

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
515TH TRANSPORTATION COMPANY (LIGHT TRUCK)
APO 96308

12 March 1970

UNIT HISTORY

1 January 1969 through 31 December 1969

On 1 January 1969 First Lieutenant Ronald L Ash Sr. and First Sergeant William J Neill both remained in their positions of Commanding Officer and 1st Sergeant of the 515th Trans Company. The company had an operating strength of 2 officers, 1 warrant officer and 169 enlisted men. The 515th ushered in the new year by moving to a new location. On 3 January the company moved from its area at Camp Hockmouth to Gia Le in an area directly adjacent to the 39th Transportation Battalion (Truck) Headquarters. The unit's equipment, including the CO's hootch, survived the six mile or more move without incident. On the night of 10 January, the men of the 515th encountered their first taste of enemy activity of this year when two (2) 122 mm rockets hit in the area, one just 15 yards from the mess hall. Miraculously there were no injuries or damage done.

After the initial tasks of getting settled in the new company area, the 515th still faced a perplexing personnel management problem. The unit was up to strength in personnel with more arriving every day but there were only 8 trucks in the two platoons located at Gia Le and 17 trucks in the Cam Ranh Bay platoon. The constant utilization of personnel for details was having a harmful effect on the Unit's morale. Fortunately the reduction to zero strength of the 863rd Transportation Company provided the 515th with thirty four (34) 2½ ton cargo trucks which solved this problem. On 26 January a battalion formation was held for the promotion of 1LT Ash to Captain. On 26 January the 515th also assumed operational control of the 2nd platoon of the 363rd Transportation Company which was a medium truck company located in Da Nang.

Due to its added capability, the 515th received several static direct support commitments for the 101st Airborne Division (Airmobile), including the hauling of fresh bread, ice cream and troops to Camp Evans, Landing Zone Sally and Camp Eagle. On 11 February the 515th assumed operational control of the 3rd platoon of the 57th Transportation Company, a five ton cargo truck company located in Quang Tri. Both the 57th's platoon and the 363rd's platoon were used mainly for port and beach clearance. On 16 February 1LT Joseph K Winkler joined the company as a platoon leader. The acquisition of LT Winkler gave the 515th two platoon leader, something it had not enjoyed for 7 months. Lt Winkler had previously served 5 months as the 39th Transportation Battalion Adjutant.

During the last week in March, the 515th and its attached platoon from the 57th Trans Co began conducting combat support missions to Fire Base Blaze which was manned by artillery units from the 101st Airborne Division (Airmobile) and XXIV Corps. The initial runs to Blaze were treacherous and tested the stamina of the men and equipment. The portion of the road from Fire Base Bastogne to Fire Base Blaze was originally built by the French nearly 20 years ago and was barely wide enough for a five ton cargo truck to pass. The 515th and 57th continued to run to Blaze on a daily basis, weather permitting, hauling the much needed ammunition and building materials used by the 27th Engineer Battalion to rebuild the road now named QL 547. The 515th and 57th platoon can be credited with hauling the ammunition used by the artillery units at Fire Base Blaze to shell the infamous "Hamburger Hill" located in the A Shau Valley.

On 2 March the 515th acquired another platoon but this time in exchange for its 3rd platoon in Cam Ranh Bay. The 235th Trans platoon which was attached to the 363rd Trans Co in Da Nang became the 3rd platoon 515th Trans Co while our old platoon in Cam Ranh Bay became the 235th Trans platoon. The new platoon had a full complement of men and 20 new five ton cargo trucks.

April was a month of changes for the 515th which begun on the wrong foot. On 8 April the unit attained a score of 69 on its first CMMI since the unit has been in RVN. The CMMI was conducted by the Da Nang Support Command. On 24 April the unit assumed operational control of the 2nd platoon 57th Trans Co while the 2nd platoon 363rd went to Quang Tri to be attached to the 57th Trans Co. On 25 April the unit moved its motor pool across Gia Le Road to the motor pool formerly utilized by the 363rd platoon thus being able to take advantage of a large maintenance building.

On 27 April the company changed commanding officers with the assignment of Cpt Robert L Poley who formerly served as Division Transportation Officer for the Americal Division located in Chu Lai. Cpt Ash was reassigned to the 39th Trans Bn as the S-4.

During the month of May the 515th continued its mission of port and beach clearance and direct support to the 101st Airborne Division (Airmobile). On 22 May the 515th lost First Sergeant Neill due to a emergency reassignment. During First Sergeant Neill's 11 months with the unit he had performed in a truly exemplary manner and was awarded the Bronze Star. SFC Frank Overby the former Truckmaster assumed the duties of First Sergeant.

June was a climax for the company's operation to Fire Base Blaze. Convoys operated almost daily. The engineer work on the road was so successful that by the end of the month tractor-trailer vehicles could cross the road. The cargo truck requirement then transferred to other fire bases being built throughout Northern I Corps.

Panther I and Panther II, Anzio, Nancy, and Roy were scattered from the Hi Van Pass north of Quang Tri. Each one was atop a high hill or peak; so that the final approach to each was over extremely steep and treacherous roads. On several occasions wet weather made the inclines so slick that a vehicle could not maintain footing and would slide off the edge. Through sharp driver skill these incidents were always minor, with no injuries, loss of life or property. For several months the unit had been in need of senior NCO's. The month of June brought new life to the unit. First Sergeant Nathaniel A Dance arrived, and shortly after that a young SFC, Gian Carlo Poli also joined the unit. First Sergeant Gerald Toller had joined the unit in May, but after his extension leave, he went to the 805th Transportation Company. It was also about this time that SFC Frank Overby went to the 39th Transportation Battalion Operations section, and SFC Gian Poli took over the job of Truckmaster.

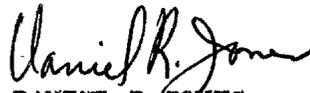
The mission of the 515th during the month of July was still port and beach clearance, but our roll in support of the 101st Airborne Division (Airmobile) was steadily growing. And in the month of August we were sending two convoys of twenty to thirty trucks a day to Fire Base Blaze. We also sent a platoon of volunteers out to Fire Base Rendezvous for two weeks. During this time we moved Fire Base Currahee and Fire Base Rendezvous back to the Fire Base Blaze area.

When the rains began to come in September, the 515th was the only company which could negotiate the steep, muddy hills. It was also in early September that Captain Robert Poley, who had been without any other officer for nearly a month, received two lieutenants and a warrant officer: First Lieutenant Daniel R Jones, First Lieutenant Robert B Johnston and Chief Warrant Officer Kenneth E Coburn. SFC Lewis Rose III had taken over the second platoon in August, and SFC Francis Gray had brought his platoon up from Da Nang, so the leadership in the 515th was at its full strength. When the 101st Airborne Division (Airmobile) withdrew its troops from the A Shau Valley, the 515th helped the Division in its relocation to Camp Evans and Dong Ha. With the end of the day-long, dirt-eating convoys into the A Shau Valley, the 515th switched its emphasis to port and beach clearance at Tan My Ramp, and support of local fire bases.

In November the men of the third platoon, which had come to RVN as a unit, rotated to the states. SSG Percy Washington became the platoon sergeant of the new third platoon. Although we were short of personnel, the company did not let down. That month we won the company of the month award, as we had done in the prior month, and we also passed our Annual General Inspection.

December saw the 515th again winning the Company of the Month Award. We had been averaging between 2% and 4% deadline rate per month for several months. We concluded the year with a steak and drinks dinner for the cleaning women and a gift of five boxes of clothes to an orphanage in Phu Loung Villiage. The clothes had been donated by a Girl Scout Troop in Florida under the leadership of Mrs Kenneth E Coburn, the wife of our Maintenance Officer.

1 Incl
Tonnage & Mileage Figures


DANIEL R JONES
1LT, TC
Commanding

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Report of tonnage and mileage for Unit History during the period of
1 January 1969 through 31 December 1969:

<u>Month</u>	<u>Tons</u>	<u>Miles</u>
January	3519	27,758
February	2095	13,685
March	3525	27,760
April	2248	27,900
May	637	12,500
June	1827	33,432
July	1812	33,253
August	1814	39,796
September	1990	48,800
October	3531	18,887
November	2468	49,663
December	4663	16,768