

1969

ANNUAL SUPPLEMENT
HISTORY OF THE
243rd AVIATION COMPANY (ASSAULT SUPPORT HELICOPTER)
10TH AVIATION BATTALION (COMBAT)
1ST AVIATION BRIGADE

1 JANUARY 1969 - 31 DECEMBER 1969

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FOREWORD

The following is a brief record of the 243d's activities and accomplishments for the past year. The statistics speak for themselves, but no written account, regardless of its statistical accuracy, could ever hope to give a meaningful description of the personal effort and sacrifice of the men and officers of the 243d Aviation Company.

"Performance with a sense of urgency", is our motto and the standard by which we judge our own performance.

CHARLES R. PALMER
MAJ FA
Commanding

Chapter I Heraldry



a. Description and Meaning of the Unit Patch

The 243rd Assault Support Helicopter Company adopted the name "Freight Train" after their arrival in country. The name is descriptive of our combat mission and the words, "By Hook Or Crook", located below the Freight Train on the patch emphasize our ability to provide a "Visible means of support" for the Bagavonds of Vietnam. The "Freight Trains" carry supplies into the field for our supported units just as the train around the world carry cargo of every size and ashpe to the most remote corners of the globe. If a load cannot be cauled via the conventional means of our hook, then we find an unconventional way to haul it. "By Heek or Crook" we complete our mission.

b. History and Honors

The 243rd Assault Support Helicopter Company was designated as such on the 30th of September 1966 and allotted to the Regular Army. The company was officially activated on the 1st of December 1966 at Fort Sill, Oklahoma. This was in essence the beginning of the 243rd ASH Co. Our lineage, however, is traced back to the beginning of World War II, at which time we were the 815th Quartermaster Company (Truck).

During World War II, the 815th Quartermaster Company (Truck), participated in the Papua, New Guinea, Leyte and Luzon Campaigns. The Philippine Presidential Unit Citation was awarded on 17 October 1944.

Chapter II Command and Control

a. Unit commanders (Dec68-Dec69)

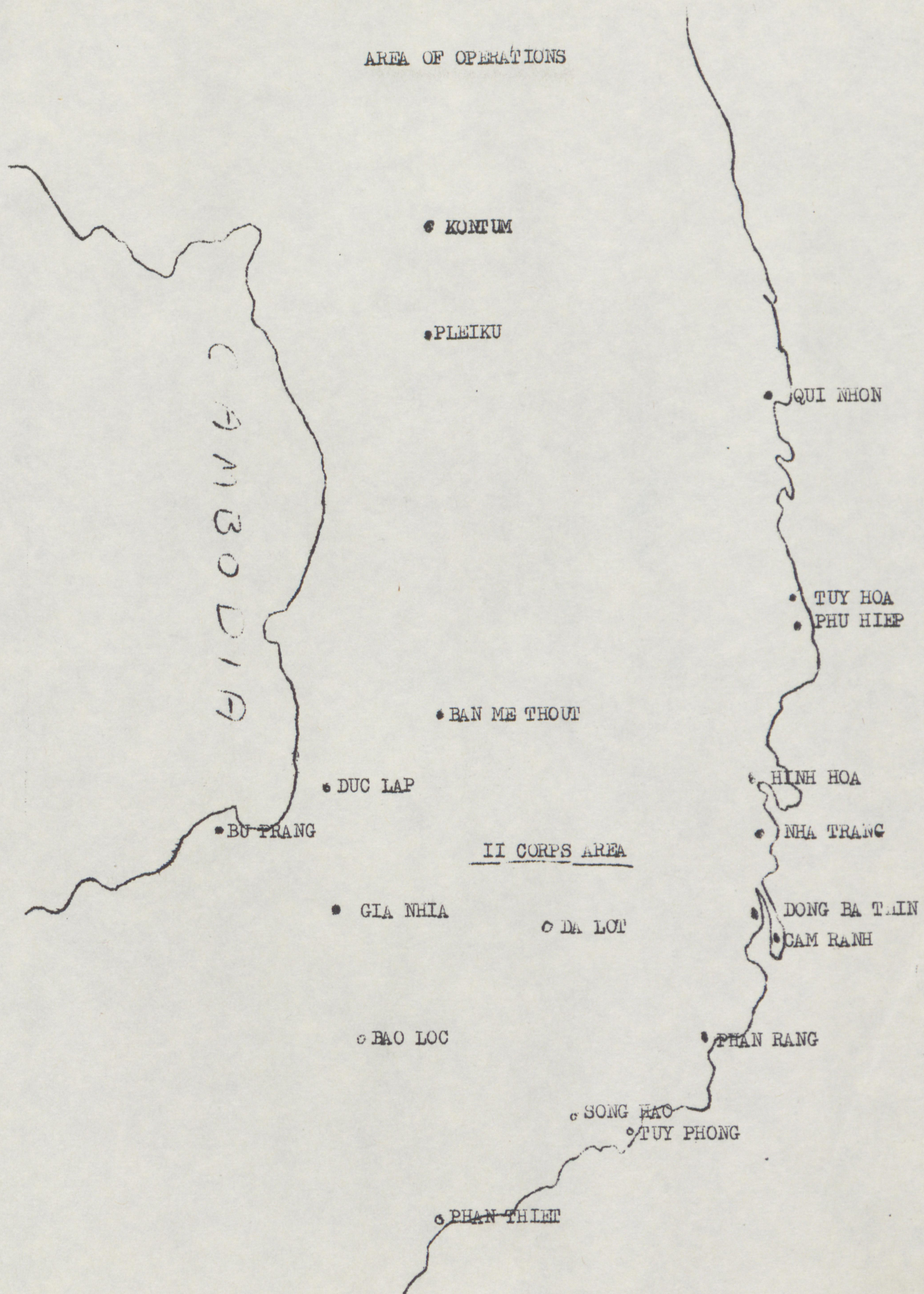
Major Edgaton T. Crouter assumed command of the 243d ASH on the 20th of September 1968. Major Crouter turned the company over to Major John B Reese on the 27 th of March 1969. The present commanding officer, Major Charles R. Palmer, took charge of the company on the 31st of August 1969.

b. Area of Operations

(1) The 243d ~~Assault~~ Support Helicopter Company continued to operate in the II Corps area. The majority of our missions took us to the coastal city of Phan Thiet for the movement of Artillery and resupply. Freight Train aircraft flew daily missions over the mountains into the central highlands area, supporting both ARVN and American forces. From Bao My Thout to Bao Loc and as far West as the border of Vietnam would allow, Freight Train aircraft moved artillery bases, resupplied them and carried ground forces on combat assaults.

(2) Most of our missions keep us South of Ban Me Thout. We have on several occasions, however, flown North to Phu Hiep to conduct joint operations with our sister units, the 180th and the 196th ASH Companies.

AREA OF OPERATIONS



Chapter III Unit Operations

a. The 243rd Assault Support Helicopter Company gave support to the units of Task Force South throughout the **entire year**. The individual units supported were the 3/503rd Infantry, 173rd Airborne Brigade in the Dalat/Bao Loc area, the 3/506th Infantry, 101st Air Cavalry Division in the Phan Thiet area and the 23rd ARVN Division. The White Horse ROK Infantry Division recieved aircraft in the area surrounding Cam Ranh and Ninh Hoa. Occasional support was given to the ROK units in the neighborhood of Phu Heip. The 5th Special Forces and MACV also received our help and during the months of April and March, three Freight Train aircraft remained on station at Ban My Thout, to be utilized by these units in case of an emergency. The aircraft remained at BMT until they accumulated 25 hours of blade time, at this time they were replaced by three other aircraft and fresh crews. While in BMT the crews stayed with the 155th Assault Helicopter Company and Received minor maintenance support from them.

b. A modification to the aft blades grounded all but two of the Freight Train aircraft for most of May. The blades were slowly replaced and the month of June saw us operation at full strength again.

c. The 243rd was redesignated during the month of May as the 243rd Aviation Company (Assault Support Helicopter). In June Task Force South added the 2/1st Armored Cavalry to the units in the Phan Thiet area. A vigorous program to increase the road security between Phan Thiet and Tuy Phong required the participation of most of the flyable Freight Train aircraft. By the last of July the long hours began to take effect and the 243rd maintenance became swamped with aircraft that required Perioikic Inspections.

The total number of hours flown during the month of August was reduced to half the usual number. I was on the third of August that the 243d received it's first combat casualty. CW2 H.B. Carrigar was pilot on a resupply mission for the White Horse ROA Infantry Division, while flying a sling load out to a fire base. He was wounded in the right side by a single round fired from the hills around Phan Rang. After initial treatment at Cam Ranh Hospital he was medivaced to Japan for further treatment.

d. In September the crews began to get a change of scenery. Support continued for the Task Force Units in the Phan Thiet area, but more and more of our aircraft were sent over the mountains into the Ban My Thout area in support of the 5th Special Forces, MACV and 17th CAG, as reports spread of an NVA build up along the Cambodian border. Toward the end of September the unit began to work around the clock on maintenance to keep aircraft flying. The weather in the BMT area became serious handicap. Low ceilings and heavy rain made resupply of the fire bases around Bu Prang difficult and at times impossible. Anti-aircraft weapons became more abundant as the NVA pressed the attack for Bu Prang. The area between Duc Lap and the Cambodian border became known as the "Volcano" because of the heavy anti-aircraft fire. Twelve aircraft were reported shot down over this area alone. The 243rd was extremely lucky during months of October and November, no serious damage was done by the enemy near BMT.

e. On the 22nd of October the Aircraft Commander and Pilot of Freight Train 105 were wounded in the legs while resupplying a Korean fire base near Ninh Hoa. CW2 Thomas Andrews, the AC was eventually medivaced to Japan.

WO1 Dale Chrisenberry sustained lesser injuries and was back to duty two weeks later.

f. In December the fighting around Duc Lap eased up after several unsuccessful attempts by the NVA to over run Bu Prang and Duc Lap. The weather on this side of the mountains became extremely hazardous, characterized by low ceilings, rain and high winds that gusted from 20 to 40 knots.

g. December was also a tragic month for the 243d. SP/5 Ronald F. Keener was the first member of the 243d to be killed in action. He was the Crew Chief on Freight Train 109 when it crashed on the resupply pad at Phan Thiet. The accident occurred on the 10th of December and the Accident Board has not released its findings as of this date.

Chapter IV Equipment and Installations

a. Improvements were being made to the perimeter security and lighting at the beginning of the year. Work on the perimeter is still going on, especially in the control of weeds in the concertina wire. The perimeter at this time is quite adequate.

b. Changes in the company area were slight, an addition was made to the mess hall for an Officers Mess and the NCO's constructed a day room for their use. The most radical change was in the maintenance ramp. The CH54 revetments to the South of the old ramp were taken over and modified for use as a maintenance area. The tents and buildings that were on the North end of the old ramp were moved into the new area, and a new POL point was constructed between the two ramps.

Chapter V Reflections

a. Individual Awards

1. DFC Major Edgerton T. Crouter
2. DFC Major John B. Reese
3. DFC Lieutenant Robert D. Gardner
4. DFC CW2 Joseph Coke

b. KIA

- a. SP/5 Ronald F. Keener

c. MIA None

APPENDIX I

OPERATIONAL STATISTICS

MON	HRS	SORTIES	PAX	CARGO TON	A/C REC	ACC	A/C HIT
JAN	1099	2487	13,910	3061	0	0	0
FEB	943	2118	9,867	2488	5	0	1
MAR	1176	2832	13,064	3887	5	0	1
APR	1178	2515	10,422	3010	5	0	0
MAY	626	1492	6,029	1635	11	0	1
JUN	1152	3642	6,993	3278	2	0	0
JUL	1064	2249	7,011	3385	16	0	0
AUG	608	1317	4,355	1712	1	0	1
SEP	1139	2476	7,190	4285	8	0	0
OCT	1178	2608	10,919	3161	4	0	1
NOV	1138	2149	7,642	2799	6	0	1
DEC	<u>1171</u>	<u>2868</u>	<u>9,296</u>	<u>3464</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>3</u>
TOTAL	12,472	28,753	106,698	36,165	64	1	9