

UNIT HISTORY

1 January 1966-31 December 1966

On 1 January 1966, the 64th Transportation Company (Medium Truck)(Cargo) found itself continuing its previous year's mission of Post Support at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. The Commanders, 1st Lt William F Pietrowitz 1 January-5 January, 1st Lt David G. Black III 6 January-31 May, and Cpt John M Horvath 1 June-31 December were primarily concerned with the daily commitments to the John F Kennedy Center for Special Warfare and to the Division Ready Force of the 82nd Airborne Div.

On 1 April, the initial message from the Third US Army alerted the unit for deployment with the date set for 10 July. The movement order is attached as appendix 1. From its personnel strength of 145 on 1 April, the unit built up to a strength of 178 for its eventual deployment on 22 July. A roster of key personnel is attached as Appendix 2.

After a controversy which raged between 31 May and 25 June, Continental Army Command informed the elements concerned that the unit would deploy as scheduled with its M52A1 Diesel 5 ton tractors. The difficulty had centered around the deployability of this tractor at a time when the M52A2 Multifuel 5 ton tractor was considered more desirable. The unit's initial operations, covering 971,400 miles on the road from Qui Nhon to Pleiku between 20 August and 31 December proved that the decision was the right one. The diesel tractor proved itself dependable and did not present any maintenance or supply problems.

Deployment began on 22 July when American Flyer Airlines moved the unit from Pope Air Force Base, adjacent to Ft Bragg, to McChord Air Force Base, Washington. Busses moved the 64th to the Tacoma Outport where the Military Sea Transportation Service Transport, the USNS John Pope was boarded. Sailing on 23 July, the men of the 64th saw Okinawa on 5 August, and on 10 August boarded a Landing Craft Utility for final movement to the beach of Qui Nhon, Republic of Vietnam. The unit area was located 12 miles inland, in the Phu Thanh Valley. With building materials at a premium, the 64th set about the difficult business of providing themselves with a contonement area.

On 13 August, the unit vehicles and equipment, which had on 5 July departed from Charleston South Carolina Outport aboard the US Robin Hood, arrived in Qui Nhon. A measure of the 64th's effectiveness may be gained from the previously noted mileage figure, and the fact that the task vehicle availability during 30 August-31 December averaged 82 percent.

The mission, continuing since arrival in Vietnam, has been the movement of general cargo from the Qui Nhon depots west on Route 19 to Pleiku Supply Points.

The close of 1966 saw the 64th well-settled in the Phu Thanh Valley, and ever mindful of the requirement to keep the supplies moving.

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY

64TH TRANSPORTATION COMPANY (MEDIUM TRUCK CARGO)

APO SAN FRANCISCO 96318

UNIT HISTORY 1968

The coming of 1968 found the 64th Transportation Company (Medium Truck Cargo) heavily committed to the mission of supporting the embattled elements of the 4th Infantry Division in Kontum, RVN, and Dak To, RVN. The major emphasis was on the movement of cargo north on highway QL 14 to Kontum and Dak To. There also were daily convoys on highway QL 19 to An Khe and return to Pleiku. It was on such a convoy to An Khe, that the 64th Transportation Company had its first ambush of the year. On 31 January, while returning from AnKhe to Pleiku, the 124th Transportation Battalion convoy in which 1Lt David R Wilson, a member of the 64th Transportation Company, was convoy commander, and which was made up mostly of 5 ton tractors and trailers from this company. The resulting action saw 1Lt Wilson killed when his jeep took a direct hit from a mortar round. The company also had four other personnel wounded in the ambush. 1Lt Wilson was presented the Silver Star posthumously, with "V" device for his gallant actions when he speedily went back into the kill zone to move his personnel out of the kill zone. SP4 Jimmie Tidwell was awarded the Bronze Star with "V" device for his actions in the ambush.

The primary mission of the 64th Transportation Company is to provide transportation for movement of general cargo by Motor Transportation. This mission is further broken down as follows: to provide transportation for movement of personnel, general cargo, bulk petroleum products and missiles by line haul and local haul operation within the II Corps Tactical Zone as directed. Also included is local transportation support to Headquarters, Pleiku Sub-Area Command, in excess of that unit's organic capability, as directed. Also included is providing security for convoys in line haul operation, supporting combat operations as directed, and providing security for portions of the 124th Transportation Battalion perimeter.

Due to the lack of personnel and equipment this unit had reduced capability during 1968. However, the unit averaged 30 to 35 task vehicles committed daily in local and line hauls. There were also 4 gun trucks and 2 to 3 gun jeeps with crews committed daily. During the year the unit's average shortage of personnel was thirty enlisted men and two officers. We had an average vehicle shortage of twenty multifuel tractors. Even though there was a shortage of men and equipment we amassed over a million miles and hauled 150,000 tons of cargo.

A 6.4% deadline rate was maintained throughout 1968. A high of 30.1% during the monsoon season to a low of 1% which was obtained after the unit move in August.

(One page from the 1969 64th Med Trk Co Operations Report/Lessons Learned)

III. OPERATIONS AND TRAINING:

- A. Each month the company has a practice alert.
- B. Mandatory subject training consists of Character Guidance, CBR, Safety, Physical Training, Command Information, Military Justice, Code of Conduct, Prevention of Heat Injury, Weapons Qualification and Familiarization, Psychological Warfare, Armed Forces Censorship, Safeguarding Defense Information, and Survival, Escape and Evasion. In addition, personnel of this unit are constantly undergoing driver maintenance retraining.
- C. Combat Service Operations consisted of local haul support to the Pleiku area and line haul support to Kontum, Dak To, An Khe, and Qui Nhon.
- D. Combat operations started with the death of truck driver SP4 Gerald R Acton who was killed on 8 May 1969 while waiting at the marshalling area at Ben Het for departure of the convoy.
- E. On 8 June, 1969, when the 124th Transportation Battalion ran a convoy from Dak To to Ben Het, the embattled base camp, SP5 Barrent Torgerson and his gun crew on the "Mighty Minny" participated in the heaviest contact encountered all year.
- F. On 14 June 1969, SP5 Ronald Taylor and his crew gave good account of themselves on the "Highland Animals" gun truck in an ambush at Pump Station 8 on QL 19.
- G. On 23 August 1969, in a convoy from Pleiku to An Khe, SP5 Cliff Bottorf, NCO of the "Death and Destruction" gun truck, was wounded seriously and medevaced in an ambush at bridge #25 on QL 19.
- H. On 15 November 1969, SP5 Roger Spencer and his gun crew on the "Ho Chi's Hearse" provided the base of fire in the kill zone enabling the convoy to clear an ambush at bridge #30 on QL 19. This marked the end of combat actions for this reporting year.

IV. PERSONNEL:

Throughout most of the year the company was understrength. The average strength for the company for the year was 151 personnel assigned. Particularly critical was the shortage of Squad Leaders, E5.

V. LOGISTICS:

There were several items which were difficult to obtain, including tires and tubes, hydrovacs, and regulators. In December the company began a turnover of trucks replacing the oldest vehicles with new trucks.

On 4 Oct 03, in Orlando FL, there was a dedication ceremony for the ILT David R. Wilson Armed Forces Reserve Center. Dale Sindt, now a Colonel in the U. S. Army Reserve, who was a platoon leader with David Wilson, took action to so name this Center. The Center covers 120,00 square feet and is a beautiful 16 million dollar assembly hall and auditorium and training facility.

The Silver Star citation for 1LT Wilson is as follows:

For gallantry in action while engaged in military operations against an armed hostile force in the Republic of Vietnam, 1LT Wilson, Transportation Corps, U.S. Army, distinguished himself on 31 January 1968 while serving Commander of a supply convoy in the Republic of Vietnam. Wilson's convoy was subjected to fire by an enemy force. Although he was safely out of the danger zone, he unhesitatingly returned to the scene of the action to lead his men to safety. Many of the vehicles had halted in the kill zone and were subject to an intense enemy mortar and small arms fire. Passing through the ambush zone, 1LT Wilson, with complete disregard for his own safety, turned around and reentered the kill zone to insure the safe passage of the rear element of the convoy. While making this final courageous effort to insure the survival of these personnel, he was mortally wounded by an enemy mortar round falling on his vehicle. Through his extraordinary heroism and outstanding leadership ability, 1LT Wilson was able to save the lives of many of his personnel who otherwise would have been halted in the kill zone subject to the most intense enemy fire. 1Lt Wilson's personal bravery and devotion to duty were in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service and reflect great credit upon himself, his unit, and the United States Army.

The thus far known names of the gun trucks in the 64th Truck Company are:

Highland Animals

Highland Raiders

Mighty Minny

Ho Chi's Hearse

Death and Destruction.

The thus far known names of members of the 64th Truck Company who were killed are:

David R Wilson (Silver Star)

Earnest Fowlke

Barrent O Torgerson

Donald L Neeley

Gary A Best

Charles F Gamble

Robert Warnock

Kenneth Tierney

Gerald R Acton

According to James Lyles, author of the book called “The Hard Ride; Vietnam Gun Trucks”, 4 gun truck crewmen were killed in a freak helicopter accident. Lyles said, “The entire crew of a gun truck called Mighty Minny from the 64th Transportation Company were killed in a helicopter crash. SP5 Gary A Best, SP4 Charles F Gamble, SP5 Donald L Neeley and SP5 Barrent O Torgerson were killed near Kontum on October 28th, 1969, when the helicopter they were being given a ride in crashed and burned shortly after takeoff.” As of October, 2003, Lyles has catalogued the names of 368 gun trucks.

If you have any further information to add to an understanding of the efforts of the 64th, please contact John M. (Jack) Horvath, or Ralph Grambo, the ATAV webmaster.

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