

## **165<sup>th</sup> Transportation Company**

### **World War II**

The 165<sup>th</sup> Transportation Company constituted into the US Army as the 165<sup>th</sup> Quartermaster Company and activated at Fort Ord, California, on 23 April 1942. Subsequently, on 8 July 1942, the 165<sup>th</sup> Quartermaster Company inactivated at Ford Ord, California.

While on inactive status, the Company redesignated the 165<sup>th</sup> Quartermaster Truck Company on 10 December 1943 then redesignated as the 165<sup>th</sup> Transportation Corps Truck Company on 1 August 1946.

### **Cold War**

In 1949, the Soviet Union tested its first nuclear bomb and the Communist Chinese drove the Nationalist Chinese off the mainland onto the island of Formosa. The threat of world communism became real and heralded the Cold War where communist and democratic nations poise on the brink of war. Center to the threat was the defense of Europe against Soviet aggression. The free European nations and the United States formed the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in 1949. The boundary between East and West Germany represented the front line and France was the communication zone (COMZ) where an intricate system had grown. For fear the Soviets would use their nuclear capability to destroy the deep draft ports in Northern France, the NATO planners expected to have to conduct a Normandy style amphibious resupply mission. The US Army Transportation Corps began to focus on its ability to conduct supply over the beach operations. The terminology changed to logistics-over-the-shore (LOTS) operations when soldiers realized that they had originally been working on the SOB. The Cold War saw significant development in LOTS capability.

The 165<sup>th</sup> Transportation Corps Company redesignated the 165<sup>th</sup> Transportation Company on 11 June 1954. In 1952, the Army built its first LCU 1466s. On 15 July 1954, the 165<sup>th</sup> Transportation Company activated at Fort Eustis, Virginia, as one of two heavy boat companies of the 159<sup>th</sup> Transportation Battalion (Boat). The company was undermanned and the leaders complained that they had so many Soldiers tasked on special duty that they could not conduct any training. The remainder of the company participated in sports, parades and static displays. On 25 September 1956, it inactivated at Fort Eustis, Virginia.

### **Vietnam War**

The Military Assistance Command, Vietnam assumed a greater role in ground combat in 1965. President Lyndon B. Johnson was reluctant to give General William Westmoreland the number of troops that he felt he needed to stave off the increasing presence of North Vietnamese Army guerrillas. The first increment of troops did not prove sufficient and in 1966, the President authorized a second buildup. Since most of

the surplus active duty units were already in Vietnam, the second buildup required the activation of more units.

The 165<sup>th</sup> Transportation Company (Light Amphibian) activated at Fort Story, Virginia, on 1 June 1966. In December 1966, the 165<sup>th</sup> LARC rail loaded to Oakland, California, shipped out to Cam Ranh Bay, Vietnam. Around March or April, half of the company moved to Thailand. There it attached to the 499<sup>th</sup> Transportation Battalion (Terminal) at Sattahip. The 165<sup>th</sup> LARC conducted ship-to-shore lighterage in support of the nearby US Air Force Base in Thailand. Ships usually anchored approximately one and a half miles off shore. The engineers built a pier for the ships to dock at in late 1967.

In February 1968, the 165<sup>th</sup> LARC Company sailed from Thailand to participate in the most significant LOTS operations ever conducted during the Vietnam War. Critical to the success of the enemy's offensive operations was its severing of the lines of communication into I Corps Tactical Zone. Had they achieved this, the NVA victory would have been all but assured had the Army not been able to reestablish an alternate supply line. The beaches all along I Corps had too shallow a gradient for landing craft to drop ramp on dry shore. Therefore, only amphibious vehicles from the 165<sup>th</sup> LARC and Provisional BARC Companies could conduct the ship-to-shore lighterage. The 159<sup>th</sup> Terminal Battalion "Sunders Wonders" provided command and control for the LOTS operation. The 253<sup>rd</sup> Maintenance Detachment (Direct Support) attached to the 165<sup>th</sup> LARC.

Immediately upon arrival in country, the personnel of the unit met the precarious task of forging a base of operations on an isolated beach deep within hostile territory. Although subjected to constant enemy harassment, they worked on a twenty-four hour basis to establish a defensive perimeter and adequate living and working conditions in the remarkably short period of four days. The LOTS operation supported the 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division during Operations PEGAUS and DELAWARE to break the siege of Khe Sanh and drive the NVA out of the A Shau Valley.

Although the 165<sup>th</sup> and their fleet of 25 LARC Vs suffered constant attacks from enemy fire, they only lost one LARC V during the whole operation. LARC V # 834 operated by SPC Kinashiro from Hawaii, was hit in the rear by a rocket, while heading back out to sea for a pick up. Fortunately, for the LARC crew, the blast did not cause any casualties and only minor damage to the boat.

The LOTS operation at Wunder Beach, near Quang Tri, fortunately provided MACV with the additional tonnage needed to conduct its counter-offensive to relieve Khe Sanh and drive the NVA out of I Corps Zone. This was only possible due to the skill and efficiency with which men at Wunder Beach moved cargo from ship-to-shore and inland. A typhoon closed down the operation in September. Thus, they far exceeded the expectations of MACV skeptics and delivered the means for victory.

Realizing the importance of civic actions to the ultimate success of the war effort, the men of the company organized a vigorous assistance and transportation program to

replenish vitally needed food supplies for the isolated island of Bai Lue. The 165<sup>th</sup> Transportation Company and 253<sup>rd</sup> Maintenance Detachment received the Meritorious Unit Commendation on 3 May 1969 for their work at Wunder Beach during the period 21 March 1968 to 26 September 1968.

The 165<sup>th</sup> Transportation Company returned to Thailand and inactivated on 1 November 1968.

Officially, the 165<sup>th</sup> Transportation Company participated in the following campaigns during the Vietnam War:

Vietnam Defense  
Counteroffensive  
Counteroffensive, Phase II  
Tet Counteroffensive