

A basic history...

Headquarters and Headquarters Troop, Troop A, Troop B, Troop C, and Troop D (ground)

Activated, equipped and trained at Fort Knox, KY Jun-66 to Oct-67

Deployed from Fort Knox and attached to the
17th Aviation Group, Pleiku, 28Oct67 to 18Apr72
Squadron moved to Dak To, Mar68
Squadron moved to Qui Nhon, Mar71
Squadron moved to An Son, Nov71

Troop A transferred to 10th Aviation Battalion, Jul71
Troop B transferred to 52nd Aviation Battalion, Apr71
Troop B assets used to raise Troop H, 17th Cav, 30Apr72
Troop H departed Vietnam, 26Feb73.

Troop C "Blue Ghost" assets used to raise
Troop F "Blue Ghost", 8th Cav, 1Apr68
"Blue Ghost" departed Vietnam, 26Feb73.

Troop C (replacement) assigned 15Jul68.
Raised from assets of Troop C, 2/17th Cav, Fort Campbell, Ky, 1May68
Troop C assets used to raise Troop H, 10th Cav, 30Apr72
Troop H departed Vietnam, 26Feb73.
Troop D (Ground) transferred to 52nd Aviation Battalion, Jul71

The History of the 7th Armored Squadron, 17th Air Cavalry, 1967 - 1968

The following is a small part of what many hope will be a complete history of the 7/17th Cavalry in Vietnam. This history was first compiled by Mike Law, and published in the Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association (VHPA) 1992 Membership Directory. There have been numerous updates since then. This material is copyright protected. It is presented with the hope that 7/17th Cavalry veterans will submit additions and corrections. Besides the chronological narrative, the history includes the leadership roster, the Honor Roll of all the Killed In Action (KIA) and Missing In Action (MIA), the illustrations of the base camps, lists of awards and citations, and the alphabetic roster of every one known to have served in the 7/17th Cavalry. Since this is our first attempt to publish this information on the web, only pieces of the narrative and the leadership roster are presented.

The January and February 1968 chronological narrative is available. Based on feedback, more of the narrative will be presented. Please provide updates feedback to [Mike Law](#).

There are three primary sources for this chronological narrative: unit histories, the VHPAs helicopter and KIA databases, and first person accounts. The first two are used as a template or background format because they contain specific facts and specific dates. However, the first

person accounts are very good and the most important element of this history. We need more first person accounts.

1966 - 1967

In less than a year that begin November 1966, the squadron organize, equip, staff, and completed training at Fort Knox, KY. It deployed to Vietnam as a unit in September and October 1967. The squadron, part of the 17th Combat Aviation Group, established its base camp at Camp Enari near Pleiku. The squadron mission was to provide combat reconnaissance and security for the 4th Infantry Division (4ID) and other allied units in western II Corps. Headquarters and Headquarters Troop, A Troop, B Troop, C Troop and D Troop were combat operational by November and based out of Camp Enari. In late November, C Troop relocated to Chu Lai and was attached to the 14th Combat Aviation Battalion to provide combat reconnaissance and security for the Americal Division. The squadron routinely conducted successful combat operations, gathering valuable intelligence, and killed and captured enemy soldiers. Though several Ruthless Riders were wounded, none had died. Battle damage and accidents claimed a few helicopters, mostly the scout "loach" OH-6A.

1968

The primary source materials for this year are: For Headquarters and Headquarters Troop (HHT), the 14 page initial Authorized Unit History (AUH) prepared by Captain (CPT) Michael G. Law. For A Troop, the 18 page AUH prepared by First Lieutenant (1LT) Robert J. Gibson. For B Troop, the 31 page AUH prepared by 1LT Richard L. Montgomery. For the original C Troop, the same three documents mentioned for last year. The 1/1st Cavalry's history has a good map that shows the relative location of the various Fire Base (FB) and Landing Zone (LZ) base camps. For the replacement C Troop, a 14 page AUN prepared by CPT Edward F. Johnson plus a Yearbook. For D Troop, the 18 page AUH prepared by Lieutenant (LT) Brack Jones, Jr. For the Squadron: a 37 page Recommendation for Presidential Unit Citation, a 20 page Operational Report - Lessons Learned (OR-LL) for the period 1 FEB through 30 APR, a 28 page OR-LL for the period 1 AUG through 31 OCT, and extracts from a 30 page OR-LL for 1 NOV through 31 DEC.

For January, unit histories state that A Troop and D Troop worked out of Kontum for the first ten days of the month. Together they killed 14 North Vietnamese Army (NVA) and captured one. Both A Troop and D Troop were based at Camp Enari. B Troop's unit history contains a single paragraph covering operations prior to TET 68 which is why we had very little on this troop during the last two months 1967. Basically they considered those pre-TET 68 operations as "on the job" training for the days that followed. Operating out of Camp Enari, B Troop used Plei Djereng, Plei Kleng, Kontum, Dak To, the Oasis, Ban Me Thuot, Ben Het and An Khe as staging areas for daily operations. They supported the 173rd Airborne Brigade (Abn Bde), the three brigades of the 4th Inf Div, various Special Forces (SF) units and Long Range Reconnaissance Patrols (LRRP), plus units of the 101st Airborne Division (101AD). They accounted for 37 Vietnamese Communist (VC) and NVA killed, 26 captured, 4 weapons captured, 5 tons of rice recovered or destroyed plus over 100 documents captured. C Troop, located at Chu Lai, continued to support the Americal Division. The unit history states that D

Troop provided vehicular reconnaissance and fire base security at Ban Me Thuot for most of the month.

January 2, the VHPA Helicopter database lists battle damage and injury record for C Troop UH-1C #66-0738 flown by an un-named crew. One of the crew was injured. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission and while at an altitude of 75 feet and 70 knots of airspeed, they took five hits from 7.62mm type SA/AW which hit the cargo section; they continued flying and completed the mission, the helicopter was repaired in theater.

January 3, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for C Troop OH-6A #65-12997 flown by an un-named crew. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission and while at an altitude of 25 feet and 6 knots of airspeed, they took one hit from 7.62mm type SA/AW which hit the engine comp; they continued flying and completed the mission, the helicopter was repaired in theater. The VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for C Troop OH-6A #66-7829 flown by an un-named crew. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission and while at an altitude of 50 feet and 50 knots of airspeed, they took five hits from 7.62mm type SA/AW which hit the engine comp, forward main rotor system, bottom tail section, right tail section; they continued flying and aborted the mission. The VHPA Helicopter database has two battle damage records for C Troop UH-1C #66-0741 flown by an un-named crew. The decoded details of the first record state that this was a recon mission and while at an altitude of 50 feet and 70 knots of airspeed, they took three hits from 7.62mm type SA/AW which hit the cargo section, main rotor blade system and the armament; they continued flying and completed the mission, the helicopter was repaired in theater. The decoded details of the second record state that this was a recon mission, while at an altitude of 150 feet and 70 knots of airspeed, they took one hit from 7.62mm type SA/AW which hit the armament, they continued flying and completed the mission, the helicopter was repaired in theater. Finally on the 3rd, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for C Troop UH-1C #66-15067 flown by an un-named crew. The decoded details of the record state that this was a direct combat support close air support mission and during the attack approach target area, they took one hit from 7.62mm type SA/AW which hit the forward cockpit; they continued flying and completed the mission, the helicopter was repaired in theater.

January 4, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage with injury record for C Troop UH-1C #66-15067 flown by an un-named crew. One of the crew was injured. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission and while at an altitude of 80 feet and 75 knots of airspeed, they took two hits from 7.62mm type SA/AW which hit the cargo section; they continued flying and completed the mission, the helicopter was repaired in theater.

January 5, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for C Troop OH-6A #65-12997 flown by an un-named crew. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission and while at an altitude of 85 feet and 60 knots of airspeed, they took one hit from 7.62mm type SA/AW which hit the left bubble; they continued flying and completed the mission, the helicopter was repaired in theater

January 6, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage with injuries record for C Troop UH-1C #66-15041 flown by an un-named crew. Two of the crew were injured. The decoded

details of the record state that this was a recon mission and while at an altitude of 300 feet and 60 knots of airspeed, they took one hit from 7.62mm type SA/AW which hit the canopy; they continued flying and completed the mission, the helicopter was repaired in theater.

January 7, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for A Troop OH-6A #66-7806 flown by an un-named crew. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission and they took one hit from an unknown source which hit the forward main rotor system; they continued flying and completed the mission, the helicopter was repaired in theater.

January 9, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage with one injury record for C Troop UH-1C #66-0745 flown by an un-named crew. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission and while attacking a target, they took two hits from 7.62mm type SA/AW which hit the cockpit; they continued flying and completed the mission, the helicopter was repaired in theater. This event must have happened earlier in the day because this helicopter would be destroyed in the afternoon.

January 9, First air crew KIA. WO James L. Phipps, WO Rainer S. Ramos, and their gunners SP4 Warren E. Newton and PFC Fred J. Secrist, C Troop, in UH-1C #66-00745 received intense enemy fire and crashed at map coordinates AT955308, Quang Tin Province. They are thought to be the first air crew members to be killed from the 7/17th. While the records do not indicate this, we suspect that SP4 Newton was the CE. LT Don Williamson and MAJ Jack Burden provide some details:

Jack says that it is important to remember that the battles associated with TET '68 started about one month earlier in this part of I Corps because the 2nd NVA had become very aggressive since right after Christmas and had been pushing towards the Coast. The Americal folks were still pretty new in-country and were giving up ground in "no man's land." Most of the time C Troop would stage out of Hawk Hill as it supported the 1/1st Cav based there. Hawk Hill was about a mile from the ocean, west of QL 1 and about halfway between Chu Lai and Da Nang. Most every day C Troop would send teams looking to see how far the NVA had advanced in a given sector. The Americal instructions were for C Troop not to fly into NVA Country because the Division was not in a position to provide the extensive support that even a downed bird could generate. C Troop had a different operational configuration than either A or B Troop. We would take our Lift with the Blues and several sets of Guns and Scouts to Hawk Hill. We didn't fly a C and C per se. We would send out one or two mixed teams (one LOH and one UH-1C Gun) to recon by themselves knowing that the rest of the troop was literally standing by for them. If a team made contact or wanted to put the Blues in, then we would try to pull the other mixed team into the same general area to minimize the risk of having two birds down in two different areas. It was really neat when one team would find something and ask for Gun support; because most times we would send four Charlie Models to answer the call. That was a real "heavy, heavy team" and usually did a bang up job on the bad guys! Billy Williamson and I were Majors and used to take turns directing the operations from Hawk Hill or in a C and C when we got into a fight. I was on the hill on the 9th.

Don continues. I was the ranking officer and the leader of the mixed team on the 9th. We had been briefed and given an AO on the west side of FB Ross and another little outpost just beyond

it. They were the last friendly positions and most everything to their west was NVA Country. We called that a "no fly line" because of the Division support policy Jack just described. I remember spreading out the maps on some sand bags and we all talked about our route to the AO. Naturally, running a map and flying a LOH low level doesn't make much sense; so I gave my maps to Phipps and Ramos. I still believe we missed a turn and flew west too far. Anyway, I remember passing over a small pond and receiving fire. I broke and called the Gunship to warn them about the fire. I hadn't even made a complete circle yet when I heard them say that they were taking fire and had been hit. They continued flying on the same heading, so I finished the circle and climbed up behind them. I told them I was "right on them" so if they needed to land or whatever I was in a position to support them. Anyway, they kept flying straight and flew right into the side of this mountain doing at least 90 knots!! We had just refueled and rearm. Brother, what an explosion and a fire!! I made several passes hoping to see someone get out but they really didn't have a chance. On my second pass I was REALLY RECEIVING FIRE. I called for help and remember talking with everyone that evening. They all agreed it was the WORST FIRE they had ever received.

Jack finishes the story. When we received Don's call, we launched everything we had at Hawk Hill. I was calling back to Chu Lai and coordinating things; but was really desperate to get out there. One ACT of the 1/9th Cav was living at Hawk Hill at the time. They came over and looked at the crash point on the map. They agreed it was certainly bad guy country but said if our troop was going in (meaning putting the Blues on the ground); that they would go as well. At first I really felt good about this and was ready to commit both troops. Finally, I displaced some poor Gun pilot and flew out there in Greg Ross's gunship. They must have picked the base camp for a heavy weapons units of an NVA Regt; the fire was really bad!! It didn't take long to realize that we would doom both troops if we tried to go in there. Their ship was still burning like mad when I got there with ammo, especially WPs going off. I made a couple of passes at about 50 knots about 20 feet over the site but certainly saw nothing that was encouraging at all. We tried to go back the next day but it was still too hot. There was a small OP about 300 meters up the steep hill from the crash site. About a week and a half later, these friendly forces called that the area was secured. I took a special team in to inspect the site. We found some human remains and the team was positive they had identified four left legs. Even so they were officially carried as MIA for many years; but I have no doubt that they died.

An edited version of the official Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) material reads as follows: The crew consisting of WO James L. Phipps, AC; WO Rainier S. Ramos, pilot; SP4 Warren E. Newton, door gunner; and PFC Fred J. Secrist, gunner, were on a gunship-cover mission about 20 miles west of the city of Tam Ky in Quang Tin Province. LT Williamson, the pilot of another helicopter, was flying as scout in front of WO Ramos' aircraft when he received a call from WO Phipps indicating that he had been hit, was on fire, and was going down. LT Williamson stated he would follow the aircraft down. He saw smoke trailing from Ramos' aircraft, but did not sight flames until the aircraft impacted on the ground. The helicopter hit and exploded (the estimated impact speed was between 65 and 80 knots). The senior officer of Troop C, 7th Sqdn, 17th Air Cavalry arrived and made several passes over the downed aircraft. Heavy automatic weapons fire from the north and east of the downed aircraft was received on the third pass, but it was noted that the downed aircraft was gutted by fire and explosions. At no time was any evidence seen that suggested that the crew had been thrown clear of the crash. During the first 45 minutes of

the on-scene observation, the munitions, consisting of 2.75 rockets and 40 mm grenades were exploding every minute or two. The senior officer remained in the area for about one and one-half hours. On January 20, a recovery operation was initiated and the remainder of the aircraft was located in the bottom of a large trench. About three sets of remains were recovered, but only one set (that of PFC Secrist) was subsequently identified. Newton, Phipps, and Ramos were not declared dead, but Missing In Action, indicating that there was still the possibility that they were thrown clear of the aircraft and captured by the enemy.

Since the DIA states that only PFC Secrist's remains were recovered; the others (Newton, Phipps, and Ramos) were listed as MIA because their remains could not be identified. Officially everyone except Secrist was listed as MIA (later changed to BNR), so they were posthumously promoted. The Wall shows the pilots rank as CW3, Newton as SSG, and Secrist as SP4. Since Newton's MOS was 67N40 and Secrist's was 67N2F, it is unclear as to which was the CE for this ship and which was the gunner.

January 9, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for C Troop UH-1H #66-16024 flown by an un-named crew. The decoded details of the record state that this was a direct combat support close air support mission and while at an altitude of 200 feet and 80 knots of airspeed, they took one hit from 12.7mm type AW which hit the cargo section; they continued flying and completed the mission, the helicopter was repaired in theater.

January 11 to 21, A Troop worked out of Dak To. The unit history states that an A Troop LOH took nine hits but was able to make it back to Dak To and the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for A Troop OH-6A #66-7807 flown by an un-named crew. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission and while at an altitude of 15 feet and 10 knots of airspeed, they took nine hits from 7.62mm type SA/AW which hit the cockpit, equipment section, tail section, skid, fuselage, cargo section; they continued flying and completed the mission, the helicopter was repaired in theater. The Blues and a D Troop platoon were inserted and made heavy contact with the NVA who withdrew leaving 15 dead.

January 13, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for Headquarters and Headquarters Troop UH-1C #66-15037 flown by an un-named crew. The decoded details of the record state that this was a direct combat support command and control mission and while at an altitude of 200 feet and 60 knots of airspeed, they took one hit from 7.62mm type SA/AW which hit the engine comp; they made a precautionary landing and aborted the mission, the helicopter was evacuated.

January 15, A Troop went to the rescue of an armored column that had been ambushed. The Cav broke the ambush and killed 12. The VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage and loss with injuries record for A Troop OH-6A #66-7802 flown by an un-named crew. Two of the crew were injured. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission during a bank right they took six hits from 7.62mm type SA/AW which hit the horizontal stabilizer, tail section, they crashed and terminated the mission, the helicopter was lost to inventory and destroyed. The VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for A Troop UH-1C #66-0648 flown by an un-named crew. The decoded details of the record state that this was a direct combat close air support mission during the attack approach to the target area, they took two hits from 7.62mm

type SA/AW which hit the cargo section and main rotor blade system, they continued flying and completed the mission, the helicopter was repaired in theater.

January 16, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage and loss record for B Troop OH-6A #65-12989, at map coordinates YB782229 flown by an un-named crew. Three of the crew were injured. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission during the hover they had more than 99 holes from an unknown source, they crashed and terminated the mission, the helicopter was lost to inventory and destroyed. The code 99 holes in this record usually means that the aircraft was near some type of explosion like a command detonated mine, a claymore, a mortar or artillery round.

January 17, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for A Troop OH-6A #66-7826 flown by an un-named crew. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission, they took one hit from 40mm RPG type exploding weapon which hit the forward main rotor system, they continued flying and completed the mission, the helicopter was repaired in theater. The VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for B Troop OH-6A #66-7834 flown by an un-named crew. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission, while at an altitude of 50 feet and 80 knots of airspeed, they took one hit from 7.62mm type SA/AW which hit the forward main rotor system, they continued flying and completed the mission, the helicopter was repaired in theater.

January 18, while working the site of the January 15 armored column ambush, the Scouts suddenly came under heavy AWs fire and one pilot was wounded. Air strikes and artillery were used to silence the NVA who lost 7 killed and had two recoilless rifles destroyed. During the last part of the month A Troop worked around Pleiku.

January 20, A Troop's Scouts found six NVA taking evasive action and killed four but then a LOH was shot down. The Blues were inserted to protect the crew. In the action that followed, the Blues killed five more and captured some medical supplies and a weapon. The VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage and loss with injuries record for A Troop OH-6A #66-7805 flown by an un-named crew. Two of the crew were injured. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission, while at an altitude of 20 feet and 10 knots of airspeed, they took eight hits from 7.62mm type SA/AW which hit the oil cooler, tail rotor system, fuel cell, bottom cockpit, and cockpit, they crashed and terminated the mission, the helicopter was lost to inventory and destroyed. The VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for A Troop UH-1C #66-15064 flown by an un-named crew. The decoded details of the record state that this was a reconnaissance armed escort other aircraft mission, while at an altitude of 100 feet and 80 knots of airspeed, they took seven hits from 7.62mm type SA/AW which hit the bottom fuselage, they continued flying and completed the mission, the helicopter was repaired in theater. Finally on the 20th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for B Troop UH-1C #66-0732 flown by an un-named crew. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission, while at an altitude of 400 feet and 80 knots of airspeed, they took one hit from 7.62mm type SA/AW which hit the engine compartment, they continued flying and completed the mission, the helicopter was repaired in theater.

January 22, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for A Troop OH-6A #66-7797 flown by an un-named crew. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission, while at an altitude of 20 feet and 30 knots of airspeed, they took four hits from 7.62mm type SA/AW which hit the engine comp, armament, fuselage, they made a forced landing and modified the mission, the helicopter took-off and was repaired in theater. The VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for A Troop OH-6A #66-7803 flown by an un-named crew. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission, while at an altitude of 30 feet and 35 knots of airspeed, they took seven hits from 7.62mm type SA/AW which hit the engine comp, cargo section, forward main rotor system, they continued flying and completed the mission, the helicopter was recovered to recovered to Ruthless maintenance area and repaired in theater. The VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for A Troop UH-1C #66-15062 flown by an un-named crew. The decoded details of the record state that this was a direct combat support close air support mission, while at an altitude of 150 feet and 100 knots of airspeed, they took one hit from 7.62mm type SA/AW which hit the tail section, they continued flying and completed the mission, the helicopter was repaired in theater. Finally on the 22nd, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage and loss with injuries record for A Troop OH-6A #66-7832 flown by a partly-named crew. The crew chief, SP4 Dale S. Puishis, had fatal injuries and the other two crew members were injured. This incident took place at map coordinates ZA072512 in Pleiku Province. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission, while hovering over the target, they had more than 99 holes from 7.62mm type SA/AW which hit the fuselage, they crashed and terminated the mission, the helicopter was lost to inventory and destroyed. The A Troop unit history states that they found five NVA in a bunker and the Guns killed three. SP4 Puishis was killed when his LOH was shot down, crashed and burned. The other two crew members were wounded but were successfully extracted.

January 24, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for B Troop OH-6A #65-12994 flown by an un-named crew.. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission, they took one hit from 7.62mm type SA/AW which hit the tail section, they continued flying and completed the mission, the helicopter was repaired in theater.

January 25, the VHPA Helicopter database has an accident and loss with fatalities and injuries record for B Troop UH-1C #66-15001 in Pleiku Province. The AC, WO1 R.P. Raible, was injured, the pilot, WO1 Milligan Johnson Marcus, suffered fatal injuries, the crew chief, PFC D.R. Doss, was injured, and the gunner, PFC G.A. Winters, was also injured. The decoded details of the record state that this was a combat mission. The accident summary details are as follows: On takeoff, aircraft began a descent. Suspect gross overweight. Tail stinger hit the ground and wire. Aircraft slid down into a gully until striking the other side of the gully. Aircraft started to burn. Fire was extinguished. Additional details: Possible engine failure while taking off from Camp Enari.

January 26, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for A Troop OH-6A #66-7826 flown by an un-named crew. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission, while at an altitude of 30 feet and 20 knots of airspeed, they took one hit from 7.62mm type SA/AW which hit the right bottom cockpit, they continued flying and completed the mission, the helicopter was repaired in theater.

January 27, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for C Troop UH-1C #66-15065 flown by an un-named crew. The decoded details of the record state that this was a reconnaissance armed escort other aircraft mission, while at an altitude of 300 feet and 60 knots of airspeed, they took six hits from 7.62mm type SA/AW which hit the cockpit, cargo section, they continued flying and completed the mission, the helicopter was repaired in theater. On the 29th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for C Troop UH-1C #66-15040 flown by an un-named crew. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission, while at an altitude of 100 feet and 70 knots of airspeed, they took one hit from 7.62mm type SA/AW which hit the right armament, they continued flying and completed the mission, the helicopter was repaired in theater.

January 30, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for B Troop OH-6A #65-12993 flown by an un-named crew. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission, while taking off at an altitude of 3 feet and 10 knots of airspeed, they took two hits from mortar type exploding weapon which hit the tail section, they continued flying and completed the mission, the helicopter was repaired in theater. The VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage with injuries record for C Troop OH-6A #65-12998 flown by an un-named crew. Two of the crew were injured. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission, during the level flight operations area, they took three hits from 7.62mm type SA/AW which hit the bottom cockpit, bottom cockpit, cargo section, they continued flying and aborted the mission. Also on the 30th, the VHPA Helicopter database has two battle damage records for B Troop OH-6A #66-7835 flown by an un-named crew. The decoded details of the first record state that this was a recon mission, while at an altitude of 25 feet and 60 knots of airspeed, they took one hit from 7.62mm type SA/AW which hit the bottom cockpit, they continued flying and completed the mission, the helicopter was repaired in theater. The VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for B Troop OH-6A #66-7835 flown by an un-named crew. The decoded details of the second record state that this was a recon mission, while at an altitude of 50 feet and 45 knots of airspeed, they took four hits from 7.62mm type SA/AW which hit the left bottom cockpit, cargo section, right cockpit, bottom fuselage, right fuselage, they made a forced landing and modified the mission, the helicopter was repaired in theater and evacuated. This record states that the one crew member was killed and two others injured. **THIS IS SIGNIFICANT BECAUSE THE VHPA IS NOT AWARE OF ANY 7/17th Cav CREW MEMBER KILLED ON THIS DATE. PLEASE REPORT DETAILS TO MIKE LAW.** The VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for B Troop UH-1C #66-0732 flown by an un-named crew. One of the crew was injured. The decoded details of the record state that this was a direct combat support command and control mission, during the attack approach to the target area, they took six hits from 7.62mm type SA/AW which hit the right cockpit, main rotor blade system, cargo section, they continued flying and completed the mission, the helicopter was repaired in theater.

January 31, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for Headquarters Troop UH-1C #66-15038, location Kontum. The decoded details of the record state that this was a direct combat support command and control mission, while on ground, they took one hit from mortar type exploding weapon which hit the tail section, they continued flying and completed the mission, the helicopter was repaired in theater. Additional Details: During this period of time, the aircraft was often flown by "Ruthless 6", the squadron commander, LTC Pete Johnson, and CPT

Bob Young flew this ship as pilot and the crew chief was SP5 Michael Lill with Mike Manger as door gunner. Other senior officers in the squadron also flew this aircraft.

Don Oliver provides: "One of the funniest incident of my tour involved another B Troop Huey crewchief named Sandoval. Sandy was a little moody but was a meticulous and careful technician. One day MAJ Hefford was flying C and C in Sandy's ship during an operation near Polei Kleng. While out in the AO, the main rotor tach generator failed which generated a few choice words from the Major. While Sandy took offense to the comments about his aircraft, Hefford's attention quickly returned to the war. He flew back to the staging area and set down to discuss something face to face with another officer, and Sandy thought he was going to be on the ground for awhile. As soon as they landed, Sandy got out, opened the engine and transmission cowls, and got up on the engine deck to start removing the tach generator (with the engine still running). Maybe Sandy should have thought through this one better? Meanwhile, Hefford finishes his conversation and takes off with Sandy still on the engine deck. Ever a resourceful fellow, Sandy crawls forward by hanging on to antennas and ventilator cups until he is above the pilot's windshield. He then leans forward with his head down in front of the Major and starts banging on the windshield. Meanwhile the rest of the Lift had been trying frantically to raise the CO, but he was on another freq. Hefford always looked at Sandy a little funny after that!"

B Troops Tiger Skin

During January, SSG Roger Philpott shot a very large Bengal tiger with one burst from an M16 during a recon mission. CPT Dan Dantzler provides the following:

Two lift ships secured the area and loaded the tiger onto a cargo net. The tiger was hung on the water tower at Camp Enari and skinned. The Vietnamese workers were clearly cautious of the tiger. Though they knew he was dead, they scurried to touch the tiger and quickly withdrew. They believed touching the ferocious wild animal would pass his courage on to them. I believe the Vietnamese had meat for dinner. CWO Rodney Orton had the skin tanned in Nha Trang. It then hung on the officers club wall. Later when B Troop was at Phan Thiet, the tiger skin still adored the wall of the underground officers club. There are several photos of the tiger being hung up on the water tower. One that I have shows WO Richard Shoney watches while CWO Orton helps hang the tiger. Several years later, a tiger skin was reported hanging in the 1st Aviation Brigade villa in Saigon. Was it the Red Lion Inn? Does anybody know where that tiger skin is today?

TET 68

February - The Headquarters and Headquarters Troop unit history sums it all up "During TET 68 the entire Sqdn's activities and energies were devoted to the Kontum area which was nearly occupied by the NVA." During the first week, Sqdn elements killed 24 NVA/VC in operations near Kontum, Dak To, and northwest of Pleiku. These operations were either to clear the NVA/VC from the cities and immediate areas around military base camps or to escort critical convoys since portions of the road between Pleiku and Kontum were in enemy hands. For the rest of the month, with D Troop still based out of the Kontum air field, the Sqdn supported TF 1/22 which consisted of the augmented 1/22nd Inf Bn. The ACTs found numerous trails and

bunker complexes near Plei Mrong (about seven kms west of QL14 and about half way between Pleiku and Kontum). This proved to be "home" for the large enemy force that had cut QL14 at the start of TET 68 and had sent units against both cities. For the period 8 - 29 Feb, the Sqdn killed 51 NVA/VC, captured 7 POWs, 4,250 rounds of small arms ammo, 215 rounds of crew served ammo, 5 individual and 6 crew weapons, and 41 packs which contained documents and over 100 lbs. of medical supplies. The Sqdn did its Cavalry job of "finding and fixing the enemy" well because the 4th Inf moved the 173rd Abn Bde to Kontum to work the Plei Mrong area and returned the 7/17th to work its traditional AOs from Ban Me Thuot to Dak Pek. The unit histories record specific days and events in a little more detail. C Troop, located at Chu Lai, continued to support the Americal Division.

February 1, B Troop was sent to Dak To but diverted to Kontum because Dak To was under a heavy mortar attack. NVA gun positions inside the city greeted them as they approached the Kontum air strip. The Guns started surgically working on the NVA guns and the Lift started carrying friendly wounded to the 71st Evac at Pleiku. About the time the Lift section returned, the C and C learned that Dak To was "clear" and "needed the Cav." The first priority at Dak To was to find the NVA mortar teams and the Scouts did this quickly. First the Guns were used then several air strikes. During the post-strike screen, the Scouts found an extensive complex of tunnels and bunkers. They marked the area so accurately that the next series of air strikes were accompanied by numerous secondary explosions. Back over the area, the Scouts found some NVA trying to leave and the Guns killed four but received intense 50 cal fire. One UH-1C took several hits. The co-pilot received facial wounds from the shattered windows so they flew back to Pleiku Air Force Base. The Kontum situation was so bad that the Brigade at Dak To used B Troop to lift and CA C Company, 1/22nd Inf from Dak To to Kontum which required 20 sorties. The troop killed four move NVA during the CA. Just after the CA, B Troop received a change of mission to support A Troop in a critical convoy escort. Both Troops finally departed the AO at 2045 to return to Enari. The VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for B Troop Aircraft UH-1C #66-15033 flown by an un-named crew. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission, while at an altitude of 300 feet and 90 knots of airspeed, they took two hits from 12.7mm type SA/AW which hit the right cockpit, main rotor blade system, they continued flying and completed the mission.

CPT Charlie Rayl describes these times as follows: Some time before TET 68 actually started, A Troop had killed an NVA LT, his SGT, and a body guard who were carrying a courier packet containing the TET 68 Offensive NVA battle plans for the Central Highlands. I firmly believe the military intelligence community chose to discount these documents, disbelieving that the NVA had the capability to carry out such a large scale attack. For two weeks prior to TET 68, we repeatedly reported NVA construction of new roads, battle positions, fortifications and even new unused graves as we flew the Pleiku, Kontum, Dak To area. We were very concerned about not only the number of sightings but also the fact that we were not getting shot at during our VRs. We were criticized for not getting the kills we had in the past; but the vital information we were providing was either not believed or ignored. For me, the TET 68 Offensive began while on an early morning VR out towards the Ia Drang Valley. I spotted some Montagnards with larger than normal baskets on their backs traveling down a trail. They didn't wave, smile, or look up at us as we hovered by. Unusual. The Montagnards were always friendly to the Scouts and would voluntarily open their baskets to show us what was in them, indicating they meant no harm. I

decided to herd them down the path to a flat, open area where we could bring the Blues in and called for the Blues. About that time Opns called and requested that I return to base. I argued that I had just made a significance find. MAJ Inglett, Tornado 6, got on the radio and with language I clearly understood, ordered me back to camp. When I got there, he briefed us that a MAJOR attack was under way at Kontum and that the airfield and SF camp were in danger of being overrun. As we flew by Pleiku, we noticed some of it was ablaze. A major fire fight was in progress about 12 Ks north of Camp Holloway. We arrived at Kontum with only one team of Scouts and Guns plus the C and C. We orbited east of Kontum while the CO sorted things out in Kontum. We could see a few little fire fights going on; but nothing like the fires and destruction going on at Pleiku! My observer, Dennis Carlin, and I always liked the Dak Bla River that ran east to west, south of Kontum. The river valley had always been a friendly place as opposed to the mountains and jungle nearby. We were snooping along low level over the "friendly river" when we over-flew a squad of ARVN engaged in a fire fight. They were obviously in a heap of trouble. They were caught out in the open on a sand bar on the east bank of the river. The NVA were pumping a heavy volume of rifle fire at them. One ARVN frantically waved and pointed to the tree line to his west as I flew by. I rolled in hot with the mini, spraying the bursts as close as 15 feet from the ARVN into the tree line. Instantly, the ARVN stood up, started firing and attacked the NVA position! Gutsy little rascals, or, with my shooting that close to them, dumb? I made one more pass but they were already in the tree line, so I couldn't shoot. On my third pass, some of the ARVN were back out on the sand bar waving and smiling as friendly as I had ever seen them towards an American. A few days later I flew by the same location and several NVA bodies had been drug out on the sand and left to rot. A dog was chewing on them. I was offended, so we shot the dog. Anyway, by this time MAJ Inglett had things figured out. The SF camp was under siege by mortar fire they believed was coming from the rifle range located to the northeast of Kontum; so we sent two Scouts and two Guns up there. We made a high speed, low level pass near the rifle range. There they were - first valid intelligence we had been given all day. The NVA had a bunch of mortars set up, so our Guns opened up. It was a turkey shoot! As we did not have another Gun team on station yet, we decided to refuel at Kontum.

When we got to the refuel point, we noticed there was no one to operate the pump. We always refueled "hot" (with the engine running and the rotors turning), so Dennis got out to go start the pump. I called the tower and asked to refuel. He responded that the tower was closed, that he was in a bunker with a PRC 25 and that the field was under attack! News to me!! Dennis was struggling to crank up the gas powered fuel pump when I happened to glance toward the 57th AHC's compound and saw a flight school classmate of mine, CPT C.D. Rogers, crouched behind a revert. He was frantically waving at me to get the hell out of there. C.D. was a big guy, had been a football player in college and I knew he had more than his share of courage. His acting scared and crouched behind a revert definitely got my attention! I looked over my right shoulder and saw dust being kicked up to my right rear by AW fire. Dennis was still at the fuel pump about 20 meters away. He had it running but was not facing towards me. With the noise of the LOH and the fuel pump, he could not hear the incoming fire. I couldn't leave him and I couldn't leave the aircraft. After what seemed like two eternities, he turned around and saw the dust flying from the bullet strikes and me frantically signaling him to get back to the ship. Dennis won the 20 meter dash. I pulled pitch while he was still strapping in. I wasn't helping much by flying in what I called "making it dance" so as not to give the NVA a steady target. My wing was steadily firing into an area south of the fueling pits. Still no fuel and not enough in the tank to make it back to

base. But ole lady luck was with us as we spotted a 5,000 gal tanker parked inside the 57th's compound. We landed next to the tanker and a soldier came running over while trying to make himself a small target. He gets the fuel pump started and we start refueling. Soon a pilot appears and tells me that all of the 57th's helicopters have been hit and that they had been receiving enemy fire in the compound most of the day. I waved goodbye to C.D. with a thumbs up. He was a hell of a guy. He later extended so that his younger brother wouldn't have to serve in Vietnam and was killed during the extension.

We got married up with our second Gun team and started working the northern perimeter of the 57th's area. The Scouts searched and marked enemy positions and the Guns shot them up. The minigun and rocket fire dampened the spirits of the NVA attackers! Apparently the situation at the SF camp deteriorated, because our CO called for the Blues to be inserted in or near the camp. Our Guns were dispatched to cover the insertion. Since they didn't need Scouts for that, my team kept working the 57th's northern perimeter. I recall finding an ARVN position just north of the perimeter. He was surrounded and had his hands full but was making a menace of himself in the NVA rear. We made a couple of firing passes at the NVA along a tree line and I called for some Guns. The response: "kill them yourself, Red; we've got to get the Blues in!" As luck would have it, another Gun team showed up and I got them to shoot up the area around this lone ARVN. After that, the NVA activity on the northern side quieted down and my team went back to base camp to rearm. The fires and fire fights were still going on at Pleiku. The airfield was a beehive of activity. When we returned to Kontum, we set up an aerial screen to watch for NVA reinforcements into this battle. Shortly a 122mm rocket fired from a distant mountain to the northeast, scored a direct hit on the 5,000 gal tanker we had used earlier that day. An instantaneous explosion ensued with a towering black fuel fire of smoke billowing skyward in sharp contrast to the other brown smoke in the battle area. As a result, we were sent to look for the rocket launch positions. We found the remains of where it had been launched but searched the deep mountain side jungle in vain for any unfired rockets. It is a tough job to hover a helicopter right on top of the trees trying to blow the branches aside in the hopes of getting a glimpse of the camouflaged rocket site. Mountain flying at that altitude is a challenge as the ship reacts to every little up and down draft and the wind currents are always tricky. It finally got too dark to work anymore, so we went home. For the next six days, the Scouts were grounded because our Blues were embroiled in a fight at the SF camp. Without the quick reaction force provided by our Blues, the CO wouldn't risk using the Scouts. Besides the NVA were easy to find all around Kontum. I felt sorry for the Blues. They had not been exposed to fighting from a fixed position and we were unable to extract them for several days.

Kontum was desperate for Infantry even though the entire 1/22nd Inf Bn and everything that the Special Forces B-24 command could scrape together were totally committed. D Troop quickly returned from Ban Me Thuot and consolidated with A and B Troop's Blues. These combined forces flushed any known or suspected VC or NVA from buildings within the city. Intense sniper and automatic weapons fire was received as they moved from house to house. D Troop was directly responsible for the successful defense of the SF camp and portions for the city during the TET 68 Offensive and was officially commended on several occasions by the B-24 commander. In 1970 the Rifle Platoons of A and B Troops plus all of D Troop were awarded a Valorous Unit Award for the period 30 Jan to 12 Feb. Al Iller provided a copy of the Recommendation for Presidential Unit Citation for the period 30 Jan - 5 Feb prepared by MAJ Bruce Wilder. This

document describes these events in considerable detail but has not been included in this history due to publishing deadlines. (Mike Law will correct this soon.) Finally, pages 157 and 158 in Winged Sabers contains several photos of these Infantry units during this period.

February 2, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for Headquarters Troop UH-1C #66-15034 flown by an un-named crew. The decoded details of the record state that this was a reconnaissance armed escort other aircraft mission, during the attack w/drw target area, they took four hits from 12.7mm and 7.62mm type SA/AW which hit the main rotor blade system, tail section, they continued flying and completed the mission, the helicopter was repaired in theater.

February 5, the VHPA Helicopter database has an accident record for B Troop OH-6A #65-12973, location An Khe. The crew of CPT R.S. Young and SP5 J.R. Ehrhartt had minor injuries. The decoded details of the record state that this was a combat mission and the accident summary states: At a 15-20 foot hover. aircraft experienced tail rotor failure and crashed. Suspect flex coupling failure.

February 6, the VHPA Helicopter database has an accident with injuries record for B Troop UH-1C #66-00730, location An Khe. The crew of CW3 B.C. Walton had minor injuries and the other crew member is not named. The decoded details of the record state that this was a combat mission and the accident summary states: Pilot attempted to land aircraft in revetment. Wind caught aircraft causing the tail rotor to hit the revetment. The aircraft spun to the right and hit the ground.

February 8, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for B Troop OH-6A #65-12987 flown by an un-named crew. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission, while at an altitude of 50 feet and 20 knots of airspeed, they took five hits from 7.62mm type SA/AW which hit the cyclic, cargo section, fuselage, they made a forced landing and modified the mission, the helicopter was repaired in theater and evacuated. The VHPA Helicopter database has a loss record for B Troop UH-1C #66-0730, at map coordinates YA702324 but no other details about this event were recorded.

February 9, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for B Troop UH-1C #66-0733 flown by an un-named crew. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission, during the attack approach target area, they took one hit from 7.62mm type SA/AW which hit the tail section, they continued flying and completed the mission, the helicopter was repaired in theater. The VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for C Troop UH-1C #66-0741 flown by an un-named crew. The decoded details of the record state that this was a direct combat support close air support mission, while attack at an altitude of 1000 feet and 80 knots of airspeed, they took two hits from 12.7mm type SA/AW which hit the main rotor blade system, they continued flying and completed the mission, the helicopter was repaired in theater. The VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for B Troop UH-1C #66-15004 flown by an un-named crew. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission, while with 90 knots of airspeed, they took one hit from 7.62mm type SA/AW which hit the tail section, they continued flying and completed the mission, the helicopter was repaired in theater. The VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record with injuries for C Troop UH-1C

#66-15039 flown by an un-named crew. One crew member was injured. The decoded details of the record state that this was a direct combat support close air support mission, during the attack approach to the target area, they took three hits from 12.7mm type SA/AW which hit the main rotor blade system, tail rotor system, bottom fuselage, they continued flying and aborted the mission. Finally on the 9th, the VHPA Helicopter database has an accident with injuries record for Headquarters Troop UH-1C #66-15034, location An Khe. The crew included the AC, CPT D.W. Halcomb, had minor injuries and the pilot was CW2 R.C. Wise. The decoded details of the record state that this was a combat mission and the accident summary states that the aircraft engine failed in flight. Pilot did not detect failure in time to make a successful autorotation. Autorotation at low altitude and RPM. Aircraft hit the ground tail low.

February 12, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for A Troop UH-1C #66-0647 flown by an un-named crew. The decoded details of the record state that this was a reconnaissance armed escort other aircraft mission, during the attack approach target area, they took three hits from 7.62mm type SA/AW which hit the left bottom cockpit, cargo section, engine comp, they continued flying and completed the mission, the helicopter was repaired in theater.

February 15, A Troop was directed to help a LRRP in contact that had one prisoner. They inserted the Blues and with the screen of aircraft quickly brought the situation under control. The Lift section then extracted all the ground elements.

February 16, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for B Troop UH-1H #66-16019 flown by an un-named crew. The decoded details of the record state that this was a direct combat support close air support mission, during the attack approach to the target area, they took three hits from 7.62mm type SA/AW which hit the right fuselage, they continued flying and completed the mission, the helicopter was repaired in theater.

February 17, the VHPA Helicopter database has an accident record for B Troop OH-6A #65-12993, location An Khe. The crew consisting of pilot WO1 R.M. Paulk and the CP WO1 J.F. Frechett both had minor injuries. The decoded details of the record state that this was a combat mission and the accident summary states that the aircraft was on a recon mission 15 feet above trees in low airspeed when aircraft began to spin to the right. Pilot tried to stop the spin with left pedal but the aircraft did not respond. Pilot pulled collective at the same time and the aircraft settled through trees damaging the tail boom.

February 18, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for B Troop UH-1C #66-15003 flown by an un-named crew, location Laos. The decoded details of the record state that this was a direct combat support command and control mission, while at an altitude of 100 feet and 80 knots of airspeed, they took two hits from 7.62mm type SA/AW which hit the canopy, tail section, they continued flying and completed the mission, the helicopter was repaired in theater.

February 19, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage and loss record for B Troop OH-6A #66-7861, in the tri-border area northwest of Kontum. The crew, pilots WO1 Stephen Cohan and WO1 Thomas Jon Moore and observer SSG David Harry Lewis were killed. The

decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission, while at an altitude of 50 feet and 35 knots of airspeed, they had more than 99 holes from 7.62mm type SA/AW which hit the tail section, they crashed and terminated the mission, the helicopter was lost to inventory and destroyed. Additional Details: During a VHPA Reunion someone wrote on the KIA records of the three soldiers LOH dipped and blew up about 30 feet off the trees. Additional information about this incident is requested.

February 20, while on a platoon size, aero-rifle mission, SP4 James L. West, of D Troop was killed while on flank security. The VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for B Troop Aircraft UH-1C #66-0731 flown by an un-named crew. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission, while at an altitude of 100 feet and 80 knots of airspeed, they took one hit from 7.62mm type SA/AW which hit the cargo section, they made a forced landing and modified the mission, the helicopter took-off and was repaired in theater.

February 21, A Troop Scouts found a network of caves with clothing laying outside. The Blues were inserted and made contact. After a few air strikes, the enemy broke contact and the Blues found two dead NVA and captured two weapons and twelve packs.

February 22, the Sqdn's combined Infantry force was inserted to sweep a bunker complex. They killed one NVA and captured an impressive amount of ammunition including land mines, B-40 rockets, mortar round, 75mm recoilless round, etc. The Scouts that screened for the Infantry killed two NVA attempting to get away.

February 23, D Troop was inserted to reinforce A Troop's Blues and they made contact with an estimated NVA Battalion. Six air strikes were employed and the Guns expended several times that day. The Lift inserted 4th Division units as further reinforcement. The Sqdn elements confirmed 23 NVA killed and 7 captured. 31 packs plus weapons and ammunition were recovered. The 7/17 Infantry remained on the ground that night.

February 24, an A Troop Scout was forced down, crashed and burned while covering for the Infantry. SP5 Joseph McCloy, flying as gunner on the LOH, was killed at map coordinates ZA191759. A Troop's Blues and D Troop started moving toward the crash site and B Troop's Blues were inserted to reinforce them. En route the Infantry made contact, returned fire, and killed 4 NVA and destroyed a machine gun. Contact was soon broken and the Infantry extracted. The VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage and loss record for OH-6A #66-7868 that states one person was killed in the incident. However, the VHPA has yet to learn the unit that owned this aircraft. Anyway with information about the SP5 McCloy's LOH is requested to contact the VHPA.

February 26, B Troop did a pre-planned insertion of the Blues who made light contact and killed 5 NVA. The Blues were extracted and the search continued. The Scouts discovered an area with 8 hootches plus some tunnels and laundry drying. The Blues went in again and found a hospital complex with 2 operating tables, some medical supplies and documents plus 1 dead and 1 wounded NVA. The wounded man said the complex was a 35 man hospital and thought there were 10 more wounded in the area. The Scouts found and killed one of the guards. Everything was lifted out and the complex destroyed.

February 29, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage and loss record for A Troop UH-1C #66-0725 flown by a partially-named crew, at map coordinate ZA062365 in Kontum Province. The crew included the AC, CPT P.A. Saunders, an unknown pilot, crew chief SP4 Ronnie Dean Schultz who was killed and the gunner PFC Michael F. Peters. In May, 1998 Mike Peters stated that they were hit by enemy fire while returning for fuel at Kontum, lost tail rotor, crashed into trees, came to rest on left side. He believed the helicopters was retrieved. The decoded details of the record state that this was a direct combat support close air support mission, while withdrawing from the target area, they took one hit from an unknown source which hit the tail rotor system, they crashed and terminated the mission, the helicopter was lost to inventory and destroyed.