

# 180th Assault Support Helicopter Company

This page is dedicated to W01 Ronald Jansinski, KIA, 1971. I served as Big Windy 18, from 1970-1971. It was my second tour and I served as one of the Maintenance Officers. I was a CW2 then. The 180th ASHC was located at Phu Hiep when I first arrived, but was later transferred to Tuy Hoa AFB. It was a medium lift helicopter unit, flying the CH-47C (Chinook).

## **FORWARD**

The 180th Assault Support Helicopter Company (CH-47) with its base camp at Phu Hiep Army Airfield continues, as it has since its arrival in the Republic of Vietnam, to render to Free World Military Assistance Forces the kind of high quality heavy lift support which enables them to meet the aggressor and defeat him on his own ground. The 180th prides itself on this ability to furnish steady, dependable support on a continuous basis to units throughout the II Corps Tactical Zone and through the professional "can do" attitude of all members past and present, the name of "Big Windy" has come to be known throughout the Republic of Vietnam.

## **CHAPTER I**

### **HERALDY**

#### **DESCRIPTION OF DISTINCTIVE UNIT INSIGNIA**

The "Big Windy" insignia consists of a circular white cloth patch, approximately 41 inches in diameter, embroidered in green and gold with black trim. It features the silhouette of the CH-47A "Chinook" helicopter in traditional Army Green. Gold lettering embroidered concentrically along the circumference announces the unit name: "180th Aslt Supt

Helicopter along the upper- edge and the name of its associated maintenance unit: "403rd T.C. Det" appears along the lower edge. The unit traditional call sign "BIG WINDY" and the unit motto "GOD IS OUR COPILOT" are concentrically embroidered in gold along the inner circumference.

This insignia is worn on the inner button of the right breast pocket by members of the 180th ASHC. Members of the 403rd T.C. Det wear this insignia on the inner button of the left breast pocket.

A commemorative plastic replica mounted upon a wooden plaque is presented to unit aviators and pilots prior to -their departure. This replica is suitably inscribed with the name of the recipient and the inclusive dates during which he served with either unit.

## CHAPTER II

The 180th Assault Support Helicopter Company (CH-47A) was constituted in the Regular Army on 16 July 1965 under the name of 180th Aviation Company (Medium Helicopter). It was activated at Fort Benning Georgia, on 17 March 1966 by General Order 99, Headquarters, Third U.S. Army, dated 16 March 1966. This same order also activated the 403rd Transportation Detachment (Medium Helicopter Field Maintenance). The authorized strength of these units was as follows:

	<b>Officers</b>	<b>Warrant Officers</b>	<b>Enlisted Men</b>	<b>Aggregate</b>
180th	13	25	148	186
403rd	1	1	80	82

LTC (then Major) Thomas F. Perkins, Artillery, became, the first commander of the 180th per Special Order 69, Headquarters 10th Aviation Group, dated 24 March 1966 and LTC

(then Major) Wallace L. Tate, TC, became the first commander of the 403rd.

The spring and summer of 1966 were devoted to organization and training. Personnel and equipment "ear-marked" for the 180th and 403rd began to arrive at Fort Benning. Training was conducted at an accelerated pace culminating in Training Operation "PERKINS" 1-5 August 1966. During this Field Training Exercise, both units demonstrated their readiness for deployment. While supporting the 2nd Battalion, 40th Artillery and D Troop, 17 Cavalry, the 180th flew 100 sorties, transporting 875 passengers and 44,000 pounds of cargo.

Following Training Operation "PERKINS" final preparations for overseas movement began in earnest. From 24 August to 6 September, the CH-47 helicopters were ferried from Fort Benning Georgia to Sharpe Army Depot, California., where they were readied for trans-shipment from Alameda. TOE equipment left Fort Benning by rail on 16 September for further surface shipment. This equipment arrived at Charleston, South Carolina, was loaded aboard the MSTS Gordon, and left for Southeast Asia on 19 September. On 1 October., the advance party consisting of Majors Rupert F. Glover and Allen M. Carlisle departed the United States by commercial aircraft. They were the first unit members to land in the Republic of Vietnam' arriving, on 4 October. On that same date, 3 officers; 3 warrant officers, and 25 enlisted men departed Alameda, California, with their aircraft aboard the MSTS Briton. From 14 thru 17 October, small groups of officers and men departed Warner Robbins AFB Macon, Georgia, aboard C-130 aircraft. All told, seven C-130 airplanes, two Liberty ships and one aircraft carrier were required for the move.

Initially the 180th and 403rd were assigned to the 10th Combat Aviation Battalion and located with their parent unit at Dong Ba Thin. Pilots and crew members were sent to the 179th Assault Support Helicopter Company in Pleiku and to aviation units of the 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile) in the An Khe

area to receive their "in-country" orientation. Meanwhile, through self-help, construction of billets and the layout of work areas at Dong Ba Thin progressed rapidly.

Upon arrival of the MSTs Briton at Vung Tau on 17 November, little time was wasted restoring the aircraft to flyable status. Working diligently and with forethought, the first mission-ready helicopters departed Vung Tau a scant forty-eight hours following their arrival in-country. By the time the sound of three twin-rotored helicopters flying-by in review over Flanders heliport was heard on 19 November, "Big Windy" flight crews had already completed a part of their first combat resupply mission. As

the helicopters departed Vung Tau, they were diverted to Saigon to ease a backlog of aircraft parts destined for units of the 17th Combat Aviation Group, thus., prior to becoming operational., the 180th Assault Support Helicopter Company (CH-47) delivered 85,000 pounds of aircraft parts-to units located at Ban Me Thuot, Pleiku, Qui Nhon, Nha Trang and Dong Ba Thin. An intensive unit training cycle was curtailed as the unit was deemed combat ready and declared operational on 1 December 1966.

### CHAPTER III

## COMMAND AND CONTROL

### **Commanders of the 180th Assault Support Helicopter Company (CH-47)**

1. LTC Thomas F. Perkins, Artillery, from 24-March 1965 to 1 April 1967.
2. LTC Wallace L. Tate, Transportation Corps, from 1 April 1967 to 3 October 1967.
3. LTC Francis E. Worth, Artillery. from 3 October 1967 to the present time.

During its activation and training period, the 180th Aviation Company (Med Hel) and the 403rd Transportation Detachment (141st Hel Fld Maint) were under the command and control of the 37th Aviation Battalion, 10th Aviation Group.

Effective 21 October 1966, the 180th and 403rd were assigned to the 17th Combat Aviation Group per General Order 770, Headquarters 1st Aviation Brigade, dated 1 November 1966. Both units were further assigned to the 10th Combat Aviation Battalion until 14 November 1967.>

From 15 November 1967 until now., the 180th and 403rd have been under the command and control of the 268th Combat Aviation Battalion; 17<sup>th</sup> Combat Aviation Group, 1st Aviation Brigade.>

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **UNIT OPERATIONS**

The 180th Assault Support Helicopter Company (CH-47) was deemed ready to assume its combat support roll and became operational in the Republic of Vietnam on 1 December 1966. From home base at Dong Ba Thin., the unit soon began to operate in the manner established by its parent unit, the 10<sup>th</sup> Combat Aviation Battalion who were already known as the "Vagabonds of Vietnam." Four aircraft were dispatched to Tuy Hoa to support units of the 101st Airborne Division engaged in Operation "GERONIMO." Two other "Chinook" helicopters and crews led by Major Morgan L. Phillips were assigned to support the Capital Infantry Division of the Republic of Korea at An Son. Since this was the first exposure of the "Tiger Division" to the CH-47, much time was expended in training and teaching proper cargo helicopter employment. Beginning on 7 December 1967, units of the 101st Airborne Division moved from Tuy Hoa to Kontum. "Big Windy's" helicopters followed along to provide tactical airlift support for Operation "PICKETT." Other unit

aircraft operating out of Dong Ba Thin were allocated on a daily basis to units ranging from Song Mao to Phan Thiet. Thus the 180th Aslt Spt Hel Co fell in step with the 10th CAB's Vagabond march. "Big Windy" was selected to transport the Bob Hope Troupe from nearby Cam Ranh Air Force Base to Cam Ranh Army Airfield. CPT Fred Hope., unit Administrative Officer; piloted the aircraft which transported his namesake. Christmas was celebrated by many members of the unit at the Christmas tree celebration of the little town of Hoa Tan. About 350 children and their parents attended the festivities. The officers and men of the 180th provided candy and presents for the children who, in turn, presented native dances for the entertainment of members of the 180th. In the words of Father Tran Thuc Dinh., Hoa Tan parish priest., the 180th was "Daddy Noel." Thus began the 180th's Community Relations program, During its first operational month., the 180th logged 805 flying hours, transporting 2,635 tons of cargo., and 10,935 passengers.

Beginning in January 1967, increased airlift support was provided for the Capital Infantry Division of the Republic of Korea and support of the 101st Airborne Division continued. On Saturday, January 25th., the 180th held its first company picnic-beach party. As expected, the enlisted men trounced the officers at volleyball. "The Nads" a musical group consisting of Captains Kelly, Muller and Wilson provided entertainment with their inimitable renditions of original songs. Each of their selections was rewarded with applause and shouted encouragement such as : "Go-Nads!" Their parodies panning everyone and everything ranging from "Windy Six" to "The Song Contest" were instrumental in developing the "playing" portion of "Big Windy's" hard-working and hardplaying reputation.

In February, the 180th continued to extend its support activities from Cu Chi to Tuy Hoa. Ten aircraft aided in the rapid movement of troops and munitions during Operation "JUNCTION CITY" in the northern Mekong Delta sector.

Support of the 101st Airborne Division ranged from Bao Lac to Phan Thiet. As the month drew to a close the 101st moved northward toward Song Mao. Three helicopters requiring extensive 3rd echelon maintenance remained at Phan Thiet where two aft swash plates and one forward transmission were changed. Members of the 403rd Transportation Detachment utilizing equipment no more sophisticated than a davit, performed these field maintenance tasks in an outstanding manner despite the most adverse field conditions. Specialist Six Kivler distinguished himself by performing an engine change in the field aided and abetted only by the Maintenance Officer. Simultaneously, the unit was ordered to move north in order to be in a better location from which to support forthcoming operations. On February 24th, the land-tail, under the command of Major Leonard L. McLaughlin, arrived at Tuy Hoa. The one-day trip from Dong Ba Thin was outstandingly successful in that not a single vehicular breakdown occurred. The difficulties inherent in operating and maintaining aircraft at four different locations were compounded by the needs of building a new cantonment. With undaunted spirit, all officers and men became carpenters, plumbers, electricians, and tinsmiths. Although many of our aircraft were flown by blistered hands, our combat support mission never faltered. Our construction project progressed at a rapid pace.

Through March, as the 101st probed deeper into its area of operations near Song Mao during Operation "FARRAGAUT" the 180th continued to refine and improve its service. Working with the full cooperation of the 2/230th artillery, a standardized loading plan to move an artillery battery was developed. By deleting all mixed loads and transporting all equipment externally, the time required to relocate an artillery battery was reduced considerably. Support of the Capital and 9th Infantry ROK Divisions engaged in Operation "OH JOCK YO" saw many troop moves of more than 500 persons per day. On two occasions, 1,175 and 1,246 troops were transported. The monthly total of 17,833 passengers

transported established a new high for the unit. After having seen action in the Song Mao, Phan Rang, and Tuy Hoa areas, a contingent moved to Khahn Duong on 28 March to kick-off Operation "SUMERALL."

From 28 March until 6 May, the 180th assisted the "Screaming Eagles" as they maneuvered through Khanh Hoa Province. Limited support was extended to the 9th ROK "WHITE HORSE" Infantry Division as they continued their regimental size operations to clear and open Highway 1 near Ninh Hoa. A CH-47 piloted by Captain Kelly received a few rounds of rifle fire while landing in a "secure" landing zone southeast of Ninh Hoa.

As the "Screaming Eagles" moved to Duc Pho on 6 May, the 180th was given the task of providing general airlift support for the 22nd, 23rd and 24th ARVN Divisions in the II ARVN Corps area. Base camp was established at Ban Me Thuot. Insertion and extraction ladder training was given to units of the "White Horse" Division by the 180th's Chinook Aviation Briefing team assisted by members of the 10th Combat Aviation Pathfinders. The advance party of the 268th Combat Aviation Battalion arrived at Phu Hiep. The 180th acted as host company and provided billeting and messing facilities as well as vehicular support for the new unit. The CH-47 ramp revetment program was initiated. According to some party experts, the "Social Event of the Year" was held on 24 May 1967. The "Hook Lounge," featuring an original bamboo bar, provided the setting of the grand farewell for Colonel Marr of the 17<sup>th</sup> Combat Aviation Group. The ladies of the 91st Evacuation Hospital (SMBL) added the charm of their voices and the glamour of their round eyes to the festivities. On May 29th, the general support mission at Ban No Thuot was terminated and the base camp was closed. Four aircraft were allocated to provide direct support to the 179<sup>th</sup> Assault Support Helicopter Company in Pleiku. Led by Major "Tac" Baldwin, the flight of four Chinooks left a misty Ban Me Thuot and proceeded toward a very rainy Pleiku. Two of the helicopters piloted by CW3's Anderson and Flohr sustained



a few rounds of small arms fire near the road junction north of Plei Do Lim. The other two helicopters piloted by Major Baldwin and CW3 Murray were forced to fly at reduced speed by their heavy internal loads. Choosing to fly "nap-of-the-earth" at reduced speeds dictated avoidance of main travel arteries. Although by doing so these two aircraft avoided enemy fire., they were forced to land at Hensel Army Airfield by an extremely low ceiling and visibility. After a one-hour visit with the "Shamrocks" of the 4th U.S. Infantry Division, the weather improved and the two helicopters were able to proceed to Holloway Army Airfield.

The first task assigned to the Pleiku group consisted of transporting 200 tons of rice from Kontum to Dak Pek, a distance of approximately 50 miles. Compounding the difficulties posed by adverse weather conditions was the problem of refueling since the only facility was located at Dak To, midway between Kontum and Dak Pek. Despite torrential rains, this task was completed expeditiously without mishap. During the month of June, the four helicopters at Pleiku logged 375 flying hours, transporting 4,762 troops and delivering 1,357 tons of cargo. Meanwhile, in the "White Horse" (9<sup>th</sup> ROK Infantry) Division area, numerous combat assaults and combat support missions were being flown, "in-country" indoctrination of seven aviators and 20 enlisted crew members of the 205<sup>th</sup> ASHC was conducted. Despite a 50% turnover of aviators, the 180<sup>th</sup> ASHC achieved a new high flying hour total of 959 hours.

July saw previous high performance totals eclipsed. Statistics for the month included 1,029 flying hours; 4,457 tons of cargo; and 14,674 passengers. General support in the Central Highlands was terminated on 7 July. The return of personnel and aircraft from Pleiku marked the first time this unit has been together since May 6<sup>th</sup>. The stage was set to raise the curtain on Operation "HONG KIL DONG". Two Korean Divisions,

the 9<sup>th</sup> and the Capital Infantry Division, on 9 July, launched their most extensive combat airmobile assault since their arrival in-county. The 180<sup>th</sup>'s Chinooks played a key role in providing the rapid mobility required for this fast-moving search and destroy operation. Relocating units in the Tuy Hoa-Cung Song-Dong Tre area as dictated by their fluid tactical situation, flying operations continued at a record -setting pace throughout the month. CW3 Rex C. Flohr and CW2 Richard N. Woodward successfully executed a forced landing in the vicinity of Chap Chai mountain. During takeoff, a loud noise was heard followed by a severe vibration throughout the airframe. The immediate application of emergency procedures resulted in a swift, safe landing without additional damage to the aircraft.