

- YELLOW / WO KEIL
- AMMO KICK-OUT B/C (2 UFTS)
- LIGHT FIRE TEAM
- Co. D Co.
- INDIVIDUAL ENEMY POSITIONS
- TREE LINE

**CONFIDENTIAL**



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CONFIDENTIAL  
 DOD 5165-900-10



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DUONG

LO

FIREBASE  
CINDY

ABANDONED  
XOM ONG LINH

FIREBASE  
LOIS

LANDING  
ZONE

PHU CƯƠNG

THU DAU MOT

BIÊN HÒA

BIÊN HÒA

GIA ĐÌNH

SÀI GÒN

FIREBASE 10

ABANDONED  
PHƯỚC HIỆP

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY  
Headquarters, United States Army Vietnam  
APO San Francisco 96375

GENERAL ORDERS  
NUMBER 203

24 January 1970

VALOROUS UNIT AWARD

1. TC 439. The following AWARD is announced.

By direction of the Secretary of the Army, under the provisions of paragraph 202.1g(2), AR 672-5-1, the Valorous Unit Award is awarded to the following named unit of the United States Army for extraordinary heroism while engaged in military operations during the period indicated:

The citation reads as follows:

The 227TH AVIATION BATTALION (ASSAULT HELICOPTER) distinguished itself by extraordinary heroism while engaged in military operations on 6 March 1969 in Bien Hoa Province, Republic of Vietnam. Providing lift helicopters and gunship escort for the 1st Battalion, 12th Cavalry, 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile), the members of the aviation element for the third lift of the combat assault came under intense automatic weapons, small arms, machinegun and rocket-propelled grenade fire from an estimated North Vietnamese Army company in reinforced bunkers bordering the landing zone. Due to the relentless firepower of the enemy, the lift aircraft were forced to discontinue the approach and the thirty troops, inserted on the two initial lifts, began taking casualties and faced annihilation unless reinforcements were received. An air strike and heavy volumes of aerial rocket artillery were placed on the enemy fortifications and the members of the 227TH AVIATION BATTALION (ASSAULT HELICOPTER) responded immediately to the tactical emergency and made numerous attempts to reinforce the hard pressed ground forces. Disregarding the hazards involved, the personnel of the gunteams flew directly into the hail of hostile rounds and, with deadly accuracy, fired into the gunports of the bunkers to silence some of the enemy positions. Repeatedly entering the dangerous landing zone, the determined lift crews ultimately inserted thirty additional troops, performed medical evacuation and effected the vital resupply of ammunition. Throughout the bitter conflict, the officers and men of the unit manifested exceptional bravery, steadfast determination and indomitable fighting spirit in providing the utmost in airmobility and firepower. As a result of their courageous and timely actions, they forced a determined enemy to disengage and contributed immeasurably to the safety of the ground forces in preventing further loss of life. The extraordinary heroism and devotion to duty displayed by the members of the 227TH AVIATION BATTALION (ASSAULT HELICOPTER) are in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service and reflect distinct credit upon themselves and the Armed Forces of the United States.

## NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION

Company A, First Battalion, Twelfth Cavalry, met heavy enemy resistance as it entered a bunker complex at Universal Mercator YT183210 in Bien Hoa Province, Republic of Vietnam, on 6 March 1969. The battalion commander decided to combat assault Company C, into the same area.

The landing zone, surrounded by trees approximately 100 feet high, during the night large enough to accommodate three UH-1H helicopters, was located at coordinates YT190206. The mission was initially assigned to Company A, (six UH1H Transport Helicopters) and Company D, (two AH-1G Cobra Gunships), 227th Aviation Battalion (Assault Helicopter) (Airmobile). With the combat assault force thus formed, the flight proceeded to the pickup zone at Firebase Cindy.

At 1425 hours immediately following preparation of the landing zone by tube artillery from Cindy and the section of Aerial Rocket Artillery on station the first three aircraft constituting the initial flight, each deposited six infantryman in the small clearing and departed. The second lift, consisting of two ships, inserted twelve more skytroopers into the landing zone and departed without incident. Since the area was small and seemingly secure, yellow one, the flight leader, directed the flight to begin a "DAISY CHAIN". Each aircraft, although maintaining numerical order, would make individual shuttle runs between the pickup point and the landing zone. Thus the vulnerable position could be reinforced in a minimum amount of time.

Executing his approach with the sixth sortie, yellow one was suddenly caught in an ambush by an estimated reinforced company size North Vietnamese Army element. Stubbornly refusing to abort his mission, he continued to approach the landing zone, trying to ignore the sound of the impacting rounds against his aircraft. Finally, acting upon the advice of the gunship pilots, he discontinued his mission and returned to base to inspect his aircraft. Enroute to Firebase Cindy, he contacted the element under fire in the landing zone and was informed that there were at least three machine guns (one .30 caliber and two .50 caliber) in bunkers heavily reinforced with logs and three to four feet of overhead cover. There was also an undetermined number of B-40 rockets and AK-47 sites around the landing zone. Yellow one then instructed the remainder of the flight that further attempts would be halted until he returned. At this time, calls for assistance were made. Additional sections of aerial rocket artillery were requested and arrangements were made for tactical airstrike. Company A, Company B, and Company C were all contacted to supply replacement transport ships and Company D, was ordered to scramble all available gunships to the area. Finding the first aircraft unsuitable for further flight, Yellow One returned to the landing zone to attempt once again to land the sixth sortie. During this approach, the enemy positions were pounded by barrages of 2.75 inch rockets and mini-guns from the gunships of Company D, 227th Aviation Battalion. But once again he was forced to discontinue his approach due to the devastating fire from within the bunkers.

Meanwhile, the commander of 227th Aviation Battalion arrived on station and assumed leadership of the flight. Aircraft commanders of the remaining aircraft were instructed to return to Cindy and await further orders. No further attempt to reinforce the pinned down troops would be made until a tactical airstrike could be placed on the enemy positions. When the commander of Company D, arrived with all five remaining AH-1G gunships, the aviation battalion commander directed him to reorganize the seven gunships and eight sections of aerial rocket artillery so as to provide maximum fire support. Shortly thereafter, replacement aircraft from all three transport companies began arriving. Each one was given appropriate instructions by the battalion commander. At this time, approximately forty aircraft were involved in the operation, including three command ships, two airforce fighter-bombers and other ships in support of the operation.

Without proper leadership and organization, the situation could have become one of utter confusion. With perfect coordination, the battalion commander contacted the flight leader, now in his third aircraft, and instructed him to bring all remaining aircraft on station and set up an orbit to the northeast of the landing zone as soon as the airstrike was completed.

Seconds after the last napalm fell on the enemy bunkers, Yellow One proceeded through the dense smoke, accompanied by constant suppressive fire from aerial rocket artillery and gunships flying at tree top level, in order to better fire upon the enemy positions, and successfully landed the sixth sortie, under constant fire from the well entrenched enemy. A second aircraft landed as the first departed and the seventh sortie was inserted. As the second aircraft was departing the landing zone, the third began its approach and immediately came under extremely heavy anti-aircraft fire. Doggedly, the pilot continued through the barrage until the crewchief was severely wounded in the neck by shrapnel which had shattered his chest protector. The approach was then discontinued and the injured man flown to medical air. For several minutes following this, the aerial rocket artillery fired salvo after salvo into the bunkers. But even the seventeen-pound warheads on the rockets failed to penetrate the dense overhead cover. Realizing the problem, and disregarding the danger involved, the gunships began making low level runs through the withering enemy fire, some equipped with only miniguns and 40MM grenade launchers. With deadly accuracy, they fired directly into the gunports of the bunkers. By employing these tactics, the gunships were able to silence one of the .50 caliber emplacements and many individual enemy positions, thereby relieving some of the pressure from the transport pilots.

After this devastating attack, Yellow Four proceeded to make his approach to the landing zone. Due to the dense smoke and dust from the expending rockets, the pilot was unable to locate the landing zone. Analyzing the problems quickly, the commanding officer of Company D, began orbiting 200 feet above the area, almost at a hover. Disregarding the fire power brought to bear upon himself, and in full view of the enemy below, he was able to vector the incoming ships to the landing zone by using his navigational lights. With the gunships raking the area with minigun and 40MM projectiles, and aerial rocket artillery releasing salvo after salvo on the enemy positions, Yellow Six managed to land through the immense volume of enemy fire pouring into the landing zone. With fifty-four men now in the landing zone, and impending darkness about to halt the operation, the ground commander repeatedly asked for an aircraft to evacuate his critically wounded. The landing zone was still under intense ground fire from all sides and a medevac could not be sent in. Once again the battalion commander called upon his men. An aircraft was needed to insert one more load of reinforcements, and then evacuate as many of the wounded as possible. Knowing the danger involved one of the crews from Company C unhesitatingly volunteered for the mission. Again, several sections of aerial rocket artillery were expended on the enemy sites as the gunship company commander led Yellow Two into the clearing. But devastating fire still issued forth from the bunkers and the gunship commander advised the transport pilot to abort the approach. The crew, seeing the wounded men lying on the ground, elected to continue. Upon setting the aircraft down, the pilots watched as their windshield shattered from rounds fired at them by the crew of the enemy .30 caliber and .50 caliber emplacements. Without hesitation on their part, the pilots quickly turned the craft so that the tail section was pointed at the enemy, thereby reducing the target they offered to the gunners. The reinforcements dismounted quickly but several minutes elapsed before the wounded could make it to the aircraft.

With rounds impacting constantly into the craft, the crew steadfastly remained in the landing zone until six men had been loaded into the helicopter before taking off again. The door gunner, even though wounded in the foot, helped all the wounded into the craft and then commenced putting out suppressive fire as the pilots departed the landing zone. Making a quick check of the helicopter, it was discovered that it had been hit at least thirty-six times, and that one .50 caliber round had punctured the transmission oil system. Realizing that the transmission could malfunction at any time, the pilot quickly headed for the nearest friendly landing zone to transfer his load to a sound aircraft for further evacuation.

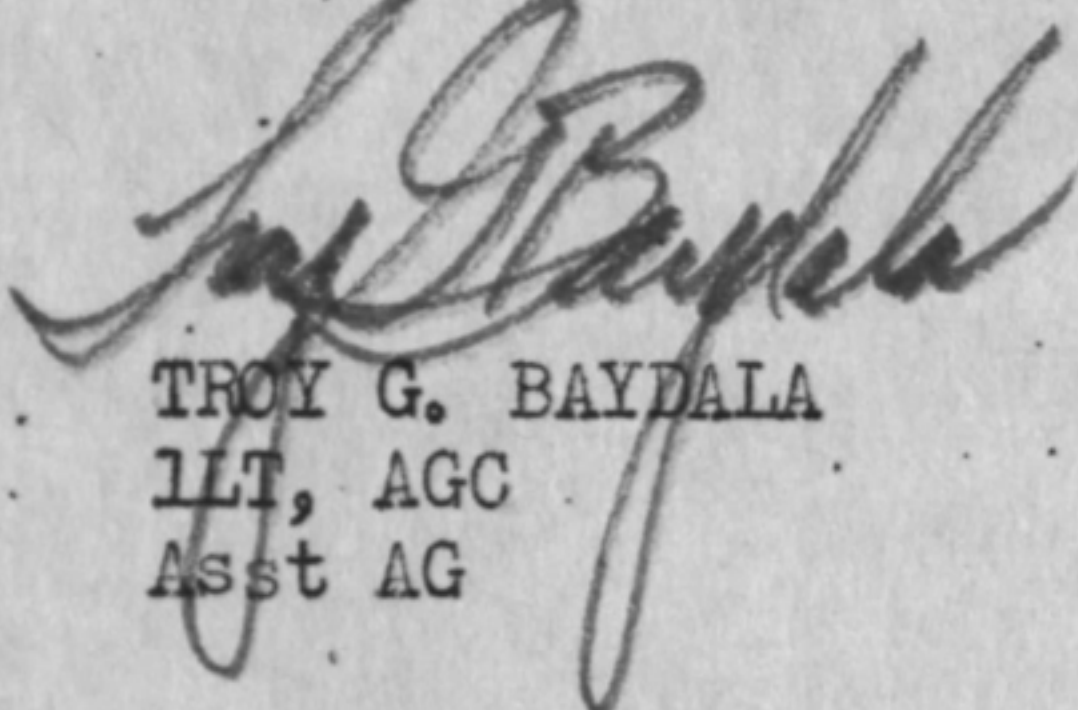
Meanwhile, the ground troops were running low on ammunition and had requested a resupply. Hearing the request, one of the crews from Company B, immediately volunteered to take the badly needed supplies into the landing zone. Because of the poor visibility at the landing zone caused by smoke and greatly reduced light conditions, the pilot requested the ground unit to ignite a smoke grenade. Identifying the smoke, the pilots descended to execute a low level approach. Meanwhile the enemy, seeming to know their every move, released a similar smoke grenade fifty meters away from the first one as it began to dissipate. Hurriedly the crew brought their approach up short, thinking they had misjudged the distance, and kicked out part of the ammunition. Realizing their mistake, they immediately returned to landing zone Cindy for another load while the gunships from Company D, destroyed the ammunition that had been dropped near the enemy position. Upon returning to the heavily disputed landing zone, the crew from Company B, once again brought their craft to a hover exposing themselves to the withering enemy fire, and successfully completed the resupply mission.

At 2030 hours, mission 3J20 was halted because of darkness. However, due to the valiant efforts by all the members of 227th Aviation Battalion, fifty-four well supported infantrymen were in the landing zone. The moral of the ground troops was understandably high. The medevac mission performed by Company C, and the resupply mission by Company B, proved to them that they could count on the 227th Aviation Battalion to take care of any situation which might arise during the night. This knowledge gave them the inspiration to see their mission through.

A sweep of the area on the following morning disclosed that the well prepared and determined enemy had been forced to withdraw. All that remained of the NVA elements were mere pieces of bodies scattered around the area of the bunkers. There were bunkers filled with blood, pieces of bodies tied to trees and numerous blood trails. (Actual count is unknown). There was no way to confirm the size of the enemy force, but it was believed to have been at least a reinforced enemy company or battalion due to the heavy anti-aircraft weapons involved. Due to the effectiveness of the supporting aircraft the casualties to the ground element were held to six dead and eighteen wounded. In the estimate of the ground commander, without the assistance of the 227th Aviation Battalion, his forces would have been annihilated by the numerically superior enemy forces. Completely disregarding the tremendous volume of enemy fire, all elements of the 227th Aviation Battalion repeatedly entered the dangerous landing zone to bring reinforcements, ammunition, medical evacuation and fire support to the beleaguered skytroopers on the ground. Despite the enemy damage to thirteen helicopters which had to be grounded for repairs, plus others repaired at landing zone Lois during the operation by the battalion aircraft maintenance section and the support elements from Company B, and the

casualties inflicted upon them, the 227th Aviation Battalion continued to support and assist the ground forces, delivering 1300 rockets and over 32,000 rounds of mini-gun ammunition. The valiant and concerted effort by the entire battalion forced a determined enemy to disengage. The intrepid and tenacious performance rendered by the 227th Aviation Battalion in support of their ground comrades can be a continuing inspiration to every army aviator. Their continuing valor in the presence of extreme danger is highly commendable. With full knowledge of the situation they repeatedly faced death as they entered the landing zone time and time again. The individual acts of heroism were recognized by a total of forty-three awards, including four Impact Awards. There were four Silver Stars awarded; two to members of Company C, one to Company A, and one to Company D. Twenty-six Distinguished Flying Cross awards were received throughout the battalion, plus numerous Air Medals for Valor.

The 227th Aviation Battalion did not come by their victory cheaply. All twenty of the aircraft involved from the battalion were hit many times by the enemy gunners, with Companies B, C, D each having two aircraft rendered inoperable after the action. Company A, whose aircraft were initially assigned to the mission, had seven damaged; while Company C, and A each had aircraft so badly damaged that stateside evacuation was required.

  
TROY G. BAYDALA  
1LT, AGC  
Asst AG

PERSONNEL CITED FOR INDIVIDUAL AWARDS

HHC 227th Avn Bn

Distinguished Flying Cross

LTC Edward B. Covington III

A Company 227th Avn Bn

Silver Star

1LT, David A. Hughins (Impact)

Distinguished Flying Cross

CPT Leif B. Oksevaag  
CPT Howard S. Rodesky  
1LT, Steven E. Young  
WO1 Robert D. Collins  
WO1 Charles W. Lucas  
SGT Kevin Smith  
SP4 Dirk J.P. Appel  
SP4 Edward F. Avila  
SP4 James L. Cooper  
SP4 Joseph W. Leonard  
SP4 Kenneth Wiley

Air Medal W/V

SP5 Barry L. Hawkins  
SP5 Michael L. Collins  
SP4 Theophilus Faison  
SP4 Wesley H. Yost Jr.

B Company

Distinguished Flying Cross

WO1 Leslie M. Mandeville (Impact)

Air Medal W/V

WO1 Victor Diatschenko  
SP4 Charles P. Eddins  
SP4 Michael A. Ballinger

C Company 227th Avn Bn

Silver Star

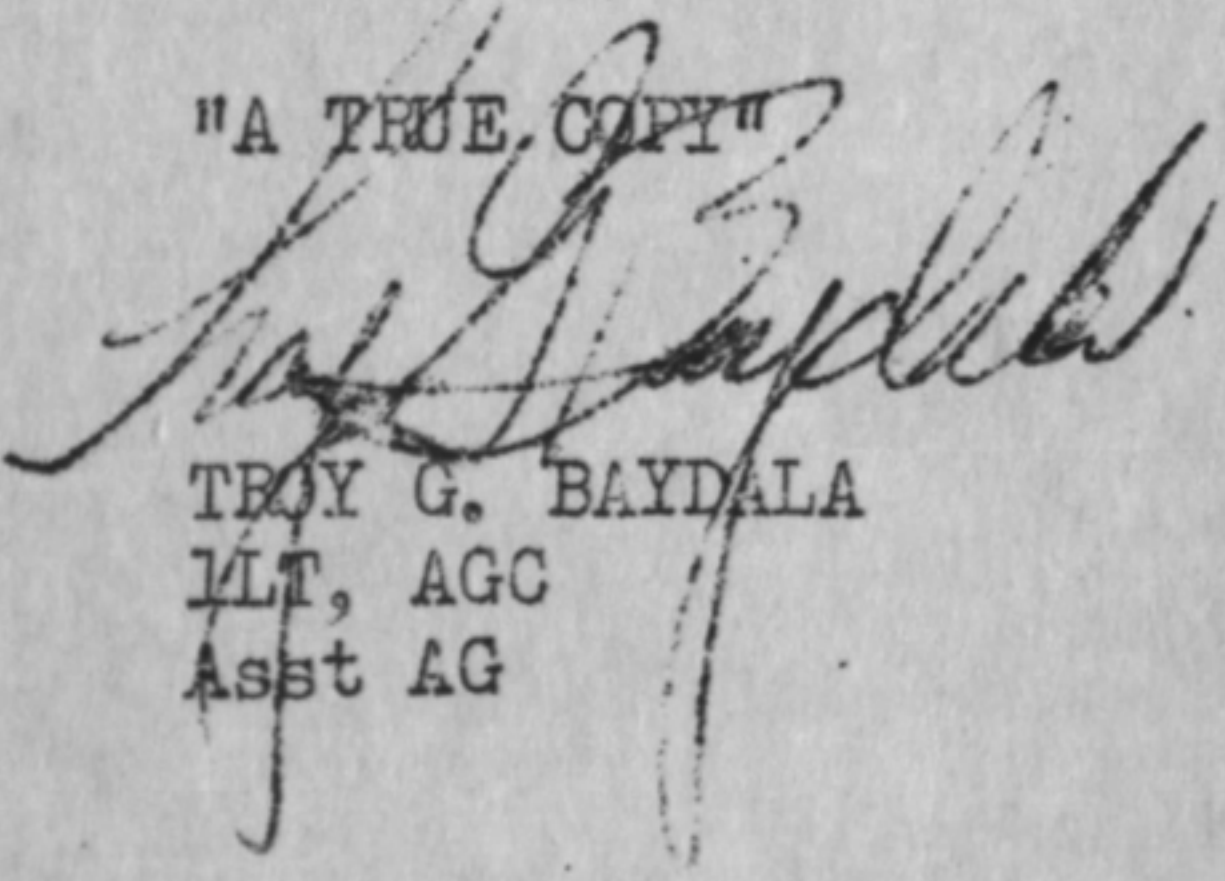
WO1 Paul T. Keil (Impact)  
SP4 James O. Conner

Distinguished Flying Cross

1LT, Edward K. Strickland  
WO1 Robert M. Anderson  
WO1 Robert M. Forsyth  
SP5 Dennis L. Becker  
SP4 Perry W. Garrett  
SP4 Joseph M. McKinster

s/William G. Wood  
t/WILLIAM G. WOOD  
1LT, FA  
Assistant Adjutant

"A TRUE COPY"

  
TROY G. BAYDALA  
1LT, AGC  
Asst AG



D Company 227th Avn Bn

Silver Star

Distinguished Flying Cross

Air Medal W/V

s/William G. Wood  
t/WILLIAM G. WOOD  
LLT, FA  
Assistant Adjutant

"A TREE" *CP1*

*Troy G. Saydala*  
TROY G. SAYDALA  
LLT, AGC  
Asst AG

MAJ John A. Little (Impact)

WO Joseph T. Arton  
WO1 Ronald D. Gunther  
WO1 Richard L. Harris  
WO1 Robert L. Hartwig  
WO1 Steven L. Kramer  
WO1 Frank D. McWhirter  
WO1 Harold E. Weiss

LLT, Peter N. Bohn  
LLT, Jonathan P. Lee  
WO1 David L. Austin  
WO1 Timothy D. Dallas  
WO1 Marshall R. Mooney  
WO1 John D. Rutherford  
WO1 Jack H. Suttle