

1098th Transportation Company (Medium Watercraft)

The 159th Transportation Battalion was activated at Ft Eustis, Virginia, on 1 September 1953. At that time it had lettered LCM boat companies, from A, B, C and D. With the end of the Korean War in 1953, the Army disbanded its Engineer Special Brigades and transferred the responsibility for amphibious landings to the Transportation Corps. The 159th Transportation Battalion assumed the responsibility for operating landing craft for combat and logistical support during joint amphibious operations and tactical mobility, combat and logistical support in the ship to shore missions. It became the only designated combat battalion in the Transportation Corps. Many of its original members were veterans from the inactivated 2nd Engineer Special Brigade, which had conducted the Inchon landing.

Each LCM company was authorized two 65-foot steel hull command boats, one 46-foot steel hull control boat and 33 LCMs. Its first landing craft were the WWII vintage LCM-6s but by 1955 the battalion received the newer LCM-8s.

In 1954, the battalion commander, LTC Michael D. Isrin, January 1954 to February 1957, received authorization for the battalion to blouse their boots, wear the green leadership tabs and red tape on side of their trousers at knee level to denote shore party. He developed the unit insignia and the motto, "Hit the Beach."

The Soviet Union tested their first nuclear device in 1949 which heightened the fear of a war. The shortest distance for Soviet long range bombers to attack the United States with nuclear bombs was across the Arctic Circle. The US Air Force established a line of Distant Early Warning (DEW) stations from Thule, Greenland to the tip of Alaska in 1952. In spring of 1951, landing craft from the 159th Battalion were attached to the 373rd Transportation Major Port (TMP) to Thule, Greenland as part of Operation BLUEJAY. In February 1952, the 373rd TMP conducted Operation Support of North Atlantic Construction (SUNAC) 52. LCMs and LCUs from the 159th discharged cargo and equipment for the construction of the radar stations along the DEW Line. The deployment to Thule Greenland to conduct the LOTS operation during SUNEAC became the first deployment for the 159th. The boats were prepositioned in Greenland and crews of the boat companies participated in annual SUNEAC LOTS operations every year until 1963.

In May 1959, the company received the larger and faster LCM-8s. With LCM-8s, the unit was capable of transporting 720 short tons of general cargo per day in ship-to-shore or shore-to-shore operations. The primary mission of the unit was to provide and operate landing craft for the movement of personnel and cargo for Army water terminal operations. LCM-8's were well suited for river and inland waterway operations due to its shallow draft. The LCM-8 is steel welded, twin 27 inch screw craft. It is powered by four marine GMC 6-71 diesel engines designed to land heavy equipment, trucks, trailers, and tanks. The craft are 73 feet long and 24 feet wide. When fully loaded the craft can carry 60 short tons. The LCM-8 could carry 200 personnel on short missions. The craft traveled between nine and twelve knots fully loaded.

On 25 September 1959, the Battalion was reorganized as HHC, 159th Transportation Battalion with Companies A, B, and C reorganized and redesignated as the 1097th, 1098th and 1099th

Transportation (Medium Boat) Companies, respectively on 29 September 1959. D Company was disbanded.

The 329th, 1097th and 1098th Medium Boat Companies, 461st Amphibious Truck Company and the 554th BARC Platoon supported Operation JAMLEX from 25 October to 7 November 1960. They operated under the command of the 6th Transportation Battalion. The operation tested the “through the beach” concept to support the 1,500 man Marine landing team at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina. The operation was conducted in four phases with the DUKWs and landing craft discharging troops, tanks, artillery and supplies on the beach to establish a foothold. The BARCs established a ferry across the inland waterway. The second phase concentrated on the logistical support of combat forces even utilizing helicopters for emergency resupply and medical evacuation. During the second phase the amphibians and landing craft moved troops and supplies across the New River. During phase four helicopters lifted a battalion of Marines to Camp Davis and Bogue Field for further maneuvers.

From 21 August to 23 September 1961, the 11th Terminal and 159th Boat Battalions of the 3rd Transportation Terminal Training Group conducted Exercise DARK SKY at Fort Story, Virginia. The purpose was to conduct LOTS operations at night using new infrared techniques. This method had only been tried before once at Camp Wallace, Virginia. A beach reconnaissance team (BRAT) searched and marked the beach, then the security force landed in the first wave of landing craft of the 329th Heavy Boat, 1097th, 1098th and 1099th Medium Boat Companies. The 73rd Floating Craft Maintenance Company of the 159th Battalion also supported the operation. The 11th Battalion provided the 105th, 117th, 123rd, 124th and 264th Terminal Service Companies. The training objectives included the use of infrared lights in night ship-to-shore operations, cargo documentation, signal communication, composite battalion command concept, local and rear area security and damage control.

On 12 July 1962, the company was reassigned to the 4th US Army Transportation Terminal Command Gulf at Camp LeRoy Johnson, New Orleans, Louisiana. The company deployed to St. Petersburg, Florida in October 1962 during the Cuban Crisis. There it prepared for possible amphibious landings in Cuba. The 1098th moved back to Ft. Eustis, VA under the 4th Transportation Command and 394th Transportation Battalion (Terminal) on 15 June 1964 due to the closing of Camp LeRoy Johnson.

“I do not remember the day we left but it was cold. We were put on alert sometime in Oct. 62. All the company mike boats were pulled out of the water at 3rd Port and new bearings, shafts and props replaced if needed. All we were told is to get the boats in top condition. We all new what was going on in Cuba from the news so we knew that was the direction we were heading. We departed from Ft. Eustis out to the James River heading east. The HQ. J-boat in the lead vessel with Capt. Mandina, Top Sgt. Steinfield and some other brass aboard. I believe there was a 65 ft. ocean going tug in back of them. The rest of us in the mike just fell in line in no order. As we got into Norfolk I thought they would load us onto Navy ships to take us south. Instead we headed into the locks just south of Norfolk and into the intercoastal water way. When we hit the locks only a few vessels could enter so we had to wait our turn. A lot of the guys did not pack all there gear as they thought this was just another alert and meant nothing. Well that started our journey south with hardly any sleep for the next 10 days or so. When you are 20

years old and a coxswain on a mike boat, if something breaks you are going to catch hell for it. I has a engineer and a new seaman on board who did not operate a boat too well. So it was me at the wheel all night for many nights and I would let the other 2 guys operate for a few hours during the day and take a cat nap. We had no security to speak of. Who was going to mess with these mike boats on the intercoastal waterway. Most people at that time did not even know that the Army had landing crafts or tugs or even the *Page*. When the bridges over the water way had to be opened to let us pass ,the people in the cars would get out and wave and even throw food into the well deck. Some of those bridges stayed open for a long time with all the boats passing through. They all knew we were heading to Cuba.

“They set up a mess tent in one of the mike boat well decks so when it was time for chow we would just pull along side and get it. If there was room we would stop along the banks. The intercoastal is not a wide waterway in most places. All the company sergeants were aboard the mess boat. When we got down into Florida one of the best places we ate dinner at one evening was in Fort Pierce. Just ran the mikes up to the shore or tied up at the docks. People were coming out in droves to see us as they had all hear on the news about this large convoy heading down the intercoastal.

“Don't want to get too far ahead of myself. We pulled into Kings Bay Georgia which was a Navy weapons depot. There we waited for a few days as this was out turning point. Russia did not budge to remove the missiles, so they installed 2 racks of .50 caliber machine guns on all the mike boats. It had a maintenance trailer on my boat which they removed and put on a duce and a half and a trailer filled with ammo. All the company had to sleep on shore in pup tents. Only problem with that was the place was loaded with rattle snakes and water snakes. Several of the guys were bitten. I went back to the mike boat and slept on a litter over the engines. Nice and warm and no snakes. After leaving Kings Bay we headed south again to Port Everglades.

“We did have to maintain a little radio silence between the mike boats unless a problem came up with a boat. I happened to have a good working radio aboard my mike C-11 and did a lot of relaying from the command J-boat to the last vessels who the J-boat could not reach. We had constant problems at night with the command vessel getting lost and having to stop or mikes braking down. We were stretched out for miles. Well doing all the radio relaying that I did, a southern Major we had in the company, who's name I do not remember, but who liked to chew on cigars came up to me when we arrived in Port Everglade to thank me for the radio work. He gave me and my crew a 24-hour pass into Ft. Lauderdale.

“Port Everglades at that time in 1962 was not to large of a port area. There was only a small pier area for the smaller freighters that came in. The 159th took command of the entire port. Most of the mike boats were run up on the beach area around the port. They were also bringing a lot of 90-day wonders in to bring the company to full battle strength. The boat crews stayed at a old college dorm in Ft. Lauderdale. I mainly stayed on the mike boat. I always took boat watch at night. There was plenty going on in the port area at night. The 329th with the LCU's came down the coast as they drew to much water for the intercoastal. We could shower and eat chow on the LCU's. All the residence of Ft. Lauderdale were bringing us food and drink.

“We did a little bit of amphibious training but not much. Ran a few time runs down toward the Keys, I guess just to see if we could make the run to Cuba on our own or load the boats on ships for transport to Cuban waters. We were well trained anyway. 1099th spent a lot of time in Little Creek. We took more Marines and Army personnel to the beach in amphibious assaults at Ft. Story than I can count. We also trained with the Navy who at that time called themselves beach jumpers who are now the SEALs. They would take the jumpers several miles out into the Atlantic off of Ft. Story and have them jump from a chopper and try to make it to shore. It was a long 3-mile swim for some, if they could not make we would scoop them out of the water with the ramp down. We also were well trained with the M2 carbine which was our weapon at that time as well as the .50 and .60 caliber machine gun.”

Bill Muller. 1099th Trans Co.

The 1098th, also known as the Seadogs, deployed to the Republic of Vietnam in April 1965 operating at Qui Nhon under the 394th Transportation Battalion. The US Army supplied units in country through three major ports. The medium boat companies of the 159th Battalion deployed to each of them. The 1098th conducted ship-to-shore lighterage at Qui Nhon. Until the DeLong pair was established at Qui Nhon in 1967, the company offloaded men and equipment arriving in country and supplies from ships outside the harbor and delivered them to the beach area inside the harbor. Every unit arriving at Qui Nhon arrived at the beach on an LCM, or Mike boat. Then the company mostly offloaded ammunition from the boats out at sea and delivered them to the LST beach. They had some supply missions to Thuy Hoa. Sometimes the beach was contested by the enemy.

Around May 1967, LTC Dave Thatcher, the commander of the 159th Battalion, issued 1LT Louis D. Bishop, commander 1098th commander, orders to move the entire company south to Can To. The 1098th loaded all its equipment into its 28 LCMs divided two platoons. It planned to leave its 100-ton floating crane, 2 tugs, and 6-8 fuel barges at Qui Nhon. Within 72 hours the battalion commander diverted their destination north to Sau Hugynh. The 1098th uploaded supplies and tanks. The LCMs hit the beach while the fighting went on and lost two Mike boats in the surf. The company then back hauled wounded and refugees.

In the fall of 1967, a serious incident occurred. While off-loading two 500-pound bombs into an LCM, the pallet slipped out of the sling and fell. The ammunition ship was almost empty so it was riding quite high in the stream so the pallet of bombs fell a considerable distance then hit the steel deck of the Mike boat, which resulted in a low level explosion. It killed the coxswain almost immediately but didn't blow up the mike-boat or detonate the other bombs. Fortunately, the coxswain had the presence of mind before he died to spin the ship's wheel and turn the boat away from the ship. Of the other crew members, two jumped over the bowramp, one saved himself by climbing up the anchor chain, the second was badly burned and died later. The assistant to the coxswain was behind the cabin area, which protected him from the blast. He survived and was able to get on board the ship.

The Mike boat with several pallets of bombs aboard just drifted down the side of the ship. The crew of the ship frantically tried to put the fire that had started in the wooden pallets out. The LCM drifted out into an area right in the center of about five ammunition ships then made a couple of circles where it blew up. Had the LCM blown up next to the ammunition ship, the

explosion would have set off that one and the other ammunition ships and leveled Qui Nhon.

Early in its mission, the 1098th performed river patrol and resupply. The unit also performed missions like the one "Shallow Sinus" in the fall of 1968. During these missions the company performed beach inserts or assaults with the Marines or Korean troops. The 1098th converted some LCM-8s and 6s into 'pusher' boats for light tug assistance in Da Nang Harbor and also had a J-boat (work boat), Q-boat (work boat), Skimmers, a few tug boats, fuel barge, and BARC (Barge Amphibious Resupply Cargo). The unit's LCM's were used mostly for intracoastal operations and some coastal operations. The company departed Vietnam 1 January 1972, the last medium boat company to depart.

For its service in Vietnam the unit earned the Meritorious Unit Commendation (Army), Vietnam 1967 and the Republic of Vietnam Cross of Gallantry with Palm, Vietnam 1971 decorations. The unit also received campaign credits for Vietnam, Defense Counteroffensive Phases I to VII, Tet Counteroffensive, Sanctuary Counteroffensive, and Consolidation I and II.

The 1098th returned to Fort Eustis, Virginia, under the 24th Transportation Battalion (Terminal), 7th Transportation Group, in March 1972, but was not fully manned until 23 October 1972. At Ft. Eustis the unit gained the mission of providing support to the Transportation Center, Transportation School, and Ft. Eustis. The unit was allocated fifteen LCM-8s. On 10 June 1974, the company was reassigned to the 10th Transportation Battalion (Terminal) still under the 7th Transportation Group (Terminal), Ft. Eustis, Virginia. By November 1974 most of the unit's licensed personnel (draftee's) had left the unit. The unit spent the next year training the new privates. During 1975 one-third of the 1098th's LCM-8s were "deadlined" due to a severe parts shortage; parts shortages continued until 1980. The unit also experienced a major shortage of senior non-commissioned officers from 1976 to 1984 and a ten-fold overstaffing of private and private first class personnel. History reports for 1979 show LCM-8s 8585 and 8597 were assigned to the company that year. LCM-8s 8517, 8592, 8599, and 8603 were in the inventory in 1981. 1983 historical records show LCM-8 8580 and 8597 on the books.

On 8 August 1990, the 1099th was placed on alert status in response to Iraq invading Kuwait four days earlier. On 11 August 1990, boat personnel from the 10th Battalion were organized into the 703rd Provisional Boat Company which was comprised of elements from the 73rd, 329th, 558th, and 1098th Companies (Boat). The 1098th deployed 43 soldiers to Saudi Arabia on 22 September 1990 under the 703rd to the Port of Jabal, in Kuwait City. The 1098th supported Operations Desert Shield, Desert Storm, and Southern Watch and received Campaign participation credit for Southwest Asia, Defense of Saudi Arabia, and the Liberation and Defense of Kuwait. On 15 Aug 1991, the company was reassigned from 71st Transportation Battalion to the 7th Transportation Group, Ft. Eustis, Virginia.

The unit also deployed soldiers to Operation Restore Hope in Somalia and was assigned to the 710th Provisional Boat Company, 24th Transportation Battalion in Mombaso, Kismaayo, Mogadishu from 1992 to 1993. On 18 March 1994 it was reassigned to 24th Transportation Battalion.

Since 1994, the unit has deployed soldiers to Rawanda, Southwest Asia, and Port-Au-Prince, Haiti in support of Operation Uphold Democracy. During Operation Uphold Democracy the unit was assigned to Combined Joint Task Force 190 at Cape Haitian, Port-Au-Prince in 1994 and 1995.

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The United States pressured the military junta in control of the government in Haiti to step down and allow the duly elected president Aristead to assume office. In September 1994, the 329th Heavy Boat deployed to Haiti as part of the 10th Transportation Battalion of 7th Transportation Group for Operation Uphold Democracy. This was the largest flotilla of Army watercraft since the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962. Initially, this was planned as a forced entry operation but after the military junta stepped down, the military operation shifted to peacekeeping and nation building. Because of the deplorable state of the road networks coupled with the fact that if a truck slowed down, the populace would overwhelm it and steal the cargo. Army watercraft out of Port Au Prince supplied the US Army units in the outlying areas, such as Cap-Hatien, Point Lobardi, Port de Paix, Anse D'Hainault and Les Cayes. During Operation Uphold Democracy the 1098th Medium Boat was assigned to Combined Joint Task Force 190 at Cape Haitian, Port-Au-Prince. The United Nations assumed responsibility for peacekeeping in Haiti in December 1995.

Presently, the 1098th Transportation Company continues to participate annually in Operation Pacer. Operation Pacer is the annual resupply of the Thule Air Base in Greenland.

The weapon inspection teams had departed Iraq in 1998 because of their lack of cooperation. Rhetoric and accusation increased between the President George Bush administration and that of Saddam Husein in Iraq over the issue of weapons of mass destruction. On 8 October, Congress granted President Bush the power to launch a US military attack on Iraq.

As the likelihood of military operations increased, CENTCOM directed that 7th Transportation Group preposition part of its maritime fleet early. On 22 October, LSV-4 of the 1099th Transportation Company, 10th Transportation Battalion sailed on its own to Kuwait. LSV3 was a USAR vessel. This brought the number of LSVs in theater up to 3. The smaller vessels would have to deploy aboard the *MV Tern*. 7th Transportation Group held a ROC Drill to walk its leaders through the uploading steps of the *MV Tern* on 22 October.

7th Transportation Group held a Group-wide FTX RESOLUTE MONGOOSE '02 from 1-5 November. As part of that FTX, 24th Transportation Battalion completed the upload of twelve vessels; 5 LCUs, 5 LCMs, 1 large tug and 1 small tug, and equipment on the *MV Tern* on 5 November for forward stationing for the President's war on terrorism. The 824th Transportation

(Medium Boat) Company (USAR) with 67 soldiers became formally assigned to the 24th Battalion on 12 November. It would take the *Tern* nearly a month to reach Kuwait.

During this time, 7th Transportation Group made serious preparations for possible contingency operations. It held a Contingency Operations ROC Drill at the Modiset Building on 22 November. 143rd Transportation Command then held a Contingency Operations ROC Drill of its subordinate units at the Modiset Building on 26 November. The ROC drill was a rehearsal of the CENTCOM contingency plans. This provide both organizations the chance to work out any coordination problems.

On 5 December, a total of 95 personnel from 24th Battalion and 824th Heavy Boat Detachment deployed to Kuwait to download the *MV Tern*. After completing the download, the detachment returned to Ft Eustis.

Meanwhile the pressure picked up against Hussein's regime. On 8 November, the UN Security Council had passed Resolution 1441 requiring Iraq to comply with the disarmament agreements signed after the war. The UN Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC) led by Hans Blix entered Iraq on 27 November. The increasing tension led to the threats of offensive military against Iraq if it failed to comply fully and accurately with the UN accords agreed to after Iraq's surrender following Desert Storm. While the Iraqi Government did send a weapons disclosure to UNMOVIC and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) by 17 December as required, many doubted its accuracy. The UN inspection teams had been allowed to reenter the country had were not denied access to any location, but however, failed to turn up any evidence of weapons of mass destruction. This provided a leverage for the UN Inspection teams to travel unfettered throughout the country.

On 18 December, 7th Transportation Group finally received its deployment order for the Persian Gulf. 6th and 24th Battalions would deploy to the Persian Gulf leaving the 10th Battalion behind. The UN Inspection Team had a deadline of 27 January to report back to the UN Security Council with their findings. That was seen as the trigger event for military operations.

As the year began, 7th Group soldiers continued to deploy overseas. The 11th Transportation Battalion deployed to Kuwait to operate out of the Port of Ashuaiba. The 24th Battalion arrived at Arifjan.

The 24th Battalion moved its command post from Arifjan to Naval Base (KNB) on 28 January. It was augmented by the 824th Transportation Company (USAR) out of Tampa, Florida, and Moorehead City, North Carolina. The battalion conducted logistics-over-the-shore (LOTS) operations to offload ammunition. LSV 4 and LSV6 relayed back and forth to Qatar to bring container into port. This was a day run where one LSV was in port while the other was at Qatar. The TSV also ran rolling stock back and forth from Qatar, KNB and Bahran. LCU 2019, 2024, 2027, and 2029, and LCM 80, 82, 91 and 98 of the 1098th Medium Boat Company conducted lighterage. 567th Trans (Motor) Company cleared cargo from the beach.