

1970

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
EIGHTH UNITED STATES ARMY
55TH AVIATION COMPANY (ARMY)
APO San Francisco 96301

EAST-55AVN

22 March 1971

SUBJECT: 1970 Annual Historical Report

Office of the Chief of Military History
Department of the Army
Washington, D. C. 20315

1. The 55th Aviation Company (Army) was activated in March, 1951, and has performed its support role under three different titles. First called the 8085th Flight Detachment at Taegu, Korea, it was moved to Seoul, Korea just three months after its activation. In January, 1957, it was redesignated as the Eighth United States Army Aviation Detachment and on 24 June 1960 it was again redesignated as the 55th Aviation Company (Army). At this time its authorized strength was 14 officers and 70 enlisted men. The primary mission of the unit was to provide general aviation support to Headquarters, United Nations Command, Eighth United States Army, Korea Military Advisory Group, the United States Embassy, and governmental agencies of the Republic of Korea.

2. During the year 1970, although the mission of the 55th Aviation Company (Army) remained essentially the same as in previous years, the size of the unit and type of equipment used within the unit have changed considerably. The authorized strength has increased to 26 officers, 180 enlisted men and 33 KATUSA personnel. Under the Company Headquarters are four platoons: Headquarters Platoon; Operations Platoon; Service Platoon and Aircraft Platoon. These platoons provide the organizational structure of the company. Also attached to the company is the former Aerial Surveillance Platoon which was reorganized as the 6th Aviation Platoon (A/S) on 5 May 1970.

3. The 55th Aviation Company is located on Yoido Island, approximately 5 miles southwest of Seoul, Korea, bordered on all sides by the Han River. Past history reflects numerous complete floodings of the island. To combat this, a flood control project was completed in 1969, consisting of a cement barrier that surrounds the island. The barrier proved effective when again in late August, 1970, the water level exceeded the danger level and the company was alerted to evacuate all the flyable aircraft to Ascom and Pyong-Taek. Despite the difficulties in communications and maintenance experienced during the evacuation period

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all operational missions were performed by the highly competent pilots, crews and operations personnel.

4. Yoido Island is scheduled to be returned to the Republic of Korea for use as a site for a "Model City Korea". The new site for the 55th Aviation Company is approximately 15 miles south of Seoul. The target date for completion was moved from August 1970 to a later date of April 1971 due to minor construction difficulties.

5. In logistics, the 55th Aviation Company is the most advanced, up-to-date Army Aviation Company within the Republic of Korea. The company proudly utilizes six U-21A "Utes", which greatly increase the mission capability and decrease flying time between airfields. A turn-in of the formerly used "old reliable" U-6 Beavers is now in progress. The 6th Aviation Platoon has four OV-1B Mohawks which complete the total of 10 fixed wing aircraft in the company. Although the fixed wing section makes up a large portion of the company, the rotary wing section has surpassed it in total number of aircraft and percentage of missions flown. The rotary wing section has a total of 18 helicopters of which 10 are UH-1D "Hueys" and 8 OH-58A "Kiowas".

6. During the year 1970, the unit participated in Eighth Army Field Exercise, "Focus Lens". In addition to its normal mission of providing aviation support, the unit established and operated a heliport which provided courier service between Pyong-Taek and Seoul. The planning, coordination and operation brought recognition and praise from Eighth Army Headquarters. Dignitaries and high ranking officials of allied nations were flown throughout the Republic of Korea, Japan and Okinawa. The list of officials included the Vice President of the United States, Spiro Agnew; the Army Chief of Staff, General William C. Westmoreland; Secretary of Defense, Melvin Laird; Britain's Ambassador, the Honorable Nigel C. C. Trench; members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and numerous Republic of Korea Government officials.

7. Although VIP passenger service is the primary mission of the company, many other types of missions are assigned to the unit. One of these missions is support of the Eighth United States Army Parachute Club. During one mission Sgt. John W. Gay died when his parachute failed in a sky-diving attempt. On 8 October 1970, the unit suffered the loss of WO1 Frank L. Mathias, who died in an OH-58A crash near Chun-Chon, Korea.

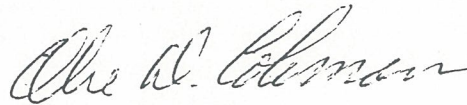
8. During the year, the unit's standardization instructor pilots applied their efforts on new techniques of training which made the company the standardization center for Eighth Army Aviation and the Republic of Korea.

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9. The company began the year under the command of Major Melecio Z. Santos who, upon DERCS, turned the command over to Major Dale E. Snell. The company, under the command of Major Forrest E. Franklin since November 1970, has had a very good year, accomplishing its mission with great success. All signs point to continued success in the future.



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