

BIRMINGHAM BRINGS IN 1,700 TROOPS

sent by Patrick Aguilar

SAIGON—Hauling troops and supplies for Operation Birmingham, Air Force C-130 Hercules crews from the 315th Air Div. made one of the largest combat assault airlifts in the Vietnam war.

Operation Birmingham is a search and destroy operation being conducted northwest of Saigon.

During the first day of the airlift, nine Hercules crews delivered more than 1,800 1st Inf, Div. soldiers and 390 tons of equipment to an isolated landing strip near Tay Ninh.

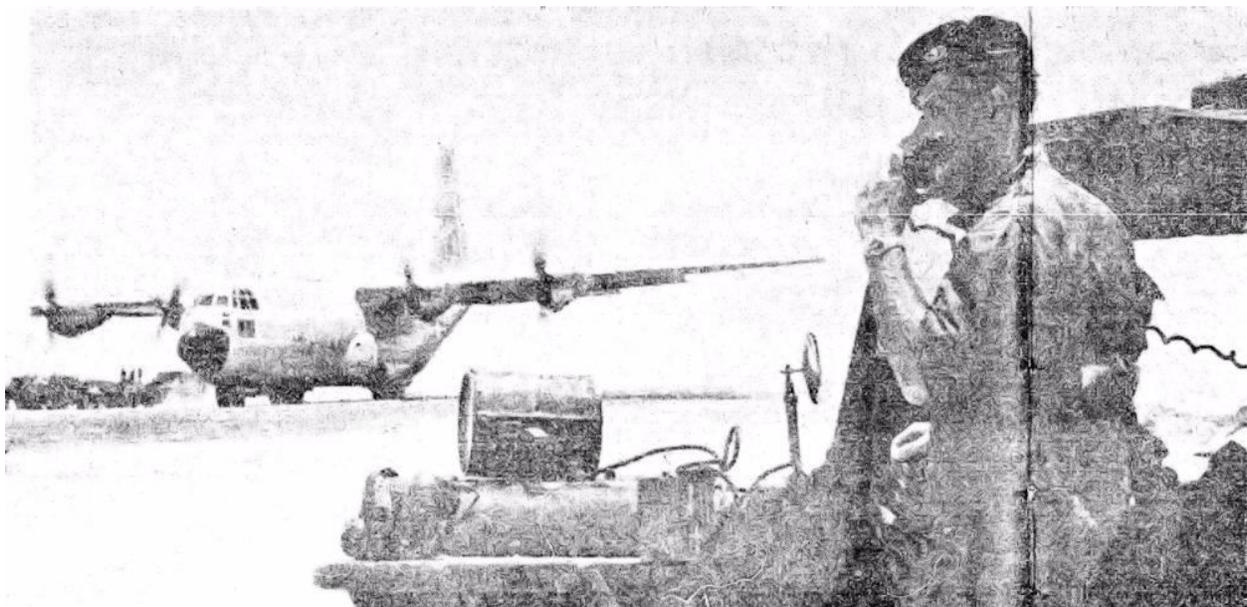
Throughout the day, Air Force news flew 57 sorties shuttling the men and cargo from five locations —the Tan Son Nhut and Bien Hoa air bases, Lai Khe, Phuoc Vinh and Thu Dau Mot.

Lai Khe and Thu Dau Mot are 20 and 25 miles north of Saigon. Phuoc Vinh is 30 miles north-northeast of the South Vietnam capital.

The first flight of five Hercules landed on the 3,800 foot dirt strip about 6:45 a.m., April 24 1966, An Air Force ground Combat Control Team (CCT) headed by Maj. James F. Morgan, 37, of McLean, Va., came in with the first flight, The Combat controllers set up field radio equipment to direct air traffic throughout the airlift.

The first airplanes also carried 320 ground troops. Immediately after landing, the ground troops spread out to secure the area.

Col. George L. Hannah, 46, of Knoxville, Tenn., 315th Air Commando Wing commander said the troop and equipment movement was extremely complicated.



A2C RICHARD E. WILHELM OF LAS CRESCENTA, CAL., A MEMBER OF AN AIR FORCE COMBAT CONTROL TEAM, DIRECTS LANDING OF A C-130 AT AIRSTRIP NEAR TAY NINH