

HISTORY
OF
162ND ASSAULT HELICOPTER COMPANY

1 January 1968 - 31 March 1968

Prepared by
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Unit Historian

Approved By
Major James E. Thompson
Commanding

Headquarters
11th Combat Aviation Battalion
APO San Francisco 96289

162ND ASSAULT HELICOPTER COMPANY

Roster of Key Personnel

Commanding Officer..... MAJ James E. Thompson
Executive Officer..... MAJ Allen A. Bresette
Operations Officer..... MAJ Paul J. Wenzel
First Sergeant 1SG Clyde L. Pine
First Platoon Commander..... MAJ Ray H. Kreulen
Second Platoon Commander..... 1LT Harlan M. Scheibe
Third Platoon Commander..... CPT Harold J. Hayes
Service Platoon..... 2LT John Davenport
Intelligence Officer..... MAJ Paul J. Wenzel
Commanding Officer 407th TC Det..... MAJ Ronald K. Andreson
Commanding Officer, 758th Medical Det..... CPT Ronald W. Case
Commanding Officer 450th Signal Det..... 1LT Sterling L. Linton
Consolidated Supply and PRO..... WO1 Thomas D. Phelps

I Mission and Resources

During the period 1 January through 31 March 1968, the 162nd Assault Helicopter Company continued to support commitments of the 11th Combat Battalion. All assigned missions were successfully completed in a professional manner, upholding the standards established by the 11th Battalion and the "Vultures".

The self-help construction program is still being utilized under the guidance and direction of 1LT Sterling L. Linton with many new structures and improvements as a result.

The new "Vulture Theater" has been completed, with a new stage, screen, projection room, and covered seating area.

The new addition to the 162nd Mess Hall has been completed and a new sump has been dug. The mess hall has also been completely enclosed to help eliminate dust.

Two new houthouses have been built for the 407th TC Det. personnel and the old buildings removed.

Four new showers have been built and overhead covers put on all the urinals. All showers, urinals, and latrines have been painted.

A hover area for maintenance has been leveled off and primed along with all of the slick lines. Also lights have been installed on the slick line. The revetments have been cleaned up and numbered A1 through C6.

The orderly room has been repaired, repainted and somewhat remodeled due to the sanding plaster on the ceiling.

A new shed for the generators has been built and the generators moved to eliminate the noise from the operations briefing room. Also, new wiring is being installed in the company area.

The inside of the operations building has undergone a much needed redesigning and remodeling, under the direction of Major Paul J. Wenzel.

Several personnel changes have taken place within the company during the quarter. 1LT Marlan K. Schiebe has taken over the second platoon, replacing CPT. Edwin B. Dean, who rotated stateside. 1LT James Shannon took over the first platoon temporarily when CPT. Paul B. Fellenzer rotated back stateside. Major Ray H. Kreulen has replaced Lt. Shannon as first platoon leader until April 15 when he will replace Major Wenzel as operations officer. CPT Harold J. Hayes has replaced CPT. Thomas H. Guisenberry as commander of the third platoon due to CPT Guisenberry rotating stateside.

Chief Warrant Officer Charles E. Weed from Battalion replaced WO Thomas D. Phelps as Consolidated Supply and PRO, releasing WO Phelps back to the 2nd Platoon to resume his flying duties.

II Operations and Training

The following units were supported during the quarter:

101st Airborne Division
1st Infantry Division
9th Infantry Division
25th Infantry Division
5th AAFW Division
199th Light Infantry Brigade
1st Australian Task Force
5th Special Forces Group
II Field Forces Victor

Total Missions Flown -	10,030
Total Sorties Flown -	26,391
Tons of Cargo Carried -	491
Passengers Carried -	49,961
Total Flight Time -	8,720 hours

Number of Aircraft Hit by Enemy Fire:

	UH-1C	UH-1D
January	1	1
February	3	11
March	3	2

Number of Aircraft Lost

	UH-1C	UH-1D
January	0	1
February	0	1
March	11	0

Number of Aircraft Recovered

January	3
February	3
March	2

Crew Members Wounded:

January	1
February	4
March	3

Crew Members Killed:

January	0
February	0
March	4

The 162nd "Vultures" started the new year with a change of commanders. A change of command ceremony honoring Major Stobely L. Wilson, the departing C.O., and Major James E. Thompson was held on 1 Jan 68 in conjunction with a presentation of awards ceremony. MG Williams Commanding General of the 1st Aviation Brigade was present to present awards to persons being decorated. Among those receiving awards was Major Wilson who received the Distinguished Flying Cross for heroism while participating in aerial flight and the Bronze Star for meritorious achievement.

The "Vultures" were sorry to lose such a fine commander as Major Wilson, but in return were happy to give Major Thompson as a replacement. Major Thompson is on his second tour in Vietnam and before coming to the Vultures, did an outstanding job with the "Tomahawks" of the 128th Aslt Hel Co as their Operations Officer.

Visiting dignitaries present at the ceremony were; COL Psaki, 12th Group Commander; COL Lowery, Commander, 3rd Bde, 101st Abn Div; LTC Hobbs, 11th Cbt Avn Bn Commander and his staff and other Company Commanders of the Battalion.

A total of 29 Awards were presented at the ceremony. Following is a list of these awards:

LFC

MAJOR Wilson

B.C.

MAJ Wilson
C/T Dean
C/T Gaisenberry
2LT Coriell
1SG Brooks

A.I. "V"

PFC Bowling

A.I.

WO Garner
WO Granados
WO Greenleaf
WO Lydeen
WO Olson
WO Stevens
WO Stoehr

A.M.

SGT Scott
SP5 Reed
SP4 Autrey
SP4 Popuy
SP5 Espvik
SP4 Kollmer
SP4 Mailloux
SP4 Pierson
SP4 Seba

ACM "V"

PFC Heinemann

ACM

WO Wright J.C.
SP4 Forte
SP4 Kilpatrick
SP4 Stewart

The first half of January were spent becoming accustomed to our new CO and was mostly occupied with training flights for the 101st Abn Div., preparing them to become operational in the Republic and indoctrinating them to the techniques of airmobile operations.

On 17 January the "Vultures" conducted combat assaults for the 3rd Bde, 101st Abn Div. "Screaming Eagles." As the day progressed the "Rakasans" made contact with an undetermined element of Viet Cong and additional reinforcements were inserted by the "Vultures" enabling the "Rakasans" to route the hostile force.

On the 18th of January we were on Ready Reaction Force for the 3rd Corps tactical zone and were called to the aid of our sister company, the "Robinhoods" while supporting the 25th ARVN Div, the 173rd had landed in the midst of a hard core VC Element and lost several ships. The "Vultures", with the aid of their armed platoon, the "Copperheads", completed the insertion in spite of intensive

ground action, and proved again that the 162nd is the best in the Battalion.

A couple of days later, 20 January, the "Vultures" were engaged in a Battalion lift with the "Robinhoods" when the 1st Platoon flight lead reported receiving fire. Shortly afterwards, the third and fourth aircraft also reported receiving fire. The 11th Bn Commander, LTC William A. Hobbs, who was in charge of the operation, called in the "Copperhead" light fire team. After the "Copperheads" suppressed the area no more fire was received and the operation was completed without further incident.

At approximately 2330 hours on 26 January several mortar rounds hit near the maintenance area but there was negative damage to aircraft, property, or persons.

On 28 January the "Vultures" were honored to have Brigadier General Spruance, (retired) as a guest speaker at our safety meeting. Brigadier General Spruance is a safety officer for the Air Force. After having a near fatal crash in 1961 while flying for the Delaware Air National Guard. His talk was centered around his near fatal crash and how he avoided his rendezvous with death.

On 29 January the Vultures, landing one ship at a time in a small pick up zone, extracted over 60 tons of captured Viet Cong rice from a field location between Phuoc Vinh and Lai Khe. There were a few anxious moments while we were extracting the 600 bags of freshly packed rice and toilet paper, as the APC's just north of the pick up zone made contact with the Viet Cong. However, the mission was successfully completed and we did not receive any fire in the short skirmish that took place.

The 30th of January marked a new era in the fighting in the Republic. The Viet Cong made a strong offensive in most of the key cities and district in the Republic. Saigon, Bien Hoa, Long Binh, Phu Loi, Lai Khe and many other key places were hit with rockets, mortars, and in some instances ground attacks.

On 30 January we extracted the majority of our aircraft to Vung Tau due to intelligence reports of an upcoming attack. The following day we were back on the job, completing our missions with the professionalism that the "Vultures" are known for throughout the 3rd Corps Tactical Zone.

On 31 January we teamed up with our sister assault helicopter companies the 128th, and 173rd, and two assault support helicopter companies, the 205th and 213th, and together moved over 3,400 troops and 370 tons of cargo in the short span of ten hours, while supporting the 1st Inf. Div.

The battalion size insertions, two extractions, and a further one and a half battalion insertion in company size lifts were made in the late afternoon hours. Over five and a half battalions of infantry and supporting equipment were moved by the 11th Bn from Di An to Quan Loi, with the "Vultures" moving over 1000 troops.

This was the largest movement of troops ever conducted by the UH-1 units of a combat aviation battalion in a one day operation.

Several times during the day the Vultures came under intense enemy mortar and rocket fire at Lai Khe and surrounding areas. However, due to the fine efforts of our flight leads 1LT Harlan Scheibe and 1LT James Shannon and the coordinated efforts of "Vulture 3" Major Paul J. Wenzel, and "Vulture 6", Major James E. Thompson, all the lifts throughout the day went exceptionally well.

The "Vultures" started the month of February with a bang so to speak. In the late hours of the first day of February incoming 82mm mortars were reported in the south quadrant of the compound. These few rounds could have been an indication of things to come for the "Vultures" because February was a busy month for the 162nd.

On 2 February the "Vultures" were supporting the 1st Bde of the 101st Airborne north of Song Be when WO Ronald D. Freer noticed a loss of power and made a successful emergency landing in a swampy clearing. The aircraft was recovered before dark and the days mission was completed without further incident.

In the early morning hours of 3 February the 162nd Armed Platoon, the "Copperheads" were called to the aid of a P.F. compound south of Phuoc Vinh, which was under attack by a company size force of VC. The "Copperheads" stopped the attack and were credited with killing 25 VC during the night's action. It

is because of swift strikes such as these that COL Lawrence L. Mowery, Commander of the 3rd Bde, 101st Abn., at Phuoc Vinh presented the "Copperheads" with a letter of commendation for services rendered to him and his troops.

On 5 February the "Copperheads" were again called on to thwart the enemy in their attempt to over run a Vietnamese compound near Phuoc Hoa. After being scrambled the "Copperheads" established contact with the ground unit and proceeded with their gun runs. When it was over one of the compounds advisors gave the "Copperheads" credit for 8 dead and 7 wounded VC.

On 6 February the 162nd was on RRF, but at 1215 hours came to the aid of the "Thunderbirds" who had lost 2 ships to enemy ground fire just west of Binh Chan. The "Vultures" airlifted elements of the 199th Light Inf. Brigade into there strategic locations around the downed aircraft and completed the lift without taking a round.

On 8 February Major James E. Thompson and members of the 162nd Armed Platoon, the "Copperheads," were the honored guests of the Vietnamese district chief at Phuoc Vinh. The district chief had arranged an appreciation ceremony for the part the "Vultures" played in repelling repeated VC attacks on Vietnamese out posts earlier in the month. The district Chief presented the members of the 162nd with floral wreaths, which are symbolically, one of the highest awards that a person can receive from the government of Vietnam.

"Charlie" must have resented the awards because shortly before midnight on the same day he presented a few incoming rotors and rockets.

On 10 February the "Vultures" were moving elements of the 9th Inf. Bde from field locations to Long Tam when they came under heavy enemy fire. Two aircraft took hits, one through the windshield and one through the exhaust. CWO David Fridgeon was the aircraft commander of the aircraft that took the round through the windshield and 1LT Frank Loturco was his pilot. The coincidence of this was that CWO Fridgeon was flying his last combat assault in Vietnam, and 1LT Loturco was flying his first combat assault.

After the "Vultures" were released and enroute to Phuoc Vinh, the "Copperheads" heavy fire team with them, intercepted a call by Paris Control at Binh Hoa, on guard for any gunships in the area to contact Paris Control. The "Copperheads" responded and were requested to go to an area five miles northeast of Binh Hoa, to cover a downed chopper until it's crew could be picked up. After the crew were rescued, the "Copperheads" were released and returned to Phuoc Vinh.

On 12 February the "Vultures" supported the 9th Infantry Division out of Rach Gia. The lift went smoothly and without incident and carried the fine name and reputation of the 162nd's little further south.

After the flight was released they returned to the "roost" to celebrate the promotions of four Warrant Officers to Chief Warrant Officer. The hosts of the party were CWO John J. O'Conner, CW2 Charles R. Sanders, CW2 Gerald L. Racey, and CW2 William P. Sheehan. The "Vultures" were pleased with the promotions of their fellow officers and gladly accepted their invitation to a free bar for the night.

The following day the "Vultures" were indulged in what was suppose to be an administrative lift for the 101st Abn Div when the lead ship was sprayed with lead from a VC AK 47. After taking one round through the windshield, the crew chief of the lead ship, SP4 Howard Wetzel, cut the running enemy down with a burst from his M-60. It was the first VC kill for SP4 Wetzel, but he hopes not his last.

Also on the 13th WO Ronald Adair had a rather unusual day. WO Adair was on short final to the normally secure pad at Phuoc Hoa when he was greeted with enemy rines and small arms fire. Although the aircraft was later found to have more than twenty holes from shrapnel and bullets in the main rotor, tail rotor, gear box and bottom and side of the fuselage and was rapidly losing fuel. WO Adair successfully flew it back to Phuoc Vinh and only one person was injured; SP4 Tobay, the gunner, received a piece of shrapnel in his leg.

The following day, 14 February, the "Vultures" were hard at work supporting elements of the 9th Inf. Div. when "Charlie" greeted them in an LZ with RPG's and automatic weapons. Three aircraft received minor damage from shrapnel and a few lucky hits by "Charlie" but no one was injured and "Charlie" was again shown it is expensive to mess with the "Vultures."

On the 16th and 18th "Charlie" made sure that we knew where our bunkers were by tossing a few motars and rockets our way, however, what little damage was done was minor and there were no reported injuries.

On 19 February while cleaning up the company area several unexploded M-79 and fragmentation grenades were found and taken care of by the local EOD team.

On 21 February one of the "Vultures" lift aircraft received heavy automatic weapons fire from a VC road block north of Phu Loi and was going to make a gun run until he was discouraged by RPG rounds and changed his mind and called the coordinates in to be hit by airstrikes.

On the night of the 23rd the VC tried again to register on our maintenance area with several motar rounds.

On 24 February 1LT Barlan Scheibe had an experience he will never forget. He had to make an emergency landing southeast of Phuoc Vinh and the aircraft was totaled and burned. No one was injured although it was a horrible experience for everyone aboard.

The month was drawing to a close but "Charlie" got in four more punches before the bell sounded, hitting us on the 24th, 26th, 27th, and 29th with occasional mortar and rocket rounds.

The "Vultures" started the month of March out by welcoming ten new aviators to the roost for two weeks of in-country training and orientation. The ten aviators from the 7th of the 1st Air. Cav. Regt, were newly arrived in country and made their home in Di An for the first thirty days after leaving the "Vultures". As is tradition at the "Vultures", each new officer is required to put ten dollars on the bar the first night in the company, so needless to say the month of March was started out right.

The first two weeks of the month were spent mostly on missions with the 1st Inf. Div. and 101st Abn Div., however the pattern was changed somewhat with trips to Han Tam and Xuan Loc while supporting the ARVN.

On the night of 5 March, the Phuoc Vinh compound came under mortar and rocket attack. The 162nd Armed Platoon responded to the attack by taking to the air to seek out the enemy positions. While engaged in counter-mortar defense a gunship was destroyed in mid-air due to unknown causes. All the crew and the aircraft was a total loss. The crew members included: CWO Vernon R. Tweedy, SP4 Brian T. Murray, SF4 George D. Novakovic, and a pilot from the 7th of the 1st Air. Cav who was training with the "Vultures", WO1 Leuning.

On 12 March at approximately 2130 hours the VC again hit the Phuoc Vinh compound with mortars and rockets. Although there were over 200 incoming rounds counted there was only minor damage in the "Vultures" area.

On the morning of 17 March the "Vultures" were engaged in an operation with the 101st Abn Div. in an attempt to locate and destroy Viet Cong mortar positions in the III Corps area, while in the afternoon we were lifting elements of the 5th S.F into LZ's north of Long Binh.

On 20 March the 162nd combined with other elements of the 11th Cbt Avn Bn to lift troops of the 1st Inf. Div. from Quan Loi to Loc Ninh and LZ's around Loc Ninh. The "Vultures" were chosen to lead the 30 ship operation and as always came through with flying colors.

A busy day was in store for the "Vultures" on 22 March when they arose to support infantry units south of Phuoc Vinh. Immediately after receiving reports that the ground units were in heavy contact with "Charlie" the armed helicopter platoon, the "Copperheads", came to their aid and drove the VC back while the helicopter lift platoon resupplied the units during the lull in the fighting. Because of the tremendous support given by the "Copperheads" the VC directed their fire on the armed helicopters and succeeded in downing one aircraft. However, one of the lift aircraft piloted by WO Donald L. Welch, of Clearwater Fla, quickly rescued the downed crew while five other aircraft put in a security force to secure the aircraft until it could be lifted out by a CH-47.

As the Chinook was lifting the downed gunship out of the area, a med-evac aircraft in the same area received heavy fire and went down. The "Vultures" responded immediately to the emergency by extracting the ground troops from where the gunship had been downed and inserting them in to secure the crippled

and-ovac aircraft. During these insertions and extractions the Vulture lift platoon had excellent coverage from the "Copperhead" fireteam. At one point, as the lift ships were departing the area, unfriendly troops were seen converging on that area. Both downed aircraft and their crews were successfully secured under intense hostile conditions and known enemy positions were quickly silenced.

The day was still not over for the "Vultures". The mission that had been planned for the hours that "Charlie" caused havoc for the infantry and their many units still had not yet been completed. The "Vultures" were reassembled with the "Copperheads" to continue their never ending task of routing "Charlie" from his most secure hiding places. Dusk was near but was used as an advantage. Under concealment of darkness more infantry units were inserted into a position which would enable them to surprise the enemy with the approach of dawn. Both the area of pick-up and the area of insertion were surrounded by suspected VC positions. Swooping down as their namesake would, the Vultures surely surprised Charlie as it appeared he didn't have time to react to what was happening, and thus ended another day.

On 23 March, the "Vultures" were engaged in an operation northeast of Saigon while supporting the 1st Inf. Div. there was only light enemy contact, however, the 1st Div with the help of the 162nd was able to account for 22 enemy bunkers destroyed.

The 24th saw the "Vultures" working almost all the III Corps area while engaged in operations with the II Field Forces.

On 25 March the Vultures again started the day supporting the 1st Inf. Div. in an operation north of Lai Khe. With the aid of one of our sister units the "Vultures" lifted ground units into LZ's with hopes of finding and destroying any VC in the area. This battalion size lift was controlled by Red Dog 3, and brought to the end to two large, newly fortified bunker complexes. The "Vultures" then moved to Di An to air lift move infantry units north of Thu Duc. With a break of only thirty minutes, the 162nd were on their way again supporting infantry units near Bien Hoa.

The 26th day of the month was began with incoming rounds in the 162nd area. At approximately 0100 hours. After a rather restless night the 162nd was again on the job participating in a battalion size operation north of Lai Khe. The lift was held up briefly while a security force was inserted around a downed aircraft in the area. After the aircraft was recovered and the security force extracted, the operation was resumed without further incident.

At approximately 2245 hours on the same night the Phuoc Vinh compound again had incoming rounds. Two mortar rounds hit the nearly completed maintenance hanger, three persons were slightly injured from shrapnel.

On 28 March the "Vultures" worked with the "Black Baron" and his aviation elements in an operation north of Chon Li tan which involved LZ's within 150 meters of the Cambodian border. As our CO later said, "you learn to appreciate the professionalism in the 162nd after seeing another unit go nearly 5 miles off course while looking for the LZ. The "Vultures" as always, were right on target, hitting the RP's and LZ's with uncanny accuracy and getting the usual comment from the ground and air missions commanders of doing an outstanding job.

After completing the days mission, the Vultures returned to the roost to attend a banquet in honor of the departing 12th Avn Gp Commander, COL Psaki. COL Psaki has been in Vietnam for 18 months and has been 12th Gp Commander for the last 12 months.

During the banquet COL Mowery, the commander of the 3rd Bde 101st Airborne Division at Phuoc Vinh was made an honorary "Vulture" and presented a "Vulture patch.

COL Psaki said he had a warm feeling for the 162nd from the first time he came to Phuoc Vinh. Since then the 162nd has stood out among all of the 33 odd units in the 12th Gp as one of the finest. "I've seen the "Vultures" pull the fat out of the fire several times, and set the standard for other units," said COL Psaki "The name "Vultures" is not a romantic name and does not draw attention," continued COL Psaki, "however, the 162nd does draw attention wherever it goes as the model assault helicopter company."

The month of March was reported by the Service Platoon as being a record breaking month. The "Vultures" flew 3119 total hours, which is more than the unit has ever flown in one month.

(10)

III Maintenance and Supply

During the quarter Aircraft Availability Rates were as follows:

January	UH-1C	83%
	UH-1D	77%
February	UH-1C	81%
	UH-1D	79%
March	UH-1C	79%
	UH-1D	83%

Consolidate Supply reports that there were no shortages of critical items at this time.

(11)