

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
336TH ASSAULT HELICOPTER COMPANY (UH-1)
APO San Francisco 96296

SUBJECT: Unit History

Commanding General
United States Army Vietnam
ATTN: AVHCS-MA
APO US Forces 96375

1. Enclosed is a history of the 336th Assault Helicopter Company, APO :
Francisco 96296, from 1 January through 31 December 1967.
2. This history is related in narrative form in the style and words of
Warrant Officer Aviator of the type who is the back bone of the Company.
It is compiled from after action reports and personal accounts. Through
the year, on a daily basis, many examples of bravery and perseverance in
the face of enemy fire and other adverse conditions went without notice.
The incidents depicted in this history are only samples of the devotion
duty demonstrated by each man in the Company each day. It will be noted
that although the names change due to DEROS turnover, the actions exhibit
remain on the same high plane which is an indicator of the superb quantity
and quality of the personnel received in the Company.
3. The 336th Assault Helicopter Company has a western theme. The Commo
name "The Warriors", the "Thunderbirds" armed platoon, the "Reservation"
parking area, the "WigWam" lounge and lining up for the War Path prior
to combat assaults are all mentioned with pride.
4. This history is published on a monthly basis and a copy is made available
to each man. A pictorial history is maintained in the Company Orderly

Dwaine C. Watson
DWANE C. WATSON
Major, Infantry
Commanding

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Unit History

JANUARY 1967

1967 Started our with a literal "Bang" for the Warriors. On the 7th this month they staged an operation out of Tra Vinh in support of the 7th Division. The mission was to conduct a searching operation to the east of Tra Vinh near the coast of the South China Sea. On the fourth troop lift a landing zone in the vicinity of the infamous Long Toan outpost, the Warrior transports had just touched down when sniper fire rang out. The aircraft commander of one of the lead ships was hit in the leg. Gunships began to suppress the area but were instructed to cease fire since there were friendly troops already in the landing zone from the three previous lifts and there was danger that some friendly troops would be hit by the suppressive fire.

On the next two days of the operation, virtually the same thing happened in every landing zone resulting in two more Warrior transport pilots, and two Warrior crew chiefs being wounded along with a number of transports being shot up.

One of the pilots wounded on the 8th was flying with a young Vietnamese Air Force Lieutenant as co-pilot, when he was hit in the shoulder by a Cong sniper's bullet. The Vietnamese Lieutenant, with only a few hours of flight time, took the controls and flew the aircraft safely back to the start field where the wounded pilot was evacuated by "Dust-Off".

On the 19th of this month the Warriors were supporting a search and destroy operation of the 21st ARVN Division 10 miles Southeast of Ca Mau. There was little contact made with the enemy until it came time for extraction. Towards the end of the extraction the thirty troops remaining in the pick-up zone began to receive intense fire and a light fire team of T-Birds began suppressing the area around the pick-up zone.

FEBRUARY 1967

This month saw the beginning of intensive use of night "Fire Fly" operations by the Thunderbirds. Firefly missions were flown on 12 of the 28 days of February.

The mission of the Firefly is to interdict sampan traffic on canals, rivers and other waterways during the hours after curfew, in an effort to prevent resupply of Viet Cong elements and to harass and disrupt Viet Cong units during their movement at night.

A Firefly team consists of a light fire team of armed helicopters and one armed transport which is used as a light ship. The principle of operation is as follows: The lightship, cruising at approximately 1000 feet absolute altitude, flies down the selected canals and rivers training its powerful light in search of targets. Behind the lightship flies the lead gunship, the light fire team, at 600-700 feet and in position to put fire on any target of opportunity or suppress any enemy fires directed at the lightship. The trail gunship flies blacked-out at an altitude of from 500-600 feet and its primary mission of this ship is to protect the lead gunship from enemy fire. The mission usually lasts from 2200-2300 until 0400 or 0500 in the morning.

On the 15th of this month the Warriors and T-Birds went to Vi Thanh in support of the 21st ARVN Division. On the first day of this operation the ground troops encountered light resistance from the enemy. On the morning of the second day the transports were put into a landing zone approximately 100 meters from a heavily wooded dike line. As the transports touched down the Viet Cong opened up with automatic weapons on the lead aircraft. Warrior Lead flown by Captain Robert L. Stewart was shot down and Captain Stewart mortally wounded. The second and third aircraft in the flight were also :

MARCH 1967

On the first at 2000 hours the T-Birds took off from Soc Trang enroute Bac Lieu for a Firefly operation. Arriving at 2030, the pilots proceeded to airfield operation for their briefing. Approximately fifteen minutes later recoilless rifle rounds began to fall into the center of town causing panic and numerous casualties among the civilian populace. Almost before the second and third rounds had fallen, the T-Birds were off the ground and putting target attacks on the Viet Cong weapons emplacements. Due to the instant response and the intensity of the attacks by the armed choppers, the enemy broke thier attack and fled but not without suffering heavy casualties.

By this time the Vikings, the armed platoon of the 121st Assault Helico Company, had been scrambled from Soc Trang and were enroute to relieve the T. The two gun platoons continued to relieve each other until almost midnight. it was decided by the Vietnamese commander to put a 10 ship troop lift into enemy area in an attempt to make contact with the fleeing Viet Cong. A flight of ten Tiger transports, led by Captain Robert Greene, was scrambled to Bac Lieu. Captain Thomas Beauchamp, second section leader of the T-Birds, found and marked the landing zone and directed the Tigers to a pin point landing. No contact was established with the enemy that night, but the next morning the ARVN ground forces found numerous blood trails and expended recoilless rifle casings where the T-Birds had put their strikes.

On Easter Sunday, the 26th, Colonel Jack Dempsey, Battalion Commander of the 13th Aviation (DELTA) Battalion was killed in action while attempting to rescue the crewmembers of two downed choppers.

A flight of armed transports had been put into a "hot" landing zone and one of the aircraft was shot down. A Dustoff medevac helicopter went in aft crew but it also was hit by intense enemy fire and went down. Colonel Dennis

APRIL 1967

The month of April was relatively quiet with the exception of the 1st and 13th.

On the first (April Fools Day) at 16 minutes to twelve, Soc Trang Airfield was hit by 17 rounds of 75mm recoilless rifle fire. The attack lasted for 6 minutes and resulted in little damage. One round came through the roof of the Awards and Decorations office and destroyed almost everything in the office except a few award citations. Within the next 2 days, the office was repaired and everything was back to normal. Three helicopters were hit by shrapnel resulting in only minor damage, and two enlisted men from the T-Bird platoon received shrapnel wounds when they scrambled to their choppers as the rounds started.

On the 13th, the Warriors and T-Birds were supporting a 21st Division operation in Chuong Thien province staging out of Vi Thanh. The first Battalion in the landing zone made heavy contact with elements of the Tay Do Battalion which were dug in along a canal line about 3 miles SW of Phung Hiep. A call was initiated for armed helicopter support. A T-Bird fire team led by CPT, Robert L. Stewart rallied to the call and began to put target attacks on the fortifications so the ground elements could maneuver. On the second pass CPT Stewart's wing aircraft, flown by WO Arthur Jones, was hit by automatic weapons fire. A fire immediately broke out and WO Jones made a crash landing. The crew chief and gunner PFC Arevalo and SP4 Gibson were thrown clear of the aircraft but the pilots were trapped in the flaming wreckage amid exploding ammunition. PFC Arevalo and SP4 Gibson returned to the aircraft and dragged both pilots from the flames. WO Jones suffered a broken leg and WO Ryan second degree burns on the

This month the Warrior Transports flew 2,369.8 hours and 4,924 sorties. They carried 140.1 tons of cargo and 15,828 passengers. The T-Birds flew 43

MAY 1967

On the 13th, the T-Birds were on Firefly mission, staging out of Soc for Ba Xuyen sector. A light fireteam led by Cpt Robert Stewart and 1Lt Mc Oslin were reconning a large river to the south of Soc Trang and were about to go off station to refuel when suddenly the light-ship illuminated a large sampans approximately 35 feet in length. The sampans was moving slowly east down the river to a known Viet Cong staging area and was in violation of published curfew. The sector advisor gave the word to open fire and the T-Birds attacked the sampans sinking it with rockets and machinegun fire backed up with a 40mm grenade launcher. The fireteam then put strafing attacks on the south side of the river in the vicinity of the sunken sampans. The following day Bac Lieu sec S-2 reported they had received good intelligence that the T-Birds had killed and wounded 80 Viet Cong and had sunk a large supply boat which the V.C. had been escorting.

On the 19th of this month we lost 5 Warriors in an aircraft accident. Two pilots and three crewmen were killed, and three escaped with minor injuries. WO's Fridenkoitis and Kight were killed as were SP4's Sharp and Larman and PFC Tighe. WO's Lambert and Hendrix and SP/4 Elliott were only slightly injured.

On the 21st at approximately 2330 the T-Birds were scrambled to Bac Lieu. The town was under recoilless rifle and mortar attack. The Vikings, the armed platoon of our sister unit the 121st Assault Helicopter Company, were already at Bac Lieu on a Firefly mission and were rearming after expending their ordnance on the Viet Cong. The T-Birds arrived as the Vikings pulled off station and continued strafing the now fleeing V.C. Several civilians were killed and a large number wounded by the attacking Viet Cong. The number of Viet Cong killed is unknown.

JUNE 1967

On the 8th of this month the T-Birds got into a good firefight with elements of the 261st Viet Cong main force Battalion. The T-Birds were flying tactical air support for a US Special Forces CIDG operation a few miles SE of Moc Hoa. The lead elements of the friendly forces had just crossed their line of departure when the VC opened up with automatic weapons from a tree line a few hundred yards to their front. The forward element suffered heavy casualties and the T-Birds called in for close air support. Captain Richard Kelly was flying fire team A shotgun aircraft spotted VC main force running out of the tree line on the left side of the advancing friendly element. The T-Birds rolled in on an attack and began receiving intense automatic weapons fire from retreating Viet Cong. Captain Kelly's aircraft was hit twice. One round wounded his gunner SP4 Terrance Cary in the leg and the other went through the synchronized elevator push pull tube. Captain Kelly returned to Moc Hoa with his wounded gunner and Captain Charles Thomas, 2nd Section lead, who was flying as T-Bird chief went down on the deck to take over fireteam lead and to continue attacking the now paralytic stricken Viet Cong. On his first pass at the target Captain Thomas' aircraft was hit in the engine oil reservoir and his oil pressure dropped to zero so he put the aircraft down in a rice paddy without further damage. Captain Roger Greenwood and WO James Ryan who were flying the Command Control ship put a request for assistance for the downed crew and WO's Salvatore Salupo and Phillip Litt answered. T-Bird 4 flown by WO's Doug Lape and Meredith Mazza were now covering the downed ship alone and they escorted Warrior 26 as he went into pick up the downed chopper's crew. A little later as the ground forces continued to take moderate casualties, Warrior 20 flown by Captain Sullivan Brown and WO David Jackson, along with Warrior 26 went into the hot landing zone under fire to

JULY 1967

The month of July was relatively calm for the 336th Assault Helicopter Company. However, there were plenty of fireworks on 4 July as a heavy fire of T-Birds led by Captain Charles Thomas, supported a small ARVN operation 10 miles northwest of Tra Vinh. The ground forces made early contact with the T-Birds as they swept through the operational area and began calling on the T-Birds for support. During the day's operation the T-Birds made repeated target attacks on several known V.C. concentrations clearing the way for the advancing ground forces. Near the end of the day WO Douglas Lape earned a cluster for his Purple Heart as an enemy bullet smashed through the chin bubble of his ship spraying shrapnel in his hands and legs. Fortunately his wounds were not of a serious nature. Expending over 30,000 rounds of 7.62 ammo and 2.75" rockets during the day, the T-Birds made 18 confirmed and 12 suspected V.C. kills in addition to destroying 40 sampans and 12 hooches.

Only three days later, on 7 July, another light team of T-Birds were sent to work with the ARVN forces at Tra Vinh, this time to the Southeast of the city. The fire team led by 1Lt Robert Oslin ran into several target attacks on the way and at other suspected V.C. locations the T-Birds were credited with 26 confirmed kills for the day. Both gunships were hit by enemy fire as they worked over the area. One enemy round entered over the pilots door of WO James Hadley's ship, scraping the top of his helmet while another entered through the belly of the ship splitting the sole of the boot on the ship's gunner SP4 Larry McGune. Not outdone by the T-Birds, Major Royce Smithson, flying command and control ship, took a hit from enemy groundfire while making an approach to an outpost in the

A four day operation in which the Warriors were the primary aviation unit involved was staged from 12 July through 15 July. The first day of the operation

August 1967

The month of August 1967, kept the 336th Assault Helicopter Company busy right from its very first hour. At 0100 hours 1 Aug 67, Du Tho Training Center only a few miles south of Soc Trang, came under mortar and small arms attack of an estimated V.C. company. Within minutes after the attack had commenced, a light fire team of T-Birds were airborne and enroute to the training center. WO Jim Hadley found himself, for the first time, flying as fire team lead. However, his inexperience was of no consequence in the outstanding job he did silencing the enemy guns. Placing target attacks on areas of concentrated mortar and rifle muzzle flashes, WO Hadley quickly put a stop to the attack. Later, under the light of a flare, the fire team leader found several V.C. leaving the area by sampan and commenced the attack. After two times on station over Du Tho all the enemy fire had ceased and no more enemy movement could be detected, so the T-Birds returned to Soc Trang for the night. Later on in the day it was confirmed that they had been responsible for more than 20 VC/KBA.

On 2 Aug at 1800 hours the 336th was holding an awards ceremony in which several of the Warriors and T-Birds were being honored for their actions while serving in Viet Nam. As the ceremony progressed a very unexpected, "Scramble the T-Birds", came through the loudspeaker.

It was a hectic moment as the pilots and crews broke from formation and bolted for their ships. In another minute's time they were airborne enroute Tra Vinh and the ceremony continued.

While things had been peaceful in Soc Trang two ARVN outposts southwest of Tra Vinh had been under heavy attack and had called for gunship support. Cpt. Jack Bertlecamp, flying as T-Bird Chief, learned that the V.C. had left the outposts and were leaving the area. It was the T-Bird's mission to find and

SEPTEMBER 1967

The 336th Assault Helicopter Company "Warriors", found themselves hard work early in the month of September 1967. The first two days of the month the Warrior Transports in support of the 21st ARVN Division at Vi Thanh. It was a rather quiet operation for the most part, with the transports receiving fire only once, while gunships picked up only small amount of ground fire. Although there was little contact, over 60 Viet Cong were killed during the operation. Also, there were several weapons captured by Friendly Forces, including 14 guns and one 60mm mortar.

During the second day the operation was in progress, the Warriors made a fine demonstration of Army Aviation's capacity for flexibility. Early in the morning the commanding General of the 21st Division, completely altered the operational plans. In less than 45 minutes after his final instructions were given the Warriors had completed the first LZ of the day and all phases of the operation functioned as smoothly as if it had been planned for several days.

Usually when reference is made to a "scramble" it's usually in a conversation about or by the T-Birds, who spend a great deal of time on alert for gunship mission. However, on 9 September 67, it was Warrior 6 himself, who called on a scramble. At 1030 hours on 9 Sept. Major Joseph Laseau was sent to Bac Lieu to pick up a command and control group and organize an immediate action operation based on information concerning an enemy position that had been recently received.

Within another hour all available gunships and transports had arrived at Soc Trang and were briefed on the mission and soon the 42nd Rangers were being lifted into the area.

Although the operation was barely 6 hours in progress, 24 Viet Cong were

OCTOBER 1967

October was a relatively slow month for the 336th. On the 9th Warriors and T-Birds supported the 21st ARVN Division in an amphibious assault on Cu Lao Dung Island. Operating out of Soc Trang, the operation was a combined helicopter and amphibious assault by members of River assault group forces. The Warriors lifted approximately 800 troops into the island. The lifts were met by light small arms and automatic weapons fire. The Birds reported drawing heavy automatic weapons fire through out the area. Lao La France received a wound in the foot. Among the 25 VC that were captured or killed was an ARVN deserter. The T-Birds only accounted for KBA due to the dense foliage. They destroyed 34 sampans and 38 structures.

The 24th and 25th of October found the Warriors and T-Birds again supporting the 21st ARVN Division. Working out of Emc Lieu on the 24th the Warriors helped put in almost 1000 troops. Little fire was received on lifts, but on the extraction moderate to heavy small arms and automatic weapons fire was received.

On the 25th, a demolition team was lifted in, along with 250 troops. Their purpose was to destroy the VC Canal blocks in the area. Two very large ones were destroyed.

The month closed, with the gunships credited with 25 KBA, 103 structures and 60 sampans destroyed.

The 336th came out just about even this month as far as replacement and people going home. Welcome to WO Allan Miller, WO James Murphy and James Stukey. A fond farewell to Captain Thomas Beauchamp, Captain Jer. Duggan and 1st LT Richard Clark.

NOVEMBER 1967

The month of November came in like a lamb and out like a lion. We started as a pretty uneventful month, ended in increased activity for the Warrior and T-Birds of the 336th Assault Helicopter Company.

On the 16th of the month the Warriors and T-Birds were on a small operation involving the C.I.D.G. Operating out of Vinh Long the Warriors lifted over 500 troops into three LZ's, covered by the T-Birds. Very little enemy fire was encountered during the day as the ground troops maneuvered. The troops remained on the ground through the night and four confirmed were captured.

On the 25th the VC attempted to mortar Soc Trang Airfield. All the rounds fell short, landing on the Tiger's Tail. No U.S. injuries resulted.

The 27th again brought VC mortar rounds to Soc Trang Airfield this time bringing moderate damage. WO David Lape was fatally wounded while running to his ship during the scramble. Sgt John Ksionzyk, second Platoon Ser was paralyzed from the waist down as a result of the blasts. Warrior 2 was totally destroyed, and all but six Warrior aircraft were damaged by shrapnel. As the T-Birds ran to their ships, some were knocked down by blasts and T-Bird Chief, Cpt Robert Knight received minor wounds. After the attack the T-Birds located and destroyed the sampans which the attackers had used to transport themselves and their equipment. Shortly thereafter they were sent to the rescue of an outpost under attack, and the VC escaped.

The 29th and 30th of the month found the Warriors and T-Birds supporting a 21st ARVN Division operation out of Soc Trang on the 29th, and Pac LA on the 30th. The operation area was covered by elements of the Soc Trang

DECEMBER 1967

On the morning of the second the Warriors and T-Birds were scrambled on an IRF to Ca Mau to support a 21st ARVN Division operation. The operation went smoothly until the T-Birds heard a call over guard. Two Americans were trapped in Nam Can outpost. They were trying to recover the radios from an O-1 shot down a few days earlier. A light fire team, lead by Capt Robert Knight, headed toward the area. An Air America chopper, also hearing the call, turned toward Nam Can. Capt Robert Knight and the T-Birds, successfully rescued the Air America and got the men out. Later that day, four Warriors were called to carry supplies into the outpost. They were covered by a light fire team of T-Birds. The first two ships went in and out successfully. When the third ship went in, the VC opened up. As a result, the pilot of the third ship, WO Russell Moldenhauer was mortally wounded in the head. The T-Birds had a total of 5 ships take hits for the day.

Then on the 8th, 9th and 10th the Warriors and T-Birds were supporting another 21st ARVN Division operation out of Vi Thanh. It was proclaimed one of the most successful operations in the delta, with over 450 VC killed. The Warriors and T-Birds put out their utmost, staying until 2200 and 2300. Some even remained overnight supporting the operation.

The 15th brought an unexpected surprise for the 336th, they were called upon to support the 9th American Division, staging out of Dong Tam, the Warriors put the Americans and ARVN Marines into LZ's near Cai Lay.

The 20th, 21st and 22 the Warriors and T-Birds were again at Vi Thanh supporting the 21st ARVN Division. The operation was a success, with over 70 VC KTA and 6 tons of ammunition and medical supplies.

AWARDS AND DECORATIONS
PRESENTED TO THE MEN OF THE 336TH ASSAULT HELICOPTER COMPANY

PERIOD COVERED
Jan thru Dec

DISTINGULSHED SERVICE CROSS	3
SILVER STAR	5
LEGION OF MERIT	1
DISTINGULSHED FLYING CROSS	75
SOLDIERS MEDAL	0
BRONZE STARS WITH 'V'	30
BRONZE STAR	35
AIRMEDAL WITH 'V'	108
AIRMEDAL	150
ARMY COMMENDATION MEDAL WITH 'V'	37
ARMY COMMENDATION MEDAL	84
PURPLE HEART	50
CROSS OF GALLANTRY	43
USARV CERTIFICATE OF ACHIEVEMENT	30
VIETNAMESE CROSS OF GALLANTRY	43
VIETNAMESE MEDAL OF HONOR	5

MISSION TOTALS FOR 1967

SORTIES FLOWN	82,341
HOURS FLOWN	33,603
PASSENGERS CARRIED	140,103
CARGO CARRIED (tons)	2,403
STRUCTURES DESTROYED	2,459
SAMPANS DESTROYED	2,190
VIET CONG K.B.A.	1,104*

* By confirmed body count.