

**ANNUAL SUPPLEMENT**

**HISTORY OF THE 170TH ASSAULT HELICOPTER COMPANY 52ND COMBAT  
AVIATION BATTALION 1ST AVIATION BRIGADE**

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## **PREFACE**

This paper is submitted in accordance with AR 870-5 for the purpose of supplementing previous historical report.. The Information contained in the following pages was obtained from daily journals,, personal interviews. Operation and Lessons Learned reports, and news accounts. Dates in many cases are not exact, but close enough to give the reader a good understanding as a role the 170th AHC played in the war of Vietnam.

## **FORWARD**

The history covered in the following pages is dedicated to all those who have made it possible to say that the United States is the defender of the free world's freedom, The period covered by this report is important mainly because it draws to a close the period of the great offensive on the part of communist aggression in South Vietnam and ushers in the Vietnamization of the conflict that took so Many American lives.

The 170th Assault Helicopter Company along with other companies dedicated to the protection of the free world is largely responsible for helping bring to a close the conflict in the II Corp area The following is a summary of the events which took place during this period.

## I INTRODUCTION

The 170th Assault Helicopter Company of the 52nd Aviation Battalion began operations in 1969 with the 405th Transportation Detachment, 448th Signal Detachment, and 755 Medical Detachment attached. (Shortly there after on the 21st of January the 170th was deactivated and the detachments absorbed by the 170th.) Since then the 170th has continued to cover twelve slick and four guru- missions a day. The esprit de corp of the 170th has continued to increase ever since the change was made.

Operations that the 170th has been involved in were as follows Hines, Wayne Javelin, Putnam Tiger, Greens Orange III, Wayne Breaker, Putnam Wildcat, Greene Bullet, Hartle Green, Kramer White, and Hodges Black.

## II MISSION AND ORGANIZATION

The mission of the 170th has continued to remain the same throughout 1969 with a continued emphasis on ARVN support, primarily the 23rd ARVN Division in Quang Duc Province, and the 5th Special Forces Group. During the latter part of 1969. four Buccaneer gunships RON (remained over night) for three months in support of the 24th ARVN Division located near Ban Me Thuot.

The 170th is authorized 219 enlisted men, 19 officers and 51 Warrant officers. All but t~ officers are rated aviators. These 289 men maintain and operate & total of 22 UH-1H troop carrying helicopters and 7 UH-1C helicopter gunships.

## III WEATHER

During January, February, and March excellent flying conditions prevailed in the Pleiku area. Nights were usually clear with low temperatures in the mid 50's and high temperatures in the mid 80's, Occasionally fog would form near the surface but rarely persisted past 0830.

During April and May (Spring Transition) flying conditions remained good. However the occurrence of early morning fog increased and thunderstorms were quite common during late and early evenings.

The Southwest monsoon rainy season began the last week of May and persisted until late September. Generally poor flying conditions existed from midnight to noon with low overcast ceilings and frequent showers. Marginal flying conditions existed from noon until midnight with broken ceilings around 2,500 ft and scattered thunderstorms. High temperatures were in the upper 70's and the low temperatures in the upper 60's. Humidity ranged from 75 to 90%. A rare break in the monsoon weather came for a three week period in August, but by early September the monsoons were finally reestablished. By the end of October the monsoons had terminated and weather condition, were significantly improved. The fall transition had frequent early morning fog and late afternoon thunderstorms. Excellent flying weather prevailed in November and December.

#### IV COMMAND

Maj. Donald A, Roberts was in command of the 170th at the beginning of 1969. It was during his tour of duty that the signal and maintenance sections were incorporated into the 170th's organization. When this happened Major, Roberts had additional responsibilities which demanded considerable attention. Major. Roberts did an outstanding job in seeing that the changeover came about in a smooth manner. Maj. Roberts' tour of duty ended the 4th of May.

The next commander to take charge of the 170th was Maj. Hardy. Maj. Hardy was greatly respected by his men the morale of the 170th rose to increasing heights.

Maj. Douglas H. Snell, who took command of the 170th on the 1st of September was one of the finest commanders that the 170th has had, Maj. Snell came to the 170th as a senior aviator. His experience in aviation, helicopters as well as fixed wing, made the 170th perform like a smooth running machine. Maj. Snell was still in command at the end of December 1969.

The 170th takes its hat off to the above commanders for the out-standing job that they did to make the 170th the company that it is today.

## V MAINTENANCE

During the first part of 1969 the 170th maintenance had some difficulty obtaining critical items. During this period maintenance was operating at 80% enlisted strength and still managed to keep enough ships flyable to meet the mission requirements.

During the middle part of 1969, parts and personnel became more available and maintenance was partly relieved of their tremendous work load. However, during the latter part of 1969 the 170th lost many experienced personnel without them being replaced until the end of the year.

The 170th was able to fly a total of 29,285 combat hours of which 4,490 were flown by gunships and 24,795 by slicks. The gunships flew approximately the same amount of hours as did the gunships from other companies. However, the slicks flew more hours than any other companies in the battalion.

The 170th reported only 29 aircraft damaged, and only 16 were lost. The is an outstanding safety record flying combat missions in this type of aircraft and the credit can be given to the 170th maintenance and the professionalism displayed by the individual pilots.

## VI OPERATIONS

The 170th began 1969 with a majority of its support going to the 5th Special Forces, ARVN Forces, and 4th Inf. Division. During the latter part of April, the siege of Ben Het started and lasted 53 days. The 170th, along with other companies, provided both logistical and tactical support to the Kontum Province which was suffering from enemy attack in all areas. It was through aviation effort alone that locations such as Ben Het and Dak To received the ammunitions and supplies so badly needed to maintain their tactical position in the field. During this time, the 170th maintained a standby medivac ship that remained over night at Dak To for two months.

During this time, the 170th Gunships were busy covering troop insertions and road convoys that carried supplies to the critical area. In fifteen minutes on one road convoy coverage two Buccaneer ships were shot down and two others shot up. No one of the 170th were killed during the siege of Ben Het, although some received minor wounds.

About the middle of September, the 170th was called on to support areas further south as the monsoon season engulfed the northern part of the II Corp area. Four Gunships were RON in Ban Me Thuot for approximately three months, September through November. It was during this period that the Battles of Bu Prang, Duc Lap and Mike Smith took place. Aircraft reported minor combat damage almost every day they flew.

Gunships alone reported expending up to 50,000 rounds or minigun ammo (7.62) and 300 rockets a day per ship. Upon returning to base (Camp Holloway) the 27th of November Buccaneer aircraft were notified by the people they supported that they had approximately 800 confirmed enemy kills and an unknown number of wounded that escaped during this period. The slicks, during this period, ran resupply, troop carry, medivac, and reconnaissance missions.

During the latter part of the year, enemy action in the Pleiku and Kontum Provinces died off and the 170th was called on to support forces in the Binh Dinh Province which extended from the Mang Yang Pass to the coast.

## VII AWARDS

The following awards were received by officer's and enlisted personnel during 1969

Air Medals	79
Air Medal with "V" device	11
Silver Star	5
Bronze Star	22
Distinguished Flying Cross	21
Army Commendation Medal	39
Army Commendation Medal with "V"	9
Bronze Star with "V" device	3
Purple Heart	17
Oak Leaf Cluster	33
Good Conduct Medal	9

## VIII STATISTICAL DATA

The following is a list of yearly totals for 1969.

	UH-1H	UH-1C
Sorties flown	67,735	7,514
Passengers carried	132,382	
Tons of cargo hauled	8,226	
Total hours flown	24,795	4,490
Average daily commitments	12	4
Average daily availability	14.8	4.4
WIA	10	
MIA	1	
KIA	2	



