

TEST FLIGHT

My name is Thom Iannarino: I am an Army Major Retired and a Master Aviator. I flew over 1300 combat hours in the Republic of Vietnam (RVN) during my tours with the 1st Cavalry Division in 1967-68 and the 1st Aviation Brigade in 1969-70. The incidents you are about to read and view occurred during my second tour.

In June of 1969 I was assigned to the 1st Aviation Brigade's 244th Surveillance Aircraft Company (SAC). The 244th was located at Can Tho in South Vietnam's delta region at the junction of the Lower Mekong and Can Tho Rivers, about 90 miles southwest of Saigon.

The mission of the 244th SAC was to provide side looking area radar (SLAR), infrared (IR) and photo imagery intelligence to U.S. and RVN units in the IV Corps area of operations (AO). The aircraft used to accomplish these missions were OV-1 Mohawks. There were 8 OV-1B SLAR, 8 OV-1C IR and photo, and 2 OV-1A training and photo aircraft in the 244th SAC.

My primary duty while assigned to the 244th SAC was as the aircraft maintenance officer/test pilot. One of my main responsibilities was to test fly all aircraft upon their completion of a 100-hour phase maintenance inspection. During the course of the test flight all aircraft systems, flight controls, instruments, etc. were checked to insure their safe and proper operation prior to being returned to an operational status

- 1 Following a phase inspection of OV-1C 61-2697, I checked the logbook to insure all entries were correct and to see if anything special needed performed during the flight. Upon completion of reviewing the logbook, I conducted a thorough walk around 697 checking everything: ejection seats, fluid levels, tires, skin, flight control surfaces, etc.
- 2 When the logbook and the preflight inspection were completed, I climbed aboard 697 to initiate the pre-start checklist, engine starts, communication checks, etc. I was finally ready to taxi out of the revetment to the aircraft run-up area. After performing the by-the-book run-up, systems checks, and hi-speed taxi, I was ready for take off and the test flight.
- 3 Once airborne, I flew over Can Tho airfield and its' surrounding compound. The runway was laid out East-West and approximately 2,000' long. It's perforated steel planking (PSP) was not user friendly, especially when wet.
- 4 During the test flight of 697, I followed the checklist, made a few notes and returned to Can Tho pleased that Grumman's OV-1C performed as advertised. After landing, I taxied back to the unit's maintenance area on the ramp and backed 697 into the 8' high 3' thick 3-sided revetment. Upon completing the post flight check, I made my way to the flight line maintenance building where I finished the required paperwork to release 697 to an operational status.