Note: From Leslie Hines Americal Division Veteran’s Association Vietnam era historian.

The Americal Division Veteran’s Association is grateful to Mr. Steve Stone for sharing the images of his 1969-70 176th Assault Company Helicopter unit album with veterans of the Americal Division. Mr. Stone was a pilot in the 176th AHC in 1969-70.
176th Assault Helicopter Company Unit History

The 176th Aviation Company (Airmobile) became activated 1 October 1966 at Ft. Benning, Georgia by Third Army General Order 308. The same General Order brought about the formation of the 411th Transportation Detachment and the 45th Signal Detachment, the two subordinate units assigned to provide direct support to the company. (The two support units have since been taken into the 176th and made an integral part of the company). The 176th and its detachments were under the command of the 44th Aviation Battalion, 10th Aviation Group.

Shortly after being formed the company moved to the field for a series of tactical training exercises. It was during this time that the company experienced a great drawback in losing the majority of its pilots to other units already being deployed to Vietnam. Within a short time the company was again up to strength and prepared to undertake its mission, to provide aviation support to free world military forces in the Republic of Vietnam.

When orders finally arrived, the twenty-eight UH-1 series helicopters were flown to the west coast for shipment overseas while the remainder of the company boarded C141 transports at Lawson Army Airfield and some 12,000 miles later arrived at Tuy-Hoa Air Force Base, Republic of Vietnam.

Here the men of the 176th were faced with a dual role: that of conducting aviation in-country training and constructing a base of operations. The advance party arrived on 8 February 1967. After being assigned to the 17th Aviation Group, 44th Aviation Battalion at Lane Army Heliport, the party began to establish a base camp at Phu-Hiep, five miles south of Tuy-Hoa. On 16 February 1967 the main body began arriving to include aircraft and TOE equipment. Under the command of LTC Harry T. McDaniel the task of unloading and accounting for all equipment and material was accomplished along with the construction of twelve living quarters, a mess hall large enough to feed 300 men, and buildings for an orderly room, operations, and a maintenance area.

Meanwhile, training programs were established for air crews to fly with other companies of the 44th Aviation Battalion. This provided for instruction and planning of airmobile assaults, aerial gunnery tactics, as well as orientation for crew chiefs and door gunners. On 8 March 1967 LTC McDaniel led Minutemen aircraft and crews on their first combat assault in conjunction with the 174th Assault Helicopter Company.

On 25 March 1967, after having flown some 2200 sorties in over 600 combat hours, the 176th Aviation Company was declared Operationally Ready thus proving that 176th men had met the challenge of a near impossible task and were ready to undertake the company’s mission.

The first operation in which the 176th was involved was with the 9th ROK (White Horse) Infantry Division. During the short time the Minutemen supported the White Horse Division, the 176th provided command and control and utility aircraft throughout the Korean area of operations adjacent to Minh-Hoa. While participating in operation Beak Ma II and operation Ojackyo the unit encountered its first experiences with troop repelling due to the hazard of landing zones located on sharp ridges and razorback ridge lines. Both operations proved to be successful and were performed without any major difficulties.

The Minutemen continued with Operation Ojackyo with the Capitol Division from 14 April 1967 to 6 May 1967. At the same time the company moved its base of operations to Lane Army Heliport. Here the Minutemen trained five Korean
aviators and familiarized them with the complexities of airmobile assault techniques. The company also participated in lesser operations with both Free World Military Forces and Republic of Vietnam military forces. At the termination of support for the Capitol Division the unit returned to the base camp at Phu-Hiep for a period of maintenance and preparation for the next move.

The beginning of May 1967 brought orders for the 176th to provide aviation support to the 1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division. On 9 May an advance party consisting of the commanding officer with representatives from supply and maintenance proceeded to Duc Pho to coordinate with the Screaming Eagles. At this time final plans were made for movement of the company and loading got under way at Tuy-Hoa. The equipment to be moved was convoyed to Vung Roo Bay, put aboard LST's and landed on the beach at Duc Pho. The entire move from Phu-Hiep was completed in four days and living quarters were established at Eagles' Nest when the main body arrived on 11 May 1967.

LTC McDaniel was called home unexpectedly on emergency leave on 31 May 1967, and MAJ. Donald W. Phillips assumed command of the company on 12 June 1967.

The 101st Airborne Division moved into the mountains west of Duc Pho on Operation Malheur II with the Minutemen providing aircraft for command and control, utility missions, combat assaults; the Muskets, the armed helicopter platoon, provided close air support, along with reconnaissance capabilities on a 24-hour basis. Upon the successful completion of Operation Malheur II on 1 August 1967, the Minutemen with the assistance of the 14th Aviation Battalion, heli-lifted the 101st to the mountains and river valleys west of Quang Ngai on Operation River. At this time until the termination of the operation on 13 August 1967, the 176th maintained a flare ship with a light fire team of gunships at Quang-Ngai airstrip as a quick reaction force to assist the paratroopers at night.

Following completion of Hood River, the Minutemen and Muskets began operation Benton by lifting the Screaming Eagles in an all-day operation to Chu Lai where the individual battalions air-assaulted an operational area west of Tam-Ky previously held by the Viet Cong. At the same time the 176th rear base camp was moved to Chu Lai, the Headquarters of Task Force Oregon, now the Americal Division. The company supported the paratroopers on various search and destroy missions until 29 August 1967, when the 101st again moved to Duc Pho.

On 1 September 1967, working out of the Special Forces Camp at Ha-Thanh, the Minutemen with the assistance of the 14th Aviation Battalion participated in lifting one battalion of Screaming Eagles on Operation Raid. This was an all day attempt, utilizing quick-strike capabilities to release South Vietnamese prisoners from a Viet Cong prison compound in the mountains southwest of Quang-Ngai. The operation was successfully completed without the loss of a single aircraft or any major incidents.

Operation Cook brought the Minutemen and the airborne together in the mountains northwest of Quang-Ngai between 4 September and 9 September. This short search and destroy mission was followed by a massive airlift of the brigade back to Chu Lai for Operation Wheeler on 11 September 1967. This operation was conducted through small unit tactics, blocking forces, and quick-reaction airmobile assaults in the mountains northwest of Tam-Ky up to the Que-Son Valley.

At this time the 176th with its supporting elements returned to Chu Lai to establish a base at the Ky Ha Heliport. The move completed on 15 September 1967, utilizing organic air combined with a road march of unit vehicles. The Minutemen provided continuous aviation support throughout the period in spite of the maintenance and operational difficulties created by such a move.
Between 20 and 27 November 1967, the 176th began withdrawing the 1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division from the field for their move to Phan-Rang. Their area of operations was taken over by the 196th Light Infantry Brigade. The 198th Light Infantry Brigade, which had recently arrived in-country, was assigned mission of conducting operations in the Chu Lai TAOR. The 176th Aviation Company's missions with this unit have been mainly, to include airmobile operations for the security elements of the Chu Lai Defense Command, close air support for convoys from Tam-Ky to Quang-Ngai, as well as the ever present command and control and combat cargo carrier aircraft.

On 3 November MAJ. Donald W. Phillips took command of the 198th Aviation Section as well as S-3 air section and MAJ Paul E. Jackson assumes command of the 176th Aviation Company, coming to the unit from the 14th Aviation Battalion Staff.

During the months of December and January the Minutemen supported the 198th in operation Muscatine along with other forces of the Americal Division in the Chu Lai area from Quang-Ngai to Tam-Ky.

On 4 December 1967 the 176th Aviation Company began providing two UH-1D's and their crews for the support of the 5th Special Forces Group. These ships worked out of Da Nang and rotated crews after a period of one week TDY. Their work was of a classified nature and their missions has recently been assumed by the Armed Helicopter Platoon, who provide a light fire team for the Green Berets.

Other Minutemen ships began supporting the III Marine Amphibious Force on Operation Prairie Fire as well as working for the 196th Light Infantry Brigade.

With the beginning of 1968, the 176th under the command of Major Paul E. Jackson, continued its support of the Americal Division with operation Muscaine, (20 Dec 67-10 Jun 68).

In April 1968, the command of the 176th was turned over to Major Jerry N. Tuttle. Under his command the unit participated in operations Burlington Trail (Quang-Tin), and Pocahotas Forest, both ending 31 July 1968.

Beginning with the 12th of May 1968, the Minutemen were involved with one of the most important rescue missions they have taken part in; the evacuation of troops from Kham Duc. North Vietnamese regulars had moved in and all but taken over the Kham Duc Airfield within a period of three days. The 176th along with several other helicopter companies played a major part in the rescue of hundreds of American troops and Vietnamese civilians.


The change of command of the 176th went, in February 1969, to Major Ronald C. Metcalf. Under his direction the unit began operation Fayette Canyon for units of the 196th Light Infantry Brigade and operation Russell Beach for the 196th Light Infantry Brigade, which the latter has just been completed in August 1969.

In the month of August 1969, Major O. R. Hite assumed command of the 176th Minutemen and at present continues to lead them, as in the past, with that extra ability found only in Minutemen Commanders. As to be expected, the 176th Assault Helicopter Company continues to excell in its high degree of mission readiness and accomplishment.
Major O. R. Hite
Inf, Commanding Officer

Capt TC Gibert E. Boen Executive Officer

1Sgt Victor R. Byrer, you know its an article is for taking my picture don't you.
My next lecture will be "the value of education in today's army."

What do you mean you had guard yesterday?

What's going on here?

I'd rather be in Philadelphia

Speed Kills
Presenting awards

That helicopter just fell on one of your men

Biggy Rat

Getting a few points

Atten' Hut

The big brass
I'd rather fly

Operations Officer

I'd sure like to be a door gunner

Shortimer

Stand at attention troop

They voted me most Popular Officer?
Anybody need a test pilot?

Yes, I'm a new guy

Big "D"

Yep, Lund Messed up the guard roster again

They said I was going to Puerto Rico

Where's my R & R Orders
O.K. Men, Who stole my Cigars.

Let's see, E-6 shouldn't be that hard to make.

Repeat 'her' name again please.
Already for inspection

Landscape a Bunker?

A purple heart for what?

And now for two hours of uninterrupted music

The only way to get ahead

Minuteman, man
If we don't hang together, we'll hang separately.

It's a Deal.

Sorry, no checks.

Tool Room.

I'm a Civilian.

What does avionics mean?
Bring me your poor, your ragged, your hungry

A Hammer for every job

Number, please

Dinner and a movie? I'd love to
No, I'm not a stock boy

Control tower

Boy this Army's alright

Returning from a CA

Put finish line right here

Left-off
I'd fly a mile for a Camel.

It'll do 200mph in the quarter.

You outta here then run when we get through with them.

All right, we'll race Ya. $5.00 a year.

Breakin in a new guy.

Elephant at work.
Maintenance Crew

Overlooking 176th Flight Line

We all look a like don't we!
Let's see ya do a wheelie

Has anybody seen a turbine engine flying around

Unscheduled at work

"Flyboys"

He won't set still

Boy, I sure wish I knew how to fly this thing.
Out on the Flight Line.

It's the inside one, too.

Has anybody seen my crewchief?

Rumble seat.

Ya, I'm tough, what a gonna do about it?
1ST Flight

Our group had 45% fewer casualties

Police call

Scientific head modification

It will too fly!

Sorry, I only go as far as the gate
I think the collective got a hit.

This armoured seat is uncomfortable

Tell me it's not a Mig

15 confirms

CPT Lonnie of the space cadets

Anybody need a Lift
Tijuana Brass

Free jeep for everybody

With this wrench we can do anything

I just lost the torque wrench

Which one's the driver?

Why can't everybody be the same size
176th Rent-a-trailer

Comradeship

Ready, Aim

Wrecking crew

A rocket for every occasion

PSP Detail
Tomorrow I get a bunk

Contact!

He called you a lifer

Gunship

Would you believe steak?

Tell me all about it
Do you hear something knockin

How could you have 5 aces

Smile!

Just call me Aviation

Sun's even bright in the Mess Hall

Let's take a break

Big decision

I think it's alive
Getting the point across

Ya, ya, we're workin on it

Bird's cage

XO giving it personal attention

Give us a week and we'll completely rebuild it.

Providing death and destruction 24 hours a day
Mess Steward

Boy, he sure isn't camera shy

The Mess Hall clan

We'd rather fight than cook

Wanna beer?
You know, some people get mad when you say bad things about the Army.

You really expect us to eat this, don't you.

I think I just ate my spoon.

What the Hell?!

So what if I'm a Lifer.
How'bout some of you guys movin' out.

Those rockets sure leave a big hole don't they.
Who put the "Hic" in the food.

You call this food (Blah!!)

A toast to the cooks
I think we got this place figured out

He's the lifer, I'm not

Did I ever tell you 'bout the time I did my thing

Boy I'd like to get a hold of her

I tried to 1049 but they won't let me
It looks like gravy, but it smells like salad dressing.

S is for Sandbag.

We're proud of our 3/4

What goods self service when you don't get your choice of food.

Another maintenance failure.
What's a SP5 doing in the Em Club?

Is that a peace sign, or does he want another cigarette.

The easy life
War's Hell

I think it's incomin

Man this foods good

No, we always sit at this table

Say cheese

Boy am I short
Mother will sure be proud of us.

All this in one A.O.?
That looks good. What's a mortar attack anyway?

I didn't see that. Who needs a radio in a chopper anyway?

What's happening, brother?
MAJ. Metcalf

MAJ. Hite

1SG Byrer

Captain Boen
Graphics portrayed were developed using materials from the United States National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency and were reproduced with permission. Images are not for resale or commercial use. The images were down-loaded from the Texas Tech Vietnam Center web-site. Locations were marked on the maps based on the information provided by Americal Division Veterans and reports obtained from the National Archives.
Graphics portrayed were developed using materials from the United States National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency and were reproduced with permission. Images are not for resale or commercial use. The images were downloaded from the Texas Tech Vietnam Center website. Locations were marked on the maps based on the information provided by Americal Division Veterans and reports obtained from the National Archives.