

Oct 1965-

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ANNUAL UNIT HISTORY
174TH AVIATION COMPANY (AML)
1 OCTOBER 1965 TO 31 DECEMBER 1966



SHARKS



DOLPHINS

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I. PERIOD OF INITIAL UNIT FORMATION

(1 September 1965 to 31 January 1966)

The 174th Aviation Company (Airmbl.) (Lt.) was activated at Fort Benning, Georgia on 1 October 1965 by authority of General Order Number 278 (Appendix I), Headquarters Third United States Army as amended by General Order Numbers 50 (Appendix II) and 309 (Appendix III), Headquarters Third United States Army and General Order Number 116 (Appendix IV), Headquarters United States Infantry Center, Fort Benning, Georgia.

Personnel started arriving at Fort Benning, Georgia on 1 November 1965. Major Robert M. Stuart assumed command with Major Melvin D. Tate as executive officer and Major James E. Shrader as operations officer. The attached units were the 409th TC Detachment commanded by Major Orville W. Mc Natt, the 452nd Signal Detachment commanded by Major Theodore M. Stuart and the 765th Medical Detachment commanded by Captain John P. Hailman. The medical detachment was detached prior to the units movement overseas in March, 1966. The First Sergeant of the 174th Aviation Company was SFC Marvin D. Hill.

It is interesting to note that the company was not lacking leadership as it was assigned twenty-three majors, nine captains and two lieutenants in the first thirty-four people to report.

The company was organized under TO&E 1-77, 63 W C/1, which provided for two airlift platoons, consisting of eight UH-1D's each, and one armed escort platoon, with eight UH-1C's (540 Rotor System). One UH-1C was assigned to the Service Platoon.

The airlift platoons were organized so as to be capable of airlifting Combat troops, supplies and equipment into a combat zone, and to per-

form command and control missions, as required, in conjunction with both ground and airmobile assaults.

Each UH-1D was armed with two door-mounted M-60 machine gun kits to provide suppressive protective fire while performing air landed assaults.

The UH-1C's of the armed escort platoon were equipped with a combination of the M-3, M-5, M-6, and M-16 subsystems. The primary role of the armed escort platoon is to provide suppressive fire in the landing zone and armed escort to and from landing zones.

The company headquarters and operations section were organized so as to provide continuous command and control from either a ground or airborne position.

In the initial days of company organization the main problems were lack of personnel, equipment and training. In time the personnel and equipment shortage was remedied and the company began an intensive training program. The training program was hindered by the great number of people arriving in the company in need of completing annual and semi-annual minimums. Due to the shortage of time the units IP's gave proficiency rides at night so that both proficiency rides and minimums could be completed before the end of the year.

The 174th Aviation Company was alerted for PCS move from Fort Benning, Georgia to USARPAC on 8 December 1965 and by the end of December the company had all personnel and TOE equipment. In addition, the training program was well under way and all aviator minimums were completed.

II. POR QUALIFICATIONS AND FTX

(1 February 1966 to 14 March 1966)

During the months of January and February 1966 the unit was in the process of intense tactical and POR training. The training culminated in the completion of "NUOC NAM IL" an FTX conducted in the vicinity of Fort Benning on 1-2 February 1966. The remainder of the month of February was utilized in correcting the deficiencies noted during the FTX and continuing the training program initiated when the company was activated.

In addition to the extensive training program the unit began preparation for movement overseas. During this period, arrangements were made for the accumulation of building materials that would be difficult to obtain once in Vietnam. Used refrigerators were bought and completely reconditioned free, by the father of one of the men, so that proper refrigeration would be available in troop billets.

The advance party was formed but was to leave two weeks after the main body left because they were going to travel by air and would arrive in Vietnam well ahead of the main body.

Fifteen days leave was granted to all personnel before departing for Vietnam.

III. MOVEMENT OVERSEAS

(15 March 1966 to 11 April 1966)

On 15 March 1966 the 174th Aviation Company departed Fort Benning, Georgia for Oakland, California, after the previous week was spent preparing all equipment for shipment. In addition, during the previous week

all TOE aircraft were ferried to Oakland, California where they were shipped aboard the USS Point Cruz. On 16 March the company sailed aboard the USNS Upshur arriving in Qui Nhon Harbor on 6 April 1966. Three stops were made enroute: one each at Pearl Harbor, Yokohama, and Okinawa.

While the main body travelled by ship to Qui Nhon the advance party travelled by air and completed arrangements for a base camp. When the unit arrived at Phu Tai Valley an orderly room and Company mess were built and the necessary materials for additional buildings were on hand.

On 7 April 1966 the unit off loaded and moved to Phu Tai Valley, west of Qui Nhon, to establish a base camp. One difficulty in off loading should be noted at this point and that was the fact that many hours were lost because the ship was loaded in the wrong order and therefore the 174th Aviation Company's equipment could not be unloaded until much of the cargo destined for other ports was unloaded.

Preparation of the base camp was hampered due to the late arrival of TO&E wheeled vehicles. Wheeled vehicles arrived aboard the African Glen on 11 May 1966 two days after the unit had been declared operational.

The unit's helicopters were transported from Oakland, California aboard the USS Point Cruz which arrived in Qui Nhon on 9 April 1966. Unit aircraft were assembled and flown to Phu Tai Valley on 10 and 11 April 1966.

IV. IN-COUNTRY READINESS TRAINING

(12 April 1966 to 11 May 1966)

During the period 12 April to 11 May 1966 the unit participated

in unit readiness training. During this training period, combat requirements necessitated the frequent use of the 174th Aviation Company for both Direct Combat Support and Combat Assault missions.

The work on buildings progressed rapidly and the 174th Aviation Company area was partially complete. The building program was conducted mostly at night due to flying requirements during the day.

Shortly after arrival in Vietnam the 174th Aviation Company was involved in a personnel exchange so that the company would not lose all its personnel during one month of the year. The necessary adjustments were made and the company functioned smoothly.

V. ASSIGNMENT TO 52nd AVIATION BATTALION

(12 May 1966 to 23 May 1966)

The Company was initially assigned to the 52nd Aviation Battalion with the mission of providing direct support for the Capitol ROK Division, the 22 ARVN Division and the Qui Nhon Area Support Command. During this period the battalion headquarters was far removed from the company location and missions, hence requiring a liaison officer to schedule missions for the supported units.

During this period the 174th Aviation Company got its first real taste of combat while supporting the Capitol ROK Division and the 22nd ARVN Division. On 12 May the company airlifted elements of the ROL Cavalry Regiment marking the beginning of operation "PON GIA 66-6" (Lightning 66-6). In this operation the aviators encountered low clouds, severe turbulence and winds in excess of 50 knots. After finishing the airlift

of troops, the company continued support with the airlift of supplies and the evacuation of the wounded.

On the 14th of May 1966 the 174th Aviation Company moved to Tuy Hoa to support the airlift of troops of the 47th ARVN Division. On this airlift the company received groundfire while enroute and 378 Troops plus heavy weapons were lifted into the landing zone.

On 16 May 1966 the company moved to Camp Holloway, Pleiku and supported the 3rd Brigade, 25th Infantry Division in operation "PAUL REVERE."

The 174th flew numerous combat assaults and resupply missions contributing immensely to the success of the overall operation.

Throughout the remainder of this period the 174th Aviation Company participated in numerous combat assaults among them POKPUNG I (Typhoon I) and POKPUNG I-I in support of the Republic of Korea Tiger Division Cavalry Regiment.

VI. ASSIGNMENT TO 14th AVIATION BATTALION

(24 May 1966 to 22 September 1966)

On 24 May 1966 the 174th Aviation Company was placed under the operational control of the 14th Aviation Battalion and on 1 June 1966 complete control was shifted from the 52nd Aviation Battalion to the 14th Aviation Battalion.

The major combat operations were "PON GIA 66-7" (Lightning 66-7), "MUGHOK 3", "PON GIA 66-9" and "POKPUNG 3" (Typhoon 3) all conducted in support of the Capitol ROK Division. In addition many other operations were conducted in support of the 22nd ARVN Division and the American 101st

Airborne Division. The majority of the assaults were in the Phu Cat mountains and the associated valleys. One of the major problems encountered during this period was aircraft receiving ground fire in the ROK 1st Regiment area of operations. The exact location of the fire could not be pinpointed to allow the gunships to fire upon the target.

Desperately seeking a solution to the problem, authorities decided to "ambush" the Viet Cong gun position.

An aviator with two hand picked volunteers were airlifted into the area where they set up an observation post. After two days of waiting they were able to spot the Viet Cong patrol getting into position.

When the next re-supply helicopter flew into the outpost, the Viet Cong began to fire. Armed helicopters, that had been orbiting out of sight by prearrangement, were called in by radio from the small observation post. The armed "Hueys" were on the scene and annihilated the Viet Cong patrol before they had a chance to hide.

Subsequent resupply flights were conducted into the area without further enemy harassment.

Through the exchange of letters between Major Dick Overhamm, platoon leader of the 174th Aviation Company's gun platoon, and General Robert Lee Scott, Jr., past commander, China Air Task Force, permission was granted authorizing the 174th gun platoon to use the famed shark-mouth of General Claire Chennault's Flying Tigers (Appendix V). Since that time the gun platoon has painted a sharks mouth on each gun ship and has become well known throughout Vietnam as the "Sharks".

On 8 August 1966 Major Walter L. Payne assumed command of the 174th

Aviation Company from Major Robert M. Stuart. Shortly thereafter on 21 September Major William C. Dalrymple assumed command from Major Payne.

VII. OPERATION "MENG HO 6"

(23 September 1966 to 15 October 1966)

On 23 September 1966 the Tiger Division of the Republic of Korea Army launched operation "MENG HO 6". The 174th Aviation Company supported this operation with numerous combat assaults and re-supply missions. During the period 23 September to 30 September 1966 the 174th Aviation Company flew 2,454 sorties in 505 total flying hours and expended over 5,400 rounds of ammunition in conducting eight combat assaults in the Phu Cat mountains. Through the efforts of the 174th Aviation Company the Tiger Division was able to inflict a crippling blow in the Viet Cong movement in the Phu Cat mountains. The "Valley of the Shadow," or the "Valley of Death" as it came to be known, was, through the efforts of the 174th Aviation Company, free of communist domination for the first time in 20 years. Many combat efforts by other units in the past failed to open the Phu Cats. Only after "MENG HO 6" was this area really opened. Over 2,000 weapons were captured and 1,200 Viet Cong killed during "MENG HO 6".

Elements of E210 B, the Viet Cong Division opposing the Koreans were scattered and destroyed.

This was the largest operation to date that the 174th Aviation Company was able to support. In appreciation for the outstanding support rendered by members of the 174th Aviation Company, the Com-

manding Officer of the 26th Regiment Republic of Korea Army, Colonel Pak, presented key officers in the company with a Viet Cong battle flag and a swagger stick constructed from a Chinese communist rifle bayonet and a 50 caliber machine gun shell. In addition, as a token of appreciation for his fine work in leading the combat assaults during "MENG HO 6," Major Henry E. Schwarz, Commanding Officer of the 1st flight platoon, was presented with a Chinese Communist Flag and a letter of appreciation from Major General Lieu, Commanding General of the Capitol ROK Division.

VIII. OPERATIONS SUPPORTING THE 4th INFANTRY DIVISION

AND THE 101st AIRBORNE BRIGADE

(16 October 1966 to 31 December 1966)

The 174th Aviation Company continued its fine record of achievement throughout the remaining months of the year in many combat operations. The company supported operations of the 4th Infantry Division and the 101st Airborne Brigade at Tuy Hoa. The pilots flew an average of 10 - 12 hours per day many times eating only C rations so that continuous support would be available.

In addition the 174th Aviation Company supported the Republic of Korea Tiger Division in operation "MENG HO 7" beginning 11 November and ending 25 November 1966. In this operation the Cavalry Regiment of the Tiger Division was very successful in clearing the area around Qui Nhon of Viet Cong. Additional operations throughout the period included "BON GIA 66-11" on 16 December, "GHEON JIN 66-4" on 17 December, "POK

PUNG 3" on 19 December, "POC PUNG 5" on 22 December, "Eagle 5" on 23 December, "BON GIA 66-12" on 26 December and "GHEON JIN 66-5" On 30 December.

All of these operations were successful. The 174th Aviation Company, in addition to providing combat assault aircraft, continually followed up with resupply of all areas of operations,

The 174th Aviation Company in addition to providing support in combat action also contributed to civic action as well. Led by Major William C. Dalrymple, members of the company provided food, clothing and toys for the children in orphanages and towns in the area around Qui Nhon.

One of the company's greatest contributions to the Vietnamese was its hiring of indigenous personnel. Through these efforts both the company and the Vietnamese benefited. The company benefited by the availability of labor to build contonment projects and the Vietnamese benefited monetarily. This in turn stimulated the Vietnamese economy by keeping the unemployment down.

Christmas in Vietnam found the aviators of the 174th Aviation Company once again supporting the combat troops. There weren't any combat assaults, but many troops in the field got hot turkey through the helicopter support given by the 174th Aviation Company.

The 174th Aviation Company completed a very successful year in Vietnam. The aircraft flew 20,483 hours, 117,612 sorties, carried

10,429 tons of cargo and transported 114,077 passengers since its entry into the Vietnam Conflict.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Henry E. Schwarz".

HENRY E. SCHWARZ
Maj CE
Unit Historian