

HISTORY OF THE
282nd AVIATION COMPANY (AIR MOBILE LIGHT)

7 OCTOBER 1965 - 31 DECEMBER 1966

prepared by
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The 282nd Aviation Company was activated at Fort Benning, Georgia on 7 October 1965 under the authority of General Order # 218, Third United States Army. Also activated at the same time were three supporting detachments: The 484th TC Detachment (Cargo Helicopter Field Maintenance), the 504th Signal Detachment (Radio Repair) (Avionics), and the 105th Medical Detachment. The first individual assigned to the company was Major George J. Young, Infantry, who assumed command on 23 October 1965. The first NCO assigned was 1SG E8 William F. Ubrey.

The mission of the newly-formed company was to draw TO&E equipment and train personnel in preparation for overseas movement. Because the company was organized less the airlift platoons, training in airmobile concepts was accomplished with the assistance of the 182 Aviation Company, the base training unit of the 10th Aviation Group. The 282nd participated in nine training exercises prior to overseas movement. The Company Headquarters and Operations personnel were trained to plan, coordinate and conduct company-sized airmobile operations, aerial delivery of Ranger patrols and aerial vectoring to release points and landing zones in coordination with Pathfinder personnel. The training emphasized formation flying, both day and night. As a result of this training, the 282nd Aviation Company attained the

mission and fragmented disposition of the company. It has been gratifying to support the advisory personnel and Special Forces personnel in the I and II Corps Area. In many cases, the only contact with the "outside" world, for these men, has been the Black Cats. It has been professionally stimulating to serve and support these dedicated soldiers. At the end of the calendar year, much work is left to be done. The 282nd Aviation Company stands ready, and is confident in its ability, to prove the same excellent support in 1967.

required proficiency to assume command of the airlift platoons, gun platoon, and supporting detachment.

Other special training completed by the 282nd Aviation Company is as follows:

- 1) Five (5) officers completed UH-1 transition.
- 2) Six (6) officers completed aerial gunnery training. they received 12 hours of classroom instruction and both day and night firing of aerial weapons systems.
- 3) Three (3) enlisted men attended crew chief training classes.
- 4) Eight (8) enlisted men attended door gunner training classes.
- 5) Forty one (41) enlisted men attended AAMTAP school for the UH-1 airframe and engine.
- 6) Thirty nine (39) enlisted men participated in an M-60 machine gun familiarization course.
- 7) Unit clerks received on-the-job training with the 44th Aviation Battalion and the 10th Aviation Group.

In December 1965 Major Benjamin D. Waterman, Signal Corps, took command of the company, completed the training cycle, and was to deploy with the company to overseas duty in Vietnam.

On 9 February 1966, Letter Order AT-16T-0, Headquarters, US Army Infantry Center, Fort Benning, Georgia, was received, which ordered the Permanent Change of Station of the 282nd Aviation Company and it's supporting detachments, to the Republic of Vietnam, with duty station unknown. The company passed the Department of the Army General Inspection and

actions of these men are credited towards the saving of 12 Vietnamese, procuring of important intelligence information and the prevention of a Popular Force defeat due to exhausted ammunition supplies. They received the Army Commendation Medal with "V" Device for their courage, determination and outstanding discipline while under fire.

Initially, the officers of the company resided in downtown Da Nang, in two villas. The enlisted men in a tent area west of the runway at Marble Mountain. In October, the company moved to a new contonement area on the southwest portion of the airfield. The new billets, excellent mess hall and new latrines with hot and cold water were more than welcome. The excellent facilities were the envy of visiting aviation personnel. The need for a theater was recognized and was constructed in November of 1966. This theater was designed by SP4 Edwin L. Smith, and was dedicated to the memory of SP4 Freda who died in Dalot on 3 September 1966. Also, a patio was constructed and landscaped with grass and trees. This area retreat was dedicated to the memory of PFC Bultman, who was killed on 3 September 1966 in the same accident. Additional construction was planned to complete the facilities of the company. These facilities included an Enlisted Men's Club, Officers Club, barber shop and mail building. The addition of these facilities would complete one of the best company areas in Vietnam.

The "Black Cat" Aviation Company has proven itself in combat. The seven-month period in Vietnam has been a challenge to the initiative of all because of the broad

prepared for the forth-coming movement. The move was accomplished in four phases.

On 5 May 1966, the USNS Breton departed Alameda Naval Air Station, Alameda, California, with 8 UH-1D aircraft belonging to the company. Aircraft and avionics PLL and AAL, which had previously been assembled at Sharp Army Depot, was also on board. Two officers and seven enlisted men from the unit accompanied this shipment. The carrier docked at Vung Tau, Republic of Vietnam, on 12 June 1966, after a twelve day delay for emergency repairs.

On 22 May the company Advanced Party, headed by Major Waterman, the Company Commander, departed Travis AFB, California and flew to the Republic of Vietnam. When the 8 UH-1D aircraft arrived at Vung Tau, they were flown to An Son, the home of the 14th Combat Aviation Battalion, by the officers of the Advance Party, the two officers who accompanied the 8 aircraft on their sea voyage, and some officers of the 14th Aviation Battalion. The aircraft and avionics PLL and ASL were trans-shipped by sea to the final home of the 282nd Aviation Company, Da Nang, and finally arrived on 29 July 1966.

Meanwhile, on 8 May 1966, the freighter "Tulane Victory" had departed Savannah, Georgia, with unit TO&E vehicles and equipment. One enlisted man accompanied this shipment. The freighter stopped for five days each at Menila, Yokohama and Saigon, arriving in Qui Nhon (near An Son) on 26 June 1966. The "Tulane Victory" rode at anchor for one week before discharging cargo due to a shortage of terminal service

map-of-the-earth techniques. The senior advisor of the Hoi An sub-sector, LTC Kain, was flown about the area of operation to acquire information of the position of the enemy. The aircraft was fired at by the VC, however, the machine gunners quickly reacted to all ground fire with suppressive fire from the machine guns. During the course of the day the Popular Force unit received 12 casualties from an engagement with the stubborn enemy. The helicopter crew was called on to evacuate the wounded from the hot area. Four sorties were made to the ARVN hospital at Da Nang. Each time the helicopter landed in the landing site, they remained alert and responsive to muzzle flashes from the tree line. Upon touchdown they were quick to assist loading of the Vietnamese wounded, and when the aircraft was at a safe altitude enroute to the hospital they provided comfort to the wounded. At approximately 1815 hours, a call was received from the commander of the Popular Force unit requesting emergency resupply of ammunition to a key outpost. The outpost was on the peak of a small hill and was a blocking force. Armed hueys from the Marine Air Facility at An Hoa were provided to the landing site. On the third lift in, one of the armed helicopters was hit severely so both returned to An Hoa. The crew of the Army huey continued into the landing site, dropped off the ammunition and returned to An Hoa for another load. The aircraft commander relied heavily on his door gunners to provide suppressive fire and expert marksmanship contributed greatly to the successful mission accomplishments during all phases of the support effort. the

personnel, equipment, and the higher priority of other ships with critical cargo. After unloading of the "Tuland Victory", the equipment was shipped to Da Nang on an LST.

The main Body of the company departed San Francisco on 16 May 1966 on the USNS Gordon. Also aboard this ship was the unit's minimum essential equipment. After sailing for several days someone was told to go fly a kite and for the next few weeks a kite was seen flying high above the ship. The Gordon arrived in Qui Nhon on 10 June 1966. The troops were transported to the 14th Aviation Battalion area for processing. Later the troops were transported by Army Caribou to Da Nang where the Company Command Post was to be located.

The new company's mission was to provide aviation support to the I and II Corps Advisory effort. This required company personnel to be garrisoned as far north as Hue Citadel, as far south as Dong Ba Thin and as far west as Ban Me Thuot and Kontum. The 282nd Aviation Company absorbed the assets of the I Corps Aviation Company (Prov), which consisted of the provisional company headquarters, supporting detachments and two flight platoons. These were the 1st and 2nd Platoons of the 172nd Aviation Company. The 1st Platoon was in garrison at Da Nang, supporting I Corps Headquarters and Advisory Staff and the 2nd Platoon was in Pleiku in support of II Corps Headquarters and Advisory Staff. The 2nd Platoon, at Pleiku, had been under the command of the 52nd Aviation Battalion.

The operational area of the 282nd included all of I and

Aviation Company (Prov), assumed command of the Black Cats, the callsign assigned to the company on 23 May 1966. Soon the reputation of the "Black Cats" was established because of the "can-do" spirit of the company and the fine officers and men.

These first five months in Vietnam were not without difficulty or tragedy. The night of 26 July 1966, only two months after arrival, the Marble Mountain Airfield was mortared by the Viet Cong and every Black Cat aircraft on the field was damaged. Fortunately, only two men were slightly wounded. The aircraft were evacuated due to extensive damage, and the remaining aircraft were rapidly repaired on site. In a few days, the 1st Platoon was back in operation.

On 3 September 1966 the company lost an aircraft in a tragic accident near Dalot. The pilots miraculously survived, however the two enlisted crewmen, SP4 Arthur A. Freda Jr. and PFC Roy J. Bultman were killed. The loss of these fine soldiers was mourned by all members of the company.

On 19 October, WO Ralph R. Guynn, SP4 William G. Hartley, and SP4 Thomas E. Garfield Jr. were crew members of a UH-1B Helicopter in support of a combat operation 25 miles south west of Da Nang, being conducted by a Popular Forces unit from the Hoi An sub-sector. Reconnaissance, medical evacuation and resupply missions were flown that day. The Popular Force was sweeping the terrain toward a hill on the west and were encountering strong Viet Cong resistance. The weather was marginal forcing the helicopter to be flown using

II Corps, or one half the area of South Vietnam. Most of the area consisted of trackless jungle and rugged mountains. To accomplish this support mission effectively, the 1st Platoon headquartered in Da Nang at Marble Mountain Air Field Facility with aircraft stationed in Da Nang, Hue Citadel and Quang Ngai. The 2nd Platoon, headquartered in Pleiku at Camp Holloway had aircraft in Pleiku, Kontum and Bam Me Thuot. The 3rd Platoon was headquartered in Qui Nhon with aircraft stationed in Qui Nhon and Dong Ba Thin. First Platoon's area of operation ranged from the DMZ to Qui Nhon, 3rd Platoon's from Quang Ngai to Phan Thiet, just east of Saigon, and the 2nd Platoon's from beautiful Dalot northeast of Saigon to remote Special Forces sites north of Kontum, adjacent to the Laotian border.

The company mission necessitated that single ship missions be flown with only the protection of the door gunners. These missions were flown over some of the most rugged and unforgiving terrain in the world. Certainly the outstanding maintenance support rendered by the supporting detachments has contributed greatly to the success of the company's operations.

Although the mission, at times, seemed routine, there were many occasions when the utmost of daring and courage was required. The officers and men of the 282nd Aviation Company responded to the challenge admirably and as a result, twenty six individual awards for valor were earned during this period of combat operations. These awards included the Silver Star, Distinguished Flying Cross, Bronze Star Medal

with "V" device, Air Medal with "V" device and the Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry. The acts of heroism are too numerous to include all in this history. The following narratives of awards have been selected as representative of the aggressive spirit and outstanding performance of duty by the individuals honored with these decorations:

"1st Lieutenant French was the aircraft commander of a UH-1D helicopter on a combat support operation. Upon receiving information of a crashed B-57 bomber, 1st Lieutenant French immediately flew to the crash site. Upon arrival he spotted the escort aircraft for the downed plane. Being unable to spot the downed pilot from his position, he asked that smoke be dropped to plot the pilots location. The smoke enabled him to spot the pilot's parachute in the trees. He immediately entered the area. The area has been burnt out by an air strike or fire of some type. Due to the sloping angle of the terrain and other obstacles, 1LT French was forced to hover and one of the pilots started running toward the helicopter. He was immediately brought aboard and simultaneously the helicopter began receiving heavy automatic weapons fire from the right and left front. As the aircraft started to climb, it shuddered violently, having taken a hit in the rotor. He continued a low-level flight still receiving fire while the two gunners sprayed the flight path. When they were a safe distance from the area, the aircraft was brought to 1500 feet and then they returned to the Tactical Command Post with the downed pilot".

"SP4 Emile E. Tetreault was serving as crewchief of a UH-1B helicopter on 24 July 1966, when a medical evacuation of Dong Ho outpost was performed by his Aircraft Commander. Upon landing at the entrance to the insecure outpost, SP4 Tetreault dismounted his machine gun, and taking a belt of ammunition for it, entered the outpost. He directed wounded ARVN soldiers to the aircraft and carried several to the ship. Three men were carried out of a minefield. SP4 Tetreault had volunteered to perform these actions and was willing to return for the remaining wounded that could not be taken the first time, when the complete insecurity of the outpost required the mission to be terminated".

Major Waterman, the company commander, was transferred to 17th Combat Aviation Group upon his promotion to Lieutenant Colonel in late June. Major Gilbert R. Hickenbottom, Infantry, former commander of the I Corps