

24th Transportation Battalion



The 24th Transportation Battalion was originally constituted on 1 May 1936 as Headquarters, 1st Battalion, 24th Quartermaster Regiment. During that time, truck units were organized as regiments with three battalions and lettered companies. The Battalion was activated at Fort Dix, New Jersey, on 10 March 1942 and redesignated as the 1st Battalion, 24th Quartermaster Truck Regiment on 1 April 1942. The Regiment was broken up on 1 February 1944 and the 1st Battalion reorganized and redesignated as Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment, 24th Quartermaster Battalion, Mobile. Companies A, B, C, and D were redesignated as the 3361st, 3362d, 3363d, and 3364th Quartermaster Truck Companies, respectively. Each company would follow its own separate lineage. In 1944, the 24th Battalion was redesignated as the 24th Quartermaster Truck Regiment and deployed to Central Europe. The 24th Battalion arrived late in the war but provided crucial logistical support throughout France, Germany, and Holland during the Rhineland and Central European campaigns. Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment, 24th Quartermaster Battalion, Mobile, was inactivated in France on 24 May 1946.

Effective 1 August 1946 the Quartermaster Corps transferred the functions and responsibilities of truck and aviation units to the Transportation Corps. In accordance with GO No 77, War Dept., 24 July 1946. On 1 August 1946, while still on inactive status, the 24th Battalion was converted and redesignated as Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment, 24th Transportation Corps Truck Battalion. It was later redesignated on 19 February 1948 as Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment, 24th Transportation Truck Battalion.

Berlin Blockade and the Cold War

Prior to the end of World War II, the Allies had agreed to divide the responsibility for occupation of Germany among them. Similarly, the German capitol of Berlin, located in Soviet sector, was divided by the occupying powers. On 30 November 1945, the Allied Control Council officially approved in writing an air corridor between the western zone and Berlin. In 1948, Russia decided to roll its occupied countries into the Soviet Union. The fear of a clash between the two new super powers, as they now faced each other across this border, began a period of time in the US Army known as the Cold War. From then on, it had an enemy to train to fight. This enemy was the Soviet Union and their communist surrogates. The Army of Occupation in Germany shifted to an alliance of

mutual defense and the defeated Germany became an ally in its own defense. On 20 March 1948, the 24th Battalion was activated in Germany.

The first challenge to the US Army during the Cold War came when the Soviet Union closed off freight traffic of its former Allies into Berlin hoping that they would turn their portion of the capitol over. The Russians imposed a blockade of Berlin on 21 June 1948. The US Army and Air Force responded by delivering supplies to Berlin through the air corridor. Operation Vittles had its airborne birth on 26 June, 1948. Rhein-Main and Wiesbaden became the Airports of Embarkation (APOE) with TC Airhead Tempelhof in Berlin the Airport of Debarkation (APOD). The 2nd Traffic Control Group opened another APOE at Wiesbaden Air Base on 29 June. The 122nd Truck Battalion and the 76th Heavy Transportation Company added to the line haul. The 24th Transportation Battalion assumed responsibility for command and control. The airlift delivered an average of 8,000 tons per day. On 4 May 1949, Western Allies and the Soviet Union agreed to lift the blockade. The Allies continued airlift for three more months to build up reserve stocks. The US Army proved that it could support a massive operation by air. On 4 April 1949, the western powers signed the North Atlantic Treaty forming the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).

The 24th Battalion was reorganized and redesignated as Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 24th Transportation Truck Battalion on 2 December 1949. It was again reorganized and redesignated as Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 24th Transportation Battalion on 1 April 1953. The 24th Battalion continued to serve in Germany until it was inactivated on 25 December 1957. While on inactive status it was redesignated as Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment, 24th Transportation Battalion on 1 June 1965.

Vietnam War

After the French defeat and pull out from Indochina in 1954, the country was partitioned into Laos, Cambodia and North and South Vietnam. The communist party controlled the North and a democratic government was established in the South. Both agreed to later hold elections to unify the country. The United States backed the democratic government in the South with advisors while the North trained Vietcong guerrillas to win control of the south. The first transportation units to arrive in Vietnam were helicopter units in 1962.

The communist insurgency had grown to the point that in 1965, the US Army Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (MACV) took over the ground war in Vietnam. The massive build up of American troops in that country required an even larger logistical tail. The terrain of the country varied from mountains and jungle to rivers and swamps. All US Army transportation in Vietnam fell under responsibility of the 1st Logistical



broad map showing location of Cam Ranh Bay in relation to other points in Viet Nam

Command. Logistics in Vietnam was organized around the major ports in each of the four Corps Tactical Zones. The 1st Logistics Command initially established logistical bases throughout the four military regions with ports at Saigon, Cam Ranh Bay, Qui Nhon and Da Nang as the main logistical bases in each area. The Saigon supported operations in III and IV CTZ while the Cam Ranh Bay and Qui Nhon supported the II CTZ. Da Nang provided the only deep draft port in the I CTZ.

A closer view of Cam Ranh Bay and where pier locations were and different transportation company location.



A closer view of Cam Ranh Bay and where pier locations were and different transportation company location.

The first deployment of troops began in the summer of 1965. On 24 June 1965, the 24th Battalion reactivated at Fort Eustis, Virginia, as Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment, 24th Transportation Battalion. It became clear to General William Westmoreland, Commander of AMCV, that he needed additional troops in Vietnam. The 24th Battalion arrived in Vietnam on 24 June 1966 as part of the second build-up of troops. It was attached to the 124th Transportation Command and U.S. Army Support Command, Cam Ranh Bay.



Sign showing 124th Transportation Command and the 24th Battalion and its attachments

Cam Ranh Bay served as the major logistics base for southern II Corps Tactical Zone. Cam Ranh Bay Support Command provided command and control and directed the logistic activities. The transportation commands arrived to control the increasing number of transportation battalions. The 124th Transportation (Terminal) Command, with the 10th Terminal Battalion, off-loaded cargo at the pier while the trucks of the 24th Terminal Battalion conducted port clearance to the depots.

Cam Ranh Bay had a major depot facility. The 54th General Support Group had the 262nd Quartermaster (POL) Battalion, 191st Ordnance (Ammunition) Battalion, 63rd (Direct Support) and 69th (General Support) Maintenance Battalions. Each operated depots with different classes of supply. Cam Ranh Bay also had a huge maintenance facility run by the VINNEL Corporation. The 96th and 278th Supply and Service Battalions fell under the 504th Field Army Depot, which was one of the largest depots in the country. The 500th Motor Transport Group had the 36th Battalion, which conducted direct haul to the base camps of units in the First Field Force.¹

COL Henry Del Mar assumed command of the Da Nang Support Command in October 1969, after his predecessor was relieved for the Cam Ranh Bay race riots in the depots. Del Mar had no qualms about turning an organization upside down or worrying about whose career he ended to get the results he wanted. He wanted to create a new organization and needed the personnel vacancies of the 36th Transportation Battalion to fill it. To do this, he would combine the truck companies of the 24th and 36th Transportation Battalions into one battalion.²

Del Mar planned to move LTC Eldon Carey, Commander of the 24th Battalion, to become the Deputy Port Commander for the 124th Transportation Command. Carey had already come out on the promotion list for colonel and no longer needed the command. Del Mar asked LTC Edward Honor, then commander of the 36th Battalion to command the 24th Battalion. In December 1969, Honor assumed command of the terminal battalion

¹ Richard E. Killblane, *Mentoring and Leading: The Career of Lieutenant General Edward Honor*, Fort Eustis, VA: US Army Transportation Center, 2003.

² Ibid.

headquarters to manage nine truck companies. Previously the 24th Terminal Battalion had only delivered cargo from the pier to the depot. After the merger of the two truck battalions, all the companies conducted line haul except for the company with the Kenworth Tractors.³



LTC Edward Honor (center) in a headquarters, here they would discuss convoy operations. LTC Honor would command both 36th in July 1969 and then the 24th in December of 1969.

The 24th Battalion then provided command and control for the following companies:

- 24th Transportation Company (Light Truck)
- 172nd Transportation Company (Medium Truck)
- 442nd Transportation Company (Medium Truck)
- 515th Transportation Company (Light Truck)
- 529th Transportation Company (Light Truck)
- 566th Transportation Company (Medium Truck)
- 592nd Transportation Company (Light Truck)
- 670th Transportation Company (Medium Truck)

³ Ibid.



592th Trans Comp patch.



A convoy waiting for clearance lined up ready to roll. In the rear would be the bobtail which in the event a truck broke down, the bobtail would just hook them up on the back and carry them for the remainder of the trip, there were always several bobtails bring up the rear. (photo by Wayne Patrick)

The battalion assumed the 36th Battalion's direct haul mission through the Central Highlands of southern II Tactical Corps Area. The short haul ran one-day round trips from Cam Ranh Bay along Highway 1, coastal highway, north to Nha Trang and Ninh Hoa or south to Phan Rang. Long hauls went north and turned west on Highway 21 to Ban Me Thout, or straight west from Cam Ranh Bay along Highway 11 to Da Lat and Bao Loc. On a long haul, the convoy would drive up one day and return the next. The battalion route later included a long haul south along the coastal highway to Phan Thiet. As many as 90 to 180 vehicles of all types - cargo, tanker and reefers - lined up for a convoy each morning in serials of 25 to 40 vehicles. The petroleum truck company at Cam Ranh Bay would intermix with Honor's convoys. While the routes may have become routine, there was one major difference to running convoys since the last time Honor was in country.



Driving on paved roads was luxury that was short lived most of the time. (photo by Wayne Patrick)



This could be the middle of a convoy with a gun truck and command and control jeep following. Gun Trucks were spaced out with a ratio of 1:10. (photo by Wayne Patrick)

The 36th Battalion had only started encountering convoy ambushes in late 1969 and lost its first soldier killed. During another ambush at Ban Me Thout Pass, the enemy buried a satchel charge in the road which blew up the lead V-100. The gun trucks stayed and fought for 15 to 20 minutes then turned around.

Rick Smith remembered that the worst attack happened between December 1969 and February 1970. Rick Smith was then the NCOIC of “Peace Maker” in the rear of the convoy. It did not have any radios. The trail party had only one gun truck. A wrecker rode two thirds of the way back in convoy.⁴

⁴ Rick Smith interview.



The Piece Maker with a Mini gun was attached with 2 ammo boxes holding 5,000 each rounds and twin 60s on the rear. (photo by Jerry Pickett)

During an ambush the gun trucks in the kill zone would pull over and return fire. The next gun truck would pull up and relieve it, so it could return to its original place in the convoy. The last gun truck would fire until convoy was out of sight for 5-10 minutes. Rick's crew volunteered to be the last gun truck because they thought they were tough.⁵



duce and a half part of the 442 transportation company (medium truck). (photo by Wayne Patrick)

Their destination was Ban Me Thuot, where the 101st Airborne Division had a base camp on top of a mountain. They halted at bottom of mountain, then sent a spotter plane to check for enemy. It could not see anything since the enemy was hidden in the jungle.

⁵ Rick Smith interview.



The trail party in a convoy, from left is the duce and half, followed by a wrecker, and command and control jeep. (photo by Wayne Patrick)

The convoy then received the word to proceed. An ARVN 2 ½-ton truck loaded with Vietnamese was hit coming down hill. The enemy had just shot the truck up with the passengers in the back. Blood was pouring out of it. Rick estimated that it had 15 killed in the back. 75-100 yards further up ROK infantry and armor stopped their convoy. Then convoy commander sent a gun jeep back with instructions. The last four to five gun trucks were told to hang tight. They stayed back at 100-foot intervals while the convoy continued. They felt that the ROK could handle the enemy. Rick saw the ROKs running up the steep mountain. This impressed him. He heard lots of small arms fire and mortars. The convoy did not receive any hits. The mountain was too steep and the enemy was firing down over their heads. The gun trucks waited 15 minutes, then a ROK colonel came back and said he did not need them, so the gun trucks rejoined the convoy.⁶

When they arrived at the base camp, Rick saw American wounded stacked four deep in several ¾-ton trucks. They had been through a big fight. He did not think that that was a good way to treat



An M-52 Truck with an M-129 trailer hauling cargo on a convoy (photo by Wayne Patrick)

⁶ Rick Smith interview.

wounded. He could not eat dinner that evening. The gun trucks when they ROned at a camp always pulled perimeter security. Gun trucks covered all the corners, ten feet from wire. At 0200, the “gooks” attacked the compound. The enemy reached the wire. Rick fired so many rounds that he had to change barrels twice. He did not use the timing gage. He just screwed the barrels in and backed off three clicks. The infantry were so grateful they bought the gun truck crews breakfast the next day. He thinks the company received a citation for the action.⁷



Gun Truck ‘Gamblers’ part of the 566th TC

Ronald Smith remembered the convoy on 26 June 1970 had 12 gun trucks; four from the 360th POL Company, four from the 670th Medium Truck Company and four from the 442nd Medium Truck. The Reefers were in front, followed by the flat beds with projectiles (projos) and food, then POL tankers and the trail party. Convoys were organized by type of truck then by company. This would have

placed the 360th POL tankers, from the 262nd Quartermaster (Petroleum) Battalion, in the last march unit of the convoy.⁸

SSG Jack Buckwalter was the NCOIC of the 360th march unit. It started out with 21 vehicles. The platoon leader was the convoy serial commander and rode in a gun jeep at the head of the serial with a MP V-100 and a gun truck. Another gun truck rode closer to the rear. A gun truck and three more gun jeeps were evenly distributed through the serial.



POL Tanker, SP4 Charles Pedigo drove one when struck by RPG (photo by Wayne Patrick)

⁷ Rick Smith interview.

⁸ Ronald Smith interview by Richard Killblane, 17 June 2005 and Robert Dalton email to Richard Killblane, September 6, 2005.

SSG Buckwalter rode in the trail gun jeep at the end of the convoy. This was the policy of 500th Group convoys at the time. Ten 10-ton tractor and trailers loaded with Petaprime (dog food) were waiting for them at the bottom of the Ban Me Thout Pass so they could have air cover going up the Pass. The convoy had an L-19 Birdog for air cover. The ten tractors and trailers fell in the last serial.⁹



*Underdeveloped roads received wear and tear like the trucks
(photo by Wayne Patrick)*

On its way up the Ban Me Thout Pass, an enemy soldier fired an RPG at one of the lead POL tankers driven by SP4 Charles Pedigo. The rocket flew at an angle through the cab and hit the fuel tank. Smith remembered that Pedigo safely jumped out of the cab but the truck started to roll

forward. He jumped back in the cab to set the hand brake then the fuel tanker blew up killing the driver. That act prevented the truck from rolling back down the steep grade into the other trucks and blocking the pass. The burning truck melted the asphalt and blocked the narrow mountain road, stopping the convoy.¹⁰



Three helos supporting ground convoy

Convoy enroute to Ban Me Thout with air support. Air Support was very important in discouraging Enemy ambushes (photo by Wayne Patrick)

The convoy commander and the vehicles ahead of the burning fuel tanker continued to Engineer Hill at the top of the Pass. He radioed back to his NCOIC that they were receiving small arms fire. They received small arms fire from the ridge across the valley to the north and down from the ridge above to the south. The enemy on the ridge across the valley had mortars and .51 caliber machineguns firing gray

⁹ Jack Buckwalter telephone interview by Richard Killblane, 7 September 2005.

¹⁰ Ronald Smith and Buckwalter interviews.

tracers. All the gun trucks entered the kill zone, pulled off to the side of the road and fired at the enemy on the opposite ridge. The air cover left because there was too much ground fire. One gun truck pulled up to right next to the burning tanker, the USA pulled over to the right side of the road about 300 meters below the burning tanker and returned fire ¹¹



SP4 Charles Pedigo's POL tanker that was hit by an RPG and exploded after he jumped back in to set the brake to keep it from rolling back into the convoy behind him. His act of bravery and selfless service saved the lives of fellow Soldiers and their cargo.

SSG Buckwalter only heard the muffled explosion of the rocket. He did not hear the small arms fire that far back in the convoy. He immediately raced his gun jeep to the front of the convoy. As he rounded the jungle road, he saw two MP gun jeeps halted on the left side of the road. He ordered them to

drive up to the fight but they refused. Buckwalter told his gunner to shoot them if they did not move. The MPs did as instructed. When the SSG reached the scene, there was no longer any enemy fire. He told the crews in the gun trucks to open fire anyway on the ridge across the valley. During the process, a major kept calling on the radio wanting to know about his Petaprime (dog food).¹²

The gun trucks returned fire for 35 minutes until the firing quieted down. SSG Buckwalter then made the decision for the trucks behind to turn around and return down the mountain. The mountain road was narrow so



The roads themselves were enough of an obstacle – undeveloped and winding paths for a convoy (photo Wayne Patrick)

¹¹ Ronald Smith interview.

¹² Smith interview and Dalton email.

“USA” had to back up to a place where the tractors could turn around. Smith could see the smoke for 35 miles. They found a MACV unit at the base of the hill and waited for two and a half hours until the lieutenant called that they had air cover again. The drivers did not like the idea of driving back up the hill but Buckwalter made them. On the trip up, he stopped to recover Pedigo’s body from the burning truck. The body had burned into a small ball and a few bones. He did not see the skull, so he left. The next day he stopped again but none of the body remained. Around 200 yards past the burned out tanker, the convoy was hit again by small arms fire but the gun trucks returned fire and the convoy kept going. The last gun truck dropped back to make sure that SSG Buckwalter was safe. It drove just ahead of the trail gun jeep the rest of the trip down the mountain.¹³



Some parts of the convoy had jungle to left and right of them with minimal clear views of the way the roads may twist and turn. (photo by Wayne Patrick)

The 24th Battalion had distinguished itself during terminal service and line haul operations in Vietnam from 1966 to 1971, earning two Meritorious Unit Commendation Medals. The 24th overcame major obstacles, including severe tidal conditions, torrential winds and rain, strong enemy presence, and lack of permanent discharge facilities. During several important combat operations, the 24th provided direct transportation

and supply support to the 101st Airborne Division and the 9th (Korean) White Horse Division in the face of hostile enemy fire.



The risks associated with such narrow and undeveloped roads caused incidents of trucks rolling down cliffs.(photo by Wayne Patrick)

¹³ Buckwalter interview.

7th Transportation Group

On 17 July 1972, the colors of the 24th Transportation Battalion (Terminal) returned to Fort Eustis and the battalion was reformed under the command of LTC Jonathan Barrett. The 24th Battalion was redesignated as Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 24th Transportation Battalion on 17 July 1972. During the decades following the Vietnam War, the United States was reluctant to involve its military in contingencies. President Jimmy Carter and Congress reduced the amount of funds available for training and maintenance making for lean years. These years saw, conversely, the greatest expansion of communism in the Western Hemisphere. The US Army found itself pushing back the communist gains during decade of the 1980s. Following the military intervention in Panama during Operation Just Cause, the operation tempo of the US Army would significantly increase. As the CONUS based active duty theater level transportation command, the 7th Transportation Group would become the most deployed command in the US Army.

The 784th Transportation Company was inactivated in January 1973. The 119th Transportation Company was activated at Fort Eustis, Virginia, on 21 December 1972 and became the US Army's first container handling unit. It had 140-ton and 300-ton cranes.

In 1980, the 24th Battalion provided command and control over the following units:

- 119th Transportation Company
- 155th Transportation Company
- 264th Transportation Company
- 567th Transportation Company
- 16th Transportation Detachment (Cargo Documentation)
- 157th Transportation Detachment (Cargo Documentation)
- 491st Transportation Detachment (Cargo Documentation)
- 544th Transportation Detachment (Trailer Transfer Point)

Operation Desert Storm/Desert Shield

Ten days after the first Iraqi tank rolled into Kuwait, the 24th Transportation Battalion, commanded by LTC James S. Ebertowski, deployed to King Abdul Aziz Port of Dammam, Saudi Arabia spearheading the logistical support required to defend that country from invasion and force Iraq's withdrawal from Kuwait.

Storm on the Horizon; The 24th Transportation Battalion in Saudi Arabia
LTC Donald D. Parker and CPT Jeffery A. Kipers¹⁴

I. The Early Hours

On 9 August 1990, the soldiers of the 24th Transportation Battalion, 7th Transportation Group, based at Fort Eustis, Virginia, Received an early wake-up call. This event,

¹⁴ 24th Transportation Battalion After Action Report for Operation Desert Shield/Storm.

triggered by tumultuous events in the Middle East, was the beginning of the greatest deployment in history; Operation Desert Shield.

The leaders of the 24th Transportation Battalion (Terminal Service), then-commanded by Lieutenant colonel James S. Ebertowksi, knew early on that they would be a big part of this operation. In their pre-deployment briefings they learned that most unit equipment, ammunition and sustainment cargo for the Kuwait Theater of Operations would flow through the King Abdul Aziz port in Damman, Saudi Arabia. This is a very well developed port, with numerous berths, large staging areas, sophisticated container handling equipment and shore-side cranes to handle ammunition, vehicles and break-bulk cargo. Additionally, the harbor is deep enough to handle Fast Sealift Ships, which would bring in many of the tracked and wheeled vehicles for the deployment.

Armed with this information, a 7th Transportation Group surge/advanced party deployed to Saudi Arabia on the 10th of August. The advanced party consisted of select officers and NCOs from the 24th, 10th and 6th Transportation Battalions. The 551st transportation Company (Cargo Transfer), commanded by Captain Johnny Sawyer, made up a large part of the advanced party. This versatile unit, assigned to the 24th Transportation Battalion for “the duration”, would be a vital part of the deployment.

II. Laying the Ground Work

When the advanced party arrived in Saudi Arabia they found themselves in a very fast paced, fluid environment. Lieutenant General William G. Pagonis, the 22d SUPCOM (TAA) Commander, was in charge of all support for the rapidly developing theater. However, his staff was not yet in-country. Much of the 24th Transportation Battalion staff was drafted to help from the fledgling SUPCOM staff. For several weeks, lieutenants did the jobs of lieutenant colonels; sergeants, the jobs of captains. The 551st Transportation Company ran the A/DACG at Dhahran Air Base, where over five-thousand soldiers arrived daily. 7th Transportation Group staff officers and noncommissioned officers also worked at the airfield, coordinating with host nation authorities for cargo trucks and buses to move incoming soldiers to their field sites.

Meanwhile, the balance of 7th Transportation Group and 24th Transportation Battalion coordinated with authorities at the Port of Damman for follow-on military operations at the port. Ships containing prepositioned equipment and ammunition previously stored at Diego Garcia were already steaming for Saudi Arabia. As the month of August drew to a close, the 24th Transportation Battalion staff filtered out of SUPCOM and back into the port. The 551st Transportation Company mission also shifted from the airfield to the port, where they took on the job of warehousing and shipping massive amounts of ammunition.

The ammunition mission dominated during these early weeks on the deployment. The LASH vessels, laden with over eighty barges of ammunition apiece, arrived within several days of each other. Since the 24th Transportation Battalion did not have its

terminal service companies in country yet, they relied upon host nation contract laborers to discharge ammunition from the barges.

24th Transportation Battalion staff officers and noncommissioned officers supervised these third world laborers. This was a challenging and often frustrating job, as most of them, mainly from Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Bangladesh and India, spoke very little English. Additionally, many of the laborers had never worked ammunition and were oblivious to the extreme hazards involved. For example, they had to be constantly told to stop dancing on top of the MLRS pods and smoking in the vicinity. They also had a penchant for sleeping on the ground while fork lifts and other heavy equipment were working in the area. Eventually, through constant supervision, the host nation stevedores did become very proficient in their jobs. Over 1,500 short tons of ammunition flowed into and out of the port every day.

III. The Big Push

By the end of August, the first of the Fast Sealift Ships arrived. The 567th Transportation Company, commanded by Captain Dale Caroe, deployed from Fort Eustis to link up with the 24th Transportation Battalion and discharge these vessels. Within weeks, seven FSS ships discharged their cargo, mainly tracked and wheeled vehicles for the 24th Infantry Division (Mech). At the same time, numerous break-bulk and RO/RO vessels, carrying unit equipment, arrived at the port.

This was a challenging time for the 24th Transportation Battalion and the 567th Transportation Company. The 567th was required to work multiple vessels, 24 hours a day. Additionally, many ships of unit equipment arrived before the owning unit did. This meant that there were few or no Port Support Activity (PSA) soldiers to assist in driving vehicles from ship-side to staging areas. Despite this, the unit began to set new standards for the rapid discharge of ships.

Complicating the discharge was the condition of some of the Ready Reserve Force (RFF) vessels that were pressed into service. The serviceability of some of the ships gear was inconsistent, forcing innovative work-arounds and extensive use of the ports shore cranes.

The 24th Transportation Battalion documentors were also hard at work. Initially, the 358th and 491st Automated Cargo Documentation Detachments (ACDS), with about 40 cargo documentation specialists apiece, deployed with the 24th Transportation Battalion. In September, approximately 115 additional documentors from fifteen separate cargo documentation detachments from the active, Army Reserve and National Guard components joined the 24th Transportation Battalion. These elements teamed up and immediately began documenting the avalanche of unit equipment, containers and ammunition flowing into and out of the port.

Like the stevedores, the documentors were busy from the start. They effectively tracked unit equipment using LOGMARS and the Terminal Support Module (TSM). They also

manipulated TSM's sixty data fields to create tailored reports for customers requiring information on the status of their cargo. The documentors also used a combination of LOGMARS and manual systems to account for ammunition. This was a difficult job because none of the ammunition arrived in-country with LOGMARS labels. To get a good pallet count, the documentors generated and affixed their own labels to ammunition pallets. They scanned these labels as stevedores offloaded the ammunition moved forward to multiple ammunition supply points. The superb efforts of the 24th Transportation Battalion documentors enabled logisticians and commanders at all levels to managed the movement of material into a constantly expanding theater.

In September, as sealift flow intensified, and the remaining elements of the XVIII Airborne Corps flowed into the port, the 119th Transportation Company (Terminal Service), commanded by Captain Peter R. Watling, joined the 24th Transportation Battalion . This much needed addition allowed the battalion to keep pace with the rapidly expanding mission. the Fast Sealift Ships returned with more equipment an, at these point, the two terminal service units worked up to eleven ships simultaneously.

The 24th Transportation Battalion leadership recognized a need for additional cargo lifting gear to handle the increased work load. They contracted for the fabrication of various types of lifting gear to handle vehicles, helicopters, containers, ammunition, general cargo and tanks. They consolidated these sets in a battalion gear locker. The gear locker delivered cargo sets directly to ship-side as requested by the ship OIC or NCOIC. This enabled terminal service units to get the right lifting gear quickly and made the whole operation more efficient.

During this time, the 24th Transportation Battalion took on what would become one of their most important missions; commercial container management. The first of over one-hundred Special Middle East Shipping Agreement (SMESA) commercial container vessels carrying sustainment cargoes of almost every class of supply arrived at the port in late September. Captain Steven Daoust of the 24th Transportation Battalion took charge of the container management mission. Before commercial container ships arrived at the port, he and his operations cell analyzed vessel manifests to assist the material management centers (MMCs) in identifying the contents and disposition of each container. The 551st Transportation Company managed the container yard and loaded containers for shipment using host nation straddle cranes and Army rough terrain containers handlers (RTCHs).

Working with the MMCs, movement control centers (MCCs), the Military Traffic Management Command (MTMC), and host nation port authorities, the 24th Transportation Battalion marshaled and shipped over 25,000 SMESA containers during the Desert Shield deployment and Desert Storm conflict.

In November, between the deployments of the XVIII Airborne Corps and the VII Corps, LTC Ebertowski handed the reins of command over to LTC Donald D. Parker, recently arrived from USTRANSCOM. The soldiers of the 24th Transportation Battalion took an all too short break to enjoy a lavish Thanksgiving Day meal.

IV. The Bigger Push

By December, over 150 ship-loads of VII Corps equipment began steaming for Saudi Arabia from Germany and CONUS. The next three months were to be the most difficult of the deployment. The 264th Transportation Company, commanded by Captain John Bellizan, joined the 24th Transportation Battalion in Saudi Arabia to meet the intensified sealift flow. They immediately jumped into the breach, working several RO/RO vessels initially, then “graduating” to FSS and break-bulk ships. Before long, they were discharging ammunition and unit equipment as quickly as the other units, despite being a “Type B” unit. The push for ammunition, especially Air Force ammunition, became urgent as President Bush’s deadline of 15 January approached. The 24th Transportation Battalion worked two ammunition ships and up to twelve LASH barges simultaneously. The always innovative gear locker designed specialized lifting devices to handle MLRS pods in LASH barges during rough sea states. They also built “spider gear”, a spreader device equipped with twelve dangling hooks, to lift six pallets of artillery projectiles simultaneously, this tripled the stevedore’s ability to discharge projectiles.

The ammunition operations section, run by Captain Joerle Blackman and the 551st Transportation Company, pushed over 1,800 short tons per day of 500 and 2,000 pound bombs, MLRS pods, small arms, missiles, and artillery projectiles to several different ammunition supply points.

The PSA situation improved with the arrival of the 4/16th Infantry, 1st Infantry Division (FWD), from Goepingen, Germany. These soldiers arrived in-country with an abundance of enthusiasm. They became a permanent 700 soldier PSA for three months to assist in the deployment of the VII Corps. This much needed augmentation came at exactly the right time. As mid-January approached, the pace at the port increased yet again. Every berth was filled, providing significant challenges to the battalion harbormaster’s office. Over 200 commercial containers of supplies left the port every day by truck and rail. Unit containers of every shape and size poured in. The port was crammed with over 10,000 soldiers living in warehouses, awaiting their move to the desert.

The Military Sealift Command provided over 100 different ships to support the operation. As a result, the terminal service units of the 24th Transportation Battalion encountered some very unique situations. The 567th Transportation Company discharged the seatrail *Maine*, a ship commissioned in 1944, formerly used to transport rail cars. The rails were still intact, but this time the cargo was unit equipment.

The stevedores used colorful nicknames, some of them unprintable, for many of these Ready Reserve vessels. The ship “Advantage” became the “Disadvantage”, because it was so difficult to discharge. If a ship sat too long at the pier it became a “light-house” or “land-ship“. A few select vessels even earned the distinction of being called “The Ship From Hell”.

Winter brought high winds, which made LASH barges bob like corks in the harbor. Oftentimes, lines securing the barges to the pier would snap, sending them adrift with the stevedores aboard. Saudi tugs or watercraft from 10th Transportation Battalion would be called to the rescue.

Several ships arrived loaded with equipment donated by the German government. These Czech-made, former East German vehicles posed significant challenges for the stevedores as much as this equipment had no lifting points. They were also perplexing for the PSA, who had never seen or driven these odd looking trucks, bulldozers and ambulances with the logo “TATRA” emblazoned on the grille.

V. “SCUD Alert”

As the air war began the sealift pace did not let up. Adding to the already complex mission were the notorious SCUD missiles which, when launched, caused everyone to don chemical protective gear and seek cover. Although the 7th Transportation Group provided host nation personnel with protective masks, the laborers quickly disappeared at the first tones of an air raid siren. Fortunately, through the coordination efforts of the 24th Transportation Battalion’s S-3 officer, Major Gregory Cox, the battalions’ stevedores had been trained in advance to operate host nation fork lifts, portal cranes, container straddle cranes, and other material handling equipment for just this contingency. For several weeks, these missiles flew frequently across the Abdul Aziz Port. The security measures of the port included the always reliable Patriot missile system. After the first few SCUD were knocked from the sky in brilliant explosions, soldiers gained confidence in the capability of the Patriots. Operations continued without delay despite the annoying SCUD vs Patriot battle overhead.

VI. Victory

As the air war phased into the ground war in February, the push for ammunition and containers increased. The 24th Transportation Battalion received a welcome addition in the 685th Transportation Company (Terminal Transfer), an Army Reserve unit out of Gary, Indiana, commanded by 1LT Timothy Zimmer, arrived in-country. This brought the battalion personnel strength to a peak of over 1,200. These soldiers immediately set to work loading and bracing ammunition onto both civilian and Army trucks of all types for forward movement in support of ground operations. There was a serious cargo tie-down shortage in theater so the wily stevedores made do with material at hand. These included wood, chains, cables and even rope. The extraordinary efforts of the 685th Transportation Company kept cargo moving in the finest traditions of the battalion.

The 100 hour ground war ended suddenly and the focus immediately shifted to redeployment. Battalion planners had already laid much of the ground work for redeployment. Some of the effort was simply a matter of “shifting gears”. However, even the best plans must remain flexible. The battalion was called upon to immediately accept the 24th Infantry Division (Mech) into the port as they withdrew from Iraq. The 7th Transportation Group busily coordinated with other support units to quickly install wash

racks and provide maintenance, medical support, subsistence and other services to redeployment units. The battalion quickly established sterile staging areas to marshal equipment that had been cleared by customs and agriculture officials and began documenting each vehicles prior to entry. Vessels ready for loading were identified and prioritized for use in the redeployment. Within hours after the 24th Infantry Division arrived at the port, their first pieces of were being loaded and documented aboard the *NSNS Bellatrix*.

While most of the battalion was preparing the port for redeployment, the 551st Transportation Company sent two platoons of cargo handling specialist with MHE to Kuwait city International Airport in early March where they performed as the Arrival/Departure Airfield Control Group (A/DACG). They assisted the Kuwaitis in opening the airport and supporting the flow of humanitarian aid through the APOD during the bleakest first hours of Kuwait's recovery.

The 24th Transportation Battalion continues to serve in Saudi Arabia, providing terminal service to redeploying forces. Soldiers of the battalion have exceeded all expectations in the redeployment effort, just as they did during the incredible deployment. The Herculean job that they have done is a tribute to their professionalism, competence, flexibility and just plain tenaciousness. During a recent visit to the port, General Vuono, Chief of Staff of the Army, called them "the unsung heroes of Operation Desert Shield/Storm." "Service is Our Product" is not just a catchy battalion motto but a fact that has been demonstrated each day in Damman, Saudi Arabia, by the hard working soldiers of the 24th Transportation Battalion.

LTC Parker was the battalion commander and CPT Kipers was the S-1 Officer for the battalion.

By 15 April, the 24th Battalion provided command and control for the following:

- 119th Transportation Company (Terminal Service)
- 159th Transportation Company (Heavy Crane)
- 264th Transportation Company (Terminal Service)
- 567th Transportation Company (Terminal Service)
- 53rd Transportation Detachment (Cargo Documentation)
- 157th Transportation Detachment (Cargo Documentation)
- 343rd Transportation Detachment (Cargo Documentation)
- 358th Transportation Detachment (Automated Cargo)
- 491st Transportation Detachment (Automated Cargo)
- 545th Transportation Detachment (Cargo Documentation)
- 551st Transportation Detachment (Cargo Transfer)
- 585th Transportation Detachment (Cargo Documentation)
- 685th Transportation Detachment (Cargo Transfer)
- 1090 Transportation Detachment (FC)

By 4 May, the 24th Battalion picked up the 1404th Light/Medium Truck Company, 396th Cargo Documentation Detachment, and B Battery, 3-2 Air Defense Artillery.

On 17 September 1992, the 264th Transportation Company (Terminal Service) was inactivated. From August 1991 to September 1992, the 24th Transportation Battalion operated the primary port of entry for most of the supplies and equipment arriving and departing the theater in support of Operations Desert Shield, Storm, and Farewell. The 24th Battalion's stevedores discharged and uploaded over 700 ocean-going vessels during these operations. It earned the Meritorious Unit Commendation for its efforts.

Operation Restore Hope, Somalia

No sooner had the battalion headquarters returned than it was alerted for another deployment. Again proving that elements of the 7th Transportation Group ranked among the most often deployed units in the US Army. In January 1991, the Communist regime of Mohammed Said Barre collapsed in Somalia and the country was torn apart by civil war. The famine situation added to the crisis and the war caused a total collapse of the government infrastructure which could not deliver the food aid arriving at the port to the growing refugee population which needed it. The warring factions saw the control of the delivery of this food as a source of power. The United Nations began to airlift humanitarian aid to the worst famine stricken areas of Somalia and Kenya in August 1992. They needed to establish a transportation network to deliver the aid from the port to the humanitarian organizations throughout the country.

In December 1992, a Marine Expeditionary Unit landed and secured the port Mogadishu then the 7th Transportation Group deployed two battalion task forces to Mogadishu to deliver humanitarian aid to the humanitarian relief organizations. The 24th Battalion, commanded by LTC Flood, lead Task Force 24 to operate the seaport and provide lighterage, reverse osmosis water purification, heavy crane and cargo documentation support. The 6th Battalion Task Force opened the airport with an Arrival/Departure Airfield control Group (A/DACG) and provided cargo transfer support and conducted port clearance and onward movement with line haul motor transports. The 7th Transportation Group Task Force provided command and control for the two battalions, under the Joint Task Force Support Command.

The 24th Battalion activated the 710th Boat Company (Provisional) from soldiers across the 7th Group to man lighterage from the heavy-lift proposition ship, *American Comorant*. On 9 December, 39 soldiers deployed to Hythe, England, to prepare the lighterage and other critical equipment for deployment to the Horn of Africa. The advance party of the 7th Group departed on 17 December, to receive two LASH ships, *Green Harbor* and *Green Valley*. On 20 December, the advance party of the 6th Battalion arrived and set up A/DACG operations at the Mogadishu airport. Meanwhile, the task forces loaded 950 pieces of equipment aboard the fast sealift ship (FSS) *USNS Capella* then berthed at Newport News, Virginia. The 7th Group soldiers began to deploy on Christmas Eve.

To operate the port, the 24th Battalion had to finish a massive port rehabilitation started by the Navy and Marines. The 119th Terminal Service Company with the assistance of a

platoon from the 497th Engineer Port construction Company and trucks from the 6th Battalion cleared away thousands of tons of debris, derelict vehicles, wrecked containers, and mounds of garbage and hauled it to dumps located outside the city. The 6th Battalion's dive detachment also moved sunken tugs and patrol boats from the piers to open critical berthing space. Of the six berths, Maritime Prepositioning Ships carrying Navy and Marine equipment worked at berth 6, berths 2 and 3 at the end of the pier could only accommodate one fast sealift ship at a time, ships carrying humanitarian cargo discharged at berth 1 and a small commercial fuel tanker tied up at berth 4.

The road to Kismayu was impassable so the 24th Battalion set up terminal operations there. The two LCU-2000s conducted inter-coastal transportation from Mogadishu to Kismayu to sustain the 10th Mountain Division task force there and deliver engineer equipment to repair a bridge. Two LCM-8s transported medical and relief supplies to the isolated islands of Jofay and Julaa and also relocated Special Operations Forces.

By the end of March 1993, Task Force 24 assumed control over both the seaport and A/DACG operations in Mogadishu as part of United Nations Somalia (UNISOM). The 870th Cargo Transfer Company was then attached to the 24th Battalion to conduct A/DACG operations. From then until 28 March 1994, the 24th Battalion was solely responsible for the reception and onward movement of all equipment and sustainment supplies brought in and out of the theater, as well as supporting fellow coalition forces. By the time the 24th Battalion finally redeployed, they had discharged and uploaded well over 300 ocean going vessels, making it possible for US and coalition forces to provide needed assistance to the starving Somali people.

The 24th Battalion provided command and control for the following companies:

- 119th Transportation Company (Cargo Transfer)
- 155th Transportation Company (Terminal Service)
- 710th Transportation Company (Provisional) (Boat)
- 870th Transportation Company (Cargo Transfer)
- 335th Transportation Detachment (LSV-1)
- 358th Transportation Detachment (Automated Cargo)
- 491st Transportation Detachment (Cargo Documentation)

Operation Support Hope, Rwanda

While deployed to Kenya in August 1994 as part of Operation Support Hope, the 24th Transportation Battalion provided logistical support to the United Nations efforts to aid Rwandan refugees by offloading critical equipment and supplies at the seaport of Mombassa.

Operation Uphold Democracy, Haiti

President Clinton pressured the military junta in Haiti to turn the government over to the duly elected president, Jacque Aristeed. They military junta held out to the last possible moment. The initial plan for Haiti was a forced entry. The planners expected the Haitian

military to obstacle the seaport, so they needed LOTS capability and a port opening package delivered by watercraft.

A flotilla of Army watercraft from 10th and 24th Transportation Battalions (Terminal) sailed down to Haiti. The LCU 2000s of the 329th Transportation Company (Heavy Boat), 24th Battalion joined the LCUs of the 97th Transportation Company (Heavy Boat), LT801 (towing BD6701) of the 73rd Transportation Company and LSV1 and LSV4 of the 10th Battalion set sail on 13 September 1994 to form the largest flotilla of watercraft in convoy since the Cuban Missile Crisis. Since the majority of the watercraft belonged to the 10th Transportation Battalion, it provided command and control of the task force.

The 10th Transportation Battalion was configured for forced-entry. The boats were uploaded with the 7th Transportation Group port opening package of rolling stock (vehicles) for any contingency. They took the sectional floating causeway and BD heavy crane in the event that the Haitians sabotaged the port.

The convoy initially anchored off of the coast of North Carolina at 0800 and waited for the other vessels. The LCUs, LT801, LSV1 and LSV4 sailed as a convoy to Haiti in two serials. CW3 John Marino, vessel master of LSV1, commanded the first serial and CW5 Brewster, vessel master of LSV4, commanded the second serial, which consisted of the LCUs of the 97th Transportation Company. MAJ Thomas Baker, XO of the 10th Terminal Battalion, was designated the Task Force/Convoy Commander. MAJ Baker rode with the first serial and remained at Third Port for the latest possible intelligence on the situation before leaving. The first serial sailed past the second serial at 1930 on 13 September. The second serial joined up behind the first and sailed under radio silence except for navigational aids.

At 0040 on 18 September, the convoy arrived at Grand Turk Islands in the Bahamas and went into a holding area. The vessels just sailed around in a big square for 10 hours. They stopped there to pick up three LCUs loaded with 5,000-gallon fuel tankers. These vessels had left three to four days prior to the others to support refuel operations for air operations. They also picked up commercial tugs and an FSS ship, *Nashville*. The *Nashville* was loaded with combat equipment and vehicles for the US Marines. The fleet departed at 1050 that night.

The fleet arrived at Port Au Prince at 0400 on 20 September. By that time the military junta had agreed to step down from power and allow Jacque Aristeed to become president of Haiti. They also agreed to allow the US Armed Forces to use its ports. There was no longer a need for a forced-entry. Much of what was taken down would have to return. LSV4 was that last vessel to discharge its cargo and rolling stock. It discharged 21 pieces of equipment and picked up 9 pieces and 15 stevedores for opening the port.

Three of the LCUs from the 329th Transportation Company had received the mission to deliver aviation fuel and maintenance support to Great Inagua Island by D-5. The XVIII Airborne Corps planned to operate a forward area rearm and refuel point (FARP) and an aviation intermediate maintenance (AVIM) site on the island's airstrip. The three LCUs

picked up eight 5,000 gallon fuel tankers containing JP5 aviation fuel; a D7G bulldozer; a 10K forklift; 40-foot trailers, expando vans, and prime movers; HMMVs and trailers and deploying unit containers.

The LCUs 2013, 2015, and 2016 set sail from Third Port, Fort Eustis, on 12 September with CW2 Pat May as the convoy commander. At 2200 on 15 September, the vessels arrived at their assembly area ten miles off the island. The 329th Transportation Company Commander, CPT Gene Piskator, accompanied his three LCUs and went ashore with CW2 May and four soldiers at 0500 the next morning to survey the beach for a landing. 1st COSCOM ordered them to only discharge two of the 5,000-gallon tankers and the aviation maintenance equipment. They discharged this within four hours then set sail for Port-au-Prince.

On 3 October, 1st COSCOM tasked the 7th Transportation Group to support the Joint Special Operations Force. On 6 October LCUs 2008 and 2023 transported vehicles, equipment and Special Forces and Civil Affairs soldiers west to Jeremie to restore electrical power in the outlying communities across northern and southern Haiti during Operations Light Switch. They dropped their cargo and passengers off the next day and returned.

In a couple of weeks after 10th Battalion's original arrival, it was determined that 10th Battalion did not need all the watercraft so it sent the vessels of the 329th Heavy Boat home. The vessels of the 97th Heavy Boat remained. Those LCUs hauled cargo to remote sites and transported troops to R&R beaches. However, the crews of the vessels were not allowed to enjoy the beach facilities and had to eat MREs while the soldiers had barbecues.

Operation Vigilant Warrior

In October 1994, the 24th Battalion again responded to the threat of Iraq aggression as part of Operation Vigilant Warrior by providing crucial logistical and transportation support to the 24th Infantry Division in Saudi Arabia. The 24th Battalion conducted cargo documentation, airfield clearance, and port operations at the seaport of Ad Dammam, including the first ever multiple prepositioned ship download.

In February 1998, the 24th Transportation Battalion was ordered to deploy to support USCENTCOM. Three elements of the 567th Terminal Service Company and a command and control element from HHC deployed to Camp Doha, Kuwait. Their mission was to conduct A/DACG operations at the Kuwait International Airport in support of Operation Desert Thunder.

Kosovo

The 24th Transportation Battalion deployed LSV1 and LSV6 to provide ferry support between Brindisi, Italy, and Durres, Albania, from 16 April to 15 September 1999. This was in support of the deployment of TF Hawk to Kosovo. As the mission came to a

close, US Central Command (CENTCOM) tasked the 7th Transportation Group for an LSV to be prepositioned in Kuwait. LSV6 redeployed to Fort Eustis on 30 September 1999 while LSV1 changed crews at Rota, Spain, for further deployment to Kuwait. The 24th Battalion rotated the crews of its LSVs every six months.

Theater Support Vessels

The lessons learned from the US Central Command (USCENTCOM) deployments to the Persian Gulf and Somalia indicated that Army watercraft could not deploy to the theater in the time needed. Most units did not arrive in theater combat ready. The personnel arrived often weeks before their equipment. Therefore, the Transportation Corps needed a vessel that could reposition men and their equipment in theater with speed and efficiency. When Army Chief of Staff, General Shinseki, outlined his plan for Army Transformation, this became the Army Transportation Corps' focus. CW4 Ray Aube, of Combined Army Support Command (CASCOM) at Fort Lee, VA, became the project officer for the Theater Support Vessel (TSV).

In 1998, CW4 Aube began to talk with naval architects and read naval literature to determine what the state of the art in watercraft design was. He researched emerging trends in watercraft technology and considered the possible military applications. Coincidentally, the military and commercial industry was independently looking at high-speed watercraft designs. The industry was rapidly moving in the development of this technology. The Europeans were looking at developments in mono-hull designs while the Australians experimented with the catamaran hull design. In 1998, Incat was building a catamaran where the dead weight was becoming equal to the ship' light-weight or the pounds of cargo was equal to each pound of the ship's weight. This technology allowed the craft to attain higher speeds.

Aube then began to research and write his Operational Requirements Document (ORD) and completed the draft in 1999. His boss, COL Robert Kubiszewski forwarded it and Headquarters, Department of the Army approved the draft ORD on 17 January 2000. With this document, the Department of the Army officially recognized the need for faster watercraft as a requirement. COL Samuel M. Cannon, at TACOM, became a believer in this concept. While Aube had thought of limited troop movement, Cannon said, "Let's get ambitious and move lots of troops." Cannon established contact with the shipping industry to lease the theater support vessel (TSV). He decided upon the catamaran design. After examining several designs, TACOM decided upon the high-speed, 96 meter wave piercing, sealift catamaran built in Tasmania by Bollinger/Incat L.L.C., an Australian company.¹⁵

The ultra modern jet impeller technology could propel the catamaran with its light-weight aluminum hull up to speeds of 40 knots, four times faster than the LCU or LSV.

¹⁵ SPC Jonathan Wiley, "Army leaders view plan for theatre support vessel," *The Wheel*, 3 January 2002 and interview with CW4 Ray Aube by Richard Killblane, 29 August 2002.

MG William Mortensen, Chief of Transportation, adopted the concept and sold the idea to Robert Spriggs, up at Newport. By 24 July 2001, the next Chief of Transportation, BG (P) Robert T. Dail, and the Commander of the TACOM signed a Memorandum of Agreement between the Army and Navy, Marine and Coast Guard commanders to sponsor as partners the administration of the High Speed Vessel, (HSV) X1 project, *Joint Venture*. The Army and the Navy would each crew the vessel for six months a year. The Army provided a crew of thirty-three with CW4 William “Bill” Davis, the vessel master, and CW3 Rebecca Brashers, the first mate. The HSV was attached to the 24th Battalion for support.

The success of the HSV and MG Dail’s personally championing the cause convinced TACOM to lease a second catamaran, Theater Support Vessel (TSV)-X1, *Spearhead*. The Army reverted money and the personnel vacancies destined for LSV8 to fund the first all-Army TSV.

On 29 October 2002, the TSV ORD IPT met to review and discuss the comments on the TSV Operational Requirement Data (ORD) that generated from the worldwide staffing process. The IPT reviewed and either accepted, modified or rejected the comments. TRADOC set a suspense of 1 December to receive the TSV ORD. STRAP approval was expected on 18 November.¹⁶

The military and contractor equipment began arriving at Fort Eustis on 15 October 2002. The crew of 43 personnel flew to Hobart, Tasmania, in late October for training. The TSV-1X Advanced Concept Technology Demonstration (ACTD) vessel, *USAV Spearhead*, was accepted by the Army in a ceremony held in Hobart, Tasmania, on 14 November. The *Spearhead* was a 98-meter, commercially designed catamaran with modifications to support military operations and equipment requirements. This vessel came one step closer to the objective vessel that incorporated over 100 modifications from lessons learned on the HSV-X1 joint demonstration. After leaving the HSV, CW4 Davis became the captain of the new TSV-X1 on 15 November. The TSV-1X was also attached to the 24th Battalion for command and control.¹⁷

In December 2002, the TSV *Spearhead* left Australia for the Island of Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean to support Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) and participate in a USCENCOM. The HSV *Joint Venture* reverted to US Navy control from 11 November until 17 March 2003 and deployed to the CENTCOM AOR in time to participate in Operation Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom.

Operation Iraqi Freedom, Kuwait

By 2002, Saddam Hussein failed to comply with the UN Resolution to verify that it had disarmed all efforts to build weapons of mass destruction. President George Bush tired of the UN’s inability to force compliance. In January 2003, the United States, Great Britain and other allies staged in Kuwait for an invasion into Iraq with the purpose of

¹⁶ CASCOM Staff Notes, 2002.

¹⁷ SIGACTS Feb 03.

removing Hussein from power. Unrelated to the impending crisis, the 6th and 24th Battalions were scheduled to participate in an exercise to conduct their CENTCOM war-time mission called NATIVE ATLAS.

To prepare for NATIVE ATLAS, the 7th Transportation Group held a JLOTS exercise RESOLUTE PHOENIX VI at Fort Story from 24 to 28 January. HHC, 7th Transportation Group, 24th Transportation Battalion and HHD, 6th Battalion conducted a vessel discharge operations, MDMP and Command Post Exercise. The 24th Battalion established a battalion-level life support area (LSA) on 24 January then conducted LO/LO and RO/RO operations off of the large, medium-speed, roll-on/roll-off ship (LMSR) *USNS Mendanca* from 26 to 28 January.

From 20 March to 3 April 2002, the 24th Transportation Battalion, then commanded by LTC James Herson, deployed on a CENTCOM sponsored JLOTS exercise, NATIVE ATLAS '02, off the California coast adjacent to Camp Pendleton. The battalion conducted a download of a fully laden LMSR containing the 2nd Brigade Combat Team (BCT) from the 3rd Infantry Division (M), commanded by COL Perkins.

The 24th Battalion along with the 6th Battalion The 24th Battalion took its 567th Cargo Transfer Company and the 1069 POCD. They discharged the vessel over a five-day period and passed on the equipment to the 6th Battalion to onward move it to the National Training Center.¹⁸

The 6th and 24th Transportation Battalion were task organized under the control of the 32nd Transportation Group of the 143rd TRANSCOM at Camp Pendleton, CA from 20 March to 3 April. The exercise discharged the equipment of the 2nd Brigade, 3rd ID (M), which had loaded aboard the *USNS Seay* at the Port of Savannah, Georgia, so the brigade could attend the National Training Center at Fort Erwin, California. This JLOTS and command relationship would exercise the tasks of the transportation units inherent in the CENTCOM war plans.

The 10th Transportation Battalion conducted the rail upload of 272 pieces of equipment of the 6th and 24th Battalion at Fort Eustis, Virginia, on 2 March. This included 22 containers, three KALMAR RTCHs, two dozers, two DV-43 RTCHs and two cranes. From 20 to 24 March, the 7th Group units conducted rail download of their equipment and established C4I nodes.¹⁹

The 24th Battalion took its organic 169th Port Operation Cargo Detachment (POCD), 491st Automated Cargo Documentation (ACD) Detachment, 492nd Transportation Company and the 567th Cargo Transfer Company (CTC). The 24th Battalion also received support from the 652nd, 834th, 1181st and 1397th TTB. The 1397th TTB augmented the 491st Automated Cargo Detachment at North Island. The 6th Transportation Battalion provided port clearance and forward movement to the NTC. It deployed with the 89th Medium

¹⁸ LTC James Herson, "24th Transportation Battalion Command Report, 1 January to 31 March 2003," 1 June 2003.

¹⁹ LTC James Herson, "Native Atlas '02 Initial Hot Wash," Camp Pendleton, CA, 8 April 2002.

Truck Company, 558th Floating Craft General Support (FCGS) Company, 551st Cargo Transfer Company, the 384th and 622nd Movement Control Teams. The battalion picked up control of two USAR truck companies when it arrived. The 24th Battalion would offload the equipment and the 6th Battalion would clear it from the beach to their final destination. Commercial lowboy company would move the heavy equipment like tanks and Bradleys to the NTC. The 53rd Movement Control Battalion provided the movement control for the operation. The two MCTs provided the 53rd Battalion 24-hour capability. The Navy provided LCUs for lighterage and SEABEES constructed the Trident pier and RO/RO Discharge Facility (RRDF). The Trident pier was stabbed into Red Beach and the RRDF was anchored at sea. The Navy's Joint Lighterage Control Center (JLCC) coordinated the schedule of its LCUs.²⁰

On 28 March, the 24th Battalion conducted helicopter discharge pier side at NINAS. On 29 March, *USNS Seay* arrived and began discharge. The 169th POCD boarded the *Seay* to discharge the equipment. One purpose of the exercise was to validate the new stern ramp on the *USNS Seay*. The Navy failed to inform the 24th Battalion of this agenda during the In Progress Reviews (IPR). This took the 24th Battalion by surprise and created an atmosphere of distrust. They wanted to see if the RRDF could support the weight of the stern ramp with an Abrams tank. Since the free-floating ramp was only connected by cables, the Navy wanted to see if it would damage the ship during rough seas. The rolling stock drove onto the RRDF then Navy LCU-2000s discharged equipment and cargo off of and transferred it to the Navy Trident Pier at Red Beach or the fixed pier at Delmar Basin. LTC James Herson, commander of the 24th Battalion, felt that the reliance on the Navy's lighterage and Trident pier caused unnecessary delays as their priorities were not the same as the Army's.²¹

Navy LCUs dropped ramp at the Delmar Basin. There the KALMAR RTCH of the 567th CTC lifted the containers out of the hold. The limited reach of the KALMAR required the LCUs to reposition themselves several times so that the KALMAR could pick up the heavy containers. This caused the LCUs to delay longer than the available tide window, which stranded them until the next tide.²²

The operation shut down at 1700 on 30 March due to inclement weather and high sea states. The 24th Battalion completed the discharge of the *Seay* on 3 April. They failed to achieve their 96-hour goal projected in the regional OPLANS. This was due to the lack of vessel support provided by the Navy. "During the first and last shifts of discharge operations, the Navy provided only one vessel to transport vehicles to and from the beach."²³

The Navy proved to be very difficult to work with. LTC Herson was never an officer to hold back his opinion. He wrote in his hot wash,

²⁰ Native Atlas and discussion with SFC Michael Aguilar by Richard Killblane, 5 May 2005.

²¹ Native Atlas and Aguilar.

²² Native Atlas.

²³ Native Atlas, p. 11.

“The Navy lacked the operational flexibility in adjusting field services around the needs of the operators. HAD shift changes all gone perfect, ie. Navy lighterage not become constantly NMC [non-mission capable], medical emergencies not crop up, etc. then their rigid methodology of camp administration and support would have only been a minor irritant. However, given a fluid and dynamic discharge environment, coupled with only using primarily naval lighterage, set times for showers, inflexible class I feeding times and MRE issue, etc. soon proved to be non viable. When brought up to the Navy to make necessary common sense adjustments, they proved very difficult to deal with and always *‘wanted it their way.’* This is a clear case of the tail wagging the dog and is clearly unreasonable. While we acknowledge the SEABEES are unable to provide the level of service we are accustomed to, they must be better able to tailor their support system to accommodate the operator’s’ dynamic schedule of discharge and RSO needs. Even simple requests for hot soup and coffee for us to issue after meal hours to all AFFOR soldiers and NAVFOR sailors working at night proved very hard to get approved. This is pure bunk and unprofessional.”²⁴

From 6 to 11 April, the 7th Group assets prepared their equipment for rail upload. Meanwhile the 2nd Brigade moved to NTC from 8 to 9 April and the 7th Group equipment rail uploaded from 9 to 12 April. The advon redeployed on 10 April and the main body redeployed on 17 April.²⁵

LTC Herson returned from this exercise bitter about the participation with of the Navy. Herson was extremely mission oriented and had no patience for personal agendas. He felt that the Navy had their own agenda and its priority was not the speedy discharge of cargo and equipment, which is the standard of achievement for JLOTS operations. While this operation was a rehearsal of the CENTCOM war plan, it provided a hint of what Herson would face the next year during Operation Iraqi Freedom.

In June and July 2002, in accordance with the mandates of the Army watercraft restructuring program (AWRP), the 8th and 329th Transportation Companies were both inactivated. The 24th Battalion had lost its fleet of LCUs. It still retained the two LSVs (LSV1 and LSV6), crewed by the 335th and 411th Detachments, as well as the TSV. Both LSVs were still stationed out of the Kuwait Naval Base where they sailed to various destinations in the Persian Gulf to the Horn of Africa in support APS repositioning, sustainment stock replenishment.²⁶

In July 2002, LTC Herson and three of his staff officers deployed to Kuwait to participate in the USCENTCOM sponsored Operation VIGILANT HAMMER from 10 to 31 July. The 7th Transportation Group wanted to download one Large, Medium Speed, Roll-on, Roll-off (LMSR) vessel, the *Lotkins*, from the Afloat Preposition Stock (APS) 3 at Port of Au Shuyabah in order to determine the download time and also how many Prepo vessels they could berth at the pier at one time. From then on the 7th Group prepared for war.

²⁴ Native Atlas, p. 14.

²⁵ Native Atlas.

²⁶ Ibid.

Ash Shuyabah, KNB, Kuwait International Airport (KCIA) provided the three ports of debarkation into Kuwait. Of the two terminal battalions to deploy, the 24th Transportation Battalion would receive the responsibility to conduct the Joint Logistics-Over-The-Shore (JLOTS) Operation at the Kuwaiti Naval Base (KNB). KNB was a naval base that provided berthing for small swift boats. It did not have the capability to berth and discharge deep draft seagoing vessels. LTC Herson and his staff officers, MAJ Karen Fleming, CPT Jennifer Naples and CPT Matthew P. Cashdollar, verified that an LSV or LCU-2000 could discharge cargo at the north ramp and that the south ramp was suitable for causeway operations.²⁷

As the likelihood of military operations increased, CENTCOM directed that the 7th Transportation Group preposition part of its maritime fleet early. As early as April, the 24th Transportation Battalion had received the task to begin planning for the transfer of selected watercraft to the CENTCOM Area of Operations (AOR). By August, the 24th Battalion was directed to take the lead in planning with the US Coast Guard, Norfolk Naval Base Harbor Control, Military Sealift Command and MTMC for the transfer. On 22 October, LSV4 of the 1099th Transportation Company, 10th Transportation Battalion sailed on its own to Kuwait and joined LSV3, a USAR vessel, and the 24th Battalion's LSV6. The smaller vessels would have to deploy into theater aboard the *MV Tern*. The 7th Transportation Group held a Rock Drill to walk its leaders through the uploading steps of the *MV Tern* on 22 October.

The 7th Transportation Group followed with FTX RESOLUTE MONGOOSE 02 from 1 to 5 November. LTC Randy Patterson brought his entire 106th Battalion headquarters to Fort Story. As part of that FTX, the 24th Transportation Battalion completed the upload of twelve vessels; 5 LCUs, from Tampa, Florida, and Morehead City, North Carolina, and 5 LCMs, 1 large tug and 1 small tug, and equipment, aboard the *MV Tern* on 5 November for forward stationing. This operation was appropriately dubbed "U-TURN." It would take the *Tern* nearly a month to reach Kuwait. To fill replace the LCMs deployed to Kuwait, the 824th Transportation (Medium Boat) Company (USAR) with 67 soldiers was activated on 1 November 2002 and was attached to the 24th Battalion on 12 November.

The small vessels aboard the *MV Tern* would require a support package upon their arrival in theater. HHC, 7th Transportation Group deployed 5 personnel of the Caretaker Advon Team to Kuwait on 29 November. The Main Body of the Caretaker Team deployed to Kuwait the next day. The Caretaker Team comprised marine engineers with the responsibility to maintain the vessels deployed aboard the *MV Tern* in an operational status awaiting the arrival of 24th Battalion. On 5 December, a total of 95 personnel from 24th Battalion and 824th Heavy Boat Detachment deployed to Kuwait to download the *MV Tern*. SGT Eric Lehman had the privilege to drive the first boat (M-8582) off of the *Tern* after it arrived. Upon completion of the download, the detachment returned to Ft Eustis.

²⁷ Herson, "Command Report."

In early January 2003, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld issued the deployment order. The 24th Battalion advance party deployed to Kuwait on 20 January 2003. The 24th Battalion moved its command post from Arifjan to Kuwait Naval Base (KNB) on 28 January. The first part of the main body followed on 14 February and the rest of the battalion arrived in packages. The 7th Group soldiers flew out of Langley Air Force Base. The stevedores of the 24th Battalion downloaded their first vessel, *MV Edward Carter*, from 23 February to 8 March. The Navy component, under the command of Commander Donald P. Cook, had overall command of the CJLOTS Operation. The 24th Battalion would answer directly to Cook for all CJLOTS. As in all previous CJLOTS exercises, this relationship would prove difficult.²⁸

The 469th Transportation Detachment was reactivated on 16 March as the designation for crew of the Theater Support Vessel. This unit designation was selected because it had been the previous designation of the *USAT John U. D. Page*, the largest Army vessel of its day, and later its replacement, the *MV Sutton*. The 469th Detachment was attached to the 24th Transportation Battalion.

The ground war kicked off on 20 March 2003 while the 24th Battalion continued its JLOTS Operation all the while coming under SCUD attacks. LSV4 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, conducted lighterage from ships anchored offshore. The 1098th Transportation Company had brought four Mike boats: LCM 80, 82, 91 and 98. The six-man crews split into two crews to pull 12-hour shifts. The “Pax” boat transported crew changes of cargo handlers out to the vessels to be offloaded. The “Blue Cross” boat pulled medical support for anything at sea. It had group medics and a HMMV aboard and operated like a floating ambulance. The security boat pulled security around the vessels when the seas were too rough for the Navy security boats. One Mike boat remained standby for VIPs and replacement boat for the others.

With the beginning of the ground war in Iraq on 21 March, the US Marines seized the port of Umm Qsar, Iraq, then began to clear the city. This Iraqi port would become the life line for humanitarian aid for the Iraqi people. However, the port was obstructed with derelict vessels and mines blocked the entrance. The Royal Navy mine sweeper immediately began clearing the waterways of any mines while the *Royal Fleet Auxiliary Sir Galahad* waited offshore to deliver humanitarian aid destined for the Iraqi people. With half the port swept for mines by 25 March, the Task Force Naval Special Operations notified 24th Transportation Battalion to send in Large Tug 1974, *Champagne Marne* and crew to help clear the port of derelict vessels.

Bright and early on 26 March, CW3 Mark Godlewski’s crew went in and located an operational Z-drive tug and began clearing the berths of derelict vessels over the next two days. LT-1974, arrived the next day and began clearing the port. Two mines were found in the channel leading to the port that day. The tug had driven over them. Evidently, the

²⁸ Herson, “Command Report.”

tug had entered at a time when the tidal condition submerged the mines deep enough to allow LT-1974 to pass safely over them. This, however, further delayed the *RFA Sir Galahad*. In harbor rehabilitation, tugs are some of the first vessels in to clear the piers and waterways. LT-1974 towed the Iraqi vessels *Miram* and *Rasoola* out of the way. On the 28th, the *Sir Galahad* arrived at New pier for a CNN moment. The Army's tug and crew left the publicity to the resupply ship and slipped back out of port on its way back to Kuwait Naval Base. As a result of this service, the Secretary of the Navy awarded the Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal to LT-1974. This is the first time an Army vessel has received such an award from the Navy.

The 567th Transportation (Motor) Company cleared cargo from the beach to the ammo yard while host nation vehicles cleared the yard. The 24th Battalion downloaded containers at KNB at times faster than they could be transported out of the port. At one time enough containers of ammunition built up in the ammo yard to blow away KNB and part of Kuwait City. The battalion also augmented the line haul capabilities of the 106th Transportation Company by sending a platoon forward to operate trucks into Iraq.

While in Kuwait, LTC Preston Thompson assumed command of the 24th Transportation Battalion from LTC James Herson, Jr. on 3 June 2003. The battalion was scheduled to participate in CENTCOM Exercise Bright Star in Egypt. The irony was that Bright Star was designed to provide units an opportunity to train at the collective skills that they needed for war. What the 24th Battalion had accomplished at KNB far exceeded the challenge of Bright Star and most soldiers did not look forward to the exercise. At long last, CENTCOM cancelled the exercise and the 24th Transportation Battalion returned to Fort Eustis, Virginia, on 22 July.

In March 2004, the 1098th Transportation Company of the 24th Battalion provided 12 Soldiers under 2LT Mark Pitzak to support JTF AKROAD during Operation Alaskan Roads. This was a humanitarian mission to build access road from Metlakatla, Annette Island, to a ferry terminal at Annette Bay. The ferry would provide access to Ketchikan and open Annette Island to tourism. The bay was along the salmon run and also a stop for tourist ships. This would become an economic boon to the Metlakatla Indian community.

The JTF lived at Camp Wy-Wuh on Annette Island. Because of the remoteness of the island, the three LCM-8s and two commercial command and control boats, owned by Alaska Command (ALCOM), became the logistical lifeline to the task force. The Soldiers worked hard but on their time off had the opportunity to go fishing and explore Alaska. This mission provided the members of the 1098th Medium Boat an excellent opportunity to work in a joint environment. The company rotated crews every two and a half months just as the other units of the task force. This would provide more Soldiers in the company to benefit from the training opportunity. The first 12 Soldiers rotated back in May. The 1098th then sent 14 more soldiers to crew the boats. The soldiers returned in 24 September 2004.



Crest

The insignia of the 24th Transportation Battalion, a pilot's wheel, refers to the Battalion's mission of providing command staff direction to attached units. The lines allude to terminal service facilities for loading and unloading and for the transshipment of cargo and personnel. The wavy diagonal lines are from the arms of the Rhineland. It refers to the participation of the Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment of the Battalion in the Rhineland and Central Europe campaigns.

Campaign Participation Credit

World War II: Rhineland; Central Europe

Vietnam: Counteroffensive; Counteroffensive, Phase II; Counteroffensive, Phase III; Tet Counteroffensive; Counteroffensive, Phase IV; Counteroffensive, Phase V; Counteroffensive, Phase VI; Tet 69/Counteroffensive; Summer-Fall 1969; Winter-Spring 1970; Sanctuary Counteroffensive; Counteroffensive, Phase VII; Consolidation I; Consolidation II; Cease-Fire

Southwest Asia: Defense of Saudi Arabia; Liberation and Defense of Kuwait; Cease-Fire

Decorations

Meritorious Unit Commendation (Army) for VIETNAM 1966-1967

Meritorious Unit Commendation (Army) for VIETNAM 1970

Meritorious Unit Commendation (Army) for SOUTHWEST ASIA

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