

# The Lords of Darkness

By Kenneth Finlayson

**MODERN** Army Special Operations Aviation (ARSOA) grew out of the failure of the United States' effort to rescue the American hostages held by Iran in 1980. Operation EAGLE CLAW, the complex two-night operation designed to rescue the 53 hostages from the American embassy in Teheran, was aborted when a U.S. Marine helicopter collided with an Air Force C-130 aircraft during refueling at the Desert One airstrip. In the aftermath of the failed rescue attempt, the Army recognized that Army Special Operations Forces (ARSO) needed dedicated special rotary wing (helicopter) aviation support. This led to the formation of Task Force 160 in 1981, the forerunner of today's 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment (SOAR). The 160th SOAR "Night Stalkers" are the Army's premier special operations aviation element, specializing in long-range, low-level night penetrations of enemy airspace to deliver ARSO forces to locations with pinpoint accuracy. From 1982 until 1994, the 45th Aviation Battalion (SO)(A), later redesignated the 1st Battalion, 245th Aviation Regiment, Oklahoma Army National Guard, served as a National Guard "round-out" unit for the 160th. During this period, the 1/245th, the "Lords of Darkness," supported ARSO operations worldwide.

This article is a history of the 1st Battalion, 245th Aviation Regiment from 1978 until 1994. The organization, training and deployments of the OKARNG 1/245th in support of 1st Special Operations Command (1st SOCOM), United States Army Special Forces Command (USASFC), and later United States Army Special Operations Command (USASOC) are the focus of this story. The 1st Battalion, 245th Aviation Regiment began when Detachment 1, 445th Aviation Company of the Oklahoma National Guard (OKARNG) in Tulsa, was reorganized and redesignated Company D (-), 149th Aviation Battalion on 1 October 1978.<sup>1</sup> Initially it was a light attack helicopter company with 127 personnel and three UH-1M Huey attack and two OH-58 light observation helicopters.<sup>2</sup> In the post Desert One build-up of Army SOF aviation, the unit was redesignated the 45th Aviation Battalion, (Light Helicopter Combat) on 1 May 1982 and given the mission to support ARSO.<sup>3</sup>

The 45th Aviation Bn organized under a Table of Distribution and Allowances (TDA NGW7QQAA effective 1 May 1982), expanded the unit to 203 personnel and 25 OH-6 Cayuse helicopters.<sup>4</sup> The unit returned the OH-58's and UH-1M Hueys to the National Guard Bureau. In 1985, B Company, 149th Aviation Battalion



45th Infantry  
Division SSI



245th Aviation  
Regiment DUI



160th SOAR  
DUI



1st SOCOM  
SSI



USASOC  
SSI



245th personnel waiting to load a UH-1H on board an Air Force C-5A Galaxy. The venerable Vietnam-era Huey was a mainstay of the 245th, at AASF#1 in Lexington, Oklahoma.



The OH-6 Cayuse was the primary A Company aircraft of the 1/245th from 1982 until 1986. The Cayuse was modified into the AH-6C attack and the MH-6B lift models. Under the SOA configurations, they were known as "Little Birds."

located in Lexington, Oklahoma was assigned to the 45th Aviation battalion. They brought with them 23 UH-1H Hueys. In November 1986 it became B Company, 45th Aviation.<sup>5</sup> Of the 25 OH-6s in the battalion, 17 were reconfigured as the MH-6B lift model and 8 as AH-6C attack model.<sup>6</sup> On 1 June 1987 the 45th Avn Bn (LT

HEL CBT) was renamed the 45th Aviation Bn (Special Operations) (Airborne) and on 1 October 1987 was again redesignated to be the 1st Bn, 245th Aviation Regiment (SO) (A). This was the unit designation until inactivation on 1 September 1994.<sup>7</sup> Throughout this period, the battalion trained to mirror the 160th's operational standards in order to provide the highest caliber support to ARSOF in CONUS (the Continental United States) and abroad.

In 1982, when the 45th was assigned the mission to support ARSOF, the battalion consisted of a Headquarters and Headquarters Company (HHC), three light aviation companies and an aviation intermediate maintenance company (AVIM). The HHC, A Company with the 23 OH-6's (17 MH-6B and 8 AH-6C Little Birds) and D Company (AVIM) were located at Army Aviation Support Facility #2 (AASF #2) adjacent to the Tulsa International Airport. B Company (15 UH-1Hs) and C Company (8 UH-1Hs) were at AASF #1 in Lexington, Oklahoma, south of Oklahoma City, roughly 130 miles from Tulsa.<sup>8</sup>

On 26 August 1989, AASF #2 in Tulsa was formally dedicated after a \$7-million military construction upgrade. The new facility on 50 acres of land adjacent to the Tulsa International Airport included a two-story National Guard Armory, flight operations center, organizational maintenance building, an AVIM hangar, a 2,000 foot-runway, and the flight line for helicopter parking.<sup>9</sup> The Armory was named for Chief Warrant Officer Two Dennis L. Barlow. The Flight Operations Center was named for Warrant Officer One David O. Barr. These two 45th Aviation Battalion pilots died in a training accident in March 1987.<sup>10</sup> In 1990, the Organizational Maintenance Shop was dedicated to Staff Sergeant David A. Brown who died while on deployment in Honduras in 1988. The improved facilities better supported the high mission profile of the 1/245th.

Special operations aviation support to ARSOF is predicated on the ability to fly low-level operations under night vision goggles (NVGs) and hit the designated target/landing zones on time. The time-on-target standard of the 160th SOAR is "plus or minus 30 seconds."

### The Three Basic Helicopters of the Lords of Darkness



25 OH-6 Cayuse, 1982-1989. In 1986 17 were reconfigured as MH-6Bs and 8 as AH-6Cs.



23 UH-1H Hueys, 1985-1994. 15 Hueys were assigned to B Company and 8 to C Company.



15 UH-60A Black Hawk Helicopters, 1986-1994. The 245th received 2 Black Hawks in 1986 and 13 more in 1989.

The 245th aircrews trained assiduously to meet this standard. From its inception as a Special Operations Aviation unit, the 245th was blessed with experienced pilots. Many were Vietnam veterans, with hundreds of hours in the cockpit. "The potential was there. We had a great opportunity with the 245th," said Brigadier General John N. Dailey, the commander of the 160th SOAR from 1986 to 1990.<sup>11</sup> Still, training with NVGs was a priority. At this time, flying at night under goggles was a relatively new skill and the 160th was the primary Army's practitioner. CW4 Robert C. Lane, who completed flight training in 1968, recalled, "In 1983, we started in heavy on NVG training. We trained with the 160th guys, and there was a lot of trial and error."<sup>12</sup> Training in Yuma, AZ, and in Oklahoma rapidly improved their NVG flying proficiency.<sup>13</sup>

Part of performing to the 160th SOAR's standards involved training the pilots and crews in mission planning and flight preparation and acquiring special skills. The NG pilots had to meet the same standards as the Active Army Night Stalker pilots in terms of flying hours, medical requirements and flight qualification.<sup>14</sup> "They were great supporters," said COL Joseph Fucci, former 160th SOAR Commander. "They kept up with our SOPs and we were able to trade off IP's [Instructor Pilots]. From the standpoint of the Regiment, they were always part of it."<sup>15</sup>

The first stage for aircrews to achieve was Basic Mission Qualification (BMQ). This entailed a specific

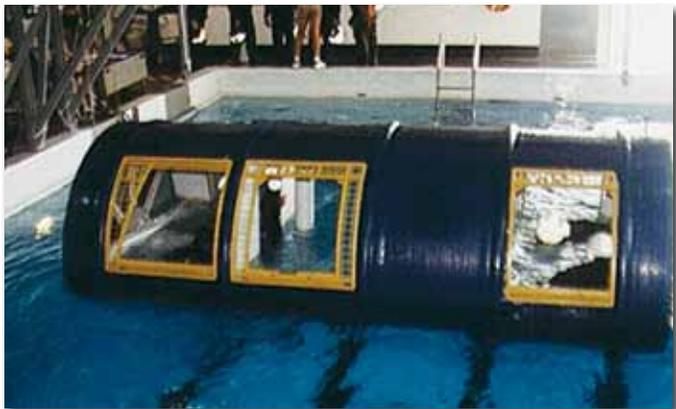


*An artist's rendition of 245th pilots flying an OH-6 using night vision goggles.*

*CW4 Robert C. Lane using the SRU-36P Helicopter Emergency Egress Device (HEEDs) to provide oxygen to aircrewman exiting a submerged aircraft. Lane was preparing to be "dunked" at Pensacola, Florida.*



number of flying hours under NVGs, meeting specific standards proficiency in navigation, and completing Survival Escape Resistance and Evasion (SERE) training, deck landing qualification with the U.S. Navy, and rotary wing "Dunker" egress training at Pensacola, FL. A three-week course designed by the 245th and the 160th



*Training to exit a submerged aircraft is done in the "Dunker" at Pensacola Naval Air Station, Florida.*



*Captain Byron L. Barnhart enters the "Dunker" module for egress training. Completion of the training was a requirement for the 245th aircrews.*



*Army Rangers on board a UH-60A Black Hawk ready to "fast-rope" onto an objective. A Company, 245th flew the UH-60A from 1987 until 1994.*



*The MH-6B "Little Bird" provides a lift platform for up to four Army SOF personnel.*



*Rangers fast rope on to a rooftop from a UH-60A Black Hawk.*

covered these criteria.<sup>16</sup> The unit was assisted in the SERE training in 1990 and 1991 by Mobile Training Teams from the U. S. Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School, before unit members attended the resistance and evasion portion of the SERE course at Fort Bragg.<sup>17</sup> The 160th SOAR certified the first several BMQ courses. Once qualified as BMQ, the crews worked towards Fully Mission Qualified (FMQ) status, involving additional flight training and navigation under NVGs. After attaining FMQ, there were additional individual pilot qualifications.

The planning, coordination, and execution of an ARSOA mission are the responsibility of the Flight Lead (FL). To attain the Flight Lead Qualification (FLQ), pilots are trained in mission planning, coordinating the aircraft ingress and egress routes to the target, establishing checkpoints and navigation waypoints, and aircrew briefings. At least one FLQ pilot leads every mission. Every flight operation has an Air Mission Commander (AMC). This senior flight officer coordinates with the supported ground force and maintains situational awareness during the air mission. Major (MAJ) Emery Fountain, the commander of C Company in 1993 explained: "Probably the most rewarding job is the Air Mission Commander because he orchestrates mission planning and execution. Running neck and neck with him is the Flight Lead, who leads the group in and returns on time to pull them out."<sup>18</sup>

The 160th SOAR certified the first FLs and AMCs.<sup>19</sup> Flying to the 160th standards, the 45th strived to provide

seamless support to ARSOA. When it was first dedicated to support ARSOA, the 45th had two types of helicopters. The OH-6 Cayuse helicopters had been configured as the MH-6B lift and AH-6C attack helicopters. The UH-1H Huey lift helicopters, like the MH-6 and AH-6 aircraft had been extensively modified with improved navigation and communications systems, although the upgrades were considerably less than what the 160th SOAR aircraft had.<sup>20</sup> (The 160th had no UH-1Hs.) CW4 Robert Lane said the lack of 'cutting edge' technology meant 'no modern marvels'. We had the Omega Navigation System, which was not very accurate, and no GPS [Global Positioning System]. It was 'finger on the map' navigation."<sup>21</sup> In the midst of getting aircrews Special Operations Aviation (SOA)-qualified, was the transition to UH-60A Black Hawk helicopters in 1986.

In 1986, A Company received two UH-60A Black Hawks direct from the Sikorsky factory in Stratford, Connecticut. These were initially used to support the AH-6C and MH-6B Little Birds during deployments.<sup>22</sup> In 1989, A Company received 13 UH-60As from the four Active Army SF Group Aviation Detachments. The 23 "Little Birds" (AH-6 and MH-6 aircraft) were transferred to the Army's Aviation and Missile Command (AMCOM) for redistribution. Most were migrated to the 160th SOAR. Company A became a UH-60A medium lift company of 15 aircraft.<sup>23</sup> The pilots, crews and maintenance personnel transitioned from Little Birds to Black Hawks while the UH-60s were upgraded to SOA standards. With the Black Hawks came a sharp escalation in the operational tempo.

Beginning in 1984, when eight MH-6's first deployed to Fort Bliss, Texas, to support the 5th SFG, until the unit inactivated in 1994, 245th support to ARSOA grew every year. Between 1984 and 1990, the unit supported the 75th Ranger Regiment (in Savannah, Georgia, Fort Walton Beach, Florida, Lacrosse, Wisconsin and Fort Lewis, Washington), the 1st, 5th and 7th SFGs (Fort Huachuca, Arizona, Fort Bliss, Texas, and McAlester, Oklahoma), and other ARSOA units in a wide variety of locations in the continental United States.<sup>24</sup> Between 1990 and 1993, UH-60 helicopters worked with Army special operations units and other government agencies at the Nevada



*Davis Airfield in Muskogee, Oklahoma. The 245th staged out of Davis Airfield to support JRTC rotations at Fort Chaffee, AR and Fort Polk, LA. Flying from Davis Airfield enabled the 245th to extend flying times to support ARSOF long range penetrations.*

Test Site at Mercury, Nevada.<sup>25</sup> Supporting the active component was only half of the 245th's ARSOF mission.

Support to the Reserve Component (National Guard and Army Reserve) SFGs was a major training mission for the 245th. In 1984, four MH-6's worked twice with the 20th SFG at Camp Blanding, Florida.<sup>26</sup> In subsequent years, the 245th worked with the 12th and 19th SFGs as well as the 20th. These missions took the unit to Little Rock, Arkansas, Camp Dawson, West Virginia, Pueblo, Colorado, Camp Williams, Utah, and Anchorage, Alaska.<sup>27</sup> Another significant requirement was supporting active and reserve SOF during their unit rotations to the Joint Readiness Training Center (JRTC).

The 245th deployed aircraft and crews to support 22 ARSOF unit rotations at JRTC from 1990 to 1994.<sup>28</sup> Two to eight aircraft with crews and maintenance personnel supported JRTC rotations at Fort Chaffee, Arkansas, until 1993, when the training center relocated to Fort Polk, Louisiana. On several rotations, the 245th staged for JRTC missions from Camp Gruber and Davis Airfield, near Muskogee, in eastern Oklahoma. This enabled the aircrews to practice long-range ARSOF penetrations. CW4 Robert Lane noted that the four-hour flight from Camp Gruber to Fort Chaffee, Arkansas was much like an actual mission. "The JRTC 'box' was pretty small. To get training with NVGs and on navigation, it was better to fly the longer legs."<sup>29</sup> At the JRTC, the primary mission was to insert SF teams at night to precise locations and to exfiltrate them as required. Some infiltrations involved



*Soldiers of the 1st Special Forces Group rappel from a 245th UH-60A Black Hawk. The 245th supported active and reserve SF groups in CONUS and overseas.*

parachute operations or "fast roping" the SF teams onto their objectives. The UH-60A Black Hawks and UH-1H Hueys supported these JRTC rotations. The older Hueys helped the SF ODAs (Operational Detachment Alpha). "When the SF teams went down range to work with other nations, they were more likely to be using UH-1s than Black Hawks. Training with our guys on the Hueys prepared them to use the UH-1s in other places," explained MAJ Keith Owens.<sup>30</sup> Exchanges with other nations took place between 1986 and 1994.



*The 245th supported four deployments to Thailand. Here B Company UH-1Hs support the 19th SFG and the Royal Thai Army near Lop Buri in 1987.*



*Pilots from the Royal Thai Army trained with 245th airmen at the RTA Aviation Center in Lop Buri, Thailand in 1991. The pilots are posing with the Oklahoma Adjutant General, MG Donald F. Ferrell.*



*The 245th based out of the Palmerola airfield in Honduras to support the 7th Special Forces Group in Exercise LEMPIRA 87.*

In April 1987, the 245th deployed four UH-1H Hueys to Thailand to support the 19th SFG during Exercise COBRA GOLD.<sup>31</sup> Based out of Lop Buri, Thailand, the 245th supported the 19th and trained Royal Thai Army (RTA) helicopter pilots on night vision goggle flight techniques. "They used our goggles, the AN-PVS 5s. It was pretty seamless as far as working with their pilots," said First Sergeant Norman Crow. "We ended up doing a total of four rotations with the Thai Army."<sup>32</sup> In 1987, the 245th deployed to Thailand, to support the 19th SFG and

work with the Royal Thai Army pilots supporting their Special Forces.<sup>33</sup> The 245th deployed four UH-1Hs and two MH-6s. The pilots flew with the RTA pilots and did mission planning training.<sup>34</sup> In 1991 the 245th went back to Thailand, this time without aircraft. They flew with the RTA pilots in their UH-1N Hueys.<sup>35</sup> A contingent of RTA pilots came to Oklahoma to train with the 245th at Camp Gruber in 1993.<sup>36</sup>

In 1987, the 245th deployed MH-6B Little Birds and UH-1H Hueys to Honduras. They were supporting the 1st Bn, 7th SFG in Exercise LEMPIRA 87. A year later they returned to support the 2nd Bn, 7th SFG during LEMPIRA 88.<sup>37</sup> By 1993, the 245th had moved to Southwest Asia

Lieutenant Colonel (LTC) Terry R. Council, the 245th commander in 1993 recalled that "in January [1993] we sent two pilots and two crew chiefs to Bangladesh and flew their aircraft [Bell 412s]. We provided some of the first night training to the Bangladeshis at home. Three pilots and three crew chiefs trained Indonesian aviators for the first time in April 1993," said LTC Council.<sup>38</sup> Later that year, the battalion supported a five-week deployment to Townsville on the northeastern coast of Australia. Two UH-60A Black Hawks and a 30-man element of pilots, crewmembers and maintenance personnel supported a Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force (CJSOTF) of U.S. SOF (U.S. Army Special Forces, Navy SEALs, and Air Force Special Tactics teams) and Australian Special Air Service Regiment (ASASR) personnel.<sup>39</sup> Supporting a deployment schedule of this magnitude could not be accomplished with a normal weekend drill once a month.

The 245th belied the notion of the National Guard as a part-time force. Many 245th flight crews, staff officers and NCOs spent up to four months on active duty each year.<sup>40</sup> SOA standards could not be maintained with a single monthly drill weekend. "Our pilots flew an average of once a week, which is probably as much as a lot of active duty people. We did 15 exercises a year, for an average of two exercises per crewman and conducted 12 drill weekends a year," said LTC Council.<sup>41</sup> CW4 Robert Lane described the routine as "three weekends a month. Two weekends would be spent on deployment supporting the SOF units and one here at home station training. This was the case from 1987 to 1994."<sup>42</sup> In 1992 the battalion logged 6,297 flight hours supporting various missions; 604 hours supported ARSOF and ARSOA training, 894 hours supported conventional units and 763 hours supported State and Federal counter-narcotics programs.<sup>43</sup>

The 245th worked with the Oklahoma Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs, the Oklahoma Highway Patrol, the Federal Bureau of Land Management, and the Bureau of Indian Affairs. In a more traditional National Guard role, it provided humanitarian relief assistance after natural disasters.<sup>44</sup> The ability to provide aircraft and crews to support this high operational tempo depended on a support force as dedicated and proficient as the aviators they supported.

The training of maintenance personnel for the various aircraft and the ability to load-out the unit for

# AREAS of OPERATION



## CONUS:

- **Operations:**  
Tulsa, OK  
Lexington, OK
- **Training:**  
Yuma, AZ  
Pensacola, FL  
Fort Bragg, NC
- **Support:**  
5<sup>th</sup> SFG  
Fort Bliss, TX  
75<sup>th</sup> Rangers  
Savannah, GA  
Fort Walton Beach, FL  
LaCrosse, WI  
Fort Lewis, WA  
1<sup>st</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> SFG  
Fort Huachuca, AZ  
Fort Bliss, TX  
McAlester, OK  
12<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup> SFG  
Camp Blanding, FL  
Little Rock, AR  
Camp Dawson, WV  
Pueblo, CO  
Camp Williams, UT  
Anchorage, AL  
JRTC  
Fort Chaffee  
Fort Polk  
NTS  
Mercury, NV

Honduras

Bangladesh

Thailand

Indonesia

Australia



deployments were major missions of the 245th. 1SG Norman Crow recalled the unit's effort to get the training program to standard. "Until 1989, we were in Sperry, [Oklahoma,] in an armory built in the 1930's by the WPA [The Depression-era Works Progress Administration]. There was no MOS [military occupation specialty] school for the OH-6 mechanics so we had to initiate an on-the-job-training [OJT] program. For the Hueys and later the Black Hawks, we were able to send our mechanics to Army schools."<sup>45</sup> In 1991, the battalion started a program to train mechanics on the CH-47D Chinook. The 245th was anticipating receipt of the CH-47 to replace the UH-1H Hueys. This would bring the battalion more in line with the 3rd Battalion, 160th SOAR. By the spring of 1993, twenty-three mechanics were fully trained on the CH-47D at AASF#1 in Lexington.<sup>46</sup> Without the organic CH-47D airframes, the unit was forced to adopt innovative ways to maintain their proficiency. They worked with other National Guard units flying the Chinook, and the unit completed an entire phase maintenance program on two CH-47Ds of the 3rd Battalion, 160th SOAR. Phase maintenance entails a complete teardown of the aircraft, inspection and replacement of worn parts, reassembly and test flight. The unit did this vital maintenance procedure while completing the scheduled maintenance on its own UH-1H Hueys.<sup>47</sup> Much to the chagrin of the mechanics, the 245th was inactivated before receiving any CH-47D aircraft. Maintenance training was only one part of the unit's mission. Getting the aircraft to the operational area was a major task for the support personnel.

At the Tulsa International Airport Air National Guard ramp near AASF #2 and at Will Rogers International Air National Guard facility in Oklahoma City, near AASF #1 in Lexington, the unit could practice loading and off-loading helicopters using Air Force transport aircraft. Regular practice on Air Force C-130 and C-5A transport aircraft reduced the time to prepare aircraft for loading and unloading. The unit trained to have the off-loaded aircraft mission capable in a matter of minutes from the time the aircraft touched down.<sup>48</sup> This capability was critical to successfully supporting Field Landing Strip (FLS) operations and getting aircraft launched and recovered quickly. Once in the operational area, the 245th supported its helicopters internally. CW4 Jaime N. Smith, the unit Property Book Officer and "logistician," was a regular member on the Advanced Echelon (ADVON) for the deployments. Arriving ahead of the unit, Smith and his team would begin coordination with the support-



*The 245th became very proficient at loading and off-loading aircraft during deployments. Here OH-6s are loaded aboard a U.S. Air Force C-130 Hercules at the Air National Guard facility at the Tulsa airport.*



*Preparing and loading UH-1H Hueys and OH-6s aboard a U.S. Air Force C-5A Galaxy was a constant training mission.*



*Scheduled to receive the CH-47D in the early 1990's, the 245th developed a cadre of trained aircrews and mechanics, but received the aircraft after inactivation.*

ed unit and arrange the logistical support. Often this meant establishing one or more Forward Area Arming and Refueling Points (FAARPs) along the ingress and egress routes.<sup>49</sup> The 38-man Airfield Services platoon provided the expertise and personnel to make the logistics happen. Under SFC Mike Kittrell, airborne qualified personnel accumulated 678 parachute jumps by 1994.<sup>50</sup>



*A UH-60A Black Hawk prior to loading onto a U.S. Air Force C-5A Galaxy at the Air National Guard facility at the Tulsa airport.*



*A Forward Area Arming and Refueling Point (FAARP) near Disney, Oklahoma. The ability of the 245th support personnel to maintain organic aircraft was a key to success during deployments.*

The 245th achieved a very high level of expertise in every facet of aviation support before force structure changes and funding prompted the inactivation in 1994. The 245th did not deploy in support of Operation DESERT STORM, but provided "Little Bird" instructor pilots to replace deployed IP's from the "Green Platoon," the training platoon of the 160th.<sup>51</sup> In the drawdown of forces and reduced Department of Defense funding, the United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) deleted the 245th from its Program Objective Memorandum (POM), the source document for unit funding.<sup>52</sup> LTC Terry Council, the last battalion commander of the 245th said "We got caught in the 'Peace' dividend and were not funded in the POM. USSOCOM had to make some hard decisions."<sup>53</sup> 1994 was the last year the unit received active Army funding. On 1 September 1994, the 1st Battalion, 245th Aviation (SO) (A) was inactivated at AASF #2 in Tulsa. Colonel Bryan D. Brown, the 160th SOAR commander and a number of his staff attended the inactivation ceremony.<sup>54</sup> "They carried a lot of water for us, particularly in supporting ARSOF in the Pacific. They had unbelievable skills," said Brown.<sup>55</sup>

After inactivation, the individual helicopter companies were assigned to National Guard aviation units in neighboring states. A Company (UH-60As) and D Company (AVIM) were reflagged to the 108th Aviation Regiment in the Kansas Army National Guard.<sup>56</sup> The UH-60s of A Company were later transferred to the 1st Battalion, 285th Attack Reconnaissance Battalion of the Arizona Army National Guard.<sup>57</sup> In the years following inactivation, B and C companies received CH-47D Chinooks. A C-23 Sherpa transport airplane detachment was added to the OKARNG.<sup>58</sup> Today the Chinooks are part of the 36th Combat Aviation Brigade, Texas Army National Guard and the C-23s belong to the 641st Aviation Regiment of the Oregon Army National Guard.<sup>59</sup> Left behind at AASF #2 in Tulsa is the 145th Airfield Operations Detachment, which provides air traffic control support to both active and reserve component aviation units on deployment.<sup>60</sup>

During the twelve years that the 245th supported Army SOF as a "capstone" unit of the 160th, two



*The multi-role C-23B Sherpa provides long-range cargo and passenger-carrying capability to the Army National Guard.*

accomplishments stand out. First: the high volume of duty days served by the unit members to support operations. In 1992, 245th personnel averaged 110 days on active duty.<sup>61</sup> This was far above the total of a traditional National Guardsman. It was due to the high operational tempo and the dedication and commitment of the "Lord of Darkness." Second: while the 245th duplicated missions and met the standards of the 160th SOAR in ARSOF support, the unit did not have the same level of technology. As CW4 Robert Lane said, "We did the same things, only we did them the old fashioned way."<sup>62</sup> That the 245th could provide support to ARSOF indistinguishable from that given by the 160th SOAR was a tribute to the professionalism of the aircrews and support personnel of the 245th. The Lords of Darkness reduced the mission load on the 160th SOAR battalions significantly and demonstrated that top quality performance is not restricted to the Active forces. ♣

*The author would like to thank COL (ret) Billy Wood and MAJ Byron Barnhart for the photographs used in this article and all former members of the 1/245th interviewed for this article for giving generously of their time.*

## Endnotes

- 1 Colonel (ret) Billy R. Wood, email to Dr. Kenneth Finlayson, 24 October 2007, transcript, USASOC History Office Classified Files; **The designation of the 245th Aviation Regiment is from the Army Institute of Heraldry, Center of Military History. This is the Army agency responsible for the official designation of units.** <http://www.tioh.hqda.pentagon.mil/AVN245AviationRegiment.htm>.
- 2 Gregg Bond, "The Lords of Darkness: Oklahoma's 1/245th Aviation Battalion," *Special Warfare*, March 1992, 32-35; Wood email, 24 October 2007.
- 3 "Vital Support at Home and Abroad: Oklahoma Army National Guard Special Operations Aviation Unit is a Smart Investment," draft article dated 10 January 1993, author unknown; Brigadier General Terry R. Council to Dr. Kenneth Finlayson, 20 October 2007, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC, 2.
- 4 Wood email, 24 October 2007.
- 5 Wood email, 24 October 2007; Wood email to Dr. Kenneth Finlayson dated 13 November 2007, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.
- 6 Wood email, 24 October 2007.
- 7 Brigadier General Terry R. Council, OKARNG, interview by Dr. Kenneth Finlayson, 20 October 2007, Tulsa, OK, digital recording, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC; Chief Warrant Officer Four Robert C. Lane, OKARNG, interview by Dr. Kenneth Finlayson, 20 October 2007, Tulsa, OK, digital recording, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC; Wood email, 24 October 2007.
- 8 "Vital Support at Home and Abroad: Oklahoma Army National Guard Special Operations Aviation Unit is a Smart Investment," draft article dated 10 January 1993, 3.
- 9 "Vital Support at Home and Abroad: Oklahoma Army National Guard Special Operations Aviation Unit is a Smart Investment," draft article dated 10 January 1993, 3.
- 10 "Vital Support at Home and Abroad: Oklahoma Army National Guard Special Operations Aviation Unit is a Smart Investment," draft article dated 10 January 1993, 2; Council interview; Major Keith Owens email to Dr. Kenneth Finlayson, 13 November 2007, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.
- 11 Brigadier General (ret) John N. Dailey, interview by Dr. Kenneth Finlayson, 29 November 2007, Fort Bragg, NC, interview notes, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.
- 12 Lane interview.
- 13 Lane interview.
- 14 Wood email, 24 October 2007.
- 15 Colonel (ret) Joseph Fucci, telephone interview by Dr. Charles H. Briscoe, 26 November 2007, digital recording in the USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.
- 16 Major Keith D. Owens, 145th Airfield Operations Detachment, OKARNG, interview by Dr. Kenneth Finlayson, 20 October 2007, Tulsa, OK, digital recording, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC; Lane interview.
- 17 Owens interview.
- 18 "Vital Support at Home and Abroad: Oklahoma Army National Guard Special Operations Aviation Unit is a Smart Investment," draft article dated 10 January 1993, 11.
- 19 Lane interview; Owens interview.
- 20 Lane interview; Council interview.
- 21 Lane interview.
- 22 Lane interview.
- 23 Council interview; Wood email 24 October 2007; Colonel (ret) Billy R. Wood email to Dr. Kenneth Finlayson, 13 November 2007, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.
- 24 Active Component Support Training Matrix, dated 19 May 1993, 1st Battalion 245th Aviation, provided by Brigadier General Terry R. Council to Dr. Kenneth Finlayson, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.
- 25 Council interview; Active Component Support Training Matrix, dated 19 May 1993.
- 26 Reserve Component Support Training Matrix, dated 3 May 1992, 1st Battalion 245th Aviation, provided by Brigadier General Terry R. Council to Dr. Kenneth Finlayson, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.
- 27 Reserve Component Support Training Matrix, dated 3 May 1992; Lane interview.
- 28 Memorandum for Record, HQ, 1st Battalion, 245th Aviation (SO) (A), 12 May 1993, Subject: JRTC Support, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.
- 29 Lane interview.
- 30 Owens interview.
- 31 Overseas Support Training Matrix, dated 19 May 1993, 1st Battalion 245th Aviation, provided by Brigadier General Terry R. Council to Dr. Kenneth Finlayson, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.
- 32 Norman Crow, 1st Battalion, 245th Aviation, OKARNG, interview by Dr. Kenneth Finlayson, 20 October 2007, Tulsa, OK, digital recording, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.
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