

The History of the Outlaws
62d Aviation Company - Co A/502d Avn Bn
The First Year
FORWARD

This history has been prepared to document the history of only the first year of existence of a very unique Army Aviation Company. The 62d Aviation Company, quickly pulled together from the assets of the 11th Air Assault Division in Fort Benning, was truly the vanguard for the huge US buildup in southeast Asia.

When the unit arrived in Vinh Long, South Vietnam, in September 1964, other than Special Forces detachments, only 7 US combat units were in place in South Vietnam. All 7 were helicopter companies, formed into 3 Battalions assigned solely to support the ARVN. The Battalion to which the 62d was assigned was still so new it was known as the Delta Aviation Bn (Prov). It would soon be renamed the 13th Aviation Battalion.

When the 62d arrived in Vinh Long, there was no Long Binh support base. There was no 1st Aviation Brigade. There was no US infantry to provide airfield security. In the Delta the company found two other helicopter companies, one of which was also at Vinh Long. The Delta Battalion was the one link between the company and US Support Command Vietnam in Saigon. It was clear that the company would have to be extremely self-reliant, self-sufficient and self-supporting.

When the 62d left Fort Benning, it spearheaded the massive US buildup in Vietnam by being the very first unit deployed to begin that buildup! In less than a year the 11th Air Assault Division would become the famous 1st Air Cavalry Division and would be locked in combat in the highlands of central Vietnam. By mid-1965, five other US combat divisions were either in, or on their way, to Vietnam as well as thousands upon thousands of support units.

We were good. And, we led the way! We brought with us experience gained from tough training with the 11th Air Assault Division and, upon arrival, we acquired the experience of combat tested people who transferred into our unit from other in-country units.

We took great pride in our growing accomplishments. We named our company the "Outlaws". The Mavericks (and what a great name that was!) provided gun support for our slicks. "Roadrunner" people pulled us out of one tight situation after another with their maintenance skills. The 28th Signal Detachment, always behind the scenes but out front with their avionics support kept us communicating with each other. We picked up volunteer door gunners from the 25th Division in Hawaii because our TO&E didn't provide for that critical support. Our unit had cooks, supply people, ammo specialists, medics and countless others who contributed to our success in many unsung ways. Together, we made one great team during that first year and we had much to feel proud about during our year together.

When we all rotated a year after arriving in Vietnam, we left the continuing history of the Outlaws to be written by others. This is the history of the first year of the Outlaws.

The Outlaws

62d Aviation Company & Company A - 502d Aviation Bn

August 1964 - September 1965

The **62d Aviation Company** was activated at Fort Benning, Georgia on 6 August 1964 (1). The unit was formed from assets available within the 11th Air Assault Division. Major Thomas E. Anderson, Infantry, was selected by the Division Commander, Major General Harry W.O. Kinnard, to command the new unit, prepare it for deployment and move it to Vietnam in less than 40 days.

The company was organized under TO&E 1-77E and, after augmentation with various additional personnel and equipment, was authorized a strength of 14 officers, 41 warrant officers and 117 NCO and enlisted personnel.

The company was organized with a company headquarters, two airlift platoons (slicks) an armed helicopter platoon (guns) and a service platoon. Major items of equipment were 25 UH-1B utility helicopters, 3 observation fixed wing O-1F and 3 U-6A utility fixed wing aircraft.

The primary mission of an air mobile company was to: *Perform tactical air transport of combat troops, supplies and equipment; Provide tactical armed escort for the lift ships during the conduct of air landed assault operations; Provide supplemental aerial fire support to the maneuver elements of the supported units once committed.*

The first Morning Report indicated a strength of 1 officer, 1 warrant officer and 116 enlisted men. The unit was soon brought to full strength in personnel and equipment and began preparing for overseas deployment, to a still-classified destination, with a target date of 24 September 1964. Officer, Warrant Officer, NCO and enlisted personnel assigned were all highly-trained and experienced soldiers who had been with the "experimental" 11th Air Assault Division for some time. This experience was invaluable once the unit arrived in Vietnam.

Key personnel initially comprising the company headquarters were: Major Anderson, Captain Alfred J. Iller, Armor, Executive Officer; Captain Charles E. Humphries, Armor, Operations Officer; First Sergeant E-8, Hugh Rae.

Preparation for Deployment

The company, being cognizant of the very short period of time available before deployment, began immediate preparations. The G-1 section, 11th Air Assault Division had screened the records of all personnel prior to assignment to the company, thereby assuring POR qualification and negating any extensive re-shuffling of personnel that would normally accompany an overseas movement by keeping turnover of personnel to a minimum.

Because personnel of the company were coming from within the 11th Air Assault Division, all aviators assigned were already qualified in the UH-1B aircraft. Training in operational techniques was not a challenge.

The company faced the tasks of POR processing and the receipt, processing and packing of all organizational equipment. Captain John W. White, Jr. Armor, 1st Platoon Cmdr, was appointed as coordination officer for the voluminous task of preparing the company's equipment for rail shipment to a port for sea transport overseas.

Captain White, with the cooperation and assistance of all personnel assigned within the company, accomplished this task during the period 16-23 August 1964. Throughout the preparations for deployment, the work was well organized and each man contributed maximum effort to ensure that the deadlines for shipment were met.

After completion of the outloading of equipment, all personnel of the unit were given two weeks leave to prepare their personal belongings for shipment, resettle their families and to bid farewell to friends and loved ones and return to Fort Benning for deployment. To facilitate their return to Fort Benning, the 11th Air Assault Division sent CV-2 Caribou aircraft to 9 locations throughout the US to fly company personnel back to Ft. Benning. This type of cooperation was evident throughout all preparations for deployment.

Deployment to Vietnam

On 18 September 1964, a small advance party, commanded by Captain Iller, departed Fort Benning enroute to their new duty station in Southeast Asia. The advance party consisted of Captain Alfred J. Iller, 1/Lt Robert E. Bergquist, Plt Sgt E-7 Travis H. Wilson, Sgt E-6 Gerald W. Meyers, Sgt E-5 Charles W. Murphy, Sp4 Jerry H. Berry, Sp4 Bryon Micksch and Sp4 Freddy L. Brock.

The advance party flew to Vietnam to establish liaison with the US Army Support Command and the Delta Battalion, to which the unit would be assigned. Their mission was to coordinate the details of the reception of the main body upon arrival in Vinh Long.

Late in the evening of 25 September 1964 the main body of the company boarded buses at Fort Benning and moved to Warner-Robbins AFB, Georgia. Later, in the early morning darkness, the unit boarded five C-118 prop-driven aircraft and departed on the first leg of their five-day, 9000 mile deployment to Vietnam.

After intermediate stops at Travis AFB, California, Hawaii, Guam and Clark Field in the Philippines, the main body arrived on 30 September at Tan Son Nhut International airport in Saigon, Republic of Vietnam. The group was met by LTC J Y Hammack, Delta Battalion commander, and almost immediately was shuttled by USAF C-123 aircraft to the dusty Mekong Delta airstrip at Vinh Long that would be their new home. Vinh Long is a Provincial capital city located on the Mekong River 55 miles southwest of Saigon in the heart of the famous Mekong Delta.

The compound in Vinh Long had been built only a year earlier to house the 114th Aviation Company (Knights) and was expanded to house and accommodate the arrival of the 62d. Living conditions and facilities available within the compound far exceeded the expectations of the new personnel.

The 62d arrived in Vietnam with 26 officers, 29 warrant officers and 117 NCO's and enlisted men. The combined strength of both the 114th and the 62d at Vinh Long exceeded 600 total personnel.

Support Units Attached

To provide additional capabilities beyond that available within the Air Mobile Company, two direct support units were attached to the 62d and joined the unit upon arrival in Vinh Long.

The first of these was the **150th Transportation Detachment** (CHFM). The 150th was activated on 8 August 1964 at Fort Eustis, Virginia. Equipment and personnel for the 150th were drawn from the assets of established CONUS units.

On 1 September 1964, Captain Frederick R. (Tim) Bisch, Transportation Corps, was assigned as Commanding Officer. Captain Bisch was previously assigned to the staff and faculty at the Transportation School in Ft. Eustis. Key personnel comprising the command group of the unit, in addition to Captain Bisch, were CWO John C. Moodt, TC and Sergeant E-6 James W. Proctor.

On 27 September 1964, the main body of the 150th departed Langley AFB via KC-135 aircraft and arrived at Vinh Long on 30 September, coinciding with the arrival of the 62d. The unit's equipment began arriving on 7 October and was approximately 95% complete by 27 October. Upon arrival, approximately 50% of the assigned personnel were transferred and fillers picked up from other in-country units in order to spread the DEROS dates of unit personnel.

Initially, a lack of working space, parts packages, hardware and other necessary equipment hampered operations. These problems were soon resolved and a consolidated system of maintenance was adopted. The 62d's Service Platoon maintenance personnel were incorporated into the 150th, which enabled the combined unit to work two shifts, thereby spreading the maintenance workload and providing continuous maintenance support.

The 62d absorbed the administrative workload of the 150th thereby allowing the personnel of the detachment to focus their energies toward their primary mission of providing second and third echelon maintenance support. This system worked well in all respects due primarily to the organizational abilities and close supervision exercised by Captain Bisch and CWO Moodt.

Another key attached support unit was the **28th Signal Detachment** (RRA). This unit was activated at Fort Riley, Kansas on 11 August 1964, arrived at Vinh Long on 16 September and began supporting the 62d on 6 October 1964.

Captain Joseph R. Clelan, Signal Corps, had been assigned to the 13th Aviation Battalion when the unit was constituted at Fort Bragg. A minimal Battalion Hqs staff deployed to Vietnam to join the existing Delta Battalion in early October. On 8 October, Captain Clelan assumed command of the 28th. The detachment was authorized 1 officer and 6 enlisted men and had the primary mission of providing radio repair and avionics supply to the 62d Aviation Company. The detachment had the capability of providing up to fourth echelon maintenance on all aircraft radio equipment.

To further consolidate the functions of the various units at Vinh Long, the Service Platoon of the 62d, minus the maintenance personnel attached to the 150th Trans Det, joined forces with the 114th Service Platoon and took responsibility for the functioning of the consolidated ammunition supply point.

Utilizing one officer and seven enlisted men, the Service Platoon was responsible for requisitioning, storing and issuing all ammunition utilized by the aviation companies and the installation.

Nicknames and Call Signs

All aviation units in Vietnam had found it necessary to develop singularly distinctive call signs for radio identification and air-to-air communication with each other. Such call signs also made it easier to design individual unit patches that were a great source of morale and pride to the individuals assigned to the units.

Knowing this, prior to departure from CONUS, and after much discussion, the 62d adopted the name "**Outlaws**" for the company as a whole and the armed platoon adopted the nickname/callsign "**Mavericks**". 1/Lt Robert E. Bergquist, Infantry, was responsible for coordinating the selection of the two names. He also designed the distinctive "Outlaw" unit patch insignia as well as the "Maverick" logo. Bergquist himself was a member of the Mavericks.

The Outlaw patch consisted of a shield with a background color of white in the top arc, with the main body in blue. Superimposed on the white arc was the OUTLAW name, lettered in red. Under the Outlaw name, emblazoned on a blue shield, was a map outline of South Vietnam, in green, with "Vietnam" in yellow lettering. A steer skull, in black and white, was located to the left of the map. The number "62d" in red, was located above the skull. A narrow black band outlined the entire shield. The basic colors of the insignia represented the colors of the American flag and the basic combat arms colors (infantry, armor, artillery) which the unit supported.

The Maverick insignia was a bull's head, painted yellow, with red fire snorting from its nostrils. The Outlaw and Maverick insignia were painted on the front radio compartment access doors of the slicks and armed platoon aircraft, and soon became a familiar sight in the Delta.

When it came time to select a radio call sign for the 150th, the nature of their mission seemed to parallel the attributes of the little desert bird called the **Roadrunner**! The Roadrunner is a sturdy bird, adaptable to its every environment, known for its lightning quickness, capable of short, intense flight when necessary and possessing a distinctively long tail not unlike that on the UH-1 helicopter.

Thus, the three major elements of the 62d quickly became known by their distinctive names: Outlaws, Mavericks and Roadrunners !

Assignment and Mission

Upon arrival in Vietnam, the 62d became part of the US Army Support Command, Vietnam, under USARYSIS then USARPAC. The company was placed under the operational control of the Delta Aviation Battalion (Prov). The general mission of the company was to augment, within the "Rules of Engagement", the aviation capability of the Republic of Vietnam forces by providing Army aviation support for the ARVN forces of the Vietnamese IV Corps area.

Specifically, the aviators of the company would be required to fly ARVN and US troops and supplies over the remote and otherwise inaccessible areas in the Delta to avoid ground ambush and to provide the third dimension of warfare, the vertical, air-landed envelopment.

On 5 October 1964 the Delta Battalion (Provisional) was redesignated as the 13th Aviation Battalion and the 62d was placed under operational control of the Battalion. The 13th Battalion continued to coordinate Army aviation support throughout the IV corps area from its headquarters located at Can Tho, approximately 45 miles southwest of Vinh Long.

Primarily, the 62d was to provide support to the 7th ARVN Infantry Division located at My Tho, approximately 25 miles northeast. When circumstances dictated a consolidation of effort throughout the Delta, the 62d would participate in larger support missions.

Area of Operations

The IV Corp tactical zone, which the 62d shared with both the 114th and 121st Aviation Companies (the latter being located at Soc Trang), covered nearly all of the Mekong Delta south and west of Saigon. The area encompassed the major food-producing region of South Vietnam and was considered the critical area wherein the struggle for freedom would be decided. Three major ARVN units in the IV Corp area were the ARVN 7th, 9th and 21st Infantry Divisions. The 62d also supported other ARVN and US military units in the Delta as well as innumerable political sub-divisions.

Delta Terrain and Weather

The flying conditions in the Delta were unlike anything any of the personnel of the 62d had ever encountered. During the dry season, generally from November to May, skies were normally clear. Prevailing winds were generally from the east and seldom exceeded 30 knots. Dust was a primary hazard while conducting operational missions.

During the rainy season, from June to November, heavy rain showers and thunderstorms occurred almost daily. Early morning low overcast conditions were frequent with winds from the southwest. Temperatures ranged from 80-95. Humidity remained high all year long. These conditions caused density altitudes to remain around 2000 feet and significantly affected the operational limitations of the UH-1B.

Terrain in the Delta was characterized by a flat, poorly-drained surface, criss-crossed by an extensive and intricate network of canals and streams with an average elevation of approximately 15 feet throughout the Delta. During the rainy season the Delta was subjected to widespread flooding with up to 70 percent of the terrain covered by 1-3 feet of water. Mangrove swamps predominate in the coastal fringe area that surrounds the Delta on two sides. Inland terrain is covered mainly with rice paddies lined with earthen dikes and levies. Except for the trees that border canals and waterways, and low-lying marsh grass and reeds, there is little concealment. Isolated jungle growth in uncultivated areas is found in several Provinces and most of the populated areas are linear in pattern and border roads, rivers and canals.

Organization

To carry out its mission, the company was equipped with 25 UH-1B helicopters broken down into two airlift platoons, each with 8 aircraft, and one platoon of 8 armed aircraft. For command and control, the platoons were further divided into two sections, each with 4 aircraft. The remaining UH-1B was equipped with supplemental radio consoles and utilized as a command and control aircraft, normally flown by the Company Commander.

Each lift aircraft could transport 8 ARVN troops in addition to a normal crew of four. The company's lift capability was 98 ARVN troops or approximately one infantry company.

The armed platoon, with each aircraft equipped with the XM-6 machine gun system and 12 tube rocket installation, provided escort for the troop carriers to and from the landing zone, provided detailed reconnaissance of a landing zone prior to landing the troops, and suppressive fire in support of the air-landed assault when necessary. After completion of its primary mission, the armed platoon provided supporting assault fire for the ground elements when necessary to bridge the gaps in available air and artillery support.

The Command and Control aircraft (C&C) was normally flown by the Company Commander and carried commanders and staff from the ARVN division command group and MAAG advisory personnel who jointly controlled the air mobile assault and subsequent ground operations.

The observation fixed wing aircraft (O-1Fs) were used as reconnaissance and artillery adjustment aircraft with one being detailed as the vector control aircraft, normally flown by the operations officer, who assisted in the control function and covered the refueling gaps of the C&C helicopter, ensuring continuity of command in the operational area.

Garrison organizational activity consisted of the normal administrative orderly room functions, an operations/intelligence office and airfield dispatch office. Overall garrison facilities and functions were shared jointly by the 114th and 62d and controlled by the office of Post Coordinator, who was the senior company commander.

Pre-Operational Training

During the period 1-20 October, personnel of the 62d were provided on-the-job combat training by personnel of the 114th. The professional manner in which the members of the 114th gave their time, effort and the benefit of their experience cannot be adequately described. This cooperation contributed immeasurably to the ability of the 62d to become combat operational in such a short period of time.

In the first week after arrival, a transfer of approximately 50% of the officers and men of the 62d was made for the purpose of spreading the DEROS dates within the company as well as to acquire a depth of combat experience from in-country personnel throughout the new unit.

Each newly arrived aviator was given an initial proficiency check in the UH-1B helicopter and then proceeded to obtain 25 flying hours on command and liaison missions with the crews of the 114th. Concurrently, members of the armed platoon, although all were recruited from the gun companies of the 11th Air Assault Division and were qualified in the aircraft and armament systems, trained with the armed platoon of the 114th, the "Cobras", and gained valuable knowledge and experience in armed helicopter tactics and techniques employed in combat in Vietnam.

On 7 October 1964, the 62d received the first 12 of its 25 UH-1B aircraft. During the period 13-19 October, the remaining aircraft were received, having been transferred from various units within the country. During this period, TO&E supplies and equipment surface-shipped from CONUS arrived piecemeal and was processed and made ready for use.

By 20 October 1964, the "Outlaws", "Mavericks" and "Roadrunners" of the 62d Aviation Company were trained and ready for the opportunity to forge out on their own.

The Delta Aviation Battalion officially declared the 62d Aviation company to be operationally ready for combat on 21 October 1964 !

Missions

A wide variety of missions were flown, ranging from routine administrative support to combat assaults into hostile landing zones. Missions included troop transport, "Eagle flights" used to seek out and destroy the enemy; resupply; medical evacuation; rescue operations and many others. The company also had its share of "VIP" flights. The majority of flying was done during daylight hours because that was when the ARVN forces preferred to operate. However, night missions were frequently used in a wide variety of ways. Every mission that was conducted during daylight also was performed at night at one time or another, including the first night troop lift for most of the pilots since they left Fort Benning.

Aircraft and crews were not subjected to hostile fire on every mission. In fact, hostile fire was the exception rather than the rule. However, the most routine mission would often turn into a most hazardous operation when unexpected ground fire was received. Complacency was a luxury never allowed, or experienced. The crews soon found that they were faced with a determined, elusive, cunning and dangerous enemy, the Viet Cong terrorist (VC).

Command and Liaison

Command and Liaison (C&L) missions, originating at the using units, were funneled to the 13th Bn Combat Operations Center (COC), thru Division and I V Corps Tactical Operations Center (TOC), where they were consolidated. COC determined the number of aircraft available for the next day and allocated aircraft on a priority basis to the using units. The Company Operations section received the missions from Bn. COC and assigned them to the respective platoons. Aviators assigned a C&L mission would fly their aircraft, usually a single-aircraft mission, to the reporting point specified in the mission order. C&L support ranged from support of Corps and Division senior advisors and staffs to sector support wherein the villages, hamlets and districts were visited by ARVN officers and US advisors or resupplied. Special Forces, USOM, etc. also received allocations along with other requestors.

Eagle Operations

Eagle flights were usually flown in conjunction with a troop lift in support of a ground operation, in a search for VC activity or in concentrations in an attempt to develop a situation. Normally 10 transport aircraft carrying 80 aggressive Vietnamese rangers and a platoon (5) of armed helicopters made up the flight, with the armed aircraft providing security for the troop carriers as they would in a regular air mobile operation. The force would be flown to an area suspected to contain a VC unit, at which time the armed aircraft would screen the area for VC activity, often receiving ground fire which gave the Eagle force commander an indication of what to expect.

The troop commander would select an area he wished to search, then coordinate the selection of a landing zone with his US advisor as well as with the C&C aircraft. The flight would then swoop down into the landing zone (LZ) with armed aircraft escort to provide suppressive fire if needed. The troop carriers landed, discharged the troops, and climbed to altitude to orbit near the area until the troop commander requested to be picked up. Meanwhile the armed aircraft were flying their "daisy chain" pattern, at low altitude, searching for likely targets or fleeing VC. During these operations, prisoners, supplies and weapons were often captured, and hidden VC facilities such as arms factories and hospitals were located and destroyed.

The following extract from an After-Action Report is typical of an Eagle operation conducted on 27 December 1964.

27 December 1964. The 62d Aviation Company provided 5 troop carriers, 7 armed helicopters and 1 C&C aircraft. Aircraft were attached to the 121st Avn Co for support of an operation staged out of Soc Trang. The aircraft arrived at the staging area at Soc Trang at 0800 and at approx 0900 an airmobile landing was made near coord XR260410 in support of a ground operation being conducted in that area. Negative contact was made and at approx 1100 an Eagle force was landed in an LZ vic coord XR150730. This force was deployed in support of a Regional force on an search and clear operation in the area that had reported encountering VC opposition.

The Eagle force was landed in the LZ and, immediately upon offloading from the aircraft, made contact with the VC. The Eagle force encountered stiff opposition from what was later learned to have been three VC hard-core battalions and the Hq of a VC general who was in charge of terrorist activities in the IV Corps area.

The ensuing battle saw the commitment of two additional ARVN battalions which were airlifted into the area. Subsequent lifts into the operational area were conducted throughout the afternoon and into the hours of darkness. Intense small arms, automatic weapons fire, recoilless weapons and mortar fire were received by the troop carriers on the second, and each succeeding, landing in the LZ.

What started out as a small, limited search for VC, utilizing a routine Eagle force, developed into a full-scale effort in which the entire assets of the 13th Aviation Bn were ultimately employed. The entire operation lasted approx 12 hours.

During this time, an intensive ground battle was fought which was supported by VNAF (Vietnamese Air Force) and the armed platoons of the 62d, 114th and 121st Avn Co's. Numerous hits from ground fire were received by the troop transports and nearly all of the armed aircraft committed were damaged. Two armed aircraft were shot down by enemy fire, one of which was burned by the VC and the other secured by friendly troops overnight and airlift evacuated the following day.

Although the outnumbered ARVN ground forces sustained numerous casualties, the VC forces were handed a decisive defeat resulting in excess of 150 killed, reports of over 300 wounded and numerous heavy weapons (i.e. 50 caliber machine guns with anti-aircraft sights) recoilless rifles and small arms were captured.

Throughout the operation the air crews' performance was characterized by aggressiveness, professionalism, discipline under fire and numerous examples of personal and group heroism.

Pre-planned assault missions

On pre-planned assaults, the Operations Officer received a briefing from the unit conducting the operation, normally the Division, and, upon his return from the tactical briefing, would brief the company on the operation they would be making. The enemy situation, tactical ground plan, company formation, flight routes, release points, refueling areas, staging instructions, etc. were all covered in great detail. COC had, by this time, levied the respective aviation units for the assets necessary to complete the mission.

The aviation elements involved would then proceed to the staging area for a final briefing on any changes in the operational plan. The 13th Avn Bn provided logistical support for the operation in conjunction with the Bn liaison officer who was physically located at each Division headquarters.

In a majority of cases, a combined effort on the part of all three Aviation companies in the Delta was required. The company in whose tactical area of operations the operation took place was designated as the unit controlling the operation. For example, the 62d Avn Co led and controlled all operations executed by the 7th ARVN Division as did the 114th and 121st in their respective Division areas.

The execution of the air assault phase of the mission utilized a "slick" leader, armed escort and reconnaissance of the LZs and an C&C aircraft, assisted by the vector control aircraft. Upon completion of the initial troop lifts, the bulk of the slicks were released back to the company to perform routine C&L missions while a smaller number were held on standby in the event that reinforcement was required at a later time.

Compound Security Missions

After a severe VC mortar attack on the large airfield at Bien Hoa, armed platoons (Mavericks and Cobras) initiated nightly compound security patrols. A fire-team (either 2 or 3 aircraft) along with a flare-equipped slick, would conduct night reconnaissance patrols in the immediate and surrounding areas of the Vinh Long airfield to prevent the VC from massing for an attack. Nightly patrols frequently encountered ground fire in the course of their nightly sweeps along the canals and rivers leading toward the compound.

Doctrine

Throughout its initial operational period, the 62d employed aviation doctrine established by aviation units that had preceded it. These included such things as flight altitudes to and from LZ's were flown at 2500 feet or higher unless weather precluded obtaining these altitudes. Small arms fire could be effective up to 1500 feet. It was also found that, in the flat, table-top terrain of the Delta, with the limited cover afforded, the element of surprise associated with low level approaches could not normally be achieved. Also, intensive, accurate ground fire from VC guerillas, who controlled the countryside, prohibited low altitude. Detailed reconnaissance of the LZ by the armed platoon and subsequent shifting of the LZ in relation to the volume of fire received during the reconnaissance proved its merit in many cases. Suppressing fires by the armed platoon on the treelines and flanks of the LZ also proved very effective. The staggered trail, modified staggered trail and "vee" flight formations were primarily used. These formations provided flexibility to meet various LX conditions.

The armed platoon proved its worth many times over and can be given credit for the low number of small arms hits taken by the troops carriers. Old techniques were refined and new techniques developed by the armed platoon to provide the best support for the relatively unarmed troop carriers. The aviators in the armed platoon proved the thesis that maximum coordination, flexibility, teamwork and support can be best achieved through the use of organic close aerial fire support.

Operations Summary

From the day the 62d began flying combat support missions, it established an outstanding record of responsiveness and support. In the first 90 days that the unit was operational the company flew over 4900 hours during which time they were exposed regularly to hostile fire as evidenced by the fact that 24 aircraft received hits during this time 2 of which were shot down and 6 crew members were wounded.

A total of 15,039 troops and nearly 150 tons of cargo were transported during the 8034 sorties flown during this 90 day period.

Command and Administration

Major Anderson commanded the Outlaws through nearly their first year of operation in the Delta. After receiving orders to the Command and General Staff College, he turned over command of the company on 26 June 1965 to the Company Executive Officer, Captain Al Iller. Captain Iller retained command of the Outlaws until his DEROS on 2 September 1965.

1st Sergeant Rae was replaced in late 1964 by First Sergeant Raymond E. Hall.

Of the original platoon leaders who deployed with the 62d from Fort Benning, Captain Jack W. Sanford, Maverick Lead, and Captain Jerry F. Wade, Service Platoon Commander remained in their initial positions. Captain John White and Captain Dale E. Sherrod, the first and second platoon leaders respectively, were drafted by the 13th Avn Bn to work in the Combat Operations Center. They were replaced by Captain Bryce R. Kramer and Captain Olen D. Thornton.

Operations Section

Initially, because of limited facilities on Vinh Long, the 62d Operations section was housed in an inadequate space. However, a permanent structure was soon constructed adjacent to the 114th Operations office. Captain Charlie Humphries quickly began the vital tasks of coordinating all flight missions, maintaining flight and operations records and a myriad of administrative duties. Captain Humphries also participated in a large number of combat operations, often flying the C&C aircraft.

Personnel from the 62d and 114th jointly manned and operated the Dispatch office, control tower, POL facilities, fire station and the ammunition supply point.

On all major troop lift operations, a maintenance team from the 150th was positioned at the staging area where it could provide emergency, on-the-spot repairs, aid in the recovery of downed aircraft and make decisions on whether a damaged aircraft could safely be flown home for repairs. "Roadrunner was a frequent and welcome sight in the operational area.

Outlaws Get New Number Designation

Because the **62d Aviation company** had been quickly authorized, activated and deployed in late 1964, it had not been part of the Army's FY 64 budgeted force structure when the budget was submitted several years earlier.

In FY 65, in order to provide budget support for the new unit, the Department of the Army zeroed-out the personnel and equipment of a similar helicopter company at Fort Hood and transferred the numerical designation of **Company A, 502d Aviation Battalion** to Vietnam. Thus, on 14 December 1964, the numerical designation "62d" was retired and the personnel, equipment and support units of the 62d were reassigned, still as "Outlaws" and the unit became A/502d.

During the short time the 62d existed as an operational unit, from 8 October 1964 to 14 December 1964, personnel of the unit had earned 358 Air Medals, 18 Air medals with "V" device, 10 Distinguished Flying Crosses, 1 Silver Star, 7 Purple Hearts, 2 Commendation Medals and 33 Vietnamese Crosses of Gallantry.

There is no record of the unit ever having an official Outlaw patch made during the time it was the 62d Aviation company. By the time the patches were ordered, the number had changed. It proved to be an awkward designation, "Company A, 502d Aviation Battalion". However, the first patch worn on the uniform of the Outlaws was that showing "502d".

The original Outlaws, Mavericks, Roadrunners and other personnel who initially deployed with the 62d rotated back to CONUS by September 1965.

During the year, Department of the Army had now incorporated the Outlaw unit (62d - A/502d) into the FY66 force structure and the company was once again redesignated. This time the numerical designation **175th Aviation Company** was applied to the unit and the designation of Co A/502d was returned to the 1st Armored Division at Fort Hood, TX. The company retained the numerical identification 175th, as well as the name "Outlaws" throughout the remainder of the Vietnam conflict.

From the day the company was activated at Fort Benning in August 1964 until the Outlaws were officially disbanded by DA in 1972, the Outlaws established an enviable record of combat service.

The DECCA System

The Advanced Research Products Agency (ARPA) provided Army units in Vietnam with a wide number of items to increase combat efficiency and safety. One of the unique and interesting products the Outlaws tested in early 1965 was a navigation system called DECCA.

The DECCA system consisted of a scrolling map of the area of operations onto which a stylus printed a trace of the track of the aircraft path over the ground. The system relied on at least three ground-based navigation transmitters which were used by the DECCA system to triangulate the direction from the transmitters and record the location of the using system onto the scroll map.

It was a primitive version of a much later, and much more reliable system now known as GPS.

The 62d had several aircraft fitted with the DECCA system, one being the C&C aircraft. Its accuracy was very good but the system was limited by the width of the scroll map mounted above the instrument panel in the cockpit. Each mission, in which the DECCA system would be used, had to have the area of operations preplanned by the DECCA system technician and programmed into the system. If the pilot flew off the map, the system was of no value.

A DECCA technician was stationed at Vinh Long to support our use of the system.

The company made limited, but accurate, use of the system.

Logistical support

Logistical support for the company was a major task. Since transportation by road was unsafe, nearly all supplies, rations and equipment were flown in or brought in by water transportation. Being 55 miles away from the logistical support facilities in Saigon, created many problems in supply procedures for those stationed at Vinh Long.

A liaison team from the 13th Bn was located in Saigon to coordinate the procurement and shipment of supplies. Air transportation was utilized primarily. Each day, large quantities of supplies, including ammunition and rations, arrived at the PSP airfield in Vinh Long. Aircraft used were normally either Army CV-2B Caribou or USAF C-123 transports. Unit aircraft were also used occasionally to fill the gap. All POL products were brought in by commercial trucks. Normally ammunition was brought in by water transportation up the Mekong River.

Medical Support

The 83d Medical Detachment, commanded by Captain (Dr) James C. Black, Medical Corps, operated a dispensary at Vinh Long and provided other primary medical services including sanitation services, preventive medicine services, physical examinations, aeromedical evacuation, and emergency treatment. "Doc" Black and the members of his team participated in many combat support missions and volunteered to fly on day and night medical evacuation missions when they felt their services were needed. On major troop lift operations, they accompanied the flights to the staging areas where they were able to administer emergency treatment when required. In addition to the support provided by the 83d, "Dustoff" medical evacuation aircraft flew with the lift aircraft on all combat assault operations.

Vinh Long Facilities

Housing and Construction

Personnel at Vinh Long lived in temporary buildings with cement floors, wooden walls, screened half-way up, and covered with tin roofs. Individuals quickly interjected their personalities into the "hootches" and living conditions were quite comfortable.

Construction projects at Vinh Long were coordinated and controlled by Mr. Gordon E. Kelley, a civilian who headed the Repair and Utilities Section. His office was responsible to MACV for the maintenance of existing facilities and construction of new facilities.

Facilities Management

An Office of Installation Coordinator was established shortly after the arrival of the 62d. Major Anderson, as the senior officer assigned to Vinh Long, also assumed this additional duty. The Installation Coordinator facilitated the administrative and logistical support for the two aviation companies and their attached units at Vinh Long, working closely with Mr. Kelley, thus relieving individual units from the time consuming tasks of internal housekeeping.

The actual execution of these duties was assumed by Captain Robert M. Williams, Artillery, who was named the Deputy Installation Coordinator, serving under Major Anderson's supervision. Captain Williams staff consisted of one enlisted clerk and one Vietnamese secretary.

Special Services

Vinh Long airfield gradually adopted a number of services for recreational activities during leisure hours. Among these were a tennis court, tape van, volleyball courts and an improvised swimming pool.

The military R&R program allowed a large number of personnel to visit sub places as Hong Kong, Bangkok, Tokyo and the Philippines. R&R leaves to these areas ranged from 5-7 days. Military air transportation was furnished at no cost to the individual. The company also set up a "villa" in Vung Tau at which personnel spent an occasional weekend.

Motion pictures were available through Special Services and shown in the screened-in theater nightly. An infrequent USO show also provided live entertainment for the troops.

A major Special Services show, however, was the appearance of Bob Hope in Vinh Long for his very first show ever presented in Vietnam, on Christmas Day, 1964. More about the Bob Hope show in a separate section.

Mail

Mail, a vital morale factor, was processed at the APO by Detachment 29, 11th Air Postal Squadron. Mail service was rapid and efficient with letters often arriving at Vinh Long within 3 or 4 days after they were mailed in the States. The Vinh Long address was APO San Francisco, 96357.

Post Exchange

Within the Compound a small post exchange was operated by installation personnel and was open daily. It filled essential needs and stocked many luxuries such as radios, watches, cameras, recorders, etc.

Clubs

Both Officer and Enlisted clubs were operated on the compound. The "Tie One On" enlisted club and the "Mekong Manor" officers club provided refreshments and provided comfortable surroundings. Soon after the arrival of the 62d, officers were authorized a Cost Of Living Allowance and a mess was established at the club.

Religious Services

Chaplain Captain Mark C. Gasquet, a resident of the compound, held Protestant services each Sunday. Catholic services were provided both by a Catholic priest stationed in Can Tho as well as Mass by a Vietnamese priest at the nearby convent operated by Irish nuns.