



# **220th Aviation Company**

**(Surveillance Airplane Light)**  
**(Reconnaissance Airplane)**  
**(Utility Airplane)**



"Catkillers" and Family, and all Friends and brothers in Arms, in memory of those who have served.

## **A PLATOON COMMANDER'S REPORT**



### **CAPTAIN WILLIAM 'BILL' E. EVERETT** **Catkiller 16, 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon Commander**

#### **MISSION PILOTS:**

**Robert 'Pop' E. Richards, CPT, Section Commander**  
**Stuart 'Stu' A. Miller, CPT, Section Commander**  
**Charles 'Charlie' R. Welsh, CPT**  
**Thomas 'Tom' E. Batten Jr., 1LT**  
**Monty B. Price, 1LT**  
**Arnold 'Arnie' J. Roebuck, 1LT**  
**William 'Bill' D. Welch Jr., 1LT**  
**Ronald 'Ron' M. Fero, WO**  
**Ronald L. Grooms, 1LT—on loan from 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon at Hue**

#### ***Preface: A Typical Platoon Monthly Report for the Company Operations Historical Summary***

However, Bill said that he was/is a terrible writer—so the original handwritten report was by a LT as dictated by Bill—the signature is Bill's...

When the 220<sup>th</sup> was spread from the 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon in Quang Ngai to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon in Da Nang and with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon in Hue and the Company Headquarters and Operations in Phu Bai, communication of any kind particularly with the 1<sup>st</sup>

Platoon was often difficult at best. If the distance away was not bad enough, Hai Van Pass between Da Nang and Phu Bai impeded radio communication; the Viet Cong frequently cut land lines and Mother Nature's weather added her handicap to our being able to 'reach out and touch or talk to each other' much of the time. Frequently, to get daily operational reports, radio relay had to be used through Da Nang – often with an aircraft in the air at all three locations – with someone in the back seat to copy the messages. In addition to the daily reports Platoon Commanders were requested to submit a monthly summary of their operations and significant events from which some entries were included in the Unit's Annual Report for the Unit History. During the first few early months the southern provinces covered by the 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon were quite active. It might also be assumed that the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoons submitted similar reports; however, only this report (handwritten) was among the things located (and retrieved) from the National Archives files by Stuart Miller, a former Section Commander of the 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon, when he visited there in 1990.

## “1<sup>ST</sup> PLATOON QUANG NGAI MONTHLY REPORT

NOVEMBER 1965:

The month of November was a busy one for the First Platoon. Included in the months activities were seven large operations supported; the finding of three “lost” patrols, two of those at night; Naval Gunfire missions at night for defensive fires; flying over four outposts overrun by VC; flying registration missions for the Chu Lai Batteries: several airstrikes called in on VC found during normal VR's; plus all of the flying connected with the VR program and support of a division. Bad weather prevented us from doing more.

The first day of the month Lieutenant Welch received a VC round through the baggage compartment of his aircraft and conducted an airstrike that resulted in the death of one of the snipers west of Quang Ngai airfield. During a normal VR on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of November, Captain Richards spotted 50 VC moving along a trail south of Tra Bong. He requested an airstrike and kept the VC under surveillance until jets arrived. Later in the month Captain Richards repeated the above performance at nearly exactly the same location. The VC seems to use this trail less frequently than previous.

Late in the afternoon of the 14<sup>th</sup>, Tra Bong Special Forces Camp sent in a request for an O1-F to find a lost patrol that had been ambushed and unheard from for five hours. After two hours of night flying, Lieutenant Price succeeded in making contact with the patrol and relaying its position back to camp. Two Australians had been KIA in the ambush. *[Note 1]*

Hiep Duc Outpost was overrun the night of the 17<sup>th</sup> and we began flying for the relief force; a task that was to last eleven days. The morning of the 18<sup>th</sup> Lieutenant Welch's aircraft was again hit, this time by twelve rounds at once, as he flew over Hiep Duc. His observer, Lieutenant Tran, was wounded slightly in the face and left hand and Lieutenant Welch received minute particles of shrapnel in his elbow. Both persons were flying the next day. Also on the 18<sup>th</sup>, two outposts were overrun just across the river from Quang Ngai, both within two miles of the compound. *[Note 2]*

The 22<sup>nd</sup> of the month saw the VC launch a full-scale daylight attack against the ARVN 37<sup>th</sup> Ranger Battalion at Trach Tru. The Rangers were in immediate danger of being overrun when our O-1F's, Air Force Bird dogs, and A1-E's from Qui Nhon broke through the 400-foot ceilings and brought massed firepower against the VC in the open. Two destroyers were moved close offshore immediately and NGF conducted from our aircraft cost the VC many lives. We flew over Trach Tru the next two days and nights, adjusting NGF, performing Forward Air Control (FAC) for USMC gunships, and keeping a constant watch on VC movement.

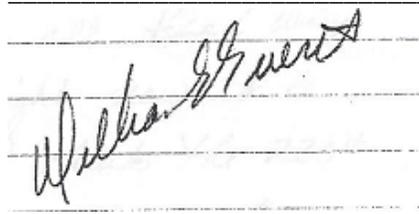
The night of the 24<sup>th</sup> a call for help once more came to the First Platoon. A RF Unit had lost contact with its command element during an engagement with the VC. Lieutenant Batten took off and together with Captain Richards flew all night locating and covering the element until daylight when they made it back to friendly lines. When Batten first located the element it was completely surrounded by VC and the radio operator had to whisper to avoid detection.

Due to the many actions at once around Quang Ngai, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon sent Lieutenant Ron Grooms down to help us out. However, it rained almost constantly the three days he was here and little flying was accomplished by anyone.

The month of November has ended with the First Platoon becoming more entrenched in the respect of the advisors at Quang Ngai. The Senior Advisor has utmost faith in us and many of the advisors have told us our aircraft are the best thing they can ask for in an operation. We will continue to earn and hold this respect.”

[signed]

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**NOTE 1:** Tra Bong, located in Tra Bong District, Quang Tri Province, was opened and closed by TDY teams from 1<sup>st</sup> Special Forces Group (A). A team from the Australian Army Training Team Vietnam (AATTV) reopened the camp about 28 August 1965. Mixed AATTV, USASF teams ran the camp until the first PCS Detachment (which had been A703 until it was transferred to 5th SFGA) took over the camp in January 1966. It was re-designated A-107. Tra Bong was converted to 61st Border Ranger [*Defense Battalion*] on or about 31 August 1970.



TRA BONG SPECIAL FORCES CAMP



Tra Bong Airstrip  
Photo Courtesy Of Troy Duplessis

**Note 2: USMC Narrative:**

**Abandonment of Hiep Duc information for MAG-16 ,VMO-6, MAG-36  
Quang Tin Province, I Corps, Hiep Duc, South Vietnam:**

The official USMC history starts that after reports of the attack on Hiep Duc reached Da Nang, Marine Phantoms and Skyhawks arrived over Hiep Duc and conducted strikes. At the same time, MAG-16 and MAG-36 prepared to lift two ARVN battalions into the area.

**COL O'Connor**, the MAG-16 CO, and **LTC Zitnik**, the CO of VMO-6, made an early morning reconnaissance flight to look the area over and select the LZ. **O'Connor** recalls: *The area was ominously quiet. We didn't see a living soul. There was much evidence of the fight the day before. The typical triangular shaped French fortification in the village had been penetrated in several places. There were several corpses hanging on barbed wire around a few of the outposts across the Song Thu Bon.* The ARVN commander selected a small hill about 80 meters high and about 700 meters from the village; as the LZ because they believed all the open areas would be ambushed. The lift was organized from Tam Ky. The LZ was a small, two-ship area on the western end of a ridgeline that contained some peaks over 200 meters high.

Unknown to the allies, the VC had emplaced 12.7mm machine gun positions for the NVA 195th AA Battalion on the high hills, which dominated the LZ. The enemy gunners allowed the first two helicopters to land and then opened fire on the following waves. **COL O'Connor** stated: *The enemy were actually firing down on the landing helicopter and several were hit. It soon became obvious that we had to knock out those guns on the peak or suffer unacceptable helicopter losses. I stopped the helicopter flights, and directed them to circle their positions about 3 miles east of the hill. Then, A-4's and F-4's began a thorough neutralization of the gun positions under control of some Army light fixed-wing aircraft [emphasis added—these aircraft were from the 220<sup>th</sup> Aviation Company's 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon at Quang Ngai]. We took the risk of stopping the lift because we had less than a company in the zone. Enemy ground movement was observed after the first helicopter landed as the enemy displaced from their original positions around the open areas and moved into the village toward the LZ.'*

VMO-6 gunships and USMC jets struck the enemy as they moved. After the 20-minute halt, the insert resumed. Although the VC ground forces were converging on the LZ, the Marines were able to land a superior force without further opposition.

For this operation, the Marines had employed 30 UH-34s, 17 were hit, and 3 badly damaged. One Marine crewman was KIA and three others WIA. The relief force had its work cut out for it, but with Marine close air support and determined fighting, the ARVN gained the advantage.

By the end of the 19th, the ARVNs reoccupied Hiep Duc but the 1st VC Regt still controlled the critical terrain to the northwest. The two ARVN battalions killed 141 VC and captured 87 weapons while suffering 33 KIA and 73 WIA. The American advisor with the ARVN estimated the Marine air support had accounted for another 300 VC KIA.

While I Corps decided to re-garrison Hiep Duc, the NVA attacked the outpost at Thach Tru and the ARVN command had no choice but to pull the two battalions from Hiep Duc and thus abandon the district capital.“

*The source for this information was USMC 65 P. 98: <http://www.vhpa.org/KIA/panel/battle/65111801.HTM>*

*Transcribed and arranged by Dennis D. Currie, Assistant Editor, Catkillers.org*