

The following information is taken from the historical document of the 52<sup>nd</sup> Combat Aviation Bn. I have extracted from it all information pertaining to **Operation Gibraltar**

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

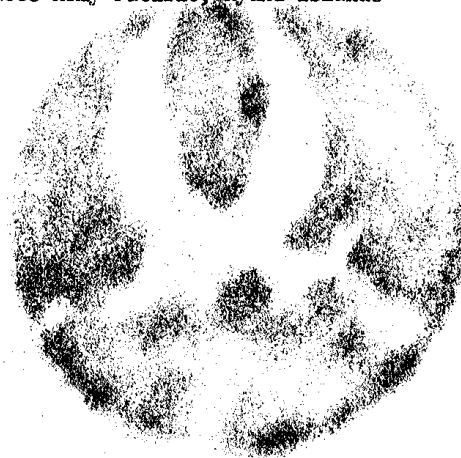
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From 24 August to 28 September the 52d Aviation Battalion had the mission of providing two airmobile companies with a control (battalion) headquarters for Operation Ramrod/Highland. The purpose of the operation was to secure Route 19 from Qui Nhon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

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

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

Damage assessment revealed the 117th now had 5 flyable UH1D's, 4 UH1B's(A), A/502d had 7 flyable UH1B's, 5 UH1B's(A) and the Marine had only one flyable CH-34. The Marine unit was no longer effective and was released by the CO, 52d Aviation Battalion.

A third lift was initiated with a total troop capacity of 52. Due to the heavy fire around the primary LZ, an alternate LZ was selected about 600 meters south. On this lift, 6 aircraft from the 117th were hit and 5 from A/502d. One helicopter of the 117th was downed in the LZ and the crew was evacuated. At the end of the 3d lift the 117th Avn Co had 1 flyable UH1D and 3 flyable UH1B's(A). A/502d had 4 flyable UH1B's and 4 UH1B's(A). The battalion suffered personnel losses of 1 KIA and 6 WIA. Troop lift capability had been reduced at this point to approximately 22 troops. At approximately 0900 the CO, 52d Aviation Battalion notified the CO, 1st Bde, that his unit was no longer effective and could not continue the troop lift. It was released at this time.

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

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



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

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

SEPTEMBER:

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

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

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

