

The OV-1 Mohawk in Vietnam

by Dave Collar

I have bought from this guy. He is a Warrant Officer in Electronic Intelligence

Dave—
Didn't you fly
a Mohawk in
VN?

Aviation units are the source of some of the most flamboyant pocket patches. Although constituting a small segment of the aviation community, Army fixed-wing units have contributed their share of these patches. Given the time that has passed since the end of the war, coupled with their individualistic and difficult designs, collectors often find it difficult to identify the patches these units produced in Vietnam.

I was lucky enough to be able to trace two patches worn by OV-1 Mohawk surveillance aircraft units in Vietnam all the way to their creator while doing research for my unit's Official History upon our return from the Gulf War (1). In truth, this was no great feat of research: it was handed to me on a olive drab platter.

The 131st Aviation Company

The 131st Aviation Company was activated on June 1, 1966, having its origins in the 20th ASTA (Aerial Surveillance and Target Acquisition Detachment). This unit was created on July 1, 1965 at Fort Riley, Kansas and moved to Nha Trang, Vietnam on October 23, 1965 as part of 1st Aviation Brigade, working directly for the Military Advisory Command, Vietnam (MACV). The Mohawk unit became the 131st Aviation Company (Aerial Surveillance) as the unit moved from Nha Trang to Hue Phu Bai, the second Mohawk unit in the Army. This was the second unit to use the designation 131, as an aerial weapons company of the 227th Aviation Battalion formed on July 1, 1965 at Fort Benning used the number until the Battalion switched to lettered companies, at which time the number was placed on the inactive list until being reissued to the Mohawk unit. When the 20th ASTA became the 131st, its First Sergeant, ISG Monico (first name unknown) designed its distinctive insignia (2). Since many of the 131st missions were flown at night, he selected a "Nighthawk", and this design became the pocket patch and tail marking for all aircraft. It was also stenciled or painted on any suitable pallet, from drop tanks to the hanger roof. Unlike many insignia, which are selected by "the brass" and forced on a unit's members, the Nighthawk appeared to be hugely popular. A photograph of one of the first pocket



131st Aviation Company pocket patch

patches, possibly the prototype, was included in the first unit history, from the end of 1966. This first patch is entirely hand made in the distinctive "Silk Stitch" or "Slip Stitch" used by local Vietnamese manufacturers, and it appears to be made on green light canvas equipment cover, always common around an aviation unit, with the green cloth left showing behind the hawk and scroll. The scroll is white with black letters; the hawk is black with yellow talons and beak; and the eyes are accented in red. Issue two of *The Mohawker*, Newsletter of the OV-1 Mohawk Association, Spring 1991, has a photo taken in late '65 or early '66 of the Commanding officer, Major Saunders, wearing slash-pocket, open-button jungle fatigues, with a Nighthawks patch on the right pocket and green leadership tabs with no DIs (nobody ever saw any in the 131st) on his epaulettes. The enlisted men are not wearing a pocket patch, and are wearing standard cotton fatigues. No shoulder patch is visible, but the 131st wore the Aviation Brigade patch when available.

"Nighthawk" also became the unit's motto and its radio call sign was "Iron Spud," usually shortened to "Spud" (a iron bucking bar used in riveting). Both Spud and Nighthawk are still used by its successor unit, A Company, 15th Military Intelligence Battalion (Aerial Exploitation).

According to Major Gary O. "Mister Clean" Alton, commander of the 131st from

August 1968 to March 1969, the mark of a SPUD pilot was a black flying coverall. Dyed black and embroidered in Thailand, these had nighthawks, pilot's rating (wings) and name embroidered in white, with a standard Mohawk patch sewn on (3). Pilots also had a black aviation "party suit", with the same white nighthawk, name, and wings, but with individualized patches. These black party suits were still being worn by 131st vets at the West Fort Hood Officer's Club (Robert Gray Army Air Field) during "Spud Calls" as late as 1979 (4). A xerox of a pocket patch worn by Maj. Alton shows a very well made 131st Aviation Company Nighthawks patch as described above, but made with a "Juki" type embroidery sewing machine instead of being entirely hand stitched.

"Juki" is the brand name of a heavy duty sewing machine made in Japan, and the embroidery model was often used to make patches. A wheel on the machine enables the operator to vary the width of the embroidery as it operates. These sewing machines were used by "Mamasans" (as GIs call Asian women) to make patches in Vietnam, Korea, Thailand, Japan, the Philippines, Pakistan, and just about anywhere GIs are found. Less often encountered is an embroidery machine called a "Brother". In both, the cloth to be embroidered is usually secured in a hoop to keep it flat and taught, and often stiffened with paper to keep the material from bunching up. The cloth is hand guided to make the image while the needle moves back and forth horizontally according to how wide the embroidered width is to be. Juki still makes embroidery machines, although computer operated looms are becoming more popular in Asia (and the US). These allow the operator to construct the image using a graphics program, and the computer then operates the sewing machine. These are popular among companies that do custom embroidery. According to friends of mine in Korea, it's becoming difficult to find a place that still hand or Juki embroiders a patch, as the computer operated looms are so popular.

By 1971 all enlisted men and officers in the 131st had more common slash pocket covered button jungle fatigues. The pocket

patch was worn by all, along with black baseball type caps with unit and name in white embroidery. On July 1, 1971 the Mohawk aviation units were redesignated Military Intelligence, and the 131st became the 131st Military Intelligence Company (Aerial Surveillance). The scroll on the patch was changed accordingly (5). A half-year later the unit moved from Hue Phu Bai to Marble Mountain. The pocket patch worn by then Specialist Four Charles Franklin was also made on a Juki type sewing machine, then hand finished. Colors are the same as the prototype described above. A little more angular than Maj. Alton's Thai-made patch, Sp.4 Franklin's patch was definitely made in Vietnam. Patches made in Thailand generally tended to be of a little higher quality. Franklin, whose Nighthawk is still on the fatigue jacket he wore in the 131st, obtained his patch off-post in Vietnam from a "Mamasan" patch manufacture. He also got a scroll above his pocket patch, as illustrated, celebrating the multi-role OV-1D Mohawk, the same aircraft the 131st successor unit, A CO 15th MI BN would deploy with to Saudi Arabia in 1990. The scroll is black on green, but the background cloth has faded a bit with time.

The 131st moved on September 1, 1972 to Marble Mountain, and on October 18, 1972 flew its last combat mission. The colors were cased and transferred to Fort Hood, TX. The 131st replaced the 293rd Aviation Company (Surveillance Airplane) at Fort Hood, a distinguished Mohawk company in its own right, having been one of the few regular units to establish aviation records. During this time the 131st was part of the 13th Aviation Battalion, "Wings of the Mekong", of the 6th Cavalry Brigade, and from 1972 to 1978 was the only regular Mohawk Company in the continental U.S.. In 1978 it became a company of the 15th MI BN of the 504th MI Brigade, and was a company of the 163rd MI BN for a short time along the way.

73rd Aviation Company

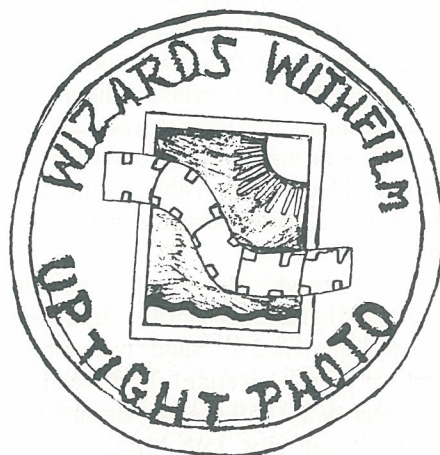
The second patch was more exclusive, having a very short life span. This patch was worn by the 73rd Aviation Company and found its way to the 131st. The "Uptight Photo" patch was designed in late 1971 by then Specialist Four Lyle "Zip" Zimmerman while he was working night shift in the photo lab of the 73rd (6). As Zimmerman had time on his hands be-



131st Aviation Company pocket patch and scroll, made in Vietnam.

tween missions, the lab NCOIC, SSG Jim Robinson, gave him permission to design a pocket patch for the section. The designing took 10 days, and the tailor shop at Long Thanh made between 60 to 70 of them.

"Uptight" was the 73rd's call sign, while "Photo" was the section. According to Zimmerman, "The little strip of film and the picture showed what we could do, take negatives and print pictures. The gray strip represents film, the photograph in the middle is framed by a white border like most pictures were back then. The sun



73rd Aviation Company pocket patch, made in Vietnam.

represented that we took photos in the daylight while the dark blue sky says we could take them by night. The wavy strip of brown with the green indicated that we did it over the jungle or water. It was there the tailor shop messed up because the brown wavy line should have been green, and the green should have been brown".

"Now the 'Wizards With Film' was just a phrase I came up with to put across the top. Since it wasn't an official patch I didn't want to use the 73rd AVN SAC across the top. To kind of sign my name to the patch I used my old high school colors in it. The dark blue off the picture and the orange as the whole background. I went to high school in Seattle Washington-Rainier Beach Jr. High School. As for who wore it-Just the guys in the photo lab, and only in country".

The patch was not worn for long as the 73rd stood down at Long Thanh around July 1972. Charles Franklin, with half of his Vietnam tour finished, was transferred from the 73rd to the 131st, and wore the "Uptight Photo" patch in the 131st until told to take it off, with the reasoning that patches from another unit could not be worn. Before I was able to contact Lyle, Franklin and I were both secure in our knowledge that the orange background of the photo patch was for the US Army Signal Corps. So much for symbology! The patch itself is a very vivid orange, and the quality of the embroidery, which is all machine applied, hand guided Juki, is excellent. Even the rays of the sun and the gaskets in the film are machine applied. The cloth is not dyed ricebag as many Vietnam made patches are, but a thin cotton dyed at the factory. To stiffen it for embroidery, a combination of glue-stiffened sandbag cloth and brown paper, probably from a government mailing envelope, was used to back the patch. The paper does not seem to have been glued to the sandbag, however. After the patch was cut from the orange cloth, the excess was carefully glued under the patch instead of trimming the cloth from the border stitch. It is a very carefully made patch. All of the embroidery thread is a quality fine silk.

Anyone interested in finding out more about the OV-1 Mohawk can join the Mohawk Association, a nonprofit organization that publishes a quarterly newsletter packed with Vietnam vintage photos and articles about Mohawk events and history. It also sponsors a yearly meeting. You do

not need to have been involved with Mohawks or even the military to join. Write *The Mohawker*; 11724 67th Place North; Minneapolis, MN 55369.

Thanks to Charles "Frank" Franklin; Lyle "Zip" Zimmerman; Gary "Mr. Clean" Alton; Edward "Webby" McLaughlan, the Scottish Mohawker; and Regina G. Burns and staff at the U.S. Army Aviation Museum, Ft. Rucker.

1. "Desert Warpath-History of A Company, 15th MI BN (Aerial Exploitation) in the Gulf War", December 1991, CW2 David W. Collar, on file at the US Army Histori-

cal Branch. An outline was published in issue three of *The Mohawker*.

2. Histories of the 131st Aviation Company, on file at the Fort Rucker Aviation Museum. These were written at the end of each year by the units S-1, 1966, 1967, 1969, and 1970. A note in the archives indicates that the the history from 1968 is still classified. I doubt if it still exists.

3. Letter from Major (Ret) Gary O. Alton to the author's unit, late 1991.

4. History of the 131st, CW3 (ret) Peter J. Bonner (an ASMIC member) and CPT Mark W. Stephenson. A incomplete copy

of this was found in a notebook that had been rescued from the trash in 1981. It seems to be a compilation of recollections of SPUD vets in the late '70s. With it was an incomplete history written by ILT Brenda I. Blatt, from April 20, 1979. Many items were the same in these two histories, I'm not certain which of the two came first.

5. Letters from Charles Franklin to the author, late 1991 and March 30, April, 13 July 30, 1992.

6. This and the following paragraphs taken from letters from Lyle Zimmerman to the author July 6, August 15, 1992.

TRADING POST

The 1st and 2nd Filipino Regiments (Seperate)

by Royce E. "Bo" Scott



1st Filipino Regiment

Under the terms of the Treaty of Paris of 1899 that ended the Spanish-American War, Spain ceded the Philippines to the United States. Included in that agreement was a provision that allowed males from the Philippines to enter the United States to work. During the 1920s and 1930s, large numbers came to the U. S., mostly through the port of San Francisco.

Among the many thousands who came, were a few with honorable service in the U.S. military. Most of these had served as cooks or messboys in the U.S. Navy, but some had served with the Philippine Scouts whose officers were Americans.

When the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor and then the Philippine Islands in World War II, hundreds of patriotic Filipinos who were in the U.S. rushed to volunteer. As a

result, the 1st Filipino Infantry Regiment (Sep.) was activated at Fort Ord, California July 13, 1942. A West Point trained Filipino Colonel named Velasquez was given command of the 1st FLIP, as it came to be known.

With thousands of volunteers, the ranks of the 1st FLIP filled quickly and the 2nd Filipino Infantry Regiment (Sep.) was activated at Fort Ord on November 21, 1942. Colonel Charles L. Clifford was selected to command the 2nd FLIP.

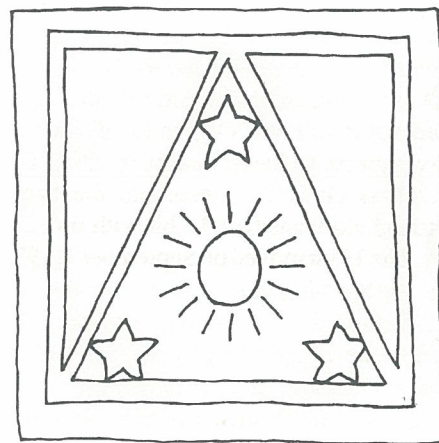
In January of 1943, the 2nd FLIP was moved by motor convoy from Fort Ord to Camp Cooke (now Vandenburg AFB).

1943 passed quickly and in early 1944, with the war turning in the Allies favor, the War Department put out a regulation (immediately dubbed the "P-38") permitting all soldiers 38 years of age or older, who had been drafted into the services, to apply for discharge.

By March 1944, the 2nd FLIP had dropped from a regiment of 3,000 officers and men to a little more than 1,000, and was inactivated on March 27, 1944.

The 1st FLIP was deployed from Camp Stoneman via the San Francisco Port of Embarkation to Oro Bay New Guinea on April 6, 1944, and arrived there on April 27, 1944. After further training, the 1st FLIP landed on Leyte on February 8, 1945 as part of a provisional task force that was assigned to clear the northwest coast of Samar and the islands in the Bernardino Strait.

Returning to San Francisco in April of 1946, the 1st FLIP was inactivated at Camp



2nd Filipino Regiment

Stoneman on April 10, 1946.

The Insignia

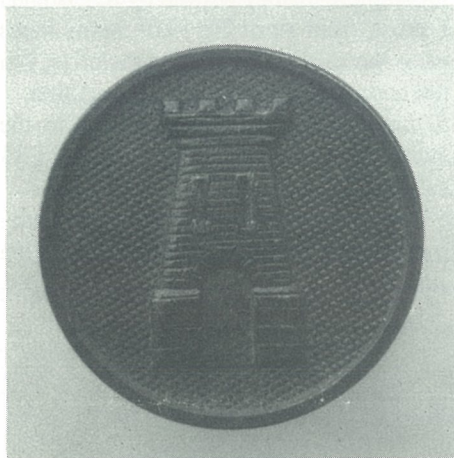
The shoulder patch of the 1st FLIP shows a smoking volcano. The three stars within the smoke represent the three main island groups of the nation. The colors are yellow and black. Besides the original wool version, the patch has been made in an all embroidered version, and an embroidered version with an OD edge.

The shoulder patch of the 2nd FLIP is the flag of the Philippines. Again, the three stars represent the three major island groups of the nation. While I have been able to locate only the original wool version, an embroidered version possibly exists. The colors are red, blue and gold on a white field.

TRADING POST

Unusual United States E.M. Type One Discs

by Ronald Lang



Unassigned Engineer Corps (unofficial)



Rail Transportation Service

Unassigned Engineer Corps, (unofficial)

This is similar in design to the construction engineers of the Cuban regiment, but does not have the shovel and pick in the background and does have two windows in the single tower. When and why it was used is still questioned. Does anyone know?

Rail Transportation Service

Worn by troops operating rail services. This unit, although in operation toward the end of World War One; it did not become official until roughly six months after the war had ended.

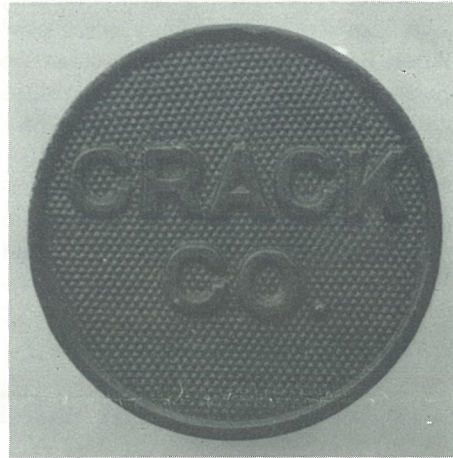
Crack Company, (unofficial)

There are several schools of thought on this one: First, used in schools with ROTC for outstanding performance as recognition for achievement; Second, used by the 89th Inf. Div. for units that maintained a high state of combat readiness and unit/uniform appearance.

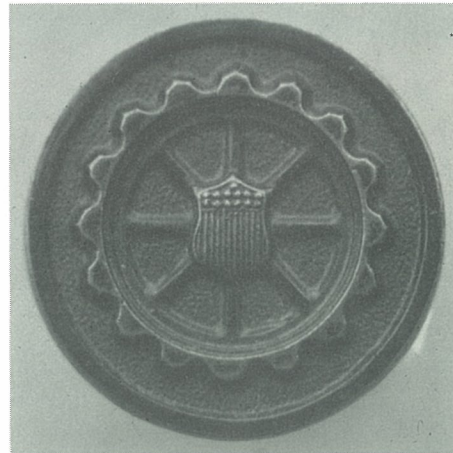
Army Service Corps, (unofficial)

This disc is more than likely foreign made. It has a slightly smaller screw post that is welded directly to the disc without the anti-spin device, and has a 3/8" six sided (hex) nut, instead of the round screw on locking device. I would guess, looking at the paint on my disc, that it was made in France.

I am interested in hearing any comments you may have on these discs to be tabulated for a future issue of the TP.



Crack Company (unofficial)



Army Service Corps (unofficial)

An aircraft carrier is home to more than the planes and pilots that fly off of them. Among the others making up the carrier crew are the members of the Carrier Air



CATCC Patches

by Charles H Bogart



Traffic Control Center (CATCC). These are the air control people who guide the pilot back to the carrier and help him aboard via voice radio traffic. Shown are patches from CATCCs on board the Randolph (CVS-15), Bon Homme Richard (CVA-31) and Franklin D. Roosevelt (CVA-42).

