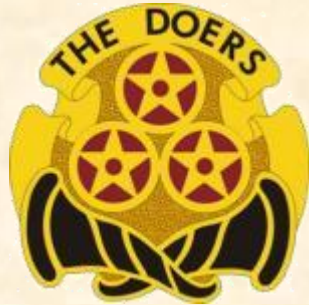


## 6<sup>th</sup> Transportation Battalion (Truck)



**6<sup>th</sup> Transportation Battalion Crest (l) and coat of arms (r)  
mouse over each for a description**

### World War II

The battalion constituted on 17 June 1943 as the Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment (HHD), 6<sup>th</sup> Quartermaster Troop Transport Battalion. The battalion activated on 26 August 1943 at Fort Devens, Massachusetts. It reorganized and redesignated as the HHD, 6<sup>th</sup> Quartermaster Battalion (Mobile) on 20 November 1943. The battalion deployed to Europe on where it supported the drive from Northern France, through the Rhineland and into Central Europe .

On 30 March 1945, the battalion became attached to the 12<sup>th</sup> Army Group and stationed at Diedrich, Germany. On 14 June 1945, the 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion was attached to the 550<sup>th</sup> Quartermaster Group for all administration and operations. On the following day the battalion was relieved from assignment to the 9<sup>th</sup> US Army and assigned to the 7<sup>th</sup> US Army. During this period the battalion was located in Ledeban Kaserne, on the outskirts of Hildersheim, Germany. At this time, the battalion had six operating units under its command.

On 2 July 1945, the battalion departed Hildersheim and went to Wahern, Germany. There the battalion continued its mission of supporting Class I and III supply points in addition to all bakery units within the area. On 8 July, the battalion was attached to the 56<sup>th</sup> Quartermaster Base Depot for administration and operations. The 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion was attached to the 56<sup>th</sup> Quartermaster Base Depot on 8 July 1945.

### Army of Occupation

The battalion moved again on 11 August 1945 to Hersfeld, Germany, but the main operations for the battalion took place in Kassel where the battalion established a forward base to service the units within the area. At Kassel the battalion commanded twelve operational units.

During 1945, the following companies comprised the battalion for operations:

3011<sup>th</sup> Quartermaster Bakery Company  
 3013<sup>th</sup> Quartermaster Bakery Company  
 3035<sup>th</sup> Quartermaster Bakery Company  
 3038<sup>th</sup> Quartermaster Bakery Company  
 348<sup>th</sup> Quartermaster Depot Company  
 195<sup>th</sup> Quartermaster Gasoline Supply Company  
 197<sup>th</sup> Quartermaster Gasoline Supply Company  
 832<sup>nd</sup> Quartermaster Gasoline Supply Company  
 842<sup>nd</sup> Quartermaster Gasoline Supply Company  
 607<sup>th</sup> Quartermaster Graves Registration Company  
 608<sup>th</sup> Quartermaster Graves Registration Company  
 579<sup>th</sup> Quartermaster Laundry Company  
 87<sup>th</sup> Quartermaster Railhead Company  
 93<sup>rd</sup> Quartermaster Railhead Company  
 552<sup>nd</sup> Quartermaster Railhead Company  
 554<sup>th</sup> Quartermaster Railhead Company  
 231<sup>st</sup> Quartermaster Salvage Collecting Company  
 233<sup>rd</sup> Quartermaster Salvage Collecting Company  
 540<sup>th</sup> Quartermaster Salvage Repair Company  
 978<sup>th</sup> Quartermaster Service Company  
 1191<sup>st</sup> Quartermaster Service Company  
 3104<sup>th</sup> Quartermaster Service Company  
 3130<sup>th</sup> Quartermaster Service Company  
 3168<sup>th</sup> Quartermaster Service Company  
 3170<sup>th</sup> Quartermaster Service Company  
 3195<sup>th</sup> Quartermaster Service Company  
 3216<sup>th</sup> Quartermaster Service Company  
 3217<sup>th</sup> Quartermaster Service Company  
 3218<sup>th</sup> Quartermaster Service Company  
 3230<sup>th</sup> Quartermaster Service Company  
 3279<sup>th</sup> Quartermaster Service Company  
 4093<sup>rd</sup> Quartermaster Service Company  
 4183<sup>rd</sup> Quartermaster Service Company  
 4185<sup>th</sup> Quartermaster Service Company  
 4191<sup>st</sup> Quartermaster Service Company  
 8015<sup>th</sup> Quartermaster Service Company  
 8027<sup>th</sup> Quartermaster Service Company

During the next eight months, the battalion was gradually relieved of its motley Quartermaster units. Many of the companies inactivated or returned to the US, which kept the battalion in a constant state of flux. During one quarter, the battalion was headquarters for 25 separate Quartermaster units. By April 1946 when the battalion came under the command of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Army, it had a homogeneous command of 14 Quartermaster Truck companies, 11 of which were in the Mannheim area. Seven of these were provisional units manned by Polish personnel with one American officer and four enlisted men to supervise operations.

In addition to the above units, the battalion had one unit in Darmstadt supplying the community with necessary commodities, and another unit at Hanau supporting the transportation needs for the Hanau Air Depot. The remaining units were in Asperg and driver and maintenance personnel came from a waiting list of German civilians. This unit supported the transportation needs of the entire Ludwigsburg area. The major problem encountered during this period was maintenance of combat worn vehicles and the shortage of qualified officers and enlisted. In June 1946, the battalion was placed under the Continental Base Section, however, the headquarters remained in Mannheim. From July to September 1946, the mission of the battalion became the restoration of combat worn vehicles and the transport of supplies and equipment varied within the different areas. On 1 August 1946, the battalion was converted and redesignated as the HHD, 6th Transportation Corps Truck Battalion. Quartermaster truck units were given to the Transportation Corps following World War II.

In the latter part of October 1946, there was a critical shortage of food in the German consumer markets, which was aggravated by the fact that the German transportation infrastructure at the time was inadequate to transport recently harvested produce from the farms to the cities. A request for additional vehicles for the transportation of this produce was approved and a program was drafted and immediately put into effect. The original plan was a program to aid the ill-conditioned and insufficient number of commercial German trucks in hauling the autumn harvest to market. However, due to the lack of heating fuel, a need especially acute in the cities, the initial plan included the movement of fuels. The need for this fuel had become so imperative that if this movement had not gone into effect as expeditiously as possible, coal shipments from the United States would not have been forwarded directly. Operation SPUD called for local community commanders to assemble the hauling requirements for the area under their jurisdiction.

LTC S. G. Lefner, commander of the 6<sup>th</sup> Transportation Battalion, immediately set his forces into action by sending half of his operative companies into the Pforzheim, Goppingen, and Karlsruhe areas and the remainder proceeded full time operations. The cargo hauled included potatoes, firewood, grain and several other foodstuffs. During the operation, several difficulties arose. Foremost among these was the work force shortage, which increased under the stresses of a major operation. The vacancies, due mainly to the rapid redeployment of military personnel, were filled for the most part of German civilians drivers. As these drivers were, in general, poorly trained and lacked the necessary experience, their knowledge of vehicle maintenance was limited. An operational slowdown was the inevitable outcome of this policy of civilian vehicle driving. In addition, many vehicles were still combat worn, had not yet been replaced and had only undergone the most urgent repairs. Nevertheless, they transported approximately 189,826 tons of supplies and drove a total of 1,583,900 miles during these three months of the operation.

This assistance furnished transportation for all critical farm products and sufficient fuels to enable the German agencies to provide for their needs before the winter had set in. The 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion, as did many other transportation organizations completed its mission with the great success and Operations SPUD ended on 31 December 1946.

As a credit to this battalion and to the other units participating in the operation, which was of such great assistance to the German economy, the following words from the Bamberg



Newspaper, *Fraenkisher Tag*, serve as a reminder: “In order to comprehend the generosity with which the victors are treating us one should ask oneself if the German army in Poland would have placed trucks at the disposal of the Polish population to save the harvest?” This is both a compliment to our American way of life and to the drivers who toiled the many hours, carrying their cargo to the centers of need.

On 22 April 1947, the Battalion was redesignated the HHD, 6th Transportation Truck Battalion and participated in the Berlin Airlift. Prior to the end of World War II, the Allies had agreed to divide the responsibility for occupation of Germany among them. Similarly, the German capitol of Berlin, which was in Soviet sector, was divided by the occupying powers. On 30 November 1945, the Allied Control Council officially approved in writing an air corridor between the western zone and Berlin. In 1948, Russia decided to role its occupied countries into the Soviet Union. The first challenge after the war came when the Soviet Union closed off freight traffic of its former Allies into Berlin hoping that they would turn their portion of the capitol over. The Russians imposed a blockade of Berlin on 21 June 1948. The US Army and Air Force responded by delivering supplies to Berlin through the air corridor. Operation Vittles had its airborne birth on 26 June 1948. Rhein-Main and Wiesbaden became the Airports of Embarkation (APOE) with TC Airhead Tempelhof in Berlin the Airport of Debarkation (APOD). The 67<sup>th</sup> Transportation Truck Company and the 6<sup>th</sup> Transportation Battalion hauled the cargo to the Air Port of Embarkation at Rhein-Main Air Base. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Traffic Control Group opened another APOE at Wiesbaden Air Base on 29 June. The airlift delivered an average of 8,000 tons per day. 4 May 1949 the Soviet Union agreed to lift the blockade. The Allies continued the airlift for three more months to build up reserve stocks. The US Army proved that it could support a massive operation by air.

The 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion remained in Germany until its inactivation on 19 January 1949. On 29 January 1949, its colors returned to the United States.

## **Cold War**

In 1949, Russia detonated its first atomic bomb and the Communist Chinese drove the Nationalist Chinese from the mainland onto the island of Formosa. The Soviet Union formed out of the buffer states that Russia kept after World War II. This created the Iron curtain and the United States and the rest of Europe formed the North Atlantic Treaty Alliance (NATO). These acts divided the world into a conflict between the communist governments and democratic governments. The super powers avoided direct conflict but instead fought each other indirectly in a series of conflicts in Third World countries. This face-off between the superpowers became known as the Cold War. This threat required the United States to maintain a large standing army during a time of relative peace.

## **Fort Eustis, Virginia**

The 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion was redesignated as the Headquarters and Headquarters Company (HHC), 6<sup>th</sup> Transportation Truck Battalion on 16 July 1952 and allotted to the Regular Army. It reactivated at Fort Eustis, Virginia, on 15 August 1952 then redesignated as HHC, 6<sup>th</sup> Transportation Battalion on 31 October 1952. On 15 August 1952, HHC, 48<sup>th</sup> Transportation Highway Group also activated at Fort Eustis and provided command and control for the 4<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup> and 126<sup>th</sup>

Transportation Truck Battalions and the 502<sup>nd</sup> Traffic Regulating Group. The 48<sup>th</sup> Transportation Group (Truck) supported the Transportation Training Command. From November 1952 until August 1956, the 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion supported various training missions of the Transportation Training Command.

On 25 September 1953, fell under the 48<sup>th</sup> Transportation Group and reorganization took place.

The 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion assumed responsibility for the following:

- 15<sup>th</sup> Transportation Company (Light Truck)
- 16<sup>th</sup> Transportation Company (Light Truck)
- 61<sup>st</sup> Transportation Company (Medium Truck) (Petroleum Tanker)
- 557<sup>th</sup> Transportation Company (Heavy Truck) (Heavy Lift)

The 61<sup>st</sup> and 557<sup>th</sup> Truck Companies participated in Support Northeastern Command (SUNEC) '53. Several of the battalion's companies continued to take part in SUNEC operations during 1954, 1955 and 1956. SUNEC was an annual Logistics-over-the-shore (LOTS) operation to deliver supplies to the US Air Force stations in Thule, Greenland every spring and summer in support of the Distant Early Warning (DEW) Line along the Arctic Circle. This was the shortest distance between the United States and Russian and the most likely avenue of attack by Soviet bombers and later missiles.

The 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion and the 502<sup>nd</sup> Traffic Regulating Group participated in Operation FLASHBURN at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, from April to June 1954. The truck battalion logged 120,885 miles, transporting 11,402 tons and 8,028 passengers.

With the end of the Korean War, the 126<sup>th</sup> Battalion prepared for release from active duty and in 1954. This caused a reshuffling of truck units on Fort Eustis over the next two years. The 126<sup>th</sup> Battalion transferred its 165<sup>th</sup> Truck Company to the 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion in 1954. Then on 24 February 1955, the 17<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Transportation Companies were transferred to the 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion from the newly activated 522<sup>nd</sup> Battalion. The 16<sup>th</sup> Light Truck Company attached to the 522<sup>nd</sup> Battalion on July. The 522<sup>nd</sup> Battalion activated from the personnel and equipment left by the 126<sup>th</sup> Battalion when it was released from active duty on 9 February. The two companies participated in SUNEC that year. The 165<sup>th</sup> Truck Company was released from active duty later that year. The 5<sup>th</sup> and 597<sup>th</sup> Medium Truck Companies were attached to the 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion in 1955. The 126<sup>th</sup> Transportation Company organized from the active duty personnel and equipment that were left over from the 652<sup>nd</sup> Truck Company after it was released from active duty on 10 March. It was also attached to the 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion.

By 1956, the 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion contained of the following units:

- Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment
- 5<sup>th</sup> Transportation Company (Medium Truck)
- 17<sup>th</sup> Transportation Company (Medium Truck)
- 19<sup>th</sup> Transportation Company (Medium Truck) (Refrigeration)
- 32<sup>nd</sup> Transportation Company
- 61<sup>st</sup> Transportation Company
- 126<sup>th</sup> Transportation Company (Truck)

## 597<sup>th</sup> Transportation Company (Medium Truck)

### Germany

In August 1956, the 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion was designated as a “Gyroscope” unit. The battalion then conducted an eight-week training program, six weeks of which were spent on field problems at Camp A. P. Hill, Virginia. On 11 March 1957, the battalion left the United States and arrived at Panzer Kaserne, Boeblingen, Germany, on 21 March 1957, for a two-year unit rotation. It replaced the 29<sup>th</sup> Transportation Battalion (Truck), which returned to the United States. It picked up the 62<sup>nd</sup> Medium Truck Company attached to the 10<sup>th</sup> Transportation Highway Group. In Germany, the 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion formed part of the line of communication that stretched from the ports of Northern France to US combat divisions in Germany.

During the Cold War, US Army Europe established its line of communication back to the ports of Northern France. The 37<sup>th</sup> Transportation Highway Group had responsibility for the first leg of the line haul. It handed off cargo to the 10<sup>th</sup> Group which then delivered to the garrisons and units in the field.

The 62<sup>nd</sup> Medium Truck Company was relieved by the 126<sup>th</sup> Medium Truck as part of Operation GYROSCOPE and rotated back to Fort Eustis in March 1957.

After the settling in period, the 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion looked to a busy year. In July, the Battalion hosted the 7<sup>th</sup> Army Special Troops Drivers Proficiency Contest and participated in a farewell ceremony for COL Carol K. Maffout prior to his departure for 7<sup>th</sup> Army. The Battalion again played host to the 7<sup>th</sup> Army Support Command Driver Proficiency Contest in September in July 1958. On 20 February 1959, the 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion was redesignated as the HHD, 6<sup>th</sup> Transportation Battalion. The 6<sup>th</sup> Transportation Battalion “Gyroscoped” back to Fort Eustis, Virginia, in April 1959 and was the last battalion to do so from Europe.

### Fort Eustis Again

The 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion fell under the 48<sup>th</sup> Transportation Group once again with the following companies:

- 88<sup>th</sup> Transportation Company (Light Truck)
- 61<sup>st</sup> Transportation Company (Medium Truck) (Petroleum)
- 62<sup>nd</sup> Transportation Company (Medium Truck)

The 6<sup>th</sup> Transportation Battalion participated in the Joint Army-Marine Corps Landing Exercise (JAMLEX) from 25 October to 7 November 1960. It had control of the 329<sup>th</sup> Heavy Boat Company, 1097<sup>th</sup> and 1098<sup>th</sup> Medium Boat Companies, 461<sup>st</sup> Amphibious Truck Company, 854<sup>th</sup> Terminal Service Company and the 554<sup>th</sup> BARC Platoon, 151<sup>st</sup> Light Truck and 598<sup>th</sup> Medium Truck Companies, 65<sup>th</sup> Light Helicopter Company and the 18<sup>th</sup> Aviation Maintenance Detachment. The operation tested the “through the beach” concept to support the 1,500 man



Marine landing team at Camp Lejuene, North Carolina. The operation occurred in four phases with the DUKWs and landing craft discharging troops, tanks, artillery and supplies on the beach to establish a foothold. The BARCs established a ferry across the inland waterway. The second phase concentrated on the logistical support of combat forces even utilizing helicopters for emergency resupply and medical evacuation. During the second phase the amphibians and landing craft moved troops and supplies across the New River. During phase four helicopters lifted a battalion of Marines to Camp Davis and Bogue Field for further maneuvers.

The 62<sup>nd</sup> Medium Truck Company was again transferred overseas. This time it deployed to France in October 1961, where it was attached to the 106<sup>th</sup> Battalion.

In July 1962, the 10<sup>th</sup> Transportation Company 27<sup>th</sup> Battalion and 62<sup>nd</sup> Transportation Company 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion returned from two and a half years on the road. In June 1958, the companies assigned to the US Army Transportation Corps Road Test Support Activity at Ottawa, Illinois. The companies had departed in September and the ribbon cutting ceremony for the science of highway durability test of pavements and bridges conducted in October. The \$22,000,000 project was a proving ground for the 40,000 mile interstate and defense highway system administered by the American Association of State Highway Officials (AASHO). Four hundred drivers drove in three arrangements of two shifts around the clock, rotating every two weeks. They drove loaded commercial trucks from ¼-ton to 5-ton diesels, summer and winter, over six highway loops of various thicknesses of concrete and asphalt. They drove over 17 million miles.

A section of the 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion headquarters and the 151<sup>st</sup> Transportation Company deployed to Europe to support the Berlin Crisis logistics effort; the elements returned in August 1962. During 1962, the 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion participated in Operation GREAT BEAR in Alaska and Exercise SAND DUNE at Fort Story.

On 22 August 1962, the 62<sup>nd</sup> Medium Truck Company disembarked at Hampton Roads from Germany and was attached to the 27<sup>th</sup> Battalion only for a short time that year then it was attached to the 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion.

### **Cuban Missile Crisis**

In September 1962, the Soviet Union shipped nuclear missiles to Cuba. President John F. Kennedy responded by a naval blockade of the island and threat of an invasion. In October, the 6<sup>th</sup> Truck and the 159<sup>th</sup> Boat Battalions were mobilized for the Cuban Crisis. The 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion received orders to load the equipment of the 88<sup>th</sup> Light Truck, 61<sup>st</sup> Medium Truck, and 62<sup>nd</sup> Medium Truck Companies on flat cars to Florida. On 2 November, they departed and became operational on 10 November. From then the 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion waited with the landing craft of the 159<sup>th</sup> Boat Battalion for the impending amphibious invasion of the Communist Island. Cuba and the Soviet Union agreed to withdraw the missiles, but the 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion remained in Florida until December until the danger abated. The 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion returned to Fort Eustis by a four-day motor convoy, arriving on 8 December.

In the last week of March 1963, the 62<sup>nd</sup> Medium Truck Company received the mission of Headquarters Company (Provisional) to support the Joint Task Force (JTF) 4 Headquarters. In June, the 62<sup>nd</sup> Medium Truck participated in Exercise BIG STEP II at Camp Lejuene, North

Carolina. In October and November 1963, the battalion participated in Operation BIG LIFT and the headquarters airlifted to Ramstein Air Base in Germany on 22 October 1963 where it moved to Lorsch Woods outside Viernheim. The battalion received many commendations for outstanding work during BIG LIFT including a letter from the Office of the Secretary of Defense.

### **Vietnam War**

In 1962, communist insurgents launched a guerrilla war to usurp the unification elections in the Republic of South Vietnam. The United States then sent advisors and helicopter companies to South Vietnam to stabilize the government. In 1965, it became clear that South Vietnam would fall without greater assistance from the United States. Military Assistance Command, Vietnam, (MACV) called for an increase in the number of US troops to serve in the combat role against the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese Army. The 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion deployed to Vietnam during the second buildup in 1966.

In April 1966, LTC Oren E. De Haven assumed command of the 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion, known as “The Doers.” The battalion headquarters with 38 personnel departed Fort Eustis on 23 July 1966 and arrive at Long Binh on 13 August 1966. The 6<sup>th</sup> and the 7<sup>th</sup> Transportation Battalion were attached to the 48<sup>th</sup> Transportation Group. The 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion operated 2 ½ and 5-ton trucks while 7<sup>th</sup> Battalion operated M52 trucks with S&P trailers.

The 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion assumed control of the 86<sup>th</sup>, 120<sup>th</sup> and 151<sup>st</sup> Light Truck Companies 14 days after its arrival. The 86<sup>th</sup> had just arrived on 12 August 1966 while the 120<sup>th</sup> and 151<sup>st</sup> had both arrived the previous summer. HHD, 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion had responsibility to receive, house, orient and employ the attached truck companies. The 87<sup>th</sup>, 261<sup>st</sup>, and 543<sup>rd</sup> Light Truck Companies arrived in early October. All the companies had 2 ½-ton trucks except the 261<sup>st</sup>, which had 5-tons with 1 ½-ton trailers.

Within 60 days of its arrival, the 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion had six truck companies attached to it:

- Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment
- 86<sup>th</sup> Transportation Company (Light Truck)
- 87<sup>th</sup> Transportation Company (Light Truck)
- 120<sup>th</sup> Transportation Company (Light Truck)
- 151<sup>st</sup> Transportation Company (Light Truck)
- 261<sup>st</sup> Transportation Company (Light Truck)
- 543<sup>rd</sup> Transportation Company (Light Truck)

Upon arrival HHD, 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion was attached to the 48<sup>th</sup> Group and moved into tents. The group commander gave DeHaven control of the southwest corner of Long Binh, known as “TC Hill.” He said, “That’s yours to do with what you want.” DeHaven visited to his old boss, Major General Frank Miller, who was then the Chief of Staff of US Army Vietnam (USARV). Through this connection, Dehaven’s Logistics Officer, CPT Harold Rodd, went before the Planning Board at Long Binh and received priority in getting the pre-fabricated Butler buildings. The battalion would construct an eight company-size battalion area. The catch was that the men had to construct the buildings themselves. DeHaven asked every man to volunteer at least one hour of his free time to this project. They found a cement mixer left by the French and a





mechanic by the name of Paul Rodds hooked it up to a diesel engine to get it to work and painted the drum yellow. Since Paul worked for CPT Rodds, the men of the battalion called the contraption, "Rodds' Rolls Royce." They laid the concrete foundations then erected the buildings. By the time DeHaven left in August 1967, they had completed five of the company areas, the battalion headquarters, mess hall, bachelor officer's quarters, supply facility and recreation area.

The 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion as part of the 48<sup>th</sup> Group supported American units in the III (entire zone) and IV (limited) Corps Tactical Zones and conducted the only major sustained convoy operations in areas that had long been disrupted by the Viet Cong. The two

battalions conducted port clearance in the Saigon area, which included the commercial port of Saigon and military ports of Vung Tau and Newport, the latter adjacent to Long Binh. The 163<sup>rd</sup> Transportation Company (Light Truck) was assigned

*5 ton truck, part of the 86<sup>th</sup> Transportation Company 48<sup>th</sup> Group 6<sup>th</sup> Transportation Battalion. (photo by Frank L. Savage Jr)*

to the 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion in 1965 at Chu Lai. In port clearance operations, the 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion cleared all types of

general cargo from the main port of Saigon to the US port facility at Newport and Vung Tau; provided priority support to the Air Cargo Section of the 8<sup>th</sup> Aerial Port at Tan Son Nhut Airbase; and transported all classes of ammunition from barge discharge sites to ammunition storage areas at Long-Binh, Tan Son Nhut Air Base and Bien Hoa Air Base. Most of the short haul runs took only a few hours to reach their destinations. The trucks drove on modern highways and hastily improved jungle roads.

The initial mission of the 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion was to move arriving personnel and equipment of major combat units from their debarkation points to the base camp areas. During the troop build up, the battalion moved every major combat unit arriving in the III Corps area. The first unit the battalion transported was the 11<sup>th</sup> Armored Cavalry Regiment, which had arrived in country in September, a month after the 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion headquarters had arrived. The battalion transported the 3,539 personnel and 8,039 tons of equipment from the airhead to its base camp at Bien Hoa.

In October, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade of the 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division (ID) arrived by ship at Vung Tau. During Operation ROBIN, the battalion moved 3,126 personnel and 1,887 tons of cargo from Vung Tau along the previously unsecured Route 15 to its base camp at Dau Tieng.

Soon after the 3rd Brigade, 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division had arrived, it entered combat in War Zone C in the Tay Ninh Province. During Operation ATTLEBORO, from 14 September to 24 November



*The 120<sup>th</sup> Transportation Company sign. (photo by LTC Larry Lathem)*

1966, the 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion convoys delivered supplies from depots to the 1<sup>st</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry Divisions and 173<sup>rd</sup> Airborne Brigade in the field, often delivering ammunition and much needed supplies right up to forward positions. The unimproved roads were either relatively or completely unsecure. PFC Dennis R. Lehman and PFC William E. Kennedy were killed in an ambush on 21 November 1966. Since many of the truck companies still had not arrived, a critical shortage of trucks arose during this operation. The 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion received the mission to organize, command and control a provisional truck company made up of 100 trucks and personnel drawn from all USARV Commands. The battalion organized, billeted and placed the

company into operation in less than 12 hours. The battalion delivered over 6,500 tons of critical supplies during this operation.

In order to speed the flow of critical war supplies and certain categories of US AID cargo through the congested port of Saigon, the MACV negotiated two contracts with a US firm to furnish commercial design trucks for port clearance work in mid-1966. When the 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion became operational, it received the mission of staffing and operating the Office of Contracting Office's Representative



*the back of the 543<sup>rd</sup> yard from a guard tower (photo by Dennis Mansker)*



(COR) for the first two contracts. It also received the similar mission with the third contract, which was signed with another firm in the Fall of 1966. The supervision of these contracts and attached military units gave the 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion operational control of 1,000 trucks. The contractor's standards of performance and maintenance were initially low.

The Viet Cong guerrillas attacked the contractor's motor pool facility on 13 September 1966 killing five men and destroying 37 trucks. Following that attack, the 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion received the mission to provide security for the contractor motor pool. On 10 October 1966, the Viet Cong returned in force. The 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion fought off an attack killing a minimum of 21 Viet Cong and did not lose a single vehicle in the attack. In spite of the frequent interruptions of service due to strikes, Viet Cong activity and other causes, the battalion still provided a contract vehicle service that constituted over 75 percent of the war cargo moved through the vital port of Saigon. The battalion turned over its COR function to Headquarters, 48<sup>th</sup> Group on 16 March 1967

The next unit, the 199<sup>th</sup> Light Infantry Brigade, arrived on 10 December. During Operation CANARY, the 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion transported 2,215 men and 1,629 tons of cargo along the same Route 15 to Song Be without an accident or incident. It received the praise of the brigade personnel.

The Headquarters and Headquarters Company and 3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade, 9<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division arrive next on 16 December followed by the Division Support Command and Division Artillery on 19 December, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade on 3 January 1967 and 2<sup>nd</sup> Brigade on 28 January. During Operation DUCK, the 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion moved the entire division to its destination. This was the largest move of the 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion with brigade destinations to Bear Cat, Tan An and Dong Tam. The battalion continued to resupply the division until it became operational.

The 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion also provided support for Operation CEDAR FALLS, 8 to 26 January 1967. The 11<sup>th</sup> Armored Cavalry Regiment, 3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade, 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division, 1<sup>st</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry Divisions along with Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) battalions conducted the offensive operations against Viet Cong Region 4 Headquarters in the "Iron Triangle." Notable in this operation was the issue of battalion vehicles in support of efforts to relocate refugees. The convoys relocated 1,112 refugees, their belongings and livestock from the "Iron Triangle" while the battalion was still heavily committed with beach and port clearance.

The 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion supported the same units during Operation JUNCTION CITY, from 22 February to March 1967. The 11<sup>th</sup> Armored Cavalry Regiment, 3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade, 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division, 1<sup>st</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry Divisions along with four ARVN battalions formed a horseshoe position to trap Viet Cong and North Vietnamese Army (NVA) regulars in War Zone C. The 173<sup>rd</sup> made the only American combat jump during the war to block the escape route across the Cambodian border.

In February, 48<sup>th</sup> Group required one truck company to provide security for TC Hill instead of a composite guard. This allowed one company to stand down to accomplish nearly all of its quarterly training requirements during this one-week period.

The 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion also supported Operation SENACA FALLS. From 18 August 1966 to 31 May 1967, the battalion moved over 413,468 tons of cargo and over 241,032 passengers driving



4,621,736 miles with an accident rate of .62 per 100,000 miles while the US Army Pacific average was 1.18 recordable accidents per 100,000 miles. The battalion received its first Meritorious Unit Commendation for the period from August 1966 to March 1967. From 22 December 1966 to 4 February 1967, the Battalion drove 1,047,000 miles without accidents. On 8 April 1967, the battalion received recognition for driving 1,000,000 accident free miles. Every available truck drove seven days a week, day and night. Deadline rate for task vehicles reduced from a high of 23 percent in September 1966 to 2 percent in May 1967 with an average rate of 6 percent. DeHaven could boast that he had 45 vehicles on the road on any given day while other areas at best put 30 trucks on the road.

In August 1967, LTC Clinton K. Jones assumed command of the 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion. DeHaven would go on to retire as a major general. The 163<sup>rd</sup> Light Truck was dropped from the battalion on 8 December 1967. The 321<sup>st</sup> Medium Truck company took its place when it arrived from Fort Meade, Maryland, on 26 December 1967.

During 1968 and 1969, the battalion performed daily line haul operations from Long Binh to Tui Hoa, Phong Loi, and Phuc Bien. In 1969, the 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion was comprised of the following companies:

- Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment
- 86<sup>th</sup> Transportation Company (Light Truck)
- 87<sup>th</sup> Transportation Company (Light Truck)
- 120<sup>th</sup> Transportation Company (Light Truck)
- 151<sup>st</sup> Transportation Company (Light Truck)
- 261<sup>st</sup> Transportation Company (Light Truck)
- 321<sup>st</sup> Transportation Company (Light Truck)
- 352<sup>nd</sup> Transportation Company (Light Truck)
- 379<sup>th</sup> Transportation Company (Medium Reefer Truck Company)

The 319<sup>th</sup> and 352<sup>nd</sup> Light Truck Companies arrived in January and September 1968. The 379<sup>th</sup> Medium Reefer Truck Company operated under the battalion starting in November 1968. The 87<sup>th</sup> and 151<sup>st</sup> left in March 1969.

During this time, convoys quit running at night outside the cantonment area. Only trucks ran from the Newport pier to the ammunition supply point (ASP) at night. There was always more cargo to move than trucks to move it.

The 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion worked in support of the new port clearance operation at Cam Rahn Bay and the port of Saigon. In long haul operations, the battalion supported the III and IV Corps zones. During this time the battalion converted four companies into stake and platform (S&P) units. Medium 5-ton trucks with a dolly pulled the S&P trailer, which came to be known the "monster." Only the best drivers drove on these trucks. The trucks carried bulky commodities, like napalm and the accident rate on these shipments was almost non-existent. The battalion also supported the movement of Class V (ammunition) shipments. The 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion hauled ammo shipments from the truck barge transfer points to the depot. When ammo was ordered the 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion would then haul it north to combat areas.

On 2 September 1967, a returning convoy out of Pleiku in the Central Highlands was ambushed by a North Vietnamese Army (NVA) company destroying 27 trucks and killing or wounding as many drivers. Up until that time ambushes had only destroyed individual trucks. From that time on, the enemy focused on shutting down the lifeline of the combat units especially the helicopter units by ambushing entire convoys. 8<sup>th</sup> Transportation Group's solution was gun trucks.

In late 1967 or early 1968, Major Larry Ondic had pedestal mounts for machineguns and steel plating put on many trucks for a night convoy to move elements of the 9<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division. The convoy ran without incident and commander of the 9<sup>th</sup> Division loved the hardened concept. That was as close to a gun truck as the 48<sup>th</sup> Group came.

The first large-scale ambush in the 48<sup>th</sup> Group occurred on 25 August 1968. It was a typical monsoon season day. The clouds were low, visibility was poor, and intermittent rain drenched the area. The large resupply convoy of 81 trucks of the 48<sup>th</sup> Transportation Group assembled at Long Binh. The convoy assembled with reefer trucks in the front, followed by supply trucks, and fuel and ammo trucks in the rear. If a fuel or ammo truck were disabled it would not stop the entire convoy—the rest of the convoy could speed out of the hostile area. Convoys resupplied the camp of the 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry Divisions, daily at Tay Ninh located just seven miles from the Cambodian border in Tay Ninh Province. The famed Ho Chi Minh trail ran near the Tay Ninh province. The convoy normally took a few hours to complete, because the mandated convoy speed limit of 20 miles per hour.

The convoy of 81 trucks proceeded on Main Supply Route (MSR) 1 from Saigon through Hoc Mon, west past the 25<sup>th</sup> ID base camp at Cu Chi, through Trang Bang, across the bridge at Soui Cao Creek (also called Soui-Cide bridge, because of a large number of ambushes that occurred there) on to Go Dau Ha at the intersection of MSR 1 and MSR 22. The convoy next turned northwest onto MSR 22 through the village of Ap Nhi—about 4.5 miles northwest of the Go Dau Ha intersection. The convoy would end after passing through Tay Ninh about 20 miles from Ap Nhi. 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade of the 25<sup>th</sup> ID normally provided road security from the Go Dau Ha intersection, but could not due to a reduction of force ordered by the Division's new Commanding General, MG Ellis W. Williamson.

The reduction in force resulted from the feared third phase of the Tet Offensive (Vietnamese Lunar New Year). The 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Brigades of the 25<sup>th</sup> ID usually secured the convoy route, but Williamson pulled 3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade back to Saigon to defend the city and its approach routes. From 17 to 24 August, the 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade fended off thirteen enemy battalion or regimental attacks—including seven attacks on 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade bases. The 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade's Intelligence (S-2) determined that 16,000 North Vietnamese Army (NVA) combat ready troops of the 5<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> Divisions accompanied by an anti-aircraft battalion led the offensive against the 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade with two attached VC battalions. This was in contrast to the 25<sup>th</sup> ID's intelligence, which believed that Saigon was the target. The 25<sup>th</sup> ID then stripped the 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade of the 2/34<sup>th</sup> Armor, moving the unit back to Cu Chi, while still ordering the 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade to carry out all regular duties and that the "MSR clear and secure" mission should be supplied if time and manning allowed. This was a fatal mistake. The Brigade commander believed he could not defend his own bases let alone the MSR; he informed the 25<sup>th</sup> ID commander of his concerns. The 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade was left with three undermanned rifle companies, three undermanned mechanized infantry companies, and two 105-



mm artillery batteries—with no armor or armor cavalry units attached. Eight MP gun jeeps provided the only security for the 81 vehicles in the convoy.

The Ap Nhi and the Ben Cui Rubber Plantation (known locally as Little Rubber) flanked MSR 22 for about a mile. The Ap Nhi side was mostly farm land while the Little Rubber side had rubber trees growing to fifteen feet of the road. Between the trees and the road were a drainage ditch and an earthen berm. The 88<sup>th</sup> NVA Regiment elements moved into the Little Rubber on the night of 24 August and prepared to ambush the Tay Ninh resupply convoy. At 1145 hours the convoy entered the sleepy village of Ap Nhi. It was misting and raining and the ceiling was at about 200 feet. The convoy met a column of Army of the Republic of Viet Nam (ARVN) soldiers marching along the road. The column was marching on the north side of the MSR adjacent to the Little Rubber. The lead vehicles of the convoy had started to leave the village and the ammo and fuel vehicle were alongside the column when ARVN soldiers opened fire on the convoy. The ARVN soldiers turned out to be VC and NVA dressed in ARVN uniforms. This was the signal for the VC and NVA troops positioned in Little Rubber and enemy forces to begin an intense barrage of rocket, machine gun, and automatic weapons fire. A fuel truck was hit and immediately blocked the remainder of the convoy. Thirty-one trucks in front of the destroyed fuel truck sped away according to standard operating procedures (SOP) leaving 50 trucks stuck in the mile long kill zone. Later an ammunition truck at the rear of the convoy was hit. The initial assault had hit its mark with those two vehicles—sealing the convoy in place. The next targets were the eight gun jeeps and vehicles with radios. The NVA and VC had thoroughly planned the ambush. The ambush occurred at the southernmost limits 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade TOAR. None of the 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade's available artillery could range the ambush. The low ceiling initially prevented air support.

A 7<sup>th</sup> Battalion driver, Sergeant William W. Seay, was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor for his gallantry during the ambush. His citation reads, in part, “When his convoy was forced to stop, Seay immediately dismounted and took a defensive position behind the wheels of a vehicle loaded with high-explosive ammunition. As the violent North Vietnamese assault approached to within ten meters of the road, Seay opened fire, killing two of the enemy. He then spotted a sniper in a tree approximately 75 meters to his front and killed him. When an enemy grenade was thrown under an ammunition trailer near his position, without regard for his own safety he left his protective cover, exposing himself to intense enemy fire, picked up the grenade, and threw it back to the North Vietnamese position, killing four more of the enemy and saving the lives of the men around him. Another enemy grenade landed approximately three meters from Seay's position. Again, Seay left his covered position and threw the armed grenade back upon the assaulting enemy. After returning to his position he was painfully wounded in the right wrist; however, Seay continued to give encouragement and direction to his fellow soldiers. After moving to the relative cover of a shallow ditch, he detected three enemy soldiers who had penetrated the position and were preparing to fire on his comrades. Although weak from loss of blood and with his right hand immobilized, Seay stood up and fired his rifle with his left hand, killing all three and saving the lives of the other men in his location. As a result of his heroic action, Seay was mortally wounded by a sniper's bullet.”

The first to respond to the ambush were “Huey C Model” helicopters, equipped with two door gunners, fourteen rockets, and a mini-gun, from the 25<sup>th</sup> Aviation Battalion. A Huey pilot saw



friendly forces in the ditch while enemy soldiers unloaded the American trucks and carried the supplies into the tree line. The helicopters had a tough time engaging the enemy. The ceiling was still low and the regular angles of attack were impossible. The Huey's normally rolled in on the target with a steep dive from about 1500 feet—the low ceiling meant the pilots had to fire rockets flat, often over or under shooting the target. It took eight hours for the division ground reaction force to arrive; the convoy was pinned down the entire time. The delay in the response resulted from a communications problem and the remoteness of the ambush location. Thirteen to fourteen transporters lost their lives in the ambush.

COL Paul Swanson assumed command of the 48<sup>th</sup> Group from COL Frank Chase in November 1968. Swanson and Metheny opposed the use of gun trucks as employed by 8<sup>th</sup> Transportation Group at Qui Nhon and the 500<sup>th</sup> Group at Cam Ranh Bay. Both believed the combat commander was responsible for convoy security. They did not want to crowd into the infantry's mission. They did allow the drivers to put steel plating on the sides of their cabs for individual protection though. Swanson told the infantry if they wanted ammunition, rations and B&B (beer and beverage) the infantry had to keep the Viet Cong off the convoy's backs. The combat divisions also began adding armored personnel carriers, tanks, armored cars, and helicopter air support to reinforce the convoys. The tanks usually drove in the middle of the convoy and the APCs in the lead. Since the convoy speed was 20 to 30 miles per hour, the armored vehicles could keep up. In fact, the drivers of the trucks complained that the APCs preferred to speed up and leave them behind. While their job was to protect the trucks, the infantry knew the trucks were the enemy's target and they wanted to get away from them. The 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division was more aggressive at patrolling their MSR but theirs was shorter than that of the 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division.

The run out of Long Binh to Tay Ninh was the biggest problem. The convoy ran right through the crowded streets of Saigon. Vehicles could easily get lost or a VC could climb up on the running board and shoot the drivers. The convoy to Tay Ninh had to depart every morning at 0600. If the convoy had any difficulty then it could not make it back the same day. Drivers would then have to sleep in the cabs of their trucks and return the next day. By February or October 1968, the engineers had completed the Phu Con Bridge so convoys could bypass the congestion of the city. The run to Tay Ninh became faster and safer. The second major ambush occurred on 18 December 1968 in the 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division area of operations killing the convoy commander.

The battalion was awarded its second Meritorious Unit Commendation for Vietnam for the period from 1968-1969.

Prior to Swanson battalion commanders only served six-month tours. Metheny's predecessor Keith Jones had commanded the 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion for a year like DeHaven. Swanson believed if combat commanders had to serve one-year tour then logisticians should too. LTC John D. Bruen assumed command of the 7<sup>th</sup> Battalion from LTC Irving Hilton. Metheny, Hilton and Bruen each commanded one-year in Vietnam. The added continuity greatly enhanced truck battalion operations in Vietnam. Metheny went on to become a Brigadier General; Bruen attained the rank of Lieutenant General.

The battalions ran mostly “Round Robins” meaning they departed in the morning and returned at night. Swanson also ensured that convoys to the Rest and Recreation area at Vung Tau were performed by rotating companies. This ensured that all companies could take advantage of the vacation area. Swanson also scheduled so drivers had a half of day of down time at the recreation area while they were there. Swanson assigned drivers to their own trucks and allowed the drivers to personalize their trucks. Swanson believed the drivers would take care of their truck if they were allowed to armor them or paint the wheel hubs.

Following the August 1969 ambush, the battalion installed M-60 machine guns on battalion jeeps. A directive came down requiring that each truck had two drivers. Most units did not have enough drivers so they had mechanics or other support troop ride “shotgun,” During December 1968 to February 1969, the battalion also experienced a shortage of parts and trained mechanics. During those months the Operational Readiness Rate dropped.

The third major ambush occurred in May 1969 in the 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division area of operations. When Metheny gave up command in July 1969, his convoys had experienced 10 ambushes, four of which were major. From then on battalion commanders only served for six months.

From the spring to summer of 1970, the battalion heavily supported the logistical operations for the Cambodian operation. In this operation, the 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion transported ammunition from the Cojido ammunition complex. The battalion moved over 44,000 short tons of inbound ammunition per month and was instrumental in further transporting supplies further to the operation area. Its success in its ability to move cargo led the battalion to take over the complete responsibility of the Cojido operation including operations of the barge site in the fall of 1970. In October 1970, the 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion pioneered the utilization of the MILVAN system in Vietnam.

Between July 1969 and June 1971, the battalion commanded as many as eight companies. These companies performed local haul and line haul operations, convoy operations, port and beach clearance, Cojido Ammunition Supply System operations, and MILVAN operations. The battalion was awarded its third Meritorious Unit Commendation for Vietnam for the period from 1969-1970. In July 1971, the battalion received recognition for 750,000 miles of accident free operations. By August 1971, the battalion was reduced to four companies. The four companies performed local haul and line haul operations, convoy operations, port and beach clearance, and MILVAN operations. During Vietnam, the 6th Transportation Battalion participated in 14 campaigns.

The 86<sup>th</sup>, 261<sup>st</sup>, 321<sup>st</sup>, and 379<sup>th</sup> Transportation Companies left Vietnam in 1972. Upon its return to the United States, the 6th Transportation Battalion was inactivated at Oakland Army Base on 14 June 1972. It earned three Meritorious Unit Commendations for service in Vietnam from 1966-1967, 1968-1969 and 1969-1970.

The 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion had the following companies under its command during Vietnam:

402<sup>nd</sup> Transportation Company (Terminal Transfer) 6 October 1966 to 30 June 1971.

446<sup>th</sup> Transportation Company (Medium Truck) 19 November 1966 to 30 September 1972.

563<sup>rd</sup> Transportation Company (Medium Truck) 23 October 1966 to 30 November 1971.

572<sup>nd</sup> Transportation Company (Medium Truck) 19 November 1966 to 24 March 1972.

## **7<sup>th</sup> Transportation Group**

On 8 August 1978, the 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion's former commander, Major General Oren De Haven assumed command of Fort Eustis. He discovered that all the battalions in the 7<sup>th</sup> Transportation Group had battle honors from Vietnam except the 38<sup>th</sup> Truck Battalion. Neither had he 7<sup>th</sup> Group served in Vietnam. He requested that the 38<sup>th</sup> Transportation Battalion be reflagged the 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion since the 38<sup>th</sup> had no battle honors and the later had served both in World War II and Vietnam. In September, he also requested that the 7<sup>th</sup> Group be reflagged as the 48<sup>th</sup> Transportation Group for the same reason.

“Esprit de corps and high troop morale are generated to a large degree by identification with military units which hold excellent combat records. I believe that a noteworthy record of service in the most recent conflict in Vietnam is more meaningful to the younger group of personnel who either actually served in Vietnam, or who are of an age to distinctly recall the conflict.

It is my belief that a redesignation of two active units presently assigned to Fort Eustis that did not experience service in Vietnam, to two other currently inactive units that hold awards for service there would be instrumental in enhancing esprit and morale. An analysis of the history of these units, both quantitative and qualitative, was accomplished locally, and appears to substantiate my recommendation. World War II records have been included in the analysis.”

On 16 March 1979, the 6<sup>th</sup> Transportation Battalion was reactivated at Fort Eustis, Virginia, replacing the 38<sup>th</sup> Transportation Battalion. The 7<sup>th</sup> Group was not reflagged and this began the longest relationship of the 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion with any one headquarters. As a theater level transportation asset, the 7<sup>th</sup> Group would in time become the most deployed unit in the Army. In almost every US contingency operation, an element of the 7<sup>th</sup> Group deployed.

LTC Alvin L. Koestring took hold of the colors of the 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion, which had been located in storage at New Cumberland along with three boxes of historical property located at Pueblo Army Depot, Colorado. The battalion had the following companies:

100<sup>th</sup> Transportation Company (Light-Medium Truck)

551<sup>st</sup> Transportation Company (Terminal Transfer)

870<sup>th</sup> Transportation Company (Terminal Transfer)

LTC Stephen T. Christian, Jr. assumed command of the battalion in November 1979. During the following years of President Ronald Reagan and George Bush, the US Army received ample money for training exercises. The 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion participated in BOLD EAGLE 80 at Eglin Air Force Base, Florida during September through November 1979. This was a large US ATLANTIC Command field training exercise. The battalion also participated in REFORGER in



January 1980. REFORGER was an annual two week field training exercise in Germany to test the ability of CONUS based units to deploy to Germany by air, draw their equipment from POMCUS war stocks and fight.

In 1980, the 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion contained the following units:

- Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment
- 100<sup>th</sup> Transportation Company (Light Truck)
- 551<sup>st</sup> Transportation Company (Terminal Transfer)
- 870<sup>th</sup> Transportation Company (Terminal Transfer)
- 90<sup>th</sup> Transportation Detachment (Trailer Transfer)
- 160<sup>th</sup> Transportation Detachment (Contract Supervisor)
- 358<sup>th</sup> Transportation Detachment (Cargo Documentation)
- 547<sup>th</sup> Transportation Detachment (Contract Supervisor)
- Transportation Augmentation Detachment (TRADOC Light/Medium Truck Platoon)
- USATC&FE Honor Guard (Provisional)

The battalion participated in US Army Reserve annual training, LIFE LINE II, at Fort Indiantown Gap, Pennsylvania and Fort A. P. Hill, Virginia, from 15 May to 3 June 1981.

1982 was a time of major reorganization. In June 1982, the 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion lost the 160<sup>th</sup> Transportation Detachment and picked up the 126<sup>th</sup> Transportation Detachment in its place. The 547<sup>th</sup> Detachment was inactivated on 15 July 1982 and the members of the detachment were assigned to HHD. The battalion had lost both of its contract supervisor detachments. The 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion had two of the four active duty terminal transfer companies. Later the battalion gained the 497<sup>th</sup> Engineer Company (Port Construction)— the only unit of its kind in the Active Army. This was the only active duty port construction company. This combination gave the 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion a capability that no other Transportation battalion had.

In August 1982, LTC Richard J. Barnaby assumed command of the battalion. On 1 November 1982, the 544<sup>th</sup> Transportation Detachment (Trailer Transfer) was attached to the 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion. The subordinate units of the 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion established trailer transfer points during training exercise LIFELINE from April to May 1983 and participated in Exercise BOLD EAGLE 84 in Florida during September 1983.

In July 1984, LTC Douglas D. Waterhouse assumed command of the battalion. The 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion participated in numerous major training exercises such as BORDER STAR 85 at Fort Bliss, Texas, BRIGHT STAR in Egypt, GALLANT EAGLE 85 in California, and KINDLE LIBERTY in Panama. The 551<sup>st</sup> Terminal Transfer Company under the command of CPT Steven S. Slyfield, deployed to Fort Wainwright, Alaska, in support of Exercise BRIM FROST in January and February 1983. The 551<sup>st</sup> ran the A/DACG for the 9<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division and 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division. Several personnel from the battalion deployed to the Antarctica in support of scientific research during Operation DEEP FREEZE 85 from October 1985 to February 1985. The battalion also continued its mission of supporting training of the officer basic and officer advance courses at Fort A. P. Hill, Virginia.

The 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion deployed 45 personnel to JTF-Bravo to operate the Arrival/Departure Airfield Control Group (A/DACG) at Palmerola Air Base in Honduras in June 1986 in support of exercises BLAZING TRAILS, AHAUS TARA 86 and CABANAS. The US base of operations in Honduras became increasingly important in countering the expansion of communist insurgency from Nicaragua into neighboring Honduras and El Salvador.

LTC Charles M. Hanson assumed command of the battalion in July 1986. The battalion immediately participated in the activation ceremony of the Transportation Regiment at Fort Eustis then deployed to Camp Roberts, California, in support of Exercise CELTIC CROSS IV. This exercise tested and validated the conversion of the 7<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division to the first new light infantry division. The battalion ran the A/DACG at LeMoore Naval Air Station. The 870<sup>th</sup> also operated the rail terminal activities at Camp Roberts. The 551<sup>st</sup> Trailer Transfer Company operated the A/DACG at Vandenburg Air Base. Other elements of the battalion participated in BOLD EAGLE at the same time. Soldiers from the different companies deployed to Port McMurdo, Antarctica in September for support of the movement of 6,000 scientific research team to Operation DEEP FREEZE, October 1986 to March 1987. Operation DEEP FREEZE was a multi-national scientific exploration of Antarctica that began in 1955. The 7<sup>th</sup> Group would annually send soldiers to support the Naval Support Unit Antarctica.

The 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion picked up the 26<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> Quartermaster Detachments (ROWPU). The Army created these Reverse Osmosis Water Purification Units around the possibility of fighting a war in desert region of Southwest Asia. The following year required the teams to train up on their new equipment.

### **Operation NIMROD DANCER, Panama**

LTC Charles A. Seland assumed command of the battalion on 6 July 1988. In May 1989, General Manuel Noriega nullified the Panamanian presidential elections. In response, President George Bush deployed 2,000 soldiers for a show of force during Operation NIMROD DANCER. The 126<sup>th</sup> Detachment deployed to Panama to process the return of Army dependents, their household property and privately owned vehicles during Operation BLADE JEWEL. The detachment returned in July.

That same July, the 26<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> ROWPU Detachments sent ten men to Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, to link up with two skid mounted ROWPU systems after the Navy water purification system failed. They placed the system into operation and trained the Navy personnel on how to use it. The 551<sup>st</sup> Transportation Company participated in Exercise TEAM SPIRIT 89 in Korea from January to April 1989 and Operation DEEP FREEZE from January to February 1990 in Antarctica.

### **Operation JUST CAUSE, Panama**

After the Panamanian Defense Force (PDF) killed Navy LT Paz, President Bush ordered the Operation JUST CAUSE. On 19 December 1989, combined Special Operation Forces and conventional forces struck at the command and control facilities and PDF organizations in the Canal Zone thus removing General Noriega from power. Only two airfields, Howard Air Base



and Torrijos-Tocumen had the capability to land C-141 aircraft. All forces coming into Panama flew in by air. 15 soldiers from the 551<sup>st</sup> CTC deployed to Howard to run A/DACG until March. The 497<sup>th</sup> Engineer Company also deployed to Panama from January to May 1990. At the same time, the rest of the 551<sup>st</sup> participated in Exercise AHAUS TARA and FUERTOS CAMINOS in Honduras. The 551<sup>st</sup> rotated the 12 to 14 soldiers to the A/DACG in Panama in March and June 1990.

### **Operation DESERT SHIELD/STORM**

LTC Henry A. Alcott assumed command of the battalion on 3 July 1990. On 2 August, the Iraqi Army invaded Kuwait. The United States responded with an immediate deployment of troops in Saudi Arabia to prevent Saddam Hussein from seizing control of the oil fields there, Operation DESERT SHIELD. All the units of the 7<sup>th</sup> Group went on alert and prepared for possible deployment to the Persian Gulf. On 11 August, the 870<sup>th</sup> Terminal Transfer established an A/DACG at Langley Air Force Base to help deploy units from Fort Eustis. They turned the job over to the 8<sup>th</sup> Transportation Company on 1 September so they could deploy on 5 October.

The 7<sup>th</sup> Transportation Group deployed with the 10<sup>th</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> Terminal Battalions as part of the to Saudi Arabia in August. The 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion provided command and control for the rear detachment and was attached to the 8<sup>th</sup> Transportation Brigade in October. Other units of the 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion subordinate units deployed without its headquarters. The 551<sup>st</sup> Terminal Transfer deployed with the 24<sup>th</sup> Battalion on 11 August. The 544<sup>th</sup> Detachment deployed as part of the 419<sup>th</sup> Transportation Company on 13 October 1990 to 25 May 1991. The 90<sup>th</sup> Trailer Transfer Detachment deployed on 13 October 1990 to 25 My 1991 as part of the 68<sup>th</sup> Transportation Battalion. The 157<sup>th</sup> Cargo Documentation Detachment deployed with the 24<sup>th</sup> Battalion in August and remained until the last units were withdrawn in August 1991. The Dive Detachment deployed to theater and helped rehabilitate the Port of Shuyabah in Kuwait after the Iraqi Army had evacuated it.

On November 29, the UN Security Counsel passed a resolution that Iraq withdraw from Kuwait by 15 January 1991. CENTCOM began buildup of forces for offensive operations. On 15 December 1990, HHD, 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion deployed to Saudi Arabia on 16 December and the remainder of the 7<sup>th</sup> Group no-deployed personnel fell under the 71<sup>st</sup> Battalion. Its equipment had sailed on the *USAV James McHenry* from Third Port on 17 November. The 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion served as a multi-functional Logistics Task Force providing direct support to the 1st Armored Cavalry Regiment and non-divisional units of the VII Corps. The US led coalition force defeated the Iraqi Army and drove them from Kuwait in a 100-hour war that began on 19 January. The problem was that the UN charter left Saddam Hussein in power in Iraq. This would require a US presence in the Southwest Asia. The 6th Transportation Battalion received a fourth Meritorious Unit Commendation Award and returned to Fort Eustis on 9 August 1991.

Following the Gulf War, the United States looked for its peace dividend by downsizing the military machine that ensured the peace. The 90<sup>th</sup> Trailer Transfer Detachment, 157<sup>th</sup> Cargo

Documentation Detachment and the 544<sup>th</sup> Transportation Detachment were inactivated in September 1992. By 1993, the 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion consisted of the following units:

- Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment
- 100<sup>th</sup> Transportation Company (Light Truck)
- 497<sup>th</sup> Engineer Company (Port Construction)
- 551<sup>st</sup> Transportation Company (Cargo Transfer)
- 870<sup>th</sup> Transportation Company (Terminal Transfer)
- 126<sup>th</sup> Transportation Detachment
- Transportation Augmentation Detachment
- 26<sup>th</sup> Quartermaster Detachment (ROWPU)
- 30<sup>th</sup> Quartermaster Detachment (ROWPU)

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the super powers no longer kept smaller countries in check. The smaller countries returned to their former squabbles. Wars broke out with greater frequency. Over the next decade, the US Army would deploy on more overseas missions than it had over the previous two centuries.

### **Operation RESTORE HOPE, Somalia**

In January 1991, the Communist regime of Mohammed Siad Barre collapsed in Somalia and the country was torn apart by civil war. The famine situation added to the crisis and the war caused a total collapse of the government infrastructure that could not deliver the food aid arriving at the port to the growing refugee population that needed it. The transportation infrastructure completely broke down as tribal warlord fought over control of the most precious commodity in the famine ridden country of Somalia – food. The United Nations began to airlift humanitarian aid to the worst famine stricken areas of Somalia and Kenya in August 1992. They needed to establish a transportation network to deliver the aid from the port to the humanitarian organizations throughout the country.

In December 1992, a Marine Expeditionary Unit landed and secured the port Mogadishu then the 7<sup>th</sup> Transportation Group deployed two battalion task forces to Mogadishu to deliver humanitarian aid to the humanitarian relief organizations. The advance parties of the 6<sup>th</sup> Transportation Battalion, under the command of LTC James R. Chalkley, deployed with the 24<sup>th</sup> Terminal Battalion to Somalia in support of Operation RESTORE HOPE on 20 December 1992, just prior to Christmas. The 24<sup>th</sup> Battalion ran port operations while the 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion cleared the port. The main force of the battalion deployed 4 January 1993 and providing line haul, airfield, and driving support to the United Nations and Coalition Forces.

The 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion Task Force opened the airport with an Arrival/Departure Airfield Control Group (A/DACG) and provided cargo transfer support and conducted port clearance and onward movement with line haul motor transports. The 7<sup>th</sup> Transportation Group Task Force provided command and control for the two battalions, under the Joint Task Force Support Command.



The 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion provided command and control for the following:

- 24<sup>th</sup> Medium Truck Company, commanded by CPT Renee L. Miller, Fort Riley, Kansas.
- 57<sup>th</sup> Light-Medium Truck Company, commanded by CPT Patrick Lovesee, Fort Drum, New York.
- 100<sup>th</sup> Light Truck-Medium Company, commanded by CPT Michael A. Meneghini, Fort Eustis, Virginia.
- 360<sup>th</sup> Medium Truck Company (POL), commanded by CPT Christina D. Hatton, Fort Carson, Colorado.
- 870<sup>th</sup> Cargo Transfer Company, commanded by CPT Kenneth Johnson, Fort Eustis, Virginia.
- 30<sup>th</sup> Quartermaster Detachment (ROWPU) was attached to the 24<sup>th</sup> Battalion.

To operate the port, the 24<sup>th</sup> Battalion had to finish a massive port rehabilitation started by the Navy and Marines. The 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion's dive detachment also moved sunken tugs and patrol boats from the piers to open critical berthing space. While the 24<sup>th</sup> Battalion set about opening the port, the 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion initially established its headquarters at the Mogadishu Airport and moved 6,000 tons of cargo and 8,268 passengers.

After a month, it moved to Baledogie, on the outskirts of an old Soviet airfield. The soldiers called it "Firebase SNAFU" from a term from World War II, Situation Normal, All Fouled Up. The companies set up camps in different areas. Initially, the biggest problem that the convoys face driving through the streets of Mogadishu was theft. The Rules of Engagement only permitted the use of lethal force to defend lives, not protect property. The starving Somalis figured very fast that they would not be shot for stealing. After trial and error with everything from chicken wire to axe handles, the drivers finally learned that pepper spray worked best. By the middle of February Ali Mahdi turned over his technicals (crew served weapons mounted on pick ups) over to United Task Force (UNITAF) control and the 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion relocated them to an area where they could be rehabilitated for use by the Somalia National Police.

After 60 days, the 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion returned to Fort Eustis with its two companies and turned the A/DACG operation over to Task Force 24, then under the United Nations Somalia (UNISOM) control. The last element of the battalion returned in March 1994.

LTC Kathleen M. Gainey assumed command of the battalion on 28 June 1994. This was a time of major reorganization the result of further downsizing. The 100<sup>th</sup> Light Truck and the 870<sup>th</sup> Cargo Transfer Companies inactivated on 15 September 1994. Similarly, the US Army began withdrawing units from Europe. In 1995, the 89<sup>th</sup> Medium Truck Company transferred from the 53<sup>rd</sup> Transportation Battalion in Kaiserslautern, Germany to the 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion. The entire company, with equipment, families and furniture moved to Fort Eustis. The advance party arrived at Fort Eustis on 20 April and the main body, 71 soldiers, 87 family members, four cats and five dogs, arrived on 23 May. Its M915 Tractors and M872 Trailers departed the Port of Antwerp on 27 May and arrived at Newport News Port on 6 June. The 331<sup>st</sup> Floating Causeway Company activated in June 1995 as part of the 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion. It inactivated at Fort Story as a LACV-30 company in 1995 because the Army no longer needed air cushion vehicles. The 331<sup>st</sup> Marine Maintenance Company was transferred from the 10<sup>th</sup> Battalion to the 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion.

By 1995, the 6<sup>th</sup> Truck Battalion consisted of the following units:

- Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment
- 89<sup>th</sup> Transportation Company (Medium Truck)
- 331<sup>st</sup> Transportation Company (Floating Causeway)
- 497<sup>th</sup> Engineer Company (Port Construction)
- 551<sup>st</sup> Transportation Company (Cargo Transfer)
- 558<sup>th</sup> Transportation Company (Marine Maintenance)
- Dive Company (Provisional)
  - 74<sup>th</sup> Engineer Detachment
  - 86<sup>th</sup> Engineer Detachment
  - 511<sup>th</sup> Engineer Detachment
  - 544<sup>th</sup> Engineer Detachment
  - 569<sup>th</sup> Engineer Detachment
- Transportation Augmentation Detachment
- 26<sup>th</sup> Quartermaster Detachment (ROWPU)
- 390<sup>th</sup> Transportation Detachment (Contract Supervisor)

In October 1994, the US Army deployed troops to Kuwait for Operation VIGILANT WARRIOR in response to Saddam Hussein's saber rattling. He would remain a constant problem in the region.

### **Operation UPHOLD DEMOCRACY, Haiti**

President Bill Clinton deployed a forced entry task force to Haiti in September 1994 to force the military junta to permit the legally elected President Jean Aristead to assume office. Prior to the arrival of the US forces, the military junta agreed to relent. The 10<sup>th</sup> Terminal Service Battalion led the transportation task force down with elements of the 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion. The 497<sup>th</sup> Port Construction Company and the 331<sup>st</sup> Floating Causeway Company deployed to Haiti as part of the force opening package, but upon arrival, the company was not needed and returned. The 551<sup>st</sup> Cargo Transfer Company deployed to Panama on 1 September 1994 to support Special Forces in securing the borders of Peru and Ecuador during Operation SAFE BORDER. They returned in April 1995. HHD, 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion also participated in Exercise PRAIRIE WARRIOR at Fort Lee, Virginia, in May 1995.

LTC Luis R. Visot assumed command of the 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion in 2000. LTC Visot was a US Army Reserve officer on exchange from Florida. A Regular Army officer commanded a Reserve transportation battalion in Florida.

### **RESOLUTE PHOENIX VI**

From 24 to 28 January, HHC, 7<sup>th</sup> Transportation Group, 24<sup>th</sup> Transportation Battalion and HHD, 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion conducted a vessel discharge operations, MDMP and Command Post Exercise at



Fort Story in preparation for the upcoming JLOTS NATIVE ATLAS '02. The 24<sup>th</sup> Battalion established a battalion-level life support area (LSA) on 24 January then conducted LO/LO and RO/RO operations off of the LMSR *USNS Mendanca* from 26 to 28 January.

### **JLOTS - NATIVE ATLAS '02**

The 6<sup>th</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> Transportation Battalion conducted a JLOTS exercise under the control of the 143<sup>rd</sup> TRANSCOM at Camp Pendleton, CA from 20 March to 3 April. The exercise discharged the equipment of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Brigade, 3<sup>rd</sup> ID (M), which had loaded aboard the *USNS Seay* at the Port of Savannah, Georgia, so the brigade could attend the National Training Center at Fort Erwin, California. This JLOTS and command relationship would exercise the tasks of the transportation units inherent in the CENTCOM war plans.

The 10<sup>th</sup> Transportation Battalion conducted the rail upload of 272 pieces of equipment of the 6<sup>th</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> Battalion at Fort Eustis, Virginia, on 2 March. This included 22 containers, three KALMAR RTCHs, two dozers, two DV-43 RTCHs and two cranes. From 20 to 24 March, the 7<sup>th</sup> Group units conducted rail download of their equipment and established C4I nodes.<sup>1</sup>

The 24<sup>th</sup> Battalion took its organic 169<sup>th</sup> Port Operation Cargo Detachment (POCD), 491<sup>st</sup> Automated Cargo Documentation (ACD) Detachment, 492<sup>nd</sup> Transportation Company and the 567<sup>th</sup> Cargo Transfer Company (CTC). The 24<sup>th</sup> Battalion also received support from the 652<sup>nd</sup>, 834<sup>th</sup>, 1181<sup>st</sup> and 1397<sup>th</sup> TTB. The 1397<sup>th</sup> TTB augmented the 491<sup>st</sup> Automated Cargo Detachment at North Island. The 6<sup>th</sup> Transportation Battalion provided port clearance and forward movement to the NTC. It deployed with the 89<sup>th</sup> Medium Truck Company, 558<sup>th</sup> Floating Craft General Support (FCGS) Company, 551<sup>st</sup> Cargo Transfer Company, the 384<sup>th</sup> and 622<sup>nd</sup> Movement Control Teams. The battalion picked up control of two USAR truck companies when it arrived. The 24<sup>th</sup> Battalion would offload the equipment and the 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion would clear it from the beach to their final destination. Commercial lowboy company would move the heavy equipment like tanks and Bradleys to the NTC. The 53<sup>rd</sup> Movement Control Battalion provided the movement control for the operation. The two MCTs provided the 53<sup>rd</sup> Battalion 24-hour capability. The Navy provided LCUs for lighterage and SEABEES constructed the Trident pier and RO/RO Discharge Facility (RRDF). The Trident pier was stabbed into Red Beach and the RRDF was anchored at sea. The Navy's Joint Lighterage Control Center (JLCC) coordinated the schedule of its LCUs.<sup>2</sup>

On 28 March, the 24<sup>th</sup> Battalion conducted helicopter discharge pier side at NINAS. On 29 March, *USNS Seay* arrived and began discharge. The 169<sup>th</sup> POCD boarded the *Seay* to discharge the equipment. One purpose of the exercise was to validate the new stern ramp on the *USNS Seay*. The Navy failed to inform the 24<sup>th</sup> Battalion of this agenda during the In Progress Reviews (IPR). This took the 24<sup>th</sup> Battalion by surprise and created an atmosphere of distrust. They wanted to see if the RRDF could support the weight of the stern ramp with an Abrams tank. Since the free-floating ramp was only connected by cables, the Navy wanted to see if it would damage the ship during rough seas. The rolling stock drove onto the RRDF then Navy LCU-2000s discharged equipment and cargo off of and transferred it to the Navy Trident Pier at Red

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<sup>1</sup> LTC James Herson, "Native Atlas '02 Initial Hot Wash," Camp Pendleton, CA, 8 April 2002.

<sup>2</sup> Native Atlas and discussion with SFC Michael Aguilar by Richard Killblane, 5 May 2005.

Beach or the fixed pier at Delmar Basin. LTC James Herson, commander of the 24<sup>th</sup> Battalion, felt that the reliance on the Navy's lighterage and Trident pier caused unnecessary delays as their priorities were not the same as the Army's.<sup>3</sup>

Navy LCUs dropped ramp at the Delmar Basin. There the KALMAR RTCH of the 567<sup>th</sup> CTC lifted the containers out of the hold. The limited reach of the KALMAR required the LCUs to reposition themselves several times so that the KALMAR could pick up the heavy containers. This caused the LCUs to delay longer than the available tide window, which stranded them until the next tide.<sup>4</sup>

The operation shut down at 1700 on 30 March due to inclement weather and high sea states. The 24<sup>th</sup> Battalion completed the discharge of the *Seay* on 3 April. They failed to achieve their 96-hour goal projected in the regional OPLANS. This was due to the lack of vessel support provided by the Navy. "During the first and last shifts of discharge operations, the Navy provided only one vessel to transport vehicles to and from the beach."<sup>5</sup>

From 6 to 11 April, the 7<sup>th</sup> Group assets prepared their equipment for rail upload. Meanwhile the 2<sup>nd</sup> Brigade moved to NTC from 8 to 9 April and the 7<sup>th</sup> Group equipment rail uploaded from 9 to 12 April. The advon redeployed on 10 April and the main body redeployed on 17 April.<sup>6</sup>

By December 2002 the 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion was composed of the following units:

- Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment
- 89<sup>th</sup> Transportation Company (Medium Truck)
- 331<sup>st</sup> Transportation Company (Floating Causeway)
- 551<sup>st</sup> Transportation Company (Cargo Transfer)
- 558<sup>th</sup> Transportation Company (Marine Maintenance)
- Dive Company (Provisional)
- 384<sup>th</sup> Movement Control Team
- 622<sup>nd</sup> Movement Control Team

### **Operation IRAQI FREEDOM**

LTC Jeffrey Helmick assumed command of the 6<sup>th</sup> Transportation Battalion (Motor) on 13 June 2002. COL Visot would assume command of the 32<sup>nd</sup> Transportation Group (USAR), which would also deploy to Kuwait. That summer, President George W. Bush directed CENTCOM to prepare for possible military action against Saddam Hussein in the event he did not comply with UN resolutions resulting from the last war. By the end of the year, it became clear that the units would deploy to Kuwait. The 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion would function as a truck battalion and take its organic 89<sup>th</sup> Medium Truck Company, commanded by CPT Jeffrey E. Wagstaff, and 551<sup>st</sup> Cargo Transfer Company, commanded by CPT Shawn M. O'Brien. The Battalion had originally

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<sup>3</sup> Native Atlas and Aguilar.

<sup>4</sup> Native Atlas.

<sup>5</sup> Native Atlas, p. 11.

<sup>6</sup> Native Atlas.



planned to deploy by ship and were configured to do so, but in early January, USFORCOM notified 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion that they would deploy by air instead.

The 89<sup>th</sup> Medium Truck deployed by air out of Langley Air Force Base on 6 January 2003. The C-5 laid over in Moron, Spain, for five days waiting for aircraft parts, diplomatic clearance, runway space and flight crews. The battalion personnel had to wait around the hanger the whole time. The company arrived in Kuwait City on 13 January, one day ahead of the rest of the battalion. They spent the next day adjusting to the time difference then drew their prepositioned equipment. Two days later they began convoy operations.

Since the 89<sup>th</sup> Transportation Company was the only line-haul company in theater for nearly a month, it moved the majority of the theater's containers of US Army and US Marine Corps equipment and delivered ammunition to the Ammunition Storage Points (ASP). BG Jack Stutz, Commander of the 143<sup>rd</sup> Transportation Command, asked the 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion to perform the role of Port Support Activity (PSA) and drive every type of vehicle from truck to tank off of the arriving vessels. Since most of the equipment was prepositioned in Kuwait, the troops arrived by air and the 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion trucks had to transport the men to their equipment for drawing then the 96<sup>th</sup> HET Company hauled the tanks to their destinations. The 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion had spent 85 days moving the Marines and the British units into their positions.

The 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion was enhanced by Pallet Load System (PLS), Heavy Equipment Trailer (HET) and M915 companies from other installations.

- 15<sup>th</sup> PLS Company, commanded by CPT Wayne Hiatt Fort Sill, Oklahoma.
- 68<sup>th</sup> Medium Truck Company, commanded by CPT Edward J. Gawlik III, Germany.
- 89<sup>th</sup> Medium Truck Company, commanded by CPT Jeffrey E. Wagstaff.
- 96<sup>th</sup> HET Company, commanded by CPT Todd A. Browning, Fort Hood, Texas.
- 551<sup>st</sup> Cargo Transfer Company, commanded by CPT Shawn M. O'Brien.

About a week out from the beginning of the air war, the 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion shifted its priority to getting itself ready for war. The battalion signed for one of four mobile kitchens, government rations, 73 Temper tents, 100 to 200 hundred shower, four Mobile Kitchen Trailers, plastic toilets and other comforts for life support. Helmick believed that there was no excuse for the soldiers of a truck battalion to live in misery.

The logistics package that would cross the "berm" into Iraq was divided into three packages: ADDER 1, 2 and 3. The 6<sup>th</sup> Transportation Battalion, with HHD, 7<sup>th</sup> Transportation Group and other theater level assets formed ADDER 2. The ground war was originally supposed to begin on 21 March, after the "shock and awe" campaign. ADDER 2 was scheduled to cross the border on G+2. The initial success of the bombing campaign caused CFLCC to move G-Day up to 20 March. LTC Helmick led his convoy across the border on the morning of 22 March, G+1. The 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion's objective was to assume control of the Forward Support Base (FSB) CEDAR from 3<sup>rd</sup> COSCOM and establish Logistic Support Area (LSA) ADDER at the Tallil Airport.

The convoy stretched along Alternate Supply Route (ASR) ASPEN in a single lane for as far as the eye could see. Helmick's biggest fear was for the convoy to stop. His fear was realized when incoming artillery struck two hours after they crossed the border. The convoy came to a halt. Helmick

raced ahead in his HMMV to see what had happened. The MPs in the front of the convoy had halted. When he asked them why, they said that their doctrine called for them to stop until the artillery stopped. Helmick had to reach CEDAR that night. He told the MPs that if they would not lead, then to pull off to the side of the road and let his convoy pass. Helmick then led the convoy. They reached Main Supply Route (MSR) TAMPA, Route 1, and all the vehicles that could crowded onto the six-lane highway with the combat units. They arrived at the intersection of MSR TAMPA and ASR BOSTON, FSB CEDAR, around 1600 and it took all night for the rest of the convoy to close. The convoy pulled off ASR BOSTON quickly established security. The drivers of the vehicles pulled guard all night.

On 22 March, the 3<sup>rd</sup> ID(M) seized the town of Nasiriyah with its two bridges over the Euphrates River intact, 150 miles inside the Iraq border. Following that, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade captured the Tallil Air Base south of the city. The 1<sup>st</sup> MEF advanced along Route TOPEKA, the Basra highway, and engaged enemy resistance from Saddam Hussein's Baath Party militia at Basra. The plan was to get to Baghdad as quick as possible without being decisively engaged in clearing cities along the way.

The morning of 23 March, LTC Helmick with BG Stultz, the 7<sup>th</sup> Group Commander and their operations officers drove to the Tallil Airport. They arrived as the 3<sup>rd</sup> ID(M) was driving the Iraqis away from the airfield. The Iraqis had obstructed the airfield with everything they could push onto it and booby-trapped the obstacles. It took engineers 48 hours to clear the runway. Helmick's advance party realized that the area would not support both the airfield and truck operations. Helmick returned and sent 1LT Jeremy Russell's platoon of the 551<sup>st</sup> CTC up to Tallil to set up air terminal operations with the US Air Force. Helmick then sent SFC Michael Aguilar back down MSR TAMPA to look for a suitable location for the truck operations. Aguilar and the company first sergeants located an area off MSR TAMPA eight miles south. At that time, the MSR still belonged to the US Marines and Helmick needed permission to set up operations.

On 25 March, BG Stultz gave the 6<sup>th</sup> Transportation Battalion permission to use the new site and begin running convoys. The 551<sup>st</sup> CTC set up a Trailer Transfer Point (TTP) at the new CEDAR site and the 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion sent trucks back to the 106<sup>th</sup> Battalion's logistic base at NAVISTAR to pick up loads. The 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion ran a pull-push operation. They picked up cargo from the 106<sup>th</sup> Truck Battalion at Convoy Support Center NAVISTAR on the Kuwait/Iraq border and delivered it to the V Corps rear at BUSHMASTER. However, that day a shamal, "the mother of all sand storms," shut down operations. The sky turned black from the sand storm and soldiers could not see a few feet in front of them. The hurricane force winds blew 27 tents away. After the winds died down the next day, the 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion began convoy operations.

The 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion had two separate convoy operations on G-Day. When the G-Day moved up one day, the 3<sup>rd</sup> ID(M) left with only four days sustainment instead of five and consumed one day while waiting. They crossed with only three days' sustainment of food and water. BG Charles Fletcher found 13 empty trailers of the CPT Wagstaff's 89<sup>th</sup> TC and directed them to go back and pick up the remaining one-day supply of MREs and bottled water. Wagstaff's convoy spent six days on the road and delivered its critical cargo right up to the within a few miles of the front lines.

The 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion gave a platoon of the 96<sup>th</sup> HET to the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division to haul its heavy engineer equipment to establish its Forward Area Resupply Points. For two weeks they held on to the platoon and denied that they had them. Finally when the 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion reported the platoon as missing in action did the 101<sup>st</sup> admit having them and BG Stultz forced them to give the HET platoon up.

No movement control teams had arrived in country, so the 6<sup>th</sup> Transportation Battalion received its taskings directly from the 7<sup>th</sup> Group. Helmick turned the 96<sup>th</sup> HET Company over to the 106<sup>th</sup>



Battalion since he no longer needed to haul tanks. The 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion had the 68<sup>th</sup>, 109<sup>th</sup> and 233<sup>rd</sup> Medium Truck Companies and the 15<sup>th</sup> PLS Company.

After the 3<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Division seized Baghdad International Airport, Helmick sent 1LT Roepke's platoon of the 551<sup>st</sup> CTC to set up operations there.

Line of communication stretched from NAVISTAR to CEDAR to SCANIA to ANACONDA, north of Baghdad.

After a month into the operation, the 106<sup>th</sup> Battalion began pushing cargo up to CEDAR and the 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion pushed cargo up to ANACONDA.

The 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion returned to Fort Eustis in July 2003.

In June 2004, the 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion conducted the annual JLOTS operation in Honduras and Guatemala.

In August 2004, the 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion again deployed to Southwest Asia for OIF 2.

#### **CAMPAIGN PARTICIPATION CREDIT**

World War II: Northern France; Rhineland; Central Europe

Vietnam: Counteroffensive, Phase II; Counteroffensive, Phase III; Tet Counteroffensive; Counteroffensive, Phase IV; Counteroffensive, Phase V; Counteroffensive, Phase VI; Tet 69/Counteroffensive; Summer-Fall 1969; Winter-Spring 1970; Sanctuary Counteroffensive; Counteroffensive, Phase VII; Consolidation I; Consolidation II; Cease-Fire

Southwest Asia: Defense of Saudi Arabia; Liberation and Defense of Kuwait; Cease-Fire

#### **DECORATIONS**

Meritorious Unit Commendation (Army) for VIETNAM 1966-1967

Meritorious Unit Commendation (Army) for VIETNAM 1968-1969

Meritorious Unit Commendation (Army) for VIETNAM 1969-1970

Meritorious Unit Commendation (Army) for SOUTHWEST ASIA