

1965

HISTORY OF THE 68TH AVIATION COMPANY
1 January 1965- 31 December 1965

68TH AVIATION COMPANY
AIRMOBILE LIGHT
APO US FORCES 96291

7 January 1966

SUBJECT: UNIT HISTORY

The unit was constituted 7 March 1960 in the regular army as the 68th Aviation Company. The Company was activated 14 April 1960 at Fort Ord, California and inactivated 6 December 1962 at Fort Ord. The unit was reactivated 15 August 1964 in the Pacific and operated in Vietnam as the First Utility Tactical Transport Helicopter Company in the history of army aviation. On 1 March 1965 the company was inactivated and designated the 197th Aviation Company. On 5 July 1965 at Fort Benning, Georgia, the 68th Aviation Company (Airmobile)(Light) was activated by verbal order of the Commanding General, Third United States Army. Third Army General Order Number 200, dated 12 July 1965, confirmed the activation under TOE 1-77E and attached the unit to the 10th Aviation Group, Fort Benning, Georgia.

Major Joe D. Ecrette assumed command of the company by Unit Order Number 1, dated 12 July 1965, for the interim period of time until the arrival of all the officers assigned to the company. All the officers were assigned to Seventh United States Army in Germany at time of activation of the company. On 1 September 1965, the reporting date of all the officers at Fort Benning, Major Walden P. Honeycutt assumed command of the 68th Aviation Company (Airmobile)(Light) by Unit Order Number 11.

The company was given thirty days to organize, train, and prepare for overseas movement. During this thirty day time period, the non-commissioned officers and enlisted men who were assigned to the company joined the unit. By 1 October 1965 the unit and equipment were ready for overseas movement, although there was a shortage of several key enlisted men.

The 68th Aviation Company main body departed Fort Benning, 4 November 1965, traveling by bus to Atlanta, Georgia, from Atlanta to San Francisco, California, by air and from San Francisco to Yang Tau, Viet Nam aboard the USNS Geiger arriving on 28 November 1965.

The advanced party arrived 10 November 1965 by air and the rear detachment arrived 20 November 1965 by air. The 68th was assigned to the 145th Aviation Battalion.

The first combat mission was flown by the following members of the 68th Aviation Company on 4 December 1965: Major Honeycutt, Major Le Master, Major Shelby, Major Williams, Captain Richards, Captain Hughes and Captain Rothmeier. This mission was flown with the 118th Aviation Company and A Company, 501st during the orientation phase of inprocessing to the Viet Nam operations.

SUBJECT: UNIT HISTORY (CONT)

The unit became combat operational on 10 December 1965 and assigned single dual ship missions until 16 December 1965. On 16 December 1965 the first complete unit type combat assault missions were flown. The first operation consisted of 12 troop carrying aircraft and 5 armed a/e and was led by Major Weldon F. Honeycutt, the Unit Commander. During the day, 6 extraction flights and 7 assault flights were completed. Although all aircraft returned safely, three ships were hit and one pilot, Captain Lawrence N. Surliff, was wounded. This was the second casualty received by personnel of the 68th since arriving in the theatre. Captain David L. Starkey was wounded on a mission with A Company, 501st during the orientation training prior to the unit becoming operational.

On the 16th of December mission, the 68th provided air mobility to extract 420 members of the 101st ABN. Div. (1/327 and 2/502) from 10 kilometers West Northwest of Ben Cat to a landing zone 7 kilometers East in 6 lifts. In the afternoon the 68th moved 90 members of the Vietnamese 52nd Ranger Bn. from Ba Ria Airstrip to an LZ 9 kilometers North in a combat assault.

Aircraft and crews for the first company assault were as follows:

<u>AIRCRAFT NUMBER</u>	<u>AIRCRAFT COMMANDER</u>	<u>PILOT</u>	<u>COPILOT</u>	<u>GUNNER</u>	<u>PLATOON</u>
807	HONEYCUTT	LEMASTER	CARSON	COMBS	HQS
086	BOND	COBE	FULLER	WATSON	SV
790	OWENS	LINDELL	BALL	ROBTT	1ST
791	WILLIAMS	MCCUNLEY	BAKER	BROGLE	1ST
792	JUGHL	DAVISCH	WEIDLINGER	JOTNER	1ST
793	BALINT	RODGERS	HUFF	BROCKER	1ST
794	SULLIVAN	WATTS	MINTON	GARDNER	1ST
797	SHAVER	RUSK	BRIDDICK	HOPKINS	1ST
798	RODGERS	MONTGOMERY	BEST	GOFF	2ND
799	HAMBOND	NOVICKI	SWAINSTON	WRIGHT	2ND
800	DETIVEAUX	WOOLARD	THOMAS	DISBROT	2ND
801	EARLEY	LANEASSER	POI	VISCAMINO	2ND
808	KAHAN	BOWEN	HAVE	MORRIS	2ND
809	SUTLIFF	KIRKMADE	PICKETT	YOUNCE	2ND
810	BURROUGHS	HACK	WITTE	RICE	2ND
096	SHELLEY	LAMBORN	ROBERTS	BERNANDEZ	GUN
090	HUGHES	YILION	WOLFGANG	COPKLAND	GUN
088	REYNOLDS	MARLIS	KANAKARIS	TAYLOR	GUN
091	RAGLAND	BLACKBURN	BOWE	BRYANT	GUN
09:	STARKEY	YOCK	HURT	MCKEIL	GUN

Three backup aircraft and crews are shown.

The call sign and special designations for each platoon are:

<u>INDIVIDUAL</u>	<u>SECTION</u>	<u>COLOR</u>	<u>CALL SIGN</u>
Major Honeycutt	C.O.	Silver	Tiger 6
Major Owens	1st Lift Cntr.	Red	Alley Cat 6
Major Barroughs	2nd Lift Cntr.	Yellow	Hallmark 6
Major Shelby	Gun Plt. Cntr.	Pink	Mustang 6
Major Bond	Svc. Plt. Cntr.	Red, yellow, blue	Broken Bull

During the period 17 December 1965 thru 31 December 1965 the 68th Aviation Company performed three company size combat operations, both assault and extractions as a single company. A total of 14 lifts were made with 1396 troops being moved. On one of the missions, 5 troop carrier aircraft were attached to the 68th from the 198th Aviation Company. In addition the 68th participated in two battalion size combat missions during this same period of time.

During the month of December, the 68th Aviation Company flew numerous direct combat support missions. From the time the company became operational, 10 December 1965, and 31 December 1965, the average time flown per assigned aviator was approximately 56 hours.

1 Incl

1. Key Personnel

[Handwritten Signature]
 W. F. HONEYCUTT
 Major, INF
 Commanding

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