

HISTORY OF THE
282nd ASSAULT HELICOPTER COMPANY

1 JANUARY - 31 DECEMBER 1967

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The new year in Vietnam found the 282nd Aviation Company carrying on their task of supporting the I and II Corps advisory effort to South Vietnam under their new Commanding Officer, Maj William F. Sullivan, who took the command from departing Maj Gilbert R. Hickenbottam on 9 January 1967.

The gauntlet of support rendered I and II Corps necessitated company personnel and aircraft to be garrisoned in selected and separate sites over the I and II Corps area. Ten aircraft were assigned to I Corps, two at Hue Citadel, two at Quang Ngai and six at Da Nang. Sixteen aircraft were assigned to II Corps, eight each at Pleiku and An Son. The unit supported a great variety of mission, carrying in its twenty six assigned aircraft, passengers that ranged from prisoners of war to military and government VIPs and cargo that ranged from medical supplies and ammunition to live animals for food supplies.

The Third Platoon, which was supporting the II Corps area was chosen to attend "on the job training" with the 335th Assault Helicopter Company at Bien Hoa to undergo training in gunships for a proposed gun platoon. The aviators that were to comprise the gun platoon departed for Bien Hoa on 13 March.

On 18 March, the 17th Aviation Group issued orders for the company to call in all detached platoons and to reform at

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since the 282nd arrived in Vietnam and once again we realize we've just begun. The unit stands ready to support now, as in the past, its mission to I Corps in the Republic of Vietnam.

the Marble Mountain Air Facility in Da Nang. On 25 March the first element of the Third Platoon arrived at Da Nang after being released from mission requirements in the II Corps area and on the 26th of March, the second element which had been deployed in Northern I Corps arrived at Da Nang marking the first time since the arrival in Vietnam that the company was together in its entirety.

From the 28th of March through the 8th of April the company, under the direction of Maj Sullivan, conducted extensive training exercises to insure that the company would function as a whole in the same superior manner that it had in its detached state, and during this period the unit still actively supported its mission to I Corps. While the company was in the throes of organization, newly acquired UH-1B model helicopters were being fitted with armament subsystems and were being incorporated into the training exercises. The training proved to be more realistic than desired on 3 April when two gunships were hit by enemy fire while on a low level reconnaissance mission. One ship was forced to land and the maintenance section flew its first recovery mission, having the aircraft flyable in thirty minutes after replacing needed parts.

The company now was ready to accept its role with the new addition of the "Alleycats", the callsign chosen for the gunship platoon. The First and Second Platoons each divided into two sections, the First Platoon sending one section to Quang Ngai and the Second Platoon sending a section to Hue Citadel; thereby providing optimum support to the entire I

complete they had carried over 14,000 pounds of ammunition and had delivered 87 wounded soldiers to a medical treatment facility.

Having worked through August and September on perfecting a "Fire-Fly" light setup to be mounted in an aircraft for night gunship missions, the Alleycats were ready to put into use this concept of gunship tactics. On 5 October, while flying a night river patrol, the gunships received word that a regional outpost west of Tam Ky was in danger of being overrun by two Viet Cong companies. The Alleycats diverted their mission and arrived just as the enemy had started his assault. The gunships, with accurate and deadly fire on the attacking force, saved the outpost from being overrun.

Well into the monsoon season, the 282nd aviators continued to support their missions in weather that demanded the very highest form of professional competence and air discipline. The Blackcats were up to the challenge and flew sortie after sortie through extremely poor weather conditions to accomplish their vital missions in support of the I Corps advisory effort.

On 11 November, Maj Ronald C. Rex assumed command of the Blackcats and the company bid farewell to Maj Ward.

On Thanksgiving Day, the Blackcats were committed to a combat assault for the 1st ARVN Div. With this commitment the Blackcats were still able to carry a heartwarming and morale-boosting cargo as they delivered hot turkey dinners to over 150 American Advisors in outlying districts over the entire I Corps area.

The last month of the year completed a year and a half

Corps area.

On 17 April the Alleycats made their first kill while conducting a search and destroy mission for the 51st ARVN Regiment near Hoi An. The 21st of April marked the first combat assault for the company when an element of the 2nd ARVN Division was lifted on an operation in the vicinity of Mo Duc south of Quang Ngai.

On 26 April the company bid farewell to Maj William F. Sullivan and welcomed the new Commander, Maj Charles E. Ward Jr. On the same day the unit was reassigned from the 14th Combat Aviation Battalion to the 223rd Combat Support Aviation Battalion by Gen Order #7, HQ 17th Aviation Gp.

On 5 May the Alleycats, supporting a surrounded ARVN unit east of Phu Bai, were credited with 89 kills and the destruction of a 57mm recoilless rifle.

Tragedy struck the unit on May 9th when PFC Michael J. Elmy, a passenger in one of the unit's helicopters, was killed when the aircraft crashed in the Da Nang Bay. Miraculously the crew escaped with minor injuries.

The 12th of May heralded the arrival at Da Nang of the 519th Medical Det. Cpt Burton, Flight Surgeon and Det Commander, and eight enlisted men were ready to minister to the needs of the steadily growing company.

From 17 May to 28 May the unit provided five gunships and seven lift or "slick" helicopters to support an operation, conducted in the area from Quang Tri to the DMZ, for the 1st ARVN Div. During the period of the operation all aircraft were based at Dong Ha and five slicks returned to Hue Citadel each night leaving the others to stand by for any

On the 12th of August the unit was again dealt a tragic and grief-filled blow. WO Leonard Eugene Easley, an Alleycat, received a mortal wound while courageously making pass after pass on a numerically superior North Vietnamese force, each time weakening the enemy's defenses until taking the round which resulted in his death.

Effective 19 August, the 282nd Assault Helicopter Company was released from the 223rd Aviation Battalion and assigned to the 212th Combat Support Aviation Battalion by GO #17, HQ 17th Aviation Group.

After working in their scarce free time for two months, the last week in August, the unit boasted three new clubs. The EM Club, the NCO Club and the Officers Club are the envy of all visiting personnel. Through the units members's initiative and hard work, all personnel were rewarded with a relaxing retreat from the rigors of combat.

On the night of 13 September the Blackcats were called upon to make an emergency resupply of ammunition and medical evacuation for a Ranger group of the 4th ARVN Cavalry which came under heavy rocket, mortar and ground attack in an area southeast of Hoi An. The Blackcats responded and along with the danger that was to be encountered in the operation area, the crews of the three ships had the added burden of darkness and limited visibility in deterioration weather conditions. Receiving intense fire upon landing, they dropped their precious cargo of ammunition and each helicopter picked up maximum loads of medevacs. Three times that night the Blackcats repeated their actions and when their mission was

emergency that might arise. Maj Ward led his unit in achieving most successful results on the entire operation.

The 10th of June marked the 1st anniversary of the company in Vietnam. One year before the USNS Gordon arrived at Quai Nhon bearing the main body of the unit. After debarkation and processing of personnel, the new troops were transported by Army caribou to Da Nang.

Operations through the summer proved the professionalism and skill of the Blackcats as they performed their mission in heavily laden ships with weather conditions such that the aircraft were operating in a decreased efficiency state.

An urgent mission for the Alleycats was called down well before first light on 8 July. Elements of the 1st ARVN Div were under heavy attack in an area north of Quang Tri. The Alleycats responded immediately, deploying six gunships to the area. Making contact with the enemy, they distinguished themselves in a five hour battle by engaging the enemy in the open areas, tree lines and fortified bunkers. As a result of their superior performance, they were able to boast 193 enemy killed by air (body count). Through their exemplary actions, the ground troops were able to capture eleven prisoners, 68 individual weapons and 26 crew served weapons. This operation has been described as the biggest single victory for an ARVN unit. Recommended for award of the Army Commendation Medal with "V" Device for Valor, the following individuals were commended by Maj Vo Huu Hanh, 1st ARVN Inf Regt Commander, and Maj W.L. Shearer, USMC, Senior Advisor:

Cackley, Bobbie D. WO1, Pilot

Martin, Glenn N. WO1, Pilot
Mc Gwin, Michael WO1, Aircraft Commander
Williams, Kenton E. WO1, Aircraft Commander
Carlson, Kent A. Sp4, Gunner
Claus, Richard J. Sp5, Crew Chief
Fishbeck, Jay P. Sp4, Crew Chief
Fishbeck, Joe E. Sp4, Crew Chief
Ginnell, Walter F. Sp4, Gunner
Nelson, Dennis E. Sp4, Crew Chief
Swiney, John A. Sp4, Crew Chief
Teleky, Thomas Sp4, Gunner
Thummel, John L. Sp4, Gunner

While rendering general support for I Corps widely diversified missions, the unit's record is continually interspersed with individual and group acts that reveal the highest forms of courage, heroism and professional competence.

On the 25th of July, while on a standard Special Forces mission, the crew was informed that a Special Forces patrol was ambushed and required an immediate medical evacuation. Through the crews courage and infective calmness, the aircraft was brought through the hail of enemy fire and the medevacs extracted from the area that was so hot that persons able to walk to the aircraft in the small clearing were hit by hostile fire as they climbed aboard. Though the ship was hit several times and sustained severe damage, the crew was able to get the medevacs to the medical facility at Chu Lai before being forced to land and effect repairs to their crippled ship.