

1968

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
515TH TRANSPORTATION COMPANY (LIGHT TRUCK)
APO 96308

13 May 1969

SUBJECT: Annual Historical Summary - 1968

TO: See Distribution

The beginning of January 1968 found the 515th Transportation Company "Roadrunners" completely split. The 1st platoon was located at Dong Ha, the 2nd, headquarters and maintenance platoons were located in Phu Bai, while the 3rd platoon continued to remain in Cam Ranh Bay. The unit was commanded by Cpt Uwe Jaeckel, had a strength of 141 EM, 3 OFF and 1 WO and had 55 task 5 ton cargo trucks, 20 of which were located in Cam Ranh Bay. The 515th Transportation Company was still under the operational control of the 3rd Marine Division as it had been since September 1967 and continued to receive its commitments from the 9th Motor Transport Battalion (Marine) located at Dong Ha. Administratively the company was controlled by the 36th Transportation Battalion (Army) located in Cam Ranh Bay.

While under the operational control of the 3rd Marine Division, the company's mission was to haul vital supplies and combat troops to Marine outposts along the DMZ. The daily convoys took the unit's vehicles along QL #9, to such points as Con Thien, Cam Lo, Calu, Camp Carroll and the Rockpile. The mission of direct combat support with the 9th Motor Transport Battalion even led convoys north of Gia Linh on QL #1, while to the south the 515th was hauling supplies from the Dong Ha Ramp and Airfield to the 1st Air Cavalry Division located at Camp Evans.

During January, the 515th vehicles were involved in several ambushes while operating in conjunction with Marine convoys. On 13 January 1968, ten (10) 515th trucks along with vehicles from the 9th Motor Transport Battalion (Marines) and the 11th Engineer Battalion (Marines) departed in convoy from the Rockpile to Calu. At approximately 1245 hours the convoy was attacked by North Vietnamese Army Regulars using small arms fire, grenades, mortars and booby trapped mines. Two men from the 515th were wounded, SP/4 Larry B. Bates, US54962914, and SP/4 Terry L. Gochanour, US54804877, while one truck was destroyed. Total losses for the convoy were 19 killed in action, 60 wounded in action and 2 missing in action.

On 23 January the 515th 2nd, headquarters and maintenance platoons joined the 1st platoon in Dong Ha. The next few days were occupied by setting up the living tents and building bunkers and on the 27th the company was back to full utilization. On 1 February, Cpt Gerald R. Knoll

Annual Historical Summary - 1968 (CONT)

joined and assumed command of the unit.

The area around Dong Ha received the brunt of the Communist Tet Offensive during the months of February and March. During this period the convoy routes traveled by the 515th vehicles and its base camp received almost daily shellings. On 2 February the 515th received its first killed in action of the year. SP/4 Ray C. Banks, US54432298 was transporting a Marine mine sweeping team between Camp Carroll and Dong Ha and found it necessary to remain over night at Cam Lo. During the night Cam Lo was overrun and Specialist Bank's truck was struck by an enemy artillery round killing him. In addition to the threat of enemy fire the 515th faced other problems, the most serious of which was lack of supplies, mainly food, repair parts and motor oil. On the 13th of February the only supply of motor oil available to the unit was two 55 gallon drums of OE 50 oil. This situation was to last for 2 weeks.

The period of 18 February - 18 March was one of very heavy shelling of the 515th base area. The unit was alerted for incoming rounds three and four times a day. These alerts were so timed by the enemy as to hit the unit during meal time. It became extremely difficult to enable the men to eat a freshly prepared meal which was beginning to have a serious psychological effect on the troops. On 14 March 1968 the 515th received its second and last killed in action of the year. During a rocket attack on the company area SP/5 Tommie L. Symack, RA15804126, was hit by shrapnel and killed. In addition to the one killed, seven others were wounded including 2LT John B. Connors, the Operations Officer and SFC James H. Kirby, the 1st Sergeant. Even during this trying period, two pluses must be noted. On 6 March the unit began to receive its first issue of "Stars and Stripes". Morale was helped tremendously. In addition on 21 February, the 515th received word that according to General Order #787, DA Headquarters USARV it had been awarded the Meritorious Unit Commendation for its operations while located in Cam Ranh Bay.

Unfortunately monthly tonnage and mileage records were destroyed covering the 515th's period of operation supporting the 3rd Marine Division while at Dong Ha. The following figures were salvaged from Marine Corps records. During the period 26 November 1967 - 16 March 1968 the 515th Transportation Company hauled 19,850 S/T of cargo, transported 19,386 troops and traveled 109,371 miles.

On 18 March 1968 the 515th returned to Phu Bai and located in the FLSG-A compound. Living conditions were greatly improved since South East Asia huts were available to include an air-conditioned Barber Shop. At this time the unit assumed its present mission of port and beach clearance of Hue and Tan My Ramps. The supplies cleared from these ramps were for such units as the 101st Airborne Division, 1st Air Cavalry Division, 82nd Airborne Division and the 1st Marine Division. Operational control of the unit was now placed on the Marine Force Logistical Command.

Annual Historical Summary - 1968 (CONT)

On 9 April 1968, operational control of the 515th was transferred to the 57th Transportation Battalion, part of the 26th General Support Group which had just established its headquarters in Quang Tri. The 515th Operations Section still continued to coordinate with the Marine Convoy Control Center to achieve better utilization of its vehicles.

The pace had slowed considerably since the 515th had moved out of Dong Ha. On 2 May the 39th Transportation Battalion arrived at Phu Bai and the 515th became part of the battalion structure. On 23 May the 515th acquired a new platoon leader, LT Barry L. Watson, who was later to become the company commander. As a reminder that the war had not ended, the 515th Transportation Company motor pool was hit by a mortar attack on 25 May 1968. Several trucks were damaged but no one was injured.

During June and July the unit continued in its mission of port and beach clearance but in addition began a series of combat support missions to Bastogne hauling Class V cargo to USARV artillery crews on the edge of the A Shau Valley. Two such missions were undertaken in June and three in July. On 14 July, shortly after the unit moved across QL #1 into Camp Hockmouth, the 515th celebrated Unit Day. A company party was held commemorating the anniversary of the 3rd year this unit has been in Viet Nam. On 20 July 1968, 1LT Barry L. Watson replaced Cpt Knoll as commanding officer of the 515th. Cpt Knoll moved up to the 39th Transportation Battalion as Maintenance Officer.

During the month of August, the 515th was involved in two large scale operations in support of the 101st Airborne Division, operation "Mass Muskat" and operation "Somerset Plain". During operation "Mass Muskat" the 515th hauled 420 S/T in 9 combat support missions. During operation "Somerset Plain" which lasted from 3rd - 19th of August this unit is credited with moving 2000 S/T of cargo and traveling 20,867 miles.

During the month of September a large backlog of supplies was developing on Tan My Ramp. To alleviate the congestion, the 515th was loaned 12 5ton tractors from 363rd Transportation Company and 30 S & P trailers from the Marine Corps. With this equipment the 515th was to conduct a trailer-transfer operation between Camp Evans and Tan My Ramp. This operation continued until the early part of November.

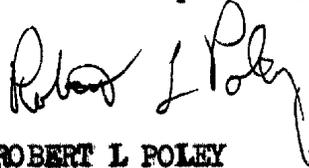
During the period 27 October to 11 November the 515th was involved in operation "Liberty Canyon" which was the move of the 1st Air Cavalry Division from Camp Evans to Tan My Ramp. Since this was a concentrated effort, vehicles were on the road 24 hours per day and with an average present for duty strength of 108 men with 40 vehicles operating per day. It was often necessary for NCO's to act as relief drivers. During the operation, the 515th is credited with moving 5,796 S/T's and driving 32,140 miles.

Annual Historical Summary - 1968 (CONT)

During November the company reached a low point in the amount of personnel and equipment on hand. The rough terrain and long years had finally taken their toll of the old M54 gas burning 5 ton cargo trucks with which the 515th was equipped. In mid November the unit had only 9 task vehicles on hand in Phu Bai and a total of 112 EM and 2 Officers assigned to the unit. There was one noteworthy accomplishment in November. The unit passed it's Annual General Inspection conducted by the Da Nang Support Command on 19 November. This was the first AGI the unit has been through since it's arrival in Viet Nam in 1965.

On 22 November, 1LT Ronald L. Ash Sr. replaced 1LT Watson as commanding officer. LT Watson moved up to the battalion S-4 position. Also on 11 November the company's 1st Sergeant, SFC William T. Neill was promoted to 1st Sgt E-8.

December saw the 515th continuing to perform its mission of port and beach clearance to the best of its ability in light of its shortage of task vehicles. No replacement vehicles were in sight but a trickle of replacement personnel had begun to filter up from Da Nang.



ROBERT L. POLEY
CPT, TC
Commanding

1 Incl
Tonnage & Mileage Figures

DISTRIBUTION:

3-Chief of Military History
Department of the Army
Washington DC 20315

C/C-Commanding General
CINCUSARPAC
ATTN: CPOP-MH
APO 96558

C/C-Commanding General
USARV
ATTN: AVCHS-MH
APO 96375

C/C-Commanding General
1st Log Comd
ATTN: AVCA-GD-H
APO 96384

C/C-Commanding General
Da Nang Sup Comd
APO 96337

TONNAGE AND MILEAGE FIGURES - MAY 68 TO DEC 68

<u>MONTHS</u>	<u>TONS</u>	<u>MILES</u>
MAY	3,496	32,982
JUN	1,790	14,923
JUL	2,645	21,994
AUG	2,282	20,867
SEP	3,732	32,882
OCT	6,043	42,134
NOV	3,738	22,766
DEC	3,689	20,449

Inclosure 1