

53rd Transportation Battalion



*53rd Transportation Battalion crest (l) and coat of arms (r)
mouseover each to view description*

World War II

In preparation for the July 1943 invasion of Sicily, the amphibious 2 ½-ton truck, known as the DUKW, became available. General Dwight D. Eisenhower considered it, not the Higgins boat, “one of the most valuable pieces of equipment produced by the United States during the war.” He created an amphibious truck battalion out of forces already in North Africa. On 28 May 1943, the 53rd Quartermaster Truck Battalion was constituted in the US Army. It was activated on 22 June 1943 in French Morocco, North Africa, and served in the Tunisia Campaign with personnel and equipment from the previously organized 2637th Quartermaster Truck Battalion (Provisional). It had four lettered companies, “A” through “D.”

The 53rd Battalion initially received 109 DUKWs and became the first amphibious battalion just in time for the amphibious assault on Sicily. The 53rd Battalion was attached to the 531st Engineer Shore Regiment, 1st Engineer Special Brigade (ESB). By doctrine, each Engineer Special Brigade had one landing craft and one amphibious truck (DUKW) battalion attached to it. The 53rd Quartermaster Battalion subsequently provided the DUKWs for all the landings in the Mediterranean. At Sicily on 9 July 1943, it hauled Rangers forward in night assaults and supplied advancing units until trucks were available. This was the first amphibious landing conducted with DUKWs. The beaches along the Sicilian coast had shallow gradients and sand bars that made landings by amphibians more preferable than landing craft, however, there were not many good beach exits for trucks and DUKWs. The battalion then established the beach dumps, towed guns into firing position.

From then on the US Navy assumed control of the beach landings in the Mediterranean, freeing the 1st ESB to prepare for the Normandy invasion. For that reason, the battalion (minus A Company) was attached to the 36th Infantry Division and landed at Salerno, Italy, on 9 September. The planners determined that the battalion needed 400 DUKWs to

sustain the large landing force. By that time the battalion had six DUKW companies attached to it. The battalion assigned 60 DUKWs to land with the artillery pieces and ammunition right behind the assault wave. Because of the difficulty of the infantry to clear the beach, the DUKWs circled out of range of the enemy weapons longer than anticipated. After waiting thirty minutes at Green Beach, the US Navy signaled the DUKWs to go ashore in spite of enemy fire. 30 DUKWs followed the directive but smoke on the shore obscured the land marks making it difficult for the drivers to find their exact landing spot. While the 60 DUKWs circled off Yellow and Blue Beaches, the beach master at Red Beach signaled them to land at his beach. As many as 125 DUKWs ended up circling off shore at Red Beach. They landed sporadically. One DUKW was rammed and sank with a 105mm howitzer and its ammunition. The crew swam to another DUKW and boarded it.

After the initial landings, the 53rd Battalion delivered tanks, heavy weapons and anti-tank pieces with ammunition. From 9 September through 1 October, the amphibians hauled cargo across the beaches until the port of Naples was secure. Then as many as 600 DUKWs conducted ship-to-shore missions at Naples.

To take pressure off of the planned landing at Anzio, the 5th Infantry Division conducted a crossing on the Garigliano River on the night of 17-18 January 1944. DUKWs of the 53rd Battalion ferried two battalions of infantry across near the mouth of the river in assault boats, one battalion crossed in DUKWs and landing craft at the mouth of the river. Only the DUKWs landed at the right location but the troops found themselves in a mine field.

During the rehearsal for the landing for Anzio, 40 DUKWs were lost at sea near Naples. On 22 January 1944, the 53rd Battalion participated in the first assault wave on Anzio. Despite heavy and continuous shelling and strafing, the battalion established a record in the amount of tonnage unloaded. With between 450 and 490 DUKWs, the 53rd Battalion brought the cargo from the Liberty ships, anchored off shore, over the beach. The 540th Engineers, under the command of COL George W. Marvin, assumed control over the operation of the port and beaches.

On 22 May 1944, the Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment was redesignated HHD, 53rd Quartermaster Battalion (Mobile) and its companies, A through D, were redesignated the 3337th, 3338th, 3339th and 3340th and followed their separate lineages. Essentially, the battalion headquarters could provide administrative and operational control over any number of companies.

The battalion also participated in the Rome-Arno, Rhineland and Central Europe Campaigns. In Germany it hauled supplies across the Rhine River. On 12 November 1945, the battalion was inactivated in Germany.

The 53rd Quartermaster Battalion received campaign streamers for Tunisia, Sicily (with arrowhead for spearheading an amphibious landing), Naples-Foggia (with arrowhead), Anzio (with arrowhead), Rome-Arno, Southern France (with arrowhead), Rhineland and

Central Europe. It may be the only Quartermaster and later transportation Corps battalion to have earned four arrowheads for amphibious assaults.

COMZ Europe

After the war, Quartermaster truck units were given to the Transportation Corps. The 53rd Battalion was activated at Fort Sill, Oklahoma, on 1 August 1946 as HHD, 53rd Transportation Corps Truck Battalion. This time it was issued trucks. It was later redesignated HHD, 53rd Transportation Truck Battalion on 16 May 1947.

After World War II, Russia occupied the East European nations with the idea of establishing buffer countries between it and the democratic Europe. The constant threat of war between the Soviet Union and Western Europe created what was then known as the “Cold War.” In preparation for that the United States and European nations created the North Atlantic Treaty Organization in April 1949. The US Army established a comprehensive Communication Zone in France to support the defense of West Germany from an attack by the Soviet block armies. This COMZ included a line of communication that stretched from the ports of Northern France to Germany and supply depots scattered throughout France.

In September 1951, the battalion shipped out to Camp Kilmer, New Jersey, for overseas assignment to European Command with station at Kaufbeuren, Germany. In November 1952, the battalion settled at Kapaun Barracks, (Vogelweh), Kaiserslautern, Germany, where it became a part of the 37th Transportation Command. The 37th Transportation Command was responsible for the line haul support to the theater command.



TC sign outside of headquarters in Kaufbeuren, Federal Republic of Germany.

The line of communication stretched from the ports of Northern France to Germany. The medium truck companies received the M52 5-ton tractors and M124 trailers and would relay the cargo laden trailers to the next battalion at Trailer Transfer Points along the way. The tractor would then pick up an empty trailer and return to his the TTP at his home station. This way, cargo was relayed all the way to its final destination yet drivers spent the night in their own barracks. The 53rd had the last leg of the line haul relay. It picked up cargo laden trailers from the 28th Battalion at Vitry Lefrancois and delivered its cargo to the 6966th Civilian Labor Group at Kaiserslautern

On 1 April 1953, the 53rd was reorganized and redesignated HHC, 53d Transportation Battalion. The 53rd Battalion arrived with the 83rd Transportation Company and would lose and pick up other companies. On 1 May 1956, it received the 66th Transportation Company (Medium Truck). On 10 May 1956, the Battalion received the 89th Medium Truck Company, the "Roadmasters." It received the 520th Light Truck Company



an IHC of the 6966th



83rd Transportation Company IHC 2000D with refrigerator trailer. (photo by Rydel Edwards)

53rd. In August 1961, the Mannheim Truck Terminal was redesignated Detachment 7. On 26 November 1963, the 150th Company was assigned to the 53rd.

on 11 June 1958, which drove 2 1/2-ton trucks. On 2 March 1959, it received the Mannheim Truck Terminal, 69th Medium Truck and 501st Light Truck Companies. The 501st made the logistical run through Communist East Germany to Berlin. On 19 June 1959, the battalion was redesignated HHD, 53rd Transportation Battalion. In February 1961, the 595th Heavy Truck Company, the "Wagoneers," joined the

This made the 53rd Battalion the largest truck battalion in Germany with eight truck companies and two terminals:

- 66th Medium Truck Company, Kitzingen
- 69th Medium Truck Company, Turley Barracks, Mannheim
- 83rd Transportation Company
- 89th Medium Truck Company
- 150th Transportation Company
- 501st Light Truck Company
- 520th Light Truck Company
- 595th Heavy Truck Company

In 1963, French President Charles De Gaulle ordered the US Army out of his country. As the 28th and 106th Battalions relocated into Germany, the line of communication shifted from the German Port of Bremerhaven laterally across the Soviet front.



On 7 May 1964, the 37th Transportation Command restructured the battalions by reassigning the companies. The 53rd Battalion lost the 69th, 150th, 501st and 595th Companies and Detachment 7 to the 28th Battalion in Mannheim. The 53rd lost its standing as the largest truck battalion in Europe. It picked up the 76th

Transportation Company in Zweibruecken. It was known as the “Home of the 100,000 Milers.” The standard of achievement for drivers is the number of miles driven without accidents. Few drivers achieved that status and usually only on their second tour of duty in Germany. Eighteen achieved this status in 1966. These elite drivers became known as the “High Miles Guys.” The 76th had achieved the 500,000 and 1,000,000 accident free miles during the period of 22 April through 8 November 1966 and won the US Army Commander Europe Outstanding Performance Plaque. Reportedly, only about seven drivers ever broke the 300,000 mile mark.

The 53rd Battalion had the following companies in 1964:

- 66th Medium Truck Company
- 76th Transportation Company
- 83rd Transportation Company
- 89th Medium Truck Company
- 520th Heavy Truck Company

Because the M52 was designed as a tactical vehicle, it was not designed for high speed traffic on autobahn. This caused a lot of wear on the vehicles. Instead, the commanders pushed for commercial tractors. In 1965, 37th Transportation Command turned in their M52 tractors for the International Harvester 205H tractor. During 1971 to 1972, the 37th Transportation Command received the newer model International Harvester Commercial (IHC) tractors 4070 and 2000D models. The northern most battalion, the 106th, which had the longest run clearing cargo out of the Port of Bremerhaven received the IHC4070s. The IHC2000Ds had single axles and could not pull the 20-foot containers as well.

In 1966, De Gaulle ordered the US Army to remove all its supply depots from France. During Operation FRELOC, the 53rd drove the most miles, 38,889,168, and hauled the most cargo, 231,854 tons, of any battalion in the 37th Transportation Command. This was actually more than half the total miles and tonnage



tractor trailer, Transtar 4070 cabover with a V-12 Detroit engine with driver Rydel Edwards (photo by Rydel Edwards)

driven by the entire command. Afterwards, the 37th realigned the companies. The 53rd picked up its old 501st and the 85th Refrigeration Companies.



An IHC-DCO 205H of the 66th Transportation Medium Truck Company at a rest stop on the Autobahn. The vehicle on the trailer is an M577 (photo by Charles E. Long)

By 1975, the 53rd Battalion had picked up the 109th “Mule Skinners” Transportation Company, which hauled the 5000-gallon tankers with M52 tractors. The line haul companies delivered cargo to Ramstein Air Base, Baumholder, Pirmasens and Nahollenbach Depot.



An IHC-DCO 205H of the 66th Medium Truck Company at a German autobahn rest stop (photo by Charles E. Long)



New sign for the 53rd Transportation Battalion painted by Hans J. Roeper in 1967. (photo by Hans J. Roeper)

In 1982, the 53rd Battalion had only four truck companies remaining, three in Kaiserslautern and one in Huerterhoeh Kaserne, Pirmasens:

- 66th Medium Truck Company
- 89th Medium Truck Company
- 109th Medium Truck Company (POL)

The 89th Medium Truck was the only truck company in Europe with the primary mission to transport by highway nuclear weapons for the 59th Ordinance Brigade under the Nuclear Surety Program throughout Germany, Belgium, Netherlands and Luxembourg. The 89th Medium Truck earned the National Defense Transportation Association Unit Award for 1987 for transporting over 26,000 short tons of cargo a total of 3 million accident free miles. They also participated in the European Command "Victory Wheels" mission to Chad, Africa, seven month support of a joint service operation at Hahn Air Force Base where they hauled three times the amount of classified cargo as moved in previous



A Wrecker of the 37th Transportation Group, 66th Transportation Company. (photo by Rydel Edwards)

missions, and finished runner-up in the USAREUR Sword of Freedom Maintenance Excellence Award. The 66th Medium Truck earned the Army Superior unit Award in Germany for 1983-1984.

In 1986, the 53rd Battalion had the following companies:

- 66th Medium Truck Company, at Kleber Kaserne
- 76th Medium Truck Company, at Permeseans
- 89th Medium Truck Company, at Kleber Kaserne
- 501st Medium Truck Company, at Kleber Kaserne

The 53rd Transportation Battalion received the Army Superior Unit Award in 1986 and 1990. The 66th Medium Truck Company had the mission to haul the mail and the 89th still had the nuclear surety mission. During 1990 through 1991, the 109th POL participated in Operation DESERT SHIELD/DESERT STORM delivering four million gallons of fuel, one million gallons of water, 90,000 short tons of general cargo, 6,000 pallets of mail and 475 containers. The company earned the Defense Transportation Award for 1992.

Following the victory in the Persian Gulf and the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the US Army began to down-size. The number of truck battalions under the 37th Transportation Group was reduced from three to one. The 53rd Battalion was inactivated on 15 September 1995. The 89th Transportation Company transferred to Fort Eustis, Virginia, as a part of the 6th Transportation Battalion that year. The 66th and 109th Transportation Companies were attached to the 28th Transportation Battalion.

Movement Control

Meanwhile, the lessons from Operation DESERT SHIELD/DESERT STORM, 1990-1991, taught that the 318th Transportation Agency (Movement Control), located in Jamaica (Queens), New York, would have been better served if transportation cell had rapidly deployed to theater to establish movement control operations prior to the unit activation on 20 September 1990 and deployed into Saudi Arabia in early October 1990. The 318th Transportation Agency operated behind the power curve until it was fully operational. The 318th Trans Agency argued that they would be better served by a reserve Theater Army Movement Control Agency (TAMCA) rather than activating an active component TAMCA. Third Army supported this argument but MG David Whaley, the Chief of Transportation, preferred the idea of an active component enhancement cell. Whaley chaired two video teleconferences in December 1993 and May 1994 for major active and reserve CONUS based Transporters. He stated to BG Gaw, Commanding General of 3rd TAMCA, that the Agency would have an early deployable, movement control team assigned to them located at Fort McPhearson.

The 272nd Movement Control Team (FC) was activated at Fort McPhearson, Georgia, on 16 November 1994. The 11-soldier team, commanded by a major, was attached to the Third Army, whose headquarters was also at Fort McPhearson. Its primary mission was to provide the 3rd TAMCA a rapid deployment cell to support US Army Central (ARCENT) strategic transportation requirements, to include force tracking and reception prior to the arrival of the headquarters agency. However, the 318th, to which it would augment in war, was inactivated in September 1995. For training this battalion tracked the movement of personnel and cargo during the biannual BRIGHT STAR field training exercises in Egypt.

US Forces Command (FORSCOM) cut an order to redesignate the 272nd MCT as the Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment, 272nd Movement Control Battalion (Echelon Above Corps) (FC) on 16 October 1999, with an authorized strength of 51 officers and enlisted. However, many members of the Transportation Corps Regimental Association who had served in the 53rd Battalion learned of the activation of the new battalion. They petitioned the decision makers to continue the lineage of an old unit rather than create a new one. FORSCOM rescinded the order on 1 July. On 16 November 1999, the 272nd Movement Control Team was inactivated and the 53rd Movement Control Battalion (MCB) was activated in its place. The last battalion commander of the 53rd Battalion attended the ceremony. LTC Perry Knight assumed command of the battalion.

The 53rd MCB was designated as an ALO-1 unit capable of deploying worldwide within 96 hours of notification. By April 2000, however, the battalion headquarters still only had around ten personnel and there was not much work for them to do. CPT Yolanda Creal had been the Operations Officer for the company then became the Plans, Programs and Operations (PPO) under the S3 after it became a battalion. She would serve with the battalion for its first three years of existence.

By July 2001, the personnel strength had grown to around 30. In August, LTC Vicki Smith assumed command of the battalion from LTC Knight. The 53rd MCB then provided movement control with the attachment of around four movement control teams during BRIGHT STAR from September through November 2001. The 53rd MCB next participated in NATIVE ATLAS from 20 March to 3 April 2002. The 6th and 24th Transportation Battalion conducted a Joint Logistics-Over-The-Shore (JLOTS) exercise at Camp Pendleton, California, to download the 2nd Brigade, 3rd Infantry Division (M). The 53rd MCB with the 384th and 622nd Movement Control Teams, of the 6th Transportation Battalion, tracked the movement of the personnel and equipment from their home station of Fort Stewart, Georgia, to the National Training Center and back.

The sum total of the battalion's movement control experience was tracking battalion and brigade size deployments with a few MCTs. Their war-time trace included 12 MCTs. Nothing the 53rd Battalion had done to that time would prepare it for the magnitude of the challenge ahead. The battalion would Receive, Stage and Onward Move (RSO) more than three divisions of units and at their peak provide command and control for 24 MCTs. This challenge was compounded by the fact that historically, movement control had always been disorganized in the early phase of operations.

However, the 53rd MCB almost never had a chance to validate its existence. Entering into 2003, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld wanted to streamline the Armed Forces and particularly the US Army by reducing the "logistical foot print." At the same time Army Chief of Staff General Shinseki wanted to organize more Special Brigade Combat Teams built around the new Infantry Tactical Fighting Vehicle. Some organizations would have to pay the bill for the new programs. The bill payers of the Army just could not see the need for this organization since it did not move anything. These units would pay the bill in personnel for higher priority Army requirements. Although the Special Brigade Combat Teams were part of the "bill," there were also other new units so there was no direct correlation between bill and bill payer. A Department of the Army level decision directed US Forces Command to identify which units to inactivate. USFORSCOM based their recommendation on installation support, readiness, OPLAN support and "Kentucky Windage" to determine which units to cut.

The 53rd MCB at Fort McPhearson, Georgia, the 57th Transportation Battalion at Fort Lewis, Washington, and the 106th Transportation Battalion at Fort Campbell, Kentucky, were designated for inactivation as a result of Total Army Analysis 2009 (TAA-09) results. The 53rd MCB was the only USFORSCOM based Echelon Above Corps MCB. Other Non-TC units were also affected. Before the year 2003 had ended, the US Army would gained a whole new appreciation for movement control.

Operation Iraqi Freedom

By 2002, Saddam Hussein failed to comply with the UN Resolution to verify that it had disarmed all efforts to build weapons of mass destruction. President George W. Bush tired of the UN's inability to force compliance. While the United States took the lead to

pressure Hussein into compliance, the Armed Forces prepared for what would happen if he did not.

In July 2002, the 53rd MCB sent CPT Charles Chang, the Chief of the Highway Traffic Division (HTD), a captain, lieutenant and two NCOs to Kuwait to participate in the USCENTCOM sponsored Operation VIGILANT HAMMER from 10 to 31 July. The 7th Transportation Group wanted to download one Large, Medium Speed, Roll-on, Roll-off (LMSR) vessel, the *Lotkins*, from the Afloat Preposition Stock (APS) 3 at Port of Au Shuyabah in order to determine the download time and also how many Prepo vessels they could berth at the pier at one time. The 384th MCT from Fort Eustis, Virginia, and the 259th (Regulating) MCT tracked the movement of the equipment from the port to Doha where it staged. From then on the battalion prepared for war. It had 12 MCTs traced to it for the war plan.

The 3rd TAMC had sent a planning cell to Doha, Kuwait, in December 2001. LTC Dave Pollard, the active duty planner for the 3rd TAMC, developed the movement control plan and ordered resources that were needed. The movement control plan called for four movement control battalions to provide intransit visibility from the RSO through the advance of V Corps. The 53rd MCB, as the only active duty movement control battalion in the plan, would arrive first and establish control over the RSO mission. The critical nodes of transportation included the port of Au Shuyabah for equipment, Kuwaiti Naval Base (KNB) for ammunition, Doha for cargo operations, and Kuwait City International Airport (KCIA) for passengers and some cargo. The command and control would set up at Camp Arifjan, which was still not completed.

The 450th MCB, from Kansas, would arrive next, then establish their headquarters at Tallil, during the ground war, with the 7th Transportation Group, and pick up movement control from the Kuwait-Iraq border. The 719th MCB, from Boston, and the 436th MCB, from New York, would follow in that order and pick up movement control from the 450th MCB.

LTC Pollard briefed the others on his plan. The movement control plan was based upon five MCTs he believed was the war time trace of the 53rd MCB. He expected the MCTs to have the same system for movement control. SFC Michael Aguilar, Operations NCO of the 6th Transportation Battalion, pointed out that these units differed from what was on the war plan and that plans are also subject to change. Different MCTs used different systems. Some of the members of the 384th MCT remained in Kuwait while the rest returned to Fort Eustis to augment the 622nd MCT for their deployment to Afghanistan.

Earlier, BG Thomas D. Robinson had just assumed command of the 3rd TAMC in April 2002. In August, he flew to Kuwait to visit all the nodes outlined in the RSO plan and the 3rd ID (M) maneuver area to become familiar with the plan first-hand. As late as September, the plan was still on track when the US Transportation Command at Scott Air Force Base held a conference and all representatives from the four MCBs attended.

By October, the war planners had outlined the forces that CENTCOM needed to execute its Operational Plan. Unfortunately, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld scrapped the OPLAN and the supporting Time Phased Force Deployment Data (TPFDD) in preference for an operation using fewer forces and Request For Force (RFF) packages. LTC Pollard had returned to the United States before his active duty replacement arrived. During that short absence of a movement control planner, Combined Force Land Component Command (CFLCC) submitted their modified requirements. The movement control plan had been reduced to just two movement control battalions. Because of NOBLE EAGLE and Enduring Freedom commitments, the 436th and 719th MCBs were no longer available.

Without any planner to represent movement control, not enough MCTs were requested. Fortunately, no one informed the 53rd MCB as they continued to plan according to their last marching orders. Their concept of operation dealt with providing movement control for the Reception, Staging, Onward Movement and Integration (RSO&I) mission. Their plan still identified war traced MCTs that would operate at each of the transportation nodes identified in the July site survey.

By that time, prospects of war became more likely. BG Jack Stultz, Deputy Commander of the 143rd Transportation Command (TRANSCOM) (USAR), arrived in Kuwait around 20 October 2002 and became the commander of the 143rd TRANSCOM (Forward) with responsibility for theater transportation under the 377th Theater Support Command (TSC), commanded by MG David E. Kratzer. When visiting Kuwait for an Internal Look Exercise, BG Robinson learned that his headquarters would probably be mobilized right after Thanksgiving. He asked his staff for volunteers and ten volunteered thinking that they would remain on active duty for only 60 days. Around 1 December, they mobilized at Fort Benning, Georgia, and completed their CRC in one week. Upon Robinson's arrival, MG Kratzer feared that commanders of arriving commands might bully the MCTs into moving their assets ahead of established priorities. Kratzer wanted one-star generals at the key transportation nodes. He told BG Robinson that he needed general officer visibility at the SPOD and APOD. Kratzer sent BG Stultz to the SPOD and told BG Robinson to take charge of the APOD.

BG Robinson moved into a tent at the KCIA. His division chief of staff, COL Aaron Richardson, supervised the meager 3rd TAMC staff at Camp Arifjan in his absence. Since there was nothing to receive the arriving soldiers and their baggage at the airport, BG Robinson had to plan and establish the APOD. With the help of LTC Anthony Hardy, MAJ Michael Brown and MSG John Nixon, they walked around and laid out the plan for the future Camp Wolf. KCIA belonged to the Kuwaitis and they needed permission to use the space. BG Robinson briefed his plan to CFLCC and they agreed with it. Since movement control actually owned no assets, he needed to arrange contracts with the host nation for 100 buses, 20 trucks and construction. He had no contracting capability on his staff so he instead turned to BG Stultz's staff for it. He also needed to coordinate for force protection and life support. BG Robinson realized that he needed the movement control battalion to round out his meager headquarters before other units began to arrive. He asked specifically for the 53rd MCB.

Around 5 December, the 53rd MCB received a telephone call to deploy to Kuwait. Without unit movement orders, they instead deployed on individual temporary duty (TDY) orders. On 10 December, the battalion headquarters boarded a plane out of Hunter Army Airfield, Georgia, and flew to Frankfurt, Germany, then arrived in Kuwait City International Airport (KCIA) the next day. From there the 53rd MCB personnel moved to Doha then learned that they would establish their headquarters at Camp Arifjan. Ten hours after their arrival they moved into the unfinished camp. Kellogg, Brown and Root (KBR) provided them five tents and the battalion constructed their headquarters in Building 5 next to the 3rd TAMC and 377th TSC in Building 6. Meanwhile, the 53rd MCB fell under to operational control of BG Robinson's 3rd TAMC. They began to prepare for the surge in troop deployments.

SGT Hoa Hoang and SGT Larry Beavers flew out with the battalion's equipment two days before the battalion. Hoang had just returned from the CENTCOM AOR as a Third Army driver. He was selected to escort the battalion equipment because he knew Kuwait. They landed two days after the battalion.

Right after the arrival of the 53rd MCB, CPT Chang drove the MSRs, ASRs to all the nodes, taking digital photos then returned to draw the battlefield circulation plan. Using power point, he drew a strip map of the routes with photos that the convoys would use. The photos would show the drivers land marks to help them not get lost. Chang and his Highway Traffic Division briefed MG Kratzer, BG Stultz and BG Robinson on the road plan.

The 53rd MCB had to coordinate and manage convoy movement in theater initially at the two key transportation nodes with three movement control teams in place. The Port of Shuyabah was the seaport of debarkation (SPOD). Kuwait City International Airport (KCIA) became the airport of debarkation (APOD). BG Robinson was informed that Secretary Rumsfeld would not mobilize any USAR MCTs before Christmas, so he could only count on three active duty MCTs. The 199th MCT, commanded by CPT David Hartwell, worked at Doha and initially did not fall under the control of the 53rd MCB. Doha was where some Prepo equipment was stored.

About the time the 53rd MCB arrived, the 80th (Port) MCT from Fort Hood, Texas, commanded by MAJ Steven Shea, also arrived. Of the three MCT in Kuwait, only the 80th MCT had been a part of the 53rd MCB's war time trace. The six personnel from the 80th MCT had deployed straight to Kuwait from Djibouti on 14 December 2002. Its one mobility warrant officer, CW2 Jonathan Wright, had graduated from the first mobility warrant officer course in April 2001. The 80th MCT had run an air terminal in Djibouti since August of that year. The 80th MCT had not received any deployment orders, but the Soldiers were extended for 90 days and verbally told to report to Camp Doha. Upon arrival, MAJ Shea met with LTC Richard Gay (ORD), ARCENT Installation Transportation Officer at Doha. Gay briefed Shea on their method of operations, but their plan was based upon handling a single flight at a time. Shea knew that the surge would greatly exceed that. The 80th MCT had only a couple of weeks to rework the plan

before the troop buildup began. The 80th MCT assumed responsibility for the APOD operations on 6 January 2003.

They initially established their Tactical Operations Center (TOC) in what had been the conference room for the small Air Mobility Command (AMC) detachment that had ran the Kuwait City International Airport (KCIA) prior to the war. As the AMC presence escalated from a four-man detachment to a 600-man Air Expeditionary Group, the MCT moved into a trailer inside the hanger next to the old AMC passenger terminal (then used for office space). Because the Air Force and Army elements at KCIA were confined to the limits of Al Mubarek Kuwaiti Air Force Base adjacent to the commercial airport, the useable space for parking and servicing aircraft, and pallet and equipment storage was about the size of a parking lot. The space was totally inadequate to use for JRSOI operations. Plans were made to construct Camp Wolf, a purpose-built life support base with facilities to stage personnel and equipment. Before the construction of Camp Wolf, the open fields on either side of the road running past the KCIA control tower were used to stage buses and trucks as well as segregate units and bags for movement to the various Kuwaiti camps. There was no facility for briefing the arriving personnel nor tents to even house the MCT. They had to shuttle back and forth from Camp Arifjan to the APOD. In discussion with BG Robinson, they agreed that their goal was to have the arrivals and their baggage on the way to their destination within three hours of arrival.

Since the 80th MCT had arrived with only six of its personnel, MAJ Shea sent a request for the remainder of his detachment to deploy. Meanwhile, LTC Smith sent the 384th (Movement Regulating) MCT, then commanded by 1LT Marshall Brown, which had just arrived from Fort Eustis, and the 259th (Movement Regulating) MCT, from Ft Hood, Texas, commanded by CPT Clinton Bohannon, to the APOD. The personnel of the 80th MCT then trained the others on what they needed to do. The 80th MCT provided command and control of the APOD operations. Both the 80th and the 259th MCTs came from the same 49th Transportation Battalion (MC) at Fort Hood. In addition to serving together at Ft Hood, Shea and Bohannon knew each other from the 1st Transportation Movement Control Agency in Germany where they managed Balkans movements together. Shea picked Bohannon to serve as his deputy commander. The APOD would become the busiest transportation node.

This operation would far exceed the capability of even the largest MCT let alone the three that were assigned to it at that time. What was needed was an Air Terminal Movement Control Team (ATMCT) like had existed in doctrine prior to 1999. The LF Team of the ATMCT contained 10 officers and 25 enlisted personnel. Both the APOD and SPOD would have to build the equivalent of ATMCTs by combining the resources of different MCTs. From January to May of 2003, over a quarter million troops and over 100,000 short tons were moved through KCIA.

In early January, the Secretary of Defense, Donald Rumsfeld, issued the deployment order. As units began to pour in, the work load at the APOD intensified, but many of the MCTs were held up for weeks at the mobilization stations for shortages of body armor or flights. It would not be unusual for the MCT to service as many as 23 aircraft at any

given time. On average, KCIA had a flow of 100 aircraft a day during the war. Before January 2003 it had been 2 per day. KCIA was host to 40 C-130s, with a squadron using one of the taxiways. Planes were parked in a way that would never have been allowed at any commercial airfield or US Air Force base. In addition to the usual ramp, the taxiways were used, the Kuwaiti Emir's Royal Ramp was used – every spot that could hold a plane did. To the credit of the Soldiers of the MCTs and their Air Force colleagues, the Army Safety Center praised the APOD operation. Not a single troop suffered a significant injury as they passed through the APOD.

LTC Smith briefed BG Robinson that she needed eight more MCTs or she could not accomplish the mission. There was nothing that he could do to free up the units from the mobilizations stations and expedite their arrival. He wanted to receive the MCTs even if they were at 50 percent readiness, but US FORSCOM would not release them until they met the established mobilization guidelines. Robinson told Smith that her answer was not acceptable, and she would have to find a way. Because of the shortage of MCTs, LTC Smith augmented the MCTs with key staff officers. CPT Erik Christianson and 1LT Patrick Schoof provided liaison between the two MCTs at the APOD and battalion headquarters. Two weeks after their arrival, LTC Smith similarly sent her adjutant, CPT Sybil Maxam, and SFC Francis McMillan to the APOD to assist in coordinating buses to transport passengers to Camp Arifjan. They received ten host nation buses and baggage trucks. These formed the bus yard.

MCTs trickled in as they became ready and flights available. The 152nd (Area) MCT, commanded by CW2 Donald McWhorter, arrived from Fort Carson on 14 January. CW2 McWhorter had graduated from the second MWO Course in 2002. Since the graduates of the first class received assignments to division transportation offices, most of the second class went to movement control teams. LTC Smith assigned it to Camp Arifjan to monitor in and outbound convoys at the entry points of the camp. They also ran the container yard at Arifjan. They set up their command tent adjacent to Building 5. SFC Tina Smith, the Detachment NCOIC, became the liaison inside the MCB headquarters. She would go out to the fence outside Building 5 and pick up the stack of TMRs from the 152nd MCT then deliver them to the battalion headquarters.

With the build up in January, SFC Joyce Lomax organized an ad hoc MCT of six Soldiers from the 53rd MCB to go to the SPOD to receive the Prepo ships. There was no other MCT at the SPOD. They coordinated for life support with the 1st MEF. The MCT worked two 12-hour shifts of three Soldiers. The 216th (Port) MCT (USAR), commanded by MAJ Gregory A. Hopkins, arrived from Fort Bragg, North Carolina, on 28 December 2002. The 18 person 216th MCT relieved Lomax's team at the SPOD on 10 January 2003. They tracked an average offload of 2 ships and 16 convoys per day. SFC Lomax's MCT then moved to Kuwait Naval Base (KNB). It became the first Army unit to operate at KNB. The Navy and US Marine Corps already had a contingent there. The Navy downloaded 10 vessels prior to the arrival of the 24th Transportation Battalion from Fort Eustis, Virginia, on 28 January.

The 7th Transportation Group began arriving in January. It would provide the assets for offloading and moving cargo and equipment to the staging camps for Reception, Staging and Onward Movement (RSO). The main body of the 6th Transportation Battalion (Truck) arrived on 13 January followed by its first truck company, the 89th Medium Truck. The 11th Transportation Battalion arrived on 17 January from Fort Eustis to operate at the SPOD. However, there was no Port Support Activity (PSA) to drive the vehicles off of the Prepo ships. On 18 January, the 6th Battalion Soldiers temporarily acted as the PSA and drove the 3rd ID(M) vehicles off of the first PREPO ship that arrived at the SPOD around 19 January. The surge in reception rapidly increased with the deployment of the 1st Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF).

The stevedores had unloaded 26 ships carrying equipment for the 3rd Infantry Division (Mechanized) and the number of vessels being discharged at the SPOD increased from two to three. By 15 February, the 139th Cargo Document Detachment and an MCT augmented the 216th PMCT bringing the number of personnel up to 38. This provided sufficient number of movement control personnel for the SPOD operation to run smoothly until the arrival of the 4th Infantry Division (Mechanized) in April. MAJ Hopkins and his NCOIC, SSG Nedgielena Grant supervised the movement control at the SPOD and the 216th PMCT provided the training for the new MCTs.

Prior to the arrival of the 3rd ID(M), CPT Elizabeth Casey, DTO, and WO1 Joseph Peck arrived. Peck and Wright knew each other from the Mobility Warrant Officer Course. Casey and Peck had a complete and accurate list of everything that was scheduled to arrive on each plane. This made the APOD's job easier in planning transportation. Of all the arriving units, the 3rd ID(M) was the best organized.

With only one truck company, the 7th Transportation Group made the SPOD the priority for military trucks and used white or commercial trucks for clearing the APOD and KNB. At the APOD, Shea had the 4th Platoon, 119th Cargo Transfer Company, from Fort Story, Virginia, with their one 40 K forklift, two 10K forklifts and KALMAR RTCHs to move pallets of cargo from the flightline to the cargo yard they build on the end of the runway. The 259th and 384th MCTs conducted the arrival briefings and cargo documentation duties on the flightline.

They had to rely on the existing ARCENT ITO contract for buses and trucks. This, however, was based upon the normal peacetime rotations of a brigade every six months. This operation would greatly exceed that. MAJ Shea complained that he did not have authority, like he had in Djibouti, to contract assets. He was entirely dependent upon one company for all buses and trucks. Since Kellogg, Brown and Root (KBR) commercial truck contract was not ready to assume the line haul mission, the APOD had to rely on host nation transportation.

BG Robinson had thought that 100 buses and 20 trucks would be sufficient to clear the APOD based upon the arrival of 3,000 passengers per day, as long as the flights were staggered and the average turn around time for the buses to return from the camps. Shea generally counted on 10 dedicated buses for each passenger flight, but needed trucks to

haul the pallets. The APOD received as many as 500 to 600 pallets a day. Host Nation drivers were a serious problem. Some came from Saudi Arabia, but they had problems with passports and visas. Even then the Kuwaiti guards at KCIA might not let them through the gate. Both the Saudi and Kuwaiti drivers had a habit of disappearing for days. For this reason, the APOD might have 10 trucks arrive or three. If he failed to meet the three hour departure time, then he had to brief this to BG Robinson. His biggest problem was trucks. Rarely did the APOD have the staging yard clear.

On 27 February, with the planning for movement control architecture in Iraq underway, MAJ Shea worked with CPT Tom Fortunato from the 27th Transportation Battalion (MC) to develop the plan for the setup of Tallil AB. Since 80th had set up Djibouti-Ambouli airfield, it was felt that their experience would be beneficial to V Corps. On that day, the Soldiers at KCIA crossed the 100,000 troop mark.

When the 146th MCT, commanded by MAJ Valerie Colangelo, arrived at KNB, it relieved SFC Lomax's team so they could return to battalion S-3 as the movement programmer. MAJ Creal, SFC Lomax, and SFC Smith, from the 152nd MCT, represented the 53rd MCB at the Asset Allocation Board meeting.

The movement plan for each day came out of the Asset Allocation Board meeting the night before. The 377th Theater Support Command (TSC) hosted meeting where representatives from the Distribution Management Center (DMC), 7th Group and 53rd MCB met around 1100 each day to plan movements for the next day. The customers submitted their movement requests to the MCTs one to two days out. The MCB received movement requests from the MCTs at each node and the 7th Group representative presented how many vehicles they expected to be available. The shortage of M915s, HETs and MPs for escorts restricted the movement of cargo and equipment. The KBR contract for commercial trucks would not stand up until May. The 7th Group presented three categories of assets: definite, probably and not likely available. The demand for trucks exceeded the first category and reached into the second category. By 1500, they agreed to what the 7th Group trucks would move and when. The 53rd MCB wrote this information by hand on an Excel spreadsheet matrix. However, the 7th Group would return later that day with revised numbers from the second category and the 53rd MCB would have to cut and paste the changes to the following days for the Transportation Movement Release (TMR) the battalion would publish. There was never enough assets to move everything in one day. At best, it would take three days from the submission of the movement request for the unit's container to arrive at its staging camp. The process usually took longer.

A conflict was over the priorities of what to move. Since most of the units arrived with their basic load of ammunition, Class V was not an issue. Food and water were the top priorities. The 7th Group was customer oriented. They wanted to move what the customers felt was the priority and the 53rd MCB was concerned about clearing cargo from the holding yards and moving cargo by priority of class of supply. They could not afford to let too many containers accumulate in the yards. The V Corps and 1st Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF) also sent representatives to the board meeting to push their

priorities. The US Marines would not agree with the priorities set so CFLCC had to intervene. LTG David D. McKiernan, Commander of CFLCC, required his G4, MG Claude V. Christianson, to sit on the board and mediate the priorities. His presence also encouraged the 7th Group to bring a more accurate predication of what assets would be available the next day.

Neither did the Marines like to wait for authorization to move their vehicles. To avoid waiting for convoy clearance the Marines wanted to sneak their vehicles out of the SPOD in numbers less than four. However, some of the vehicles became lost or stranded when traveling alone.

The break down in cooperation between the 7th Group and 53rd MCB grew over the way MCB tasked assets. The MCB tasked 7th Group by vehicles, but 7th Group wanted to be tasked by commodities and let them figure how many trucks they needed. On one occasion around mid February, the 53rd MCB tasked the 7th Group for 56 green trucks to go pick up containers of Class I at the Public Works Center (PWC). When the trucks arrived the next, the PWC only needed 40. White trucks primarily picked up containers from the PWC, but occasionally the 6th Transportation Battalion had to haul Class I from there. They complained that each time they had to pick up containers at the PWC, they arrived with more trucks than needed.

Ground was broken on the construction of Camp Wolf in January and the MCTs moved into the tents on 14 February. This meant that the troops could get more rest. Prior to the move, there was a 45-minute commute each way to and from Camp Arifjan. Now there was a quick five-minute ride from the airfield. Initially, there were no showers or porta-potties at Camp Wolf. These amenities would come in time as the base built up to process 8,000 troops a day. By the time 80th, 259th, and 384th moved into Camp Wolf, they had already closed 3rd Infantry Division, 1st Marine Expeditionary Force, and had nearly completed receiving the 82nd Infantry Division, and , with working with the Royal Air Force United Kingdom Mobile Air Movements Squadron, assisted with receiving the 7th (UK) Armored Brigade, the Royal Marines, and the Parachute Regiment. Upon completion, arriving Soldiers could wait for buses indoors. At that time, BG Robinson could start spending a day or two a week with his staff at Camp Arifjan. COL Don Stinson arrived and moved out to the APOD. Camp Wolf soon grew with a number of other tenants, an evacuation hospital, Marine contingent, and US Air Force communications unit. As the APOD commander, BG Robinson had to manage the activities on the tenants.

Fielding a new technology during a war is a risk. The radio frequency (RF) identification (ID) tag system was so new that it was not even on the TOE of the MCTs, yet deploying units had RF ID tags on their containers. Likewise the traffic management coordinators who would use it had not been trained on it. BG Robinson acquired and issued transponders, then have the MCTs trained to use them. When the container with the RF tag passed by the transponder, it recorded what was in the container. The MCB assigned convoy chalk numbers to certain RF tags hoping to keep track of convoys that way. The

problem was that the portable power supplies were unreliable and could not handle the heat and dust. The new system did not work as expected.

In February, the Dover Warehouse collapsed during a big snow storm. The sustainment cargo was then shipped to Charleston AFB, South Carolina. There the US Air Force broke the cargo down and packed the cargo onto 463L pallets. Because of the onslaught of freight arriving at Charleston, these pallets were built with mixed Army, Marine, and Air Force cargo. This would lead to consequences in theatre. These pallets also arrived without RF ID tags since Charleston was not equipped or trained to tag them. If any cargo went to the TDC without any form of identification as to what it contained then it would remain there until after the war slowed down. One day, MAJ Shea reported to BG Robinson that only 17 out of 617 pallets at the yard had RF tags.

On 28 February, the 101st Airborne Division began arriving. The turn around time for the buses took longer than planned since it was based upon the time to drive to the camp, drop the passengers off and return. Instead, the buses shuttled the passengers around the camps to their tents. The planning figure also accounted for the planes arriving at regular intervals, not all at once like the arrival of the 101st Airborne Division. BG Robinson allowed MAJ Shea to relax their goal of clearing the APOD within three hours.

The only system of record at the APOD had was GATES and it only recorded the departure from the flight line even if the cargo went to Camp Wolf. The TOC printed three manifests, one for the US Air Force, one for Camp Wolf, and one for the driver to take to the TDC.

LTC Smith had submitted her retirement paperwork for personal reasons back in August. Her original date for change of command was scheduled for August 2003 and in February, her replacement, LTC Regina Grant, was attending the Pre-Command Course (PCC). Grant was pulled out of PCC and sent to Kuwait. She arrived in Kuwait on 21 February and assumed command of the 53rd MCB on 25 February 2004.

At that time the battalion controlled five nodes and eight MCTs still far short of what they needed.

APOD

80th MCT, from Ft. Hood, TX, commanded by MAJ Shea.

384th MCT, from Ft Eustis, VA, commanded by 1LT Brown.

259th MCT, from Ft Hood, TX, commanded by CPT Clinton Bohannon

Christianson's augmentation personnel from the 53rd.

SPOD

216th MCT, from Ft Bragg, NC, commanded by MAJ Hopkins.

139th Cargo Doc Det, led by SSG Wilson.

KNB

146th MCT, commanded by MAJ Colangelo.

Doha

199th MCT, commanded by CPT Hartwell.

Camp Arifjan

152nd MCT, from Ft Carson, CO, commanded by CW2 McWhorter.

Movement control has historically been chaotic and there was a risk in changing battalion commanders right in the middle of the surge. BG Robinson felt that LTC Smith had done a good job with what limited resources she had and hated to see her leave. He briefed LTC Grant on her mission and gave her his guidance that he wanted the nodes clear. Her motivation and enthusiasm to do the job impressed him.

LTC Grant had never had a movement control assignment before and had to learn movement control fast. She read everything she could on her way over there. She would learn the operations by visiting each node every day with her sergeant major, CSM Ray Middleton. To do this she needed the right people running battalion headquarters. She switched the XO and S-3. MAJ Yolanda Creal had the most movement control experience in the battalion, so Grant wanted her as the S-3. BG Robinson agreed that this was a good move since the operations officer had more control over operations than the executive officer. MAJ Frank Diedrik actually had seniority. Grant attended the shift change briefings but because of her site visits she already knew first hand what was briefed. This kept her staff on their toes. She challenged herself as well as her staff. If they could not find needed equipment, she would tell them, "I bet you I can get it." She usually did and this challenged her staff to find solutions. She often reminded them that they were at war and "You can't do this over." Since her MCTs came from different organizations, she made an effort to make them feel like they were part of the battalion. The care of the MCTs became her primary focus.

LTC Grant had interviewed a former MCB commander during Operation Desert Storm who advised her of the importance of having liaison officers (LNO) with the MCTs at each node. After she assumed command, she stripped her staff of key officers and NCOs to send liaison officers out to each node. The LNOs augmented the MCTs and forced the commanders to focus on mission. They provided additional eyes and ears for the battalion commander.

During the surge the 53rd MCB sent CPT Cotrina Smith, from the HTD, to act as the liaison to the 216th MCT at the SPOD. At first, the MCTs and LNOs had to shuttle from Camp Arifjan to the SPOD. After two weeks, they had living accommodations and moved to Life Support Area (LSA) at the SPOD. KBR provided climate controlled tents, a dining facility and small trailer post exchange.

The surge continued to strained the capabilities of the MCTs available. As MCTs trickled in, LTC Grant assigned them to the node that she identified that had the greatest need.

LTC Grant had CPT Maxam form an MCT with four Soldiers to augment the MCT at KNB. Commodore Cooke was concerned about the net explosive weight of ammunition stored at the holding yard at KNB. He asked Maxam to inform him when the number of containers exceeded the safe limit of 70. By late February, V Corps had enough ammunition that it became a lower priority. Although truck assets had been tasked to

pick up the ammunition at KNB, many of the host nation trucks could not pass the vehicle safety inspection. In early March, the number of containers reached 200, enough to blow away KNB and part of Kuwait City. This caused KNB to stop unloading for two days.

In March, the advance party of the 450th MCB (USAR) from Manhattan, Kansas, led by MAJ Steve Comstock, arrived with 13 Soldiers and moved to Camp Arifjan. Grant attached two active duty MCTs, from Fort Bragg, North Carolina, to the 450th MCB. These MCTs had the best equipment.

The 576th (Highway Regulating) MCT (USAR), commanded by CPT Mark McWaters, arrived from Panama City, Florida, at the APOD early in the morning of 13 March. SFC Joe Kather escorted the four HMMVs and two baggage pallets, which had arrived three days before. The vehicles were in good condition but the team was missing some MTOE equipment, such as computers and radio mounts. They had all SINGCARS but had old 106s as substitutes on MTOE. They never used them. The MCT convoyed to Arifjan that same day.

LTC Grant brought the MCT in and told them what she expected of them. They stayed at Arifjan one night then moved to Camp Doha. An Area MCT was already at Doha. McWater's 576th MCT relieved another MCT operating out of Doha. They monitored three check points on MSR TAMPA, DALLAS, NEW ORLEANS. The previous HRT joined the forward deployed element of the 450th MCB to cross into Iraq.

The 576th MCT tried to report north and southbound traffic on MSR to the battalion headquarters. However, they were limited by their communications. They only had hand-held Motorolas and the batteries only lasted about ten hours.

As a USAR unit, the 576th MCT were not properly trained or equipped for regulating highway traffic or had they any movement control experience, but they were eager to learn and work. After three days, Grant told them to report to the APOD and relieve the 259th MCT so it could go to Breach Point West, which would have been the 576th MCT's mission. The 576th MCT had not received a map of the area since they arrived. They were given directions of where to drive. How they actually found their destinations was to find someone who needed a ride who knew the route.

When the 576th MCT arrived at the APOD, it fell under the supervision of MAJ Shea. There was an 8 hour gap between the time the 259th MCT had left and the 576th MCT arrived. MAJ Shea and his staff were not pleased with having lost the 259th MCT, but Shea understood that the 259th MCT was the best qualified Highway Traffic Regulating Team for the breach point. Consequently, he had to pull some of people to shadow the new MCT while they learned their new job at the APOD.

CPT Brett Swanke had arrived, on 5 March, with a replacement crew of seven Soldiers for the 80th PMCT. He had originally been the XO for the team, but assumed command of the rear detachment after Shea left for Africa in August 2002. The APOD grew to

become the largest movement control operation in theater. CPT Swanke was a HAZMAT certified, air load planner with ample experience running the air terminals at Langley and Dover Air Force Bases. The APOD became a rather self reliant, autonomous organization. At this time the APOD had between 35 and 45 personnel, the approximate size of an ATMCT.

With the loss of the 259th MCT and CPT Bohannon, Shea designated CPT Swanke as his new deputy commander. CPT Swanke ran the day airfield TOC operations with his 80th PMCT and CPT McWaters ran the night shift with some of his 576th MCT. Each had one or two NCOs who would manage flight information and coordinate with the customers. They could look up on the GDSS account to see what was arriving in the next 12 hours. With few exceptions, the GDSS and SMS systems provided accurate data on the number of passengers and cargo on each aircraft. The commercial airlines provided far better data than the US Air Force. Once they had the inbound aircraft on the radar screen, the TOC checked the TPFDD. They knew how many buses they needed for passengers and trucks for baggage or cargo.

Grant sent the 564th (Air Field) MCT from Fort Hood north to NAVISTAR.

The TOC would call the 53rd MCB to ask how many trucks would arrive and when. Battalion answered that the APOD would receive a certain number of green and white trucks¹ to deliver to Arifjan or the TDC, but not all the white trucks would arrive. The Battalion also informed the APOD of what priorities of cargo to move. The APOD also had 10 buses allocated each day for shuttling troops to their destinations. A major, who was the bus contract supervisor also became the bus yard supervisor.

The TOC, in turn, provided SSG Carol Brockington's 628th Cargo Documentation Team the priority of work. The 628th Cargo Documentation Team tracked inbound cargo, greeted the "cargo birds," checked the manifests, supervised, called forward trucks and told the US Air Force personnel what to load on trucks. Their goal was not to let anything sit on flight line more than 24 hours. They also greeted the "pax flights" and ordered the buses.

When the 384th MCT, commanded by CPT Marshall Brown, arrived from Fort Eustis, it greeted and processed the passengers upon their arrival. The passenger flights were broken down into three sections. An NCO greeted the passengers and gave them a brief intelligence summary and what to expect over the next three hours. A baggage crew was detailed from the passengers and an MCT Soldier was assigned to motivate them to expeditiously unload their baggage from the plane and load on the awaiting buses and trucks.

The 259th MCT manifested the passengers for convoys. The goal was for the arrivals to depart within three hours of their arrival. No one remained over night at Camp Wolf. This was made difficult by the fact that some units arrived with no further destination than Kuwait. The TOC had to call around to identify what command and camp the unit

¹ White trucks refers to commercial trucks and green trucks refers to military vehicles.

was assigned. Communication from the TOC to the MCB headquarters was landline with email capability or cell phone. Communication from the TOC to the flight line was hand held Motorolas with secure capability.

The 576th MCT had the largest MCT at the APOD and its personnel worked in several areas. LT Watford, of the 576 MCT, ran the staging yard. He split cargo into two sections: unit equipment, and push items (classes of supply). The pallet yard belonged the US Air Force.

The APOD grew rapidly in size and magnitude of operation. The operation went from a maximum-on-the-ground (MOG) of 3 to 18 aircraft landing per day to 60. The US Air Force ended up using the runways as ramps. The 4th Platoon, 119th CTC platoon from Fort Bragg moved containers and pallets at the staging yard around with one KALMAR, two 10K and one 40K forklifts. They also brought ten trucks. After a conversation with LTC Andy Anderson, Commander of the 10th Battalion working at the SPOD, he gave MAJ Shea ten trucks to help move cargo off of the flight line. Another platoon from the same CTC worked at the Theater Distribution Center (TDC). The cargo handlers had to keep the cargo off of the airfield otherwise it would have shut down flights. They had two green trucks dedicated to drive the half a mile distance from flight line to staging yard to keep the flight line clean.

The 628th Cargo Document Team reported the number of pallets, pallet IDs and manifest moving to Arifjan to the TOC. Since Swanke ran the day shift, he generated a seven-page report at 1200 and 2400 of what was due. It forecasted the wheels up and down times for inbound and outbound aircraft over the next 12 hours, the number of cargo and passengers on each, the passenger count through the terminal and Camp Wolf, and amount of cargo on the flight line. The spreadsheet also recorded the amount of cargo by pallet ID number shipped by ground transportation that day and, after the ground war started, shipped north by air. The TOC would then forward the roll up report to battalion. The TOC later put information on an Excel spreadsheet.

The APOD maintained landline communication or cell phones with the 53rd MCB at Camp Arifjan. The landline allowed for email exchange of information. They used hand held Motorolas with secure capability from the TOC to the flight line.

GTN worked well for tracking cargo but the problem was the RF tags. The system was not universally used throughout the Army so not all MCTs had the capability to read the RF tags. Another problem, the RF tags were held on by a plastic zip tie. These easily broke and the tags were lost. Many movement control personnel remembered seeing lots of RF tags on the ground. In some cases the batteries on the RF tags died, rendering the them unreadable. If the identity of the cargo and its owner was lost by the time it reached the TDC, it would remain there for months. The war moved too fast for people to inspect each container. Only if the units sent their own people down to identify their containers could the transporters move them.

From the beginning, LTC Grant and MAJ Shea had a very good working relationship, but an incident that neither one can agree on caused a serious rift in their relationship. With the completion of Camp Wolf, LTC Grant needed an MCT to handle the passengers and baggage while they waited for onward movement. CPT Desiree Ledan's 151st MCT, from Fort Hood, Texas, organized the trucks and buses into convoys to move the new arrivals and their equipment to their assigned camps. Besides coming from the same 49th MCB at Fort Hood, MAJ Shea had known Ledan from an MCT at Mannheim, Germany. He had her MCT augmented with personnel from the 384th MCT to run Camp Wolf.

A problem arose over the fact that LTC Grant wanted to roll that movement control operation under MAJ Shea's flightline operation. To her it made logical sense that the senior movement control officer should be in charge of all movement control teams at the APOD. Keeping in mind that what LTC Grant lacked in movement control experience, she made up for in desire to accept challenges and learn. She was ambitious and knew the Army was at war. Up until then, few officers had the privilege to command in war. She clearly saw this as a chance to excel and accepted additional responsibility. Here was another chance for a subordinate unit to excel and Grant had the full confidence in MAJ Shea's ability to handle both operations. Shea, on the other hand, saw his role as just running the terminal side of the APOD. He was considered by those who worked with him as the most extremely technically competent movement control officer in Kuwait. By doctrine, his flightline operation resembled an Air Terminal MCT and that is all he wanted to supervise. The 80th MCT's 90-day extension was nearly ended and LTC Grant felt that he was more concerned with going home. Shea's team had deployed originally on six month TDY orders and all the related paperwork such as powers of attorney, combat pay and tax free status ended with the orders. Shea requested a new set of orders extending his team longer, otherwise, they would lose their finance benefits. In the argument over which takes priority, the mission or the men, each saw the situation from a different set of priorities. Shea was concerned over his team and Grant focused on the war. Shea felt that the rest of the 80th MCT could deploy forward and replace his team. Keeping in mind that he had already been deployed for eight months in theater, four months longer than the 53rd MCB had submitted his request for redeployment which she had denied. Since Shea was one of the most experienced movement control officers in Kuwait, Grant felt the war needed his talents. She did not want to lose him.

His reluctance to accept the responsibility caused LTC Grant split Camp Wolf movement control operation from the flightline operations. She turned to BG Robinson who placed MAJ Melvin Fleming, from his 3rd TAMC, in charge of Camp Wolf. Ledan's MCT fell under Fleming's control and Fleming coordinated both movement control operations.

Another problem arose over the fact that some of the units arrived with only orders for Kuwait with no further destination. The terminal facilities were not designed to hold soldiers overnight so the MCTs had to work fast as they could to find their destination and still get them out the gate in three hours.

The 609th MCT, commanded by CPT Jennifer Velasco, arrived from Fort Bragg on 12 March. Shea remembered that it was destined for the 27th MCB and that LTC Grant had

instructed him to send it to her. Shea planned to follow those instructions but the unit was delayed on the flightline. Also, new security rules went into effect that day which restricted the third country national (TCN) drivers. Henceforth, only drivers with some Kuwaiti blood would be allowed into Camp Wolf (indicated by a numerical code on their identification cards). This played havoc with the movement of cargo and sent the MCT leadership to look for ways to get the cargo moved. With the leadership sidetracked in talks with the Kuwaitis and the base security personnel to resolve the TCN problem, the 609th was overlooked. By the time buses were available, SSG Guse sent the detachment to Camp Virginia, as per the original destination he had on his spread sheet from 3rd TAMC. LTC Grant and BG Robinson remembered that the MCT was always destined for the 53rd MCB and in fact she had given the 27th MCB some of her MCTs. After the 609th left the APOD, a sandstorm came in that halted all further movements. Efforts to turn the convoy around failed due to the storm and to security policies in place. Grant believed that the 27th MCB had high jacked her MCT and she wanted it back. She sent a convoy to Camp Virginia the next morning to bring it back then she sent the 609th MCT to Doha.

Whatever the circumstances, a great rift grew between LTC Grant and MAJ Shea. Shea had allies in CENTCOM and bypassed Grant and secured a redeployment date for his team. She saw this as unprofessional conduct, yet Shea was looking out for his team. In order to protect his career, he ensured that his evaluation was filled out by his peacetime chain of command. The importance of conflict was that those who worked with and admired MAJ Shea took his side. This rift became too well known by nearly everyone in movement control. No matter how homogenous the military organization looks it is people who make it work. Yet in spite of their differences, everyone continued to work for a common goal.

A few days before the war, the priority shifted to hauling Class I to the camps.

By 20 March, the 53rd MCB had 14 units under its control:

APOD

- 80th MCT from Ft Hood, TX, commanded by MAJ Shea.
- 94th MCT, commanded by CPT Tuross.
- 151st MCT from Ft Hood, TX, commanded by CPT Ledan.
- 384th MCT from Ft Eustis, commanded by 1LT Brown.
- 564th MCT led by SSG Friday.
- 576th MCT from Florida, commanded by McWaters
- 628th Cargo Doc Det led by SSG Brockington
- 4th Platoon, 119th CTC, from Ft Eustis, VA.

SPOD

- 216th MCT, commanded by MAJ Hopkins.
- 139th Cargo Doc Det, led by SSG Wilson.

KNB

- 146th MCT, commanded by MAJ Colandgelo.

Doha

- 199th MCT, commanded by CPT Hartwell.

609th MCT, from Ft Bragg, NC, commanded by Velasco.

Arifjan

152nd MCT, from Ft Carson, CO, commanded by CW2 McWorter.

BPW

259th MCT, from Ft Hood, TX, commanded by CPT Bohannon.

After the first three MCTs, the others assigned to the APOD were US Army Reserve units. This caused a disruption in operations. While this gave Shea more people, he had to break up the integrity of his original teams and assign the individuals to shadow and train the Reservists. By the end of the month, the APOD operations ran smoother.

BG Robinson was directed to physically insure that all land component forces (US Army and Marines) followed the agreed upon order of march entering Iraq on ASR ASPEN through Breech Point West (BPW). He arrived on the night of 19 March, the night before the ground war started. Aspen was little more than a dirt trail and the flow of vehicles had to be metered onto the route. It was the primary ASR for V Corps advance until the 1st MEF cleared MSR TAMPA to the north. Grant sent the 259th MCT, from Fort Bragg, and CPT Chris Brown as an LNO with him. They reported the progress of traffic moving into Iraq via the Mobile Tracking System (MTS) email capability. Movement controllers also acted as guides for some late moving units to insure that they linked up with other convoy elements 10-15 miles into Iraq. BG Robinson also had a platoon of MPs for security and a forward element of the 27th MCB waiting to cross the border with V Corps.

There was a steady flow of vehicles for five days. The movement controllers of the 27th MCB and elements of the 53rd MCB worked together at Breech Point West to track and regulate the flow. Because the dirt road in Iraq rapidly deteriorated and combat forces slowed around An Nasiriya, the flow of vehicles slowed and backed up in the staging areas around BPW. BG Robinson personally directed traffic through the breach point. Everyone pretty much followed the order of march. When he had time, the general slept on a cot next to his HMMV.

Once the 27th MCB personnel had insured that all of their COSCOM units had crossed the Line of Departure, they departed and the 53rd MCB took over and directed the Marine and echelon above corps logistics units onto the route based on the agreed upon order of march and communications from forward elements. The 27th MCB maintained its headquarters at Camp Victory though. The 450th MCB (Forward) crossed the berm and established their TOC at Tallil with 7th Transportation Group (Forward). They placed one MCT at Tallil and the other with the 6th Transportation Battalion (Truck) at LSA CEDAR.

Additionally, with the field hospital at Camp Wolf, all wounded and KIAs came through KCIA. As a lucrative target, KCIA faced the brunt of the SCUD attacks. On 20 March, Iraq launched seven at the airfield in a 12-hour period, driving all personnel into bunkers with chemical gear. There would be 31 such attacks during the war. Since the process from the initial SCUD alert to the resumption of operations after the "all clear" was sounded took about an hour, fully seven hours of the day could be eaten up with these attacks.

When the air war kicked off, the Iraqis fired Scud missiles at the different nodes. One Scud impacted close enough to the SPOD to shake the ground. Another landed near BPW and wounded SSG Kenny Sumbera from the 259th. SSG Sumbera had previously worked the pallet yard at KCIA and had handed that job off to SSG Brockington when 259 headed north. Sumbera received multiple shrapnel wounds and was evacuated to the USS *Comfort* and later received the Purple Heart – the only movement control Soldier to earn that medal during the war.

On 21 March, the 106th Transportation Battalion established its Convoy Support Center (CSC) at the Iraqi border that the 143rd TRANSCOM named NAVISTAR. Grant sent the 171st MCT, commanded by CPT Christine Habbout, from Fort Lewis, Washington, to NAVISTAR on 25 March. She sent the 259th MCT there after they closed BPW and MSR TAMPA became the primary supply route for V Corps. The movement control responsibilities of the 53rd MCB stopped at the Iraqi border and passed to the 450th MCB. BG Robinson did not think at first that Grant needed an MCT there. He later agreed that it was a good decision.

Since the MCT would coordinate all the convoys crossing the border, the 106th Battalion had them establish their camp outside the berm of their compound. The 106th Battalion only had enough space for the trucks of their battalion. Neither the 53rd MCB nor the 3d TAMC have any operation funds at that time. Fortunately, her Third Army rater, MG Henry Stratman, kept her in his rating chain in Kuwait. At her request, he purchased two fabricated buildings for the MCTs at NAVISTAR. Later, COL Smith, the G-8 at CFLCC, issued the 53rd MCB a fund cite.

The Public Warehouse Center (PWC) located in downtown Kuwait City was where class I food and water was stored after it cleared the port. Contract trucks were supposed to clear the containers from the PWC. A backlog caused as many as 3,000 containers to remain at the PWC so long that the food began to spoil. In April or May, the 53rd MCB sent over CPT Sherrell McNeal's 958th MCT with 20 movement controllers to gain an accountability of the containers then move them. The 7th Group also sent green trucks to clear the PWC, but the lack of material handling equipment caused the trucks to wait as much as 24 hours to get loaded. The 106th Transportation Battalion had drivers remain over night at the PWC in order to clear it. This became an additional transportation node.

After the ground war had started, LTC Grant asked COL Veditz, Commander of 7th Group, for permission to run the asset allocation board meeting. He gave it, but the 53rd MCB still wanted to task the Group for number of trucks according to the TMRs. The 7th Group S-3 did not like this and reassumed control of the meeting. The 7th Group and the 53rd MCB still did not see eye-to-eye on how to coordinate movement control. However, MG Christianson made the decisions.

The 70th MCT, commanded by CPT Altwan Grate, arrived from Fort Eustis in early April to replace Maxam's MCT at KNB. CPT Stephanie Turos' 94th MCT, from Miami, arrived in late April or early May to run redeployment and customs.

In April, the 4th ID (M) arrived with their equipment on five to six vessels. The movement controllers coordinated the movement of 2600 pieces of equipment on 45 convoys per day. They completed the move days ahead of schedule. During March or April, the 216th MCT was tasked to augment the Third Army ITO at Camp Doha to solve their highway traffic volume. By May, the 216th MCT supervised five MCTs, a total of 52 Soldiers.

By mid-April, LTC Grant told BG Christianson that she would fix the problem with the movement plan matrix. She tasked one of her movement control offices, CPT Patrick Schoof, to write an automated application to process the movement requests. He received help from an officer in MMC and another from MCT. It took them three weeks to write the program, because Schoof was not released from his duties as night battle captain until after the second week of the tasking. They wrote a Microsoft access application, called the Movement Program Utility (MPU), that the 88N at the 53rd MCB could put the data in once. That request stayed in until it was filled. They did not have to manually copy and paste. Previously, it was done on an Excel spread sheet and the 88Ns made pen changes or cut and pasted changes. The new program saved as much as 18-24 man hours subsequently freeing up an SFC from the TOC and allowed two other soldiers to focus on something other than daily rollup. After the asset allocation meeting, it only took one hour to put the data in the program and send it. From then on, they had the rollup out by 1500 each day.

By the end of April, the 94th MCT arrived. MAJ Shea placed them at Camp Champion, adjacent the APOD, to start preparing units for redeployment. The 1st Armored Division was still arriving, but by May, deployments almost complete.

MAJ Shea's 90 day extension ended and his original team flew out on 3 May. After MAJ Shea left, MAJ Melvin Flemming assumed control of all movement control operations at the APOD.

By June, the 53rd MCB finally had 25 MCTs tracking traffic at eight nodes. Only the 80th, 216th and 259th MCTs were part of the 53rd MCB's original war-time trace.

APOD

- 80th MCT from Ft Hood, TX, commanded by CPT Swanke.
- 94th MCT, commanded by CPT Turos.
- 151st MCT from Ft Hood, TX, commanded by CPT Ledan.
- 384th MCT from Ft Eustis, commanded by 1LT Brown.
- 576th MCT from Florida, commanded by McWaters
- 628th Cargo Doc Det led by SSG Brockington

SPOD

- 216th MCT, commanded by MAJ Hopkins.
- 319th MCT, from Delaware, commanded by CPT Gaz.
- 609th MCT, from Ft Bragg, NC, commanded by CPT Velasco.
- 940th MCT, led by SSG Alexander.
- 139th Cargo Doc Det, led by SSG Wilson.

4th Platoon, 119th CTC, from Ft Eustis, VA.

KNB

70th MCT, from Ft Eustis, VA, commanded by 1LT Grate.

Doha

199th MCT, commanded by CPT Hartwell.

609th MCT, from Ft Bragg, NC, commanded by CPT Velasco.

TDC

146th MCT, commanded by MAJ Colangelo.

394th MCT, led by SSG Davis.

Arifjan

152nd MCT, from Ft Carson, CO, commanded by CW2 McWhorter.

200th MCT, led by SSG Hawkins.

569th MCT, commanded by CPT Affinito.

596th MCT, from SC, led by SSG Chapman.

NAVISTAR

171st MCT, from Ft Irwin, CA, commanded by CPT Habbout.

259th MCT, from Ft Hood, TX, commanded by CPT Bohannon.

564th MCT, from Ft Hood, TX, led by SSG Friday.

PWC

408th MCT, led by SSG Ishmael.

958th MCT, commanded by CPT McNeal.

The 450th MCB tracked linear traffic – from one node to the next along the MSR. The 53rd MCB tracked inbound and outbound cargo and passengers at five nodes then tracked it to multiple destinations in theater.

Movement control was an easy scapegoat for any problem with transportation. Many of the customers complained that their requests arrived a week later. By then they had found what they needed through other sources. They evidently expected next day delivery. The truck units complained that the customer unit point of contact was either wrong, had moved or did not need that many containers or flat racks.

The unit first had to submit a movement request to the 450th MCB since it was the most forward MCB in Iraq. No telling how long it took for the units to forward the movement request to the MCB. When the 450th MCB submitted the movement request to the 53rd MCB it went before the Asset Allocation Board the next day. If the movement request received the highest priority, then it was resourced to a truck battalion the next day. The trucks would pick up the cargo or container then rest over night at NAVISTAR. At that time no trucks ran convoys at night. They left the next morning and the drive from NAVISTAR to ANACONDA was a two day drive, if the convoy was not redirected. If the TMR received the highest priority and was processed without delays, the earliest it could arrive was five days. Since there was a shortage of trucks, more often the cargo arrived a week later depending upon the priorities of the 377th TSC. The early part of the war was fluid and cargo would arrive after the unit had already moved or by the time the cargo arrived, the units had more food and water than they needed. For the first part of

the war, food and water was still the priority. The 450th MCB did not even receive their containers until April.

By April, BG Fletcher had lost all confidence in movement control. With the exception of a small TAC, his 27th MCB had remained in Kuwait for most of the war. Because Class I (food) and water were still the highest priorities, Fletcher could not receive the Class IX (parts) that he needed to keep his V Corps vehicles on the road. He directed the 181st Transportation Battalion to conduct Operation SUSTAINER PUSH. On 29 May, 3rd COSCOM established a daily trailer transfer operation at Tallil with one truck company at each end of MSR TAMPA to provide 20 hour delivery from one end to the other. The 629th Medium Truck Company at Camp Victory would drop off a full trailer at Tallil and return with an empty. The 1032nd Medium Truck would drop off an empty trailer in exchange for a loaded one and return to Camp Anaconda, near Ballad. That eliminated the need for submitting TMRs and going through the asset allocation board. That dropped two days off of the routine. LTC Darryl Daughtery's 346th Transportation Battalion eventually assumed the mission. SUSTAINER PUSH continued until 8 December 2003.

After a KBR driver was killed in Iraq in June, KBR drivers refused to cross the border without armed escort. CPT Chang developed a convoy escort matrix for MP escort across the border.

In June or July, LTC Pollard coordinated a meeting with the three movement control battalions to work out problems.

On 31 July 2003, CPT Maxam assumed command of HHD, 53rd MCB.

The 53rd MCB was scheduled to conduct Exercise BRIGHT STAR with the 24th Transportation Battalion in September. On 15 July, the 450th MCB returned to Camp Arifjan, conducted a one-week transfer of authority then assumed control of theater movement control.

The 53rd MCB returned to Fort McPherson on 10 August with the idea that they would turn around and deploy to Egypt. Some of the MCTs scheduled to go with them opted to deploy straight from Kuwait to Egypt. They thought that a short return to the United States would make the deployment harder. To their surprise, CENTCOM cancelled BRIGHT STAR and the MCTs in Kuwait came under the policy of one-year boots on the ground (BOG). COL Richardson informed the battalion commanders that they could not return until the completion of a one-year tour.

LTC Grant left the 450th MCB an order of merit list of when each MCT should go home. KBR received the contract for running the APOD and relieved the 576th MCT at end of September. They were turned over to the 450th MCB in September. The 450th MCB commander promised to let the 576th MCT redeploy in October, because of lack of mission. The 450th MCB later brought all commanders of MCTs in to meeting room in Doha and brought lots of chaplains. There they told the commanders that they had to

remain for one year. The 576th MCT moved up to Camp Anaconda in Iraq the next month and returned to Fort McPherson in February 2004. The 80th MCT remained at the APOD for a year and returned to Fort Hood, Texas, in March 2004.

Movement control has historically been a problem in the early stages of a deployment. In spite of all the problems, the 53rd MCB had made major improvements to movement control with the MPU. The battalion headquarters had deployed on a no notice alert within 96 hours and provided command and control for 24 MCTs when they were only expected to provide command and control for 12. For this reason, they received the Deployment Excellence Award for 2003.

R&R Mission

Consistent with past one-year tours in combat theaters, the US Army authorized Soldiers to return home for two weeks Rest and Recuperation (R&R). Starting 25 September 2002, the Department of Defense provided contract flights for Soldiers to fly to Frankfurt, Germany, then Baltimore-Washington International (BWI) Airport for R&R. The first flights left on 30 September. The returning Soldiers would fly in to the APOD from Iraq on nine to 14 C-130s per day in the afternoon. The APOD personnel would brief them and make travel arrangements to their preferred destinations, then bed them down and manifest them to fly out in the morning. Soldiers returning from R&R would return to Iraq on the C-130s that had dropped off the passengers for the next day's flight.

The APOD processed Soldiers out from theater and turned Camp Wolverine into a holding area for returning Soldiers. The Soldiers had to purchase their own commercial transportation from those destinations. The Human Resource Center (HRC) coordinated the Soldiers' R&R arrangements on the CONUS side. MG Antonio Toguba requested the 53rd MCB to augment the HRC PAP Team on the R&R Program at BWI. LTC Grant sent a couple of her staff to Baltimore. The flight later landed at Atlanta International Airport and eventually the Baltimore operation shut down. The proximity of Atlanta to Fort McPherson made this support convenient.

OIF1-2 Surge

The 53rd MCB returned to Kuwait in January 2004 to run the APOD during the surge of the rotation from OIF I to OIF II. LTC Grant did not want to give up the R&R mission so she scaled back the number of Soldiers she augmented the Atlanta staff. The R&R Program took a back seat to the massive rotation of troops during those months anyway. The Department of Defense suspended the contract flights on 1 February 2004. They did not provide contract flights for R&R again until 15 June 2004. The 53rd MCB returned from Kuwait in July.

Bibliography

Blumenson, Martin, *Salerno to Cassino*, Washington, DC: Center of Military History, 1993.

Day, LT Thomas G., "Reveille At Sundown; The FRELOC Saga of the 37th Transportation Group," Kaiserslautern, Germany, 1967.

Eisenhower, Dwight D., *Crusade in Europe*, Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1948.

Garland, LTC Albert N., and Howard McGaw Smyth, *Sicily and the Surrender of Italy*, Washington, DC: Center of Military History, 1993.