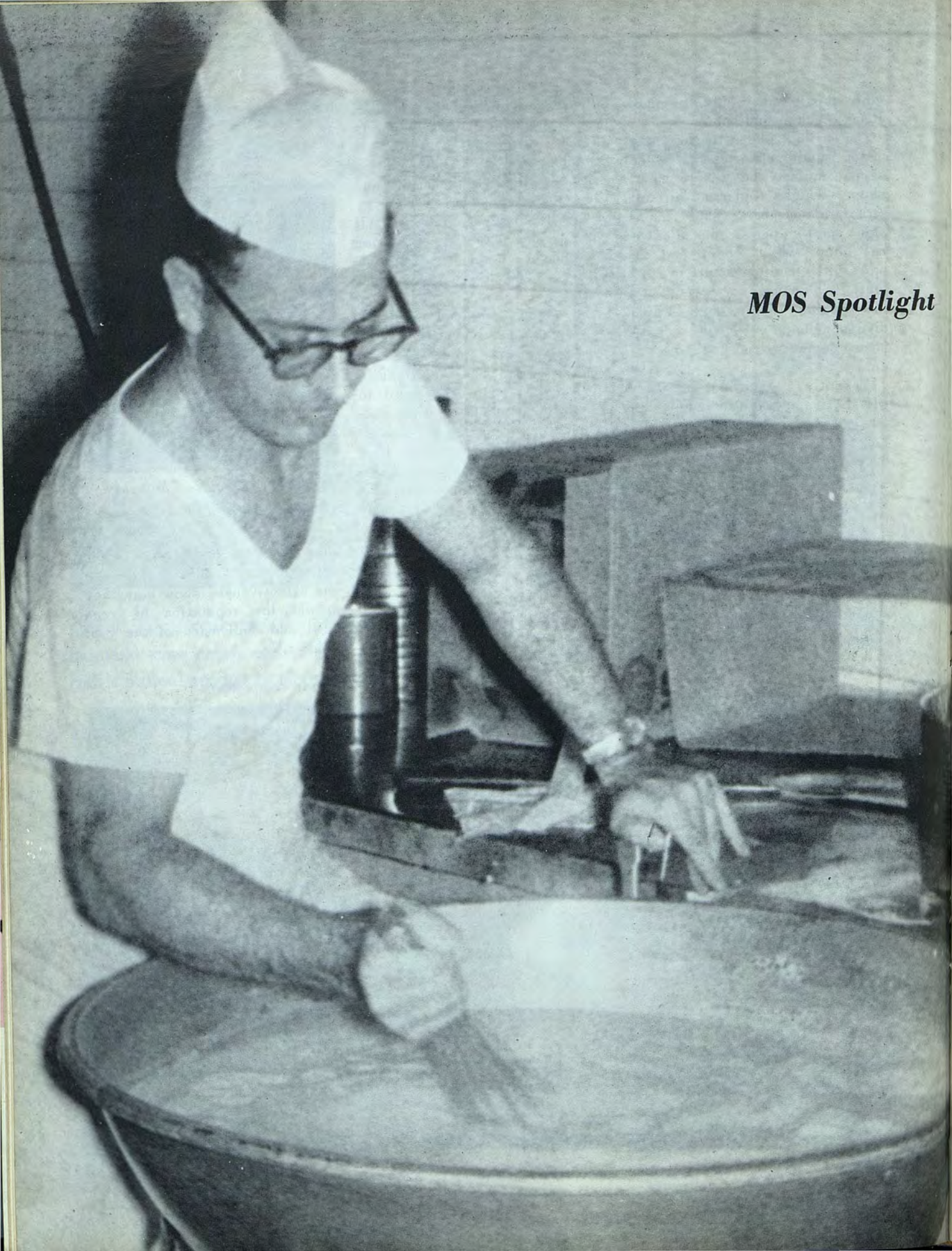
Electrical circuits Thoroughly checked

Cao Ky wrote of the men of the detachment: "...their diligence and effectiveness show that they uphold the reputation of great skill and dedication of the U.S. soldier."

The engine repairs shop disassembles, replaces or repairs engine components



MOS Spotlight



...That Important Soldier Called the COOK

One of the most important men to the war effort in Vietnam is not a "combat troop". In most cases, he has never set foot in a landing zone or flown on a combat assault mission.

But he is playing a major role in winning the war. His job is a vital one, for it affects the health, morale, and ultimate effectiveness of the soldiers who do go into combat.

That important soldier is the cook. His job, simply stated, is planning, preparing and serving the best meals possible to the men of his unit. In actual practice, however, it is much more complicated.

Planning a meal requires something akin to the skill of a chemist. The cook must have a thorough knowledge of nutrition and what kinds of foods (he works with several hundred) in what combinations will constitute a balanced diet. Couple this with the necessity of providing daily variety in the means, and his task seems even more difficult.

Preparing the meal requires another skill: he must be familiar with each kind of food and which of a large variety of spices, seasonings and flavorings will complement it.

Those are only a few of the many skills necessary to prepare a nutritious, well-balanced meal. The cook learns them during an eight week school at one of several Army training centers.

During those eight weeks the prospective cook studies food balance, nutrition, and the mess hall concept (cooking for large numbers of people). He learns to bake pasteries, pies, and sweet rolls. He learns the proper procedure for cooking the various types of meat. He has meat cutting instruction, which includes as a practical exercise completely carving a side of beef.

The instruction portion of the course is followed by closely supervised on-the-job training at a mess hall, where he puts into practice what he has learned. By the time his eight weeks are completed, the student is well-qualified to prepare a balanced, well-cooked meal.

"But you can never learn everything in school," says Specialist 5 Maurice L. Norman, a cook with the 210 Combat Aviation Battalion. "There's always somebody who's been around longer than you and knows a trick or

two to make a better, more efficient meal."

Specialist Norman helps feed almost 300 men each meal in the 210 Battalion's mess hall. And he enjoys his work.

"I especially enjoy working out in the field," he said. "A lot of people think you can't put out as good a meal because of the dirt, mud and rain. But to me it's more of a challenge, and I feel a greater sense of accomplishment at putting out a good meal in field conditions."

"I also enjoy working with Holiday meals," he added. We've got a special meal planned for Christmas, and I think I'll enjoy preparing it as much as the troops will enjoy eating it.

Specialist Norman plans to continue his career in cooking when he leaves the Army.

But the cook's duties do not end with the evening meal. Often flight crews are late coming in from a mission, and he usually has a good hot meal waiting when they arrive.

Just another of the many reasons why the cook is an essential and indispensable member of the Aviation as well as the Army team.

ROKs GO AIRMOBILE



Ever since arriving in Vietnam in 1966 to join the Free World Forces in the fight against Communism, commanders of the Republic of Korea Forces have looked forward to the time when they could provide their own troops with organic aviation support.

One year later, with the assistance of the 17th Combat Aviation Group, their hopes have been realized as the ROK 11th Aviation Company has come into being.

The new company's inventory of aircraft consists of seven UH-1Ds two more ships are on the way. Its aviators consist of 19 highly skilled Korean pilots who received their training in the United States and Vietnam.

An even dozen of the 19 have trained at Army aviation schools in the U.S. The seven other ROK pilots--in fixed-wing aviator's roles--have trained exclusively with two companies of the 17th Group, the 48th and 129th Assault Helicopter Companies of the 268th Combat Aviation Battalion.

Extensive ground school courses and a full schedule of flying

missions complemented each other in providing valuable training for the men of the rapidly developing aviation company. These personnel were trained to 400 hours of combat flying have become highly proficient pilots on their own.

But pilot schooling is only part of the story. In conjunction with the pilot program, maintenance

personnel are being trained by 17th Group companies.

Twelve Fort Rucker-trained mechanics have received on-the-job training with the 129th and 48th over the past six months. The 281st Assault Helicopter Company of the 10th Combat Aviation Battalion is training others as maintenance supervisors and

SSg Miller and Maj. Ruskauff brief their Korean counterparts



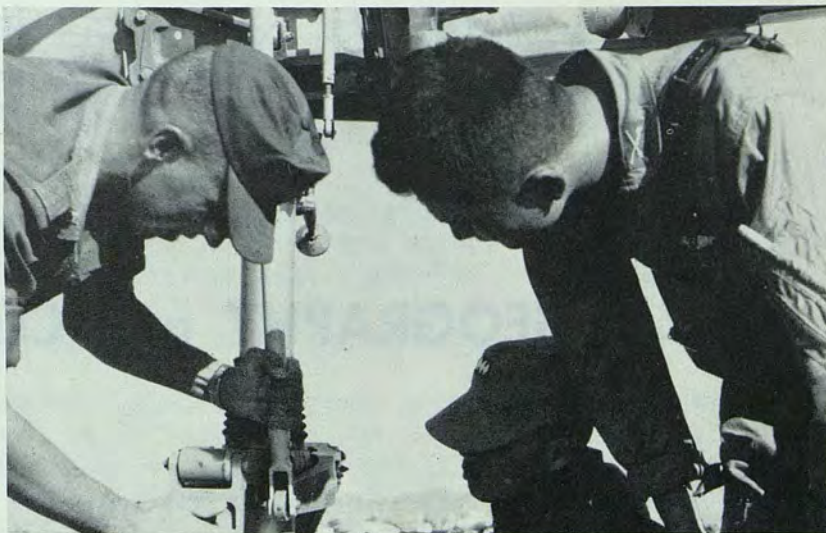
technical personnel.

ROK aircraft maintenance supervisors have worked with the 281st for over two months in learning "by the book" how to care for the helicopters in the aviation company.

"We've actually taught them from top to bottom," says Staff Sergeant Carl E. Miller, 281st Maintenance Sergeant. Sergeant Miller has spent nearly eight years in aviation maintenance, and is in a position to pass on much valuable information to the ROK apprentice mechanics. He can also make some authoritative observations about the ROK's training progress.

"They're learning fast," says the sergeant. "Their biggest problem right now is that they don't have American technical manuals translated into Korean."

Sergeant Miller explains that the ROK TO&E (Table of Organization and Equipment) also shows a lack of basic maintenance equipment. It is this lack, he



Roks Receive Maintenance Training

says, that the 281st is helping the ROKs to overcome, and something that must be done before the intraining mechanics become proficient enough to provide service adequate to keep an aviation company flying.

Perhaps the 281st maintenance officer, Major Donald R. Ruskauff sums up the training pro-

gram best. He says of the cooperation of the Korean personnel:

"You can talk with them on a technical basis. They are a privilege to work with, and I think they're going to do alright with that aviation company. We'll continue helping them all we can."

Captain Park, newly trained ROK pilot, receives pre-flight instructions



ABOUT VIETNAM

GEOGRAPHY and CLIMATE

The GI's humor has always colored his descriptions of places and situations. Vietnam has been described as "the only place in the world where you can stand hip-deep in mud and have dust blowing in your face". Another description characterizes the country as having two seasons: Hot Wet and Hot Dry.

Though greatly exaggerated, these descriptions are not without an element of truth. Although the Republic of Vietnam is relatively small (approximately the same land area as Washington state), it is a land of varieties. The terrain varies from the table-flat ricelands of the Mekong Delta to the rolling dunes of the coastal plain to the sharp ridges of the mountains in the central highlands. Lying in the tropical zone, it has a variety of climates, ranging from distinctly dry seasons to heavy rains.

Geographically, South Vietnam is divided into three well-defined areas. The first is the central highlands, which comprises about two-thirds of the country. Although this is the largest geographic area, it is the most sparsely populated, due to the heavy jungles and high

mountains which impede travel and communication.

The second geographic area is the coastal plain, a narrow strip approximately 25 miles wide, running along the coast of the South China Sea from the 17th Parallel almost to Vung Tau. This area is the center of the fishing industry, and is noted for its numerous beaches and bays, and excellent coves for small craft anchorages.

The Delta, lying south and west of Saigon, covers about one-fourth of the Republic of Vietnam's total area, and provides living space for nearly half of the country's total population of 15 million. Dominated by the Mekong, Bassac, Saigon and Dong Hai Rivers, it is characterized by a flat, poorly drained surface, crisscrossed by many streams and an intricate network of man-made canals. These canals not only serve to irrigate the extensive rice paddies but also afford avenues for small boat travel to Saigon and the innumerable small communities in the region. During the heavy monsoon season, a major portion of the Delta is flooded, making cultivation and travel almost impossible.

Climate-wise, Vietnam is con-

sidered "monsoonal", with two major seasons—the Southwest (summer) monsoon, or wet season, which extends from mid-May to early October, and the Northeast (winter) monsoon, or dry season, from early November to mid-March. The short intervening periods are known as the Spring and Autumn Transitions.

The Spring Transition is characterized by periods of very high temperatures and high humidity, while the Autumn Transition brings the highest precipitation and heaviest cloud cover. It is in the Autumn Transition, during the months of July to November that destructive tropical typhoons sweep in from the east. Generally, September is the month most likely to bring typhoons to the northern area, and in the months that follow to the south.

Temperatures also vary with location. In the north, the nights are usually cool and pleasant, as opposed to the warm and humid atmosphere found in the south.

Considering all of these variations in Vietnam's climate and landscape, perhaps the GI is right. Maybe there is some basis to the old adage that "many a truth is often spoken in jest."

MERRY CHRISTMAS, SON

To my son:

With all due appologies to Mr. Lincoln-- a mother pays tribute to her son on Christmas:

One score and fifteen years ago your parents brought forth upon this continent a new individual, conceived in love, and honor, and laughter, and dedicated to the proposition that all men have a duty to themselves: that all men are created equal and have the same rights and privileges, also the same obligations; and are committed to serve their country if she needs them.

Now you have been engaged for almost seventeen years in your country's service, testing whether you, as an individual, or any other individual so conceived and so dedicated can serve your country well. You have met opposing forces in some of the great battles of this century. I, your mother, have come to dedicate a portion of the life of my only child as a testing time for you and thousands of others like you who are giving your youth that that nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that I should do this.

But, in a larger sense, I cannot dedicate--I cannot consecrate--I cannot hallow your service. The brave men and boys, living and dead, who struggled with you all over the world have consecrated your efforts far above my poor powers to add or detract.

The world will little note, nor long remember, what you have done and given up for your country, but I can never forget the small honors you have won. It is for ALL mothers living, rather, to dedicate their sons to the unfinished work you have thus far so nobly advanced. It is for us, rather, to be here dedicated, and to commit our sons to the great tasks remaining before us; that from you we may gather strength to make increased efforts to further the causes for which you are willing to give the last full measure of devotion. That we highly resolve that you and your contemporaries will not have served your country in vain; that this nation, under God, shall accomplish a new birth of universal freedom; and that government OF ALL the people, BY ALL the people, FOR ALL the people, shall not perish from the earth.

Therefore, let this Christmas remind you of your continued duty to yourself and to your country, of the posthumous and loving memory of your earthly father, of the devine reward from your heavenly Father, and of the enormous pride in you of your mother, your wife, and your children. May you reap the unstinted gratitude of future generations, and may you remember, "My country 'Right or wrong'" that posterity may be enriched for your having passed this way, for it is true you will pass this way but once.

Merry Christmas, son. May the Lord bless and watch over you.

Love,

Mother



How lonely a sight—this Huey and its crew on a Christmas night. But in a sense many others are present—those who flew Army aircraft on Christmas nights in the early 1940s over the enchanting but treacherous desert of North Africa; or through the biting cold on the white European countryside; or in the eerie strangeness of a sweltering Pacific jungle.

Then a decade later Christmas nights were accented by the majestic but menacing Korean mountains. Still another decade later others are experiencing Christmas nights over the merciless rice paddies and mountains of another Asian country, the Republic of Vietnam. These join the invisible throng of all who have experienced similar Christmas nights. They are bound together by a common faith in their mission, their country, and the Spirit of Christmas.