

canine counterpart, locates the quarry and guides the hunters in for the kill. In Vietnam, the quarry is Charlie. The Bird Dogs are single-engined, high-winged monoplanes, and among the men who fly them are the pilots of the 219th Aviation Company (Utility Air-

Pilots of the 219th, located at Camp Holloway in Pleiku, fly an estimated 1,600 missions per month, racking up an average of 2,000 air hours. The company's aviators and aircraft spend roughly 75 per cent of this air time per-forming visual reconnaisance

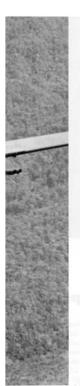
The O-1 "Bird Dog," like its dopted the name "Headhunters" and not be able to do anything anine counterpart, locates the because of a special low-level type about it directly," said CPT Ward. But, the variety of responses avof VR which it originated and successfully employed to find the VC in the rugged Central Highland terrain. The technique was chillingly simple. When the pilot spotted a likely area, he pulled the nose up, dropped a wing and dived "down on the deck" for an eyeball-to-eyeball look. "At times the Bird Dors flew so low that pilots could Dogs flew so low that pilots could peer under the eaves of jungle huts," said CPT Clifford R. Ward, a 219th aviator.

If the Headhunter drew fire or observed the enemy, he marked the location with one of the aircraft's

ailable to a Bird Dog pilot provides some degree of compensa-

Circling from a safe altitude over the target, he can command more firepower than could ever be carried by any other aircraft. Gunships, artillery, mortars, and infantry assault forces are only as far away as the switch on his radio. CPT Ward admits that Bird Dogs are not fired on as frequently now as they were earlier in the war. Though the VC used to like shooting at the slow, low-flying aircraft, over the years they have learned VR). rockets and climbed to a safe alti-In 1966, the 219th officially a-tude. "It's frustrating to be shot at the price for their brief target prac-

HAWK



tice and found it too expensive.

In addition to VR, the 219th performs several other vital func-tions. They include flying convoy cover, assisting in radio relay, help-ing the artillery establish registra-tion points and providing limited

personnel transportation.

The company is divided into four platoons which support four different groups. The first platoon supports the Pleiku sector. The supports the Pieku sector. Ine second platoon is detached and split into two sections supporting the Civilian Irregular Defense Group troops advised by the 5th Special Forces and Kontum Province. The 52nd Artillery Group and II Corps area are supported by the third platoon, and appropriately, the fourth platoon supports the 4th Infantry Division. With the exception of the second platoon, all the unit's aircraft are based

all the unit's aircraft are based at Camp Holloway near Pleiku.

In certain high-risk areas covered by these platoons, the pilots employ a special dual-ship technique for safety. If one aircraft goes down, the other pilot can mark the location and call for help.

Since its activation in 1965 at

Ft. Hood, Tex., the company has received a Valorous Unit Award with a streamer embroidered "Plei



A marking rocket is placed in its tube.

by SP5 Richard M. Emerson

Story and Photos Me," and a Meritorious Unit Commendation with a streamer em-broidered "Vietnam 1965-1966." When the unit first landed in Vietnam in 1965, it was the largest fixed-wing aviation company in the

country.

Currently commanded by MAJ
David Nauman, the unit has had
nearly five years to build on the
tradition displayed in its colorful
Headhunter patch. The Headhunter ter is depicted on the patch with wings denoting flight capability. He is shown armed with a telescope representing the primary duty of visual reconnaisance and a 2.75 inch rocket representing target marking capability. The green in the costume represents the lush Central Highlands over which the pilots fly.

The enemy must be found before he can be fought. Vietnam's jun-gles make this a difficult task, but the 219th's Bird Dogs continue to make the job easier by serving as the long range eyes of the infantry and artillery.



Long hours in the air mean long hours of maintenance.