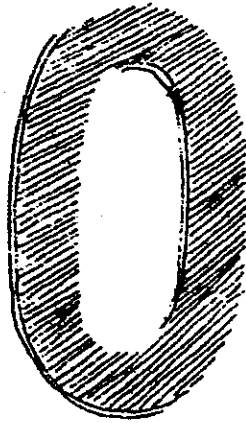
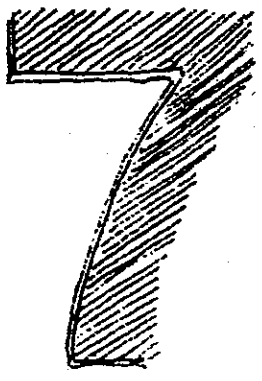
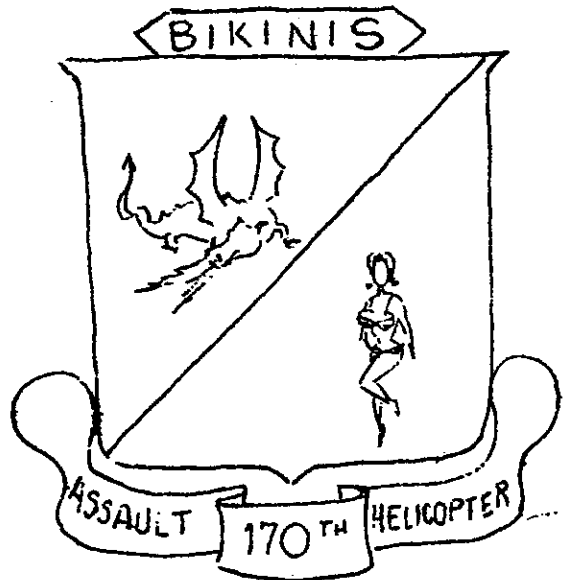


® BIKINIS ®



® BUCCANEERS ®

ANNUAL SUPPLEMENT
HISTORY OF THE
170th ASSAULT HELICOPTER COMPANY
52nd COMBAT AVIATION BATTALION
1st AVIATION BRIGADE
Pleiku, Republic of Vietnam
APO San Francisco 96318
1 JANUARY 1967 - 31 DECEMBER 1967

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TABLE OF CONTENT

Preface

Forward

I	Introduction	1
II	Mission and Organization	1
III	Weather	2
IV	Command	2
V	Maintenance	3
VI	Unit Operations and Activities	3-6
VII	Safety	7

Appendix

	Lineage and Honors	7
	Commanding Officers for 1967	7
	Roster of Key Personnel	7
	Statistic	8
	Glossary	8
	Map of II Corps Tactical Area	9
	Sketch of UH-1H Troop Carrier	10
	Sketch of UH-1C Mini Gun/Rocket System	11
	Sketch of UH-1C 40 mm Grenade/Rocket System	12

PREFACE

The purpose of this unit history is to outline the events which occurred in the 170th Assault Helicopter Company during the calendar year 1967. It is intended to give an accurate portrayal of the company, its personnel and equipment, and a clear and concise narrative of combat operation in which the unit participated. The information contained in this history has been gathered from Tactical Operation, Reports, Quarterly Command Reports, news account, and personal interviews.

FORWARD

The period covered in this history saw a continued increase in hostilities. Intense use was made of aviation to provide the flexibility and mobility so vital to the Infantryman. North Vietnamese units replaced many Viet Cong forces, bringing with them more sophisticated weapons and consequently a relatively conventional tactical situation. Casualties increased and the number of aircraft hit and destroyed also increased proportionately.

The history is respectfully dedicated to those officers and men of the 170th Assault Helicopter Company who have made the supreme sacrifice in the War in Vietnam.

I INTRODUCTION

The 170th Assault Helicopter Company of the 52nd Aviation Battalion is located at Camp Holloway near the town of Pleiku Republic of Vietnam. Pleiku is situated in the center of the rugged Central Highland of Vietnam, and is the site of ARVN II Corp Headquarters. Camp Holloway the base of the 52nd Aviation Battalion and the 170th Assault Helicopter Company is one of the oldest bases in Vietnam. It was opened in August 1962 by the 81st Transit Company (CH-21). Camp Holloway also has the distinction of being the highest permanent helicopter base in country with a field elevation of 2460 feet LSL*.

The 170th Assault Helicopter Company arrived in The Republic of Vietnam on 22 December 1965, landing at Qui Nhon, and was assigned to the 10th Aviation Battalion, 12th Aviation Group. On 10 January 1966 the company was relieved of its assignment and reassigned to the 52nd Aviation Battalion 17th Aviation Group.

The 170th has participated in Operations Paul Revere I, II, III, IV: Operation Attelboro, Operation Thayer, Operation Francis Marion, Operation MacArthur (Currently in Progress), and Special Forces Clandestine Operations. In support of these operations, the BIKINIS have performed every conceivable type combat support mission to include combat assaults, emergency resupply, medical evacuation, tactical extraction's, and command and control.

II Mission And Organization

The mission of the 170th Assault Helicopter Company is to provide tactical air mobility of combat troops, supplies and equipment within the II Corps area.

The 170th Assault Helicopter Company was activated on September 1, 1965 under TOE-77E (Augmented) by General Orders 264, Headquarters, Third U.S. Army, dated 25 August 1965. The company consists of a Company Headquarters, two Airlift Platoons, one Armed Platoon and a Service Platoon. The following units are attached:

- 405th Transportation Detachment
- 448th Signal Detachment
- 755th Medical Detachment

The 170th is authorized 152 enlisted men, 15 officers, and 52 warrant officers. All but one officer is a rated aviator. These 219 men maintain and operate a total of 23 UH-1H troop carrying helicopter and 9 UH-1C helicopter gunships.

III WEATHER

The tropical climate and topography of South Vietnam produce only two basic seasons, the dry season and the monsoon. In the Highlands around Pleiku, the monsoon season starts in May and lasts through September. During the monsoon the winds are generally out of the southwest and the humidity is high. Although there are periods of sunshine and scattered clouds, the weather is usually overcast and rainy. Flying is restricted in the early morning and late afternoon and frequently flying is prohibited all day.

During the dry season, the winds are out of the northeast and good flying weather prevails. The temperature at Pleiku is always moderate due to its elevation of 2460 feet HSL*. During the coolest of the nights the temperature may drop to 50 degrees F, while the maximum on a hot afternoon is usually around 95 degrees F.

IV COMMAND

The 170th Assault Helicopter Company was commanded by Major Loyce E. Habry from 26 December 1966 to 15 May 1967. Stepping up from the Executive Officers position which he had held for 3 previous month, Major Habry future goal was to "develop within each aircraft crew a professional team, capable of providing maximum support to ground elements, with minimum risk to personnel and equipment.

After 4 1/2 months of commanding the 170th and accomplishing his goal, Major Habry turn over command of the company to Major John P. Doyle, former executive officer of the 155th Assault Helicopter Company. Major Doyle's vast experience in Army Aviation further helped to develop the Asset of the 170th's personnel and equipment. His constant concern for his men and his desire to "accomplish the mission" in support of ground units earmarked the Bikinis as the most response helicopter company in the Central Highland.

Major Jessie Stewart took command of the "Bikinis" on 20 September 1967. His outstanding leadership ability, heroism, and "Can Do" sprit during the subsequent six (6) month was the main reason for the 170th Assault Helicopter Company's outstanding performance during the battle of Dak To. During the six month that Major Stewart commanded the company, the 170th flew more hours than any other assault helicopter company in the Battalion. Due to Major Stewart's untiring efforts, sound judgment, and knowledge of aviation, the 170th Assault Helicopter Company ended 1997 by flying over 28,500 combat hours with a signification percentage of those hours being flown supporting ground combat units at Dak To.

V MAINTENANCE

The 405th Maintenance Detachment, commanded by Major Wilbur R. Mixer, successfully met many new challenges during this period. The inception of the UH-1H with the L13 engine significantly increased the allowable cargo load (ACL), but brought inherent maintenance problems. Input Quills and foreign object damage (FOD) were perhaps the most significant. Initially engines were changed at 300 hours and then later to 600 hour level. Commencing with the Battle of Dak To in October and extending to the end of the year, combat damage required a great deal of effort on the part of maintenance personnel to keep the availability at a high level. Aircraft recoveries were made in the face of enemy fire. By providing around-the-clock support during the Battle of Dak To, the 405th contributed significantly in the defeat of the North Vietnamese Army.

VI UNIT OPERATION AND ACTIVITIES

Operation of the 170th Assault Helicopter Company during 1967 can be divided into three phases.

Phase 1: 1 January 67 thru 15 September 67 Special Forces and Clandestine Operation.

Phase 2: 16 September 67 thru 25 October 67 Initial support of the 1st Brigade 4 Infantry Division with normal operation.

Phase 3: 26 October 67 thru 31 December 67 Battle of Dak To

During the period 1 January 67 thru 15 September 67 the 170th Assault Helicopter was in direct support of Clandestine Operation for the Special Forces. The Classification of these mission precludes any elaboration of specifics. A general summary, however can be made. The 170th became highly skilled in the use of McQuire Rigs, Ropes, Ladders, low level navigation and small unit operations. Frequently the unit was spread out over a large area of operation and the command of each mission was delegated down to the section Leader level. Many acts of heroism were performed in the face of the enemy. Special Forces Units specifically requested the 170th on a recurring basis causing the unit to remain on this mission for an extended period of time.

From 16 September 1967, to 25 October 1967, the 170th in direct 1st Brigade 4th Infantry Division conducted normal operation with very few contact with the enemy. The experience learned by aviator while conducting combat assault, resupply mission, aero-medical evacuation, and command and control, proved to be invaluable during the subsequent months. The 170th's area of operation in support of the ground units of the 4th Division was located to the west of Pleiku near the Cambodian border..... terrain similar to Dak To.

On 25 October 1967, in order to coincide with the mission the 1st Brigade, the 170th was committed to move their area of operation from west of Pleiku to the Dak To area. Intelligence reports indicated a large a large build up of North Vietnamese Army regulars. From 25 October to 27 October 1967, mission requirements revealed only light contact with the enemy and no indication as to the ultimate magnitude to which the battle would develop. Intelligence reports, however, indicated that NVA units in the area were preparing battlefield positions from which attacks could be made on the ARVN and

Special Forces garrison at Dak To. The enemy strength was estimated at 4 regiments with supporting artillery units.

The Battle of Dak To began on 25 October 1967 when the 3-12 Infantry was employed as the initial battalion. By way of further elaboration, a day by day account of significant events, by phases, are stated below. Due to the heat of the battle and the maximum efforts required of the operation, only the most significant events are recorded. Single ship missions such as command and control, area medical evacuation, and resupply can only be reflected in the overall statistics.

25 October 1967 The 3-12 Infantry was employed as the initial battalion in the Battle of Dak To. Immediately upon request the 170th provided a command and control helicopter. Later that day, the 1st Brigade Headquarters arrived on site to resume operational control in and around Dak To. Again the 170th provided support aircraft, and by the end of the day had committed five transport helicopters and two gunships on stations.

30 October 1967 The 3-8 Infantry arrived at Ben Het (15 Kilometers west of Dak To) in the early hours. The 170th was immediately called upon to air mobile assault B and C Companies into an area southwest of Dak To to begin construction of a fire support base. This constituted a major move of 254 passengers in 45 sorties. Throughout the day, the 170th was also engaged in deploying Long Range Reconnaissance Patrols (LRRP) in effort to gain timely intelligence of enemy activities in the area.

31 October 1967 The remainder of the 3-8 Infantry was airlifted in the morning hours by the 170th to the fire support base prepared the preceding day.

The period 28 October to 2 November 1967 was the defensive phase of the battle of Dak To. During this period sporadic contact was made with the enemy. A continue build up of friend ensued in order to strengthen American position. During the period that the 170th was not involved in air mobile operations, the helicopters were constantly in the air resupplying food, water, ammunition, and performing the ever present medical evacuation and command and control mission. It is significant to note that from 25 October to the 31 December, aviator averaged over 140 hour per man per month.

3 November 1967 This day marked the offensive phase of the battle of Dak To. A major move was made when the 170th air mobile assaulted A and D Company of the 3-8th Infantry onto hill 724 south of Dak To. Heavy contact was made with the NVA forces only 200 meters off the landing zone. Immediately following the 3-8th move, the 170th combat assaulted the 3-12th Infantry south-southwest of Dak To to establish a fire support base for artillery and heavy mortars. On six successive assaults that day the 170th moved 550 passengers in 21 sorties.

6 November 1967 As maneuver elements of the 4-503rd Inf. (Abn), 173 ABN Brigade moved south west, Company B was airlifted south of maneuver elements to act as a blocking force. The paratroopers were landed into what proved to be an NVA Battalion Base Camp. Heavy enemy small arms fire and automatic weapons fire was received by the

“slicks” and “guns” as time after time the slicks assaulted the LZ behind gunship cover. Miraculously only one aircraft was damaged, receiving five hits, and one crew member wounded.

9 November 1967 As the tempo of the battle increased, the 170th airlifted Company A, 3-8th Infantry back to Dak To and replaced them with Company C of the same battalion. The insertion of Company C was contested as aircraft began receiving small arms fire on approach to the landing zone. As the aircraft were departing the landing zone, heavy mortar and rocket fire was received, resulting in the destruction of one UH-1H, but no injuries to personnel. Time and again the 170th braved hostile fire as reinforcements were rushed into the beleaguered units. In all the 170th moved a total of 283 passengers. Of particular interest is that out of 283 troops that were moved, at least 60 were men who were wounded and in dire need of medical aid. The replacement that were lifted into the LZ enabled the ground units to once again take the offensive. It must also be noted that throughout the Battle of Dak To the “Buccaneers”, gunships of the 170th, provided deadly accurate close-in support and continuous cover to all assaults. They were able to suppress heavy enemy fire long enough to enable the “Bikinis” to accomplish an almost impossible task.

10 November 1967 through 12 November 1967 US Forces kept constant pressure on the NVA to end the second phase of the Battle of Dak To.

12 November 1967 The third and final phase of the Battle of Dak To kicked off with the “Bikinis” lifting a company from the 1-8th Infantry. Their mission was to pursue an enemy force suspected to be retreating to the west and southwest. The 170th again conducted an air mobile assault at the height of the action, with aircraft taking hits from sniper fire. Only minor damage was sustained.

13 November 1967 The 119th and 170th Assault Helicopter Companies joined forces in support of the 1-8th Infantry. Companies B and C were lifted onto the Hill 762 to exploit intelligence reports that a rocket attack, originating from the hill, was planned on Dak To. The 170th had one UH-1H destroyed by enemy rocket fire (B-40) in the landing zone, and small arms fire was received from all quadrants during the insertion. It is believed that joint action on Hill 762 prevented a possible rocket attack in that the hill was taken before firing positions preparation could be completed.

14 through 24 November 1967 During this period the 170th conducted 5 combat assaults on various LZ's to the southwest of Dak To. Mop-up operations were in full progress for allied forces. During this period, four aircraft were damaged by automatic weapons. Only one crew member was slightly injured by hostile fire.

25 November 1967 On this day, the 170th along with the 155th Assault Helicopter Company, combat assaulted 2 companies of the 1-12th Infantry on Hill 875 to assist in mop-up operations after elements of the 173rd and 1st Brigade. At the height of the Battle of Hill 875, the 170th had 3 helicopter in support of the 173rd ABN helping to

resupply, fly out medivacs, and perform command and control mission. These aircraft were under constant enemy fire arriving in and departing from the LZ. At times the fire was so intense that the choppers made approaches into the LZ with tactical fighters giving support as close as 35 meters away.

26 through 31 November Only one combat assault was assigned to the 170th during the closing days of the Battle of Dak To. The "Bikinis", combined with the 189th Assault Helicopter Company, moved 846 troops to further exploit the pursuit role.

The Battle of Dak To was the largest single battle ever to take place in the Central Highlands. The performance of the 170th was a credit on itself. When considering the extremely adverse terrain upon which they executed assaults time and again, and the strength of the enemy, their performance was hence forth unexcelled. The action of the 170th facilitated the infantry in its establishing a defensive base, transitioning to the offensive in a matter of days, and ultimately extending to pursuit operations. The results was an overwhelming victory for U.S. Forces at Dak To.

1 through 31 December To Close out the year, 1967, the 170th continued to support the 1st Brigade in their pursuit operation at Dak To. Combat assault, resupply, aerial medivacs, and command and control mission were still being flown by the Bikinis. Although enemy was not as intense as the previous month, the Battle of Dak To was still being fought, as indeed it continues to be fought at this moment.

The professional skill, raw courage, and sheer determination displayed by the aircraft crews of the 170th as indicative of an outstanding professional units. It is impossible to elaborate on the numerous individual acts of heroism in this narrative. Suffices to say that without such men the Battle of Dak To, and other like it, would have taken an entirely different turn. With every additional hour of the 29,000 combat hours that the 170th flew in 1967 the Bikinis and Buccaneers verified that they are second to none in, heroism, professionalism and esprit de corps. In closing this history it is worthy of note to mention that the 170th, during the Battle of Dak To, conducted the initial combat assault for all the 4th Infantry and the 173rd Airborne Brigade units that were thrown into the battle. The 170th received no reinforcements during the Battle of Dak To until 10 November 1967.

VII SAFETY

Flying became more hazardous starting in October. There were basically two reasons for this. First, the enemy threat was greatly increased. Second, operation in the Dak To area required the use of small LZ's usually a bomb crater surrounded by trees up to 250 feet high. Prompt dissemination of intelligence, immediate improvement of the LZ's by the troops on the ground, emphasis on emergency procedures, and additional training of aircraft commanders reduced the number of accidents. The 170th Assault Helicopter Commander has constantly stressed safety, along with mission accomplishment, as foremost in importance.

VIII APPENDIX

Constituted 16 July 1965 as the 170th Aviation Company
Activated 1 September 1965
Decoration None

Commanding Officer for 1967

Major Loyce E. Habry	26 December 66-15 May 67
Major John P. Doyle	15 May 67-15 September 67
Major Jessie E. Stewart	15 September-25 March 68

Roster of Key Personnel

170th Assault Helicopter Company		
Commanding Officer	Major Jessie E. Stewart	Infantry
Executive Officer	Captain Jimmie S. Ford	Artillery
1st Flight Platoon	Lieutenant Jerry E.	Signal
2nd Flight Platoon	Lieutenant Edward J. Newton	Artillery
Gun Platoon	Captain Stanley H. Kryuna	Infantry
First Sergeant	SFC David G. Ebinger	
Operations	Captain Carrol W. Downey	Artillery
405 Transportation Detachment		
Commanding Officer	Major Wilbur R. Mixer	Transportation Corps
448 Signal Detachment		
Officer in Charge	CW3 Harold B. Percy	Signal
755 Medical Detachment		
Commanding Officer	Captain David ?	Medical Corps

Statistics 1967

Combat Hours Flown (UH-1H Slick)	24,883
Combat Hours Flown (UH-1C Gun)	5771
Combat Sorties	79,643
Total Passengers	107,689
Total Tons of Cargo	4228
Number of Aircraft Hit by Ground Fire	32
Number of Aircraft Accident	30

Month	UH-1H		UH-1C	
	Hours	Aircraft Availability	Hours	Aircraft Availability
January	1750*	87.0%	633	87.0%
February	1784*	75.6%	412	63.3%
March	2285*	85.0%	501	85.0%
April	2335*	83.8%	509	89.7%
May	2307*	83.9%	546	80.2%
June	1697*	82.0%	343	82.8%
June	67	93.0%		
July	1212	93.4%	377	87.2%
August	1665	92.0%	335	80.1%
September	2157	92.0%	455	89.1%
October	2486	84.2%	554	90.1%
November	1991	84.1%	519	77.0%
December	2324	84.2%	587	86.7%

* denotes D Models Hours

GLOSSARY

ARVN	Army of the Republic of Vietnam
Avn	Aviation
Buccaneer	Name of the 170th Gunship Platoon
Conus	Continental United States
Div	Division
DS	Direct Support
Gunship	Armed UH-1C helicopter used as escort aircraft
KIA	Killed in Action
LZ	Landing Zone
Slick	UH-1H helicopter used as troop or cargo carrier
VC	Viet Cong
Bikinis	Name of "slick" platoons (Red and Blue)
Bde	Brigade
Medivac	Medical evacuation

DAK TO - 173d Abn Bde (OPCON
4th Div)
335th Aslt Hel Co
(OPCON 173d) operation
terminated 22 Aug 67
Praire Fire

MARCH - Omega (FOB)

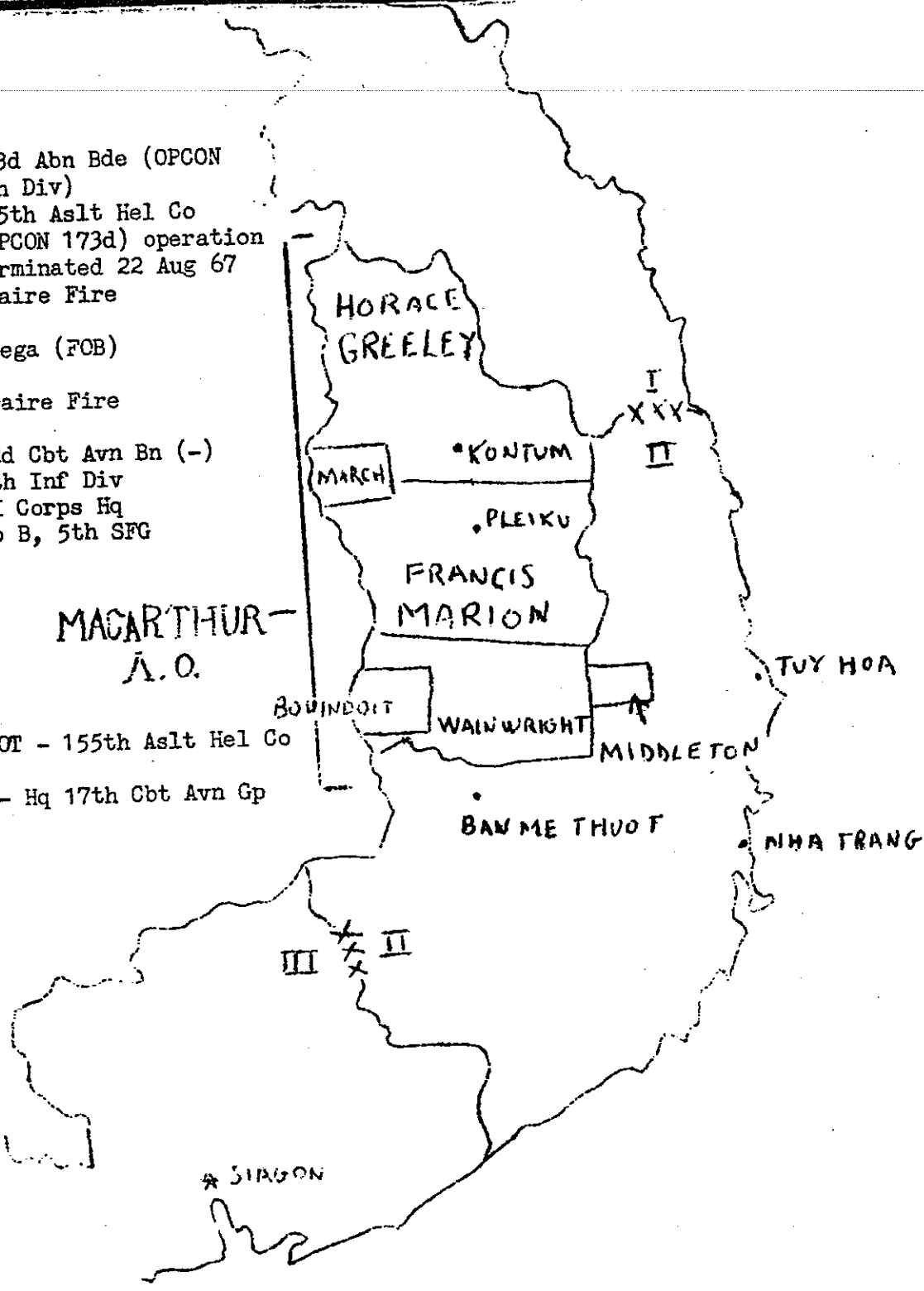
KONTUM - Praire Fire

Pleiku - 52d Cbt Avn Bn (-)
4th Inf Div
II Corps Hq
Co B, 5th SFG

MACARTHUR -
A.O.

BAN ME THUOT - 155th Aslt Hel Co

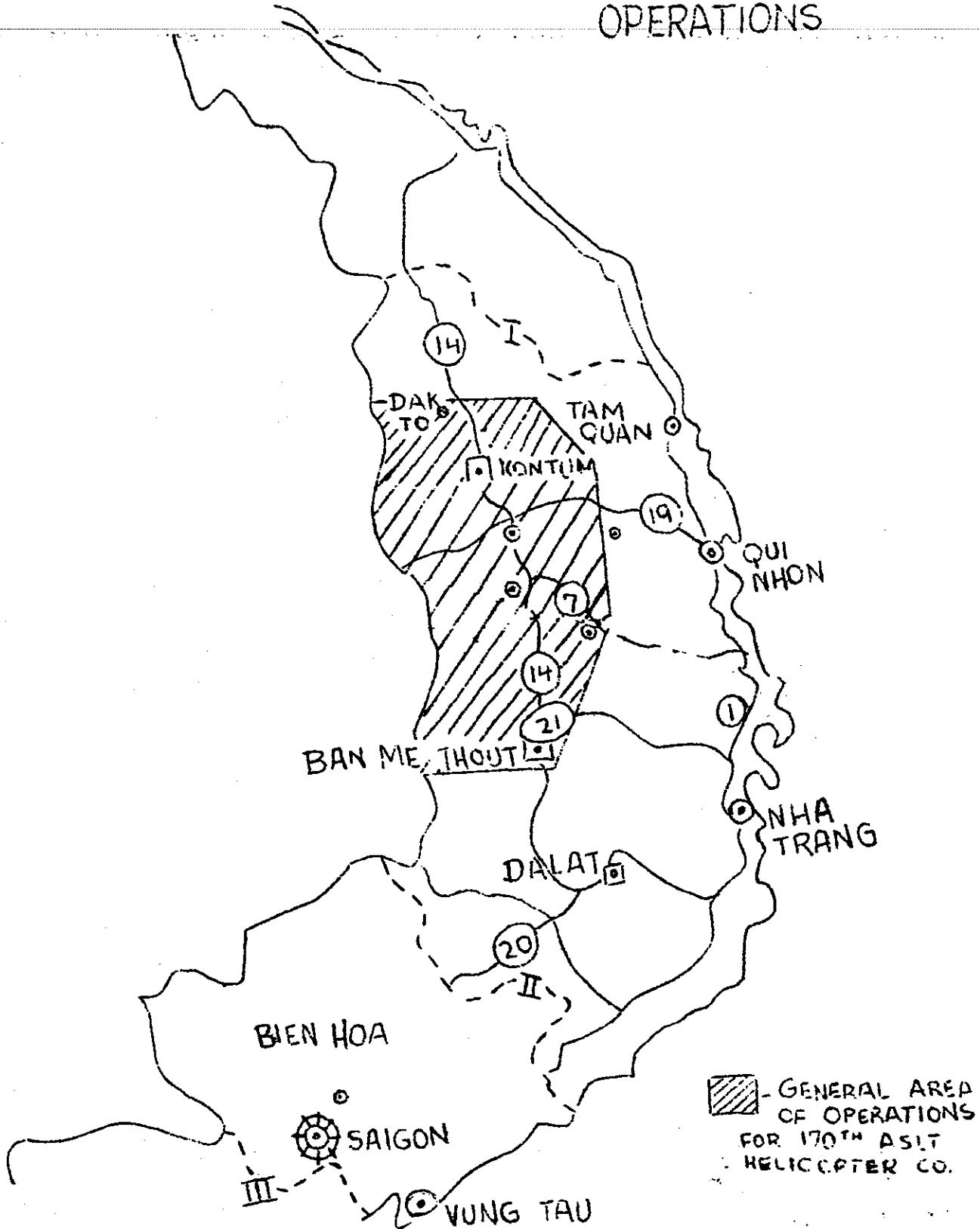
NHA TRANG - Hq 17th Cbt Avn Gp



OPERATIONAL AREA

~~C O N F I D E N T I A L~~

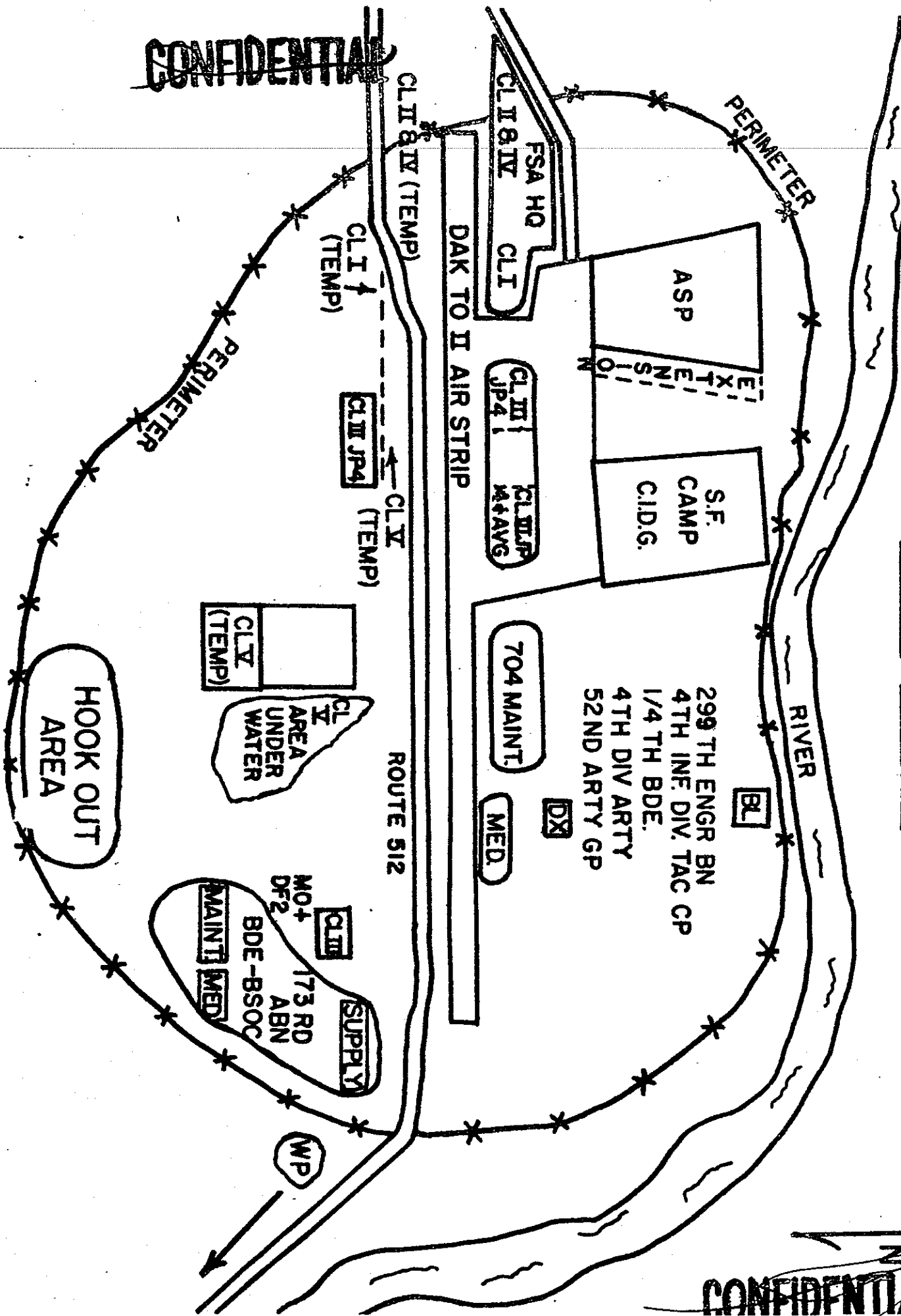
MAP OF AREA OF OPERATIONS



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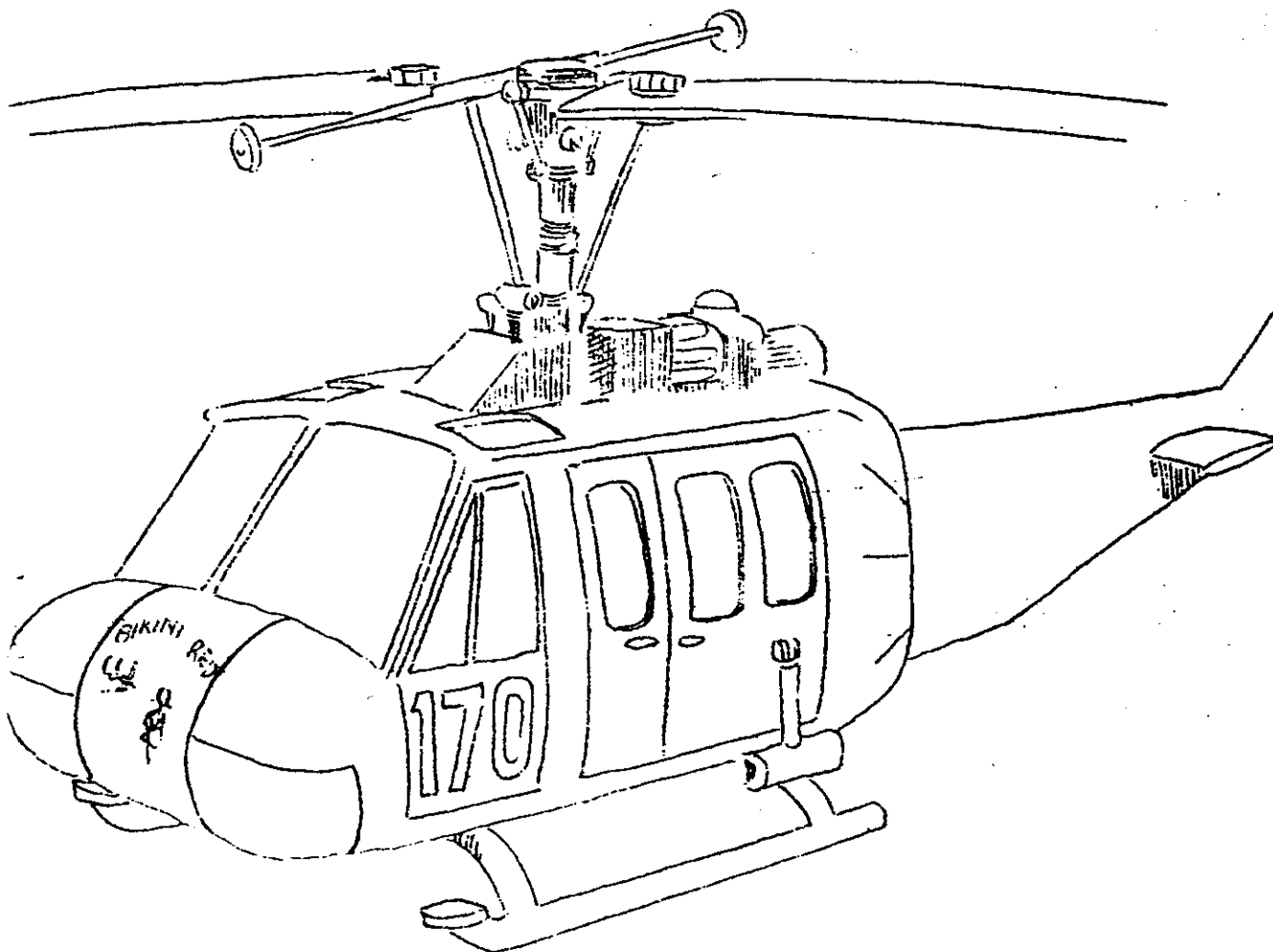
DAK POKO RIVER

DAK TO II



~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

UH-1H Assault Helicopter



Crew: 2 AVIATORS, 1 CREW CHIEF, 1 GUNNER

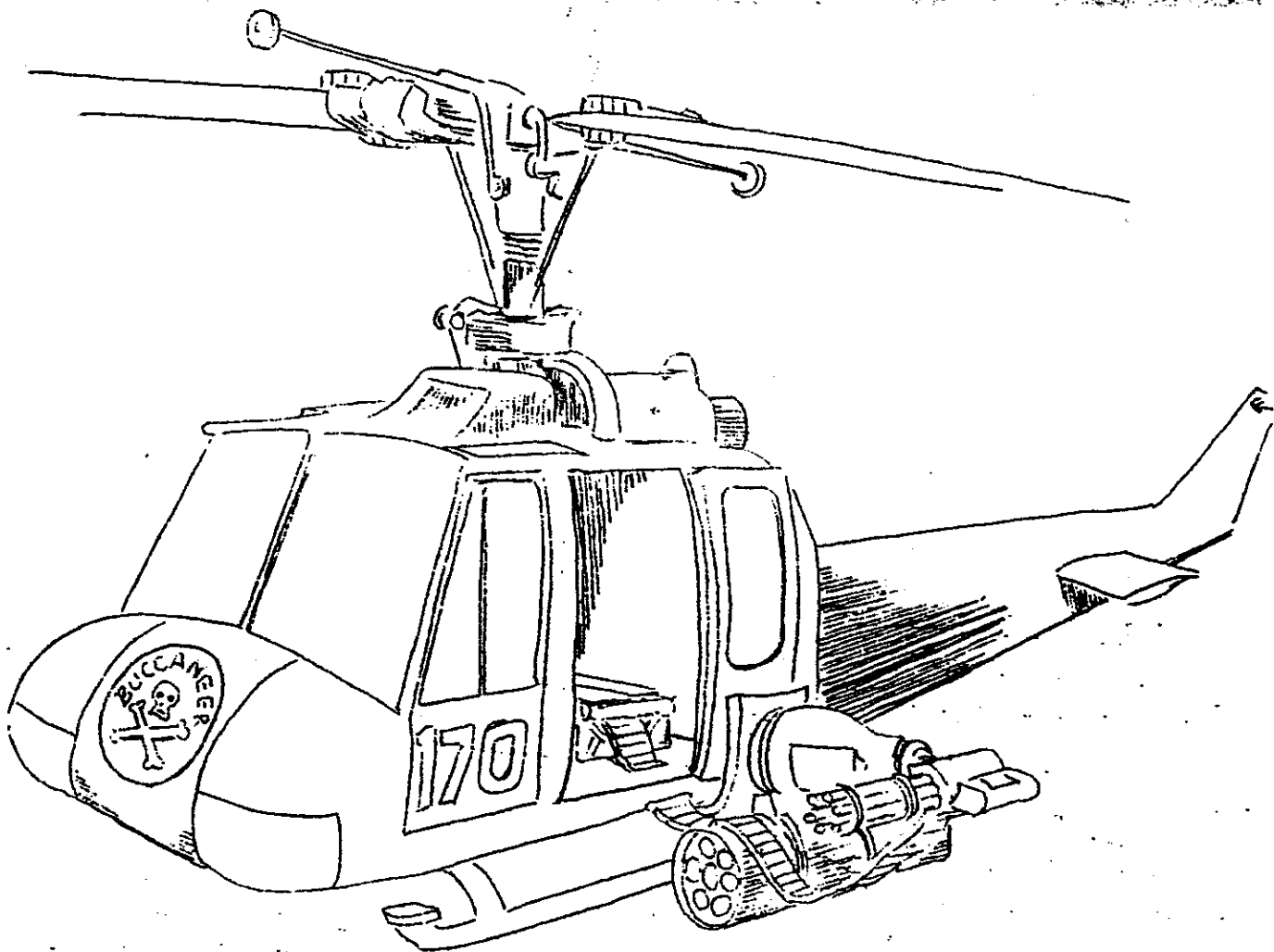
Airspeed: 80 knots cruise

Fuel: 2 1/2 Hours

Passenger Capacity: 7

Armament: 2 M60 Door Guns

UH-1C (Gunship) with Mini-guns



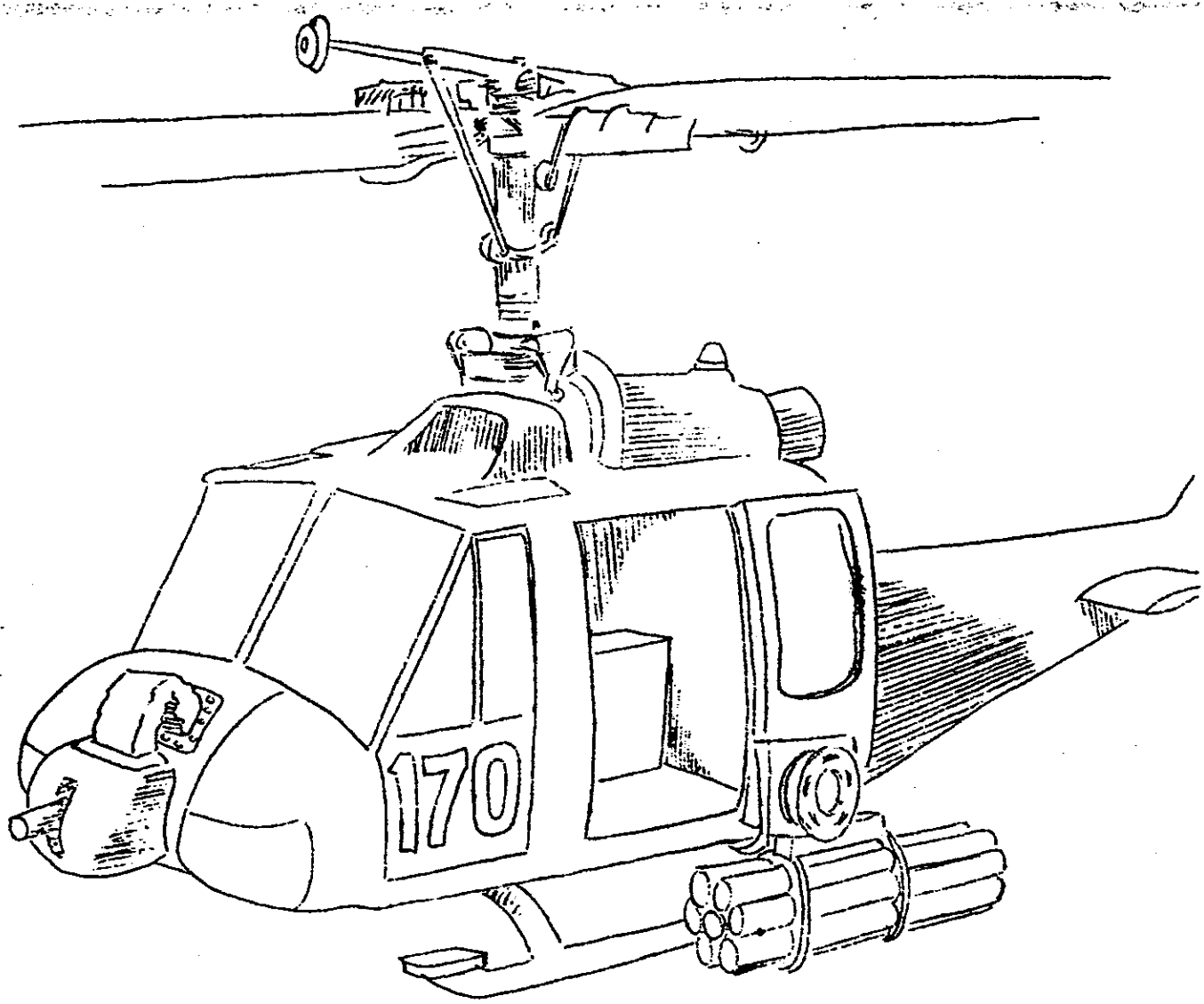
Crew: 2 AVIATORS, 1 CREW CHIEF, 1 GUNNER

Airspeed: 80 knots - cruise

Fuel: 2 Hours

Armament: 14 - 2.75" ROCKETS
 2 - Mini-guns (7.62mm)
 2 - M60 LMG (7.62mm) } 10,000 Rds

UH-1C (Gunship) with 40mm Grenade Launcher



Crew : 2 AVIATORS , 1 CREW CHIEF, 1 GUNNER

Airspeed: 80 knots cruise

Fuel : 2 Hours

- Armament:
- 14 - 2.75" ROCKETS
 - 1 - 40mm GRENADE LAUNCHER
(350 ROUNDS)
 - 2 - M60 LMG (7.62mm)