

1967

HISTORY OF THE
243D ASSAULT SUPPORT HELICOPTER COMPANY
10TH COMBAT AVIATION BATTALION
1ST AVIATION BRIGADE

1 JANUARY 1967 - 31 DECEMBER 1967

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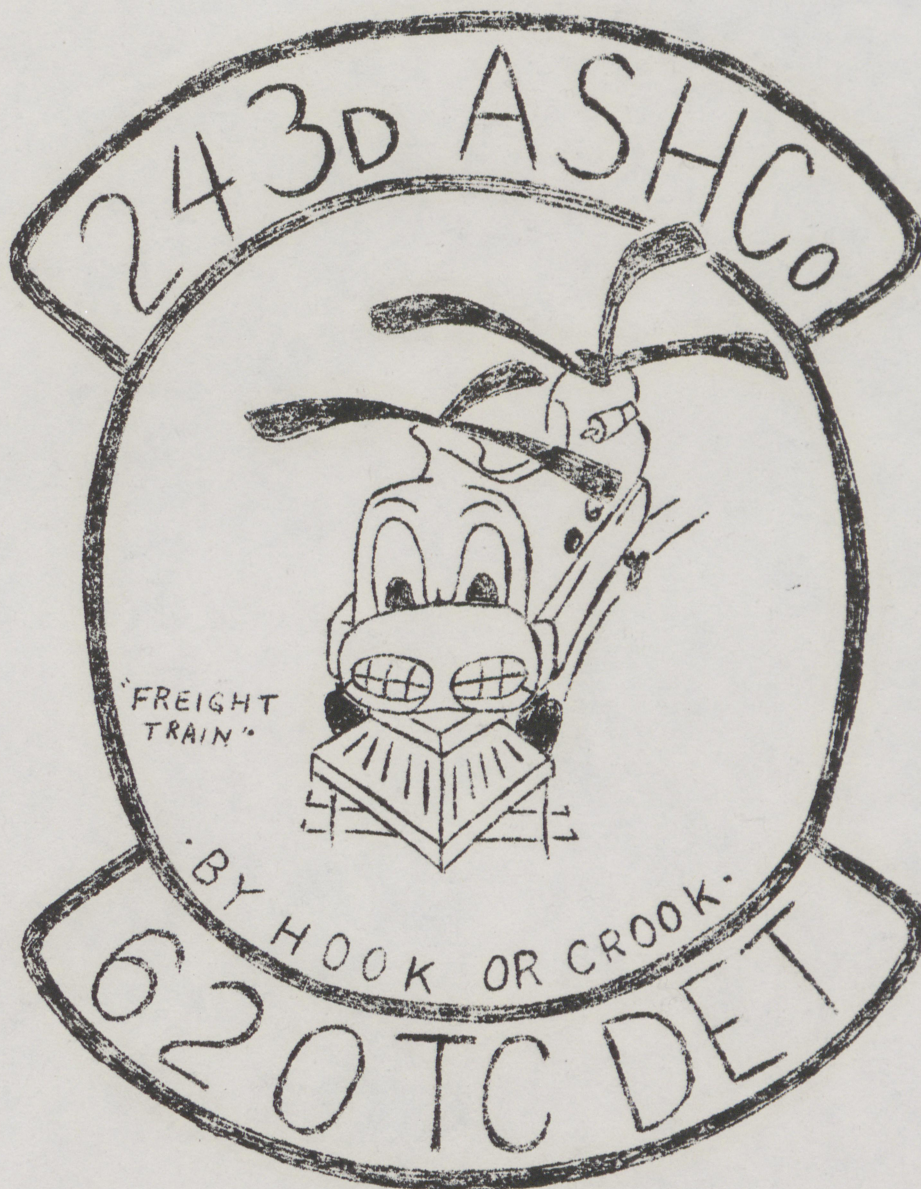


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FOREWORD

The 243d Assault Support Helicopter Company (CH-47A Chinooks) is co-located with its parent unit, the 10th Combat Aviation Battalion, (Vagabonds) at Dong Ba Thin, adjacent to Cam Ranh Bay. The 243d adopted the name of "Freighttrain" as being appropriate to our combat missions and our ability to provide a "Visible means of support" for the "Vagabonds of Vietnam". Even though the "Freighttrains" have only been in action for 42 days they have participated in two major operations ranging from the mountainous area of northern II Corps (Dak To) to the sandy beaches in southern II Corps, (Phan Thiet). The brief history of this unit has indicated that the "Freighttrains" are appropriately named and are providing a visible means of support for the entire free world effort in the central portion of the Republic of Vietnam.



DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY

Lineage and Honors

243d AVIATION COMPANY

Constituted 6 March 1942 in the Army of the United States as the 815th Quartermaster Company (Truck)

Activated 23 April 1942 at Brookley Field, Alabama

Reorganized and redesignated 2 July 1942 as the 815th Quartermaster Truck Platoon, Aviation

Reorganized and redesignated 18 January 1943 as the 2479th Quartermaster Truck Company, Aviation

Inactivated 27 January 1946 at Clark Field, Philippine Islands

Converted and redesignated 1 August 1946 as the 2479th Transportation Corps Truck Company

Redesignated 30 September 1966 as the 243d Aviation Company and allotted to the Regular Army

Activated 1 December 1966 at Fort Sill, Oklahoma

CAMPAIGN PARTICIPATION CREDIT

World War II-AP

Papua

New Guinea

Leyte

Luzon

DECORATIONS

Philippine Presidential Unit Citation, Streamer embroidered 17 OCTOBER 1944 - 4 JULY 1945

By Order of the Secretary of the Army:

Kenneth G. Wickham

KENNETH G. WICKHAM
Major General, USA
The Adjutant General

10 JAN 1968

Chapter II Unit Background

a. Unit Formation

The 243d Assault Support Helicopter Company was activated on 1 December 1966, under TO&E 1-258-F, 65 w/ch 1 and General Order 227, dated 27 November 1966. The 620th Transportation Detachment was also activated on 1 December 1966, under TO&E 1-55-510T, 56 w/ch 7 and General Order 226, dated 17 November 1966 in order to provide the 243d with necessary direct support. This unit was re-organized under MTOE 1-258F CONARC 2/67, G.O. 314, HQ USARPAC 19 December 1967, Par 1, effective 25 December 1967.

b. Training

(1) Initial individual pilot training began prior to activation of the unit. The Artillery Aviation Command provided a training company consisting of Vietnam returnee pilots and maintenance personnel. As enlisted personnel arrived, individual crew training took place. Unit training consisted of formal ground school and side by side operations with trained crews from the 154th Aviation Company. All mechanics attended either a 67U20 course at Fort Eustis, Virginia, or the AMTAF course conducted at Fort Sill, Oklahoma. Additionally, three pilots were trained as DECCA instructors at Fort Rucker, Alabama and one pilot attended Maintenance Pilot's course at Fort Eustis, Virginia. In conjunction with crew training, the unit was in direct support of the Artillery School. This provided excellent training involving airmobile operations pertaining to 105 Howitzer Battalion, which included instructing the artillery units in rigging, safety and methods of heliborne operations.

(2) Individual POR qualifications were completed during the unit training cycle. All individual POR requirements were completed approximately 30 days prior to deployment.

(3) Unit ATT was conducted from 7 to 11 August 1967 at Fort Hood, Texas. This included hoist missions, aircraft recovery, resupply and liaison with supported units. Several battery size artillery moves were made to include a night airlift of a 105 mm Howitzer Battery. A rating of excellent was given for each phase of the test. The unit and detachment deployed to Fort Hood with organic aircraft and vehicles. The ATT completed formal unit training and on return to Fort Sill unit pilots continued to fly missions in support of the Artillery School.

C. Logistics

(1) Two months prior to unit activation, TO&E & TA property was requisitioned by Post Consolidated Supply. Aircraft tools were requisitioned by Hawthorne Aviation. Aircraft and Avionics PLL&ASL were requisitioned by Sharp Army Depot and shipped from there as a support package. Other PLL's were accumulated by the unit. Coordination between and assistance from Post Consolidated Supply was excellent. Basic load of ammunition was computed and drawn for the unit from the post.

(2) Previously constructed buildings were made available to the unit upon arrival of the advanced party. To date, construction of additionally needed buildings is 90% complete. Adequate maintenance facilities are programmed but not started (i.e., Hangar, Tech Supply Building, wash rack, etc).

(3) Required bunkers, unit communication center and approved revetments for aircraft protection have been completed.

(4) Perimeter defense requirements have been fulfilled with the required bunkers and tower, to include lights and claymore mines installed in the area of responsibility.

Chapter III Command and Control

a. Unit Commanders

Major John R. Smith, [REDACTED], commanded the 243d Assault Support Helicopter Company from 9 January 1967 to 18 May 1967.

On 19 May 1967 Major Anthony M. Cominos, [REDACTED], assumed command of the 243d Assault Support Helicopter Company. He commanded the company until 11 June 1967.

On 12 June 1967, Major Billy A. Brown, [REDACTED], assumed command of the 243d Assault Support Helicopter Company.

b. Area of Operations:

(1) The 243d Assault Support Helicopter Company's primary area of operations is the II Corps Area. The II Corps Area is the largest corp area in Vietnam, and consists primarily of an area known as "Central Highlands". The central highlands area constitutes almost 50 percent of the land mass of South Vietnam. It is a rugged, mountainous area, with maximum elevation ranging from 4500 to 7000 feet in the vicinity of Delat and from 3000 to 8000 feet in the area west of Quang Ngai. The area slopes down steeply to the coastal plain on the east and more gradually in the western plateau, resulting in a strong contrast between the shorter, swifter, eastward flowing streams with their steep walled, narrow valleys, and the more sluggish westward flowing streams with their broad flat valleys. All streams are swollen and difficult to ford during the rainy season. Operations in this area differ greatly from those in the Delta and coastal plains because of the difference in terrain, weather and population.

(2) In the highlands the southwest monsoon season lasts from May to October. During this period low clouds and ground fog limit observation and seriously restrict aerial activity. Cloud ceilings are less than 3000 feet about 80% of the time. Average monthly rainfall is approximately 13 inches. The average high temperature is 88 with an average low of 55 degrees.

(3) The limited number of suitable landing zones requires careful and detailed reconnaissance in order to conduct heliborne operations. Open areas are sometimes covered with stakes and tree stumps, which may prohibit helicopter landings. The high altitude and small landing zones result in a reduction of helicopter lift capability.

(4) The other major terrain area in the II Corps is known as the "Coastal Plains". Streams, canals and rivers interlace this area; trees and other vegetation along the waterways sometimes extends 300 meters on each side. The land between the waterways is covered by rice paddies and during the rainy season these rice paddies are covered with water to a depth of one foot or more. In the dry season these same rice paddies dry up.

(5) The coastal plains weather consists of two seasons; the hot season, and the monsoon season. The northeast monsoon season lasts from September through February. During these periods the sky is overcast generally and heavy rains start and stop without warning. Most rice paddies in both the wet and dry season are potential loading and landing zones for helicopters.

Chapter IV Unit Operations

This company became operational in country on 19 November 1967. Combat, direct and general support missions have been conducted each day since that time. Initially six of the unit's CH-47 aircraft were allocated in direct support of the 52d Combat Aviation Battalion for general support during the Dak To campaign, until 30 November 1967. On 1 December, six CH-47A's were in direct support of the 1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division during operation Klamouth Falls. This support continued through 31 December 1967.

Chapter V Unit Awards

Since the period covered in this history is so short, no major unit awards have been presented.