

ANNUAL HISTORICAL SUPPLEMENT

25TH AVIATION BATTALION

25TH INFANTRY DIVISION

APO US FORCES 96225

1 January 1966 to 31 December 1966

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II ORGANIZATION:

A. TO&E: The 25th Aviation Battalion is currently organized under TCE 1-75E, 1-76E, 1-77E, and 1-78E dated 15 July 1963, and as amended by General Order Number 4, headquarters, United States Army Pacific, dated 6 January 1966. A modification TCE to the E Series was submitted for approval to Headquarters, United States Army Vietnam for approval in July 1966, but was subsequently returned with instructions to await receipt of the new G Series TCE being published for units in the Infantry Division. The G Series TCE was received by this Headquarters in October 1966 and after careful study, an MCE to the G Series TCE was submitted for approval to Hq, USAFV on 19 January 1967.

B. Command and Staff: The following is a summary of personnel occupying Command and Staff positions during 1966:

1. Commanding Officer, 25th Avn Bn:

- a. LTC Samuel F. Kalagian, 1 Jan 66 - 10 Apr 66
- b. Maj George J. Young, 11 Apr 66 - 17 Apr 66
- c. LTC Edward F. Davis, 18 Apr 66 - 31 Dec 66

2. Commanding Officer, HHD, 25th Avn Bn:

- a. Cpt Emmett F. Johnson, 1 Jan 66 - 30 Apr 66
- b. Cpt Daniel H. Leonard, Apr 66 - 27 Jun 66
- c. Maj Robert T. Curry, 28 Jun 66 - 10 Sep 66
- d. Maj Charles C. Fursley, 11 Sep 66 - 16 Dec 66
- e. Maj David H. Hall, 17 Dec 66 - 31 Dec 66

3. Commanding Officer, Co A, 25th Avn Bn:

- a. Maj Robert F. McKinney Jr., 1 Jan 66 - 4 May 66
- b. Maj Ernest C. Elliot, 5 May 66 - 4 Jul 66
- c. Maj Hughey L. Weston, 5 Jul 66 - 31 Dec 66

4. Commanding Officer, Co B, 25th Avn Bn:

- a. Maj James H. Vance, 1 Jan 66 - 21 Aug 66
- b. Maj Robert F. Huntington, 22 Aug 66 - 31 Dec 66

5. Battalion Staff:

a. Executive Officer:

- (1) Maj Eugene P. Tanner, 1 Jan 66 - 27 Jun 66
- (2) Maj George J. Young, 28 Jun 66 - 31 Dec 66

Gordon and the Victory Ship East Hills was completed on 16 March. Officers and men of the Avn Bn embarked on the USS Gordon during the evening of 16 March and the long journey across the Pacific got under way in the early hours of the 17th. As much training as possible was conducted on board the USS Gordon, however cramped quarters and insufficient training space available for the many units embarked, limited training to only the most vital subjects. The USS Gordon arrived in Vietnam waters on 31 March; however due to the tactical situation existing in the area of Vung Tau, disembarking was not to take place until the morning of 2 April. The Advance Party of the 25th Aviation Battalion departed Hawaii via Air Force MAC C-124 aircraft on 21 March arriving at Tan Son Nhut AB on 25 March. The Advance Party immediately moved to the Base Camp of the 25th Infantry Division at Cu Chi and began preparations to receive the main body. They also began the task of construction of the Bn operational complex and living quarters.

AFMIL: On the morning of 2 April the main body of troops of the 25th Avn Bn debarked the USS Gordon and came ashore at Vung Tau to the strains of martial music provided by the U.S. Army Band. Troops were immediately loaded on 2½ ton trucks and transported to the air strip at Vung Tau where Air Force C-130 aircraft were waiting to shuttle them to Tan Son Nhut Air Base. Further transportation to the Cu Chi Base Camp was provided by CH-47 (Chinook) helicopters. The main body closed at Cu Chi in the late afternoon of 2 April.

The first several nights at Cu Chi were spent in pup tents, however tent kits and tents general purpose, medium, were available and construction of what was to become the permanent Avn Bn living area was soon in progress.

The 175th Aviation Company (Airmobile Light) which was destined to be redesignated Co A, 25th Avn Bn arrived at the port of Vung Tau on 9 April. Through prior coordination with the 12th Aviation Group, arrangements were made for aviators of the 175th Avn Co to proceed to various host units in-country to receive orientation and training. Crew members of the 175th proceeded directly to the host units from Vung Tau while remainder of the unit was airlifted to Cu Chi. Maintenance personnel of the Avn Bn and Co B teamed up with the maintenance personnel of the 175th Avn Co to begin the methodical depreservation of the 27 UH-1D's and 6 UH-1C's (armed helicopters) belonging to the Avn Bn which had also arrived at Vung Tau. Armament kits were installed, the aircraft test flown and weapons test fired prior to delivery to the Bn at Cu Chi.

Several aircrews of Co B also commenced in-country training with the gun platoons of the 68th Aviation Company at Vung Tau on 3 April. The remainder of the armed helicopter crews reported to Soc Trang and Vinh Long on 16 April for in-country training with the 114th, A/101st, 121st, and A/502d Aviation Companies. All crew members received their baptism of fire participating in several operational combat assaults from Song Be in the Central Highlands to Vi Thanh in the Mekong Delta.

On 26 April all aircrews returned to Cu Chi Base Camp and began unit

the fact that all ground troops were landed safely and no aircraft were lost to enemy fire is a tribute to the proficiency and dedication with which Army Aviation is doing the job throughout Vietnam.

Operation WAHIAA terminated on 27 May with the 25th Aviation Battalion extracting elements of the 1st and 2nd Lns, 27th Inf from two pickup zones northeast of Trang Bang and returning them to the Division Base Camp at Cu Chi. No hostile ground fire was received during the extraction.

As the month of May closed, there was no doubt that the Aviation Battalion had been combat tested and had passed with flying colors. In two short months, the Battalion had organized, equipped, trained for, and had achieved the goal of providing effective aviation support to the Division. Proud of their accomplishments yet saddened by their losses, the men of the Aviation Battalion prepared with grim determination for the months ahead.

JUNE: June was characterized by the 25th Aviation Battalion's participation in many operations conducted by units of the Division. The majority of these operations were staged out of the Cu Chi Base Camp and were directed toward driving the Viet Cong from the agricultural areas of Hau Nghia Province and the reestablishment of governmental control. Joint operations involving airmobile assaults with ARVN troops were conducted for the first time. This was also the Division's first venture into the mission of pacification, a mission that was again ably supported by the Aviation Battalion.

Within the Aviation Battalion, June marked the establishment of an effective flight following facility, and aircrews of the Battalion and supporting aviation companies soon came to rely on the familiar voices of "Clipper Control".

June also saw an increased operational capability with the equipping of a UH-1D aircraft of B Co with a searchlight and 50 cal machine gun for the purpose of performing night interdiction missions on Viet Cong controlled waterways and highways.

A Pathfinder Detachment was organized to assist the Aviation Battalion to stage both troop lifts, troop extractions and resupply operations at the Base Camp and field locations. The Detachment was manned by volunteer airborne qualified and combat experienced infantrymen from ground units of the Division.

After a short training period with established Pathfinder Detachments in-country, they wasted little time improving their effectiveness by increasing the Battalion's ability to stage any type of airmobile operation day or night.

A night airlift capability was also realized by the Aviation Battalion during the month of June. Progressive training to achieve this capability began on 20 May with individual crew proficiency training. Subsequent training developed night formation techniques to be used while enroute, approach to, and departure from landing zones. These techniques were practiced by the actual positioning of local ambush patrols during twilight periods.

As a result of the numerous "Eagle Flights", resupply and medical evacuation missions into known areas of hostile ground fire, the number of ground fire incidents climbed to 109, with 33 of these incidents resulting in hit damage to aircraft.

July proved to be a trying month for the Aviation Battalion, as maintenance personnel struggled to keep an acceptable number of aircraft flying to meet mission requirements. A combination of battle damage and an accumulation of inspection requirements taxed the maintenance capability to the limit, however as the month closed, the Battalion was still providing effective support to the Division.

AUGUST: August was ushered in with a large combat assault controlled by the 25th Aviation Battalion in support of operation KOKO HEAD. On 1 August, the 2nd Bn, 27th Inf was lifted into a landing zone east of Trung Lap on the southern edge of the Hobo Woods to exploit an early morning B-52 strike. Companies A and B of the Aviation Battalion were joined by the 68th, 116th and A/501st Aviation Companies for another assault of a heavily fortified Viet Cong Base Area.

Low cloud ceilings caused all flight elements to have to proceed to the landing zone at low altitude and the expected heavy enemy ground fire was received. Although all ground troops were landed safely, the departing flight elements came under intense and extremely accurate fire. Flight routes were varied on succeeding lifts and the ground fire remained intense. Of the 50 aircraft involved in the operation, 23 received hits, two of the aircraft being forced to land near Da Troi in the Iron Triangle where they again came under enemy ground fire. One crew member from the 68th Avn Co was killed during the operation and a total of eight from all participating units were wounded.

During the operation, low ceilings forced the Battalion command and control helicopter flown by LTC Edward P. Davis, Bn CO, and Maj Charles R. Sandidge Jr., Bn S-3 to fly at dangerously low altitudes to direct the operation. Their aircraft also received hit damage and during the approach to the Cu Chi Airfield at the termination of the mission, tail rotor control failure was experienced. LTC Davis succeeded in landing the aircraft with no further damage.

After repeated friendly operations in the Filhol Plantation and the Ho Bo Woods, Viet Cong anti-aircraft fire continued to be a serious threat to helicopter employment, in that area.

The remainder of the month was devoted to providing support to the Division on operations CANU, IAHANIA and AIEA. On operation OAPU, the 1st Brigade Task Force entered a new area of operations by securing and defending the location for the new base camp of the 196th Light Infantry Brigade which was soon to arrive in country. Operation IAHANIA and AIEA involved the 2nd Bn, 27th Inf and 1st Bn, 27th Inf respectively in operations designed to further clear Viet Cong forces from the Hau Nghia Province. The Aviation Battalion

called north again to assist a Civil Irregular Defense Group Company who had been surrounded by an estimated two companies of Viet Cong since early afternoon. The CIDG Company had suffered many casualties and was now requesting medical evacuation and reinforcement. The Little Bears, known for their proficiency in night operations were called upon to perform the mission. Prior to their arrival in the Ben Soi area, LTC Davis, Avn Bn CO, assisted by members of the Pathfinder Detachment, had effected the necessary coordination, and was airborne in a Command and Control helicopter to direct the operation.

Without hesitation and with their usual professional competence, the Little Bear flight quickly completed the troop lift and medical evacuation into an unknown and unlighted landing zone without incident. Although enemy fire was received none of the aircraft were hit.

For the first time since arrival in country the Aviation Battalion was required to establish a Forward Command Post to support the extension of Operation ATTLEBORO into the Viet Cong stronghold of War Zone C. Troop lift and combat assaults were controlled by the 145th Aviation Battalion, while the complex task of coordinating aerial resupply to all of the tactical units engaged in the pursuit phases of ATTLEBORO was given to the 25th Aviation Battalion. Through the outstanding efforts of Maj Charles R. Sandidge, Bn S-3, Maj James Watts, Asst S-3, and Cpt John R. Gantt, Communications Officer, aerial resupply, amounting to tons of cargo, was provided daily to the units scattered throughout War Zone C.

The men comprising the Forward Command Post element of the Aviation Battalion enjoyed their Thanksgiving Dinner under the sunny skies of Tay Ninh.

Aircraft of the Battalion flew a total of 2,673 hours during the month of November, the high for the year, while Viet Cong fire dropped to a low of 17 incidents with only two aircraft receiving hits.

DECEMBER: December 1966 closed out the first ten months of combat for the Aviation Battalion. Operations returned to a more normal pattern of combat support as the Division again returned to conduct operations in Hau Nghia Province near the Cu Chi Base Camp, and also in Long An Province southwest of Saigon. Several large scale airmobile operations were controlled by the Aviation Battalion for the 4th Bn, 9th Inf (Manchu) in the Binh Chanh area. Extensive planning preceded the accomplishment of those operations since they were among the first to be conducted with U.S. Troops in that area. On several occasions in the past, U.S. helicopter companies carrying ARVN Troops had received intense ground fire; resulting in extensive equipment damage and casualties in this same area. However, all operations conducted during the month in the Binh Chanh area were successful and very little fire was encountered.

One of the most significant operations accomplished during the month of December was a night lift of Co C, 2nd Bn, 27th Inf into a landing zone north of Bao Trai between 0148 and 0255 hours on the morning of the 19th. All flight elements of Co A escorted by Co B received fire as they made two lifts into the landing zone and subsequent feints into two false landing zones. Again no hits were taken as Viet Cong gunners seem to have difficulty with accuracy after dark.

Air Medal for Heroism

Maj Edward B. Bookman, Co A	Cpt Delmer H. Livengood, Co A
Maj Lewllyn A. Brown, Co A	Cpt Terry F. Mix, Co A
Maj Victor J. Buttner, Co A	Cpt Robert P. Moore, Co A
Maj Glenn T. Feilke, Co A	Cpt Joel M. Price, Co A
Maj Robert Grundman, Co A	Cpt Jackson Schultz, Co A
Maj David R. Hall, HHD	1Lt Edwin R. Cowherd, Co A
Maj Raymond F. Huntington, Co B	1Lt Benjamin Crabtree, Co A
Maj Leslie A. Layne, HHD	1Lt Charles L. Kendall, Co A
Maj William Murdock, Co A	1Lt Curtis Landers, Co A
Maj Jack R. Rollinger, Co A	1Lt Robert C. MacWilliams, Co A
Maj James R. Vance, HHD	1Lt Jimmy D. Lowry, Co A
Maj Ronald C. Vines, Co B	CWO3 Robert H. Iwanasa, Co A
Cpt James M. Gass, Co B	CWO3 Paul L. Shaw, Co B
WO1 Thomas C. Hutchins, Co A	WO1 John T. Stephens, Co A
SSG Samuel J. Maddern, Co A	Sp4 James E. Harris, Co A
SP6 Lennie F. Wilson, Co B	Sp4 Robert E. Johnson, Co A
SSG Donald W. Brown, Co A	Sp4 Thomas Majerchin, Co A
Sgt John A. Rhodes, Co B	Sp4 Richard O. Nash, Co B
Sgt Lawson K. Pilkinton, Co A	Sp4 Santitos Morales, Co A
Sp5 William M. Johnson, Co B	Sp4 Edward A. O'Toole, Co A
Sp5 Bryan M. Ford, Co A	Sp4 Nick Pepe, Co A
Sp5 Robert E. Smith, Co A	Sp4 Clifton Prince, Co B
Sp5 Johnny A. Wilbur, Co A	Sp4 Lorry R. Roschella, Co A
Cpl Ronald D. Stegall, Co A	Sp4 Terry R. Shely, Co A
Cpl James L. Wilkes, Co A	Sp4 Joel D. York, Co A
Sp4 Lonnie E. Chavis, Co A	Sp4 Michael Drennon, Co A

Army Commendation Medal for Heroism

Maj Glenn T. Feilke, Co A	Sp5 Samuel Cannon, Co A
Cpt James B. Kelly, Co A	Sp5 Johnny A. Wilbur, Co A
Cpt James M. Gass, Co A	Sp4 Terry A. Heath, Co A
1Lt Richard M. Healy, Co A	Sp4 Benjamin R. Parsons, Co A
1Lt Walter R. Mace, Co A	Sp4 Herman E. Freddy, HHD
WO1 Dennis M. Jungblut, Co A	Sp4 Alphonso Trujillo, Co A
Sp5 James D. Alexander, Co A	

VIII. CONCLUSION:

The 25th Aviation Battalion has completed its first year of successful combat operations in support of the 25th Infantry Division in the Republic of Vietnam. The year was marked by hard work, long hours, brief periods of enjoyment and relaxation, and by joy and sorrow alike. The men who served with the 25th Aviation Battalion during 1966 can feel justly proud of the effort they contributed in order for the Battalion to accomplish its mission. The motto of the 25th Aviation Battalion "Lele Mahou No Na Pualii" meaning "We Fly For the Troops" has been upheld in the finest traditions of the United States Army. To the men who will follow in 1967, the traditions of the 25th Aviation Battalion are passed on.