



LTC Cas Casteel in the field with the Airborne in 1964.

COL Carleton N. "Cas" Casteel was the third Red Marker Air Liaison Officer (ALO) to work with the Vietnamese Airborne Brigade. He served as a Lt. Colonel from July 1964 – April 1965. Prior to volunteering for service in Vietnam he had been a fighter pilot serving as deputy director of operations for Twelfth Air Force in Waco, TX. Twelfth Air Force trained combat crews and was the primary source for tactical fighter, reconnaissance and airlift aircrews sent to Vietnam.

Cas had completed jump school previously at Fort Benning, GA, when the Air Force asked for fighter pilots willing to go through training. The next step probably would have been to go through the Air-Ground Operations School at Keesler AFB, MS, for specific instruction in forward air control. Instead, the Air Force sent him to Vietnam, presumably assuming he would learn what he needed in on-the-job training.

When Cas arrived in Saigon, the Airborne was planning a combat jump for that night. So, he went on his first field operation before even unpacking his bags. That jump was the first of many. He checked out in an O-1 Bird Dog but usually directed air support from the ground, logging less than 20 hours flying time during his tour. In contrast, he jumped with the Airborne more than 100 times, a record for any Red Marker. Those jumps were training jumps for the most part but included a few more combat insertions and some High Altitude, Low Opening (HALO) jumps. Casteel had one FAC working for him, CPT Robert L. Paradis. They were kept busy throughout his tour covering the deployments of the Airborne Brigade in III and IV Corps. Cas saw the end of the era of American AOLs and FACs deployed on the ground and the beginning of them directing close air support while airborne. The Vietnamese and Americans recognized his service with numerous awards.