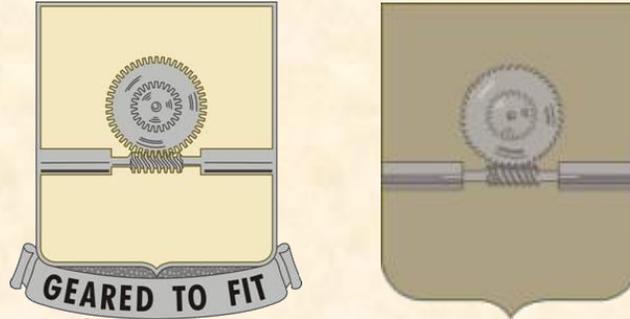


27th Transportation Battalion



*27th Trans Bn crest (l) and coat of arms (r)
(mouse over each for a description)*

World War II

In preparation for the impending World War II, the 27th Quartermaster Regiment constituted as an inactive unit of the U.S. Army on 10 February 1936. At that time transportation was a function that fell under the Quartermaster Corps and all truck units were designated as Quartermaster units. It was allotted to the Seventh Continental Army effective 1 May 1936. On 8 January 1940, the 27th Quartermaster Regiment was redesignated as a truck unit and activated as a 1st Battalion, 27th Quartermaster Regiment on 18 April 1942 at Fort Benning, Georgia. The 1st Battalion with Headquarters and Headquarter Detachment, and Companies A through D was then transferred to Camp Haan, California without personnel and equipment and attached to VII Army Corps effective 1 May 1942. Company C was activated at Fort Benning, Georgia, and transferred to Fort Riley, Kansas, on 18 April 1942.

The battalion was transferred from Camp Haan to Freda, California, on Temporary Change of Station to participate in maneuvers on 5 August 1942 and Camp Young, Indio, California, was designated as a Permanent Change of Station on 13 October 1942. It was attached to the 6th Armored Division on 2 December 1942. During this period, 1st Battalion, 27th Regiment did not move from its maneuver position of Desert Training Area, which was located in the vicinity of Iron Mountain, California.

On 2 May 1943 the unit left California and headed to Camp Patrick Henry, Virginia, arriving on May 7 then continued on to Hampton Roads. At Hampton Roads, the 1st Battalion boarded the ship “*HR 195, Dickerman*” on 10 May 1943 and disembarked in Oran, Algeria, on 2 June 1943. The unit was then stationed at Mateur, Tunisia, the Mediterranean Theater of Operations. The battalion landed in Sicily on 9 July 1943 to support the Seventh Army in the Sicilian Campaign. At the end of the Sicilian Campaign the battalion was redesignated as Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment, 27th Quartermaster Battalion, Mobile at Palermo, Sicily, on 15 October 1943. The other two battalions became the 58th and 115th Quartermaster Battalions. The 27th Regiment’s A through M Companies were redesignated 3401st through 3412th respectively. From then on the companies and battalions were interchangeable and followed separate lineages.

The 27th Quartermaster Battalion joined the Italian Campaign late. On 20 June 1944, it landed on the Italian Peninsula in support of the Rome-Arno Campaign. It then supported the push to the Alps in the Po Valley Campaign. During the Italian Campaign the battalion operated at the railheads where the trucks picked up cargo and delivered it to the corps rear areas. The battalion stayed in Italy until August 1945 when it boarded the *USAT General Scott* at Leghorn and arrived in Brooklyn, New York, on 27 August 1945 in-transit to Camp Hood, Texas, where it was assigned to the Fourth Army. On 5 November 1945, the battalion was inactivated.

Cold War

The War Department directed that effective 1 August 1946, the Quartermaster Corps would transfer the functions and responsibilities of all truck units to the Transportation Corps. While on inactive status, Headquarters and Headquarter Detachment, 27th Quartermaster Battalion was converted and redesignated the Headquarters Detachment, 27th Transportation Corps Truck Battalion on 1 August 1946. On 23 December 1948, the unit was then again redesignated as the Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment, 27th Transportation Truck Battalion.

The “Cold War” with the Soviet Union created a need for a large peacetime force. The 27th Transportation Truck Battalion was reactivated on 20 January 1949 at Wetzlar Military Post, Germany and received personnel from Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment, 3rd Transportation Truck Battalion. On 2 December 1949, the battalion was redesignated the 27th Transportation Truck Battalion. In Germany the 27th Battalion participated in transporting supplies from the seaports to the airfields for flight into Berlin during the Berlin Air-Lift. Once the routes into Berlin were reopened, the 27th ran convoys with other truck units to the city of Berlin through Soviet Zone of Germany.

The 27th Battalion moved by motor convoy from Gissen, Germany, to Kornwestheim, Germany, where it was assigned to Seventh Army on 1 April 1951. The men moved into the Wilkin Barracks. The battalion picked up control of the 62nd Heavy Truck Company (Petroleum) that had just arrived at Phillips Barracks, Karlsruhe, from Fort Story, Virginia, in May 1951. The unit continued to serve in Germany and participated in many exercises that enabled the United States Army to maintain a high-level of readiness. In September 1951, the battalion was attached to the 10th Transportation Highway Transport Group.

During the Cold War, US Army Europe established its line of communication back to the ports of Northern France. The 37th Transportation Highway Group had responsibility for the first leg of the line haul. It handed off cargo to the 10th Group which then delivered to the garrisons and units in the field. The 10th Transportation Highway Group consisted of the 27th, 29th, and 38th Transportation Battalions.

From September to October 1951, the 27th Battalion supported Seventh Army in a field training exercise (FTX) 1951. From then on it participated in every major maneuver in

Germany such as FTX COMBINE, FTX MONTE CARLO, FTX POWER PLAY, FTX HARVEST MOON, CPX COUNTER THRUST I and II, CPX SUMMERTIME, FTX INDIAN SUMMER, CPX STING RAY, CPX WOLF CALL, FTX CORDON BLEU, and CPX POLO BALL.

In 1952, the 10th Heavy Truck Company (POL) arrived from Fort Eustis, Virginia and as attached to the 27th Battalion. The 10th Heavy POL had been activated at Fort Eustis on 22 December 1950 and had served in the China-Burma-India Theater of Operations during World War II. While in Germany it would trade in its fuel tankers for M52 tractors and M127 trailers and be redesignated as a Medium Truck Company (Stake and Platform).

On 6 April 1953, the battalion was reorganized and redesignated Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 27th Transportation Battalion (Truck). The battalion had lost two companies when in September a number of National Guard truck companies were inactivated and returned to the United States. By 1 October 1953, the Battalion comprised the following units:

- 10th Transportation Company (Medium Truck) (S&P)
- 24th Transportation Company (Light Truck)
- 63rd Transportation Company (Light Truck)
- 100th Transportation Company (Light Truck)
- 544th Transportation Company (Light Truck)
- 590th Transportation Company (Light Truck)

The 590th Light Truck had been in Germany since World War II. It was stationed in Mannheim in 1947, then moved to Nurnberg in 1951 where it became a V Corps asset, then moved to Hammelburg in 1950 and then Aschaffenburg in August 1951 where it provided direct support to the 18th and 26th Infantry Regiments of the 1st Infantry Division. In April 1952 after it participated in Operations LEAP YEAR and RIVER LINE, the 590th was attached to the 27th Battalion and moved to Ludwigsburg where it spent the majority of the remainder of the year in the field.

These companies were located at different *kasernes* than from their battalion headquarters. To administer and supervise the truck operations of the 24th, 63rd, and 100th Transportation Companies in Bamberg, the battalion organized Detachment 1-A under the command of Major Wilbur T. Daly, Jr., Deputy Commander of the 27th. It remained in operation until 5 December 1955 when Seventh Army relieved the Battalion of the 24th, 63rd, 100th, and 544th Transportation Companies and attached the 40th (Petroleum) and the 62nd Transportation Companies from the 29th Battalion at Karlsruhe to it. On 15 April 1955, the 10th and 590th Companies moved to Flak Kaserne in Ludwigsburg and on 20 May, the 109th Medium Truck Company was attached to the battalion. The battalion consisted of the following companies:

- 10th Transportation Company (Medium Truck) (S&P)
- 40th Transportation Company (Petroleum)

62nd Transportation Company (Medium Truck) (POL)
109th Transportation Company (Medium Truck)
590th Transportation Company (Light Truck)

The 62nd Medium Truck (POL) had been reactivated at Fort Eustis on 14 April 1947. It had served in the China-Burma-India Theater of Operations during World War II. It was redesignated a heavy truck company in 1949 and Gyroscoped to Germany in 1951 where was attached to the 29th Battalion. On 1 October 1953, the 62nd Heavy Truck was redesignated a Medium Truck Company (Petroleum, Oil and Lubrication).

As part of third operation GYROSCOPE, the 4th Transportation Battalion in the Continental United States would replace the 27th Battalion in Germany with a due date of rotation on 15 April 1956. The advance planning group of the 4th Battalion arrived in Europe on 15 November 1955 and the 27th sent its advance planning group to Fort Eustis, Virginia on 7 January 1956. The 27th Battalion released its truck companies to the 4th Battalion. The 62nd Medium Truck ended up with the 29th Battalion by the end of the year. The advance party of the 27th Battalion departed on 16 February and the main body departed on the *USN Randall* through the Port of Bremerhaven on 18 April 1956 and arrived at New York on 27 April 1956.

At Fort Eustis, the battalion was assigned to the 48th Transportation Group and it picked up the 557th Heavy Lift Company from the inactivated 522nd Battalion. The 27th was comprised of the following units many of which had served with it in Germany:

24th Transportation Company (Light Truck)
63rd Transportation Company (Light Truck)
100th Transportation Company (Light Truck)
544th Transportation Company (Light Truck)
557th Transportation Company (Heavy Lift)

The unit arrived with 65 percent of its personnel ready for discharge. By 6 October, the 27th Battalion was reorganized with the following companies added: 17th Medium Truck, 19th Refrigeration, 61st Petroleum and 597th Medium Truck Companies. On 6 April 1957, the 61st and 597th Companies were assigned to the 29th Transportation Battalion leaving only seven truck companies. The 151st Transportation Company arrived from Germany and was attached to the 27th Battalion. In June 1959 the battalion was again reorganized and in 1960 it just had the following companies:

24th Transportation Company (Light Truck)
63rd Transportation Company (Light Truck)
151st Transportation Company (Light Truck)
597th Transportation Company (Medium Truck)
598th Transportation Company (Medium Truck)

In April 1960, the 597th Medium Truck departed on temporary duty for Thule, Greenland, in support of Support of North Eastern Command (SUNEC) and returned on 19

November. In May that same year the 151st Light Truck deployed to the US Military Academy for training support and returned in September. In April 1961, the 24th Light Truck participated in LOGEX-61, an Army-wide logistics exercise, at Fort Lee, Virginia. The 597th again deployed to SUNEK from April to November 1961 and the 63rd Light Truck deployed to West Point from May to September 1961. That July, the battalion participated in Exercise SWIFT STRIKE I with the 24th and 598th Companies. One platoon of drivers from the 24th Light Truck also deployed to Texas on Operation Mercy in September. The 598th, after its return to Fort Eustis, then departed for Europe in October.

In July 1962, the 10th Transportation Company, 27th Battalion and 62nd Transportation Company, 6th Battalion returned from two and a half years on the road. In June 1958, the 10th Company, which had just returned to Fort Eustis from Europe in 1957, was assigned to the US Army Transportation Corps Road Test Support Activity at Ottawa, Illinois. The company had departed in September and the ribbon cutting ceremony for the science of highway durability test of pavements and bridges was conducted in October. The \$22,000,000 project was a proving ground for the 40,000 mile interstate and defense highway system administered by the American Association of State Highway Officials (AASHO). The 10th Medium Truck Company was completely reorganized for the mission. Four hundred drivers drove in three arrangements of two shifts around the clock, rotating every two weeks. They drove loaded commercial trucks from ¼-ton to 5-ton diesels, summer and winter, over six highway loops of various thicknesses of concrete and asphalt. On 16 July 1962, the 10th Medium Truck Company was released from the 204th Transportation Group and attached to the 27th Battalion. The battalion then had the following companies:

- 10th Transportation Company (Medium Truck)
- 24th Transportation Company (Light Truck)
- 61st Transportation Company (Medium Truck)
- 63rd Transportation Company (Light Truck)
- 88th Transportation Company (Light Truck)
- 151st Transportation Company (Light Truck)
- 597th Transportation Company (Medium Truck)

That May the 63rd Light Truck deployed to West Point for training support until September. In July, the 10th Light Truck participated in SWIFT STRIKE II with the 6th Transportation Battalion. On 22 August 1962, the 62nd Medium Truck Company disembarked at Hampton Roads and was attached to the 27th Battalion only for a short time that year then it was attached to the 6th Battalion.

Cuban Missile Crisis

In September 1962, the Soviet Union shipped nuclear missiles to Cuba. President John F. Kennedy responded by a naval blockade of the island and threat of an invasion. In

October, the 6th Truck and the 159th Boat Battalions were mobilized for the Cuban Crisis. The 10th and 597th Medium Truck and the 63rd and 151st Light Truck Companies of the 27th Transportation Battalion (Truck) deployed to Panama City, Florida, as part of the 6th Battalion in November to rehearse for a possible invasion Cuba. From then the 6th Battalion waited with the landing craft of the 159th Boat Battalion for the impending amphibious invasion of the Communist Island. Premier Vladimir Khrushchev ordered the missiles removed, but the 6th Battalion remained in Florida until December after the danger had abated. The 6th Battalion returned to Fort Eustis by a four-day motor convoy, arriving on 8 December.

In October 1962, the 151st Light Truck Company was transferred to Fort Campbell, Kentucky. In 1963, the battalion only had the following companies:

- 10th Transportation Company (Medium Truck)
- 24th Transportation Company (Light Truck)
- 63rd Transportation Company (Light Truck)
- 597th Transportation Company (Medium Truck)

In April 1963, the 24th Light Truck moved to Fort Bragg, North Carolina. The 63rd Light Truck conducted its usual summer support at West Point and the 597th Medium Truck departed for Operation SUNEK in Thule, Greenland. The 10th Medium Truck conducted a short haul operation of 1,000 tons of classified equipment for the Navy at the Naval Weapons Station and Cheatham Annex, from 29 May to 11 July. The battalion also took part in Exercises SWIFT STRIKE III, in July 1963, conducted out of Fort Jackson, South Carolina. AIR ASSAULT I was the initial testing of the air assault concept conducted by the 11th Air Assault Division (Test). The 10th Medium Truck participated in amphibious training loading and unloading task vehicles on landing craft and highway operations. What was different about this operation was the inclusion of anti-guerrilla warfare as part of the training. The US Army had just sent advisors and helicopter companies to the Republic of Vietnam earlier that year. The guerrilla war in South Vietnam would begin to change the nature of training in the US Army.

The 27th Battalion participated in an annual Field Training Exercise at Fort A. P. Hill, Virginia in February 1964. The training consisted of night motor marches under black out conditions, displacement and perimeter defense of bivouac areas and interestingly, guerrilla warfare and attack by aggressor forces. This was the type of warfare they would see in the next year. The next month the battalion with the 10th and 597th Medium Truck Companies participated in their Annual Training Test. From 3 April to 11 May 1964, 25 soldiers from the 10th Medium Truck participated in LOGEX 1964 at Fort Lee, Virginia.

In August 1964, the 27th Battalion departed with the 10th and 597th Medium Truck Companies to Leesburg Camp, South Carolina for participation in Exercise AIR ASSAULT II, the validation exercise for the air assault concept of the 11th Air Assault Division. The battalion assumed control of the 120th, 124th, 244th, 502nd, 507th, and 541st Truck Companies. The battalion provided direct support to the movement of 75,094 personnel and 14,406 tons of equipment within the 4.5 million acres area having driven

1,475,348 miles by the end of the exercise in December. The 11th Air Assault Division then became the 1st Air Cavalry Division and deployed to Vietnam the next year. The 27th Battalion would run into it again.

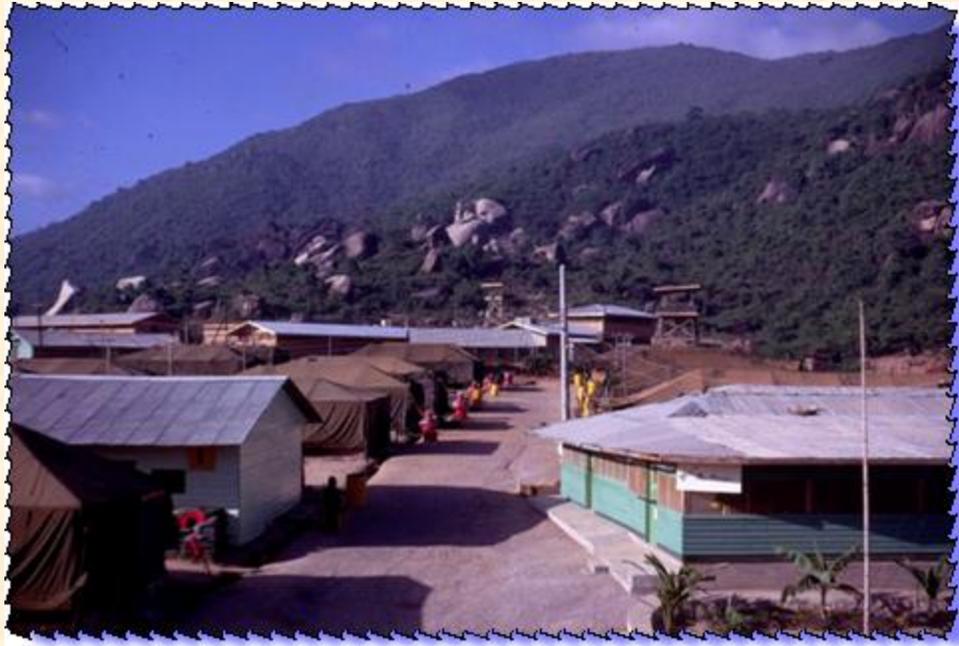
In the summer of 1965, the US Army took over the ground war in Vietnam. The 27th Battalion was again reorganized to include the following companies:

- 61st Transportation Company (Medium Truck)
- 62nd Transportation Company (Medium Truck)
- 63rd Transportation Company (Medium Petroleum Truck)
- 597th Transportation Company (Medium Truck)

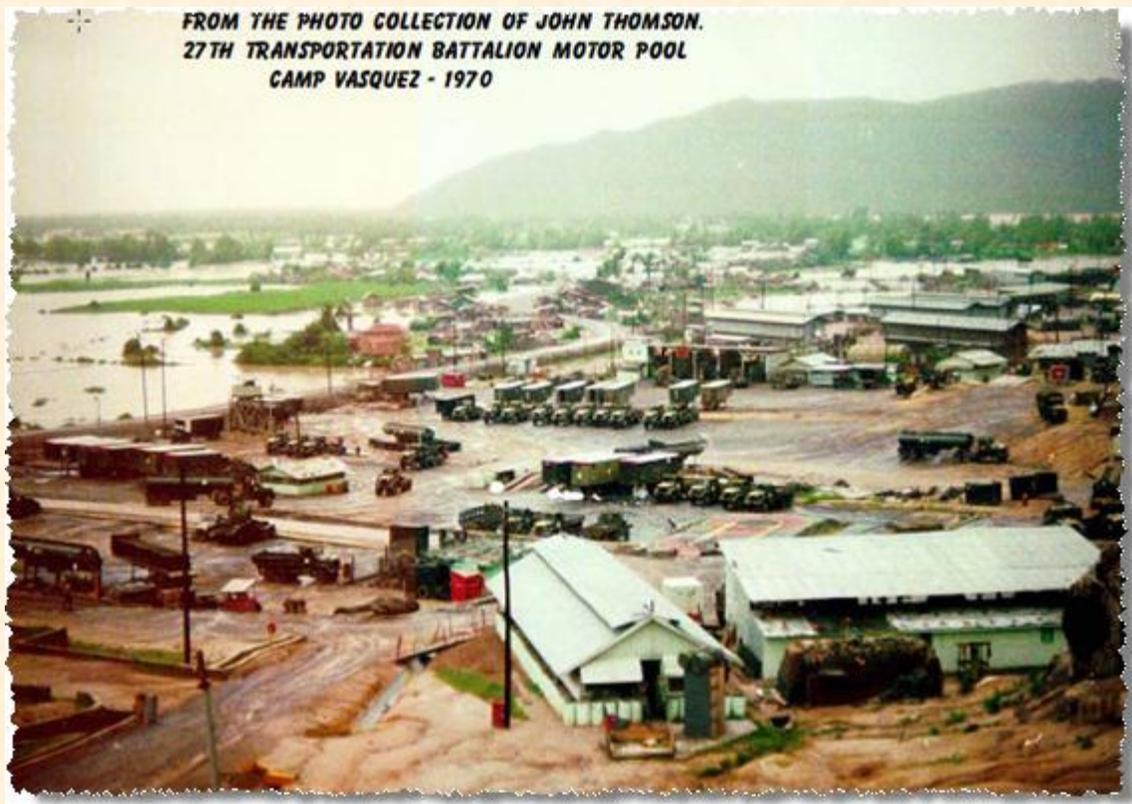
Vietnam

On 24 June 1954, French Mobile Group 100 was ambushed along Route (QL) 19 below Mang Giang Pass and destroyed in fighting around Pleiku. This brigade-sized mechanized force was made up of two battalions which had distinguished themselves fighting in Korea with the 2nd US Infantry Division. When the United States assumed a greater role in the ground war in Vietnam, this defeat haunted them. General Westmoreland felt that the Central Highlands were essential to defending South Vietnam. He planned to build up combat forces along Route 19 to deliberately keep it open, almost taunting the Viet Cong (VC) and North Vietnamese Army (NVA) that they could not defeat the Americans as they had the French. Westmoreland knew that the enemy hoped to lure the US forces into the mountainous terrain of the Central Highlands where supply lines were restrictive and vulnerable. He would meet their challenge with air mobility.

Qui Nhon became the base of supply for all logistic operations in II Corps Tactical Zone (CTZ) in which the Central Highlands fell. The first Transportation companies arriving at Qui Nhon were transferred from their Army transports to LCMs for deposit on the bare beach since Qui Nhon had no fixed pier during those first few years. The 597th Medium Truck was the first truck company at Qui Nhon, which arrived on 23 July 1965. The rest of the truck companies continued to arrive through October by which time their battalion headquarters arrived. They were put up in tents in Phu Tai, which was 10 kilometers outside Qui Nhon.



HQ 58th TC Company



**FROM THE PHOTO COLLECTION OF JOHN THOMSON.
27TH TRANSPORTATION BATTALION MOTOR POOL
CAMP VASQUEZ - 1970**

27th Trans Bn, Motor Pool, Camp Vasquez

The advance party of HHD, 27th Battalion arrived in Vietnam on 11 October 1965 and the main body arrived on 27 October 1965. The 27th Battalion was the first truck battalion to operate in the Qui Nhon area. It received taskings directly from the Qui

Nhon Support Command. The 27th Battalion assumed control of the following units at Phu Tai:

- 2nd Transportation Company (Medium Truck) (12-ton) (S&P)
- 58th Transportation Company (Light Truck) (2 ½-ton)
- 61st Transportation Company (Petroleum)
- 444th Transportation Company (Light Truck) (2 ½-ton)
- 541st Transportation Company (Light Truck) (2 ½-ton)
- 597th Transportation Company (Medium Truck) (12-ton) (Refrigeration)

There was total confusion in those first months. The 61st Petroleum Company did not even have tents when it arrived. Company sergeants went down and took from the cargo on the docks what ever they needed to survive. They improvised with available supplies to build showers and mess halls. Every company erected a beer hall tent for its drivers to relax at the end of the day. As time went on engineers came in and built wooden structures, first for the dining facilities, latrines then barracks or “hooches.”



Beer hall tent for drivers to relax at the end of a convoy or the end of a day!



House girls cleaning boots, Qui Nhon 1967

The first convoys hauled the equipment and CONEX containers of the 1st Air Cavalry Division to An Khe after it arrived on 11 September. The 1st CAV went on to fight their first bitter battle in the Ia Drang Valley during October and November. From then on the NVA would try to find the weakness to the air assault concept. Then 3rd Brigade, 25th Infantry Division arrived in December 1965 and set up operations in the Highland Plateau at Camp Holloway near Pleiku. After that the convoys ran the full length of Route 19. At this time there was no movement control organization established as the 507th Traffic Management Agency had not arrived. Units commandeering truck convoys to move their equipment became normal operations. The 1st Cavalry was the most guilty of this practice.

The units arriving from the United States had some adjusting to do to get used to life in Vietnam. A few company commanders still tried to hold formations in the company area. Some companies still had NCOs who were veterans of the Korean War. They were shocked that the people still acted like they did in the States and advised the commanders on what to do and not do in a combat zone. The Support Commands would hold command maintenance inspections (CMI) all through the war. There was a saying that good combat units do not pass inspections. It was hard to hold inspections on vehicles that drove seven days a week every week except when they broke down. Only then did they go in for maintenance. During that first year, the 504th Battalion MPs at the check points even stopped trucks in the middle of Qui Nhon village for things like tail lights out. While threat of ambush was not great, stopping anywhere outside the compound made the convoys vulnerable especially villages and cities. SFC David Hurd, of the 61st,

complained to the MP desk sergeant that his job was to help the trucks get in and out of the town not stop them. The MPs then started helping the convoys. The 504th MP Battalion and established its headquarters in Qui Nhon.



Getting a traffic ticket. I hope this doesn't affect my insurance!

While the Americans were building up their facility, they had to rely on the locals for support. The convoys filled up their trucks at a Vietnamese gas station until they built their own tank farm. They supplied the Vietnamese owner with gas for the trucks. One day he refused to open the gate to his facility when the trucks needed to fill up. SFC Hurd went over and threatened to shoot him with his .45 pistol that solved the problem. They received their fuel.

Cargo and fuel arrived at the sub port of Qui Nhon. Initially, the 444th, 541st, and 545th (after it arrived) Light Truck Companies delivered different classes of supply from the pier to their respective yards in the depot. The Han Jin Korean Transportation Company later assumed that role after it arrived. At night, trucks hauled empty trailers to the yards where they uploaded with cargo then they drove to the marshalling yard at Cha Rang Valley across from Camp Addison. The marshalling yard also had a trailer maintenance facility. Light trucks drove to the yards then back to the marshalling yard for another driver to pick the truck in the morning. The drivers parked the ammunition trailers in a different area so the explosion would not do total damage if a trailer was hit by enemy fire before it left the compound. The 597th Truck Company handled all the Reefer commitments. It had been given additional maintenance personnel to maintain the refrigeration vans. Three bob tails shuttled into the Class I (food) yard to pick up the reefer vans. Any tractor that did not have a reefer van, hauled a regular cargo trailer.



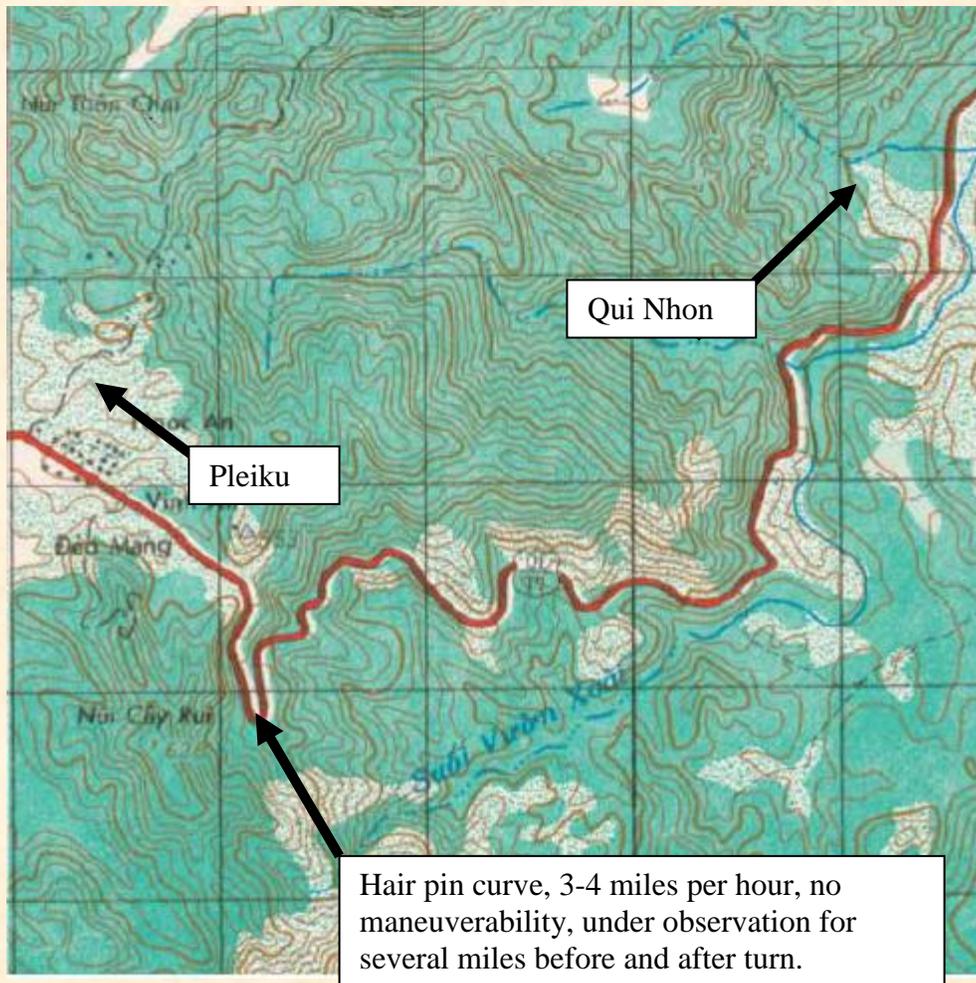
Convoy line up



Gun truck line up at Ponderosa ready to leave

From Cha Rang the drivers picked up their loads and destinations then organized into convoys. They departed around 7:00 each morning. The 27th hauled supplies daily from Cha Rang over 100 miles through the Central Highlands to An Khe and Pleiku referred to as “Frisco” or westbound convoys. Returning westbound convoys to Qui Nhon were

referred to as “New Yorkers.” The types of vehicles that the 27th operated in Vietnam were light (M34 2 ½-ton) and medium trucks (M54 5-ton). Over 200 trucks made the trip each day supplying soldiers in the Central Highlands with fuel, ammunition, food and other commodities. These long haul runs took the convoys half a day to reach their destination then another half a day to return. Only if the truck had maintenance problems or the cargo was not unloaded in time to make it back before dark did the trucks remain over night (RON) at the destination. A year after arriving in Vietnam the battalion headquarters moved to nearby Phu Tai, where it remained until departing the country.



Map sheet 6736I showing segment of QL19 between Qui Nhon and Pleiku with An Khe pass and hairpin turn.



Here, on 15 April 1954 French and Vietnamese soldiers, died for their country. Marker commemorating the initial assault on the French Mobile Group 100 (roughly brigade size). The actual battle took place on 28 Jun 1954.

Route 19 that went from Pleiku to An Khe and then to Qui Nhon was the same road on which the French Mobile Group 100 was annihilated. While driving along Route 19 the soldiers in the trucks could see the tombstone that marked the buried French men from that ambush. The 100-mile trip along Route 19 covered some of the worst terrain for trucks in Vietnam. The road around Pleiku was relatively straight and flat, but as the road headed east toward Qui Nhon, it traveled through two of the most treacherous passes in the world: the Mang Giang Pass, located about halfway between Pleiku and what was the 1st Cavalry Division's base at An Khe; and the An Khe Pass, about 50 miles west of Qui Nhon. In the first few years, Route 19 was a dirt road. The drivers returned covered in a fine red dust. The best drivers lead the convoys and had the privilege of not eating dust or a thick red mud.

Convoys generally slowed down to about three miles per hour to negotiate the winding road at the passes. The last and worst turn up An Khe Pass was the "Devil's Hairpin." If returning trucks did not slow down to three or four miles an hour, they would drive off the steep bank. Negotiating the mountains at such low speeds hauling cargo required drivers to learn to "split shift," the ability to split the gears into half gears. If they were not good at it, then the truck would stall and the engine would stop. Often the trucks behind would push the slower vehicles in front. A typical convoy had about 100 trucks and two gun jeeps. Medium trucks ran together and light trucks ran together.

In 1966, one of the fuel tankers of the 61st went off the side of the road at the Devil's Hairpin. The lieutenant opened the valve to drain the fuel to lighten the load. A VC tossed a hand match in it and burned up the truck and jeep. In those first few years, the enemy did not ambush convoys but occasionally shot at trucks. Often times the drivers did not know they were shot at until they saw the holes when they returned.

A personnel problem occurred in the fall of 1966. Since most of the companies came over about the same time, they rotated back to the United States at the same time when

their one year tour was finished. This created a problem as there was no one left to teach the replacements the tricks of driving in Vietnam. The new arrivals did not know each other before they arrived as had the drivers before them. This also caused a breakdown in cohesion as the soldiers tended not to become friends with many of the new arrivals. The new arrivals often only became friends with a few of the other guys in their companies.

The 4th Infantry Division (Mechanized) arrived in Vietnam in late 1966 with the 2nd Brigade moving into Camp Holloway on 10 August and the 1st Brigade along with the Republic of Korean (ROK) Tiger Division at Tuy Hoa on 4 October. This opened up another run south along the coastal Highway 1.

The build up of the additional brigades in II Corps Zone, required more truck companies to deliver the additional tonnage requirements. In 1966, the 64th Medium Truck arrived on 4 August, the 88th Medium Truck on 30 August, the 585th Medium Truck arrived on 18 October, 512th Light Truck, 563rd Medium Truck and 669th Light Truck on 23 October. These additional truck companies required the command of another battalion. The 54th Transportation Battalion arrived on 23 October and established its headquarters at Camp Addison at Cha Rang. Most of the light truck companies were attached to it while the 27th retained the medium truck companies. Similarly, two truck battalions required a group headquarters. On 19 October 1966, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 8th Transportation Group (Motor) arrived at Qui Nhon, set up its headquarters at Camp Vasquez at Phu Tai and assumed control of all truck units operating out of the Qui Nhon. After the 54th Battalion arrived the 27th Battalion maintained control of the following units:

- 2nd Transportation Company (Medium Truck) (Cargo)
- 58th Transportation Company (Light Truck) (Cargo)
- 64th Transportation Company (Medium Truck) (Cargo)
- 88th Transportation Company (Medium Truck) (Cargo)
- 359th Transportation Company (Petroleum) (Medium)
- 444th Transportation Company (Light Truck) (2 ½-ton)
- 585th Transportation Company (Medium Truck)
- 597th Transportation Company (Medium Truck) (Refrigeration)
- 505th Transportation Detachment (Trailer Transfer Point)



CPT B.T. Amos, CO, 359th TC, 27th TC Bn

The 54th Battalion assumed responsibility for the night run between Qui Nhon and Cha Rang Valley. Because the 597th was the only Reefer company, it still made its run with three bob tails every night. Control of day convoys was assigned by 8th Group according to which battalion had the most vehicles in it. The battalions then designated the convoy commanders from the officers of their companies. LTC Leo T. McMahon commanded the 27th Battalion in early 1967.

The dependable M52A1 Mack diesel tractors of the 64th Medium Truck logged in 900,000 miles during the first nine months in country. The major loss was broken frames due to the rough roads. When replacement tractors failed to arrive from the Tank Automotive Command in late 1967, the 64th Medium Truck's tractors on hand fell to 36 out of an authorized 60. After its first year in Vietnam, the company was kept at approximately 80% strength in men and trucks. In early May 1967, the 64th Medium Truck moved to Pleiku to become the first truck unit stationed in the Central Highlands.

On 20 May 1967, the 585th Transportation Company left Cam Ranh Bay for a permanent change of station to Qui Nhon. The 180 personnel and 70 vehicles spent the night at Tuy Hoa and finished their trip to Qui Nhon the next day. There it was attached to the 27th Transportation Battalion, commanded by Major Philip Smiley. The company settled into a camp near the village of Phu Tai. The men slept in tents and pulled their own perimeter guard.

In the summer of 1967, more brigades moved into II CTZ. The 173rd Airborne Brigade served as US Army Vietnam's mobile reserve, which Westmoreland shifted to hot spots throughout the country. He moved it to Camp Holloway near Pleiku and the 1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division north up the coast to Duc Pho. This increased the need for even

more truck companies. The 124th Transportation Battalion arrived on 24 July 1967 and set up operations at Camp Holloway. It assumed control of the 64th and 88th Truck Companies. The battalion made empty runs heading eastbound the same time the 27th and 54th convoys headed westbound.

Up until 2 September 1967, there were no large scale guerilla ambushes. On that day, the North Vietnamese Army (NVA) changed their tactics. They found the weakness to the American air assault concept. Realizing that the combat forces at An Khe and Pleiku were entirely dependent upon trucks for supplies, the NVA attacked the supply line. Tanks and APCs provided convoy security at a series of check points along Route 19. The Korean Tiger Division had responsibility for the check points from Qui Nhon to An Khe Pass. US forces at An Khe and Pleiku split the check points between them. B Company, 504th Military Police Battalion cleared the road with two gun jeeps armed with M60 machineguns each morning from An Khe to Check Point 102 at Mang Giang Pass, then the gun jeeps of C Company, 504th would escort the convoys the rest of the way into Pleiku.



Tropical growth went right up to road edge. The elephant grass could hide an elephant or a VC company or an NVA battalion and you would never know.

An eastbound convoy of 37 vehicles under the control of the 54th Battalion was returning from Pleiku under the protection of only two jeeps of C Company, 504th. Because of mechanical problems, a 5,000-gallon tanker split the convoy in two as it approached the treacherous An Khe Pass between Check Points 89 and 96. At that time the jungle grew right up to the road, so close that the driver could reach out and touch the branches. At 6:55 that evening, an NVA company struck the lead gun jeep with a 57mm recoilless rifle round killing one man and wounding the other two. Simultaneously, the enemy sprung a secondary ambush on the other half of the convoy setting the tanker on fire. Drivers were

taken by surprise. Many did not know what to expect. They saw the impact of rifle and machinegun fire on the vehicles in front of them but did not know the lethality of the ambush until the trucks came to a halt. The kill zone spread over 700 to 1,000 meters. Drivers climbed out of their vehicles and returned fire while NVA swarmed over the trucks. SGT Cox in an MP gun jeep, which had been following behind the convoy, arrived while the ambush was still in progress. He ran into an officer in a jeep heading toward Pleiku for help. Cox “forcefully encouraged” the officer that the best thing he could do was go to the front of the convoy and lead the trucks out of the kill zone. Cox then ordered every driver he came across to get back into their vehicle and drive out of the kill zone while he and his crew laid down suppressive fire on the enemy. They also threw flares over the side of the road to mark the ambush so they could direct the arriving helicopter gun ships where to fire on the enemy. Other MP gun jeeps arrived on the scene in ten to fifteen minutes. By then it was too late. In ten minutes the enemy had destroyed or damaged 30 vehicles, killing seven men and wounding 17. The AC-47 gun ship, “Spooky” arrived at 8:20 but the enemy had escaped under the cover of darkness.



Burning remains of vehicle after ambush.

This ambush sent shock waves through the truck companies of the 8th Group. For the truck drivers the nature of the war had changed. They had become the primary objective of the enemy offensive. Little did they know that the NVA were also trying to interdict the supply routes for their upcoming offensive. The response by Colonel Joe Bellino, Commander of 8th Group, was immediate. Since the local infantry and tank units would not escort his convoys, he authorized the companies to build gun trucks. Initially, the units fielded Quad .50 gun trucks but they required a crew of six to drive the truck, man and reload the guns. The Quad .50 was four synchronized .50 caliber machineguns mounted on the bed of a 2 ½-ton truck. The crews took their training from the artillery.

The best solution was to put steel plates on the bed and sides of a 5-ton cargo truck and arm the “box” with machineguns. The first gun trucks were painted olive green like the rest of the trucks in the convoys so they blended in. The other trucks were authorized to put armor planking on the sides of their trucks. These gun trucks required a crew of four men.



COL Joe Bellino, 8th Trans Group
<http://www.transchool.lee.army.mil/historian/documents/bellino.pdf>
for COL Bellino's annual report Sep 67 – Sep 68



Initially, Gun Trucks (foreground left) were painted just like other trucks in the convoy so they would blend in.

Wayne C. Chalker wrote the following in the 585th Transportation Company history for July 1967 to January 1968.

“The Road to Pleiku was not one of the best in Vietnam, and this showed on the toll it took with trucks and drivers. We were constantly patching up our tractors just to keep them running. Fuel tanks and right fenders which the air filter sat on, were always coming loose. It was not uncommon to see chains bolted from fuel tank to tractor frame, and from one fender, across the hood to the other side, just to keep things together. It was a rare day when you came back from the run to Pleiku and you didn’t have to change at least one or two flats.

“There was, of course, your occasional sniper to contend with, land mines, and once an ambush by NVA soldiers between An Khe and Pleiku which took out the lead 2 ½-ton trucks of a convoy destroying several and killing a number of drivers. It was at this time that number of drivers began putting ¼-inch steel over each door of the tractor for protection against snipers. This idea was not too popular with most of us because of the additional weight factor and subsequent loss of speed.

“Each company provided its own convoy protection, usually with a machine gun jeep front and rear of the convoy and a 2 ½-ton fitted with armor plating and two personnel

armed with M-60 machine guns. It was also at this time that I asked for and received permission to issue each driver two fragmentation grenades. This was mainly because during one of the ambushes, the NVA soldiers were able to jump upon the running boards of some of the trucks and fire inside the cab. Even though we each had our weapons with us at all times, they proved useless at times like this.

“Road and bridge protection was essential to us for getting through the cargo we carried. Some of this protection, especially between our staging area and An Khe, was provided by members of the Korean Tiger Division that was stationed just over the mountain from our compound in Phu Tai. The Koreans were very friendly toward us and there wasn’t enough they could do to prove their friendship. I remember on one afternoon in the company area we started receiving incoming 155mm rounds that, needless to say, had everyone running for the nearest bunker. It was very quickly determined that our friends over the mountain had miscalculated a slight bit. A couple of fast calls and this was taken care of. The next rain we showed close some of us came, when water poured through a hole in my tent and I picked out a 5” piece of shrapnel.

“Most of us developed a good rapport with the villagers in Phu Tai. So good, to the point we’d sneak out of the compound at night and into the village for a beer or whatever. I know myself and many others left some good friends back in Phu Tai.”

A small ambush took place on 11 November. CPT Phillip T. Hall, Jr, 585th Medium Truck Company, led a convoy of 15 vehicles back to Qui Nhon. Evidently, the enemy preferred to conduct its ambushes closer to the evening so the soldiers could escape under the cover of approaching darkness. As the convoy approached the 1st Cavalry Check Point 89, about 10 to 15 enemy soldiers fired on the last vehicles of the convoy with small arms. The drivers did as they had been instructed and drove through the kill zone to regroup at Check Point 89. Only one truck was damaged, but the armor plating on the driver’s door protected the driver. The enemy had fired on the first vehicles armored with the steel plating. No one was injured. The vehicle made it to the check point under its own power.

It took the enemy time to plan and rehearse large scale ambushes. The NVA launched its next large scale ambush on a 54th Battalion convoy led by 1LT James P. Purvis on 24 November. The convoy consisted of 43 5-ton cargo trucks, 15 2 ½-ton trucks and a maintenance truck under the protection of six gun trucks and three gun jeeps. It was divided into six serials of about ten task vehicles per serial and one gun trucks per serial.

Jerry Christopher rode shotgun in the cab of the lead 2 ½-ton gun truck which traveled at 20 miles per hour down the road. At 10:05, he spotted ten paper bags spaced across the road and recognized them as fertilizer mines. He shouted to his driver, Bob Logston, “We’re in the kill zone! “What?” Logston shouted over the roar of the engine. “We’re in an ambush!” Logston floored the gas pedal and grabbed his rifle. The two machine gunners in the box opened fire with their M-60s. A B-40 rocket then slammed into the front end blowing off the left tire and part of the wheel. The gun truck slid to a halt 25 yards short of the mines. Christopher yelled into the radio, “Contact! Contact! Contact!”

He tumbled out of the vehicle with Logston behind him and started firing his M-79 grenade launcher. Enemy fire ripped through the windshield, the engine block and into the armor plating on the side of the cab.

The Standing Operating Procedures for an ambush was for those vehicles in the kill zone to drive out and not stop. The next 5-ton loaded with small arms ammunition, down shifted, pulled out of line and roared around the damaged gun truck unaware of the daisy chain ahead. The mines blew off the his front end and his truck swerved out of control off to the right side of the road. The third driver also accelerated his rig and ran over the remaining mines losing both front wheels. His truck slid 75 yards down the road and ended up in a ditch across the road with his load of 155mm high explosive projectiles on fire. SP4 Dick Dominquez revved his engine and raced for the gap in the road. Carrying a load of CS gas, he safely squeezed through the gap and headed on to Pleiku. His was the only truck to escape the kill zone. The enemy hit the next truck loaded 155mm projectiles with a B-40 rocket and set it on fire. It slid to a halt 50 yards from Christopher's gun truck. Route 19 was completely blocked by damaged vehicles.

Christopher began firing his grenade launcher at the suspected position of the B-40. The ammunition load began to cook off. Each blast rocked the corpse of the gun truck near it. Christopher crawled to the front of the vehicle looking for his driver. Logston had been hit by machine gun fire below the waist and was a bloody mess. He was trying to crawl out of the firing line. Christopher called out, "Bob! Y'all right, Bob?" Christopher then pulled his driver into the elephant grass. Jerry asked, "What're we gonna do now, Jerry?" He looked up and saw helicopters circling above. "Why don't they do something? Why don't they help us?" Christopher pulled him under the gun truck and bandaged his wounds. "Hang on – we'll make it OK." That was as much his wish as reassurance.

Another rocket hit the tail gate above Christopher sending a shower of fragments all over SP4 Czerwinsky, a machine gunner. The other machine gunner, Jim Boyd, was hit in the arm. Both M-60 machine guns were smashed. While Christopher tried to save Czerwinsky's life, Boyd searched for a rifle and started firing away with his good arm. Christopher then saw an NVA sapper in the grass across the road. He fired with his M-79 not sure if there was enough distance for the round to arm. The round exploded on target.

When the ambush began, a B-40 rocket passed just inches behind the next gun truck, seventeenth vehicle in the serial. Machine gunners, Roy Handers and Bob Sas, opened fire. The next rocket hit the cab, wounding the driver and throwing him to the floor boards. The truck lumbered out of control off the side of the road. When the truck hit the ditch it flipped over throwing the crew around inside the box. The truck stopped upside down in the grass. The overturned truck pinned Handers' leg. Sas was crushed to death under the cab. Handers could hear the driver trapped in the cab crying for help. Handers dug himself free with his hands only to find that his leg was broken. An NVA machine gunner on the other side of the vehicle kept him from helping to the driver. He crawled around looking for a weapon when he heard a "plop" beside him. The grenade went off and blew him ten feet away. With fragments in his legs, he staggered to his feet and tried to get back to the truck when he blacked out.

5,000 gallon fuel tankers in the first serial had burst into flames spilling their flaming contents down the road for 700 yards. Pallets of ammunition on the backs of the other trucks began to cook off. NVA sappers ran up to the vehicles, climbed atop and placed demolition charges on the cargo then fired down on the drivers hiding in the grass along the side of the road. Drivers returned fire knocking the enemy off their trucks into the wreckage littering the road.

Enemy fire also hit the gun truck in the third serial and damaged it. A grenade damaged the gun truck in the fourth serial. Only the last two gun trucks remained undamaged. The drivers and the gun trucks fought back fixing the enemy in place while tanks and APCs of the 4th Infantry Division at Check Point 91W flanked the enemy. The enemy damaged 14 trucks to include four gun trucks, killed two drivers and wounded 17 at a loss of 41 of their own killed and four captured wounded. The price of ambushing convoys had gone up.

Lieutenant General Rosson, Commander of I Field Force Vietnam, said in review of the ambushes of 24 November and 16 December, “these 8th Group truckers are the unsung heroes of this war.” General Creighton Abrams, then Deputy MACV Commander, had flown over the ambush and watched the gun trucks in action. He later commented to Westmoreland, “Those guys look just like a bunch of frustrated tankers.” Abrams as a battalion commander during World War II had spearheaded the 4th Armored Division tanks into Bastogne. COL Bellino’s response to this comment was, “I think it’s safe to say they are working off these frustrations.”

In 17 November, the 173rd fought the Battle of Dak To north of Pleiku. The 173rd and the 1st Brigade, 4th Infantry Division relocated there extending the supply runs. Cargo trucks with loads destined for Dak To drove straight through and usually rested over night (RON) there with the infantry. Westmoreland also had Ben Het constructed for 175mm guns for the possibility of firing across the border into Cambodia, if he received permission.

Another eastbound convoy under the control of the 54th Battalion was ambushed by a company of Viet Cong guerrillas at 8:15 on the morning of 4 December. This convoy of 58 5-ton trucks, 11 2 ½-ton trucks was escorted by six gun trucks and four gun jeeps. The lead gun truck from the 669th Transportation Company stopped west of An Khe when the crew noticed a board with three mines pulled across the road in front of it. The gun truck then received small arms and recoilless rocket fire killing the driver, Specialist Four Harold Cummings, and wounding the crew in the back, SGT Dennis Belcastro, Frank Giroux and Joe Foster. The lead jeep with 1LT Todd, behind the gun truck, was also stopped by small arms fire. Both vehicles immediately returned fire. Five minutes after the ambush started the enemy made a strike at the center of the convoy. Four cargo trucks received flat tires but the drivers returned fire breaking off the assault. Three minutes later the enemy made another assault, which was beaten back. The remaining five gun trucks raced into the 3,000 meter long kill zone to render assistance. One was disabled by a rocket, which wounded the three gunners. The helicopter gun ships arrived

at 8:27, 12 minutes after the call, “ambush, ambush, ambush” went out and the reaction force arrived at 8:30. By that time the gun trucks had broken up the enemy ambush, killing 13 enemy and capturing one wounded at a loss of only one killed and six wounded. The loss of vehicles was one gun truck destroyed with one jeep and four trucks slightly damaged.

The last ambush of 1967 occurred between An Khe and Mang Giang Passes on 15 December.

Westmoreland sent the 1st Cavalry Division north into I CTZ in January 1968. The 3rd Brigade 101st Airborne Division replaced the 173rd Airborne Brigade until in early 1968 only the 4th Infantry Division and 7th Squadron, 17th Air Cavalry remained at Camp Holloway. The 4th Infantry Division would then expand out to Kontum and Pei Mrong with the 2nd Brigade, 1st Infantry Division at Lei do Lim and Suoi Doi.

To support the Army units moving north, 1st Log sent truck companies north. 2nd Platoon, Headquarters and Maintenance of the 585th Transportation Company were alerted to move to Da Nang on 6 January 1968. On 14 January 1968, half of the company loaded on LST 551. The company was attached to the 39th Transportation Battalion in I Corps Tactical Zone.

It became clear from enemy prisoners that the enemy wanted to completely destroy a convoy as the Viet Minh had French Mobile Group 100. 8th Group would write a whole new chapter in Transportation Corps history with the hardened convoy. The Americans were determined to keep the supply line open.

It became evident that the enemy liked to take out the lead vehicles with mines and small arms fire. 8th Group sent the order down that the gun trucks should not lead the convoys but vary their position throughout the convoy on a daily basis so the enemy would not be able to anticipate where the gun truck was. Quad .50 gun trucks required too many crew members and could not depress their guns to shoot down hill or fire through the cab of the truck. They were gradually discontinued in use as more box style or APC gun trucks were built. In time the gun trucks received pedestal mounted machineguns and were painted black with distinctive names painted on the sides. Each company built two gun trucks.

At approximately 6:15 on the morning of 21 January 1968, a convoy under the control of the 54th Battalion consisting of four gun trucks, four gun jeeps and 60 task vehicles departed Qui Nhon for Pleiku. The convoy was halted at check point 96 east for 30 minutes while the road was cleared. At 10:00, approximately 500 yards east of Check Point 102, below Mang Giang Pass, the lead element of the convoy came upon a 5-ton tractor which was attempting to hook up to a 5,000-gallon fuel trailer. Because this operation blocked the flow of traffic, the convoy commander moved to the front and directed the clearance of the road. He then instructed his convoy to continue. At this time, the enemy opened fire with automatic and small arms on the south side of the road. Convoy security personnel immediately returned fire. The convoy continued to drive

through the kill zone. Within five to ten minutes, APCs from the road security element at Check Point 102 arrived and engaged the enemy. Tanks from Check Point 98 arrived within ten minutes. Rear elements of the convoy approaching the area received approximately 40 to 50 rounds of automatic fire. Both APCs and tanks at the site of the incident fired in the direction of the hostile fire.

At 6:00 in the morning of 25 January, another 54th Battalion convoy consisting of 95 task vehicles for Pleiku and 23 for An Khe, departed the unit marshalling area located at Cha Rang Valley on Route 19. The 95 vehicles bound for Pleiku consisted of 65 5-ton cargo trucks, 19 2 ½-ton trucks, five armored 2 ½-ton trucks, four radio jeeps and two 5-ton maintenance trucks. At approximately 10:15, the convoy received automatic and small arms fire from both sides of the road. The gun trucks and convoy personnel returned fire and within ten minutes elements of 2nd Squadron, 1st Cavalry arrived on the site with APCs and tanks. After all firing stopped. The convoy proceeded west for approximately 500 yards when the NVA again fired on the second and third vehicles in the convoy from both sides of the road. The enemy fire consisted of rockets, heavy machine guns, grenades and small arms. A machine gun position was later discovered approximately 25 yards on the right side of the road. The reaction force immediately arrived on the scene from the previous ambush site. The ground distance covered by the kill zone was approximately 1,000 meters. Approximately 60 convoy personnel were involved in the ambush, plus the reaction force. Three armed helicopters arrived at approximately 10:45 and two medevacs arrived ten minutes after the request. Two officers, members of the engineer team, were wounded, one fatally, while clearing explosive ordnance from the site. The number of enemy involved was unknown. Two drivers were killed and one wounded. One 2 ½-ton gun truck and one 2 ½-ton cargo truck were damaged with minor damage to the cargo. One civilian tractor from Pacific Architects and Engineers (PAE) was destroyed.

On 30 January, a convoy under the control of the 54th Battalion departed for Pleiku at approximately 6:00 that morning. The convoy consisted of 80 task vehicles, seven gun trucks, eight gun jeeps and three Quad .50s. Upon arrival in An Khe, the convoy was joined by three APCs and one tank from the security force of the 173rd Airborne Brigade. The additional security element was dispersed toward the front of the convoy. Since the convoy was about to pass out of the area of operation of the 173rd, the additional security element pulled out of the convoy and stopped at CP 102. Approximately one mile west of CP 102, the convoy came under enemy fire initially by mortars and followed by small arms and automatic fire from a platoon size enemy. The convoy personnel immediately returned fire. In addition, the 173rd security element advanced from CP 102 and an element for the 4th Infantry Division security element moved west to engage the enemy. F111As, F104s and helicopter gun ships made air strikes. Two US personnel were slightly injured, one 5-ton tractor and reefer were damaged. No enemy dead or wounded were found.

On 31 January, a eastbound convoy from An Khe under the control of the 124th Battalion was ambushed at 3:20 in the afternoon at the base of Mang Giang Pass. It was not too far from the site of the ambush the day before. This stretch of road where the French Mobile

Group 100 was destroyed and the site of recent ambushes became known as “Ambush Alley.” That night, began the festivities of the Lunar New Year celebration, Tet. The North Vietnamese Army and Viet Cong had agreed to a cease fire during the celebration. This was done to get the Americans and Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) to drop their guard. On the night of 31 January 1968, VC and NVA units attacked major cities and targets throughout the country. This began the Tet Offensive. North Vietnamese General Vo Nguyen Giap believed that his army would win and made an all out effort. The next ambush along Route 19 occurred there on 6 February.

On 7 February, a convoy under the control of the 54th Battalion departed for Pleiku at approximately 6:30. The convoy consisted of 67 task vehicles, one maintenance truck, six gun trucks and four gun jeeps. At approximately 10:10, after passing Check Point 92 West, the convoy came under fire from small arms and automatic fire of an estimated 50 to 60 NVA from the tree line south of the road. They fired two rockets were fired at the convoy from a mound halfway between the road and the tree line. Convoy security personnel immediately opened fire killing two NVA at the rocket position. The enemy force began to move forward from the tree line but were driven back by the fire power of the convoy personnel. Gun trucks, which cleared the 200 meters long kill zone, returned to fire upon the enemy positions. Within 15 minutes, six to eight APCs and two to three tanks arrived at the scene and began to engage the enemy. Four US personnel were slightly wounded. Six dead and one enemy wounded were discovered. A 5-ton cargo hauling Class V (ammunition) was hit by a rocket and destroyed. A gas tank of another 5-ton cargo was damaged. Also several other vehicles, including two gun trucks, received flat tires from enemy fire. The gun ships arrived within 15 to 20 minutes of request.

On 13 February, an eastbound convoy from An Khe under the control of the 124th Battalion was ambushed at around 3:00 in the afternoon at the base of Mang Giang Pass.

On 21 February, a convoy under the control of the 27th Battalion departed at approximately 7:15 for Pleiku. The convoy consisted of 54 task vehicles, four gun trucks, four gun jeeps and a Quad .50. At approximately 9:50 the convoy came under fire from automatic and small arms fire and B40 rockets between CP 89 and CP 96. The convoy personnel returned fire in the direction of an estimated 10 to 12 NVA south of the highway. The Quad .50 gun truck moved into the kill zone, which was estimated at approximately 300 meters, and was credited with one NVA killed. APCs from the 173rd Airborne Brigade arrived in approximately five to ten minutes and engaged the enemy force. Artillery was also called in by the tactical force. Three vehicles including a task vehicle and the Quad .50 were damaged and three personnel were wounded. One killed and one wounded enemy were recovered along with the discovery of numerous foxholes.

On 4 March, a convoy under the control of the 54th Battalion departed for Pleiku at approximately 6:00. The convoy consisted of 104 task vehicles, 8 gun trucks and 4 gun jeeps. At approximately 9:00 the convoy was held up at CP 89 by the tactical security force due to enemy activity in Mang Giang Pass. The convoy was allowed to proceed at approximately 11:30 with the escort of one tank and two APCs from the 173rd Airborne

Brigade. At approximately 11:45, the convoy came under fire from mortars and heavy small arms and automatic fire. Convoy security immediately opened fire in the direction of the enemy which was well entrenched in the tree line on the north side of the road. The convoy also received sporadic fire from the south side of the road. The enemy force was estimated at about 50 personnel. Two Quad .50s from the 4th Battalion, 60th Artillery were traveling with the convoy, and one from the 27th Transportation Battalion convoy followed behind the 54th convoy fired upon the enemy positions throughout the kill zone, estimated to be between 500 and 1,000 meters long. A reaction force of one tank, four APCs and four gun ships arrived within five minutes. There were eight convoy personnel wounded, two from the artillery unit. One wounded died on 6 March, from wounds received in the battle. Five of the vehicles and two trailers were damaged. The convoy remained in place on the highway until 2:30, at which time they turned around under the escort of MPs and returned to An Khe.

On 8 March, another 54th Battalion convoy had departed for Pleiku at approximately 6:00. The convoy consisted of 79 task vehicles, four gun jeeps and five gun trucks. At approximately 8:30 the third gun truck of the first serial was hit with a claymore mine damaging the front tires. The explosion was followed by heavy small arms and automatic fire from both sides of the road. Three Quad .50s from the 4th Battalion, 60th Artillery travelling with the convoy joined by a company of the 173rd Airborne Brigade, which was in the area, encasing the enemy. The company commander of the 173rd was killed in the engagement. The enemy force attempted to repel the flanking action of the tactical security force but was driven back after 15 minutes of heavy contact. One gun truck and one task vehicle were damaged. Two US personnel were wounded and one killed. One of the wounded was a driver and the other two were in the 173rd. The convoy was allowed to proceed after a twenty minute delay. At approximately 9:15, two kilometers west of CP102, a task vehicle in the first serial hit a mine then small arms fire hit the cab of the disabled vehicle wounding the driver. B40 rockets then ignited the JP4 that the truck hauled. Small arms and automatic fire and rocket fire opened up on the convoy. The convoy security element fired in the direction of the enemy positions as the convoy maneuvered around the burning vehicle. Tactical security forces from the 173rd and the 4th ID arrived within five minutes and engaged the enemy. The enemy force of undetermined size established a kill zone of approximately 300-500 meters. Only one soldier was wounded with one truck damaged and another destroyed. No enemy dead or wounded were recovered.

On 15 March, a convoy was ambushed at the base of Mang Giang Pass.

On 23 March, a night shuttle convoy from the port of Qui Nhon was proceeding west on Highway 1 toward loading sites in Cha Rang Valley. At approximately 12:15, the convoy consisting of five task vehicles, one gun truck and one gun jeep, approached the bridge guarded by the Koreans. The convoy commander, 1LT Paul J. Stegmayer, of 2nd Medium Truck, observed a pipe line fire in the vicinity of Tuy Phovc. After reporting the same, 1LT Stegmayer proceeded with his column. As the convoy reached the site of the fire, an explosion occurred on the north side of the road near 1LT Stegmayer's jeep, followed by heavy small arms and automatic weapons fire. Although both 1LT

Stegmayer and his driver received wounds from flying glass and shrapnel, they were able to cross over the bridge at the site of the pipe line fire. Due to the intense enemy fire, only the jeep and one task vehicle were able to clear the kill zone. Despite great personal danger, 1LT Stegmayer, braving a withering hail of bullets, crossed back over to bridge on foot to take control of the drivers and insure that they could clear the scene. Moving from vehicle to vehicle, Stegmayer assured himself that all drivers were out of their vehicles and had taken up positions to engage the enemy. He crossed back to his jeep to radio reports to Battalion and adjust illuminating artillery rounds. With arrival of a reaction force of three gun trucks, one gun jeep and a Quad .50, 1LT Stegmayer again crossed over the bridge to direct flanking fire into the suspected enemy positions. The enemy force estimated at 15 broke contact and fled the area. All six vehicles in the convoy received small arms and automatic weapons fire. Four personnel were wounded. Intelligence reports indicated that the enemy's mission was to destroy the dual bridges (railroad and highway) at the site of the pipe line fire thus cutting a vital link on the only main highway between Qui Nhon and major tactical forces to the north and west. With the arrival of the shuttle convoy, the enemy, for reasons unknown, fired on the column. It has been recommended that the enemy may have mistaken the convoy as a reaction force investigating the pipe line fire. The action by 1LT Stegmayer and his men contributed to the failure of the enemy to accomplish their mission of interdiction of lines of communication to the north and west.

The Tet Offensive of 1968 had turned into a severe military defeat for the enemy. US ground forces had all but wiped out the Viet Cong and the NVA had taken such a beating that they withdrew to their sanctuaries to rebuild. The gun trucks had also made the enemy pay a high price for ambushing convoys. Ambushes tapered off after March. In April or May, the 444th Light Truck Company turned in its 2 ½-ton trucks for tractors and trailers to convert to a medium truck company. By then, LTC John H. Burke commanded the battalion.

At 10:00 on 12 May, two 8th Group convoys were involved in convoy ambushes on Highway 1. A southbound convoy consisting of 14 task vehicles plus security, under the supervision of the 27th Battalion, received enemy fire 200 meters south of Bridge 329. A north bound convoy consisting of 31 task vehicles plus security, under the supervision of the 54th Battalion, was approaching the same location when an enemy force, estimated at a reinforced squad, opened fire with automatic weapons and M-79 fire. The primary force was in a tree-line 150 to 200 meters from the west side of the road. The kill zone was estimated to be about 200 meters long. In this action, the 240th Quartermaster Battalion sustained one wounded POL driver. Several vehicles were damaged by enemy fire. Both convoys increased speed and moved through the kill zone. A 54th Battalion driver was killed and his 2 ½-ton cargo truck ran off of the road onto a small bank. A gun jeep and two gun trucks rendered immediate assistance while directing the convoy through the kill zone. The casualties were evacuated and the convoy continued north without further incident. The 27th Battalion convoy cleared the kill zone with only minor damage to vehicles and continued south. As the convoy reached the vicinity of Bridge 376, at approximately 10:10, enemy fire was again encountered, this time from the east side of the road, from a distance of 200 meters. An estimated platoon size enemy force

fired M-79 rounds and automatic weapons. Upon receiving enemy fire, the lead gun truck pulled over and engaged the enemy while allowing the convoy to pass through the kill zone. One driver was wounded. Four 27th Battalion vehicles were lightly damaged as a result of both encounters.

The NVA launched the third offensive that Fall but it did not last long. The offensive included a series of convoys ambushes around the country.

At approximately 12:15, 14 August, a convoy under the control of 54th Battalion departed Qui Nhon on Route 19 for a line haul trip to Pleiku. The convoy consisted of 68 task vehicles, 7 gun trucks, five gun jeeps armed with M-60 machine guns, and one Quad .50 gun truck. At 3:45, as the first serial of the convoy proceeded west past an area approximately two miles west of Bridge 34, an enemy force dressed in ARVN Marine uniforms attacked the convoy with small arms and B-40 rocket fire. The enemy force was estimated at between a platoon and a company. Four gun trucks, one Quad .50 gun truck and one gun jeep immediately returned fire within the estimated 3000 yard kill zone. A reaction force of six APCs and three helicopter gun ships arrived within five minutes after contact. All task vehicles made it out of the kill zone. However, five of those vehicles suffered damage; and one of the five was heavily damaged. The convoy had four men wounded and one soldier from the 1/69th Armored Battalion was killed. The convoy commander reported 12 enemy troops hit by return fire. After the security forces swept the area of contact, they discovered four enemy dead. The five wounded US soldiers medevaced to the 71st Medical Evacuation Hospital. Of these, two were treated and released.

On 23, 31 August and 10 September 1968, convoys under the control of the 124th Battalion were ambushed at the base of Mang Giang Pass.

After September, 1968, the frequency of large scale ambushes had declined to almost nothing. 1969 would become a fairly quiet year for convoy operations. The gun trucks had gained a reputation.

Over time the gun trucks evolved. The crews began to add heavier armament replacing the 7.62mm M-60 machine guns with .50 caliber machine guns or even multi-barreled 7.62mm mini-guns. They also began to paint their vehicles in intimidating black with red, orange, yellow or white trim and paint brightly colored names on them. The following companies built these gun trucks:

2nd Transportation Company built Madam Pele and later inherited the Maverick.

58th Transportation Company built the APC gun truck, Big Kahuna.

444th Transportation Company built four 2 ½-ton gun trucks prior to the Tet Offensive and picked up two Quad .50 gun trucks, Nancy and Bounty Hunter. At first the 2 ½-ton gun truck had no names but later one was named Snoopy, then Little Respect.

597th Transportation Company built the Oklahoma, one of the first gun trucks in early 1968 and later The Boss and the APC gun trucks, King Cobra and Sir Charles. By 1970, it had two more gun trucks: Poison Ivy and Blood Sweat and Tires.



'Big Kahuna' and crew





Two views of GT Nancy – M35A2 Truck Cargo, mounted with quad .50 machine gun. Consists of 4 x .50 cal guns capable of firing individually, in pairs, or all four at one time. The vehicle commander operates an M60 machine gun and is equipped with an M79 grenade launcher.

Selection for crew members was either made by the NCOIC or collectively by the crew. They picked only the best drivers. Each man had his responsibilities on the truck and its care and preparation. The NCOIC did not expect to have to tell anyone to do their job. The drivers could not use drugs or abuse alcohol. Consequently, the gun truck crews felt elite. They formed close bonds with their fellow crew members.

On an average each truck company had at least two gun trucks. During IG inspections the companies had to lock up the extra weapons in a CONEX and hide the gun trucks although every general officer in country knew they were there and wanted to see them when they visited. Gun trucks were still unauthorized as part of the property book.

In late November and early December 1968, the company played an important role in resupply of Dak To receiving praise from BG George McBride, commander of 1st Logistics Command.

By 2 November 1968, the 58th Light Truck Company was brought down to zero balance in personnel and equipment. It was officially inactivated on 4 March 1969.

By the early 1969, the 27th Battalion provided command and control of the following:

2nd Transportation Company (Medium Truck)

88th Transportation Company (Medium Truck)
28th Transportation Platoon
TTPO
444th Transportation Company (Light Truck)
597th Transportation Company (Medium Truck)
505th Trailer Transfer Detachment

On 3 January 1969, LT Frank, 88th Transportation Company, 27th Transportation Battalion led a convoy west from Qui Nhon to An Khe in the afternoon. The convoy consisted of nine 5-ton tractors and trailers one low boy, a 5-ton bobtail tractor and seven Han Jin (Korean) cargo trucks fell in the end of the convoy. The escort consisted of two gun trucks and the convoy commander's gun jeep in the rear. The convoy was ambushed at 1725 hours approximately one kilometer west of Bridge 19. The enemy had laid an L-shaped ambush with approximately eight on one side and three on the other firing rockets and automatic weapons. The kill zone stretched approximately 500 meters long. The American drivers drove out of the kill zone with only five 5-ton tractors and one gun truck damaged by fire. On the other hand, the enemy hit three Han Jin trucks killing one driver and seriously wounding the other two. Frank's gun jeep drove up to render aid to the Han Jin trucks and was hit by a B-40 rocket fired from an RPG, killing the driver and wounding LT Frank and his machine gunner. A gun truck move into the kill zone and laid down suppressive fire. Three of the gunners were slightly wounded and an APC from Bridge 19 came up and fired at the enemy position on the south side of the road. A gun truck and Quad .50 from the lead half of the convoy that cleared the kill zone also drove back and suppressed the automatic weapons and rockets on the south side of the road. MPs sent a gun jeep and a V-100 armored car into the kill zone. The gun truck with the three wounded gunners then turned their fire against the small arms fire on the north side of the road. Within 20 minutes, gun ships arrived. Artillery was also called in on the enemy positions. The dust-off arrived and evacuated the most seriously wounded. In total, one US driver was killed and five wounded, one Han Jin driver was killed and two wounded.



The V100 was a mobile/amphibious armored car used for recon, convoy escort, and as a personnel carrier. It was good against small arms fire, grenades and anti-personnel mines (but not much else). Angled surfaces deflected rounds and shrapnel. It had a high ground clearance and run-flat tires.

1LT Bushong, 444th Transportation Company, led a convoy of four 5-ton cargo trucks, 29 fuel tankers, six reefers, three bobtail tractors and seven Han Jin reefers west to Pleiku. The escort consisted of one quad-fifty gun truck, four gun trucks, four gun jeeps, one wrecker, and two maintenance trucks. It was ambushed by an estimated NVA platoon from both sides of the road with mortars, rockets, automatic weapons and small arms midway between Bridge 17 and 18 at 1305 hours. They caught three tankers, a gun jeep and the quad-fifty in the 400 meters long kill zone. The gun jeep and quad-fifty immediately laid down suppressive fire on the enemy positions while the tankers cleared the kill zone. Within 15 minutes, two more gun trucks from the 88th Transportation Company arrived and proceeded to the flanks of the kill zone to lay down additional suppressive fire. Artillery was called in on the enemy and Cobra gun ships arrived and the enemy broke contact after 25 minutes of fighting. Only two Americans were wounded with the quad-fifty, gun jeep, two of the tractors and tankers damaged. Two enemy were killed and two were wounded.



The Bell Cobra is a 2 bladed (whop whop whop whop) single engine attack helicopter. Provided fire support for ground forces, escort duty, and other roles. They were used in Desert Shield/Storm and last used in Bosnia, 1995. They were replaced with AH64 Apaches.

John Dodd was a career soldier and had begun his second tour in Vietnam in December 1968 where he was assigned to the 359th POL Truck Company. The 359th had just transferred from Phu Tai to Pleiku in November 1968 and was attached to the 27th Battalion. It had been attached to the 240th Quartermaster POL Battalion. Once the battalion had connected the pipeline all the way to Pleiku, this discontinued the need for POL trucks to drive Route 19. However, constant pilferage and interdiction by the enemy forced the Quartermaster battalion to shut down the pipeline. From then on POL trucks had to drive the most deadly road in Vietnam. The only load more dangerous than ammunition was hauling 5,000 gallons of jet fuel.

When Dodd arrived, the 359th had only constructed two gun trucks, *Brutus* and *Misfits*, and a gun jeep. SGT Prescott helped build and became the first NCOIC of the *Brutus*, a 5-ton gun truck with two .50s and one 7.62mm mini-gun in an armored gun box. Dodd became the NCOIC of the *Misfits*, a 2 1/2-ton gun truck with an M60 and .50 caliber machinegun in a gun box. His crew consisted of a driver by the name of Hodges and gunner, Bill Ward. Peter Hish and Alan Wernstrum substituted on the gun truck when any of the crew did not go out.

Escorting fuel convoys with each tractor hauling 5,000 gallons of high explosive jet fuel was probably the most dangerous mission for gun trucks. The enemy preferred to hit fuel tankers because the resulting fire usually blocked the road and trapped the other trucks.

On 9 June, the *Brutus* and *Misfits* escorted a convoy of 30 fuel tankers out of the Ponderosa to Pleiku. *Misfits* drove in the middle of the convoy while *Brutus* brought up the rear. The *Brutus* was a 5-ton gun truck with two forward left and right M2 .50s and a rear mini-gun. This six-barrel Gatling gun fired 7.62mm rounds at awesome speed, but was prone to misfiring. The mini-gun's rate of fire inspired fear in the enemy. *Misfits* was a standard 5-ton gun truck with two forward .50s and a dual .50s mounted on a single pedestal in the rear. The convoy had no air support that day. Once they reached An Khe, they would pick up the rest of the tankers from the 359th and the convoy commander, Staff Sergeant Hutcherson.



Cleaning the box on the Brutus

Just after the convoy had passed the Korean compound at the base of the An Khe Pass, it started received small arms fire. Dodd heard several rounds hit the *Misfits*' armor plating. At the same time he heard over his radio Specialist 4 Prescott, on *Brutus*, screaming, "Contact, Contact, Contact!" Dodd saw enemy movement about a hundred yards in the field and returned fire. The gun truck cleared the kill zone and continued up An Khe Pass. Dodd radioed back to Prescott and asked how he was doing. He answered that the *Brutus* was still involved in fighting and the mini-gun was working. This was unusual as mini-guns were not designed for the road and the bumpy ride tended to knock out the timing mechanism. Prescott had to spend a lot of time working on that mini-gun. When the

Misfits reached the top of the Pass, Dodd radioed back to Prescott again to see how the *Brutus* was holding out. Prescott answered that he had seen about 30 to 40 enemy and fired the mini-gun on them.

As the road leveled out, the *Misfits* picked up speed again. It received small arms fire but Dodd did not see anything to shoot at. The excitement passed as they left the danger behind them and the crew of the *Misfits* returned to their normal "chit chat." They talked mostly about drinking a cold beer when they stopped at An Khe. Dodd joked with the others while he kicked the .50 caliber brass around with his feet. The *Misfits* had just crossed a bridge about three miles from An Khe. Dodd called in the check point. In a few minutes they would be safe inside the compound.

A few seconds later he heard an explosion behind him. He looked back to see the security force on the bridge was under fire. Dodd recognized the sound of AK47s. This time, Dodd was screaming into the radio, "Contact, Contact, Contact!" He saw VC running around in the field to his left and opened fire with the .50 caliber. Hish and Ward worked as a team firing the M-60 while Wernstrum fired his M-16. Suddenly, someone on the radio asked for their location and size of the enemy force. This struck Dodd odd since he had just called in his location a few seconds before. Right after that a RPG slammed into the front portion of the gun box. The blast from the explosion knocked Dodd's feet out from under him but he did not let go of the machinegun. Wernstrum was bringing up another box of ammunition from the floor for the .50 caliber. Dodd had Hodges pull the gun truck and stop so they could provide fire support until the rest of the tankers past.

The voice on the radio let them know that air support was on the way. Dodd was thinking short bursts with the .50 but his fingers called for long bursts. A second RPG impacted about three feet from the rear of the box. Dodd felt blood hit his eyes. He looked down and saw that he had been hit in the leg, chest and face but with the adrenaline pumping, he felt no pain. As he looked around, he saw that the blast had blown Hish and Wernstrum out of the box. Ward was on the floor clutching his stomach. Dodd realized in a flash that his whole crew was wounded. He then called on the radio that he had two men wounded and needed a medevac.

Hodges climbed up and looked in the gun box. He pointed to some water buffalo where he saw enemy movement. Dodd told him to get back in the cab of the truck and get ready to move out. Dodd picked up another box of ammunition and loaded it. Hish and Wernstrum were still conscious and crawled into the ditch on the side of the road. Pete Hish stood up to climb up on the tail gait when a third RPG hit the rear of the gun box knocking him back to the ground. Dodd saw VC running across the road and fired on the M-60 tank and M-113 APC coming up from the check point. Their fire kept the enemy from overrunning the *Misfits*. The VC shot Hish twice. Dodd realized that he and Ward were wounded too badly to climb out and rescue the other crew members. Ward needed immediate medical attention. Dodd hit the top of the canvas with his hand and Hodges drove off. Hish then saw the truck pull away and thought, "Oh hell, what am I gonna do now?" He crawled back into the ditch. In half a minute the *Misfits* had cleared the kill zone. Dodd hoped the medevac would arrive soon. By then Ward was sitting on an

ammunition can holding his wound. He had a one inch hole in his stomach. Dodd grabbed a large bandage and told Bill to hold it over the wound.

Dodd then radioed back to Prescott to look for his two missing crew members. Prescott answered that the *Brutus* had tangled with some NVA after crossing the top of the An Khe Pass. He had already run out of mini-gun ammunition but managed to fight off an enemy rush on his gun truck.

As the truck disappeared, Hish looked up and saw the welcome sight of a medevac helicopter. As the helicopter prepared to land, the pilot and crew saw the enemy dragging wounded off into the jungle.

The *Misfits* pulled into An Khe where the trucks had assembled. Hodges stopped the gun truck but Dodd told him to drive straight to the field hospital. As the gun truck drove thirty miles per hour through the gate of Camp Radcliffe, the MPs saw that they were in trouble. Two MPs jumped in a jeep and led them to the hospital. Dodd was looking after Ward when he saw that Hodges had the front bumper trailing just about two inches behind the lead jeep. The MP looked back at Dodd and the NCOIC motioned for the MPs to speed up or get run over.

Once at the hospital, the medics helped the two wounded soldiers from the gun truck and put them onto tables in the receiving area. The medics rushed Bill Ward straight to the Xray. The medics cut Dodd's clothes off and the doctor began pulling pieces of metal out of his legs. He informed Dodd that the blood on his face came from the missing tip of his nose. Dodd's real concern was further down his anatomy. He kept trying to lift himself up to see what the doctor was doing to his legs. The nurse kept pushing him back down. Because Dodd persisted in trying to rise up, she took her hands from his chest then grabbed his "family jewels" and told him not to worry, everything was okay. Dodd laid back and relaxed.

While the doctors worked on Dodd, the medics brought in a wounded VC and put him on the table next to him. In a loud voice, Dodd told asked them to move that SOB away a few more feet from Dodd. Another nurse came in and told Dodd that his two missing crew members had been brought in. Pete Hish had fragmentary wounds and was shot twice. Alan Wernstrum also suffered from fragmentary wounds and lost part of his hand. The four wounded crew members had a short reunion in the medical ward. Because of the seriousness of the other three's wounds, they were medevaced to Japan that evening. Since the hospital at An Khe had become crowded, Dodd was flown to Pleiku. From there, he hitchhiked rides to his company area. He did light work supervising the local help around the company for about 30 days until his wounds healed then he rode on South Vietnamese convoys calling in check points until he left Vietnam in October 1969.

On 13 June 1969, a mortar round landed in back of a cargo truck killing the driver and setting the pipeline on fire, which closed Highway 19 down for three days at Ambush Alley. From 8 June to 24 July 1969, the fuel pipeline was shut down from Qui Nhon to

An Khe due to pilferage and the 359th POL Company, 124th Battalion sent a platoon of 20 tanker systems from Pleiku to An Khe to fill the gap.

The enemy continued to interdict the pipeline between An Khe and Pleiku and became non-operational from early November 1969 to 7 December 1970. This increased the number of missions the POL fleet between An Khe and Pleiku. On 21 November, the platoon of 17 tanker systems was attached to the 88th Medium Truck Company at An Khe. On 8 January 1970, the pipeline was shut down permanently and Pleiku had to rely entirely on the 359th Transportation Company for its fuel delivery. Consequently, the tanker fleet was increased to 93 task tankers. On the average, between 53 and 58 tankers were operational every day.

Right after their move to Cha Rang Valley, the 545th Light Truck was moving a company of engineers southbound on Highway 1 to Tuy Hoa. The engineers and their equipment were loaded on 5-ton cargo trucks. The engineers had their own Quad .50 gun truck for protection. The NVA initiated the ambush by taking out the Quad .50 with a command detonated mine under the culvert. The enemy opened up with small arms and automatic fire and damaged another truck. The engineers jumped out of their vehicles and took cover in the ditches. The Paladin raced up to the kill zone.

The Paladin ran into another ambush in the Mang Giang Pass. The enemy destroyed a truck with a command detonated mine. The convoy commander rode in the Paladin and had the gun truck drive right up to the burning vehicle. That was the only time that the Paladin was hit by enemy fire. They usually preferred to sit off at the edge of the kill zone and place suppressive fire on the enemy.

On 17 March 1970, the 8th Group picked up the mission to run missions north to Da Nang in support of the Americal Division.

COL Alex T. Langston, Commander of 8th Group, and COL William J. Whelan, US Army Depot Commander, believed that they could haul high priority cargo faster than the helicopters could fly it to Pleiku. To move it by helicopter, the trucks had to load it up at Qui Nhon, move it to the helicopters, transfer the cargo to the helicopters, fly it to Pleiku, again transfer the cargo to the trucks then to the user. This process took as long as five to six days. The two officers came up with an idea similar to the Pony Express. The depot could load the cargo onto priority vans that would deliver the cargo with regular daily convoys direct to the base of the customer where it would be delivered either to the unit or post office. This system eliminated the time consumed by middle men. They gave the 597th enclosed vans that had been damaged. One had a rocket hole. His company was also given 3 or 4 trailers that had no wheels. The company maintenance facility at TTP had to put landing legs on them. The 597th started out with one van and ended up with six or seven. The company could spot the van at depot at night, line it up for convoy and

have it at Pleiku by noon. This reduced the deliver time by 36 hours. On 19 March 1970, they initiated "The 8th Group Express."¹

The enemy ambushed two convoys at An Khe Pass on 10 January and 6 May 1970.

On 25 April 1970, guerrillas ambushed a night convoy from Qui Nhon and killed PFC Mason Ragland and PFC John Mattox.

At 8:45 on the morning of 10 June 1970, a refrigeration van of a westbound convoy up approaching the Hairpin just below the An Khe Pass. The vehicle was traveling about three to five miles per hour when an enemy soldier stood up on a slight rise to the south side of the road and opened fire with his AK47 at approximately 25 meters. He seriously damaged the engine of the tractor and shot out several tires. The driver continued to drive for about 100 meters when another enemy soldier fired a B40 rocket into the rear of his van. The convoy came under enemy fire from both sides of the road. He continued driving and managed to clear his vehicle out of the kill zone. Meanwhile, the enemy opened fire with small arms and automatic weapons from base of the Hairpin curve to approximately 400 meters east of it and disabled a 40-foot Low Boy, of the 444th Medium Truck Company, that was following directly behind the reefer van. PFC Billy Wehunt, of the 444th Medium Truck Company, drove his 5-ton tractor into the kill zone in an attempt to clear the area of US personnel. As he approached the Low Boy, the enemy fired into his cab killing him and the tractor drove off the side of the road. The convoy commander was with the lead element in the convoy at the base of the Hairpin Curve. Upon hearing the initial firing, he organized those vehicles not in the 200 meter kill zone and lead them to the top of the Pass. At the same time, a 444th gun truck drove into the kill zone to recover PFC Wehunt from his vehicle, but came under intense small arms fire. Two MP V-100 armored cars arrived and the gun truck crew tried again to recover the body of their fellow driver, but enemy fire again forced them back. Finally, two more gun trucks from another convoy arrived and the combined fire power of five vehicles provided enough covering fire for the recovery of PFC Wehunt's body. The enemy broke contact at 9:45. The gun trucks checked all areas of the kill zone for more personnel then proceeded to the top of the Pass.

Five days later in the same area, the enemy again ambushed a westbound convoy of 25 vehicles of the 444th and 597th Truck Companies.

¹ Telephone interview with Ronald Voightritter by Richard Killblane, May 2004 and COL Alex Langston, Jr., "Operational Report of the 8th Transportation Group (Motor Transport) for he Period Ending 30 April 1970," 22 May 1970.



Gun Truck 'Cobra' - APC shell on truck bed.

“At approximately 0900, 15 June 1970, a convoy under the control of the 27th Battalion traveling up the An Khe Pass encountered an enemy mortars or rockets. The ambush I referred to happened on 15 Jun 1970 at the hair pin turn in the An Khe pass. As usually happens when things go bad everything goes wrong. My radio hadn't been working all morning. I never received any answers to my check point call ins. My driver that day, a great buck sergeant, named Calvin Wood, and I had just passed up through the convoy and got the drivers to open up their interval. We dropped back in at the rear of the convoy about 200 meters below the hair pin turn when mortars or rockets started hitting above the turn. I called contact on the radio and Sgt Wood immediately headed for the kill zone. When we rounded the hairpin, I had one tractor trailer stopped in the road and another truck was passing him. The King Cobra was ahead of the kill zone when the ambush started but backed down into the kill zone and was laying down fire. Sgt Wood drove between the stopped truck and the one passing and as he did the driver of the truck passing was hit and went in the ditch up against the embankment. We drove up and turned around and came back to the hairpin. The trail gun truck came into the kill zone to help, then Sgt Wood and I went to check the drivers of the stopped trucks. The remaining trucks had driven through and out of the kill zone. The driver of the first stopped truck was initially missing, but I later found out that when his truck was disabled by a rocket and he was wounded by shrapnel he had jumped on one of the other trucks driving through. We got the other driver out of the truck in the ditch and took him to the top of the pass where a Huey that just happened to be flying by landed and we put him on it and they took him to An Khe. Unfortunately he died. Four rounds of automatic fire had hit the cab of his truck, three were stopped by the armor plate in the door but one had come through the canvas top and hit him. While all this was going on the gun trucks and jeeps from a convoy we had passed at the bottom of the pass had come up to help us. I used one of their gun jeep radios to talk to Battalion for the first time. We then made another pass through the ambush site to get the gun trucks to break contact. At the top of the pass we got some additional fire from the VC but suffered no more damage. We then headed for An Khe. At the next bridge we found one of my reefers. The van had been hit by a rocket and the cab by 11 automatic rounds. The driver had been wounded in the leg but, had driven to the top of the pass where a shot gunner, riding in an engineer low boy that

had tagged alone with our convoy, got out and drove my guy's rig up to the bridge. The Infantry guys at the bridge were tending to my wounded driver and had called in a medevac for him. My lead NCO had crossed over the top of the pass and had switched his radio to the next security net before the ambush started and didn't know anything had happened. They had to send gun trucks out of An Khe to chase the front half of the convoy down and bring them back to An Khe. We spent a couple hours getting reorganized and taking care of things regarding the wounded (found out the missing driver was at the hospital with minor shrapnel wounds) and the KIA then went on to Pleiku. We later took some mortar rounds in the Mang Giang Pass but, they didn't hit anything and we kept moving on. We didn't get to Pleiku until about 1500 so we RON'd there and came back to Phu Tai the next morning. I can tell you the use of gun trucks and the armor plating of drivers doors was a major life savor for 8th Group truckers. This was my first contact in 9 months being in country. I had a few more but, nothing like this one, thank goodness." LTC (R) Ronald Voightritter, Commander, 597th Transportation Company.

Three vehicles were damaged with one soldier killed and three wounded. CPT Voightritter received the Silver Star medal for his actions and SGT Calvin Woods was awarded the Bronze Star Medal with V device.

Another ambush occurred five days later. A reefer was ripped open by rocket and a driver was wounded.

In the summer of 1970, the 54th Battalion ran the night loading convoy between Cha Rang and Qui Nhon and Long Mi Depot in Phu Tai to Cha Rang. A night convoy was returning from Qui Nhon on Highway 1, near a village a couple miles short of Phu Tai, when the enemy fired rockets and small arms and automatic fire from the railroad berm and hooches. A B40 rocket hit the gas tank of a gun jeep running security and blew it up. The driver was killed. A gun jeep and the King Cobra were escorting the 597th night haul back to Phu Tai. They heard the ambush and rushed to the fight.

In 1970, President Richard M. Nixon began to fulfill his campaign promise to reduce the US commitment to Vietnam and withdraw troops. This likewise reduced the need for truck companies. As part of the troop reductions, the 124th Battalion moved from Camp Wilson, Pleiku to Camp Addison in Cha Rang on 1 July 1970 to replace the 54th Battalion that was zeroed out from 1 to 15 July. The 54th was inactivated on 13 August. The 124th Battalion picked up control of the companies previously attached to the 54th Battalion and turned over the 359th POL Company to the 27th Battalion. In July 1970, the 27th Battalion provided command and control of the following:

- 2nd Transportation Company (Medium Truck)
- 88th Transportation Company (Medium Truck)
- 359th Transportation Company (POL)
- 444th Transportation Company (Light Truck)
- 541st Transportation Company
- 597th Transportation Company (Medium Truck)

Escorting fuel convoys with each tractor hauling 5,000 gallons high explosive jet fuel was probably the most dangerous mission for gun trucks. The enemy preferred to hit fuel tankers because the resulting fire usually blocked the road trapping the other trucks. The 359th POL Company had the gun trucks, “Misfits,” “Brutus,” “Outlaws,” “Woom Doom” and “Ball of Confusion.” Specialist 5 Erik Freeman had returned to Vietnam for his second tour with the intention of becoming an NCOIC of a gun truck. The 359th Transportation Company had the gun trucks, Misfits, Brutus and Ball of Confusion. He joined the 359th POL Company. 1SG Willard Self rewarded Freeman for having won the best truck of the month with the gun truck, Ball of Confusion. Ball of Confusion was one of the early 2 ½-ton gun truck designs. It finally broke down and Freeman picked up a brand new 5-ton truck at battalion and rebuilt it into a maintenance gun truck with two 7.62 mini-guns he named the “Untouchable.” It was supposed to be the first gun truck with two mini-guns.²

In the summer 1970, Brutus’ crew consisted of William “Bill” Kagel, Ernest “Ernie” Quintana, and Sergeant Jimmy Ray Callison. Ronald “Ron” Mallory, Richard Bond and Chuck Hauser became friends with the crew of the Brutus. Every time the “Brutus” returned from a convoy, Mallory and his friends liked to help take the weapons off and clean them. They were curious and wanted to know everything about the gun truck. One day the crew told the Mallory and his friends, “If anything ever happens to us, we'd like you all to take over the gun truck.” In that manner the crew of the Brutus had chosen their replacements.³

On the morning of 21 November 1970, a jeep with radio led the 27th Battalion convoy of 29 vehicles headed toward Pleiku. “Brutus” followed 16th in the line of march and the maintenance gun truck “Ball of Confusion” followed in the rear. Behind it was a gun jeep with the convoy commander, an NCO from the 359th Medium Truck. A newly assigned lieutenant rode along in the jeep as an observer to gain experience. Having just passed an eastbound 27th Battalion convoy, the convoy with “Brutus” began climbing up toward Mang Giang Pass. The south side of the road sloped upward and the north side sloped downward. Tall grass and scattered thickets bordered both sides of the road with the tree line 250 meters from the road.

At 1105, the middle of the convoy came under rocket, automatic and small-arms fire from the south side of the road. The 800 meter kill zone caught “Brutus” and six fuel tankers. The crew of “Brutus” called “Contact, Contact, Contact” over the radio and immediately returned fire with a .50 caliber and mini-gun. B-40 rockets ignited two of the tankers and another jack knifed partially blocking the road. Small-arms fire punctured the tanks and flattened the tires on the three other tankers but they drove out of the kill zone, picked up the drivers of the burning tankers while leaking a trail of fuel on the road. They joined the lead vehicles at the top of the pass and halted. The vehicles following “Brutus” halted, turned around and drove back down the road. “Ball of Confusion” and the convoy commander’s jeep were two miles back down the road

² Erik Freeman interview by Richard Killblane at New Orleans, LA, 13 June 2002.

³ Ronald Mallory interview by Richard Killblane, 14 June 2004.

assisting a broken down vehicle. For the first few minutes of the ambush, “Brutus” bore the brunt of the fight.⁴

Upon hearing “Contact,” the convoy commander and three gun trucks of the 597th Medium Truck in the eastbound convoy; “Sir Charles,” King Cobra,” and “Poison Ivy,” turned around and raced to the kill zone. “Ball of Confusion” had preceded them. Because the jack-knifed tanker blocked the road, the gun trucks bunched up on the east end of the kill zone and placed suppressive fire with all their weapons into the enemy position. A rocket hit the gun box on “Brutus,” wounding Kagel and Quintana but killed Callison. The “Ball of Confusion” had one man wounded in the fighting.⁵

This ambush was timed with an enemy attack on Landing Zone Attack, just three miles down the road. Within 15 minutes of the first call, six APCs and one tank of the 1st Battalion, 10th ARVN Cavalry arrived in the kill zone. The majority of the ARVN Cavalry Squadron, which had responsibility for this area, had been pulled up to Pleiku several days before for operations in that area. After another 5 minutes of fighting, the enemy withdrew and only sporadic firing continued for another 15 minutes when two gun ships arrived.⁶

Ron Mallory, Chuck Hauser, Larry Dahl and Sergeant Richard Bond replaced the crew of “Brutus.” Because Mallory was one of the best drivers at split shifting, he naturally became the driver. Sergeant Bond assumed the responsibility as the NCOIC with Hauser and Dahl the gunners. As the new crew set about cleaning and repairing the gun truck, the loss of their friends sadden them. To give the truck a new look, they completely repainted “Brutus.” They thought this would make the old crew proud of what they had done. It took about a week to put “Brutus” back on the road, but took almost a month for the smell of blood to disappear.⁷

On 16 December 1970, in a westbound convoy, “Satan’s Chariot” passed a broken-down tractor and trailer and two gun trucks from an earlier convoy at An Khe Pass. The convoy arrived at the 54th Transportation Battalion base camp just an hour before dark. Sergeant Charles Sims, the NCOIC of “Satan’s Chariot,” had his men take off the weapons and start cleaning them when the commander of the 88th Light Truck arrived and told him to have his gun truck escort a spare tractor back up to retrieve the disabled vehicle. Sims challenged the decision. At that hour they would reach the pass after dark. Nothing traveled on the roads at night. He felt that the gun truck should just pick up the driver, abandon the truck, and return. The battalion commander gave Sims a direct order to recover the vehicle. The commander knew that if the tractor was left unattended overnight the Explosive Ordnance Demolitions men would have to clear the vehicle the next day before a convoy could pass. This would delay the departure of the convoys by an hour. Sims departed with a spare tractor and wrecker to transfer the trailer.⁸

⁴ Thomas, “Vehicle Convoy Security,” p. B-1-4.

⁵ Thomas, “Vehicle Convoy Security,” p. B-1-4, Mallory and Freeman interviews.

⁶ Thomas, “Vehicle Convoy Security,” p. B-1-4.

⁷ Mallory interview.

⁸ Email correspondence between Erik Freeman and Charles Sims, 15 – 21 February 1998.

When they arrived, Sims saw that the MP V-100 armored car that closed down the road each night was providing security for the broken-down tractor. “Sir Charles” also arrived. Once they recovered the tractor and trailer, “Satan’s Chariot” led the way followed by the wrecker towing the tractor and trailer, “Sir Charles” then the armored car. When they reached the base of the mountain, they found that the Koreans had strung a concertina barricade across the road closing Bridge Number 8. Sims radioed their situation to the road controller. The controller, in turn, called the American liaison officer with the Koreans to have them open the bridges. After waiting 20 minutes, the Koreans received instructions to open the bridge.⁹

Sims had driven the road so many times he thought he could have done it blindfolded, but it did not look the same in the dark. He did not remember the small village located on the north side of the road near the next bridge. Since there were no lights, he did not have visual cues to remind him of its location. To Sims surprise, the next bridge was also closed. These delays made them a target for a hasty ambush. They waited for another 10 minutes for the Koreans to open the barricades. They slowly negotiated around the barricades and all but the last gun truck and armored car had crossed the bridge when an explosion hit “Sir Charles.” The convoy started receiving small-arms fire from the village on the north side of the road. Somebody screamed over the radio, “Contact!” The gun trucks, the armored car, and the Koreans immediately returned fire.

The maintenance gun truck, “The Untouchable,” had towed a vehicle to Cha Rang Valley. Specialist 5 Freeman, the NCOIC, had become concerned that two trucks up on An Khe Pass would have to remain there over night. He had a policy that he would never leave any of the vehicles or drivers behind if at all possible. On his way back to camp, Freeman passed “Satan’s Chariot” and the wrecker heading back up to the pass.¹⁰

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Freeman-Sims email and Freeman interview.



Gun Truck 'Untouchable' at wash rack

Upon dropping off the tractor, Freeman's crew changed a flat and refueled while he monitored the radio. He could hear they were having trouble hooking up the broken-down tractor and worried that the Koreans would close the bridges on them when it became dark. Fearing that his commanding officer would not let him back out on the road at night, Freeman and his crew loaded up in "The Untouchable" and left without permission. According to policy, MPs at the gate were not allowed to stop a gun truck. Fortunately "The Untouchable" found all the bridges open except Bridge Number 7. The Koreans let "The Untouchable" onto the bridge but would not let it cross. When Freeman saw the recovery convoy approaching, he convinced the Koreans to let his truck drive off the west end of the bridge to turn around. "The Untouchable" backed up and turned around then pulled up alongside the bridge so it would be ready to fall in with the convoy when it passed. Just as the wrecker crossed the bridge, "The Untouchable" pulled into the convoy. Small-arms fire broke out from the village lasting about a minute. The rocket blast had mortally wounded the NCOIC of "Sir Charles" in the head.¹¹

When the ambush started, the Koreans quickly closed all the bridge barricades. Freeman had just told his driver to back up when he heard the ambush, but "The Untouchable" was trapped on the bridge with "Sir Charles" and the armored car behind the bridge. "Satan's Chariot" could not reenter the bridge, so Sims led the wrecker back to Cha Rang. The rest of the bridges were open and he received a flare ship to escort his convoy back. Meanwhile, one of the gunners on "The Untouchable" pointed his .50 caliber machinegun

¹¹ Freeman interview.

at the Koreans, forcing them to open the bridge's west end so "The Untouchable" then turned around and pulled up next to "Sir Charles." Freeman then raked the tree line with the mini gun for about 10 to 15 seconds and the other vehicles got under way and crossed the bridge. A medevac picked up the NCOIC, but he was already dead. An attack helicopter and flare ship escorted Freeman's convoy back. This verified that any prolonged halt made vehicles a target of opportunity since local VC lived in the area.¹²

On 23 February 1971, a convoy under the control of the 27th returning from Pleiku ran into an ambush at the top of An Khe Pass. An NVA company of about fifty initiated the ambush by disabling the gun truck, Creeper, with a rocket. They blew out the tires of the gun truck. SGT McCatchin, NCOIC of the Creeper, called for help. Although immobile, the Creeper could still place suppressive fire on the enemy. The Playboys immediately responded to the call of contact and raced into the kill zone. One NVA soldier jumped up in the ditch to fire his B40 rocket at the cab of the Playboys. Walter Deeks stopped the gun truck so the rocket passed overhead, while the crew killed the enemy soldier. The Playboys then proceeded into the kill zone. One 5,000-gallon fuel tanker had been hit and was leaking fuel on the road and another had jack-knifed in the road. It was abandoned by its driver. The convoy commander, a lieutenant, rode in the Playboys. He directed that the gun truck pull right up next to the disabled fuel truck. The Playboys placed suppressive fire on the enemy preventing their escape consequently causing the fighting to last for nearly twenty minutes, which seemed like an eternity to those in it. Whenever there would be a lull in the fighting, more enemy soldiers would move to a better position and the fighting would intensify again. At great risk to himself, Grailin Weeks, NCOIC of the Playboys, climbed in the jack-knifed tractor and 5,000-gallon fuel tank then turned it around and drove it out of the kill zone. Because of the length of the fighting in this ambush, the convoy commander called the local armor force guarding the check points for support. They sent up a tank. The gun trucks of the 359th Transportation Company, Misfits, Brutus and The Untouchable, asked if they needed help and joined from the following convoy serial. The Brutus had stopped near an embankment. During the fighting, the mini-gun on the Brutus jammed and Hector Diaz, NCOIC, and Chuck Hauser provided immediate maintenance on it. An NVA soldier stood up and lobbed a grenade into the Brutus. Larry Dahl immediately jumped onto the grenade saving the lives of his crew members. Wounded but conscious, Hauser called for Ron Mallory to get out of there. Ron Mallory then maneuvered the truck out of the kill zone and raced his gun truck to the next friendly checkpoint where a medevac awaited for the wounded crew members. Grailin Weeks received the Silver Star Medal and the rest of the crew of the Playboys earned Bronze stars with V device. Larry Dahl was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor. A new crew took over the Brutus. Larry Dahl represented the dedication and closeness that the gun truck crew members had for each other.

¹² Freeman-Sims email and Freeman interview.



SPC Larry Dahl, posthumously awarded Congressional Medal of Honor, nuff said

[for information on Medal of Honor recipients, go to this link:

<http://www.transchool.lee.army.mil/museum/transportation%20museum/moh.htm>]

After the ambush, 7th Squadron, 17th Air Cavalry began flying convoy escort. At first they flew around the country side but that did not deter the enemy from ambushing the convoys. The helicopters were directed to fly low and slow along the roads looking for wires and enemy spider holes. They flew so low that the drivers could reach up and touch the skids. This was boring duty for the pilots but they challenged their flying skills by landing on the back of moving trailers or following between the trucks in the convoy.

The 4th Infantry Division finally left Vietnam in December 1970. The 8th Group headquarters, likewise, departed on 28 April 1971 since the 124th Battalion headquarters was leaving on 16 May. The 27th Battalion assumed command and control of the remaining truck companies operating out of Qui Nhon area.

The 669th was inactivated in March 1971, the 64th and 444th in November and the 57th in December 1971. The 88th and 545th Light Truck had transferred to Cam Ranh Bay by August 1971. The 545th and 666th were inactivated in January 1972 and the 523rd in March 1972. The Battalion consisted of the following units in the spring of 1972:

- 2nd Transportation Company (Medium Truck)
- 359th Transportation Company (Light Truck)
- 512th Transportation Company (Medium Truck)
- 597th Transportation Company (Medium Truck)
- 505th Transportation Detachment (Trailer Transfer)
- 520th Transportation Detachment (Trailer Transfer)

The 2nd Medium Truck departed in April 1972. The 88th and 597th left in May 1972. HHD, 27th Transportation Battalion departed Vietnam and was inactivated the next day at Oakland Army Base, California on 11 May 1972. The 585th was the last truck company

to leave Qui Nhon area. It left in June 1972. While in Vietnam, the battalion was involved in 16 campaigns, earning 16 Campaign Steamers, four Meritorious Unit Commendations and Streamers, and the Republic of Vietnam Cross of Gallantry with Gold Star Streamer.

Movement Control

The 27th Battalion was again reactivated this time in Germany on 17 February 1986. It came under the control of the 1st Transportation Movement Control Agency (TMCA), headquartered in Kaiserslautern, Germany. The 1st TAMCA served as the movement manager in the European theater of operations. It accomplished its mission through command and control of the 14th and 39th Movement Control (MC) Battalions and through coordination with the 27th Transportation Battalion (MC). The 14th Transportation Battalion (MC) monitored transportation in Italy, and the 39th Transportation Battalion (MC) oversaw transportation in Belgium, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, and Germany, except the northern part of Bavaria and Hessen, which were the responsibility of the 27th. The 27th Battalion provided the movement control center for V Corps.

The 27th Movement Control Battalion Headquarters was broken down into Plans, Operations, and the Highway Traffic Division. The Plans section developed the movement plan within the V Corps Area and connects this plan with the theater movement plan. This planning included the Battle Field Circulation Plan, the movement of vehicles in the V Corps rear area, the rail plan for the movement of all equipment and personnel by train, the plan for moving all of the supplies by military truck, and other plans relating to movement in the AOR. Operations primarily tracked all movement in the V Corps rear, including military and commercial truck, commercial bus, rail, barge or air. The Highway Traffic Division (HTD) developed the battlefield circulation plan governing the movement of all wheeled vehicles in the V Corps rear. The plan covered routes used, the capacity and capabilities of the routes and the direction of traffic flow. Additionally, HTD issues all march credits for convoys in the V Corps rear area.

Instead of separate companies as before, movement control battalions have organic units. Movement control teams (MCT) and air terminal movement control teams (ATMCT) coordinate and monitor transportation services for Department of Defense and other designated agencies located or operating in their geographic area of responsibility (AOR). The 27th MCB has the following units:

15th Movement Control Team in Hanau supported to the 1st Armored Division.

30th Movement Control Team in Bamberg supported the 1st Infantry Division.

Highway Traffic Division

Both MCTs provided support on a regional basis. The MCTs had subordinate Branch Movement Control Teams (BMCTs) and Rail Movement Management Teams (RMMTs). The MCTs provided the primary liaison between units needing transportation and the mode of movement. In the Continental United States, the installation transportation office normally performed these functions. MCT coordination included committing the military

truck companies, ordering trains with the host nation railroad and implementing commercial contracts with truck, bus and barge companies. In a deployed environment the MCTs coordinate directly with the customer unit. BMCTs were the smallest element providing MC on an area basis. Generally, each military community had a BMCT. These teams consisted of two or three civilian transportation specialists who had an excellent working knowledge of transportation in Germany. The BMCT provided movement advice, coordinated all commercial contracts, and committed military truck units.

RMMTs coordinated rail movement of freight and personnel with the German Railroad (Deutsche Bahn). They received the rail movement requests from the customer units. After working up the cargo manifest for all equipment, containers and personnel, the RMMT submitted a request to the German Railroad for the appropriate number and type of rail cars. On rail loading day, BMCT personnel provided command and control the load, certified all tie downs, processed the paperwork, coordinated for required MHE support, and communicated between local national railroad authorities and the customer unit.

The Highway Traffic Division had Highway Movement Control Teams (HMCTs) located in Katterbach and Mainz with responsibility for coordinating with the appropriate host nation authority to process movement bids and pass march credits back to the requesting units. The HMCTs worked directly with and were normally collocated with Wehrbereichskommando (WBK). The WBK was the military district that controlled movement by all military forces through its area of responsibility. HMCT Katterbach's area of responsibility was the state of Bavaria. HMCT Mainz' area of responsibility was the states of Rheinland Pfalz, Hessen, and Saarland.

From the period of July 1990 to June 1991, the Battalion was awarded the Army Superior Unit Award and Streamer for deploying and redeploying more than 8,000 tracked and wheeled vehicles, 230 trains, 400 barges, 4,600 containers and 210,000 short tons of cargo in support of military operations including DESERT SHIELD and DESERT STORM.

The 27th Battalion was reorganized and redesignated as the 27th Transportation Center on 15 September 1995 and the headquarters moved to Wiesbaden, Germany, and was designated as the V Corps Movement Control Center.

Bosnia, Operation JOINT ENDEAVOR

After the signing of the Dayton Peace Accords, the warring factions in Bosnia-Herzegovina agreed to end the fighting. NATO-led forces would deploy into the former Yugoslav republic to implement the peace plan. On 9 December 1995, the 27th Transportation Battalion (MC) deployed to Hungary in support of NATO Implementation Force (IFOR) peace keeping missions for Operation JOINT ENDEAVOR. The battalion deployed to fourteen locations in Hungary, Croatia, and Bosnia-Herzegovina and worked at the strategic, operational and tactical levels. The Battalion maintained positive control and in-transit visibility over all rail, barge, air, bus and military and commercial truck

movements throughout Hungary, Croatia, and Bosnia-Herzegovina. The Battalion, providing combined movement control support to US and NATO Implementation Forces (IFOR), significantly enhanced the overall NATO Implementation Forces mission. Most of the battalion redeployed on 20 January 1997 but returned again in June. The IFOR mission successfully ended on December 20, 1996, and the 1st Infantry Division remained as part of the Stabilization Force (SFOR) for Operation JOINT GUARD.

On 25 April 1998, the 27th MCB again deployed to Hungary and Bosnia to support the deployment and sustainment of the 2nd Brigade, 1st Armored Division and the redeployment of the 2nd Armored Cavalry Regiment (ACR) as part of Operation JOINT GUARD. The battalion used the Transportation Coordination Automated Command and Control Information System (TC ACCIS) for the first time to develop the load plans for moving equipment of the 2nd ACR from Lukavac by European railcars to the Port of Bremerhaven for shipment to Fort Polk, Louisiana. The 27th MCB established its TC ACCIS section at Eagle Base in Tuzla, Bosnia. The section had a mirror capability in Taszar, Hungary. TC ACCIS allowed unit movement officers to maintain and update critical information routinely rather than wait for a crisis to occur to collect and update data. The 2nd Brigade, 1st Armored Division deployed from Baumholder, Germany, to assume the US responsibility for the SFOR. Prior to this operation, SFOR units deployed to Taszar by rail to two railheads and then by truck the rest of the way into Bosnia. This was the first time since WWII that military units deployed into the former Republic of Yugoslavia by rail. On 20 June 1998, SFOR in Bosnia-Herzegovina transitioned to a slightly smaller follow-on force. Consequently, Operation JOINT GUARD ended and Operation JOINT FORGE began. The 27th MCB returned in November.

The 27th MCB deployed again to the Balkans for a third time in the spring of 1999 and operated in Albania, Macedonia and Kosovo as part of Kosovo Forces (KFOR). The battalion headquarters returned to Germany in August.

It was reorganized and redesignated as HHD, 27th Transportation Battalion (Movement Control) on 16 February 2000.

In 2003, the 27th MCB had the following detachments through out Germany:

Headquarters & Headquarters Detachment in Wiesbaden

619th MCT at Wiesbaden Army Airfield provided port movement control and coordinated transportation support for US Forces moving into and out of a sea or air port.

626th MCT in Hanau provided movement control and coordinate transportation support for V Corps, USAREUR and EUCOM units. Deploys and establishes operations to support U.S. Forces as part of an Army, Joint or Combined Task Force.

627th MCT in Bamberg provided movement control and coordinated transportation support for V Corps, USAREUR and EUCOM units. It would also deploy to establish operations to support US Forces as part of an Army, Joint or Combined Task Force.

633rd DST at Hanau provided direct movement control support to the Division Transportation Office, 1st Armor Division.

634th DST at Bamberg provided direct movement control support to the Division Transportation Office, 1st Infantry Division.

635th MRD at Wiesbaden provided Movement Regulation support for V Corps, USAREUR and EUCOM units and deployed to establish operations to support US Forces as part of an Army, Joint or Combined Task Force.

Operation Iraqi Freedom

On 12 February 2003, the 27th Movement Control Battalion (MCB) deployed to Camp Virginia, Kuwait, for impending military operations against Iraq. The 27th MCB was attached to 3rd Corps Support Command (COSCOM) to provide in-transit visibility for V Corps units in the drive to Baghdad. The 53rd MCB provided theater movement control for the Reception, Staging, Onward movement and Integration (RSO&I) mission in Kuwait. The 450th MCB, when it arrived would extend theater movement control into Iraq and hand off to the 27th MCB. The 27th MCB initially focused on Reception, Staging and Onward movement (RSO&I), planning Main Supply Routes (MSRs) and Alternate Supply Routes (ASRs), building the timeline for units to cross the line of departure (LD) and integrating the use of new in-transit visibility devices.¹³

The war began on 20 March 2003 before most of the movement control teams (MCT) were available. Once hostilities began, the 27th MCB sent movement regulating detachments to the breach lanes leading into Iraq to monitor the flow of traffic which was reported to the battalion headquarters at Camp Victory, Kuwait. Once V Corps cleared the breach points, then the MCTs accompanied the convoys. Unfortunately, the highway regulating MCTs were too far back in the convoy to direct traffic and the MCTs did not equipped to defend themselves against an attack as the 3rd ID(M) bypassed enemy resistance along the way. For this reason they could not set up at key intersections to direct traffic.

As V Corps rapidly advanced, two movement control teams from the battalion were instrumental in opening the transportation nodes behind it. They established the airfield at Tallil Airbase near An Nasiriyah on the first night of the war and handed it off to the 7th Transportation Group and its MCT from the 450th MCB. The 27th MCB next opened Logistic Support Area (LSA) Bushmaster near Karbala. After the 3rd ID(M) seized control of the Baghdad International Airport (BIAP) on 4 April, they set up movement control there. As the V Corps advanced, the 450th MCB assumed responsibility for BIAP. Finally they opened up LSA Anaconda near Balad. Once established, the port MCTs kept air traffic flowing through these airfields which allowed important repair parts to be delivered to the war fighters.¹⁴

Baghdad fell to the 3rd ID(M) on 9 April. Up until then, BG Charles Fletcher, Commander of 3rd COSCOM, had not been happy with movement control. With the 27th MCB's headquarters Camp Victory in Kuwait, the closest movement control headquarters was the 450th MCB. In April, the 27th MCB moved north to LSA Anaconda where its soldiers and officers were responsible for movement control in the new

¹³ 27th Transportation Battalion History, "Operation Iraqi Freedom,"
<<http://www.3coscom.army.mil/27trans/oif.asp>>

¹⁴ 27th Battalion History.

Combined Joint Task Force-7 (CJTF-7) area of responsibility (approximately 130,000 square miles of territory ranging from the Kuwait border up to Mosul and border of Turkey).¹⁵

By 1 May, the 27th MCB provided command and control for the following:

HHC

2nd Transportation Company (Heavy Equipment Transporter)

27th Transportation Company (Attached)

383rd Movement Control Team (Attached)

619th Movement Control Team (Airfield Opening)

635th Movement Control Team (Regulating)

1032nd Transportation Company (Medium Truck)

The 647th Cargo Documentation Detachment, led by SSG Steve Praml, arrived in Kuwait on 30 April and moved north to Baghdad International Airport (BIAP) in the second week of May. It worked the flight line under the control of the 265th MCT, commanded by CPT Doss, where it processed passengers and cargo. 1LT Timothy Roepke's platoon from the 551st Cargo Transfer Company, 6th Transportation Battalion provided one KALMAR RTCH and a few forklifts. They initially fell under the control of the 450th MCB.¹⁶

Around 7 May, BG Fletcher met with BG Thomas Robinson, Commander of 3rd Transportation Agency Movement Control (TAMC), and LTC Mark Corson, Commander of the 450th MCB, to discuss movement control problems. Fletcher wanted to move the 27th MCB forward and push the Corps rear boundary back to Kuwaiti border so he would have control of everything in Iraq.¹⁷

On 15 July, the 450th MCB moved back to Kuwait and turned over the MCTs and responsibility for movement control at BIAP, Scania, Tallil and Cedar II to the 27th MCB.

The 27th MCB had focused on sustainment operations to support the combat units who had, by then, set up secure areas in which they operated out of. With soaring temperatures in the summer, water became a needed commodity and the 27th Transportation worked with the Iraq Republication Railroad in shipping bottled water from the southern port of Um Qasr to destination railheads throughout Iraq. As the railroad matured, other commodities were sent via train which reduced the amount of soldiers driving trucks along dangerous MSR/ASRs.¹⁸

The battalion spent the fall of 2003 assisting 3rd COSCOM in establishing Balad Southeast Airfield as a strategic hub for moving supplies, equipment and personnel into and out of Iraq. By October 2003 and for several months later, six to eight strategic lift

¹⁵ 27th Battalion History.

¹⁶ 2LT Aaron Marshall interview by Richard Killblane, 20 October 2005.

¹⁷ BG Thomas Robinson interview by Richard Killblane, January 22, 2005.

¹⁸ 27th Battalion History.

aircraft were flying into the airfield daily. The battalion had a port MCT on the airfield which tracked the daily arrival of pallets and Soldiers.¹⁹

In November 2003, the battalion began planning for redeployment as well as the transfer of authority to the inbound MCB out of Fort Hood, Texas. The 27th Transportation had 33 subordinate MCTs under them and detailed planning was conducted to ensure that these units would either redeploy or fall under the 49th MCB depending on when they met their one year “boots on the ground” requirement. In January of 2004, the battalion conducted its Transfer of Authority (TOA) with the 49th MCB over a ten-day timeline and redeployed to Germany in February.²⁰

The 647th Cargo Documentation Detachment departed theater on 19 March 2004.²¹

The 27th Transportation Battalion inactivated July 2007.

Campaign Participation Credit

World War II: Sicily; Rome-Arno; Po Valley

Vietnam: Defense; 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.

Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Decorations

Meritorious Unit Commendation (Army) for VIETNAM 1965-1966

Meritorious Unit Commendation (Army) for VIETNAM 1967-1968

Meritorious Unit Commendation (Army) for VIETNAM 1968-1969

Meritorious Unit Commendation (Army) for VIETNAM 1969-1970

Army Superior Unit Award for 1990-1991

Republic of Vietnam Cross of Gallantry with Gold Star for VIETNAM 1966-1971

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¹⁹ 27th Battalion History.

²⁰ 27th Battalion History.

²¹ Marshall interview.

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