

**STATEMENT BY COL WINKEL ON ACTIONS AS REQUESTED BY COMMAND CHAIN  
CONCERNING ACTIONS OF 14 NOV 1965 MADE ON 14 NOV 2005:**

*"On 14 Nov 1965 I had been assigned to the 2nd Plt, B Co (aka A Co, 5th Inf – a temporary name on Army roles used until 'B Co' could be officially registered later in 1966), of the 229th Aslt Hel Bn, of Maj. Gen. Harry W.O. Kinnard's 1st Cav Div (Airmobile). I had arrived bearing this experience: During 9 years after West Point graduation in 1956 until deploying to Vietnam in 1965 with the division as a Captain, I had earned a university master's degree; had been to the company grade officers' course; had become an Airborne Army Ranger and a Senior Army Aviator -- qualified in fixed & rotary wing, and in instrument flight. In addition, I had served 2 years under Gen. Hamilton Howze "Howze Board's" air assault concept examination; had been a cargo helicopter platoon cdr, a 120-bus company operations' supervisor, a 90-truck company cdr in Korea, and the developer of the 82nd Abn Div's first Aerial Observer School. I had also served in Maj. Gen. Kinnard's 11th Air Aslt Div (Test) during test and evaluation of the air assault concept where 'seizing the initiative' came to be a maxim impressed upon all air assault crews from this WWII vet who had suggested 'Nuts' to the Germans at Bastogne. I served as a helicopter troop lift company operations officer and platoon cdr, a battalion staff officer, a helicopter gunship platoon cdr, and an assistant operations officer for the 1st Cav Div's helicopter task force attached to XVIIIth Abn Corps operations during the Dominican Republic crises. One year later, after having arrived in Vietnam and having gone to war serving as a troop lift Huey 'slick' helicopter section aircraft commander/flight leader, I found that I had amassed 677 hours of combat assault flight time; and, had been selected for promotion to Major, Regular Army."*

*"During the Ia Drang Battles of Oct-Nov 1965, as a member of Capt. Robert Stinnett' 2nd Platoon, I served under the command of B Company's Maj. Richard Rogers. Authentication of this is cited by Lt. Gen. Kinnard, USA (Ret): **[HEADER – 1]** and **[TAB VI]**." "At 2100 on 13 Nov 1965, my platoon leader had sent me to a briefing by battalion operations where I was assigned to lead a flight section of 4-acft from B Company to be attached under operational control of A Company Helicopter Troop Lift Commander, Maj. Crandall of A Company during the combat assault troop lifts at LZ Xray on 14 Nov. On the 14th, from 0600-1000 [hours], I led my flight section of 4-acft – the Orange Flight – shuttling infantry about the Ia Drang Valley preparing for the combat assault. At 1000, I reported with my flight of 4-acft to the Plei Me pick up site to be attached to the A Company troop lift contingent to comprise, including my 4-acft, a total of 16-acft. The other 12-acft were Yellow Flight of 4-acft, led by Maj. Bruce Crandall of A Co, White Flight of 4-acft, led by Capt. Ed Freeman of A Co, and Green Flight of 4-acft, led by Capt. (P) James Wall of A Co. Capt. Freeman was assigned as 'second in command' of the 16-acft until later about 1500; he became 'second in command' wingman to his Section Leader Maj. Crandall of only 2-acft for the rest of the day." **[TAB H-4 page 2]***

*"[Note: Maj. Crandall is an indirect eye witness who on 14 Nov 1965 effected NO further communications with me the rest of the battle after 1430; because he had departed his assigned troop lift command – leaving it under the command of a subordinate, (in 1965) Capt. Emroy Gehlsen of A Co – to fly his own independent volunteer sorties. He most likely assumed that I had remained with Gehlsen's command, not knowing that I had earlier departed on my own initiative to fly volunteer sorties. I could not prove what I did then, but after more than a decade of later research on material for a proposed book, I can prove it now. This, I do here.]" **[TAB H-4 pages 1 to 3, the Gehlsen Letters]***

*"Misinformation occurred, most likely caused by 'assumption' and the 'fog of war,' and activities of the Ia Drang Battles when Gen. William Westmoreland, USA, gave Maj. Gen. Kinnard 'his head' to unleash his (Kinnard's) new "Air Assault Concept' whereby helicopters would 'free the Army forces from the tyranny of terrain' (Kinnard's proclamation). During the War's first large scale brigade-sized air assault battle of the Ia Drang Valley, air crews and ground infantry saw what "helicopters" did but few could see "who flew" in those helicopters seen in action. Helicopters went 'hither & thither' with different sections going to where critical and urgent need immediately popped up throughout the battles. Because of this, it became difficult to record specific heroic actions of the crews until research*

and correlation of helicopter action and crew remembrances could be made during the writing of several books that resulted in the discovery of information concerning several crews [Footnote 6]. As for my own 'hither & thither' actions, I report the following." [TAB C-1]

"On this day, the 14th of Nov 1965, I began and continued the entire day as an aircraft commander, first flying from 0600 to 1445 with copilot CWO2 Walter Schramm in my first UH1D troop lift helicopter; then, flying from 1445 – 2130 with copilot CWO2 Komich in my second helicopter. I flew as a flight leader all day, first leading 4-acft with Schramm, then leading 2-acft with Komich. Until 1000, I led my 4-acft attached as a single unit under operational command of no other commander. From 1000 to 1445, my 4-acft were attached under operational command of A Co – Maj. Bruce Commander, the LZ Xray Battle helicopter troop lift commander. My flight participated with Crandall's 16-acft troop lift contingent assaulting infantry of the 1/7th Cav Bn into LZ Xray until the battle became so violent that battlefield commander, Lt. Col. Harold Moore, 1/7th Bn Cdr closed the LZ to further helicopter troop lifts at approx. 1410. At that time, roughly 2/3rds of the infantry had been flown in to the battlefield. The unit was then under-strength fighting for its life, being assaulted by more than two battalions of enemy – soon to become 2 regimental sized – beginning to surround Xray attempting to annihilated the Americans there." [TAB H-14 page 10].

"Battle reports and crew interviews record the following: Crandall's contingent of 16-acft made 4 troop lifts on assault into Xray before being returned to the pick up site at Plei Me to wait at laager with all engines shut down until Xray could be reopened. There was, however, a 5th troop lift of 8-acft immediately before LZ closure led by Crandall into the LZ with the other 8-acft being turned back before reaching Xray when the battle had become too violent to continue the lifts. After 1410, all acft sat and waited at Plei Me, except for 4 crews: Crandall's 2 volunteer acft, and Winkel's 2 volunteer acft. Crandall's 12-acft A Co contingent had lost 2 acft to enemy fire; these sat at Plei Me not able to fly again. Winkel's 4-acft B Co flight, initially under opcon to Crandall's A Co, lost 2 acft to enemy fire. One waited at Plei Me for maintenance; the other shortly thereafter got shot down just outside Xray." [This information, supported by battle reports and interviews, is on file at the U.S. National Archives.]

"After the battle cdr closed the LZ, only 3-acft crews flew most all of the emergency sorties carrying ammo to Xray and evacuating troops from it until 2130. Two of the crews were A Co's Maj. Bruce Crandall & Capt. Jon Mills and Capt. Ed Freeman & CWO2 Francisco Moreno. The third, was B Co's Capt. Paul Winkel & CWO2 Leland Komich. Maj. Crandall had turned over his Xray troop lift command contingent to a subordinate A Co flight leader – Capt. Emroy Gehlsen. Crandall's A Co 2-acft flying emergency volunteer sorties then remained as a 2-ship section the rest of the day." [This information, supported by battle reports and interviews, is on file at the U.S. National Archives.]

"Winkel initiated his B Co emergency volunteer sorties leading 2-acft, then lost one to enemy fire, then picked up another B Co ship as "chase," then joined yet another B Co ship, then finally joined his platoon leader to complete the day at 2130. All other helicopter crews sat at laager with engines shut down at Plei Me except for this: Gehlsen's A Co contingent flew 1 emergency troop lift into Xray carrying the rest of the 1/7th Bn at approx 1530, and then flew two reinforcement troop lifts into Xray with B Co 2/7th Bn after 1730. Gehlsen's contingent was augmented by 2-acft from C Co and 2-acft from B Co for these sorties. Gehlsen's contingent was released from the battle at 1800." [This information, supported by battle reports and interviews, is on file at the U.S. National Archives.]

"The Battle: The Cav launched the Xray assault at 1030. I led my 4-acft Orange Flight. Our first landing was at 1048. Initially we flew in 8-acft sections lifting troops, 5 men per helicopter due to the high density-altitude conditions. We departed from Plei Me at approx. 1200 ft altitude and dropped them off at Xray at approx. 600 ft altitude into what seemed to be a sort of bathtub like LZ, adjacent to an approx. 2500 ft high mountain overlooking the LZ. By the 3rd lift, our flights had become separated and we were flying in sections of 4-acft separated by several minutes between the sections. We had to pick up several small infantry units from one or two pick up sites located in deep jungle locations scattered about Plei Me. Since Plei Me had just a few days earlier been assaulted by the North

Vietnamese, enemy troops were also in scattered locations about Plei Me. Picking up scattered troops and having to refuel our aircraft took time. Lift of the remaining contingent of the 1/7th Cav Bn (delayed by a closure of the LZ due to battle violence) would not occur until 1530." **[TAB H-1 page 3]**

"On my 4th lift, Battlefield Cdr Lt. Col. Harold G. Moore called me prior to approach, and said, '...delay landing until further notice; we've a little problem here...' I orbited my 4-acft Orange Flight waiting to be informed when I could renew the approach. [I learned decades later that the 'little problem' at Xray was that mortar rounds were impacting right on the landing area.] Soon, Lt. Col. Moore cleared my flight to land, and in doing so, he stated, '...Come in at treetop, when you land, reverse your acft and depart the same way you came in. We are impacting direct fire artillery about the LZ perimeter.'" **[TAB H-11 page 2]**

"When we landed, I noticed pods of infantry still in acft load positions on the ground, all prone and firing weapons. I landed next to a pod, rotated 180 degrees, told my Orange 4 trailing acft to take the lead so that we could depart from Xray the same way that we had arrived. We departed, all lifting off together following Orange 4. I then flew around the formation to take the lead. I remember the sound back at the LZ while on the ground offloading troops. It was as if I were in the middle of a popcorn popper. None of my aircraft commanders reported injuries. I would learn later that my Orange 2 acft had sustained engine damage due to enemy fire, but this would not be ascertained until our acft had landed and inspections could take place." **[TAB W pages 21-22]**

"My flight landed at Plei Me, boarded more infantry, then took off on our 5th lift. No sooner had we departed that I heard over the tactical radio the voice of my Helicopter Troop Lift Leader in his Yellow Flight, having just landed ahead of my flight several miles ahead, saying, 'Three of the troops on my ship did not get off, we've been hit...' Shortly thereafter, the Battlefield Cdr said, 'All acft return now to Plei Me. Do not land at Xray until further notice.' I then turned my 4-acft around; we headed back to Plei Me. Then Maj. Crandall called me on the radio and told me to send two of my Orange acft back to Holloway, the division forward supply point, load more ammo, then return to Plei Me. I 'rogered.' I then ordered Orange 3 (CWO2 Leland Komich) and Orange 4 (CWO2 Dallas Harper) to drop off troops being carried and fly back to Holloway to load more ammo, then return to Plei Me. They did." **[H-11 page 3]**

"After I had refueled my acft (Orange 1 with my first copilot CWO2 Walter Schramm), and CWO2 Kenneth Dicus had refueled his acft (Orange 2), Dicus informed me that his engine had been shot up and needed maintenance. I radioed the 229th Aslt Hel Bn Command & Control acft, Capt. Valentino Panzitta, and requested a maintenance crew come to Plei Me quickly. We parked our aircraft at the eastern end of the strip, far from the western refueling point where A Co crews parked. We shut down our engines. I walked across to other side of the strip to infantry, waiting to be lifted to Xray, who were listening to a tactical PRC-25 radio hooked up to a 296 antenna. This hook up gave the radio an approx. 75-mile range. I listened to the battle raging, and to the Battlefield Cdr giving guidance to his troops. I heard no radio traffic with helicopter crews. Had there been, then it would have been the voice of Battle Cdr Moore giving landing instructions. The Pathfinder element would not arrive at Xray until 1630. The time now was 1430. Lt. Col. Moore had closed the LZ to troop lifts at about 1410. Now, all 16-acft of the troop lift contingent had shut down engines and were at laager **[Footnote 9]** at Plei Me, that is all except my Orange 3 & Orange 4 crews having now been sent to get more ammo and then to return to Plei Me." **[TAB W page 22]**

"Although I did not know what the situation was at Xray at the time, I did know that the battle had turned violent and that the infantry there was understrength and running low on ammo at the time I was listening to the radio traffic with infantry elements at Plei Me about 1430. I would learn shortly that an Air Force aircraft had been shot down over the battlefield and had crashed nearby in a fiery explosion; that artillery was firing direct fire impacting about the battlefield perimeter, that the enemy was pouring down grazing machinegun fire about the western end of the LZ, that mortar rounds were

impacting here and there, that enemy weapons fire was criss-crossing the battlefield, that troops were being killed and wounded; and, that the enemy was rushing down off the mountain and attacking Xray in waves attempting to overrun the Americans there and annihilate them." **[TAB H-14 page 10]**

"Shortly thereafter, about 1435, my two Orange flight acft approached Plei Me. CWO2 Komich called, 'What is to be done with the ammo?' I replied, 'Wait one.' I then radioed the A Co CO, my Helicopter Xray Troop Lift Flight leader, Maj. Crandall, to whom my 4 B Co acft were attached under his operational control; and, asked where the ammo was to go. His reply was one word. 'Xray.' He did not say when it should go because Xray had been closed. He did not say who might be taking it to Xray. I then called Orange 3 on the radio and told the two acft to land at Plei Me immediately. I would sort out the chaff later, but Moore needed ammo now." **[TAB H-11 pages 1 & 3]**

"It was about 1445. I had been listening on the tactical radio channel. The battle was deteriorating adversely, and our troops needed ammo to survive. Time was critical. Action had to occur immediately. My maps had my pencil markings all over the contours about Xray. These would be hard to explain to another pilot. So, I turned and quickly walked across the strip to my acft in which my first copilot Schramm sat with our engine shut down. I could not just give the maps to Komich who was approaching to land at Plei Me and tell him, 'Here, you go to Xray. Here's the map. Good Luck!' I was the Flight Leader; I had been leading all day. Ergo, regardless of having to laager until the LZ reopened, I would lead my 2-acft loaded with urgently needed ammo to the closed LZ now smoking heavily in the distance due to heavy combat underway with artillery impacting all around its perimeter. This would become my 1st volunteer flight leading a section of 2-acft filled with ammo. If the infantry could not soon be re-supplied with ammo, annihilation loomed." **[TAB H-11 page 3]**

"CWO2 Komich in Orange 3 with CWO2 Harper in Orange 4 following in echelon then landed at Plei Me's eastern end in a cloud of red dust. I quickly pulled off the Orange 1 plates from my first acft, grabbed my map, my radio, my helmet, and my weapon; then, ran to Komich's acft running at full flat speed, looked to see CWO2 Charles Nay in the right seat and CWO2 Komich in the left seat – where the Acft Cdr usually sets – I went back to Nay and told him to get out, go to Schramm's acft, make it Orange 3. I then put my Orange 1 plates on the acft with Komich in it and boarded the right seat and took command of it. I told Komich to take off for Xray. I put the red beacon on so that Harper in Orange 4 as wingman would know to take off with us. I dug down into my map with index finger pointing the route over the map contour markings and correlated them with what I saw on the ground as we flew at treetop. I radio'd Maj. Crandall, 'Yellow 1 lead, Orange 1 flight of two with ammo, en route to Xray.' He did not respond. Capt. Panzitta in the Battalion Command & Control helicopter over head, however, did respond, 'Orange 1, fly generally towards the downed smoking A1-E crash site with plumb rising high in the sky on a heading about 275. When you get near the crash site, turn left 90 degrees, fly about 10 seconds, then turn 90 degrees to the right. Xray will be about 10 seconds away. You'll probably pick up enemy fire.' Actually, I did not need his guidance; I knew where we were and where we were going by finger-pointing on my map and watching the corresponding ground contours as the treetops whisked by rapidly; but, I was grateful that someone knew what we were doing. The time was just a couple minutes short of 1500." **[TAB H-14 page 14]**

"Near the crashed Air Force A1-E, we turned left, I checked my watch and at the 10 second point, told Komich, 'Now, right.' I could see only the tops of the trees. Komich had us so low that the trees brushed our underbelly. I thought, 'If we miss hitting the LZ, we'll be directly in front of the mountain and right in the artillery impact area. If we got hit, we'd be history because the ammo on board might explode. I called Battle Cdr Trojan 6 (Moore), 'This is Orange 1, flight of two, inbound in five on short final with ammo.' He 'roger'd' and told a soldier, 'Get that panel out there, wave it around, you won't get shot.' I thought to myself, 'if someone else had preceded us, that the panel would have been staked to the ground.'" 'This meant to me that WE WERE FIRST to land at the closed LZ....we might not make it out of here.' This was verified in 1999 by Mr. Dicus when he reported that he remembered seeing A Co air crews setting dormant at Plei Me and attending a meeting of sorts with the A Co Helicopter Troop Lift Cdr when my two acft took off from Plei Me to go Xray. This was also verified

by 1st Lt. Raul Taboada of 1/7th Bn; to wit, Taboada had gotten wounded and was sitting at the Bn medical collection point at the command post. In 2003, Taboada wrote to me this information, 'That he had seen a helicopter take off and then go down smoking heavily; and, he had seen another helicopter land to make the rescue.' Minutes later, Taboada wrote, 'He was then evacuated by yet another helicopter upon which a 1/7th Bn officer had been killed getting on board' – this aircraft was the lead helicopter of two others, Crandall's and Freeman's. Thus, my rescue of Harper's downed acft occurred prior to any other acft arriving at Xray after Battle Cdr Moore had closed it.]"

**[TAB 14 page 2 and TAB 25]**

"Quickly, we came to the southeast edge of the LZ. I saw the panel and said, 'There...there it is.' Komich pulled back on the controls and reduced our air speed from 90 kts to 0 with the rotor blades swinging up to almost being perpendicular to the ground like a huge fan. Komich was an instructor pilot and, in my opinion, he could make any helicopter dance the polka on a dime. I had selected the right copilot for this mission. We plopped to the ground. Harper landed his acft around our left and went forward in the LZ a bit. Battle Cdr Moore called on the radio, 'Stop. Come back; you're going to get hit.' Harper turned around and hovered back to sit down near us. I waited for my crew to dump the ammo. I stared straight ahead. My vision became a tunnel drained of color as if I were looking into a green-gray tube. I wondered how long it would be before bullets would slam into me; and, I wondered how long it would hurt before I died." **[TAB H-13 and H-14 page 1]**

"My crew chief Pfc. Richard Smith brought me back with his, 'We're done, let's get the hell out of here.' I called Harper, 'Orange 4, you done?' He double clicked the mic. I then turned on the red beacon, then Battle Cdr quickly called, 'Orange 1, can you take wounded and a couple of POWs?' I 'roger'd.' Wounded were loaded on Orange 4; POWs on mine. The infantry guard said, 'Wounded and POWs can't ride together.' I called Orange 4, 'We're ready. You ready?' Harper double clicked. I told Komich, 'Go.' I turned on the red beacon. Orange 4 took off with us in echelon left. Then Crew Chief Smith yelled over the intercom, 'Mr. Harper's on fire.' " **[TAB H-14 page 1]**

"Trusting without question what my crew chief had yelled, and wanting to confirm it for myself, I immediately turned and looked to my back left where Harper had taken off with us in echelon left. We were 1 crew with 4 sets of eyes. We were acft commander flight leader (me), 1st pilot-copilot-instructor pilot (Leland Komich), crew chief (Richard Smith), and gunner (Ronald Newlander). We were a 'whole greater than the sum of its parts!' I saw jets off smoke spurting out from the sides of his engine on top. I called over my UHF radio frequency, 'Orange 4, set her down now, you're on fire!' Whether he was or was not, I really did not know; but, the call was similar to what old soldiers remember doing when the call, 'GAS,' was yelled: 'stop everything in your tracks right now and protect yourself!' At this moment, copilot Komich began turning our ship to the right and decreasing altitude. Battlefield Cdr Moore, apparently watching the whole action, radio'd me saying, 'Orange 1, what are your intentions?' I told Moore, 'I'm coming back in to drop off your POWs, I'm going to pick up my downed crew, I'm going to pick up your wounded, out!' Moore, 'roger'd.' Harper had immediately landed. [I did not know then where with regard to the LZ. I learned during research decades later that he had sat down in 'no man's land' about 100 meters outside the battlefield perimeter right in the middle of an area between the attacking enemy and the defending troops in the battlefield.] A couple of days after this, by the way, I received word from my company maintenance officer that Harper's acft had sustained 11 bullet hits in his engine, severing the oil lines; and, that in 5 minutes of continued flying the acft would have been depleted of all oil. Had I not told Harper to land when I did, Harper's crew and wounded being carried might have had to crash land in the jungle somewhere and might never have had been able to make it out of the battle area alive." **[TAB 23 page 3]**

"Komich brought us around and hovered to the side of Orange 4. I saw huge black smoke billowing up from the acft as if it were actually on fire. I was sadistically grateful that the acft was smoking, for I feared for a moment that I had made a bad decision telling Harper to land in the jungle at risk of his life if he were not in trouble. It was not on fire but I did not know this at the time. It was smoking

heavily as if it were; but I didn't know. I feared that the ship could explode at any moment, and get both crews killed – even me. When we sat down from our moving hover, Harper's crew immediately transferred his wounded to my ship. The crew (Dallas Harper, Kenneth Faba, Mickey Whitaker and Joe Bishop) was quite pale in the face. A soldier from the battlefield came running up and took the two POWs away. Harper years later remembered that he saw enemy fire kicking up dirt all around. The popcorn sound continued; and, I learned later, reading the Capt. Gordon Rozanski Silver Star and the proposed Capt. Ramon Nadal Distinguished Service Cross citations that enemy fire was 'criss-crossing' the area with artillery, mortar and rocket fire blasting all about the battlefield perimeter – where we had landed to effect the rescue!" **[TAB H-12 page 1] & [TAB 11-15 page 1]**

"One wounded fellow exited Harper's ship and began limp-running to the north, towards where the enemy might be. His back was covered head and shoulders to butt with red blood. I yelled to my crew, 'That man there, go get him; we're not leaving until we get every soul that we came back here to get!' Smith and Newlander did; they ran about 75 yards out into the battle area, got him, and dragged him back on board. Komich kept the engine running full speed with flat rotors. On board my ship we had my crew of 4, Harper's crew of 4, an infantryman – Capt. Rozanski, the 1/7th Bn S4 who I named 'the strap-hanger' and who I had not learned was Rozanski until 1992 – and Harper's wounded, at least 4, maybe 5. We looked like a rush hour subway. That's 13 or 14, perhaps 15 souls on board. Komich had not yet refueled; we were light on fuel, perhaps only 20 to 30 minutes left. One wounded guy laying in the straphanger's lap looked up at me and said, 'Thank you.' This, I've remembered and have cherished for decades since! Komich hovered, moved into translational lift. We began to climb with our belly scrapping the treetops. We were probably over the enemy in attack, but we quickly got up to speed and did not climb to a higher altitude until at least 5 minutes later to make certain that we were out of enemy weapons' range." **[TAB H-12 page 1] & [TAB 11-14 page 1]**

"A couple of minutes after our departure, I called back to my Troop Lift opcon Flt Cdr (Maj. Crandall) reporting that we had gotten in and out OK, so the rest of the 1/7th awaiting lift to the battlefield could make it OK. I received no response from Crandall. I lit a cigarette (cupping my hands to keep the match going, because we had no doors on our ship and the interior winds were blowing about). I reached back to my left to give it to a wounded soldier, and the 'straphanger' took it for himself. Miffed, I did this again, and gave it to the straphanger pointing that he ought to give this one to the wounded guy. Having seen this done in the movies, I figured this is what one does for the wounded. Emotionally drained for a brief moment, I found a tear rolling down my cheek. En route back to forward support base Holloway and the medical facility, we flew over our battalion S3 forward operations section. I reported our intentions since I had heard nothing from my Troop Lift opcon Flt Cdr. I learned years later that he had been taking his wounded to LZ Falcon, only 5 minutes from the LZ, so that the medical evacuation unit acft could then ferry them back to Holloway. I was never informed of this. I also learned years later that the medical unit pilots had refused to land at the battlefield. This meant all wounded were evacuated by a few troop lift crews, such as my crew was. I then called the Holloway medical facility and reported that we were inbound with wounded and expect more, perhaps 100 more to be coming in soon because a big battle was underway; so, it might be a good idea to collect more medics at the facility quite quickly. Then I heard the Battlefield Cdr talking to our helicopters who were apparently landing more troops at Xray. He yelled, 'I told you to come in 2 at a time, not 4!' I learned later that one acft had found no place to land in his section of 4, and had hit a tree and had to force land in the battlefield. His crew was quickly rescued by another acft during the troop lift of the 'rest of the 1/7th Cav Bn.' The time was about 1515-1530." **[TAB H-11 pages 3-4]**

"We landed at the Holloway medical facility and dropped off the wounded, then flew a few hundred of yards to the refueling pump. Since these were 100 gpm pumps the time to refuel would be much less to fill up to 1100 lbs than it would have been at Plei Me on the 30 gpm pumps there. During refueling, Komich suggested that we carry back another load of ammo and I said, 'Yeah, right to Xray.' We then 'hopped, skipped and jumped' to the ammo supply point nearby and sat down, began loading from the multitude of boxes there. Quickly a Major came up yelling that we couldn't just take the stuff, because

it had to be accounted for and told us to unload it. Since we were almost full, I told my crew to hop on because we were going to leave this 'yo yo' in a cloud of dust. We had to get the ammo back to Xray immediately. We dusted the Major then yelling and flew off to the south southwest at 100 mph or so. As we flew over the 229th Bn Forward S3 operations section, I reported, 'En route back to Xray with ammo in a single ship.' All I got back was, 'Roger That.' A few minutes later, approx. 1540, knowing that we shouldn't fly into Xray as a single ship, I called to Troop Lift Xray Helicopter Flight Cdr asking for a 'chase' ship. Again, he did not respond; however, another acft cdr called, reporting that they would follow. They quickly came up at echelon left. For years I had thought this to be White 1, Freeman of A Co, because of his southern drawl – he hailed from Mississippi; but, during research during the 1990s I learned this was incorrect. Freeman had been with Crandall all day. The chase acft was actually flown by Capt. Dwayne Denton – who also had a southern Georgian drawl – & Capt. Bruce Thomas, both of my platoon of B Co. Both, however, are deceased." **[TAB H-12 page 1]**

"We approached Xray at treetop level from the northeast and found explosions from artillery impacts blasting all about the perimeter. The battlefield was covered with smoke and no perimeter could be seen. As I flew the ship around the eastern side and on around the smoke on the south side, I saw the battlefield, and called into Battle Cdr Moore, 'Orange one, flight of 2 with ammo, going around for a new approach.' Moore called back, 'Roger, but stay away from the mountain. Artillery is still firing direct fire.' I 'roger'd' and swept our flight at my airspeed gauge reading of 120 knots around the western side between the mountain and the battlefield. On around until I came to the northeast side and spotted the emergency landing spot and came in hot to land, unload, and pickup more wounded. I 'beacon'd on' and our two ships took off to the north and made our way back towards Holloway to the north east, both loaded with more wounded. Again, still with no word from the Troop Lift Xray Helicopter Cdr, I reported over the 229th S3 section, then landed at the medical facility, dropped off the wounded, quickly topped off fuel, then landed our two ships back at the supply point and boarded more ammo before the Major could scramble to our loading position. Back again we went, and I reported over the 229th Bn S3 section that we were once again en route back to the battlefield with more ammo. As I approached Xray at approx. 1625, I reported in to the Battle Cdr; but, this time Moore told us not to land the extra ammo, '...for they now had almost too much and this would add to their burden when they would leave...' after concluding the battle victoriously. He told me to drop it off at artillery position LZ Falcon, 4 miles from Xray. This peeved me a little, because I was going to 'roar at risk right back again' and now he told me 'not to bother.'" **[TAB H-11 page 4]**

"We diverted our flight, landed at Falcon and unloaded at approx. 1630. During this short interlude, I dismounted, walked to an artillery gun with a 10 foot tall pile of casings next to it. I marveled at the pile. A gunner told me, his battalion had been firing 'fire for effect' for 3 straight hours and had not had time to 'level the bubbles.' The latter is necessary to keep the guns accurately firing at a position. This meant, that while I had flown under the trajectories that the guns might have been a little off with rounds going a bit 'hither and thither;' and, thus adding to the risk to flight. He also remarked, 'one gun burned out its tube and two others, busted their hydraulics!' Then, my own platoon commander, who had been flying out of LZ Falcon shuttling infantry of Tully's 2/5th Bn to LZ Victor near LZ Xray, scurried up and said that he was going to take water to Xray and asked if I would I go too. I said one word, 'Damn,' walked to my acft twirling my arm around above meaning to Komich in our chopper, 'crank her up.' We departed with my platoon leader Stinnett in the lead. I was a bit apprehensive, because I had been leading all day going in and out of Xray, and here I was, flying wingman for a 'leader' who had not yet been to the battlefield. The time was approx. 1634 and we'd land at about 1640. We did, and then picked up more wounded. We returned to Falcon and dropped them off. Then I joined my platoon leader and followed him yet to join another mission. This being the reinforcement of B Co, 2/7th Bn into Xray at approx. 1715." **[TAB H-14 page 9] & [TAB H-18 page 2]**

"After this, having heard not one word from the A Co Troop Lift Xray Helicopter Leader – Crandall – and having checked in with the 229th Bn Forward S3 Operations section, I decided to join my B Co platoon commander to continue in combat. Stinnett had a mission to pick up from various one ship pick up sites in deep jungle positions about Falcon troops of the 2/5th Bn, then fly them to an un-

secure landing zone called LZ Victor just 3 km from the battle at Xray. This became a blocking position. This lift went on from 1730 to approx. 2000 or so. There were now 5 acft in Stinnett's flight doing this, so the entire 2/5th Cav Bn got moved in these acft before the moon came up. This completed my day, and we all returned to the Holloway base to close out our flight plans. I checked into the Chaplain's tent for a few moments with the 'Great One' upstairs, then went off to get a warm beer."

"That day, my flight records cite, I had flown in **2 different acft (with 2 different copilots)** for a total of **9.8 hours**, making **55 landings**. I had landed at LZ Xray **9 times**, with **4 of these being volunteer**, landing within the Battle Cdr's '**heroic period of time for helicopters to land at Xray** (approx. 1430 to approx. 1630); and, I had rescued & **evacuated 20 to 23 soldiers.**" **[TAB H-6 & TAB H-27]**

**"All this needs a purposeful summary:** After my initial assignment, I assumed new positions by my own initiative, one after another, in 3 newly constructed sections to fly volunteer flights to Xray. Then, having received no communication from my Troop Lift "opcon" leader – Maj. Crandall; and, having checked in several times with the battalion forward operations section -- rather than setting on my duff at Plei Me waiting for the LZ to be reopened -- I joined my own platoon commander to fly on my 4th volunteer flight to Xray in support of the 1/7th Cav then needing ammo, medical supplies, and water while surrounded by the enemy. After that, I joined 2 more different flights to lift reinforcements from a second battalion (B/2/7th Co) and, a third battalion (2/5th Bn) to a blocking position only 3 km from the Xray battle. I led sections in 7 different and separate flights – they are summed up here:"

**"The 7 different flights:"**

**"Flt #1 – (0600-1442) assigned leader of 4-acft: attached opcon to A Co for troop lifts**  
5 Observers:" Maj. Crandall (my Xray helicopter troop lift opcon flight leader)  
CWO2 Schramm (my 1st copilot of my 1st acft)  
CWO2 Dicus (my 2nd acft Acft Cdr)  
CWO2 Komich (my 3rd acft Acft Cdr)  
CWO2 Harper (my 4th acft Acft Cdr)

**"Flt #2 – (1442-1452) (1st) volunteer leader of 2-acft: emergency ammo lift to Xray under fire**  
4 Observers:" CWO2 Schramm (my 1st copilot in my 1st acft)  
CWO2 Komich (my 2nd copilot in my 2nd acft)  
CWO2 Dicus (a member of my 1st 4-acft section)  
CWO2 Harper (my wingman in my 2nd 2-acft section)

[Schramm & Dicus remained with the A Co Troop Lift contingent after I had led Komich & Harper on volunteer flight #1 to Xray. Schramm & Dicus had no contact with me after 1442.]

**"Flt #3 – (1452-1457) (2nd) volunteer leader of 1-acft: rescue of downed acft under fire**  
3 Observers:" CWO2 Komich (my 2nd copilot in my 2nd acft)  
CWO2 Harper (my wingman in my 2nd 2-acft section)  
Capt. Rozanski (S4, 1/7th Cav Bn)

[Harper returned to base after we rescued him. He had no further contact with me after about 1530 when he left my acft. Harper was recommender of my 1965 DFC, but could add nothing concerning actions after 1457. Rozanski did not know who his crew was on flights #2, #3, #4, and #5 in 1965. He and I only learned who we were at a 1st Cav



Div reunion in 1992. In 1998, Battle Cdr Moore at Xray, upgraded this same DFC to a SS which became the award. Lt. Gen. Moore did not know all actions, the same as Harper did not know all the actions that followed after 1457 on 14 Nov 1965.]

**"Flt #4 – (1530-1550) (3rd) volunteer leader of 2-acft: emergency ammo lift to Xray under fire**

2 Observers:" CWO2 Komich (my 2nd copilot in my 2nd acft)  
Capt. Rozanski (S4, 1/7th Cav Bn)

[Although, I had NO communications from A Co CO Troop Lift Cdr Crandall, I made contact en route with 229th Bn S3 forward, Maj. William Johnson, and Maj. Charles Reid, and the 'chase' acft flown by Capt. Denton and Capt. Thomas. These four are now deceased. Only Komich and Rozanski know of the event. Rozanski knew not who his crew was in 1965. He learned who it was in 1992.]

**"Flt #5 – (1630-1645) (4th) volunteer leader of 2-acft: emergency water lift to Xray under fire**

3 Observers:" CWO2 Komich (my 2nd copilot in my 2nd acft)  
Capt. Rozanski (S4, 1/7th Cav Bn)  
Capt. Stinnett (Plt Cdr, 2nd Plt, B Co, 229th Bn)

[Again, Rozanski did not know who his crew was in 1965.]

**"Flt #6 – (1730-1800) joined B Co Plt Cdr: reinforcement lift of B/2/7th Co to Xray under fire**

2 Observers:" CWO2 Komich (my 2nd copilot in my 2nd acft)  
Capt. Stinnett (Plt Cdr, 2nd Plt, B Co, 229th Bn)

**"Flt #7 – (1830-2130) joined B Co Plt Cdr: troop lift of 2/5th Bn to blocking site 3 km from Xray**

2 Observers:" CWO2 Komich (my 2nd copilot in my 2nd acft)  
Capt. Stinnett (Plt Cdr, 2nd Plt, B Co, 229th Bn)

**"Significance of these Flights:** I constructed or joined other sections, one after the other, to continue in battle. Only one can vouch fully for all flights – CWO4 Komich. NO other among 47 pilots kept manufacturing flight section after flight section to continue in battle except myself accompanied by CWO2 Komich, my 2nd copilot. Consequently, each of the separate flight sections were established by initiative. I received NO communication from A Co CO Troop Lift Cdr Maj. Crandall after 1430 for the rest of the day. I determined it essential to get ammo to Xray immediately to help avert possible annihilation during the critical time proclaimed by Battle Cdr Moore as 'approx. 1430 to approx. 1630.' Thereafter, having contacted my battalion S3 forward operations section, I rejoined my own 2nd Plt, B Co, 229th Bn to continue at battle rather than setting dormant at Plei Me!

Paul Pentton Winkel  
Paul P. Winkel, Jr., COL, USA (Ret)

14 Nov 2005  
DATE