

**HISTORY OF THE
52^d COMBAT AVIATION BATTALION**

**1 JANUARY 1965
TO
31 DECEMBER 1965**



HISTORY OF THE
52D COMBAT AVIATION BATTALION
APO SAN FRANCISCO, 96318

1 January 1965 - 31 December 1965

Prepared by
Office of the S-3

Approved by

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Military Assistance Command, Vietnam
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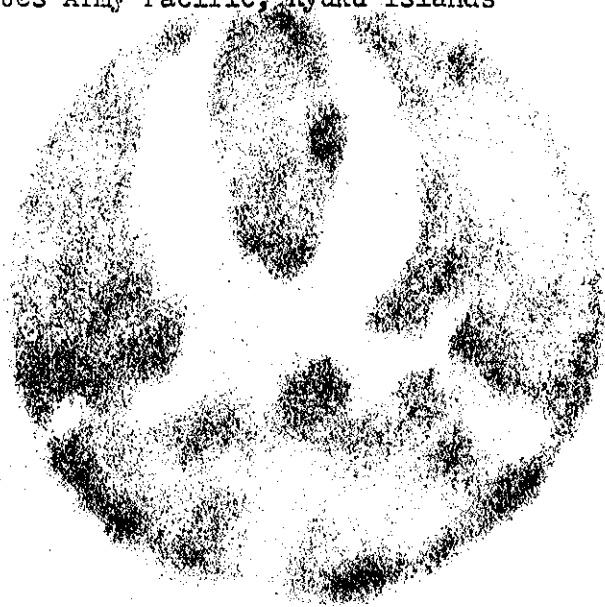


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FORWARD

The 52d Aviation Battalion is organized as is a ROAD Aviation Battalion, i.e. a fixed battalion headquarters with many and varied lesser units assigned. During the calendar year 1965, the 52d Aviation Battalion saw the loss of three of its units: the 52d Aviation Platoon (Fixed Wing Provisional) was disbanded and the men and equipment joined with the newly arrived 219th Aviation Company; the 117th Aviation Company was transferred from Qui Nhon to Dong Ba Thin and subsequently assigned to the 10th Aviation Battalion; and the 145th Airlift Platoon which joined the Battalion in July was transferred from Phan Thiet to Nha Trang and subsequently was assigned to the 10th Aviation Battalion.

However, the Battalion more than made up for these losses by the addition of the following units: 77th Field Artillery Detachment (Radar), 25th Psychological Operations Detachment, the 219th Aviation Company and the 170th Aviation Company, all stationed at Fleik; the 155th Aviation Company (formerly A/1st Avn Bn, 1st Inf Div), 165th Transportation Detachment (CHFI), 208th Signal Detachment and the 8th Medical Detachment, all stationed at Ban Me Thuot and the 161st Aviation Company stationed at Qui Nhon.

This history is respectfully dedicated to those officers, warrant officers and enlisted men, of the 52d Aviation Battalion, who gave their lives in the defense of their country.

IN MEMORY
OF THOSE WHO
GAVE THE ULTIMATE

1962

CWO CHARLES E. FOLLOWSY 22 Dec Florida

1963

CAPT JAMES R. ALLRED 14 Dec Idaho

1964

2/LT WILLIAM B. CANTHORNE 30 Jun Georgia

PFC TIMOTHY L. HODSON 30 Jun Texas

PFC ANTHONY A. SHELTON 8 Dec California

WO ROBERT E. TEUBSTOF III 18 Dec Virginia

1965

SP/5 JAMES B. ALEXANDER 10 Dec Kansas

SP/5 EVERETT L. ANDERSON 10 Feb Arkansas

SP/5 HAROLD A. ATCHER 19 Apr Georgia

CAPT LEO A. BAUER 10 Sep South Dakota

1/LT JOHN R. BALL 19 Jun West Virginia

PFC PAUL E. BAYS 10 Feb West Virginia

PFC JOSEPH E. L. BELANGER 7 Feb Maine

SP/4 TOMMY J. EISLOPER 10 Feb West Virginia

WO DANIEL W. BISHOP 19 Apr California

PFC ROBERT J. HETZ 10 Feb New Jersey

SP/4 DALE W. BROUGHTON 7 Feb Virginia

2/LT PATRICK P. CALHOUN 19 Apr Georgia

SP/5 DAVID W. CLAYTON	10 Feb	Missouri
SP/5 CLAYTON L. COLEMAN	10 Feb	Ohio
SP/5 DAVID CRAIG III	7 Feb	Pennsylvania
PFC MICHAEL E. DAVIS	21 Oct	New York
PFC DELMAR L. FERRIS	10 Feb	Iowa
SP/5 JOSEPH R. FOSS	5 Apr	Maine
SP/5 GERALD D. FOUNDS	7 Feb	Kansas
SP/4 NORMAN M. GARRETT	7 Feb	Texas
MAJ SETHARD N. HALL	21 Apr	Maine
WO RICHARD K. HARTER	19 May	Massachusetts
SP/4 ARTHUR L. HENNESSEY	19 Apr	Massachusetts
WO JOSEF S. HUYLER	21 Oct	New York
SP/5 WILLIAM J. JOHNSON	21 Oct	Illinois
SP/5 GLENN H. KELLEY	10 Feb	Tennessee
WO BOB G. KROMLSON	20 Oct	Minnesota
PFC WINDOORE LAMB	7 Feb	Florida
PFC DALLAS LANSON	10 Feb	Ohio
SP/4 HOON W. LOCK	28 Apr	Washington
PFC LARRY B. McCLANNHAN	10 Feb	Washington
SP/5 WESLEY McDONIAL	20 Oct	Missouri
WO DOUGLAS D. MACE	19 Apr	Texas
WO RONALD W. MACKLIN	20 Oct	California
CAPT GEORGIE MARKAS	7 Feb	Ohio
SP/4 CHARLES F. MILLAY	19 Apr	Kentucky
SP/4 TERRY W. MILLS	19 Apr	Illinois
SP/5 ROBERT S. HOSTER	10 Feb	Kentucky

SP/4 GILBERT OLIVAR	19 Apr	Hawaii
PFC HENRY G. PARKER	7 Feb	Tennessee
1/LT HAROLD A. PREISENDEFER	21 Oct	Pennsylvania
CWO JAMES L. PURSER	19 Jun	Tennessee
SP/5 FRANKLIN D. REGINE	20 Oct	Illinois
PFC WALTER L. RICHARD	10 Feb	Hawaii
SP/5 MARY B. ROULEY	10 Feb	Alabama
PFC PAUL RYTTER	18 Sep	California
CAPT ROBERTO SALVATEGO	19 Jun	Texas
SP/5 HERBERT M. SCHULTZ	10 Feb	Virginia
PFC PETER A. SERRER	10 Feb	California
SP/4 ROBERT L. SIMON	10 Feb	Louisiana
SP/4 HARRY L. SUMMERS	10 Feb	Virginia
1/LT JOSEPH L. THORNE	19 Apr	South Dakota
SP/4 JOHNIE PA TRIPLETT	20 Jul	South Carolina
S/SGT FRANCIS J. VALLAS	10 Feb	Pennsylvania
CAPT ROBERT D. WALKER	19 Apr	Texas
PVT MELVIN L. WATERS	10 Feb	Illinois
PFC LEON S. WILSON	10 Feb	New Mexico
PFC FLOYD LYNN	10 Feb	Iowa

"Ask not what your country can do for you; but ask what you can do for your country."

JOHN F. KENNEDY

PREFACE

The purpose of this unit history is to outline the events which occurred in the 52d Aviation Battalion, during the calendar year 1965. It is intended to give an accurate portrayal of the Battalion, its personnel and equipment, as well as a concise picture of the combat operations, in which the Battalion has participated. The information contained herein has been gathered from our Quarterly Command Reports, newspaper accounts and personal interviews.

Part I

Mission and Resources

Mission

The mission of the 52d Aviation Battalion Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment is to provide command, control, administration, communications and supply for the aviation battalion. In addition, it provides aviation staff personnel for the division headquarters.

Specifically stated in Vietnam, it is the responsibility of the 52d Aviation Battalion to provide direct aviation support to II ARVN Corps.

Organization

The 52d Aviation Battalion is organized under conventional lines, according to TO&E 1-76E, dated 15 July 1963, change 1, dated 6 March 1964, and has the following attached units:

52d Airlift Platoon

** 77th Field Artillery Detachment (Radar)

*** 25th Psychological Operations Detachment (Field Support)

119th Aviation Company (Airmobile Light)

545th Transportation Detachment (CHFM)

70th Signal Detachment

94th Medical Detachment

* 219th Aviation Company

* 203d Signal Detachment

* 155th Aviation Company

* 165th Transportation Detachment

- * 208th Signal Detachment
- * 8th Medical Detachment
- * 161st Aviation Company (Airmobile Light)
- * 406th Transportation Detachment
- * 449th Signal Detachment
- * 756th Medical Detachment
- * 170th Aviation Company (Airmobile Light)
- * 405th Transportation Detachment
- * 448th Signal Detachment
- * 775th Medical Detachment
- * 52d Security Platoon
- * 88th Military Police Section (K-9)
- ** 68th Infantry Radar Detachment

The Battalion owns, operates and maintains a total 156 aircraft.

* New addition 1965

** Assigned - Operational Control by Senior Advisor II Corp - 1965

*** Attached for Administration and Logistics Only - 1965

AREAS & FACILITIES

Area

The 52d Combat Aviation Battalion, with its headquarters at Holloway Army Airfield, Pleiku, Republic of Vietnam, is a TO&E unit, providing direct Army Aviation Support in the II Corps Tactical Zone.

The II Corps Tactical Zone consists of some 84,000 square kilometers, which represent about 45% of the total land mass of South Vietnam, and approximates in size and configuration to the state of Florida. It is bounded on the North by I Corps, on the South by III Corps, on the East by the South China Sea and on the West by Laos and Cambodia.

There are three principal types of terrain in the II Corp area. The Coastal Plains or Lowlands area contains a series of delta areas separated from one another by mountain spurs. The soil is very fertile and the low lands are a rich rice-growing area. Aviation Support in this area has been provided by the 117th Aviation Company (Airmobile Light) at Qui Nhon and the 145th Airlift Platoon at Nha Trang. During the last part of September the 117th Aviation Company was moved from Qui Nhon to Dong Ba Thin, a small town South of Nha Trang. This subsequently led to the reassignment of the 117th from the 52d Aviation Battalion to the 10th Aviation Battalion.

Portions of the Chaine Annamitique Mountains, which extend into the II Corps area, form the Mountain Region. The mountains, many of which extend to the South China Sea as spurs, have a maximum height of 7300 feet in the interior. The mountains average 2000 to 2500 feet in height and are generally covered with dense jungle. Although no aviation units of the 52d Aviation Battalion are physically located in the

Mountain Region, operations in that area are supported by units from both the coast and plateau regions. The addition of the 219th Aviation Company (Fixed Wing) to the Battalion has greatly increased the aviation coverage of the II Corps Zone. The 48 OLF aircraft of the company are employed in 13 strategic locations throughout the II Corps area, to include the Mountain Region.

The Plateau or Central Highlands are characterized by broad rolling plains of the provinces of Kontum, Pleiku, and Dar Lac. During the first part of the year, primary aviation support in the Plateau Region was provided by the 119th Aviation Company (airmobile Light) and the 52d Airlift Platoon, both based at Camp Holloway, the home of the 52d Aviation Battalion Headquarters. With the arrival of A Company, 1st Aviation Battalion, in May at Ban Me Thuot, further aviation support was provided to the Plateau Region.

Population

The population of the Corps Tactical Zone is approximately 2,800,000 some 20% of the total population of the country. Of this figure, approximately 520,000 are Montagnards. This represents about 80% of all Montagnards in Vietnam, most of whom live in Kontum, Pleiku, Dar Lac and Phu Bon Provinces.

Although surface transportation in the area is limited, major roads do connect the principle cities. Route 1 runs the full length of the Corps Zone in a North-South direction along the the coast. Further inland, Route 14 runs North-South through the zone connecting Kontum, Pleiku, and Ban Me Thuot, then shifts to an axis along the Cambodian border to Saigon. The major East-West axis, Route 19, connects the key cities of Qui Nhon, An Khe and Pleiku, and runs to the

Cambodian border. Route 7 links Tuy Hoa with Cheo Reo and then joins Route 14. The other major East-West road is Route 21, which connects Ban Me Thuot to Ninh Hoa and thence along Route 1 to Nha Trang.

Weather

Weather is always a major factor in the planning of all operations by the 52d Aviation Battalion. The weather in the II Corps area consists of two seasons: wet and dry. During the summer monsoon, which runs from June thru September, the winds are from the Southwest and the Mountain and Plateau Regions experience low ceilings and a great deal of rain; whereas the Coastal Plains have dry and excellent flying weather.

The winter monsoon runs from November to April with reversed conditions. Now the winds blow from the Northeast, causing low ceilings and rain in the coastal area while the Mountain Region enjoys favorable weather. The months of May and October are periods of weather transition and conditions both on the coast and in the plateaus are quite variable. This cycle brings frequent periods of low cloudiness, heavy rain showers and thunderstorms to most of II Corps. During this time airmobile operations are extremely difficult due to the unpredictable weather.

The varied terrain & weather found in the II Corps Tactical Zone make it necessary for RVNAF and US Forces to fight four distinct types of war; the rice paddy type war in the low lying coastal areas, the jungle war in the dense rain forests of Binh Dinh and Kontum Provinces; the mountain type war in the interior highlands of Phu Bon and Binh Linh Provinces; and the more conventional type war in the high plateau areas of Kontum, Pleiku, and Dar Lac Provinces.

HOLLOWAY ARMY AIRFIELD

The home of the 52d Aviation Battalion since its arrival in Vietnam in March 1963, has been Holloway Army Airfield. Holloway Army Airfield was named in memory of CWO Carlos Holloway who was killed while piloting a CH-21 helicopter on a combat assault in 1962.

During the past year numerous other units have come to call Holloway Army Airfield their home. Among these units, one will find a CV-2 Caribou Company of the 1st Cavalry Division, a platoon from a U-1A Otter Company, and a platoon of the 125th Air Traffic Control Company. Due to the proximity of Holloway to the 1st Cavalry Division base in An Khe, most any type of army aircraft in the inventory can be found on or near Camp Holloway.

Before the opening of the New Pleiku Airfield by the US Air Force, Holloway Army Airfield served as the sole provider of the Pleiku area. As Viet Cong activity was high during most of the year, Highway 19 to the coast was seldom open long enough to provide a safe land route for supplies to reach this area. Thus, Army and Air Force transports were given the job of hauling in all the essential needs. The 5400 feet of perforated steel plank (PSP) runway at Holloway Army Airfield proved adequate for this large task. However, extensive maintenance was required on the runway each day because of the wear and tear caused by the heavily loaded aircraft.

A welcome addition to Camp Holloway shortly after the attack of 7 February, was the arrival of the 52d Security Platoon. This platoon, one of the largest in the U.S. Army, is responsible for the defense of Camp Holloway, as well as the airfields of the 155th Aviation Company at Ban Me Thuot and the 161st Aviation Company at Qui Nhon. The

security platoon is presently under the command of 1/Lt Philip R. Fogle. Through this platoon, every available means of defense is coordinated, including bunkers, observations posts, roving patrols, mortars, ground surveillance radar, artillery, searchlights and sentry dogs. All of this is to prepare a proper welcome for "Charley" in the event he tries a "visit".

The tower at Holloway Army Airfield continued through the year as one of the most active in Vietnam, with an average of over 500 operations a day. Although the majority of these operations have been during day light hours, the attack on Plei Me and subsequent operations in Ia Drang Valley lead to many night time operations. As the tower is operated 24 hours a day, every day of the year, the night operations presented no problems.

Pleiku Center, a flight following service provided by the 125th Air Traffic Control Company, is also located at Camp Holloway. The center, provides flight following for all aircraft requesting the service. This service is normally provided to over 300 flights a day, making over 2000 separate radio transmissions.

With the addition of new units scheduled for arrival in the Pleiku area, Holloway Army Airfield looks forward to even greater activity in the year to come.

PART II

ACTIVITIES

Especially Significant Events and Operations

GENERAL:

This year has been characterized by many additions and deletions of units assigned or attached to the Battalion. During the entire period, the Battalion has continued to fulfill its commitments in support of the ARVN II Corps. In December, Camp Holloway experienced a tremendous influx of additional units. Expansion plans, which had begun earlier, are continuing.

OPERATIONS:

On 28 January 1965 airmobile operation Dan Thi Wan (Le Van Thai) was conducted in the Tuy Hoa area by the 52d Aviation Battalion, using elements of the 52d and the 145th Aviation Battalion. The battalion's mission in conjunction with VNAF was to deliver a riot control agent on the objective area. Following the chemical agent attack, an airlanded assault was conducted. Valuable lessons were learned in the employment of chemical agents by Army Aviation and recommendations were forwarded to higher headquarters.

At 070200 February 1965, Camp Holloway, Pleiku was attacked by Viet Cong Forces. The attack was well planned and coordinated, lasting about twenty (20) minutes. It consisted of a mortar, demolition, bazooka, and small arms attack. The mortar fire (approximately 70 rounds) fell primarily in the troop billet areas, while demolitions, including hand grenades, were employed against the aircraft. Casualties

were caused almost entirely by mortar fire.

This event was significant to the battalion in terms of personnel and material losses. It also emphasized the fact that in a war of this nature there are no "safe zones" or "front lines"; that every unit must be equipped and manned, or augmented, to provide its own local security while performing its primary assigned mission. As a result of this experience, additional security personnel and defensive equipment were made available to the battalion. This action prompted President Johnson to order the evacuation of American dependents from the war torn country.¹ In addition, President Johnson "declared I've had enough of this". Next day, scores of U.S. Navy jets roared beyond the 17th parallel for the first time.²

Retaliation by the Battalion was swift. At 070905 January, an operation was launched into the suspected withdrawal area and contact was made with the enemy. By 9 January, when contact was lost, a body count revealed 28 VC KIA.

Approximately forty-eight hours following the Pleiku attack, the Viet Cong carried out another successful attack, this time against the 117th Aviation Company in Qui Nhon. The Viet Cong Hotel, a newly constructed four-story masonry civilian contract billet, housing enlisted men of the 140th Cargo Helicopter Field Maintenance Detachment, was demolished by two large explosive charges planted at the front and back of the hotel's ground floor. American and Vietnamese guards engaged the Viet Cong in a fire fight, but the attackers fought their way into the

1. The Observer, weekly U.S. Forces newspaper, Saigon, 1 January 1966

2. Time Magazine, 7 January 1966.

hotel and placed the charges. Four Viet Cong were killed in the battle. Twenty (20) U.S. personnel were wounded and twenty-two (22) U.S. personnel were killed by the bomb blast and collapse of the hotel. Rapid replacement of most of the casualties was effected and field maintenance support continued to be furnished to the 117th Aviation Company by the 140th CHFM Detachment.

In February ninety personnel of the 22d Ranger Battalion and 130 personnel of the 281st CIDG Company (ARVN) were surrounded by elements of a Viet Cong battalion at coordinates BR 350465. Attempts to relieve this force by ground action from An Khe resulted in the 22d Ranger Battalion (-) sustaining heavy casualties and failing to close within five (5) kilometers of the surrounded elements. The Viet Cong occupied high ground on both sides of Highway 19 and were successfully blocking movement along the highway. Previous action in this area had resulted in two (2) UHLB's hit by enemy ground fire, wounding two (2) U.S. personnel within the preceding twenty-four (24) hours. The 52d Aviation Battalion extracted the surrounded troops on 24 February, using eighteen (18) UHLB's. It was a joint operation with the U.S. Air Force, where success would have been impossible except for the precision with which close air support was provided by Air Force fighter-bombers. This air-mobile operation demonstrated that a helicopter force can successfully operate in an enemy held area when surprise and close coordination with adequate Air Force cover is provided.

In late February, an alert pilot of the 117th Aviation Company, Lt James Bowers, sighted a camouflaged arms boat in Vung Ro Bay. This sighting resulted in the sinking of the ship and capture of 1,585 Communist Chinese rifles, 61 submachine guns and numerous recoilless rifles

104.
rockets, mortar ammunition and medical supplies which was hidden in nearby caves.³ It also provided, to the world, the undeniable proof of Communist Chinese support to the VC.

The month of March saw the Battalion engaged in normal, routine operations. That is, if you can call 19 combat assaults, with 2,367 sorties, normal. During these assaults, no aircraft was damaged by enemy fire, nor were any casualties sustained. This, by Battalion standards, is considered a good month. March also saw the extensive use of Eagle Flights; a rapid-reaction, strike force, sepecially trained in the use of helicopters for combat assaults. From these many flights, the battalion was able to collect much valuable information and formulate doctrine for the employment of such forces.

On the third of April the 52d Aviation Battalion was called on to airlift 1300 ARVN Marines on a search and clear operation in the Bong Son area. One Main Force Viet Cong Company equipped with 57mm recoilless rifles, 81mm mortars, 60mm mortars, light machine guns, automatic rifles, and individual rifles, and reinforced by an unknown number of guerrillas were operating in the area. The plan of action called for air landing 650 troops on Landing Zone Alpha (BS 905135) and 650 troops on Landing Zone Bravo (BS 900145). This operation holds special significance as it was the largest lift ever conducted by the battalion, up to that time.

On 19 April, a combat assault was conducted out of Qui Nhon. In the ensuing battle, six aircraft were hit by ground fire, two of which crashed and burned, killing all crew members. Total casualties were

3. Ibid.

9 US KIA, and an estimated 42 VC KIA.

The first of May saw the arrival at the port of Vung Tau of A Co, 1st Aviation Battalion, 1st Infantry Division (later redesignated the 155th Aviation Company) and its supporting units. At first light, the aircraft were flown from the carrier Iwo Jima to Vung Tau for necessary inspections. Meanwhile, the officers and men of the company, boarded an Air Force C-123 for a trip to their new home at Ban Me Thuot. Once there all officers and men pitched in to build a livable area of the dense, jungle covered area. This place was where the late President Theodore Roosevelt stayed during hunting trips to this region. On the morning of the third, crews from the Company were flown by Army CV2B to Vung Tau. The Company's helicopters were ferried back to Ban Me Thuot, the same day, without incident.

June 24th saw the arrival in Vietnam of the 219th Avn Co and its subsequent assignment to the 52d Aviation Battalion in Pleiku. The 219th by airplane count, is the largest aviation company in the US Army with its complement of 48 OLF aircraft. At present the elements of the unit are deployed to 13 strategic locations throughout the II Corps area. Combat surveillance is the primary function of this new unit. Employment plans revolve around repetitious, systematic, coverage of a specific area by the same pilot and observer until complete familiarization is gained of the area. The majority of the units tactical missions are conducted with a composite crew consisting of a US Army Aviator and an ARVN observer. In addition to aerial surveillance, 219th aircraft support all major ground operations conducted within the II Corps area.

From 24 August to 28 September the 52d Aviation Battalion had the mission of providing two airmobile companies with a control (battalion) headquarters for Operation Ramrod/Highland. The purpose of the operation was to secure Route 19 from Qui Nhon to An Khe and the division base area at An Khe, to permit the unopposed deployment and combat configuration of the 1st Air Cav Division. Aviation tactical support of the operation commenced with the helicopter landed assault of 2d Bn (Abn), 502d Inf, to the LZ BR 579447 on 240700 Aug 65. The battalion was lifted in six (6) lifts. Following the securing of the An Khe pass, the remaining tactical and support units of 1st Bde, 101st Abn Div closed in to the An Khe pass by vehicle convoy. The remainder of the operation consisted of the ground tactical elements establishing a defensive perimeter around the division base area and the conduct of platoon, company, and later, battalion sized search and clear operations in the An Khe area. Helicopters of the 52d Battalion provided troop lift, reconnaissance, convoy protection, resupply, and evacuation. Notable among these operations, from an aviation standpoint, was Operation Gibraltar.

Operation Gibraltar commenced at 180630 Sept 65 with the loading of elements of the 2/502d Abn Inf Bn aboard eleven (11) UHLD's of the 117th Avn Co, nine (9) UHLB of A/502d and seven (7) CH-34's of HMS 161. Escort was provided by nine (9) UHLB's(A). On the first lift 144 troops were landed. Ground fire was received in the LZ with two (2) UHLB's and three (3) CH-34's receiving hits, but they continued to fly. On the second lift into the LZ heavy automatic weapons fire was received by 7 ships from the 117th, 4 from A/502d and 5 of the Marine helicopters.

One from the 117th was forced down East of the LZ and one Marine helicopter was forced down South of the LZ. Crews of both helicopters were picked up immediately.

Damage assessment revealed the 117th now had 5 flyable UHLD's, 4 UHLB's(A), A/502d had 7 flyable UHLB's, 5 UHLB's(A) and the Marine had only one flyable CH-34. The Marine unit was no longer effective and was released by the CO, 52d Aviation Battalion.

A third lift was initiated with a total troop capacity of 52. Due to the heavy fire around the primary LZ, an alternate LZ was selected about 600 meters south. On this lift, 6 aircraft from the 117th were hit and 5 from A/502d. One helicopter of the 117th was downed in the LZ and the crew was evacuated. At the end of the 3d lift the 117th Avn Co had 1 flyable UHLD and 3 flyable UHLB's(A). A/502d had 4 flyable UHLB's and 4 UHLB's(A). The battalion suffered personnel losses of 1 KIA and 6 WIA. Troop lift capability had been reduced at this point to approximately 22 troops. At approximately 0900 the CO, 52d Aviation Battalion notified the CO, 1st Bde, that his unit was no longer effective and could not continue the troop lift. It was released at this time.

On 28 September the 117th Avn Co was moved from its base in Qui Nhon to a new location at Dong Ba Thin. This subsequently led to the reassignment of the 117th from the 52d Avn Bn to the 10th Avn Bn, on 15 Nov 65.

During the period 20-28 Oct 65, the 52d Aviation Battalion was engaged in operations resulting from the PAVN attack on the Special Forces Camp at Plei Me.

The Battalion was first called on for assistance in the early morning hours of 20 Oct, when Det C-3, USSF requested a flare ship for illumination and gun ships for suppressive fire pending arrival of USAF illumination and fighter-bomber aircraft.

Shortly after day break on the 20th, it appeared that the VC had broken contact with the camp, and it was decided to evacuate the dead and wounded from the camp. Two UHLB's(A) of the 119th Avn Co were assigned to escort two (2) UHLB's of the 498th Med Co (Air Amb). While performing this function the armed aircraft received intense automatic weapons fire, to include, 50 caliber machine gun fire, from all quadrants. One of the armed UHLB received numerous hits and was seen burning prior to impact. There were no survivors.

On the morning of 21 Oct, A Co was called on to lift 240 ARVN Airborne Rangers from Camp Holloway to an LZ four kilometers north of the camp. During the reconnaissance of the LZ one UHLB(A) of A Co suffered mechanical failure which resulted in separation of the main rotor blades at 2000 feet absolute altitude. The helicopter exploded on impact. There were no survivors. The operation continued, however, with no further incidents.

About midmorning on the 22d of October, four UHLB's(A) of A Co were dispatched to escort a VNAF CH-34 in a rescue attempt for a downed pilot of an Air Force A1E. The CH-34 did not effect pilot pickup. One UHLB(A) of A Co salvoed his rocket load and picked up the downed pilot. Later in the day another rescue attempt was made for another downed Air Force pilot in the vicinity of Plei Me. This rescue attempt had to be aborted due to heavy automatic weapons ground fire and darkness.

Rescue was effected the next morning when four UHLB's(A) of A co escorted an Air Force CH-43 to the crash site.

On the 24th of October, the 52d Battalion was given the mission of deploying 400 ARVN soldiers of the 22d Ranger Battalion along the route of an Armored Tank Force enroute to the beseiged camp. The troops were to secure likely ambush sites along the intended route of the task force. The lift was accomplished without incident.

Monday, the 25th, found the 119th and the 115th, using twenty (20) troop carriers and eight (8) armed ships, assisting the 1st Bde, 1st Air Cav Div, in a troop placement from Camp Holloway to an LZ, coordinates ZA 245165.

On the 28th, elements of the 155th and 119th Aviation Companies, extracted the 42d Airborne Ranger Company (ARVN) from LZ ZA 146064 to the New Pleiku Airfield. Upon completion of this operation the activities around the Plei Me attack had nearly ceased. The 1st Air Cav Div elements were leading into the Ia Drang valley operation as they pursued the VC in their withdrawl from Plei Me.

In November, the 52d Avn Bn joined forces with the 1st Cav Div, in operations in the Ia Drang Valley, the largest single operation of the year.⁴ Not only did the Battalion transport 2500 II Corps (ARVN) troops from Duc Co into the operational area but, through the use of heliborne operations the 52d Avn Bn contributed to keeping Highway 19 open for a 23 day period,⁵ one of the longest such periods. This enabled supplies to be brought overland, to support the US & ARVN

4. Army Times, 19 January 1966

5. USAMCV, II Corps Advisory Group, resume of events, 1 Jan to 15 Dec 65.

operations in the Ia Drang valley.

In December, VC activities diminished as an influx of additional units entered the Pleiku area. The Battalion was then engaged in house-keeping and logistics problems to properly accept these new units.

RESUME OF EVENTS 1965

JANUARY:

14 January: Operation Le Lei was conducted by the 52d Aviation Battalion in support of the 275th CIDG Company at Boun Mi Ga (BP 315835) Special Forces Camp. Nineteen UH1B's, ten UH1B's(A) and two O1F aircraft staged out of Ban Me Thuot (AQ 800083), loaded 140 troops at Boun Mi Ga, and moved them in two lifts into a landing zone at BQ 348707, 13 KM southeast of Boun Mi Ga, a two ship landing zone. Four A1H fighters were in support for prestrike and air cover.

18 January: Operation Binh Tuy 7 was staged out of Phan Thiet to an LZ at coordinates YT 850430, 33 KM northwest of Phan Thiet, in support of the 2d Bn, 47th Regt, 23d Inf Div (ARVN). Fifteen troop carrying UH1B's, escorted by ten UH1B's(A), airlanded 216 troops in four lifts.

22 January: Twenty-one UH1B's, nine UH1B's(A) and one O1F staged operation Binh Tri 5 out of Tan Canh. One hundred and fifty-four troops of the 2d Bn, 47th Regt, 22d ARVN Inf Div, were lifted in two lifts to an LZ at coordinates ZB 150570. Air Force A1H fighter-bomber aircraft provided an adequate air-cover and prestrike on the landing zone.

28 January: Elements of the 52d Aviation Battalion, in conjunction with elements of the 145th Aviation Battalion and the Vietnamese Air Force, participated in Operation Ban Thi Wan (Le Van Thai). The plan of action called for the employment of chemicals in this operation. The chemicals, 350 pounds of CS powder, 450 CH grenades and 450 CS grenades, were dispersed jointly by gas dispersing UH1B helicopters and VNAF A1H fighter-bombers.

After the employment of the chemicals an airlanded assault was conducted with 214 troops of the 44th Regt, 23d ARVN Inf Div, in four lifts at LZ coordinates CQ 270320. Moderate automatic and semi-automatic weapon ground fire was received from the vicinity of the LZ, but no aircraft were hit. The operation was very successful with claims of 45 Viet Cong killed in action and thirty sampans and forty-three structures destroyed.

30 January: An air landed assault, Operation Quyet Thang 112, was conducted by the 52d Aviation Battalion. Twenty-seven UH1B escorted by twelve UH1B(A) and two O1F aircraft air lifted the 401st and 405th Scout Companies and the 22d Reconnaissance Company of the 22d ARVN Inf Div from Cheo Rio to LZ's coordinates BQ 270650 and BQ 230650, approximately 18 KM South of Cheo Rio. Light semi automatic weapon ground fire was received from coordinates BQ 230650, but no hits were sustained.

FEBRUARY:

7 February: Elements of the 52d Aviation Battalion participated in an air landed assault and an Eagle Flight as a result of the Viet Cong attack on Camp Holloway. The operations were conducted in hope of capturing the Viet Cong that had attacked the compound the previous evening. The Eagle Flight was staged from Camp Holloway (AR 790430) to LZ AR 930730. One hundred troops were also air lifted by seventeen UH1B from Camp Holloway to IZ AR 930730. Two Air Force A1H's and twelve UH1B(A) provided air cover for the operations.

9 February: Twenty-six UH1B, eight UH1B(A) and one O1F staged an air landed assault from Qui Nhon to Phu My, 30 KM Northwest of Qui Nhon. A total of 262 troops of the 1st Bn, 45th Airborne Regt were lifted. Light automatic weapon fire was received in the vicinity of Phu My, but no aircraft were hit.

18 February: A battalion sized air landed assault was conducted in support of the Dong Tre (BQ 909704) Special Forces Camp. Eighteen UH1B, escorted by six UH1B(A) and one O1F, air lifted ninety troops in one lift from Dong Tre to LZ coordinates CQ 220330. Eight Air Force fighter-bombers provided air cover and prestrikes for the operation.

20 February: The 1st and 3d Companies, Delta Project, 5th Special Forces, were lifted in four lifts from Tuy Hoa (CQ 153477) to LZ coordinates CQ 310325. Eleven UH1B and four UH1B(A) were used in this operation.

23 February: An air landed assault was conducted in support of the 281st CIDG Company of the An Khe Special Forces Camp. Eleven UH1B and eleven UH1B(A) staged from An Khe to LZ BR 600450, lifting the 136 troops in three lifts. Intensive automatic and semi-automatic enemy ground fire was received coordinates BR 290460 and BR 282455. One UH1B and four UH1B(A) were hit with the result of one US crewman being wounded.

24 February: A battalion sized troop extraction was performed by the 52d Aviation Battalion in support of the 281st CIDG Company of the Suoi Doi Special Forces Camp and the 22d Ranger Battalion. A total of 220 troops were extracted from LZ BR 350465 to the An Khe Special Forces Camp in three lifts. Intense automatic weapon, small arms, and mortar fire was received in the landing zone. One UH1B and one UH1B(A) were hit resulting in one US wounded in action. Air Force A1E, B-57 and F-100 fighter-bombers were in support of the operation.

MARCH:

5 March: An air landed assault was conducted in support of the 1st Airborne Brigade. Eleven UH1B and six UH1B(A) lifted 312 troops in four lifts from An Khe (BR 478444) to LZ BR 410520, twenty Air Force fighter-bomber aircraft were in support of the operation.

14 March: Operation Quyet Thang 127 was staged out of Qui Nhon in support of the 3d Battalion, 1st Airborne Brigade. Twenty three UH1B escorted by twelve UH1B(A) air landed 80 troops in one lift at LZ BR 744532. The aircraft then lifted 160 troops in two lifts from Binh Khe (BR 700430) to landing zone BR 744532. Later, the troops were extracted from the LZ and returned to their original pick up points. Although small arms fire was received in the LZ, no aircraft were hit.

23 March: The 52d Aviation Battalion staged Operation Le Dang Phung with twenty-nine UH1B and twelve UH1B(A). The plan of maneuver called for moving 384 troops of the 2/45 Battalion and 23d Reconnaissance Company of the 23d Inf Div in four lifts from Phan Thiet (AN 801065) to landing zone YT 960390. Air Force fighter bombers aircraft were used in support of the operation and no enemy ground fire was received.

27 March: An air landed assault, Operation Quyet Thang 128, was performed in support of the 1/41 Battalion, 22d Inf Div. Twenty six UH1B and thirteen UH1B(A) staged from Qui Nhon (CR 090223) and moved 332 troops in three lifts from Phu My (BR 900680) to landing zone BR 915825. Six A1E aircraft were in support of the operation.

31 March: An air landed assault was conducted in support of the 1/41 Battalion, 23d Inf Div. Twenty six UH1B and twelve UH1B(A) aircraft staged from Nha Trang CP 040525 lifting 280 troops in three lifts to landing zone BP 915325 and 180 troops in two lifts to landing zone BP 925805. Additional air cover was provided by A1E fighter bomber aircraft.

APRIL:

3 April: On Operation Quyét Thang 131 the 52d Aviation Battalion air lifted a Marine Task Force consisting of two Marine battalions, the task force headquarters, 1 engineer company, one recon company and one 75 pack howitzer battery into two LZ's in nine lifts. The operation was staged out of Bong Song Airfield to landing zones BS 905135 and 900145 (BS). Semi-automatic and automatic weapons fire was received and increased in intensity with each lift. One armed UH1B received two hits, wounding one US crewman. This operation was the largest number of troops and equipment that the 52d Aviation Battalion had ever lifted during one single operation. This record for the Battalion has since been surpassed many times.

5 April: Operation Quyét Thang 132 was conducted in support of 3d Bn, 42d Regt. Twenty six UH1B escorted by two UH1B(A) and two O1Fs staged out of Kontum Airfield to landing zone ZA 030930, a three aircraft landing zone. The battalion, 434 men, was lifted in five lifts. Although light small arms fire was received in the LZ, no aircraft were hit.

9 April: ~~Twenty~~ seven UH1Bs and twelve UH1B(A) performed an air landed assault and extraction in support of the 8th Abn Bn. The aircraft staged out of An Khe and lifted 102 troops into LZ ER 265880 in one lift. The aircraft then returned to An Khe, where they stood by for the extraction which

they completed late in the afternoon. Light semi automatic ground fire was received in the vicinity of the landing zone, however, no aircraft were hit. Air Force A1H and B-57 fighter bombers provided prestrike and air cover for the operation.

15 April: An air landed assault was conducted by elements of the 52d Aviation Battalion in support of the 401st and 405th Scout Companies of the 22d Div. The operation was staged out of Qui Nhon to LZ BR 775580, with 208 troops lifted in two lifts. Moderate automatic and semi automatic weapons fire was received in the landing zone but no aircraft were hit.

19 April: Operation Quyet Thang 137 was conducted in support of the 141st and 401st Scout Companies of the 22d ARVN Inf Div. Three hundred and twenty troops were air lifted from Phu Cat into landing zone Alpha, coordinates CR 099410, in three lifts. An additional 100 troops were also air lifted from Phu Cat to landing zone Bravo, coordinates CR 075495 in one lift. Intensive enemy ground fire was received from LZ Alpha which resulted in two aircraft being shot down in the vicinity of coordinates CR 099445. Both aircraft caught on fire while still airborne, burned on impact, and were completely destroyed resulting in the death of all crewmen. Four other aircraft were also hit by this intense ground fire with one additional crewman being killed.

28 April: The 22d Battalion Marine Task Force was airlanded on an assault by thirty-two UH1B and sixteen UH1B(A). The operation was staged out of Bong Song Airfield to landing zone BS 835215, a five ship landing zone. Three lifts were needed to lift the 520 troops. Close air support was provided by twelve A1E.

MAY:

1 May: Elements of the 52d Aviation Battalion, using forty-one UH1B and twenty-two UH1B(A), lifted 472 troops of the 1st Airborne Battalion in three lifts on an air landed assault. The operation was staged out of An Khe to LZ coordinates BR 618619. Close air support was provided by USAF aircraft. No unusual incident occurred.

24 May: Operation Quyet Thang 147 was conducted in support of 2d Battalion, 40th Inf (ARVN). Twenty UH1B and ten UH1B(A) staged out of Kontum Airfield to landing zone YA 985865, lifting 450 troops in five lifts. Although no aircraft were hit, moderate to heavy automatic weapons fire was received from the vicinity of the LZ and .50 caliber or 12.7mm fire was received from coordinates ZA 000932

JUNE:

1 June: An air landed assault was conducted in response to a convoy ambush at coordinates ZA 090305. The reaction Force was lifted into the ambush site by nine UH1B and four UH1B(A) helicopters and were members of the Camp Holloway Special Forces Eagle Flight. Seven UH1B(A) helicopters remained over the assault area, in shifts, affording suppressive fire and taking targets of opportunity, while drawing heavy ground fire from the Viet Cong. Two of the seven UH1Bs were hit by the ground fire and forced to land in the vicinity of coordinates ZA 005305. The helicopter crews were immediately rescued by other aircraft in the flight. Although there was intense ground fire no injuries were sustained by the downed crews. One of the downed aircraft was later recovered on 2 June and the other on 3 June 1965.

17 June: The 23d Div was supported by the 52d Aviation Battalion for an air landed assault. The operation was staged out of Ban Me Thuot, with twenty-one UH1B lifting 252 troops into LZ BQ 033040 in two lifts. Close air support was provided by Air Force fighter bombers and suppressive fire was provided by thirteen UH1B(A).

JULY:

16 July: Elements of the 52d Aviation Battalion participated in Highway 19 road clearing operation Dan Thien 109. Twenty-six UH1D, twenty four UH1B and twenty-eight UH1B(A) helicopters were used on the operation. The mission was staged from the An Khe Airfield to a landing zone at BR 388352. A total of 1025 troops were lifted in three lifts. No fire was received and there were no incidents.

24 July: A combat extraction in support of the 1st ARVN Airborne Ranger Battalion. The aircraft, ten UH1D, nine UH1B and ten UH1B(A), staged from Holloway Army Airfield to landing zone BR 388352 and extracted 96 troops in one lift to Holloway Army Airfield without incident. USAF close air support was not required.

AUGUST:

3 August: Operation Dan Thang 5 was conducted by the 52d Aviation Battalion in support of the 3d and 8th Battalions, 1st ARVN Airborne Brigade. The aircraft, eighteen UH1D, eighteen UH1B and seventeen UH1B(A) staged from Holloway Army Airfield and lifted 1150 troops in six lifts to the landing zone at the Duc Co Airfield. Small arms and automatic weapons fire was received in the vicinity of the landing zone, resulting in one UH1D and one UH1B(A) being hit. There were no friendly casualties.

10 August: Elements of the 117th Aviation Company, Company A, 1st Aviation Battalion, the 119th Aviation Company, and the 52d Airlift Platoon (sixteen UH1Ds, sixteen UH1Bs, and fifteen UH1Bs (Armed)) performed an air landed assault mission in support of the 5th ARVN Airborne Battalion. The aircraft staged from Holloway Army Airfield and lifted 450 troops in three lifts to the landing zone at Duc Co Airfield. During the last lift, two ARVN WIA were extracted and 4000 lbs of supplies were carried to the ARVN Marine TF at coord YA 917269. Seven UH1Bs and five UH1Bs(A) of the 119th Avn Co were not utilized on the 3d lift, but were diverted to coord YA 917269 to extract 45 ARVN KIAs to Fleiku. After the last lift, three UH1Ds and two UH1Bs(A) of the 117th Avn Co were further diverted to extract fifteen ARVN WIAs from coord YA 947270 to Fleiku. Close air support was provided by eight USAF F-10Cs four of which were utilized in the prestrike while the remaining four were used to provide air cover. Small arms, automatic weapons and mortar fire was received in the landing zone and in the vicinity of the loading zone during the first lift. Two UH1Bs(A) received hits and one US door gunner was wounded.

24 August: Elements of Company A, 1st Aviation Battalion the 121st Aviation Company and Company A, 501st Aviation Battalion (thirty three UH1Ds and eighteen UH1Bs(A)) performed an air landed assault in support of the Highway #21 road clearing operation. Aircraft staged from Ban Me Thuot (East) Airfield and carried 1257 troops of the Marine TF (RVN) in five lifts to a landing zone at coord BQ 120165. During the last lift into the landing zone one UH1B(A) of A/1st experienced a low side governor failure, lost RPM and crashed into the trees in the vicinity of the landing zone. The crew was evacuated by one UH1D to Ban Me Thuot. They sustained minor injuries;

the aircraft damage was major. Close air support was provided by four USAF ALEs utilized for airstrike. No hostile fire was received.

Aviation tactical support of operation Ramrod/Highland commenced with the lifting of the 2d Bn (Abn) 502d Inf. On 24 August, ten UH1D and six UH1B(A) of the 117th Avn Co along with elements of the 502d Avn Co lifted the battalion in six lifts to landing zone BR 579447 with the purpose of securing the An Khe pass. A prestrike was made by 4 USAF ALEs.

SEPTEMBER:

10 September: Elements of Company A, 1st Aviation Battalion the 119th Aviation Company and Company A, 82d Aviation Battalion (twenty-six UH1Ds, thirteen UH1Bs and eighteen UH1Bs(A)) performed an air landed assault and extraction mission in support of the 5th US Special Forces Group. Fifty USSF and 210 VN Airborne Rangers were lifted from the stagefield at Quang Ngai to the landing zone at coord BT 137003 in one lift and later extracted in one lift from the same landing zone. No Hostile fire was received and no incidents occurred. Close air support was provided by eight USAF ALEs utilized for prestrike and eight USAF B-57s used for air cover.

18 September: An air landed assault, Operation Gibraltar, was conducted by the 52d Aviation Battalion.

Eleven UH1D, nine UH1B nine UH1B(A), and seven CH-34 helicopters from HMS 161 staged from landing zone BR 743387 at 0630 to LZ BR 741541. On the first lift some light enemy ground fire was received in the landing zone. On the second and third lifts, heavy automatic weapons fire was received, hitting a total of 25 aircraft, three of which were forced down. Personnel loses of the 52d Battalion were one killed in action and six wounded.

OCTOBER:

20 October: Det C-2, USSF, requested assistance from the 52d Aviation Battalion for the Special Forces Camp at Plei Me, which was under attack. Two armed helicopters and flare ship of the 119th Aviation Company were dispatched and gave illumination and air cover until the arrival of USAF flare and fighter bomber aircraft. Later in the morning two UH1B armed helicopters of the 119th Aviation Company, while escorting medical evacuation helicopters, in evacuation of the wounded from the Plei Me Camp, received intense automatic weapons fire from all quadrants. One of the UH1B(A) was shot down with no survivors.

21 October: Twelve UH1D escorted by five UH1B(A) of Company A, 1st Aviation Battalion, airlifted a reaction force of 240 ARVN Airborne Rangers from Holloway Army Airfield, in three lifts, to Landing Zone ZA 185166, 4 kilometers north of the Plei Me Camp. USAF fighter bombers provided a prestrike for the assault.

24 October: The 52d Aviation Battalion was given the mission of deploying 400 soldiers of the 22d Ranger Battalion along the route of the Armored Task Force enroute to the besieged Plei Me Camp. Twenty-two troop carrying ships were used.

25 October: Two Companies of the 52d Aviation Battalion assisted the 1st Bde, 1st Air Cav Div, in a troop placement from Camp Holloway to an LZ at coordinate ZA 245165.

28 October: Company A and the 119th Avn Co utilizing 20 slicks and six armed aircraft extracted the 42d ARVN Airborne Ranger Company from Landing Zone coord ZA 146064 to New Pleiku Airport in two lifts. Company A was released upon completion and closed back to Ban Me Thuot 28 1800.

NOVEMBER:

1-2 November: The 52d Aviation Battalion supported operation Quyet Thang 172 with nine UH1D, ten UH1Bs and eight UH1Bs(A), along with eighteen Marine CH-34 from HMM 363. The operation was in support of 22d Inf Div (ARVN) using a two Bn Airborne T/F and two Battalions of the 47th Regiment. On the morning of 2 November aircraft staged from Tuy Hoa South, but this time to Landing Zone coord CQ 025372. A total of 720 troops were lifted in three lifts. The USAF provided an adequate forty-five minute prestrike of both Landing Zones. One UH1B armed received one hit through the main rotor blade from ground fire.

7 November: An air landed assault was conducted by eight UH1Ds thirteen UH1Bs, and eight UH1Bs(A) from the 52d Avn Bn, sixteen CH-34 from HMM 363, and four UH1B(A) of 197th Avn Co. The operation involved air landing two battalions of the 47th Inf Regt and two battalions of the Airborne Task Force. At 0755 the 52d Avn Bn departed Tuy Hoa with the 1st lift to LZ EQ 905580. All elements refueled and rearmed after the second lift, with the third and fourth lifts being delayed one hour because of weather. A thirty minute prestrike was provided by the USAF.

9-12 November: The period from 9-12 November, the 52d Avn Bn was in support of the ARVN Artillery School in a Combined Arms Demonstration at the Duc My Training center. Thirteen UH1D, thirteen UH1Bs and twelve UH1Bs (A) of the Battalion were used in the demonstration. All air movements and Air Force and artillery fires were preplanned and coordinated by the Duc My Training Center. As part of the demonstration, a total of 546 troops were lifted on an air landed assault.

18 November: The 52d Aviation Battalion staged II Corps (ARVN) Operation Than Phong 7 from Duc Co. The 52d elements, ten UH1Ds, twelve UH1Bs and eleven UH1Bs(A) were reinforced by twenty UH1Ds and six UH1Bs(A) from the 229th Avn Bn, 1st Air Cav Div. Fifteen hundred (1500) troops were lifted in five lifts from Duc Co to Landing Zone YA 841092. Two (2) UH1Ds from the 155th Avn Co sustained light damage from ground fire, no injuries. A major factor in the operation was a first for the Battalion in refueling twelve aircraft at a time from propositioned pods, with out shutting the aircraft down.

DECEMBER:

30 December: To round out the year, elements of the 155th and 119th Aviation Companies, utilized 21 troop carriers and 12 armed helicopters, to airlift 465 troops of the 23rd Inf Div (ARVN), from Buon Ca Yang, coord EQ 010 010, to LZ EQ 280 045. The operation was conducted in 3 lifts and enemy ground fire was received. There were no hits or casualties.