

1965

History of the
541ST TRANSPORTATION COMPANY (LIGHT TRUCK)

1 January 1965 - 31 December 1965

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The year 1965 proved to be an eventful year for the 541st Transportation Company (Light Truck). Captain George W. Leslie, [REDACTED], TC, took command of the 541st in November, 1964, while the company was in the final phases of participating in exercises Air Assault II and Project TEAM.

After returning to Fort Bragg, North Carolina, after four months in the field, the 541st settled down to the routine of garrison life under the 36th Transportation Battalion (Truck) and the 5th Logistical Command. Along with two other light truck companies, the 24th and 379th, the 541st pulled post commitments in support of the 82nd Airborne Division and the Special Warfare Center.

In early February, the 541st sent a platoon to Headquarters, XVIII Airborne Corps in support of Exercise Swamp Dragon, held on the Fort Bragg Military Reservation.

In late February, the 541st sent another platoon to the 82nd Airborne Division in support of Exercise Pre-Quick Kick, held at Fort Stewart, Georgia.

Throughout the winter and spring, the 541st constantly had vehicles attached to the Special Warfare Center on Operation Cherokee Trail and training operations in the Smoky Mountains of western North Carolina.

In the middle of April, the 541st was alerted for further assignment to USARPAC. Preparations for the upcoming overseas move was interrupted on 29 April when the 82nd Airborne Division was alerted for deployment in the Dominican Republic. In seven days following the 82nd's deployment, the 541st traveled 77,000 miles with its available fleet of 34 trucks. The trucks ran 24 hours a day between Fort Bragg and Pope and Seymour Johnson Air Force Bases, hauling supplies to be flown to the 82nd.

In late May and early June, a small detachment from the 541st assisted the 36th Transportation Battalion in unloading the elements of the 82nd returning from the Dominican Republic at Sunny Point, North Carolina.

Throughout June and July, the 541st supported the 1965 Fort Bragg ROTC Summer Camp while preparing for deployment to Vietnam.

In July, the 541st was issued 16 M-35A1, 2½ ton trucks, from Central Supply Agency at Fort Bragg. Fifty drivers were flown to Fort Benning, Georgia, to drive 50 more M-35A1, 2½ ton trucks, back to Fort Bragg. The 541st's old M-34, M-35 and M-135 trucks were turned in to Central Supply.

On 29 July 1965, the 541st drove their trucks to Norfolk, Virginia, where they were loaded on ships bound for Vietnam.

On 12 August 1965, the men of the 541st left Fort Bragg by train. They arrived at Oakland Army Terminal, Oakland, California, on the night of 16 August 1965. The 541st then boarded the USNS General William H. Gordon for a 16 day voyage to Qui Nhon, Vietnam.

II.

The USNS Gordon arrived in Qui Nhon harbor on the night of 2 September 1965, and the 541st debarked on 4 September. On 5 September, the 541st was attached to the 394th Transportation Battalion (Terminal).

The 541st set up camp in Valley "C" on Highway 1 outside Qui Nhon, adjacent to the 61st and 597th Transportation Companies. Five days later, the vehicles were unloaded and picked up. Almost immediately, the 541st was put to work by the 394th Trans Bn (Tml), hauling from Qui Nhon to An Khe and clearing the beaches.

On 12 September 1965, the 541st sent one platoon to An Khe to support the 1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division and the advance party of the 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile). On 24 September, the 541st headquarters platoon and the third platoon joined the first platoon at An Khe. This portion of the company was attached to the 34th Quartermaster Battalion for administration and logistics.

On 25 September, the second platoon was attached to the 151st Transportation Company (Light Truck) in Qui Nhon and was so attached until 25 October, when the second platoon joined the company at An Khe.

The mission of the 541st Trans Co since being at An Khe has been:

(1) To provide general transport support to the 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile) and all units in the An Khe Support Area.

(2) To provide movement control for line haul operations terminating in or passing through the An Khe Support Area.

(3) To provide control and operation of trailer terminal for tractor-trailer line haul operations.

(4) To provide transport augmentation for the An Khe Support Area priority requirements from available line haul resource located in the An Khe area.

On 27 October 1965, the 541st was detached from the 394th Transportation Battalion (Terminal), and attached to the 27th Transportation Battalion (Truck).

On 5 November 1965, Captain Leslie was promoted to Major and on 20 November, Captain Wallace A. Bryans took command of the company.

Since arriving in Vietnam, the 541st has taken part in beach clearance, line haul, movement control and tactical operation activities.

In the period from 9 September to 31 December, the 541st logged 243,470 miles, hauled 8,091 short tons of cargo and carried 87,151 passengers. There were 3,614 vehicle dispatches used during this period.

The highlight of the first four months of operation in Vietnam took place in November when the 541st hauled troops and supplies for the 1st Cavalry Division during the battles at Plei Me and the Ia Drang Valley.

The 541st prides itself on being the only non-organic truck company in Vietnam in tactical direct support of a combat unit.