

39th Transportation Battalion



*39th Transportation Battalion unit crest (l) and coat of arms (r)
Mouseover each for a description*

World War II

The lineage of the 39th Transportation Battalion dates back to 1936 when it was first constituted as the 2nd Battalion, 21st Quartermaster Regiment on 1 May 1936. Organized as a regiment, the 21st Quartermaster Regiment had 12 lettered companies from A through N divided into three battalions, the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Battalions.

On 7 December 1941, the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. The next day, Congress declared war on Japan. Germany, an axis ally with Japan, declared war on the United States, which reciprocated. The race began to build up an Army large enough to defeat both enemies in several theaters of operations.

On 1 April 1942, the 21st Regiment was redesignated as the 21st Quartermaster Truck Regiment and activated with its three battalions on 16 April 1942 at Fort Benning, Georgia. The 21st Quartermaster Truck Regiment was the first full truck regiment assembled under one command at one station. A regimental review under the command of Colonel Ellis Altman was held at Fort Benning on 27 September 1942. During World War II, African-Americans were still segregated. The regiment, which was comprised of African-American Soldiers, arrived at Camp Anza, California (Arlington Staging Area) on 10 January 1943 to make final preparations for deployment to the Middle Eastern Theater; on 19 January 1943 the unit departed Camp Anza. The soldiers of the 21st Quartermaster Truck Regiment were among 6000 personnel, male and female, white and colored, who embarked on 19 January 1943 aboard the *USS Monticello*. The "4201 Shipment" departed Wilmington, California harbor at 0800 hours, 20 January and reached Bombay, India on 3 March 1943.

The United States fought on a multitude of fronts during World War II. To keep pressure on the Japanese on the mainland continent of Asia, the US Army established a

base of operations in Indian to support the Chinese Army under General Chiang Kai-Shek. Under the command of General Joseph Stilwell, the object of this front was to open a supply route through Burma into China.

On 1 December 1943, the 21st Regiment was reorganized and its three battalions were redesignated as Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment (HHD), 36th Quartermaster Battalion; HHD, 39th Quartermaster Battalion and HHD, 108th Quartermaster Battalion. The original lettered companies of the 2nd Battalion, E through H, were redesignated 3305th through 3308th Quartermaster Truck Companies respectively and assigned to the 39th Quartermaster Battalion. From then on the companies and battalions would follow separate lineages.

The fact that the 39th Quartermaster Battalion (Mobile) landed in India and earned campaign credit for Burma suggests that it operated on the Ledo Road (later named Stillwell Road) connecting India to the China, via the Burma Road. Other evidence indicates that the 21st Quartermaster Group, the 39th Battalion's higher headquarters operated from the border area of Ledo, India and Assam, Burma and from Myitkyina, Burma during the India-Burma and Central Burma Campaigns from 1942 to 1945. While a much lower priority front than that of Europe, the Mediterranean, and Pacific, the CBI theater occupied a prominent place in Allied councils, as Americans sought an early Allied commitment to reopening China's lifeline so that China could tie down massive numbers of Japanese troops and serve as a base for air, naval, and eventually amphibious operations against the Japanese home islands. The American media, with its romantic fascination with China and the Burma Road, followed the campaigns closely and kept its audience informed on Vinegar Joe Stilwell and Merrill's Marauders. Interest in the theater did drop after early 1944 as estimates of China's military capability declined, but Allied leaders continued to keep a close eye on developments in a region where they still felt they had much at stake.



Soldiers representative of the African-American soldiers that comprised the ranks of the 39th Quartermaster Battalion during WWII.



U.S.-built Army trucks wind along the side of the mountain over the Ledo supply road now open from India into Burma..."

For the American supply services, their performance in the CBI Theater represented one of their finest hours. The tremendous distances, the difficult terrain, the inefficiencies in

transport, and the complications of Indian politics presented formidable obstacles to efficient logistics. Nevertheless, by early 1944, American logisticians had developed an efficient supply system whose biggest problem was the time needed to ship material from the United States. Despite the skepticism of the British and other observers, American engineers overcame the rugged mountains and rain forests of North Burma to complete the Stilwell Road which, joined to the old Burma Road, reopened the line to China. A tremendous feat of engineering, the Stilwell Road deservedly earned considerable applause. The building of what became known as the Stilwell Road was undoubtedly a remarkable achievement, involving the toil of thousands of engineers, quartermaster transportation units and laborers constructing a road through thick jungle valleys and over steep mountain ranges under most adverse conditions. During 1945, when existing trails between Myitkyina and the old Burma Road made the road work less arduous, perhaps the most spectacular feature of the construction of the road from an engineering perspective was the erection of a number of bridges, particularly those over the Irrawaddy and Shweli Rivers. Yet no sooner had the Stilwell Road reached completion than deliveries over it were overshadowed by the Hump airlift. Moreover, after the pipeline to Kunming was placed in operation, deliveries through it exceeded those carried over the road. Nor was the Stilwell Road to be in use for long. Nine months after its opening and with the arrival of C-54 aircraft into the theater on 1 November 1945, the road was abandoned.

Japan finally surrendered to Allied forces aboard the *USS Missouri* on 14 August 1945. During the early fall of 1945, the 39th Quartermaster Battalion departed the CBI Theater. Following the 39th Battalion's service in the China-Burma Theater of Operation, the battalion inactivated at Camp Kilmer, New Jersey, on 7 November 1945. While on inactive status, it converted and redesignated as Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment, 39th Transportation Corps Truck Battalion on 1 August 1946, then redesignated as HHD, 39th Transportation Corps Truck Battalion on 11 June 1954.

The 39th Battalion reactivated at Camp Gordon, Georgia, on 3 August 1954. It reorganized and redesignated as HHD, 39th Transportation Battalion on 25 June 1959.

Vietnam War

The US Army had entered an advisory role in the war in South Vietnam in 1961. The communist North Vietnamese government sponsored a Communist insurgency in the hopes of toppling the South Vietnamese government. Because the advisory effort did not seem to stem the tide of insurgency, the US Army assumed a greater role in the ground war in Vietnam during the summer of 1965. This resulted in a large buildup of forces, which was met by a great incursion by the North Vietnamese Army. The next year, General William Westmoreland asked President Lyndon B. Johnson for an additional increment of troops. Like the earlier deployment, this one required an additional truck battalion to each support base.

In 1965, the 39th Transportation Battalion was commanded by LTC Noble E. Taylor at Ft Benning, Georgia and consisted of the following companies:

505th Transportation Company
515th Transportation Company deployed to Vietnam in June
666th Transportation Company
539th Army Postal Unit departed for the Dominican Republic on TDY in April
then status changed to Permanent Change of Station.

The truck companies supported Ranger training at the North and South Ranger Camps during the year.

With the buildup for Vietnam, units were activated to either go to Vietnam or replace units deploying to Vietnam. The following units were attached to the battalion in 1965:

38th Medical Detachment (Dental Service) and 74th Medical Detachment (Food Inspector) attached in February and detached in July.
55th Military Intelligence Detachment activated in June for deployment in August.
125th Air Traffic Control Company activated in June for deployment in December.
139th Military Police Company (attached July 65)
552nd Military Police Company (attached July 65)
544th Engineer Detachment (Utilities) (attached July 65)

In November, the 552nd MP Company deployed TDY to Fort Bragg, NC to replace MP units that had deployed to the Dominican Republic. The newly organized 300th MP Company, the 96th MP Battalion and the 244th CI Detachment were attached to the 39th Transportation Battalion on 10 January 1966 pending the arrival of filler personnel. On 12 January, the 586th Engineer Company (Float Bridge) and the 608th Ordnance Company (DS) were assigned to the battalion. By 9 March, the 96th MP Battalion and the 300th MP Company and 23rd MP Detachment were released from the battalion and on 15 March, the 39th Battalion was alerted for deployment to Vietnam.

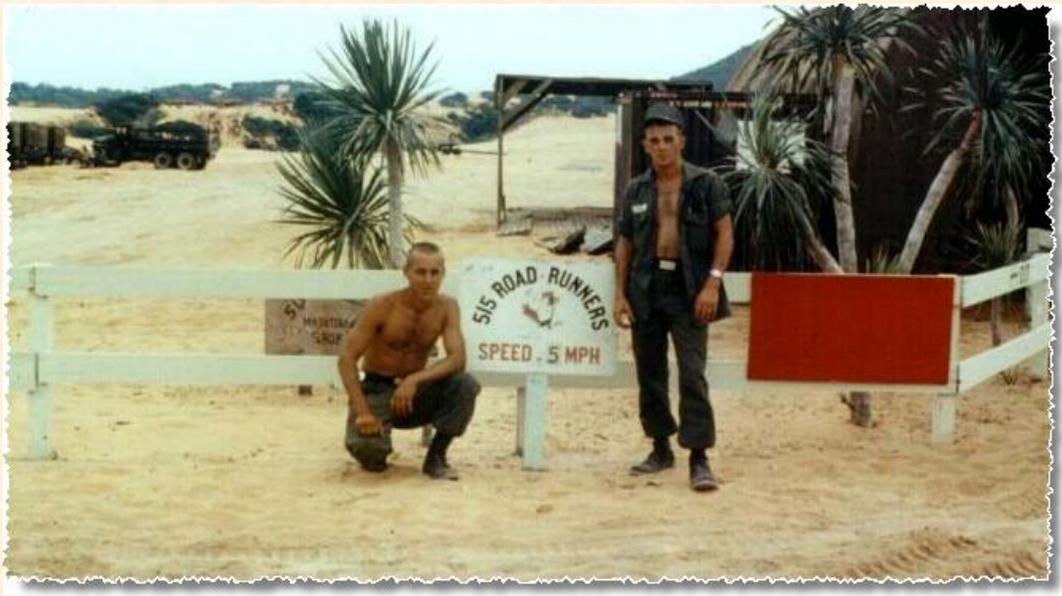
Immediately after receiving its alert orders, the 39th Battalion headquarters took steps to bring the headquarters up to full strength and get its equipment ready for deployment. It also underwent rigorous training to prepare for duty in Vietnam. On 15 April, the 139th and 552nd MP Companies were released from the 39th Battalion and on 20 May, the 505th and 666th Transportation Companies were released from the battalion for their own deployments to Vietnam. On 1 June, LTC Thomas E. Benson replaced LTC Taylor in command of the battalion and Taylor went up to Headquarters, US Army Troop Command. He would deploy to Vietnam and later command 8th Transportation Group. On 7 June, the battalion passed the Post Inspector General (IG) Prepare for Overseas Movement (POM) inspection and then passed the Third Army IG POM on 13 June. The battalion headquarters was ready to deploy.

On 21 June, the battalion shipped its Red TAT equipment to the Port of Savannah for shipment overseas and the balance of the equipment was shipped to San Francisco on 24 June. All the equipment was loaded into five CONEXes and 21 pallets. On 26 June, SSG Morgan left for San Francisco to accompany the unit operational equipment to Vietnam while CPT Thomas A. Ford, the S4, flew to Oakland to coordinate the loading of the Red

TAT equipment. The main body of five officers, one warrant and 30 enlisted men boarded a bus for Atlanta, Georgia to catch a flight to Oakland Army Terminal to board the *USNS Gordon* on 7 July. It sailed for San Diego that day to pick up US Marines and departed on 9 July. The advance party of two officers, one warrant and three enlisted men that had flown out on 10 July had arrived 14 July. The *USNS Gordon* stopped at Okinawa on 24 July, Da Nang, Vietnam on 28 July, Qui Nhon the next day and after 25 days at sea 39th Battalion finally arrived at its new home at Cam Ranh Bay, Vietnam on 31 July 1966.



Trucks of 515th TC



SP4 Broussard and another Specialist in front of 515th sign

The 39th Battalion was initially stationed at Cam Ranh Bay in southern in the II Corps Tactical Zone where fell under the control of the 500th Transportation Group and picked up the 10th and 670th Medium Truck Companies and “K” Company with 10 Kenworth Trucks and Korean drivers under Vinnell Corporation from the 10th Terminal Battalion (Terminal). On 3 August, the 39th Battalion became operational with the mission to clear the beach and port of Cam Ranh Bay of all arriving cargo discharged by the stevedores. The 36th Transportation Battalion also had the mission of port clearance. On 11 August, SSG Morgan arrived at Cam Ranh Bay with the organizational equipment. On 20 September, the 24th Light Truck Company was attached to the battalion giving it four companies:

- 10th Transportation Company (Medium Truck)
- 24th Transportation Company (Light Truck)
- 670th Transportation Company (Medium Truck)
- “K” Company (Kenworth) (Vinnell Corp)

The Vietnam War was a fought as a guerrilla war, without any front lines. The enemy struck at will then withdrew to safety in the jungle or into one of its sanctuaries across the border. For the first year that the 39th Battalion was in Vietnam, the guerrillas only harassed convoys with sniping and planting mines. The lines of communication usually stretched from a military port such as Cam Ranh Bay to the customer. The direct haul mission from Cam Ranh Bay ran through the Central Highlands of II Tactical Corps Area. The short haul ran one-day round trips from Cam Ranh Bay along Highway 1, coastal highway, north to Nha Trang and Ninh Hoa or south to Phan Rang. Long hauls went north and turned west on Highway 21 to Ban Me Thout, or straight west from Cam Ranh Bay along Highway 11 to Da Lat and Bao Loc. On a long haul, the convoy would drive up one day and return the next.

1st Logistics Command wanted to open up a new supply line. On 28 November 1966, the battalion headquarters convoyed 107 miles north up Highway 1 to Thuy Hoa with increased security provided by the Republic of Korea (ROK) White Horse Division. Thuy Hoa had an Air Force Base and needed support. Just south of Thuy Hoa was Vung Rho Bay, which had one DeLong Pier and one tie up for petroleum tanker that pumped fuel into a pipeline that ran along an old abandoned railroad track right of way that ran to the air port.

The 39th Battalion brought the 24th Medium Truck Company with it and picked up the following:

- 151st Transportation Company (Light Truck)
- 532nd Service and Supply Company (DS)
- 564th Transportation Platoon (Light Truck)
- Headquarters and 3rd Platoon, 360th Transportation Company (Medium Truck) (POL)

The battalion fell under the control of the newly constituted Tuy Hoa Subarea Command. The 39th Battalion again conducted beach clearance at both Tuy Hoa and Vung Ro Bay. Cargo was brought ashore by the 97th Heavy Boat, the 1097th Medium Boat and 344th

Light Amphibious Companies where the 119th Terminal Service Company discharged the cargo and loaded it aboard the trucks. MAJ Pope, the 39th Battalion XO, was assigned the responsibility as the Port Commander at Vung Ro Bay.

The 39th Battalion just supported the air base. It hauled cargo and ammo to the Air Force base. They did night convoys from the beach to the air base. One night, a convoy was attacked when it drove through a village. It involved small arms fire and someone threw a hand grenade in a jeep and killed two or three men. The battalion stopped running night convoys for a while. Then they started running night convoys later. During the fall, tropical storms came with heavy rain and high winds which hampered beach clearance.

In the spring of 1967, the battalion moved back to Cam Ranh Bay and its truck companies were reassigned to the 28th General Support Group (GSG) at Thuy Hoa. It then moved south to Phan Rang in late 1967. On 2 September 1967, the ambush of a convoy in northern II Corps Tactical Zone destroyed or damaged 30 out of 37 vehicles. The 8th Transportation Group's immediate response was to build gun trucks. However, the truck units operating out of Cam Ranh Bay would not see the need to build gun trucks for at least another year.

I Corps Tactical Zone

MACV anticipated that the NVA had planned an offensive early the next year. What they did not anticipate was when. The offensive, which began on 31 January 1968 during the agreed cease-fire in celebration of the Lunar New Year or Tet, caught the Americans completely by surprise. General William Westmoreland, in anticipation of trouble, ordered the creation of the Americal Division at Chu Lai in September 1967 and brought the 101st Airborne Division north to Bien Hoa/Phu Bai in November 1967. He also sent the 1st Cavalry Division furthest north into I Corps Tactical Zone in January 1968. I Corps belonged to the US Navy and Marines since there were no deep draft ports to sustain military operations. The area required cargo discharged over beach ramps by landing craft that was a traditional Navy/Marine relationship. The build up of Army combat forces in the zone required a reciprocal buildup of Army support units. The 39th and 57th Transportation Battalions moved north.

The 585th Medium Truck Company was one of the truck companies tasked to move north. It belonged to the 27th Transportation Battalion based at Phu Tan in northern II Corps. The company moved in two trips. On January 14, 1968, the advance party consisting of the headquarters, maintenance, and 2nd Platoon of the 585th loaded onto LST 551 at Qui Nhon and sailed to Da Nang for ultimate relocation to Camp Eagle, 101st Airborne Division base camp, Phu Bai. The remainder of the 585th joined them in March 1968 following the same procedure.

In mid April 1968, the 1st Platoon Sergeant of the 585th asked for volunteers for a convoy. He would not tell them where they were going, but said to be ready the next morning. Steve Plummer remembered, "Never before had we ever been asked to volunteer." Eight tractors and trailers drove to Phu Bai ammunition dump where six were loaded artillery

projectiles and black powder. At least two trailers were loaded with 175mm howitzer barrels.

Their mission was to deliver their cargo to Fire Base Bastogne at the mouth of the A Shau Valley, west of Phu Bai in Thua Thien Province. The drivers would have the privilege of driving the first convoy to attempt a resupply of FB Bastogne. A jeep led the convoy past Camp Eagle deeper into the jungle. The convoy soon met up with its armored escort. Tanks and M113 Armored Personnel Carriers (APC) fell in behind each tractor and trailer. The commander of the tank escort, a major, warned the drivers that the left side of the road belonged to the 101st and the right side did not. They should not stop under any circumstances or the tank behind them would push them off the side of the road.



Projos, white bag and green bag powder for Fire Base Bastogne

As the convoy snaked up a winding jungle hill, the enemy opened fire with RPGs and small arms. The tanks and PACs returned fire with everything they had. The drivers stayed in their trucks as instructed and continued up the hill and down the other side to the safety of FB Bastogne. The convoy received information that the road behind them was closed and they spread their trucks out around the camp to minimize the risk of losing all of them to one blast. The Major reminded the drivers to be ready to move out in 15 minutes at any time. They remained in camp for six days waiting for the road to reopen.

Around 24 April they left Bastogne with the same escort as before. Again they came under fire from the left side of the road on the downhill side of the mountain. The drivers returned fire out the drivers' side windows with their M14s. When they cleared the kill zone and reached the base of the mountain, the armor pulled off and the trucks pulled off the road to regroup. The rough road and heavy load took its toll on the trucks. Four of

them came in under their own power pushing or pulling the rest as the snail pace of 5 mph.

On 2 May 1968, the 39th Battalion moved to Gia Le in the I Corps Tactical Zone and fell under the 26th General Support Group that operated under US Army Support Command, Da Nang. The Battalion conducted port and beach clearance from the Naval Support Activity Tan My Ramp and Cornfield Ramp as well as long haul. The 39th Battalion would support all Army units north of Da Nang while the 57th Battalion supported the units south.

By 2 May 1968, the 39th Transportation Battalion, commanded by LTC Leland Tigh, had the following companies attached:

- 515th Transportation Company (Light Truck) "Road Runners"
- 585th Transportation Company (Medium Truck)
- 863rd Transportation Company (Light Truck)

During the period 3 to 19 August 1968, the 585th Medium Truck Company supported Operation Summerset Plain. The 585th primarily supported the 101st Airborne Division (Airmobile) fire bases in the A Shau Valley. They picked up their supplies from Hue for 101st Airborne Division. The convoys hauled supplies to the 101st Airborne Division at Fire Support Bases Birmingham and Bastogne as the division cleared the enemy out its long held position in the A Shau Valley. A Shau Valley was an enemy stronghold. The convoys ran on a 24-hour basis. This was the only area outside any safe area in Vietnam where convoys ran at night. For their support the Commanding General of the 101st Airborne Division sent a letter of appreciation of the 39th Transportation Battalion.

On 27 October 1968, the units of the 39th Transportation Battalion were called upon to move the 1st Air Cavalry Division from I Corps Zone. The trucks had to pick up the 1st Cavalry from Camp Evans and other scattered bases on short notice. The drivers again ran convoys 24-hours a day. This was the first time that night convoys drove north of the city of Hue. Because of the shortage of drivers, many drivers spend four to five days on the road without returning to their company area. The move named Operation Liberty Canyon lasted until 11 November 1968. MG George I. Forsythe, Commander of the 1st Cavalry Division, sent a letter of appreciation for the battalion's performance to the Commander of 1st Logistics Command, MG Joseph M. Heiser.

The 630th Transportation Company, a Reserve unit from Washington, Pennsylvania was ordered into active military service on 13 May 1968. It arrived in Vietnam and was attached to the 39th Transportation Battalion.

In October 1968, LTC Vincent M. Russo assumed command of the 39th Battalion which had the following units:

HHD at Gia Le.

- 515th Transportation Company (Medium Cargo) (5-ton Cargo) at Gia Le was commanded by CPT Ronald L. Ash, Sr. CPT Robert L. Poley assumed command on 27 April 1969.

585th Transportation Company (Medium Cargo) (12-ton S&P) at Gia Le was commanded by 1LT Thomas L. Tish.

630th Transportation Company (Medium Cargo) (12-ton S&P) at Camp Hochmuth was commanded by CPT David B. Ehlo then CPT David C. Wiggins assumed command on 9 March 1969.

By then the 39th Battalion supported both the 101st Airborne Division and the 3rd Naval Construction Brigade. The Navy Seabees were paving and repairing Highway 1.

Upon assumption of command, Russo realized that LTC Tigh had run the battalion into the ground. He never turned down any mission and the trucks severely needed maintenance, so Russo asked his group commander for permission to shut the battalion down for two to three days of maintenance. He had discussed this with the company commander who provided his maintenance and the commander agreed to run 24-hour maintenance operations for this two-day period. LTC Russo made friends with the chief of staff of the 101st Airborne Division and about four to six weeks in command, it was suggested that the battalion have helicopters fly over convoys. They did not have the helicopters fly dedicated support of just the convoys but flew over a large area that encompassed the port and area surrounding the routes. The aviation unit worried about their helicopters running out of fuel and Russo joked that they could ride on the back of his trailers to the place they needed to fly support. This caused a drop in convoy attacks.



Hueys flying air cover

Gia Le Combat Base received a rocket attacks on the nights of 1, 2 and 25 February 1969 with negative damage or casualties. On 10 February, 3rd Platoon, 515th Transportation Company, which was TDY to Cam Ranh Bay, transferred to the US Army Support Command, Da Nang, less personnel and equipment. The 235th Transportation Platoon less personnel and equipment transferred from the US Army Support Command, Da Nang to US Army Support Command, Cam Ranh Bay. At that time, the 515th had three hardened gun trucks. The 3rd Platoon, 57th Transportation Company was attached to the 515th on 11 February 1969.

On 27 February 1969, the 39th Battalion began supporting the 101st Airborne Division's Operation Kentucky Jumper in the A Shau Valley. The operation began with the movement of a forklift from LZ Sally to Fire Base Birmingham on 27 February. The convoys of the 39th Battalion delivered cargo from Phu Bai, Camp Eagle, Tan My, LST Ramp and Cornfield LCU Ramp to Fire Bases Birmingham and Bastogne. Birmingham

was the primary logistical base linked to the forward tactical areas. The convoys primarily hauled to Bastogne artillery ammunition and engineer material for the construction of the road to Fire Base Blaze. On 15 April, a convoy of 12 5-ton cargo trucks carrying 8-inch projectiles was the first trucks to move over the newly constructed road to Fire Base Blaze. Never had 39th Battalion trucks operated that far southwest, just five miles northeast of the A Shau Valley.

On 15 March 1969, a 585th convoy heading to Camp Blaze in the A Shau Valley was ambushed at a bend in the road after passing Fire Base Birmingham about 1100 hours in the morning. The convoy stopped and had to turn around and return to Phu Bai. It had around 40 wounded. Upon their return to Phu Bai, it was attacked that night. It was too foggy that night to call in gun ships. Fortunately, the wind shifted and the helicopters were able to fly and provided fire support.

Gia Le Combat Base underwent a rocket attacks on 16 and 24 March, 15 and 26 April 1969 with negative damage or casualties. However, ambushes on the way to Fire Bases Bastogne and Birmingham were pretty much harassment intended to damage individual vehicles rather than stop the entire convoy. On 17 April 1969, 2nd Platoon, 363rd Transportation Company returned to its parent unit.

LTC Russo gave up command of the 39th Battalion in April 1969.

The 666th Light Truck Company was detached from the 54th Battalion at Cha Rang Valley and sent north to I Corps Tactical Zone where it attached to the 39th Battalion.

After 11 months on active duty, the 630th Medium Truck Company was released from active military service and reverted back to reserve status on 9 August 1969.

In the summer of 1970, LTC Alvin C. "Big Al" Ellis replaced LTC Duset. The battalion consisted of the following units:

HHD

515th Transportation Company (Light/Medium Cargo) at Phu Bai

585th Transportation Company (Medium Cargo) at Gia Le

666th Transportation Company (Light Cargo) at Camp Evans

805th Transportation Company (Light Truck) at Phu Bai

The 666th Light Truck, commanded by CPT Grady Layton, was totally dedicated to supplying the 101st Airborne Division in the A Shau Valley. The 515th Medium Truck primarily ran a local haul mission from the Tan My Ramp at Phu Bai. The 585th Medium Truck primarily hauled Sealand containers from Da Nang to the 805th Trailer Transfer Point at Phu Bai then to the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ).

Around July and August 1970, LTC Ellis came up with an idea to increase the tonnage cleared from Tan My Ramp. He sent WO Rodney Getschman, the Maintenance Officer for the 515th, down to the Navy to pick up some fifth-wheel dollies. The Navy towed 12-ton trailers around the depot yards with 5-ton cargo trucks. Ellis had the idea to test them

on the open road. The problem was that the fifth-wheel was fixed, not floating. It had no brakes and bearings were not heavy enough for long hauls over the open road. Ellis liked the results and had Getschman pick up a few more a month later. He had trouble maintaining them and getting new bearings and had to cannibalize three to keep the others on the road.



5-ton truck towing 12-ton trailer

In December 1970, LTC Ellis picked his S-1, CPT Michael Lavin to command the 515th Light/Medium Truck Company. The fact that Lavin was an Ordnance officer made this unusual. The 515th had failed both its Command Maintenance Inspection (CMI) and Inspector General (IG) Inspection. Ellis felt that Lavin had what it took to instill discipline in the command. Lavin made a couple changes immediately. First he made where houses off limits in the camp. Second, he made punishment immediate. He would issue Article 15s within 24 hours of the infraction or not at all. In his first month of command, he issued 15 AR 15s then never had to issue another after that. He received an anonymous phone call warning him that he would be “fragged.” This did not deter him.

Lavin had the help of a truly professional first sergeant named Akasaki, from Hawaii. The two turned the company around and passed both their next CMI and IG in January and February. After the first month, the men learned that Lavin actually had a great sense of humor and was a down to earth kind of leader. All he wanted them to do was perform their duties. When a soldier celebrated his promotion with a party at the EM Club, one would go to the first sergeant and ask if SP4 Smith would attend the party. “SP4 Smith” was CPT Lavin’s *nom de guerre*. He would don a shirt with SP4 rank on it and have one drink with his men.

The 515th picked up Bob Hope at Phu Bai and drove him to Camp Eagle for his USO Christmas Show. The 515th received front row seats.



The USO show on Christmas Day 1970 saw more than 19,000 troopers jam into the Eagle Entertainment Bowl at Camp Eagle, HQ of the famed Screaming Eagles to get their "Christmas Hope". Along with Bob Hope on the tour were Cincinnati Red's catcher Johnny Bench, singers Lola Falana, Bobbi Martin and Gloria Loring, the Ding-A-Lings, the Goldiggers, Les Brown and his Band of Renown and Miss World - Jennifer Josephine Hosten.



Miss World 1970 – Jennifer Josephine Hosten - Grenada



The Goldiggers

Lam Son 719

Gathered intelligence indicated that the North Vietnamese Army was building up their logistic bases across the Laotian border in preparation for an offensive. General Creighton Abrams, Commander of MACV, anticipated that the NVA were planning a large offensive to coincide with the US national elections scheduled in 1972. To do so the enemy had to build up its supply bases early in 1971 before the rainy season slowed down traffic down the Ho Chi Minh Trail. Abrams wanted to strike first and disrupt the buildup. Since US Congress had passed a law after the US Cambodian incursion that prevented US ground troops from crossing the border again, the Army of the Republic of Vietnamese (ARVN) would have to conduct the cross-border operations. Three ARVN divisions would attack into Laos just south of the DMZ to sever the enemy supply line south. The 101st Airborne Division would reopen Route 9 to the border called Operation Dewey Canyon II. On 3 January 1971, the paratroopers reoccupied Khe Sanh. On 8 February the ARVN troops crossed the Laotian border and began Operation Lam Son 719/Dewey Canyon II. US helicopters and artillery from the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) would support the operation. The artillery set up their fire base at the abandoned Marine camp, Khe Sanh (Forward Support Area 2). The 39th Transportation Battalion

had the responsibility to supply the forward deployed troops. The east-west, QL or Route 9 was the supply route and the battalion posted two 5-ton cargo truck companies at Camp Vandergrift (Forward Support Activity 1). The operation would begin on 30 January 1971.

The 515th moved to Vandergrift on 31 January. The 515th would pick up the cargo from Camp Eagle and deliver it to Vandergrift. Because it had only one gun truck, the company was loaned one M113. CPT Lavin liked to drive it to Khe Sanh. On 1 February, the battalion began line haul operations between Quang Tri Combat Support Base (CSB) and FSA 1 at CSB Vandergrift. On the next day, the battalion extended the line haul mission to FSA 2 at Khe Sanh and the 506th Transportation Detachment established a Trailer Transfer Point at Vandergrift.



Moving to Vandergrift



A fortified personal hootch

For this operation the 39th Transportation Battalion was attached to the 8th Transportation Group which moved its headquarters from Qui Nhon to Quang Tri. The 585th Medium Truck Company moved to Tan My Ramp and the battalion headquarters moved to Vandergrift on 16 February. The 585th Medium Truck Company would pick up cargo at Tan My Ramp and deliver it to Camp Eagle near Quang Tri.

The road to Vandergrift was a two-lane paved road through a valley of tall elephant grass. From there, a narrow, single lane, unimproved dirt road snaked along the ridge with a river 50 to 100 feet below. Because the road past Vandergrift could only support 2 ½ and 5-ton cargo trucks, the 39th Battalion would need another light truck company to operate out of Vandergrift.



Single lane road with elephant grass on either side, capable of concealing anything and anybody

In January 1971, CPT Donald Voightritter's 523rd Light Truck Company received orders to move from its home in Cha Rang Valley north to Camp Vandergrift along the coastal Highway (QL) 1 in the I Corps Tactical Zone in preparation for Operation Lam Son 719.

By 1971, the gun truck design and doctrine had reached fruition. Experimentation had ended. The 515th had Baby Sitters, the 585th had Hardcore and the 805th had Lil' Sure Shot. The 523rd Transportation Company (Medium Truck), which had run line haul up the most ambushed road in Vietnam, Route 19 in the Central Highlands, brought six gun trucks; Satan's Lil' Angel, Ace of Spades, Black Widow, Uncle Meat, King Kong and Eve of Destruction. Each of the three platoons had two gun trucks. By then, new crew members were volunteers selected by consensus of the other crew members. The gun truck crews felt elite but the 523rd believed that by assigning two gun trucks to each platoon, rather than to their own platoon, they felt more like members of the company. They lived with the drivers who they had to protect. Since they were the best, much was expected of them and if they failed to defend the trucks then they would have to face their brothers when they returned to the barracks at night.



Gun Truck "Baby Steps"



Gun Truck "Lil Sure Shot"



Gun Truck "Ace of Spades"



Gun Truck "Black Widow"



Gun Truck "Uncle Meat"



Gun Truck "King Kong"



Gun Truck "Eve of Destruction"

http://www.transchool.lee.army.mil/museum/transportation_museum/harden.htm

"Eve of Destruction" being shipped to Ft Eustis from Viet Nam – probably the only Viet Nam Gun Truck to come back to CONUS

This late in the war, there was a shortage of Transportation Corps officers. Second lieutenants made first lieutenant in one year then captain in the next. The rapid promotion and other duties caused a shortage of lieutenants in the truck companies. The burden of leading convoys fell heavily on the NCOs. However, during 1970, the Army assigned three infantry officers to the 523rd. 1LT Ralph Fuller, an airborne Ranger qualified infantry officer, had recently served in the 25th Infantry Division but when it was inactivated, he still had part of his one-year tour to complete, so he, like many of its officers who had not completed their one-year tours, was assigned to the 523rd. Fuller also had 15 years prior service as an enlisted man. 2LTs Jim Baird and Tom Callahan had both graduated from OCS 2-70 and were assigned directly to the 523rd. The only logical reason they could conclude why the Army assigned infantry officers to truck companies were the gun trucks. This hinted that the Army felt that gun trucks were a combat arms mission. For whatever reason they were assigned there, the officers identified with the gun trucks and loved the men who crewed them. As combat arms officers they felt their place was on the road. Many preferred to ride in the gun trucks, endearing them with the crews.

CPT Donald Voightritter commanded the company. He was a fair and respected officer. His brother Ronald, another TC officer, had already earned the Silver Star Medal for valor. The personality of commanders defines the character of their commands. Voightritter created an atmosphere of mutual respect and camaraderie. This was the strongest asset of the company. The officers would discuss informally with the gun truck crews what they had done during ambushes. No two ambushes were the same and the gun truck crews reacted differently to each one. These discussions inspired confidence with the lieutenants in their crews.

While CPT Voightritter closed down the company at Qui Nhon, he sent the trucks north under the responsibility of LT Fuller. When he received instructions to lead the convoy north, he had no idea what was going on. He confessed that to his men and asked them what he had to do. They liked him even more after that and would not let him fail.

The convoy consisted of over a hundred trucks and all six gun trucks in the company. The convoy spent the night at Da Nang. Fuller told everyone to write home. The next day they convoyed to Quang Tri. Once at Quang Tri, the company became attached to LTC Alvin Ellis' 39th Battalion. The battalion became known as "Big Al and his Money Makers."

There CPT Voightritter joined up with his 523rd. They received instructions to paint over the yellow noses on their trucks. At about 10:00 in the morning, the convoy left for Camp Vandergrift.

The convoy turned left at Dong Ha and paralleled the DMZ along Route 9. They arrived at Vandergrift about one week after the 515th. Vandergrift was located in a valley surrounded on three sides by higher ground. They spent the night at Vandergrift. Meanwhile the engineers had reopened the road between Vandergrift and Khe Sanh. Khe Sanh had not been occupied since the Marines evacuated it in 1968. The road to Khe Sanh was a winding road with hairpin turns.

The demand for supplies required the two light truck companies to deliver cargo around the clock, day and night. To prevent driving off the road at night, the trucks rolled with their lights on giving the enemy ample warning of their arrival. The steep slopes with thick jungle vegetation growing right up to the road made this ideal ambush terrain. During Lam Son, the guerrillas stepped up the frequency and ferocity of their attacks ambushes hoping to starve off the American support.

The advance party of the 572nd Medium Truck left Newport by LST in December 1970. It had belonged to the 6th Battalion at Long Binh. The rest of the company arrived a few weeks later and set up operations at Quang Tri. It was attached to the 39th Battalion from 29 January to 15 February. It acquired the name "Gypsy Bandits" because the company was relocated all over Vietnam. After 15 February, it was then attached to the 57th Battalion. From Quang Tri the 572nd delivered cargo to FSA I and FSA II. Although not a part of the battalion, the 528th Quartermaster Petroleum Supply Company delivered fuel to the forward base camps under the escort of 39th Battalion gun trucks.

From 16 February, the 39th Battalion had control of the following companies:

C/23rd S&T Company (5-ton cargo)

57th Transportation Company (Medium Truck)

515th Transportation Company (Medium Truck) at Vandergrift

523rd Transportation Company (Light Truck) at Vandergrift

666th Transportation Company (Light Truck) at Gia Le

XXIV Corps Company (Provisional)

FLC LT Truck (USMC)

506th Transportation Detachment (Terminal Transfer Point)

On 16 February, the 57th Transportation Battalion assumed the line haul mission to Vandergrift as well as other missions of the 39th Battalion. The 666th Light Truck, however, continued its direct and general support mission to the 101st Airborne Division. The 57th Medium Truck Company had three gun trucks: The Justifier, The Assassins, and The Protector.

The 523rd Light Truck convoyed to Khe Sanh. It was an eerie place. There were no remnants of any structures left as the engineers had bulldozed the entire camp down when the marines evacuated. Only tall grass and thick dust covered the area. The drivers did see lots of little parachutes for flares hanging in trees without foliage. The trucks off loaded their cargo on the PSP. C-130 aircraft began to land on the once again operational air strip. Khe Sanh became the forward logistic base for operations. From there, the convoys delivered fuel and ammunition.

The living conditions were very austere at the camps. At Khe Sanh, the men simply dug holes and lived like moles when they remained over night. At Vandergrift, they could at least erect tents and sleep above ground. The 515th Company set up GP Large for its headquarters and most of the men slept in the Bedrock Hotel, a bunker with a solid aircraft landing sheet as a deck and protected vents to see the outside. Other than that, there were few amenities that they had become accustomed to at their original base camps.

Route 9 was the life line for the ARVN offensive and American support. As soon as line haul operations began, the NVA made a concerted effort to shut down the supply line with ambushes. The thick jungle that grew right up to the road made it ideal for ambushes and the fact that convoys had to run both day and night made ambushes easier. The 1st Brigade, 5th Mechanized Infantry Division had responsibility for the security of that section of the road.

During the big push, the 523rd received a priority call for a night convoy to the border. An artillery unit was nearly out of ammunition. If they did not reach the artillery fire base by 6:00 in the morning then the unit would be out of ammunition. Fuller briefed his drivers. It was a critical convoy and they only had to take two right turns. They had to be real quiet.

The Eve of Destruction and Uncle Meat were in Fuller's platoon. Fuller was especially fond of the gun truck crews. He liked to ride with them instead of in his 3/4-ton gun jeep, Daughter of Darkness. He felt better when he could stand up and look out. At night he would string his hammock between the two gun trucks to sleep.

The convoy started out at around 10:00 that night with nearly a hundred vehicles. Fuller rode in the Eve in the back of the convoy. After a couple of hours on the road, they reached the intersection where they were supposed to turn right and cross the bridge. The trucks behind the Eve took the wrong turn in the dark. Fuller called ahead to the convoy commander, "Six, be advise that the cargo truck behind me took a left." The Eve raced back down the road and caught up with the lead truck. Fuller told them to turn around. The trucks turned around and Fuller called ahead to Uncle Meat to be watching for them. They reached the fire base just before first light. Sure enough the artillery unit had exhausted all its ammunition. The convoy had their replacement ammunition.

The Eve led out on the return trip. Uncle Meat closed up the rear of the convoy. Fuller heard an explosion. Uncle Meat had run over a mine and blew out its left rear duals and air tank. David Rose, the driver, climbed out of the cab to assess the damage. David was a draftee from California. No one was seriously injured but the axle was resting on the ground. They could not drive with it in that condition. The Eve came back. Fuller got out and checked the area. He saw the sandal tracks of a lone VC who had planted the mine. He did not expect more but knew they could not stay in the area long. He told the crew of Uncle Meat to blow up the truck so they enemy could not use it and abandon it. The crew felt too loyal to their gun truck to abandon it to the enemy. David Rose told his lieutenant, "Give us a minute, sir." He had an idea. He had seen an old Western where a wheel on a wagon had broken and the axle was also resting on the ground. They used ropes and tied up the axle so it would not drag. They tried the same with Uncle Meat. They chained up the axle to the frame and hooked up the gun truck to a tow truck. They towed Uncle Meat all the way back to Vendergrift after the convoy stopped at Khe Sanh. The crew disconnected the gun box and placed it on the frame of a new truck. Uncle Meat was operational again.

Around 19 February, 2LT Baird had been sent back to Phu Bai to pick up 17 brand new 5-ton trucks. They returned after dark. The convoy doctrine at the time was to limit convoys to no more than 30 trucks with a gun truck ratio of 1:10. Uncle Meat led the convoy with King Kong in the middle and Satan's Lil' Angel in the rear. All gun trucks had three M2 .50 caliber machineguns. The M2 .50 was the most successful design in American weapons and had seen very little change in its design since its original issue in 1919. This time Baird rode close to the rear in a 3/4-ton gun jeep with twin M60 machineguns. He noticed that some Transportation Corps officers preferred to ride up front. He knew that if there was trouble it would invariably occur in the rear and that is where the key decisions would be made. If an ambush split the convoy, by doctrine the trucks out of the kill zone would continue to role of to the next security check point or camp. If the convoy commander was in the lead then the commander in would be unable to make the key decisions for the rest of the convoy either trapped in the kill zone or

behind. 1LT David R. Wilson was killed trying to reenter the kill zone in an unprotected jeep.

It was dark on 20 February as the convoy neared Camp Vandergrift. The mountain ridge to the south came within yards of Highway 9 and a valley of tall elephant grass covered the valley to the ridge line to the north. Around midnight a mile and a half from their destination, Baird heard an explosion followed by an intense volume of small arms fire from the jungle on the ridge to his left. An RPG had struck Satan's Lil' Angel's gun box from the north side of the road, killing right rear gunner, SP4 Richard B. Frazier, and wounded left rear gunner and NCOIC, SGT Chester Israel. Small arms fire shot out the tires of the gun truck. The NVA had learned to take out the gun trucks first before they went after the rest of the trucks. Without a crew to fire back, the driver of Satan's Lil' Angel drove his truck on rims out of the kill zone.

Baird raced ahead and passed a disabled 5-ton cargo truck in the ditch. He ordered his driver to stop so they could check on the driver. They came to a halt a hundred feet ahead of the truck. He did not want to leave the disabled truck until he was sure that its driver was safe. To do so required him to wait in the middle of the kill zone. As soon as his gunner tried to return fire, both M60s failed to fire. Evidently, he had put the gas plugs in backwards when he reassembled them. The three men only had one M79 grenade launcher and their M16s to defend against an NVA company. Baird immediately radioed the two lead gun trucks and told them to come back. The one thing that Baird could depend on was the loyalty of his gun truck to rescue him or any other truck in trouble.

Neither the crew of Uncle Meat nor King Kong had heard the gun fire behind them. The majority of the convoy had continued to Vandergrift as nothing had happened. Uncle Meat had already entered the compound and King Kong had just made the right hand turn into Vandergrift when they heard Baird's call for help. Immediately backed up, turned around and raced as fast as their trucks would let them back to the kill zone.

Baird knew his gun truck crews and had confidence in their judgment. He also knew that too much jabber on the radio would cause confusion and tie up the radio net. He quickly and precisely informed the gun trucks of the situation. Satan's Lil' Angel had been hit, his gun jeep and one 5-ton were still in the kill zone. The crews asked which side of the road the enemy was on and Baird informed them that he was taking small arms fire from the ridge to his south and the field of elephant grass to his north. The enemy was close enough to throw hand grenades at his vehicle. He then quit talking. He would count on their judgment as what to do.

Ten minutes of steady small arms fire had elapsed since the beginning of the ambush. By then Baird was taking fire from both sides of the road. Enemy was closing in from the elephant grass while others fired down on them from the ridge to the south. His gunner, Downer, tapped him on the shoulder and said, "I see one. What do I do?" Baird turned, looked back down the road and saw an enemy soldier about 15 meters away on a berm alongside the road loading an RPG. He told his gunner to shoot him. The gunner fired his M79 grenade launcher at him. The enemy soldier was too close for the 40mm

grenade to arm in flight. It struck him with enough velocity to either kill or incapacitate him, because he did not fire his rocket.

Around ten minutes after the initiation of the ambush, King Kong raced up to their convoy commander's $\frac{3}{4}$ -ton, parking right in front of it at an angle facing to the north. Uncle Meat similarly parked near Satan's Lil' Angel. Baird was never as glad as when he saw the tracers of those .50s. There was a reassurance that everything would turn out alright. He knew his gun truck crews knew what to do. Baird called on the radio, "They're in the ditches. They're in the ditches." The gunners on the Kong swung their .50s around and sprayed the ditches.

The success of an ambush depended upon surprise and extreme violence. The gun truck crews had learned to turn the fight back on the enemy as fast as they could with even more violence. This would take the psychological advantage away from the enemy forcing them to break contact. The .50s blazed away in four to six round bursts at the muzzle flashes to their left and right. The gunners poured 30-weight oil from plastic canteens to help cool the barrels and ensure the smooth function of their breaches after firing off about three to four boxes of ammunition.

An RPG hit the rear duals right and exploded in all the colors of the rainbow under left rear gunner, James Cochran, knocking him backwards on Larson who manned the right .50. Cochran then jumped back up, grabbed his .50 and went back to work. King Kong was an APC gun truck. Large chunks of hot shrapnel had come up through the aluminum floor of the hull and lodged in the top of the box right under his machinegun. One piece of shrapnel had burned a hole in the charging handle and others had left five or six holes in the barrel, but it still fired.

The one advantage to fighting at night, the gunners fired in the direction of the enemy muzzle flashes, which betrayed their positions. There was no concealment in the dark once one fired his weapon.

The tactic worked. After about ten minutes of firing, Uncle Meat and King Kong had turned the fight back on the enemy and they broke contact. During the fight, the driver of the disabled 5-ton had run to his convoy commander's vehicle. That close to Vandergrift, Uncle Meat loaded the wounded from Satan's Lil' Angel into their gun truck then drove off the road and backed up to Baird's vehicle. The drive shaft had broken and the vehicle could not drive. The crew of Uncle Meat hooked up the $\frac{3}{4}$ -ton to Uncle Meat, which towed it into Vandergrift. The two gun trucks that came to the rescue also received damage but could roll under their own power. After the initial volley of fire, no other casualties were taken. King Kong limped back to Vandergrift on its rims.

The sweep of the area the next day discovered four enemy dead and one wounded NVA soldier 25 meters from the road. The enemy usually made great effort to recover their dead and conceal their losses, so no one could accurately determine the total enemy losses. These were the only confirmed enemy kills by the 39th Transportation Battalion Soldiers during Lam Son 719.

On 12 March, Lieutenant Baird led a convoy from Vandergrift to Khe Sanh. Just in case the enemy tried to ambush a convoy, the detail left behind kept a reaction force. Fuller had all the gun trucks lined up ready to go.

A B-40 rocket hit the gun truck, Proud America, between the cab and the gun box on the driver's side mortally wounding the driver, SP4 Robert W. Thorne. Thorne steered the truck into the hillside instead of down the steep cliff into the creek. This saved the rest of the crew. Unfortunately, LT Baird had been kneeling by the radio mounted in the left front corner of the box when the rocket hit. He received multiple fragmentary wounds and lost his left arm.

Fuller heard the call, "contact, contact, contact," on the radio and led his convoy of gun trucks. He rode in the Daughter of Darkness. An engineer stopped him saying that there was an ambush up the road. They drove past. Lieutenant Callahan laid Baird on a stretcher and drove him to a better location near the bridge for the medevac helicopter to land. The helicopter arrived but was afraid to land, instead, the men lifted the stretcher up to the bird. Fuller told the medevac crew, "Take care of him. He was a good one." They placed Thorne's body in the Black Widow and took it back to Vandergrift.

Route 9 followed a stream with a steep back. A few weeks after Thorne was killed, the ground along the side of the road gave way enroute to Khe Sanh and the Ace of Spade went over the side and rolled to the bottom. The driver was killed. Others recovered the weapons but abandoned the truck and gun box.

An average of 80 sorties ran from Vandergrift to Khe Sanh a day and some days the number reached as high as 265. The gun trucks made the daily runs several times. The 5th Mech had a difficult time keeping the enemy away from the convoys. The convoys of the 39th Battalion were ambushed 23 times along Route 9. On one occasion the battalion commander of the security force personally assured Ellis that the road between Quang Tri and Vandergrift was so secure that one could walk along it with his wife. Two hours later the enemy ambushed a convoy two kilometers east of Vandergrift. The gun trucks ensured the convoys got through. The 39th Battalion had also received four M113 armored personnel carriers (APC) for escort. The 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) assumed responsibility for the security of Route 9 on 28 March. The division provided constant aerial support to locate the enemy and strategically located armored vehicles to provide instant reaction. This minimized the attacks on convoys.

Lam Son 719 ended on 4 April 1971 as a failure. The ARVN attacks became bogged down claiming the lack of American helicopter support as the reason. CPT Lavin drove his APC to Khe Sanh to monitor vehicle spacing as they abandoned the camp. The Americans abandoned everything and 600 trucks left with empty loads. Lavin's M113 was the last vehicle to leave Khe Sanh. The 515th remained at Vandergrift for three to five days waiting for clearance to leave. Lavin was instructed to clean out the CONEX bunker, burn the latrine and get rid of any 155m projectiles. He rolled the projectiles in

puddles, made a deal with a local Vietnamese to trade the metal in the bunker for soda then set the latrine on fire.

Although the ARVN offensive failed to disrupt the NVA buildup, the 39th Battalion overcame tremendous odds to deliver the cargo to the forward camps. The drivers lived in austere conditions, drove around the clock and encountered 23 ambushes. As a testament to their heroism, the battalion awarded 4 Silver Star Medals, 20 Bronze Star Medals with V, 37 Bronze Star Medals, 10 ARCOMs with V, 108 ARCOMs and 36 Purple Heart Medals during this two and a half month operation. The gun trucks took a beating. King King was damaged by an RPG. The Protector was destroyed early in the operation and Satan's Lil' Angel and the Ace of Spades were destroyed several times. Hardcore took an RPG in the driver's compartment. It and the Ace were rebuilt.

Upon return, the men found time to relax and celebrate. The 523rd returned to the engineer compound at Phu Bai. There the soldiers took delight simple things like hearing a toilet flush. They had stage shows with Korean dancers. CPT Lavin had created a company slush fund selling beer and sodas. With the \$1,000 profit, the 515th hired a band with women, bought a pig to roast, had the engineers build picnic tables and had a big party. CPT Lavin's tour was due to end on 20 April 1971. He turned the company over to 1LT Maloney and returned home.

The battalion moved its headquarters back to Phu Bai by the end of May. It was left with the following units:

- 515th Transportation Company (Light/Medium Cargo) at Phu Bai
- 523rd Transportation Company (Light Truck) at Phu Bai
- 585th Transportation Company (Medium Cargo) at Phu Bai
- 666th Transportation Company (Light Cargo) at Camp Eagle and one platoon at Camp Evans
- 805th Transportation Company (Light Truck) at Phu Bai

The officers and enlisted men of the 523rd thought highly of CPT Voightritter. It was so hot in the cab of the truck that David Rose did not wear a shirt. With the canvas hood on, it was often twenty degrees hotter inside the cab. He just wore the flak vest. A general officer opened Rose's truck one day and saw that the driver was out of uniform. Voightritter defended Rose by asking the general to get up in the truck and ride with him. Rose considered his company commander was "rock solid." They developed a similar respect for their courageous infantry platoon leaders. These officers never avoided convoys and always placed themselves where they could best respond to danger. These officers and men developed a bond that lasted a life time.

CPT Voightritter knew the end of an era was had come. He had the forethought to put in the appropriate paperwork to send one gun truck back to the Transportation Center at Fort Eustis. He chose the Eve of Destruction because he felt that it represented the best proven design of a gun truck. It had the double steel walls with air gap, four .50 caliber machineguns and steel windshield with bullet proof glass. He wanted future generations

to have an example of a Vietnam gun truck. The Eve was loaded up in June 1971 and arrived at Fort Eustis in July.

At the close of the operation, the battalion began an extensive trailer repair program. They maintenance personnel had to repair 200 trailers at Phu Bai. The maintenance crews worked 24-hour operation with completion by 1 June.

Fuller claimed that the 523rd also had the highest operational readiness rate in Vietnam. He placed a lot of emphasis on maintenance. His maintenance warrant officer ran superb maintenance out of the "523rd Speed Shop." He had as many as 14 soldiers to keep up with changing tires. Voightritter also had another trick. The operational readiness rate was based upon how many tucks staged every morning. It did not matter if they broke down afterwards. So Voightritter had his warrant officer line all the vehicles up at night. After Fuller inspected the vehicles with the MPs, the warrant officer towed the broken vehicles back to the motor pool.

That year the gun trucks, Ace of Spades and Uncle Meat, and a V-100, Catch 22, provided security for the 1971 Bob Hope Christmas Show.

The Tet Offensive of 1968 although a military victory, had soured the American public support for the war in Vietnam. President Richard M. Nixon was elected in the election that year to get Americans out of the war. Troop withdrawals began in 1969, however a peace agreement would be signed until 1972. As combat units began to draw down and leave Vietnam, so did the need for support troops. The 39th Battalion was pulled out of Vietnam and inactivated at Fort Lewis, Washington, on 10 March 1972. The 515th Truck Company was inactivated on 20 March. That month the NVA invaded I Corps Tactical Zone as planned and reached Quang Tri by March.

Establishment of a Transportation Battalion Headquarters in Europe

In the early-1980's the United States Army Europe (USAREUR) recognized its readiness shortfalls in the movement control arena and resource actions were processed to acquire uniformed units and other force structure to meet the most critical needs. The needs were identified in the USAREUR Transportation Operational and Organizational Plan or TROOP. One of the most sweeping organizational changes was the conversion of table of distribution and allowances (TDA) movement control teams to modified table of organization and equipment (MTOE) movement control teams. Additionally, TROOP identified the need to have adequate headquarters to command and control several subordinate movement control teams and highway regulating teams. The TROOP plan proposed that two of the three existing movement region headquarters under the 4th TRANSCOM convert to MTOE 55-500 Team AD (Battalion Headquarters) with an assigned MTOE 55-580 LD Team (Movement Control) to serve as the movement region operation center. As TROOP was implemented in 1985 the existing 2nd Movements Region, located at Rhine Ordnance Barracks, Kaiserslautern, Germany, was converted from a TDA to an MTOE organization. The 2nd MR had three subordinate movement control teams in Kaiserslautern, Mannheim, and Idar Oberstein; three Highway

Regulating Teams in Karlsruhe, Saarbrucken, and Koblenz; and two Rail Movements Offices in Karlsruhe and Saarbrucken.

While USAREUR was implementing the necessary changes to the movement control organizational structure in the mid-1980's, US Army TRADOC and the United States Army Transportation Center was concurrently studying movement control doctrine and identified similar requirements needed throughout the Army. One of the outcomes was to establish transportation battalion headquarters as the basis for command and control over movement control teams. Suffice it to say, a number of distinguished transportation battalions were inactivated following heroic service during World War II, the Korean War and the Vietnam War, many of which remain on inactive status today. In early 1985, it was determined that the 2nd Movements Region Headquarters would be renamed the 39th Transportation Battalion. Officially, on 16 February 1986, after 14 years on inactive status, the 39th Transportation Battalion (Movement Control) was reactivated at Rhine Ordnance Barracks assuming the mission of the 2nd Movements Region.

Changes to the Organization (1986-2004)

COL Thomas F. Young, the commander, 1st Transportation Movement Control Agency, hosted the ceremony to mark the activation of the 39th Transportation Battalion (MC) on 8 April 1986. The colors of the 39th Transportation Battalion were unfurled on the Rhine Ordnance Barracks parade field by LTC John G. Benton and CSM Roger McCain. In addition to the existing 2nd Movements Region organization, the Air Terminal Movement Control Team at Ramstein was assigned to the battalion. Additional operating locations for the Branch Movement Control Teams (BMCT) assigned to various MCT's were in Zwiebruecken, Pirmasens, and Worms, Germany; Chiveres, Belgium; and Nahbollenbach, The Netherlands.

The 39th Transportation Battalion organization remained unchanged for eight years. As the US Forces in Europe began to draw down following the collapse of the Iron Curtain and at the conclusion of the Gulf War, changes forthcoming would transform the composition of the battalion for a decade. Upon the inactivation of the VII US Corps, so too was inactivated the 229th Corps Movement Control Center. In 1992, the 39th Transportation Battalion was assigned the movement control team in Stuttgart, Germany and its associated subordinate activities in Stuttgart, Heilbronn and Augsburg. In 1994, the MCT Stuttgart and MCT Idar-Oberstein inactivated and the activities that remained operational fell under the supervision of MCT Kaiserslautern and MCT Mannheim. In 1995, the battalion headquarters relocated from Rhine Ordnance Barracks to Kleber Kaserne in Kaiserslautern, Germany and changes continued.

From 1995 through 1997, several of the small activities either inactivated or relocated and the battalion gained two additional movement control teams. The first was MCT Rotterdam and the subordinate BMCT in activities in Bremerhaven and Chievers, Belgium. The second was the establishment of the MCT in direct support of 37th TRANSCOM's Theater Distribution Center, a mission oriented versus area oriented

MCT. After the changes through 1997, the 39th Transportation Battalion's area of responsibility had grown to an AOR through Central and Northern Germany and the BENELUX countries. In 2002, organizational changes in the structure of movement control teams throughout the Army resulted in reactivating several Vietnam era transportation units and assigning them MCT responsibilities. The following numbered transportation detachments were assigned to the 39th Transportation Battalion in 2002:

- 606th Transportation Detachment (Area MCT) Mannheim, Germany
- 612th Transportation Detachment (Area MCT) Kaiserslautern, Germany
- 618th Transportation Detachment (Area MCT) Kaiserslautern, Germany
- 623rd Transportation Detachment (Port MCT) Rotterdam, The Netherlands
- 624th Transportation Detachment (Port MCT) Ramstein Air Base, Germany

Just as the US Army downsized in Europe through much of the 1990's, the German Defense Forces and the host nation transportation support structure downsized and reorganized as well. At the end of 2003, the German Army reorganized the regional WBK structure in place to provide convoy and special movement permits to military forces moving through their specific regions. As a result, all convoy and special movement permits are now consolidated at the German Logistics Center in Wilhelmshaven, Germany and in doing so eliminated the need for each highway movement regulating team throughout Germany. The need for a US Army close coordination with this new organization remained and the Transportation and Logistics Liaison Office (TLLO) located in Wilhelmshaven was established as a subordinate activity to the Support Operation Section of the 39th Transportation Battalion Headquarters. Similarly, over the past decade and with the privatization of the German National Railroad, all of the Rail Movement Management Teams from throughout the battalion are now inactivated and the functionality of rail planning and DB interface is consolidated in the Battalion Support Operations Section.

Recognizing the need for additional movement control teams in support of global requirements, the 486th Transportation Detachment (Area MCT) was reassigned from a direct support MCT to the 1st TMCA Headquarters to the 39th Transportation Battalion. As of June 2005, in addition to the operating locations of the assigned Movement Control Teams, the battalion also has activities in the cities of Germersheim, Stuttgart, Bremerhaven, and Wilhelmshaven, Germany; Schinnen, The Netherlands; and Chievres, Belgium.

TDA Augmentation to Battalion Headquarters and Movement Control Teams

In addition to establishing a military MTOE to support movement control in Europe, one of the proposals in the TROOP plan was to maintain a comprehensive TDA augmentation to each transportation battalion headquarters, MCT, BMCT, HMCT and RMMT. This extensive network of local national employees provides the military command structure with expertise in the areas of host nation transportation and implementation of the USAREUR Movement Control System. The 39th Transportation Battalion Headquarters has a Senior Traffic Manager as the principle advisor to the battalion commander, a traffic manager in the support operations section and a small cell of transportation

specialists in the support operations section. Each MCT has a traffic manager and assigned transportation specialists to support the mission of the numbered MCT's assigned AOR. BMCTs have transportation specialists assigned to support the units, activities and agencies that use the USAREUR Movement Control System. As HMCTs and RMMTs were eliminated, the employees working within those organizations have been reassigned throughout the battalion.

“39th Transportation Battalion in Support of OEF.”

By CPT Tom Reigeluth and CPT Bryan Bellamy

On 12 April 2004, the 39th Transportation Battalion Headquarters deployed to Bagram, Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF). The 39th deployed with 10 personnel and their organic 618th Movement Control Team (MCT) from Germany to replace the 330th Movement Control Battalion (MCB). This was the first movement control battalion to be deployed for a twelve-month duration in support of OEF. The unit fell directly under the Joint Logistics Command (JLC) (25th Infantry Division DISCOM) who provided direct combat logistical service support to the Combined Joint Task Force-76, Afghanistan (CJTF-76). The 39th Transportation Battalion mission was to control the movements of personnel, units and material within, and out of the CJTF-76 AOR and ensure effective and efficient use of all available fixed wing, rotary wing and commercial transportation assets.

The 39th Transportation Battalion worked in a combined joint logistic environment where they had Air Force, Marines and contractors directly attached to the unit. To complete their mission, the 39th Transportation Battalion had three Area Movement Control Teams that were task organized with three Cargo Documentation Teams, and two Cargo Transfer Platoons dispersed throughout the Combined Joint Operation Afghanistan (CJOA) in Bagram (BAF), Kandahar (KAF), Salerno (SAL), and Shindand. The battalion also had a contractor run MCT in Karshi-Kanabad (K2), Uzbekistan and three MCT Liaison teams that were located in Rhein Main AB, Germany, Manas AB, Kyrgyzstan, and Arifjan, Kuwait. The 39th MCB had a total of 213 airmen, soldiers, marines, and civilians working in 5 different countries to support Operation Enduring Freedom.

To handle their tasks they ran 24 hour operations, 7 days a week for the full 12 months they were deployed. The battalion was divided into an air & surface section, along with a plans section and two battle captains. Daily, the battalion was directly responsible for validating movement requests from all CJTF-76 components. They provided daily ITV to the JLC Commander for strategic moves, sensitive cargo and sustainment as requested. They coordinated, scheduled, tracked and reported the flow of forces into and out of the CJOA through the TPFFD process. Coordinated onward movement and delivery of containers where they dealt directly with commercial carriers, SDDC, DLA, and 1st TMCA. They were also the container manager for all containers within the CJTF-76 CJOA, which consisted of over 10,000 containers. Finally, they were JLC's "green sheet" authority for expediting mission essential sensitive cargo into the CJOA. To accomplish such a broad and diverse mission the battalion relied heavily on the support of its MCTs.

The 618th MCT located in BAF and the 960th MCT located in KAF were responsible for the management, control, and tracking of all air and surface transportation requirements in their AO. To complete their mission each MCT had a Cargo Documentation Team (CDT) and a Cargo Transfer Platoon attached to their unit. These attached team/platoons were instrumental in handling the high volume of sustainment containers, deployment and redeployment equipment that passed through their respective logistical hub. The 870th MCT and the 873rd CDT were originally located in K2, but were reorganized to stand-up a MCT in forward operating base Salerno, to provide air and surface movement control to the RC East Region (Kowst Bowl) of the CJOA. The “Shindand MCT” was organized at the mid-point of the deployment, after green on green fighting occurred in the late summer of 04. They provided movement control support in RC West Region of the CJOA; this MCT had 8 soldiers that were pulled from the BAF MCT.

The K2 MCT, which was made up entirely of contracted KBR civilians, and the four LNO teams were largely responsible for providing MCT support and guidance in their AO. They were detrimental in keeping the battalion headquarters informed about all the missions and movements that were to enter or depart the CJOA through their respective AO. The LNO teams were made up from the MCTs located throughout the theatre and allowed soldiers an opportunity to work in different and unique locations during the deployment.

The 39th Transportation Battalion accomplished an incredible amount during their 12 month deployment in support of OEF. When they arrived to the CJOA they hit the ground running as they were immediately tasked with several missions that they flawlessly executed. The first mission they undertook was the coordinating, tracking, and reporting of the 10th Infantry Division’s redeployment and the 25th Infantry Division’s deployment. This involved the onward movement of over 26,000 pax and the coordination and transportation of over 2,700 pieces of equipment. During the relief in place (RIP) the battalion also provided reception, staging and onward movement support to the 22 Marine Expeditionary Unit Deployment landing in KAF (2,200 passengers and 350 pieces) and the Jordanian Special Operation Force Deployment (200 passengers and 30 pieces). These are a prime example of the multiple complex missions the MCT’s and the battalion would handle throughout their deployment.

A key success factor for the battalion was flexibility. This was attributed to its ability to reorganize and task organize for effective transportation support as the dynamic of the Afghanistan theatre changed throughout the deployment. When 10th Mountain arrived in 2003 their mission was to eradicate the Taliban, Al Quaida and HIQ cells and bring peace and stability to Afghanistan. By the time 25th ID took over in 2004, their mission turned to developing a more structured, stable and logistically supported theatre, where they still went out and hunted down terrorist cells, but they also offered a long term solution toward peace and prosperity; supporting the first national election in over 40 years was a perfect example of their goals. To offer this security the theatre had to move to a more economical logistic support where they no longer relied solely on fix-wing and rotary wing to support their FOBs. They had to develop multiple lines of communications that included surface support. This action relied heavily on the local commercial carriers to

provide this support. The battalion's experience with movement control in Germany was a key to turning the theatre from a non-doctrinal to doctrinal movement control theatre where the coordination and control of limited transportation assets became essential.

The MCB was extremely valuable in offering its expertise and supporting the growing CJOA. When CJTF-76 established a logistical hub in Salerno, to effectively support the RC East Region, where many FOBs were located along the Afghan/Pakistan border; the battalion sent a nine man team to stand-up a provisional MCT. The team took direct control over both the fix-wing and rotary wing support operations and the surface operations in Salerno. The MCB was also essential in coordinating and establishing Shindand FOB, which supported Afghan National Army and Special Forces soldiers that were sent to quell the green on green fighting that took place in western Afghanistan. In less than 48 hours, they planned, scheduled and tracked 30 flights of over 200 short tons of equipment to support the Shindand FOB; then deployed an 8 man team to provide MCT support to the region. Finally, the battalion was also able to support missions outside the CJTF-76 realm. They sent a four person team to Jacobabad, Pakistan to assist the Air Force in the movement of over 450 pieces of equipment to over 5 different countries, in order to help them close their air base prior to the December deadline. Just another stunning example of the support the battalion gave to all components in the CJOA.

One of the most complex and difficult missions the battalion took on was the commercial container management. Prior to their arrival there was absolutely no container management or control of commercial movement from the port. The lack of control was costing the government millions of dollars a day as the commercial carriers charged them for container demurrage. Through the SDDC counterparts and commercial shipping firms, the battalion was responsible for calling forward commercial sustainment containers from the port of Karachi, tracking their movement and closing out their arrival to bases. They were then responsible for tracking every container that remained in the country ensuring they were pushed back to the carrier as soon as possible to avoid expensive demurrage charges. The task of container management was centralized at the battalion headquarters where on average over 10,000 containers a day were tracked and eventually returned to the commercial company; saving the government millions of dollars and supported the CJOAs vast sustainment requirements.

The 39th Transportation Battalion had an incredible impact on the success of the CJTF-76 operations. During a year where Afghanistan took great strides toward becoming a free and stable country, the battalion was there to provide expert movement control support. They were instrumental in coordinating, tracking and reporting the movement of over 70,000 personnel, 8000 pieces of equipment and over 25,000 commercial containers into, within and out of the CJOA. Their efforts and ability to change and contribute to the growing theater environment made them an invaluable asset to the CJTF-76. Their 12 month deployment in Afghanistan proved once again, that no matter where they have to go or what they have to do, they will always live up to their motto -- We'll Carry You!

As of 2005, the 39th Transportation Battalion was assigned 65 employees under the augmentation TDA. On 18 January 2006, the 15th Transportation Detachment was transferred from the 28th Transportation Battalion and consolidated its operations in Kaiserslautern as a single Trailer Transfer Point under the control of the 39th Transportation Battalion.

OIF 06-08

“History of the Deployment as of 25 January 2006”
CPT James Read

1. Pre-deployment:

In November 2005 the 39th Transportation Battalion (Movement Control) became aware that they may deploy and in December was officially identified to replace the 53d MCB for OIF 06-08. Planning for the deployment began in earnest in January 2006.

The first step was getting information from the 53d MCB (Movement Control Battalion) on their task organization and laying that out against the 39th's authorized MTOE and personnel on-hand with projected inbounds. The initial projection for the forward element was 57 personnel. This was equal to the number of soldiers allotted by MTOE however, there were several soldiers tasked to perform jobs outside of their MOS slotting. Additionally, the Battalion Rear Detachment would have an ongoing mission to provide movement control for the Central Europe Region. Even with 5 Movement Control Teams (MCTs) and the Battalion Headquarters deployed, there would be no reduction in the mission. This would require the 39th to position CACI civilian hires into the battalion while still overseeing all other MCTs and Branch Movement Control Teams (BMCTs) with a mixture of military and civilian personnel. Accordingly, the 39th MCB developed a combined forward and rear personnel matrix to track personnel by position in the 53d MCB against 39th personnel on hand, and inbound personnel and open requirements. The Rear Detachment was developed based on a skeleton crew concept where all sections were projected at minimum manning, relying on the 39th's higher headquarter, 1 Theater Movement Control Agency (TMCA), to provide assistance as needed.

Concurrent deployment preparation included: development of a master task matrix by section, scheduling all required pre-deployment training, and developing Mission Rehearsal Ramp-Up and Validation Exercises in conjunction with the 1 TMCA and 21st Theater Support Command (TSC). As the training cycle matured, those not able to attend the pre-deployment training were slotted for Individual Replacement Training (IRT) at Grafenwoehr.

As the task list and the proposed manning rosters were developed, the 39th's staff conducted In-Progress Reviews (IPRs) beginning in early February 06. These IPRs were to help the 39th get ahead of the requirements and avoid last minute “fires”. The initial list of deployment tasks was given suspenses as were resulting sub-tasks.

In addition, the personnel matrix was regularly updated and given to 1st TMCA for assistance fulfilling requirements beyond the unit's MTOE. The immediate challenge was the unit being non-deployable in personnel due to shortages based on the normal rotation of troops after returning from Afghanistan in April 2005. The unit was at approximately 50% of MTOE strength in December 2005 when a large influx of new personnel arrived. The majority of the new personnel were PV1 and PV2s directly from Advanced Individual Training (AIT) and 2LTs directly from Officer Basic Course (OBC). This was problematic in theory based on the new soldiers being so junior. Based on the deployed task organization of the 53d and the 39th MTOE, the 39th appeared on paper to be lacking based on the grade of the majority of new personnel, especially in the S2/3 section.

One of the most problematic issues for the pre-deployment tasks was the splitting of the property book. This task was not accomplished prior to block leave that left the forward and rear commanders short on time to accomplish the task. This task was eventually accomplished only hours prior to the Main Body departing for Kuwait. This was however not totally avoidable given required pre-deployment training timelines and the Mission Rehearsal Ramp-up and Validation Exercises.

The mission rehearsal exercise planning began in Jan 06 with an initial meeting with the 21st TSC exercise planners to lay out the scope, the 21st TSC commanding General's directive regarding exercise execution, and the scheduling of follow-on planning conferences. Dates for ramp-up exercise were 17-21 April and for the validation exercise, 15-19 May. The preparation for these exercises included: acquisition of the 53d MCB's Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for the subsequent development of the 39th's SOPs; developing the Tactical Operations Center (TOC) layout to include NIPR, SIPR and BCS3 requirements; and assisting the 21st TSC in validating the manning roster for the exercise participants and the support personnel. This issue is where the 39th fell short.

Because the 39th and its headquarters two levels up had not observed the mission which resulted in not understanding certain aspects of it, sourcing of role players to replicate scenarios to exercise all staff sections was wanting. This was no fault of the 21st or the 39th, but is a factor of one not knowing what one does not know. Though the 53d MCB provided their SOPs, the comprehensive details were not fully understood. The lack of details and how they affected training are laid out below. The 21st TSC planners also had a tendency to default to a previous exercise scenario set for a truck battalion that deployed the previous year, of which virtually none of which was applicable to an MCB.

The Highway Traffic Division's (HTD) booking of sustainment convoys using military and host nation escorts, call forward message processing, and briefing slide preparations were not well explained in the SOP. That said, a comprehensive "how to" continuity book was provided upon arrival in Kuwait which cleared up any questions. From the Plans Programs and Operations (PP&O) section's perspective, the pre-deployment training was Trans Log Web-centric versus the manual spreadsheet used to create the

daily Theater Movement Program (TMP) upon arrival in Kuwait. This difference in training versus reality created some issues immediately following the RIP/TOA with the 53d. Additionally, the seaport of debarkation (SPOD) tracker, glide-path charts and use of the Group's daily allocation matrix to build the Theater Movement Program (a 96-hour forecast of planned truck movements) were not well understood, as well as a myriad of other daily tasks. The Support Operations Officer (SPO) section was not well-exercised during the exercises due to the lack of a comprehensive SOP and understanding of its SPO mission. However, the SPO mission evolved significantly from the 39th's arrival that will be expounded on later. The final section exercised in the Operations realm was the Kuwait Rear Operations Center (KROC). The KROC mission, though well defined in the SOP, was not explained well. Coupled with unrealistic scenarios, this left our KROC personnel somewhat unprepared for the mission. Success of the KROC only resulted after a thorough relief in place/transfer of authority (RIP/TOA).

The Battle Captain scenarios in the exercises adequately prepared the Battle Captains for the functions however, not all of the scenarios were related to the MCB mission. This was not an overall loss as the staff coordination functions reinforced by the exercises were of great value to the overall cohesion and staff cross-talk facilitation.

The S2 (Intelligence) was a PV2 at the time of the exercises, a newly arrived Soldier from AIT. He was well trained and mentored by the 21st TSC G2 and his staff. Without Officer or NCO oversight, he continues to be one of the most respected S2's in the 377th TSC. However, it is strongly recommended for follow on units to have NCO or Officer oversight of the S2 position.

Pre-deployment training consisted of several events mandated by the US Army Europe (USAREUR) Global War on Terror OPORD. This training was a combination of Warrior Tasks and mandatory yearly training and commenced in January with weapons ranges and a Convoy Live Fire Exercise at Grafenwoehr Training Area. A second iteration of the Convoy Live Fire Exercise was conducted in May 06 as well as multiple iterations of weapons ranges ensuring all personnel were qualified on their assigned weapons prior to deployment. Along with this training, all soldiers were issued GTA cards covering a myriad of topics specific to the operational environment. These GTA cards remained inspectable reference items throughout the training and through the deployment.

In March, the 39th MCB leadership had seven key leaders identified to participate in a leader's recon. All country clearance requests were approved and travel arrangements made however, USAREUR released a FRAGO 17 hours prior to the flight departure that restricted battalion elements and below from conducting in-theater recons, IAW late-breaking Army Central Command (ARCENT) guidance. That said, the 39th MCB Commander and S3 were able to still perform an abbreviated recon by invitation of the 21st TSC CG using slots already allocated for an unrelated visit. This hindered the face-to-face question and answer sessions and directly led to some of the issues previously mentioned as related to the exercises. There were some beneficial results of the leader's recon based on products brought back however inconsistencies between the 53d manning

roster briefed to the 39th and the 53d's actual TOC later resulted in shortages of personnel deployed with the 39th. Only later was this offset by MCT personnel task organized under the 39th MCB and KBR hires. The KBR hires will be discussed under accomplishments.

2. Advanced Party.

The 39th MCB sent an Advanced Party (ADVON) of five personnel (S1, S3 Plans OIC, PBO, S6, HHD 1SG) on 12 July 2006 (arrived 13 July) to liaise with the 53d MCB seven days before the Main Body and set the conditions for the successful integration of the Main Body. The tasks of the ADVON were to secure weapons storage space, set up supply accounts, begin property book handover, ensure the Security Access Roster (SCAR) was correct, identify billeting, get these initial personnel licensed on Non-Tactical Vehicles (NTVs), identify work stations, set up email accounts and a myriad of other preparatory tasks.

The first major setback the ADVON had was getting weapons into the arms room. The initial plan was to get weapons cards for all weapons (ADVON and Main Body). Due to one incorrect entry on the personnel roster and the one hour window that the Area Support Group-Kuwait (ASG-KU) HHC Commander set to work admin issues with customers, this task did not get accomplished.

Conversely, the ASG-KU was very helpful in getting NTV licenses. The instructor was limited to 15 personnel per class however, she allowed 16 to accommodate personnel from the ADVON and she had the licenses ready in 5 hours versus the normal 72 hour turn around time.

The 53d supported the ADVON with a mini-bus and driver but only for the first day. After the first 24 hours, the transportation support was not built into the support plan and rather hit and miss.

Establishing NIPR accounts was very easy and all personnel (ADVON and Main Body) had NIPR accounts established prior to the Main Body arrival. SIPR accounts required the individual's signature so that delayed the establishment of SIPR accounts for the Main Body until they arrived.

3. Main Body Arrival.

The Main Body arrived 19 July and within 24 hours the 39th was able to store their weapons in the consolidated arms room. With the exception of minor issues, all systems were in place for the Main Body's arrival.

4. RIP/TOA

The RIP/TOA "Left Seat/Right Seat Ride" (LS/RS) took place over a 10 day period culminating in a transfer of authority ceremony on 5 August. Prior to the beginning of

the LS/RS, personnel who still had Rapid Fielding Initiative (RFI) equipment deficiencies were fulfilled. However do to a range coordination mix-up, mandatory test firing of weapons was not done until halfway through the Left Seat/Right Seat. Throughout the RIP/TOA, the operations personnel were trained on the basics of the operation and the questions still lingering from the exercises were for the most part answered. The S2/3 section began to realize that there were some inconsistencies between the way operations should be executed and doctrine as well as policies in place that were not being enforced. Despite the issues surrounding the RIP/TOA, the RIP/TOA did prepare the 39th MCB to survive the transition of authority.

5. The first four months.

Upon completion of the RIP/TOA, the 39th had several significant challenges to overcome based on manning. Because we did not have the requisite skill sets in vital positions (for example the S6 was the acting Plans/Programs & Operations Chief [PP/O]), no Mobility Warrant Officer, and the PP&O NCOIC was delayed in deployment, the processing of the Theater Movement Program and Glide Path charts (which measure progression of large unit deployments) were a large challenge to overcome. Through working with the Transportation Group Mobility Warrant Officer and perseverance culminating in the generation of tracking documents, the TMP and glide-path issue stabilized itself. This also led to the creation of a TMR-Submission tracking system utilizing JOPES data and vessel-cargo manifests and a change to deployment/redeployment TMR submission times. Both initiatives enabled a better prediction of movement requirements.

The Highway Traffic Division (HTD) set a goal of gaining movement control versus only knowing what would be on the road. This goal was realized by utilizing BCS3 to track movements, scheduling spot and SP times for Northbound movements versus allowing opportunity moves, and assigning spot times at the SPOD. Additionally, a node movement tracker was instituted to gain positive control of SPs from the nodes as a tool to determine if nodes were sending Positive Inbound Clearance (PIC) reports prior to releasing convoys, thus de-conflicting movements. The HTD also instituted a policy requiring all contractors to have an approved safety packet detailing their safety programs in an effort to reduce the number of accidents through training. This was met with 100% success by 05 NOV 06. The number of accidents has been less than 1% of all movement with no fatalities. HTD was also critical in the creation and then enforcement of an Army Central Command (ARCENT) directive requiring all drivers crossing into Iraq to have an Area Support Group-Kuwait (ASG-KU)-issued border crossing ID of which the intent was to help the sovereign nation of Kuwait prevent illegal border crossings. Further, another focuses of the HTD was updating SOPs into a how-to guide and purging out of date material. This led to the HTD initiative to merge the HTD's Convoy Commander's Handbook and the PP&O's Unit Movement Officer's (UMO) handbook into one reference approved by ARCENT as the ARCENT approved MCB regulation. Moreover, the Combined Force Land Component Command (CFLCC) Deployment and Redeployment handbooks were updated by the HTD, the first update in over a year.

The Support Operations (SPO) section was the least understood section prior to deployment and underwent the most drastic changes after the 39th's takeover. The SPO's original mission was contractor-oversight of the Heavy Lift VI and Kellogg, Brown and Root (KBR) contracts. The inherent linkage of these contracts to deployment and redeployment operations led to the SPO being an enabler of the CFLCC Deployment/Redeployment Operations Section (D/ROPS) and pushing MCB issues to the deployers through the D/ROPS Chief. Within the first months, the SPO coordinated and oversaw the movement control support of a rapid Army Preposition Stocks (APS) draw of equipment, repositioning of theater ammunition stocks between the Theater Storage Area and an ammo vessel, and rapid flow of NATO-donated equipment through Kuwait. The SPO also took on a critical review and rigid enforcement of the KBR contracts, coordinating Contracting Officer Technical Representative (COTR) training for MCB personnel, and assigning COTR responsibility for the various nodes to ensure strict enforcement and contract modification recommendations. Moreover, the SPO made multiple improvements to the transportation movement requests (TMR) form and initiated a Trans Log Web program that automates the TMR processing at all nodes with computer upgrades and training for all KBR personnel.

Other initiatives and accomplishments included: a Driving Off-Post Accountability SOP, development of a standardized RIP/TOA process for down-traced units, an SOP outlining additional training requirements for Kuwait-based personnel going on convoy into Iraq, dramatic overhaul (purging and reorganization of files) of computer share-drive information management, rapid train-up of gun-truck crews to support 1-121 FA's convoy security mission, and a "re-missioning" overview of all units to ensure maximum efficiency. During the first three months, the 39th also oversaw the security escorting of nearly 4,000 buses and 900 trucks, and over 130,000 U.S. Military personnel.

None of the 39th MCB organic units deployed with the Battalion Headquarters. The units that the 39th MCB took over control of were 1/111th ADA, 949th MCT, 586th MCT Det 1 and Det 2 (Air Force) and the 260th Trailer Transfer Detachment. Units that joined the 39th MCB during our transition were the 948th MCT, 513th MCT and 1/117th FA which replaced 111th ADA. These unit came from all sections of the Army, Active, Reserve, National Guard and even included two Air Force Detachments. The Air Force units provided the interesting challenge of dealing with personnel turn over as they served six month tours rather than the one year tour Army units perform.

As of November 2006, the 39th MCB had already initiated its transition planning to aid the next MCB by setting up a timeline for transition and providing comprehensive "how to" SOPs to use during their train up and beyond. The transition team also included a subsidiary Mission Rehearsal Exercise team. The mission of the MRX team is to provide a training support package offering realistic scenarios and events encountered by the MCB on both a routine and sporadic basis. Between the TOC, ALOC and MCTs, over 300 Master Scenario Events List (MSEL) events were created.

The 39th took movement control to a new level at the end of 2006 and into 2007. Previous to the 39th MCB, movements were scheduled but not tracked in Theater and

TMRs were done manually. Accordingly, the SPO and PP&O facilitated the further adaptation of the system call Trans Log Web to automat all TMR submissions and the allocation of TMRs for local missions. Additionally, the TMR tracker (validator?) created by the 39th MCB PP&O was adopted by the ARCENT C3 as a viable mechanism for tracking TMRs submitted versus cargo awaiting lift. The Highway Traffic Division reestablished a convoy tracking system to have accountability of all trucks on the road. The Movement Tracking System (MTS) was emplaced in every military and KBR TOC in order for all movements to be tracked by SP and RP. The HTD began tracking all movements enabling the operations center to control the flow of vehicles to nodes ensuring military and civilian traffic move smoothly. Moreover, the tracking of movements allowed the HTD and SPO to validate if all assets allocated against standing Transportation Movement Requests were utilized to ensure fiscal responsibility.

The HTD in conjunction with the 513th Movement Control Team from Camp Navistar established procedures to execute Kuwaiti regulations for all non-military cargo crossing the border through the Coalition Crossing. This was important because it was the first 39th SOP validated and stamped by Kuwaiti authorities. Having an official endorsement from the Kuwaitis opened the door for the 39th to have other Kuwaiti policies enforced by the 39th MCB validated. Along with this, the 39th chaired two border working groups. These historic events brought all Kuwaiti border control agencies and the military to the table in order to establish policies and address issues concerning the border and movement control.

Based on the President ordering more troops into the OIF AOR in January 2007, the 39th began supporting a rapid troop surge for OIF that would equate to 5 BCTs deploying through Kuwait to Iraq ranging from no-notice to 6 months early. It also supported a new concept of support for OEF. Typically all passengers flow into Afghanistan through the strategic air hub of Manas, Kyrgyzstan, and bulk cargo goes through Karachi, Pakistani. To mitigate the weather effects often encountered in some parts of Krygystan and Afghanistan, they decided to send part of the OEF rotation through the Kuwaiti aerial ports instead. Accordingly, one BCT onward moved from Kuwait to Afghanistan with the support of the 39th, while the redeploying brigade's passengers and cargo were ready to be received in Kuwait before ultimately being held in place for operational reasons. All of this was done while concurrently providing movement control support for the download and upload of an ammunition vessel. Due to thorough planning and asset management, all passengers and cargo moves arrived prior to the required delivery date.

Also in January 2007, the 39th MCB participated in two Proof of Principle exercises to validate movement windows and communication processes for the transition to a new Coalition Crossing at Khabari. The Highway Traffic Division chief's proposed movement windows were adopted by ARCENT and MNF-I over three other options because they ultimately validated the movement window plan that allowed for the most flexibility and highest volume of movements per day. During the proof of principle, all SOPs for the transition were tested and validated. Also in anticipation of the transition to Khabari, the Highway Traffic Division and two other MCTs hosted a Sustainment Contractor Information briefing in order to educate sustainment convoy contractors on

the location and differences between Navistar and the future staging and crossing points. Finally, the SPO and PP&O, in conjunction with ARCENT, hosted a ROC drill to educate Kuwaiti officials about the traffic flow and processes at the new Coalition Crossing site culminating in a tentative agreement to have Kuwaiti customs and immigrations officials at the staging camps in order to streamline the process through the border crossing.

A second movement control board was held in late January 2007 in order to assess the state of movement control processes and issues in the Battalion. At the first movement control board, 33 issues needing change were brought to the table. At the second board, only four issues came to light for change. This validated that the 39th MCB continued to lean forward and update processes and procedures as the issues arise.

Campaign Participation Credit

World War II: India-Burma; Central Burma

Vietnam:

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

Decorations

Meritorious Unit Commendation (Army) for VIETNAM 1968-1969

Army Superior Unit Award for 1987

Republic of Vietnam Cross of Gallantry with Palm for VIETNAM 1971

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