

LIEUTENANT COLONEL BILLY C. REA US Army (Deceased)



LTC Billy C. Rea entered military service with the Air Force in 1962 following graduation from Texas A&M University. He later transferred to the Army, and served in a variety of reconnaissance and imagery interpretation assignments, ranging from the 67th Reconnaissance Technical Squadron in Japan, the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) in Washington DC, and to the 2nd MI Battalion (Aerial Reconnaissance and Surveillance) in Europe.

In 1965, while assigned to Fort Bragg, he served as the S1, 519th MI Battalion deploying with that unit to Vietnam. In a subsequent tour in Vietnam, he served first as the G2 Air and later as the Deputy G2 Operations Advisor to the 3rd Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) Corps. In addition to his DIA assignment, he served three years with the Special Activities Division, US Army Imagery Interpretation Center. Other assignments in Europe included duty as the Executive Officer, 527th MI Battalion

and S1, 66th MI Group. When he returned from Europe in 1978, he served as the Chief of the Special Activities Branch, Directorate of Combat Developments, US Army Intelligence Center and School.

LTC Rea had an extensive background in aerial reconnaissance and surveillance, and imagery interpretation. He employed these skills as a field operator, a tactical commander, and as a combat developer writing requirements in the late 1970s to make the Tactical Exploitation of National Capabilities (TENCAP) a reality. His contribution to Military Intelligence came first from working in the field, understanding the type of information and timeliness requirements of tactical commanders on the battlefield. Second, by becoming an expert in national reconnaissance and surveillance capabilities, he was able to envision practical applications for immediate implementation, which less-qualified individuals could hardly conceptualize as within the realm of possibility. Third, by having the tenacity to put the requirements into place and get them validated as the Combat Developer at the US Army Intelligence Center and School, he enabled the TENCAP Program to become a reality, thereby placing the Army at the forefront of tactical exploitation of national systems. Fourth, once it became a reality, he was selected to assume command of the battalion at Fort Bragg to which the Digital Imagery Test Bed (DITB) was fielded. His extensive knowledge of all aspects of the DITB capability and its intended use enabled him to support the intelligence

needs of the XVIII Airborne Corps Commander in a manner unparalleled in history. The DITB capability was greatly improved as a result of LTC Rea's practical observations and those of the initial group of leaders and operators he mentored and trained.

LTC Rea passed away in July 1981 and was posthumously inducted into the Hall of Fame in 1992.

**Mrs. Nancy Rea
accepts the
Knowlton Award
on behalf of her
late husband
during the 1992 MI
Hall of Fame
ceremonies.**



LTC Rea (center) during a formal event.



LTC Rea (seated, 2nd from right) with the 525th MI Group Headquarters