



CHOPPERS: HELICOPTERS AND THE VIETNAM WAR



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New Zealand's Helicopter War

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Background

First, some personal details for the sake of context.

I am born and bred a New Zealander, but service with No 9 Squadron RAAF in Vietnam is not my only connection with Australia. My paternal grandfather was born in Eudunda, South Australia in 1875. In 1905 in Marton, New Zealand, he married Anna Martha Nitschke, also born in Eudunda. Two generations on, I still have many relatives in the community of 19th Century German roots in South Australia.

I'm also a graduate (1981) of the then Australian Joint Services Staff College. More relevantly to the present purpose, I served with No 9 Squadron RAAF in Vietnam for the year beginning September 1970. WGCDR Peter Coy was the Squadron Commander for the first six months; Peter Mahood for the second. GPCAPT Bruce Martin was Task Force Air Commander. To the right is his staff car characteristically holding court at the Officers' Mess in the RAAF compound at Vung Tau.



RAAF HQ Vung Tau, 1971

I was ranked Squadron Leader at the time. A few months into the tour and having learned something about what was going on, I was appointed to the additional duty of Task Force Air Commander's Representative (TFAC Rep) at Nui Dat and, later, Flight Commander at 9 Squadron. With some local encouragement, the idea of crossing the Tasman and transferring to the RAAF had growing appeal over the course of the year, but I chose to remain with the RNZAF and finally retired in 1995 from the post of Deputy Chief of the NZ Defence Force.

That said, I should also mention that although it is founded upon factual record and the available formal scholarly histories, this paper makes no claim to be a scholarly study itself. It does no more than set out views and conclusions seen through the eyes of a military operator who was in the thick of the events it chronicles.

NZ Aircrew Posted to Vietnam

The NZ Aircrew Contribution

16 RNZAF Helo Pilots → 9 Sqn
5 NZ Army Helo Pilots → 161 Recce Flt
2 NZ Army Helo Pilots → US Army
[14 RNZAF FW Pilots → FACs with USAF]

Numerous RNZAF air transport crews (and others) operated regularly into Vietnam from Singapore and elsewhere during the war but, as transients, I do not include them in this paper. The table at left lists permanent postings to operational aviation units in-country. In all, 16 pilots were seconded from the

RNZAF's No 3 Squadron to the RAAF's No 9 Squadron between 1967 and 1971. The RNZAF deployed no hardware or infrastructure; only pilots, and only 16 of the helicopter

variant across five years. On those figures I grant that the title of this paper - New Zealand's Helicopter War – could be seen as a little pretentious. And, having acknowledged the limitations of the RNZAF contribution, I must also remark that this paper is mainly about aspects of the 9 Squadron operation and the RNZAF contribution to it, since that was the game I was in. But also let me acknowledge that the RAAF's technical, admin and domestic support that we took for granted was never anything less than superb.

<u>RNZAF HELO PILOTS: 9 SQN RAAF</u>		
FLTLT Bud Mills		7/67 – 2/68
FLTLT John Clements		11/67 – 5/68
FGOFF Ken Wells		1/68 – 12/68
FLTLT Ted Creelman		9/68 – 10/69
FLTLT George Oldfield	10/68 – 5/69	
FGOFF Trev Butler		10/68 – 10/69
FGOFF John Peterson		3/69 – 4/70
SQNLDR Graeme Derby		7/69 – 1/70
FLTLT Doug (“Punchy”) Paterson	9/69 – 9/70	
SQNLDR John Pendreigh		10/69 – 10/70
FGOFF Ian Brunton		5/70 – 7/70
FLTLT Gordon Wood		5/70 – 5/71
SQNLDR Robin Klitscher		9/70 – 9/71
FLTLT Chris Peters		9/70 – 10/71
FLTLT Ian Clark		10/70 – 9/71
FGOFF Brian Senn		3/71 – 12/71
{FLTLT Bill Waterhouse	[1969]}	

the unexpected gift of a wartime tour with 9 Squadron at Vung Tau for his final six months. Most though not all of the rest did twelve months with 9 Squadron. Ian Brunton was repatriated early, for medical reasons after an accident.

I will not belabour a gallery of individuals, but on the right is Doug Paterson in the alert shack at Nui Dat, and in whose logbook the contingent commander GPCAPT Ron McKimm had written, I am told, “I consider Paterson to be a wonderful New Zealander. I also consider him to be an exceptional Australian.”



Here are two more – John Pendreigh on the left, Gordon Wood on the right.

For RNZAF fixed-wing FACs who served with the USAF it was the same – our pilots flying other peoples' aircraft. And it was the same again with the often overlooked NZ Army helicopter pilots who flew with 161 Independent Recce Flight of the Australian Army Aviation Corps. They were only five, though we need to add the additional two soldier pilots who flew, briefly and controversially, with US Army units early. More on that later.

Since our numbers were modest it's not inappropriate to list the NZ helicopter pilots who served in Vietnam by name – see left.

Initially in 1967 the RNZAF pilots were posted in two at a time, but that was shortly expanded to four. One of the first pair was John Clements, who had been posted to No 5 Squadron at Fairbairn on exchange as a flying instructor for two years, but found himself with



FLTLT Doug Paterson

Assimilation into 9 Squadron

Until 1969 RNZAF helicopter pilots were required by Australia to train with No 5 Squadron at Fairbairn before going on to 9 Squadron at Vung Tau. I make no comment on this, save to say that since it represented the difference between making or not making a combat contribution it was accepted on my side of the Tasman.

A seventeenth name on the list was Bill Waterhouse, who was the only Maori military helicopter pilot in the world at the time. In early 1969 he was killed in a mast-bumping accident at No 5 Squadron. I recently attended a ceremony at his country school in Hawkes Bay dedicating a memorial to him in the form of an Iroquois main rotor blade, mounted vertically.

By coincidence at the time of that accident it was becoming clear that the additional training was not adding much of value to either Air Force. All subsequent RNZAF secondees went direct from No 3 Squadron RNZAF to No 9 Squadron RAAF without the detour through No 5 Squadron at Canberra. As far as I know, the change caused no sleepless nights anywhere. Although there could be no doubt that the working environment was Australian, assaults on Kiwi senses like this sound clip were simply absorbed. (Go to http://mhhv.org.au/wp-content/uploads/RJK_Clip_1_AFR_Vietnam.mp3 to download and play the MP3 file)

If there were any concerns about such as culture shock or even about commonality of flying standards, they just melted away. Even the sheep jokes were muted. The Kiwis merged in without fuss.

Object Lessons

Now let me back up a little to something I hinted at above – the importance of thoroughly understanding the operational environment of Vietnam. And what I want to say is connected with something we have heard or will hear about in other papers at this seminar - the challenges entailed in growing a credible helicopter combat capability not only from a standing start, but also under actual combat pressures.

By 1970 when I arrived, No 9 Squadron was making it very clear to new arrivals that, irrespective of rank or what they thought they might know, they would not grasp what was going on in operations in-country until they had spent time finding out. Even then the test of competence would be to the unit's satisfaction, not theirs. No doubt this chafed with some, but I have believed ever since that it was one of the most intelligent rules I've encountered in any military unit, anywhere. It worked well. It protected the young from youthful over-enthusiasm without straitjacketing them; and it protected those who were longer in the tooth from making fools of ourselves or worse. ***And what it taught could not be taught anywhere except in the combat conditions of Vietnam itself.*** I can demonstrate the gist of why I say this.



FLTLT Dick Wittman

On 27 March 1971 I was co-pilot to the man on the left – Dick Wittman – in the gunship Bushranger 71. CPL Bob Stephens was crewman; LAC Barry Hogan the gunner.

Northwest of Nui Dat, elements of Bravo Company, 2RAR, were in thick jungle about to engage a group of Viet Cong, with the gunships in support. I hooked a cassette recorder into the radio and intercom. Last year the tape was starting to disintegrate, and our Ministry of Culture and Heritage was kind enough to digitise it. This involved destroying the tape in order to save it; but it worked.

The action was over an hour long, but here is a clip of the opening radio traffic between the aircraft and the soldiers on the ground: (Go to http://mhhv.org.au/wp-content/uploads/RJK_Clip_2_Contact_A.mp3 to download and play the MP3 file)

The content of the clip has not been edited - you've heard it exactly as it was on the day, poor sound quality included. And what you've heard shows clearly that, unlike at the movies, in real life there is confusing traffic on multiple radio channels, including unwanted intrusions and interference that get in the way of meaning. Sifting the essentials from the rubbish is a challenge in itself. But an additional and very spiky edge to this is the knowledge that, should missed information or misunderstanding cause mistakes in applying lethal force, the consequences can be dire.

The snippet affirms that learning from the scripted sterility of exercise training, though necessary, can be only a first step in getting to grips with the complications of the fog of war. Or at least, that is what it indicates to *me*. In combat the umpire is unforgiving.

There is something else, too. The demands of combat can make reputations or, just as easily, puncture them cruelly. Faced with the fast-moving realities of action, I've seen some of the young and inexperienced pick things up astonishingly quickly – not each and every one, nor on every occasion, but some. I've also seen cases of the older and maybe bolder falling short. So another enduring lesson I've carried with me ever since is always to distinguish carefully between experience and ability - and perhaps more importantly, never under-estimate the ability of the more capable young to cope with difficult situations, or make the mistake of assuming that exercise experience, or reputation, necessarily implies competence under fire. It may do, but it need not. All of which suggests that the required abilities are at least as much a talent as an acquired skill. Seeing talent rise to the challenge in the exacting conditions of combat was an encouraging counterweight to the effort that sometimes had to be put into those who needed to work a little harder.

Let us return to the recording. Intelligible radio contact has now been made with Zero Alpha, who has passed on a channel change for a tactical briefing by call sign 20. (Go to http://mhhv.org.au/wp-content/uploads/Clip_3_Contact_B.mp3 to download and play the MP3 file)

Poor aural legibility is still a factor, but note how Dick reads back the essentials. The exchanges went on for considerably longer than this, but we've heard enough to bring out the meticulous attention to detail – again at odds with fanciful Hollywood where the hero always gets it right by osmosis.

There is another scenario, however, in which matters can be immensely more difficult. In what we've been listening to the initiative lay with us, with time to consider all angles. That contrasts very sharply with the case when the initiative is with the antagonist; when we are reacting to events rather than managing them. Then the luxury of time to plan is absent. The stress of both the action itself and the consequences of wrong calls rises steeply. So, once again, the practice of testing everyone before licensing them was a good one.

To continue, the next clip has Dick briefing his crew. You'll also hear "Niner", the battalion commander, tending to mother-hen things from an LOH of 161 Recce Flt (call sign "Possum"). (Go to http://mhhv.org.au/wp-content/uploads/RJK_Clip_4_Contact_C.mp3 to download and play the MP3 file)

..... again the clip is shorter than the reality, but we see attention being given to ensuring that everybody knows both detail and intent. And you heard the pitch rise at the moment of contact. We also see something of the importance of teamwork – for example, ensuring the gunship leader-captain knew the action had begun despite his being off radio and missing the moment.

The original tape continues with much traffic about smoke markers and other detail to establish clearly where the friendly elements actually were. Then, in this final clip, 21 requests a dummy run before clearing the gunships to fire live. That done, you'll hear the minis and the door guns. (Go to http://mhhv.org.au/wp-content/uploads/RJK_Clip_5_Contact_D.mp3 to download and play the MP3 file)

Note the continued, methodical caution, including the dummy run. Note, too, that call sign 21 wanted reassurance that the aircraft breaking overhead was normal. This also tells us something; something much more basic and important than methodical procedure itself.

That lesson is this. When the shooting starts it is absolutely vital not only that the aviator understands the soldier and his problems; but equally that the soldier understands the aviator and his problems. We hear all too often that the aviator must understand the soldier to be effective. While nobody would argue with that, it omits fully half of this most important equation. What all that radio chatter was about was ensuring that each understood the other, in full, without reservation, and with trust. Significantly, where there were uncertainties, the players were not shy of asking.



Artillery Preparation, seen from Bushranger Gunship



Through Bushranger Gunsight on Firing Pass

These two pictures of artillery and gunship preparation (during another operation) illustrate yet another confounding factor in jungle warfare. Without the care, the attention to detail, the methodical insistence upon process, and accurate visual markers, it is impossible for the aircrew to be sure where friendly or enemy troops are on the ground beneath the jungle canopy. The risk of blue-on-blue accident is high; and near-misses are legion. These observations in turn emphasise my point that reciprocated understanding between soldier and aviator matters above all else.

It is scarcely surprising, therefore, that those who were faced with setting up a helicopter combat operation suddenly, without precedent, and unexpectedly, might have found the going uneven to begin with. Since the battlefield itself is the harshest tutor, errors or uncertainties stood to be the more brutally exposed. And the implications of this apply equally to the Army's appreciation of what the helicopter can do – or can not do – particularly where it needs to be managed as a scarce resource not available in profligate numbers.

Without doubt the learning ramps were steep in the beginning – even vertical. It's not unreasonable also to suppose that this would still have been so had the aviators been in khaki rather than blue *at that time*. Certainly the need for deep *and mutual* understanding of the requirements of the soldier and of the aviator transcends the colour of uniform. The lesson lying beneath this is an old one – modern warfare is come-as-you-are. It offers no shortcuts to proficiency, and can even penalise assumptions that they might be found.

Matters of Command

And so I think it is a great oversimplification to suggest that inter-Service command arrangements were themselves the principal or even a significant cause of occasional difficulties in delivering helicopter support at call to the ANZAC soldier on the ground. I have real difficulty with the notion that organic Army command would of itself necessarily have resulted in better helicopter support. Pure command arrangements were not the core question. Rather, success depended upon soldiers and aviators learning in the heat of battle itself what was sensibly possible and what was not. After all, an aircraft brought down cheaply or unnecessarily on top of the troops it is supposed to be supporting will cause perverse and disproportionate complications in the ground battle.

In the surrounding setting of 1ATF there also existed the in-your-face example of the most prolific user of battlefield helicopters the world has known. This made things no easier because the constrained scale of the helicopter resource available to 1 ATF stood out more sharply in comparison. But fiddling with command arrangements was never going to soften the contrast because command arrangements alone were incapable of resolving what was a resource constraint issue.

For context at this point I have to confess that I completed the entire twelve months with No 9 Squadron, including periods as TFAC Rep and as Flight Commander, with the blissful advantage of being able to claim ignorance of the partisan baggage sometimes carried by both Army and Air within 1ATF. In saying this I do not mean to suggest I was unaware, because some of the body language was plain to see, not least in the CP at Nui Dat as TFAC Rep. But, for me, and the other Kiwis I suspect, these tensions did not play as keenly as they seemed to do for some of our hosts, whether in blue or khaki.

New Zealand Helicopter Command Arrangements

I do not mean to claim, either, that there were no echoes of similar things in New Zealand, because that would be dishonest. There were; but they were generally less acute.

There could be many reasons for the difference, of course. The most obvious is that the New Zealand national arrangements were never tested in combat, whereas the Australian arrangements most certainly were.

But other factors might also have been in play. For example, the New Zealand LOH and UH helicopters were purchased expressly for the purpose of tactical support to the Army in the field. SAR was a spin-off task, not the primary task assigned. Then, for reasons of critical mass, all helicopters were assigned to the Air Force Order of Battle. Thus it was no accident that the unit (re-)formed to discharge helicopter tactical support tasks was named No 3 **Battlefield Support** Squadron. It included Air Force, Army and Navy pilots; with UH-1, OH-13 and Wasp (naval) helicopters. Initially it even had a fixed-wing element of Bristol

Freighter transports. Importantly, it was also home to a cadre of ground staff of the NZ Army Aviation Corps. The intersection between Army and Air Force was comprehensively and deliberately built-in from the beginning.

The permanent presence of the Army Aviation Corps within the Air Force provider unit meant that channels remained open to resolve issues before they festered, at least at the level of operational detail. Things were not always so equable at higher levels, although in retrospect most of the arisings were minor in nature, even outright petty. In that category we might put the restriction that Army pilots were permitted to fly only the LOH aircraft, not the UH-1. Yet Naval pilots were routinely employed on both the naval chopper and the UH-1. Obviously, policies in these areas were not exactly consistent. But, all of that said, it remains the case that the five NZ Army pilots who flew with 161 Recce Flight in Vietnam had learned their aviator trade within No 3 Squadron RNZAF. That both they and the RNZAF helicopter pilots acquitted themselves well in Vietnam suggests that the arrangements had not led either to the pitfalls of partisanship or to untoward cross-contamination.

At one point, however, the UH-1 restriction on Army pilots caused an eruption of sorts at higher levels. In 1965 after much dithering over whether to add combat troops to existing non-combat commitments in Vietnam, the government finally decided to send No 161 Battery (short). Unremarkably, this included forward observers. Two of these happened to be qualified Army helicopter pilots, fresh from active LOH duties during Konfrontasi in Malaysia.

I need to emphasise that this all took place well before considerations arose of sending aircrew as aircrew. Even so, the two qualified Army-pilot FOs retrained in-country to fly the UH-1 with a US Army aviation battalion. Exactly how this came about is unclear, but it was not unnatural that artillery observers should take to the air. It had unfortunate consequences, however, both at an inter-Service level and at a political level well above the immediacies of making things work in the field.

When a senior RNZAF officer found by accident that NZ Army helicopter pilots were flying US Army Iroquois in Vietnam, the Air Staff became grumpy. In late 1966 another senior officer examined the possible deployment of RNZAF helicopter pilots instead. The tone was not improved when he was told by the NZ V-Force staff in Saigon that the US Army would not accept RNZAF helicopter pilots at any price because “they lacked field tactical experience”. That he'd spoken with the Americans and had not found any such reservations by them did little to improve the mood. Thus the chances of a non-partisan or uncluttered view of the tenure of the two Army pilots all but disappeared.

Separately, at the political level, matters became even more cluttered. When the military sought Government leave to replace one of the Army pilots with an airman, Prime Minister Holyoake – known as “Kiwi Keith” - wanted to know why activities were taking place “without proper authority”. The Minister of Defence was asked to explain how it was that New Zealand Army helicopter pilots had participated “without government knowledge” in American operations in Vietnam. Explanations by the CGS that aerial observation was intrinsic to the artillery mission were to no avail. The Prime Minister wrote huffily that “Cabinet cannot accept the proposition that approval for one specific commitment is capable of being modified by private arrangement within the Services ...”



Prime Minister Keith Holyoake

This sounded the end for the two Army pilots. The RNZAF's parochial itch had been scratched. Cabinet then agonised for months over a follow-up proposal that a single RNZAF helicopter pilot should be sent to gain operational experience on the Iroquois with the Americans. Ministers wanted assurance that no New Zealand pilots would be “employed on operations over North Vietnam or Cambodia, or in dealing with civil disturbance.”

It was not until mid-1967 that RNZAF helicopter pilots were sent to Vietnam. But with whom would they serve? Earlier, Wing Commander Ewan Jamieson (who was our senior airman in Malaysia, later our CDF) had reported RAAF warnings that US tactics in Vietnam were “profligate in losses”; that their maintenance was “slipshod”; and that their tendency to overload helicopters was dangerous.

Please do bear in mind that I am only reporting material from the contemporary record, not passing judgement on US – or Australian - operations in Vietnam. My sources are two authoritative historical studies, completed respectively in 2005 and 2010¹. There are many other tracts of course, but most are in the manner of personal reminiscence rather than of professionally researched history. The two formal works mentioned in the footnote provide the factual basis which I have drawn upon for this paper.

And so the RNZAF pilots went to No 9 Squadron, not to an American unit. But the government remained nervous about the domestic political effects of being seen to escalate our warlike involvement in Vietnam. Involving itself directly in the detailed employment of individual helicopter pilots is evidence enough of that. Indeed, Rabel remarks that Cabinet's rebuke of the military over the two Army pilots threatened a serious breach of trust between civil and military authority. One can also see that any ambition within the RNZAF that a fixed-wing air combat element might be deployed was forlorn. Nevertheless we did eventually send 14 FACs to the USAF. But only for operations within South Vietnam; cross-border operations were not to be permitted. (This restriction also applied to RNZAF pilots seconded to No 9 Squadron. On one occasion during my tour when the squadron was tasked in support of the Australian Embassy in Phnom Penh, RNZAF pilots were excluded.)

Seen through that lens it also seems possible that another of Jamieson's observations might have played a part. He'd suggested that, if attached to the Americans, it could be difficult for New Zealand pilots to avoid being used in gunships.

Two footnotes to history arise from all this. First, as you and I know, any expectation that RNZAF pilots would not be involved in gunship operations if placed with an Australian unit proved to be among the least well-founded of forecasts.

1

A: “New Zealand's Vietnam War” - A history of combat, commitment and controversy, Dr Ian McGibbon, Published 2010

B: “New Zealand and the Vietnam War” - Politics and Diplomacy, Dr Roberto Rabel, Published 2005



Bushranger: Creelman and Butler

One of the New Zealanders – Trevor Butler – was involved in the development of the RAAF gunship, and took part in their first operational mission. Here he is on the right in the picture, with Ted Creelman who was likewise involved. Others also flew as gunship pilots. In similar vein I also know that some of our FACs regularly crossed borders, not in defiance of government wishes, but because they had to do so or fail the mission.

Not unlike the case of the two Army pilots flying US UH-1 aircraft, what seems to be pretty plain from this is that real operational practicalities in the field can say more about shaping what people do than attempts by anyone remote from the battlefield, including politicians, to circumscribe the activities of those they send to war.

The second footnote is a fascinating insight from Rabel's book on the politics. In late 1967 it was proposed that we should double our contribution to 9 Squadron from two pilots to four. One of the heavyweights of New Zealand's diplomatic firmament, George Laking (shown here on the right with Ky and Holyoake), told the Prime Minister that the additional pilots were not part of New Zealand's military contribution to South Vietnam because their deployment was “essentially an arrangement between the New Zealand and Australian Air Forces which helped meet an Australian need.”



Ky, Holyoake and Laking

Beat that! Until I read it, I was unaware that I'd been sent not to stand at the Communist gate, but to help Australia out of a hole! One could imagine, too, that Australia would be equally surprised. But, obviously, the Foreign Affairs and Defence bureaucracies were looking to express their own convictions in a way that a reluctant government could accept. If this involved a startling reversal of earlier insistence that political authority should always prevail over military utility, so be it. Suddenly, what was yesterday's sin was to be today's virtue.

We might observe in passing, too, that placement of the helicopter resource has led to starkly different outcomes in our two countries. After Vietnam, in Australia land-based helicopters were passed to the Army. The Australian Army Aviation Corps now thrives, and the Air Force's air combat force continues. In contrast, in New Zealand the helicopters were retained by the Air Force. But neither the Army Aviation Corps nor an air combat force now exist. Again I offer no comment on this; I simply relate the facts.

View Through an Operational Keyhole

Whatever the rights and wrongs might have been of arguments over command arrangements, inter-Service parochialism, attitudes, scale of resources assigned and other important things, I have to say that I did not encounter unresolvable differences of opinion or of purpose during my year in Vietnam. Indeed, at the pure operator level, very little if any of the angst sometimes exhibited at higher levels was evident.

We all know that the SAS in particular was very well served by 9 Squadron. And they know it too. But here is a tale from the perspective of an ordinary New Zealand infantryman.

On 17 April 1970 Lieutenant Stan Kidd of the fourth rotation of Victor Coy 1RNZIR was on patrol just days before the end of his tour, and was killed in contact. Unbidden, he had earlier formed close rapport with 9 Squadron, and had made his appreciation known.

He had presented to 9 Squadron the device in the picture on the right – a bottle of Chivas Regal mounted rampant between Ho Chi Minh sandals couchant, bearing the legend “To those magnificent men in their flying machines, 9 Squadron RAAF”. The nectar was to have been shared at his farewell on RTNZ. But that never took place. Sadly, I’ve not been able to find out what happened to the trophy.



LT Stan Kidd's Tribute

The Social Dimension

Let me wind all this up by remarking that occasional Air-Army banter was not the only societal matter to be dealt with. The means by which a minority might attract the notice of the many can sometimes be problematic. In the setting of ANZAC, the ground can be further tilted because what is referred to with varying degrees of immodesty as “Trans-Tasman rivalry” on my side of the ditch is a phenomenon often unnoticed on the Australian side. This rather adds to the challenge.

Early on, one of our number had made a papier-mâché model of a kiwi to hang from the ceiling of the officers' mess bar. His domain was known as “Kiwi Corner”. Over time, the kiwi suffered many indignities of a kind to be expected from living in a bar. The original is pictured on the right. He was battered, but had a kangaroo in his talons. In riposte to the call “Kiwi same same fat chook”, the kangaroo's placard announces that “I am a jumping fat rat”.



Kiwi Corner



Kiwi Mark II

During my tour, Chris Peters set out to replace the ailing bird with a new one, in more durable plaster-of-Paris. To the left is his sculpture, with a slice of the sculptor.

One night we presented the replacement to the PMC, then quickly affixed it to the ceiling by stainless steel chain hopefully proof against bolt cutters. But our care to protect this endangered species did not work for long. Within minutes our new plaster kiwi had a dart up his nether regions.

And I'd better leave it there save to reflect that there were five DFCs and two MIDs among our 16 UH-1 pilots; two became Flight Commander; and three were appointed as TFAC Rep. Of the five Army pilots with 161 Recce Flight, two were awarded the DFC. With all due modesty I could remark that that adds up to something done passingly well, even if it wasn't in our own aircraft, but in yours.