

73rd Transportation Company



*10th Transportation Battalion
Mouseover for description*

73rd Trans Company

Origins as a Truck Company

The 73rd Transportation Company was originally activated at Fort Ord, California on 4 March 1942 as Company G, 1st Battalion, 29th Quartermaster Regiment. On 10 March 1943, the unit was reorganized and redesignated as Company C, and redesignated again as the 3443rd Quartermaster Truck Company on 2 December 1943. During World War II the unit participated in the East Indies, Papua, New Guinea, and Luzon campaigns in the South Pacific and earned the Philippine Presidential Unit Citation. On 1 August 1946 it was converted and redesignated as the 3443rd Transportation Corps Truck Company. The unit became part of the newly formed Transportation Corps and was redesignated the 73rd Transportation Truck Company on 30 June 1947.

The 73rd Transportation Truck Company arrived in Pusan, Korea on 11 July 1950. On 17 July it completed its first tactical mission in Korea, supporting the amphibious landing of the 1st Cavalry Division at Pohang-dong. The trucks supported port and supply operations in Korea, running armed convoys (a .50 caliber machine gun on every fourth truck) to counter sniper fire.¹ They also served as troop transports. During the heavy fighting of 1950, the unit's trucks supported and transported the 24th Infantry Regiment, the 27th "Fire Brigade" Regimental Combat Team, and the 29th Regimental Combat Team defending the Pusan Perimeter. The 73rd also provided transportation to other countries' forces, including the South Korean 17th "Tiger" Infantry Regiment and the British Argyle and Sutherland Highlanders. Unit trucks and personnel frequently came under fire from enemy ground forces and aircraft during these operations.² On 1 April 1954, the unit was reorganized and redesignated as the 73rd Transportation Company. On 25 September 1958, it was inactivated in Korea having received participation credit for all the campaigns in Korean War.

Beginnings of a Floating Craft Company

The 73rd Transportation Company (Floating Craft) was reactivated at Fort Eustis, Virginia under the 4th Transportation Command (TRANSCOM) on 1 September 1959. Its new mission was to provide maintenance for Army floating craft, perform heavy lifts

¹ Unit history

² Unit history

and diving missions, to move limited amounts of cargo, and to provide training barges and barge personnel. On 24 June 1961, four warrant officers and 46 crewmen from the 73rd participated in the Support North East Command (SUNEC) resupply operation at the port of Thule, Greenland. OPERATION SUNEC was an annual event that took advantage of the Arctic's short summer to deliver supplies for the year to US personnel stationed there. The 73rd Floating Craft Company made up the harbor craft support element of the 285th Terminal Service Company. On 13 August 1961, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics blocked the lines of communication extending into Berlin. Consequently, President John F. Kennedy deployed two additional combat divisions to Europe in October. To support this buildup of troops the US Army deployed active duty Transportation units to the ports of debarkation in Northern France and alerted 113 Reserve units for activation. This was the largest call-up of Reserves and National Guard since the Korean War. The 73rd was sent to La Rochelle, France to participate in the Berlin Buildup. There it was divided along the various ports along the coast of northern France to assist in cargo operations until the crisis ended in July 1962.

The 231st Floating Craft Company was activated to replace the 73rd. It was one of seven Reserve and two National Guard units activated from Florida. The advance party was activated came on active duty on 25 September and the rest of the company was ordered to active duty on 1 October. The 231st had to report to Fort Eustis on 8 October and take over responsibility of the equipment of the 73rd Floating Craft Company. Upon arrival at Fort Eustis, the 231st fell under the 313th Transportation Battalion (Boat) a Reserve Headquarters activated for this crisis. The 231st operated LT2088, ST2129, T503, two floating cranes and a fuel barge. The 231st also took over the Freight Ships: FS 313 and the FS 221. The FS *Pvt Carl V. Sheridan* was at Fort Eustis, but not assigned to the 231st. The *Sheridan* may have been assigned to the 313th Transportation Battalion and manned by personnel from the Baltimore area (possibly the 949th Trans Co Floating Craft). The FS-411 *Shearwater*, FS-209 and the FS-790 were not at Third Port during the Berlin Crisis.

The 73rd Floating Craft Company returned in July 1962. The 231st Floating Craft Company had spent ten and half months on active duty and was released on 13 August 1962. Shortly after the return of the 73rd, the advance party of the company deployed to Kings Bay, Georgia on 26 October in response to the Cuba Missile Crisis. Then the entire company deployed to Fort Lauderdale, Florida where they waited for the planned amphibious invasion. However, the crisis averted and the units redeployed on 10 December 1962.

Missing the Vietnam War

Although the 73rd Floating Craft Company did not deploy overseas, the war in Vietnam had a profound effect on the mission that the company. After the French defeat and pull out from Indochina in 1954, the country was partitioned into Laos, Cambodia and North and South Vietnam. The communist party controlled the North and a democratic government was established in the South. Both agreed to later hold election to unify the country. The United States backed the democratic government in the South with advisors

while the North trained Vietcong guerrillas to win control of the south. 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 massive build up of American troops in that country required an even larger logistical tail. The first of three troop buildups began in the summer of 1965. At the same time, the training missions at Fort Eustis became that much more important. Fort Eustis was a major training center for the Army's watercraft and terminal service personnel. But the buildup in Vietnam came at such a pace that at the beginning there were not enough transportation units, including harbor craft units, ready to support it.³

The pace at Fort Eustis accelerated as units trained for their deployments overseas. In addition to its normal mission requirements, the 73rd also met daily commitments in support of the Army Transportation School at Fort Eustis, training deck and engine personnel. The 73rd Floating Craft Company had the following fleet of vessels:

- FS-216
- FS-411 *Shearwater*
- FS-790 (later named *Virginia*)
- LT-1956 (100-foot tug) *Fredericksburg*
- LT-1972 (100-foot tug) *Gettysburg*
- LT-2088 (100-foot tug) *Petersburg*
- ST-1988 (65-foot tug)
- ST-1989 (65-foot tug) *Eutaw Springs*
- ST-1990 (65-foot tug)
- ST-1991 (65-foot tug)
- ST-2114 (65-foot tug)
- ST-2116 (65-foot tug) *King's Mountain*
- ST-2118 (65-foot tug)
- ST-2119 (65-foot tug) *Bennington*
- T-462 (45-foot tug)
- ST-2050 (45-foot tug)
- ST-2056 (45-foot tug)
- BD-2587 (100-ton floating crane)

The 45-foot tugs were for tows in and around Third Port and the 65-foot and 100-foot tugs were for longer missions.

³ GEN W.C. Westmoreland, "Report on the War in Vietnam", U.S. Government Printing Office, pp. 257-266.

While the Army transportation units activated and trained, the first months of the war in Vietnam was supported by civilian contractors: Han Jin, the Alaska Barge Company, and Sea-Land Corporation. These companies cleared the ports at Qui Nhon, Cam Ranh Bay, and Saigon.⁴ The Army improved these ports and established other ports and subports (including the large complex at Newport) to utilize the country's long coastline and vast river network. This strategy took the Army's port capacity from 370,000 tons per month in late 1965 to 1,200,000 tons per month in 1968.⁵ Civilian contractors augmented the limited number of barges, tugs, and lighters that the Army had in Vietnam.⁶

The 11th Transportation Battalion (Terminal) arrived in Saigon from Fort Eustis on 5 August 1965 and assumed control of military operations at the port of Saigon. The 10th Transportation Battalion took over operations at Cam Ranh Bay on 23 September 1965. Back at Fort Eustis, the 73rd Transportation Company was reassigned from the 4th Transportation Command to the 48th Transportation Group on 1 June 1965. The 48th Transportation Group would remain at Fort Eustis while its parent command deployed overseas. As the first major transportation command in Vietnam, the 4th TRANSCOM was responsible for military port operations in the Saigon area, including the ammunition offloading operation at Cat Lai.

On 14 June, the 73rd assumed control of the following detachments:

- 267th Transportation Detachment (Liquid Cargo)
- 268th Transportation Detachment (Support)
- 271st Transportation Detachment (Floating Craft)
- 272nd Transportation Detachment (Floating Craft)
- 273rd Transportation Detachment (Floating Craft)
- 274th Transportation Detachment (Floating Crane)
- 276th Transportation Detachment (Floating Crane)

On 28 July 1965, the 73rd Company attached to the newly activated 24th Transportation Battalion, which soon deployed to Vung Ro Bay, Vietnam.⁷ The 73rd then attached to the 159th Battalion on 3 September 1965. On 12 September 1965, the Diving Section traveled to Port Allen, Louisiana to locate a chlorine barge sunk by Hurricane Betsy. Betsy was the first hurricane to cause over a billion dollars worth of damage.⁸

On 5 October 1965, the following detachments activated and added to the company:

- 472nd Transportation Detachment (45-foot Tug)
- 473rd Transportation Detachment (45-foot Tug)
- 474th Transportation Detachment (Reefer Barge)
- 481st Transportation Detachment (Floating Crane)

⁴ Report on the War in Vietnam

⁵ Report on the War in Vietnam

⁶ LT GEN Joseph M. Heiser, Jr., "Vietnam Studies: Logistics Support", CMH Pub 90-15, 1974, pp. 124-127.

⁷ www.vungrobay.com

⁸ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hurricane_Betsy

On 25 November 1965, FS-790, a 222-foot freight ship, sailed to Charleston, South Carolina by a 14-man crew for stand-by storage. The FS-790 required a crew of 8 officers and 34 enlisted and had a general freight capacity of 1900 tons. Its mission was the transport and resupply of personnel and equipment. Training classes aboard the FS-790 learned celestial navigation and piloting during these 2-4 week missions. Destination ports included Portland, Maine; Bermuda; Charleston, South Carolina; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; and Fort Lauderdale, Florida. With the second buildup of forces in Vietnam, the 73rd Transportation Company would provide a headquarters for the many detachments activated and trained for deployment to Vietnam. On 29 November 1965, the following reefer barge units activated and attached:

- 485th Transportation Detachment
- 486th Transportation Detachment
- 487th Transportation Detachment

On 1 December 1965, the following detachments also activated and attached:

- 492nd Transportation Detachment (Reefer Barge)
- 493rd Transportation Detachment (Reefer Barge)
- 494th Transportation Detachment (Reefer Barge)
- 495th Transportation Detachment (Reefer Barge)
- 496th Transportation Detachment (Reefer Barge)
- 497th Transportation Detachment (Liquid Barge)
- 498th Transportation Detachment (100-foot Tug)

On 10 December 1965, the 472nd, 473rd, 474th and 481st Detachments went overseas. On 17 December, *FS Carl V. Sheridan*, a 176-foot freight ship assigned to the 73rd, went to stand-by storage in Charleston, South Carolina. In January 1966, LT Francis D. Donnelly, acting Company Commander, noted that the unit was suffering from personnel problems due to an extremely high turnover rate in the previous year. There was a 100 percent change in officers assigned, three different first sergeants, and a high reassignment rate of both warrant officers and enlisted personnel.⁹

In February 1966, the 492nd, 497th and 498th Detachments departed for overseas. On 22 February, the 493rd, 494th, 495th, and 496th Detachments were deactivated. On 25 February, the 504th Detachment activated and attached to the company; it departed for overseas on 25 May 1966. The company had 22 detachments assigned to it for training for deployment overseas. In May 1966, the *FS Carl V. Sheridan* rejoined the 73rd at Fort Eustis.¹⁰ On 25 May 1966, the 73rd was attached to the 124th Transportation Command (Terminal A), due to the 159th Battalion's impending deployment to Vietnam. The 159th assumed the operations of the LST beach and outer harbor discharge under the 5th Transportation Command at Qui Nhon in August 1966.

⁹ Quarterly Report, January 1966

¹⁰ Quarterly Report, July 1966

On 11 June 1966, the 73rd Transportation Company picked up the 537th Detachment. On 1 August, the 73rd was reassigned to the 7th Transportation Command. In September, the 537th Detachment was inactivated and the 510th Transportation Detachment (Mat Hd Hv) was attached to the 73rd. On 3 January 1967 the 627th, 628th, 629th, 630th, 631st, 632nd, 633rd, and 634th Transportation Detachments activated and attached to the company. On 1 February, the 635th Detachment activated and attached. The 80th Terminal Battalion activated on 20 February 1967 and the 73rd Transportation Company attached to it. The 625th Detachment inactivated on 23 February. The 638th and 640th Detachments activated and attached to the company on 20 March. The training and processing of the personnel imposed extra strain on the company personnel and continued to crowd billeting space. Another problem was all the turnover of transportation detachments; the training and processing of all these detachments imposed extra duties and responsibilities on the company's personnel.¹¹

In May 1967, the 627th, 630th, 631st, 632nd, 633rd, and 634th deployed overseas. The 639th deployed on 5 June and the 638th and 640th deployed on 10 July, followed by the 537th Detachment on 14 July 1967. Two 65-foot tugs, ST 1989 and ST 1990, assigned to the 73rd from Charleston, SC on 21 July 1967. The 620th, 630th, 633rd and 634th Detachments were assigned to the newly formed Transportation Battalion Vung Tau/Delta provisional on 30 July 1967. This battalion also included one medium (1097th) and two heavy boat companies (5th and 329th). The battalion's mission was to operate the Vung Tau Terminal. The terminal had three LST slips, 2 deep draft berths, and five anchorage berths, two of which (the farthest out) were used for ammunition.

On 1 February 1968, in preparation for the third and final buildup, the 383rd, 556th, 557th, 558th, 559th, 560th, 561st, 565th, 566th and 567th Detachments activated and attached to the company. These units deployed overseas on 4 April 1968. In the midst of that, the company conducted its annual Command Inspections and Operational Readiness Tests. On 7-8 March 1968, ST-1190 and ST-1988 assisted a fire-fighting operation at Newport News Shipping and Drydock Company in Newport News, VA. The unit conducted a field training exercise at Camp Wallace from 12-15 March 1968 and supported the 80th Transportation Battalions Annual Training Test (ATT). The training of the transportation detachments coming in and out of Fort Eustis continued to strain key personnel in the 73rd. The turnover rate of the unit was also still causing problems in April 1968.¹² Fortunately the frenetic pace of deployments slowed considerably after this final buildup.

Forty-one Army tugs would serve in Vietnam. Of these, 14 were 45-foot tugs: ST-2054, ST-2066, ST-2067, ST-2068, ST-2069, ST-2070, ST-2071, ST-2072, ST-2137, ST-2139, ST-2140, ST-2143, ST-2152, and ST-2153. Twenty-one were 65-foot tugs: ST-1978, ST-1985, ST-1986, ST-1987, ST-1992, ST-1995, ST-2106, ST-2107, ST-2108, ST-2109, ST-2110, ST-2111, ST-2112, ST-2120, ST-2121, ST-2122, ST-2130, ST-2132, ST-2134, ST-2135, and ST-2198. Five were 100-foot tugs (LT-1940, LT-1952, LT-1957, LT-1969, and LT-1977) and LT-454 was the lone 143-foot tug.¹³

¹¹ Quarterly Report, April 1967

¹² Quarterly Report, April 1968

¹³ <http://grambo.us/hulltypes.htm>

Finally, the 73rd Floating Craft Company could settle into some kind of normalcy. The company tugs went to work towing. ST-2056, a 45-foot tug skippered by SGT Richard R. Robbins, set a record for tonnage moved by a vessel of its size. It towed a 76-foot Corps of Engineer tug dozer from Fairfield Swing Bridge in North Carolina to Savannah, Georgia a distance of 700 nautical miles in 1968. ST-2118 *Guilford Courthouse*, a 65-foot tug skippered by CW2 Patrick E. McClendon, also set a record for gross tonnage when it towed the section sand dredge *Henry Bacon* plus a 60-foot crane, with a combined tonnage of 1700 gross tons down the inland waterway.

On 16 August 1968, the 73rd Floating Craft Company was detached from the 80th Terminal Battalion and attached to the 92nd Battalion. Between 26 October through 1 November, LT-2088 and LT-1972 towed the *USS Reliance* from Curtis Bay, Maryland to Port Mifflin Engineer Dock in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.¹⁴ The *Reliance* was a 6000-ton floating dry dock. In December 1968 ST-1989 and ST-1991 towed a barge loaded with a LARC XV from Little Creek Amphibious Base, Virginia to Charleston, South Carolina. They returned to Fort Eustis with seven LCM-8s in tow. From 21 January to 23 February 1969, ST-1989, a 65-foot tug skippered by CW2 Tyree, completed a record voyage for intercoastal waterways. ST-1989 traveled to Mobile, Alabama to bring 3 LCMs back to Fort Eustis for a total of 3300 miles. In March 1969, FS-790 departed on a 2 ½-week voyage to New York, Bermuda, and Charleston, South Carolina with a Harbor Craft Deck Operations Course (HCDOC) class comprised of officers, warrant officers and enlisted men. On 17 April 1969, BD-2587, a 100-ton floating crane, loaded an 85-ton steam locomotive onto a rail flatcar. The locomotive was transported to Promontory Point, Utah, for display during the 100th anniversary of the cross-country railway.¹⁵

On 10 July 1969, *FS Carl V. Sheridan* was turned in for scrap. FS-216 *Colonel William J. McKiernan* was issued to the 73rd from the United States Map Service as a replacement.

On 5 December 1969, LT-1956 left Fort Eustis with two barges in tow bound for Charleston Army Depot. The barge BC-6606 was loaded with J-Boat J-3788 and the barge BC-6165 was loaded with a LARC V. Rough seas outside Charleston broke the tow and the crew was only able to reattach BC-6165. BC-6606 was lost for four days while the tug searched the waters around Charleston, with help from the Coast Guard cutter Cape Morgan. On 11 December, the LT-1956 found the loose barge with the J-boat still attached, tied it up and towed it to its destination.¹⁶

The tugs of the 73rd were able to provide a vital service to the local community that winter. The weather was cold enough in January 1970 to freeze the waters around Fort Eustis and the surrounding Hampton Roads area. The ice was so thick that the local oyster boats could not penetrate it to reach their fishing grounds. US Congressman Thomas Downing of Norfolk placed an urgent call to the Command on 13 January asking

¹⁴ Quarterly Report, December 1968

¹⁵ Quarterly Report

¹⁶ Quarterly Report

for help. The on-duty vessels were busy breaking ice around Fort Eustis' Third Port, so off-duty crews were called back. ST-1989, a 65-foot tug, and two 45-foot tugs, ST-2050 and ST-2056, responded to the call for aid. They worked long hours breaking the ice for the oyster boats until warmer weather came several days later.¹⁷

Ice breaking was nothing new for the tugs. One of the missions of the 73rd was to keep the channel around Fort Eustis open during freezing weather. The tugs would break up the ice on the James River from Third Port all the way to the James River Bridge and travel back and forth, sometimes all night, to keep the water from freezing over again. This work did a lot of damage to the hulls and fenders of the tugs.¹⁸

On 15 June 1970, the 73rd received the FS-411 *Shearwater* from Charleston Army Depot. On 27 June, FS-216 was towed by LT-1972 to the Wilmington Shipyard, Wilmington, North Carolina for overhaul and repairs. LT-1972 made a tow of a different kind on 7 August, when it responded to a distress signal from a private vessel that was sinking. The tug crew rescued the five people on board and towed the boat back to safety.¹⁹

On 31 August 1970, the Third Port support element disbanded and the 73rd received operational control of all the floating craft in the port area. These included the *Cape Decision*, Q-650, J-3760, and the BT-6400. The *Cape Decision* was an old Victory ship used as an aid in stevedore training.²⁰ On 4 September, FS-216 returned to Fort Eustis. On 26 November, it assumed its new role as the mess ship for Third Port area personnel, serving Thanksgiving dinner.²¹

Eight divers from the company's diving unit spent the months of August through December 1970 on temporary duty in the St. Thomas Virgin Islands. They served as safety divers for TEKTITE II, an underwater lab that simulated space conditions.²² TEKTITE II was developed by NASA with the U.S. Department of the Interior, General Electric, and the U.S. Navy. The safety divers shadowed the TEKTITE "aquanauts" whenever they left the underwater lab. In this environment the effect of operations, living conditions and relationships on isolated personnel could be studied. The results of these operations guided strategies for future lunar and space missions.²³

On 4 December 1972, ST-2116 and ST-1989 towed ST-1990 and ST-1988 from Fort Eustis to Charleston, South Carolina and turned them in. FS-216 was turned in on 25 January 1973. LT-1956 and LT-1972 towed BD-2587, the 100-ton crane, to Charleston in April 1973 and turned it in. It was replaced by another crane, BD-6701. By 1973, the 73rd Floating Craft Company had the following fleet of vessels:

FS-411 *Shearwater*

¹⁷ Quarterly Report

¹⁸ Marc Fortunato, interview, 20 July 2007

¹⁹ Quarterly history, 14 October 1970

²⁰ Bob Brockman, interview, 29 August 2007

²¹ Quarterly history

²² Quarterly history, October 1970

²³ <http://www.njahs.org/nh/fvxin4.html>

FS-790 *Virginia*
LT-1956 (100-foot tug) *Fredericksburg*
LT-1972 (100-foot tug) *Gettysburg*
LT-2088 (100-foot tug) *Petersburg*
ST-1989 (65-foot tug) *Eutaw Springs*
ST-1991 (65-foot tug)
ST-2114 (65-foot tug)
ST-2116 (65-foot tug) *King's Mountain*
ST-2119 (65-foot tug) *Bennington*
ST-2050 (45-foot tug)
ST-2056 (45-foot tug)
ST-2031 (45-foot tug)
BD-6701

Post-Vietnam

The Paris Peace Accords of January 1973 brought the end of direct US involvement in Vietnam, but the mission of the 73rd Transportation Company remained the same in peacetime. The company had equipment in addition to the tugs that helped them accomplish the wide variety of operations that they were involved. Several barges, including a diving barge, and a sludge barge, were used in training and ensured that the 73rd was capable of any kind of marine maintenance. The sludge barge collected used POL from the vessels around Fort Eustis. This kept the environment clean and also provided the Fort Eustis steam plants with extra POL to burn.²⁴ An 180,000-gallon fuel barge was used to supply initial diesel distribution to Fort Eustis. This barge had to be periodically towed to Craney Island Fuel Terminal in Portsmouth, Virginia and back. The unit also had numerous prepositioned barges suitable for hauling vehicles and ammunition.²⁵ The company also still had its organic ocean-going ships for longer-range freight and training missions.

Typical aftereffect of any war is the downsizing that follows and the Army began to cut back on Army mariners and especially warrant officers. As the seasoned veteran skippers gradually left the Army, they were replaced by brand new warrants. In time, the 73rd would have more boats than warrant officers to skipper them. Crews lived on their boats and there were some lingering discipline problems at the end of the war especially in drug use. The boats of the 73rd were constantly painting over "FTA" [F**k the Army] graffiti on the *Cape Decision* and there were some personnel problems with drugs, especially marijuana. A mariner, however, earned his reputation by how hard he worked and how many missions he could pull, in spite of the cut back in missions in favor of civilian contractors. The Soldiers of the 73rd did not identify with the rest of the Army

²⁴ Bill Thomas, 73rd TC Q+A, 27 July 2007

²⁵ Fortunato interview

since they spent all their time on the boats and did not work with other elements, but they trained to a high standard that reflected their outstanding safety record.²⁶

The *LTC John U.D. Page* (469th Transportation Detachment) arrived at Fort Eustis on 6 December 1973. The 73rd became its new parent unit. The *Page* was an Army Beach Discharge Lighter with a shallow draft and unrestricted loading ramp area. It required a crew of 8 officers and 41 enlisted. The *Page* was 338 feet long and had a beach cargo capacity of 600 tons and an ocean capacity of 1000 tons. A unique prototype built in 1958 had spent years in Vietnam supporting intra-coastal requirements, moving 10,000 to 15,000 short tons of cargo per month throughout the Cam Ranh Bay area. Its propulsion system was damaged in 1967 but the high demand for its services delayed its departure for an overhaul in Japan for almost a year. The *Page* had earned many awards and honors in Vietnam, especially during the Fall and Winter of 1971, when they pulled the Americal Division out of Chu Lai to Da Nang. They hauled troops to Chu Lai, and hauled their retrograde back to Chu Lai. The *Page* also set a record for amount of tonnage they hauled.²⁷

The *Page* was one of the larger ships the 73rd used to accomplish freight missions up and down the East Coast. It was relieved from attachment to the unit of 1 May 1974 but continued the freight-hauling missions for the rest of the decade.²⁸

From 28 September to 11 December 1973, ST-1991, ST-2114, and ST-2116 completed a mission that took them from Fort Eustis to New Orleans, Louisiana, Joliet, Illinois, and St. Louis, Missouri. They were transporting Delong floating piers, which had played a large part in port operations in Vietnam.²⁹

In the Fall of 1973, the 73rd, along with the 329th Transportation Company (Heavy Boat) and the 1097th Transportation Company (Medium Boat), participated in an Offshore Discharge of Containership (OSDOC) exercise at Fort Story. With the end of the Vietnam War, the Army had funds to conduct large-scale joint logistics-over-the-shore (JLOTS) training exercises to test out new equipment and doctrine. A Delong floating pier was used in this exercise. The concept was still new and the inherent danger resulted in the planners estimating that two people would die during the exercise (none were). These JLOTS exercises were held every year, although usually in Spring or Summer for better weather conditions. They had a big impact on the development of LOTS capabilities, limitations, and doctrine.³⁰

On 22 July 1975, the unit received the *MV Sutton*, a former Reserves 338-foot cargo ship with a general freight capacity of 4512 tons. The *Sutton* carried a crew of 8 officers and 44 enlisted. It was an ideal training ship for stevedores; it was set up for boom or CONEX operations. It became very popular with reserve units at ports all over the East

²⁶ Brockman interview.

²⁷ Heiser, "Vietnam Studies: Logistics Support"

²⁸ Annual unit historical report, March 1975

²⁹ Quarterly report

³⁰ Brockman interview

Coast.³¹ The 73rd turned over FS-790 to the reserve component at Curtis Bay on 17 October 1975.

On 6 March 1974, with the disbanding of the Woman's Army Corps (WAC) the 73rd received its first female Soldier, PV2 Pamela S. Wilcox. In early 1975, PFC Janet Miller, a radio operator aboard FS-790, became the first woman to live aboard an Army vessel.³²

In September 1975, a detachment went from the 73rd to Okinawa, Japan, to pick up LT-529, a 143-foot ocean-going tug. The detachment left Okinawa in late September for the shipyard at Yokosuka, Japan. LT-529 left Yokosuka at the beginning of December under vessel master CW3 Stan Painter. The detachment spent New Year's Day at Midway Island, where CW2 Sylvester Fornton relieved CW3 Painter for health reasons. LT-529 picked up an LCU in Stockton, California and towed it back to Hampton Roads. The detachment arrived at Fort Eustis in March 1976 with the company's newest tug.³³ This mission was a typical example of deployments by 73rd personnel; the unit itself never deployed, but detachments from it would be involved in other overseas missions and major operations in later years.

From 20 April to 21 May 1976, the *MV Sutton* supported the training missions of the 851st, 942nd, 135th, 169th, 987th, and 498th Transportation Companies in cargo handling, movement, and documentation at Kings Bay, Georgia.

The *Cape Decision* was scrapped in Philadelphia on 11 July 1976.

On 29 July 1976, ST-1989 sailed to Fort Monroe to aid in the docking of sailing ships for Operation SAIL, referred to in the company literature as Operation TALL SHIPS. LT-529 joined ST-1989 from 1-2 August. The 1976 version of Operation SAIL was part of the United States Bicentennial celebrations of that year. Sailing vessels from 14 countries met in New York to take part in the festivities, including the Parade of Ships.³⁴

Ocean-going tug LT-529 picked up the mobile power barge *Andrew J. Weber* at Fort Lauderdale and towed it to Fort Belvoir, 8 November to 15 December 1976. It was assisted by LT-2088 *Petersburg* and ST-1989 *Eutaw Springs* from 13-16 December. The tugs of the 73rd towed just about anything around Fort Eustis, the Hampton Roads area, and all over the East Coast. A great number of these tows were for the Watercraft Inspection Branch at Fort Eustis. Every ship at Fort Eustis went to a shipyard at least once every two years.³⁵ When a ship had to go to the shipyard for any reason, the tugs towed it there. The tugs from the 73rd did not charge by tow distance, as private tugs would have, so Watercraft Inspection was free to accept bids from shipyards in other states. Not only did these tug missions save the government money, they were also great training for the tug boat crews. Most of these tows went to shipyards in North and South

³¹ Brockman interview

³² Quarterly history, March 1976

³³ Brockman interview

³⁴ <http://www.answers.com/topic/operation-sail>

³⁵ Teel, Roger, "A Day in the 73rd", *The Wheel*, 28 October 1976.

Carolina. The larger tugs also made long trips just in case a tow was needed. They would sometimes accompany larger boats, like LCUs, to the Caribbean. The tugs were along just in case a larger boat broke down and had to be towed back.³⁶

In addition to hauling and towing, the 73rd also supported large-scale exercises involving the military LOTS capabilities. LT-2088 *Petersburg*, ST-2119 *Bennington*, ST-1989 *Eutaw Springs*, and LT-529 participated in HEAVY LIFT PRETEST, a joint LOTS exercise, 22 October to 15 November 1976. The *General William J. Sutton* participated in JAWS II and JAWS III, reserve LOTS exercises at Camp Pendleton, Virginia from 11 July to 5 August 1977. ST-2116 *King's Mountain*, LT-1956 *Fredericksburg*, LT-1972 *Gettysburg*, and LT-2088 *Petersburg* participated in the DOD level JLOTS operation at Fort Story from 21 July through 26 August 1977. This exercise involved Army, Navy, and Marine elements to test LOTS capabilities of containers and container handling equipment. BD-6701 *Big Bethel*, a 100-ton floating crane, provided backup crane capability for MILVAN loading and unloading.

On 1 June 1978, the 73rd sent 26 enlisted and eight officers to Okinawa, Japan under CW3 Walter Evans to restore LT-536, another 143-foot ocean-going tug, and sail it to Third Port.³⁷ LT-536 had served during WWII and in Thailand during the Vietnam War. This mission would soon become legend in the Army watercraft field. Back at Third Port, the 73rd participated in an 11th Battalion Field Training Exercise (FTX) from 20-23 June 1978. The reconnaissance patrols of the company's watercraft repeatedly compromised the enemy aggressors (SEAL Team 2 from Little Creek Amphibious Base) and prevented any considerable damage to the port. This led the 11th Battalion to a unanimous victory in the FTX.³⁸

On 9 August 1978, the force working on LT-536 sailed to Yokosuka, Japan for further repairs and maintenance. From there, LT-536 made its way to Hawaii via Midway. During this voyage the tug was beaten by storms for ten days straight on the 16 day passage to Midway. They were running low on fuel and fresh water and navigating by the stars, but they made it with CW2 Robert Brockman earning a reputation for celestial mastery among the crew. He correctly predicted when the light of the westernmost tower in Hawaii would appear over the horizon. It was towing two 65-foot tugs loaded on two BC barges each with a 65-foot tug. On 1 November, LT-536 sailed from Hawaii to San Diego, California. On 26 November, a fire broke out in one of the engine's generators while underway to the Panama Canal. The crew was ordered to pull in to Acapulco, Mexico, the nearest port. Acapulco was a tourism port with no major shipyard facilities. Repairs took almost three months due to the lack of repair parts in the Army system. The replacement parts needed dated back to the 1940s; eventually the needed parts were removed from LT-529 at Fort Eustis and shipped to Acapulco.³⁹ Most of the crew was able to return home for Christmas, leaving a skeleton crew with the tug in Mexico. The rest of the crew returned in January; the tug left Acapulco on 23 February 1979 and

³⁶ Fortunato interview

³⁷ Quarterly report

³⁸ Quarterly report, July 1978

³⁹ Brockman interview

encountered a violent windstorm off of the peninsula of Tehuantepec. The Soldiers on watch were glad when darkness fell; they could not see how big the waves were getting.⁴⁰ The barges served as a sea anchor, bringing some stability to the tug during four hours during which its steering was out. Overnight one of the barges' running lights disappeared. The crew figured it had broken loose in the storm. At first light they saw that it had instead flipped over, with the 65-foot tug still attached and now being towed underwater.⁴¹

LT-536 continued toward Panama, but had to reduce their speed; the sea was gradually working the underwater tug loose from the barge. Off Punta Mala, Panama, the tug broke loose and sank in water deep enough that it was not recoverable. Efforts to right the barge took three weeks in Panama before the Panama Canal Commission solved the problem. They used a giant floating crane normally reserved for removing and replacing doors on the canal locks.⁴²

LT-536 finally arrived at Fort Eustis on 12 April 1979, where a large welcome home ceremony was held. The crewmembers received additional awards from General Shoemaker, FORSCOM commander, in a separate ceremony on 18 April. These larger ocean-going tugs (143-footers) would tow barges loaded with ammunition down to Panama when the bigger boats were not available.⁴³

On 21 September 1978, the 73rd was attached to the 7th Transportation Group, the composite transportation group based at Fort Eustis. The group had operated ports in Europe and Japan during World War II and Pusan, Korea during the Korean War. During Vietnam, the 73rd had supported its mission at Fort Eustis: providing the training base for all the watercraft and terminal service units prior their deployment overseas. Within the 7th Group, the 73rd fell under the 10th Transportation Battalion, along with the 97th Transportation Company (Heavy Boat), 329th Transportation Company (Heavy Boat), 1098th Transportation Company (Medium Boat), 469th Transportation Detachment (Floating Craft), 497th Engineer Company (Port Construction), and the US Army Diving Detachment (Provisional).⁴⁴

In September 1980, longtime personnel issues started to affect the operational readiness of the 73rd Transportation Company at a new level. Personnel shortages in key positions, warrant officers and engineers, led to the administrative closing of several vessels.⁴⁵ Shortages of various military occupational skills for authorized positions and a high turnover rate had been problematic since at least January 1966. Warrant officers were especially hard to keep in the unit because many of them did not want to skipper the tug boats. They would transfer out instead. Tugs lacked the creature comforts of larger vessels. They did not handle well and their complicated engine mechanisms made them difficult to run. Without a keel, tugs bounced around on the waves like a cork and their

⁴⁰ Brockman interview

⁴¹ Brockman interview

⁴² Brockman interview; and Fortunato interview.

⁴³ Quarterly report, 3 July 1979

⁴⁴ <http://www.geocities.com/Pentagon/3007/10th.html>

⁴⁵ Quarterly report, September 1980

rocking motion in the water caused seasickness in the majority of crewmembers in rough seas.⁴⁶ In addition to shutting down vessels, the company's shortages also prevented proper maintenance, and the crew commitment to the FS-790 hampered tug operations training.⁴⁷

Some tug vessel masters were able to stave off this instability by keeping their boat busy. Actively seeking missions to perform, both in and outside the Army (within DoD), was the way to keep a boat's crew fully manned and well trained.⁴⁸ If a boat was making money for the unit, it would continue to get resources and funding. Conversely, if a boat was not completing missions, it was unnecessary, and therefore did not receive the resources and funding needed to keep it going.⁴⁹

On 16 June 1981, ST-1989 began a five-month commitment at Yorktown Naval Weapons Station.⁵⁰ This became a regular commitment for one of the unit's 65-foot tugs. A 73rd tug continued to provide ship assistance to Navy ships at Yorktown until 2003. It was a very popular mission with the crews; an opportunity to work in their job field every day.⁵¹ The mission was taken over by a leased commercial tug.

The *Page* left Fort Eustis for Ford Island, Pearl Harbor, Hawaii back in 1980. The 73rd then traded FS790 with the 949th, a Baltimore Reserve unit, for the C1-MAV1 ship *General William J. Sutton* on 15 November 1982. The FS-790 became the FS-790 (W-CFT TM). Forty-one personnel transferred to this new unit.⁵² The designation of the 469th Transportation Detachment remained at Fort Eustis with the *Sutton*, which was a sore point with the crew of the *Page*. The *Sutton* was a "prison ship" because the other vessel masters only gave up their biggest troublemakers to the pool that the *Sutton* drew from.⁵³ The *Page* was finally retired from active service in March 1992 and sent to Charleston where it was sunk to create an artificial reef. FS-790 was finally retired from military service in June 1987.

From June 1983 until 15 February 1984, personnel from the 73rd participated in Joint Readiness Exercise BOLD EAGLE. On 25 March 1985, ST-2114 sailed to Yorktown Naval Weapons Station to assist the battleship *USS Iowa* in maneuvers. The *Iowa* was unloading at the weapons station after a training mission in Norfolk.⁵⁴

From 28 February to 16 July 1986, LT-1972 supported Reverse Osmosis Water Purification Unit (ROWPU) exercises at Little Creek Amphibious Base and Cape Henry.

⁴⁶ Fortunato interview

⁴⁷ Quarterly report, September 1981

⁴⁸ Thomas Q+A

⁴⁹ Brockman interview

⁵⁰ Quarterly report, December 1981

⁵¹ CW3 Charles Torell, interview, 28 July 2007

⁵² Quarterly report, January 1983

⁵³ Brockman interview

⁵⁴ <http://www.ussiowa.org/general/html/detail.htm>

The *General William S. Sutton* was retired in March 1987. By then the 73rd floating Craft Company contained the following vessels in its fleet:

LT-529 (143-foot tug)
LT-536 (143-foot tug)
LT-1956 (100-foot tug) *Fredericksburg*
LT-1972 (100-foot tug) *Gettysburg*
LT-2088 (100-foot tug) *Petersburg*
ST-1989 (65-foot tug) *Eutaw Springs*
ST-1991 (65-foot tug)
ST-2114 (65-foot tug)
ST-2116 (65-foot tug) *King's Mountain*
ST-2119 (65-foot tug) *Bennington*
ST-2031 (45-foot tug)
ST-2050 (45-foot tug)
ST-2056 (45-foot tug)
BD-6701

From 15 May to 9 June 1989, the 73rd participated in Joint Readiness Exercise SOLID SHIELD, sponsored by the US Commander in Chief, Atlantic (USCINCLANT). SOLID SHIELD 89 was staged at various East Coast ports to improve joint operating procedures for LOTS operations.⁵⁵

After the Iranian hostage crisis in 1979, the United States paid closer attention to Southwest Asia, in particular Iran. For that reason, the Armed Forces created US Central Command (CENTCOM) with responsibility for military operations in that region of the world. As a precursor to military operations in that region, the Armed Forces began to preposition floating craft around the world and create preposition stock piles on the British island of Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean.

On 4 July 1989, ST-1991 and ST-2116 sailed to Newport News Shipyard and participated in a joint service pass in review for Vice President Dan Quayle.⁵⁶ On 26 July, crewmembers of these tugs deployed to Hythe, England to participate in the *American Cormorant* exercise BIG RED. The *American Cormorant* was a semi-submersible Heavy Lift Prepositioning Ship (HLPS). Every two years its prepositioned stock was offloaded for inspection and maintenance, and then uploaded again.⁵⁷ The tug crews uploaded eight LCM-8s, three large tugs, two BD cranes and two barges onto the *American Cormorant*.⁵⁸

During the 1980s the 73rd sent detachments to Subic Bay Naval Base in the Philippines every winter. Their mission was to operate leased 50-foot tugs in the resupply of a prepositioned ship from Diego Garcia, a military base in the Indian Ocean. Each ship

⁵⁵ <http://www.army.mil/CMH/books/DAHSUM/1989/CH12.htm>

⁵⁶ Quarterly report, September 1989

⁵⁷ <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/systems/ship/tak-2062.htm>

⁵⁸ Quarterly report, September 1989

was loaded with enough supplies, including ammunition, to sustain an entire brigade for one month of combat. Every year the ammunition was offloaded and inspected; unsatisfactory loads were retrograded and replaced from LASH barges loaded with new ammunition. Local stevedores were hired and the tugs ferried the barges in this operation. The mission was previously done by personnel from the 329th Transportation Company (Heavy Boat) because of the tug's perceived handling similarities to an LCU. However, the LCU crews were not accustomed to towing, so the mission went to the 73rd.⁵⁹

These detachments were made up of a lieutenant, an E7 detachment sergeant and 25-30 Soldiers. Four crews ran 24-hour operations in 12-hour shifts four to five days a week. This detachment was extremely popular with the Soldiers and received assignment as a reward for good work in the previous year. The opportunity for E4s and E5s to run boats normally skippered by warrant officers combined with a very favorable exchange rate for the US dollar on this detachment. These missions resulted in a disproportionate number of Soldiers in the 73rd marrying Filipino women.⁶⁰ Similar missions also took place at Yokohama, Japan throughout the second half of the decade.

Operation DESERT SHIELD/DESERT STORM

On 2 August 1990, 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. All the units of the 7th Group went on alert and prepared for possible deployment to the Persian Gulf. The 7th Group surge team that flew to Saudi Arabia prior to Operation DESERT SHIELD included less than a full tug crew from the 73rd Transportation Company. They arrived on 12 August, and were planning to off-load their equipment from the pre-position ship, *American Cormorant*, at the port of Dammam. The *American Cormorant*, however, did not arrive in Dammam until 28 August, so the tug crew instead split off to miscellaneous logistics support functions. One of these functions was arranging the lease of portable toilets and shower facilities for the Army's use throughout Saudi Arabia.⁶¹

When the *American Cormorant* arrived, three 100-foot tugs were downloaded: LT-2085 *USAV Anzio*, LT-2090 *SP4 Larry G. Dahl*, and LT-2092 *USAV North Africa*. Both BD cranes were downloaded, but only one was ultimately used. LT-2085 skippered by CW3 Richard Elmore was the first tug up and running in September 1990. In addition to its port duties, the tug also was responsible for the safety of the BD crane and the Reverse Osmosis Water Purification Unit (ROWPU) barge. Every time a SCUD alarm sounded, the two assets had to be towed out to the water to avoid any damage. CW2 Randy Rainville replaced CW3 Elmore as the vessel master the next month. CW2 Rainville remained the vessel master until the end of the conflict in June 1991. By December 1990, LT-2085 was joined by LT-2090 under CW3 Vasilios Ringas and LT-2092 under

⁵⁹ CW4 Jay Dehart, interview, 28 July 2007

⁶⁰ Dehart interview

⁶¹ CW5 Randy Rainville and CW4 Jay Dehart, interview, 28 July 2007

CW2 Jorge Gonzales. The three 100-foot tugs were augmented in the Spring by two 50-foot commercial LASH tugs, the *Wren* and the *Sparrow*.

On 24 February 1991, the coalition forces launched the ground war that retook Kuwait in 100 hours. Seven days after the ground war began on 28 February, the 10th Battalion entered Kuwait to open the port of Ash Shuaybah. The next task was to rehabilitate the port of Ash Shuaybah since the Iraqis had sabotaged the port by sinking vessels, planting mines and pouring six inches of crude oil in the port. The dive detachment from the 6th Battalion removed the sunken torpedo boats alongside the piers. During the process, the fuel cylinder on one torpedo exploded, fortunately not killing anyone. After two weeks, the port was operational.

In March 1991, LT-2092 moved from Dammam to the port of Ash Shuaybah. It towed the BD crane and an LCM. LT-2085 followed a day later. The last 40-50 miles were through a minefield, and LT-2085 was left behind by its minesweeper escort. The tug had to be guided through the mines by a British helicopter dropping smoke grenades to mark the dangerous areas. LT-2085 and LT-2092 performed several ship assists, including the *USS La Salle*, the flagship for the Commander, US Naval Forces, Central Command. The *USS La Salle* was the first US Navy warship to enter the newly liberated port; the Army watercraft had already been there for about a week. Shortly after the Navy's arrival, ST-2092 left Ash Shuaybah; ST-2085, the BD crane and the Mike boat remained for approximately three more weeks.⁶² The crews had to keep the running lights on because of the constant darkness due to the oil fires in Kuwait. The oil was so thick on the water that the tug crews used their water pumps to clear a spot on the surface when the Army divers wanted to enter the water.⁶³ All of the divers from Fort Eustis except for a seven-man SCUBA team deployed for DESERT STORM: 511th Dive Detachment; 86th Dive Detachment; and 74th Dive Detachment.⁶⁴

LT-2085 spent three weeks during May 1991 making hauls in Bahrain. During their operations in Desert Shield/Desert Storm, LT-2085 moved over 900 barges, LT-2092 moved 1200, and LT-2090 moved 700. Many of them were LASH barges. In June 1991, the 73rd had completed its mission and all the equipment went back to the port of Dammam, where a group of Soldiers from the 73rd prepared for redeployment. The tugs and cranes were loaded back on to the *American Cormorant* and sailed back to England while the crews flew back to Langley Air Force Base. They had lost one Soldier: WO1 George N. Malak, an Egyptian-American chief engineer on the tugs. As an Arabic-speaker, he moved from the boats, and was killed by a truck while organizing convoy operations. The harbormaster tower at Third Port was named after him.⁶⁵

The end of Operation DESERT STORM brought another mission to a close. The prepositioned supplies from Diego Garcia were consumed during the conflict, including the ammunition that necessitated the popular Subic Bay missions. The Army went to

⁶² Rainville/Dehart interview.

⁶³ Rainville/Dehart interview.

⁶⁴ Rainville/Dehart interview.

⁶⁵ Rainville/Dehart interview.

containerized ammunition after the Gulf War that eliminated the need for the LASH barges in the resupply operation.⁶⁶

This war ended the rotation of tug crews to the Philippines and Yokohama, Japan. All the prepositioned ammunition was expended and the Army decided to containerize ammunition, which eliminated the need for the tugs to move barges around.⁶⁷

Operation RESTORE HOPE

Operation RESTORE HOPE, a humanitarian relief mission in Somalia, began on 8 December 1992. The first US forces moved into Somalia on 9 December. At the same time, a detachment from the 73rd deployed in support of the operation consisted of three 100-foot tug crews and one BD crane crew. The detachment traveled to Hythe, England, met up with the *American Cormorant*, and sailed to the planned download site at the port of Mogadishu, Somalia. They spent Christmas and New Years in transit and arrived at Mogadishu in the first week of January. Weather conditions were rough and the unprotected nature of Mogadishu's port (and Somalia's coast in general) prevented safe discharge of the *American Cormorant*. With the weather not expected to improve, the decision was made to sail 500 miles south to a new offload site. The offload was performed nine days late in Mombasa, Kenya.⁶⁸ The tugs used were the same tugs from the Gulf War: LT-2085 *USAV Anzio*; LT-2092 *USAV North Africa*; and LT-2090 *SP4 Larry G. Dahl*. LT-2085 set out from Mombasa to tow the ROWPU barge to Mogadishu, but after 250 miles in the rough seas, the crew realized that they were actually being pushed in the opposite direction by the rough seas. The tug found safe harbor at Kisimaio, Somalia, and a more powerful Dutch ocean-going tug was contracted to complete the tow. LT-2085 arrived in Mogadishu mid-January and served as a harbor tug.⁶⁹

The boats in Mogadishu harbor took fire from the overlooking city every day. The port operators started to triple-stack empty MILVANS to block the visibility from the city. This did not stop any bullets, but made it more difficult for shooters to find targets to aim at. LT-2085 was in Mogadishu for a month until it was sent to Kisimaio in February. Kisimaio was previously used as a base by the Russian military; the port was filled with scuttled Russian patrol boats. The tug worked with the Army divers from Fort Eustis to salvage these wrecks and clear the port, as well as performing ship assists. Kisimaio was a receiving point for supplies for the US Army and the Belgian commandos that ran the port. Soldiers from the 73rd sometimes found themselves in unfamiliar missions as well; some took fire while on truck convoys from the port to the local airfield.⁷⁰ This trip was almost a two-hour drive through several villages. The gate guard at the port stopped every convoy (minimum of two vehicles at a time) and verified they had a working radio and were locked and loaded before leaving the base.⁷¹

⁶⁶ Dehart interview.

⁶⁷ Rainville/Dehart interview.

⁶⁸ <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/policy/army/fm/100-17-1/Ch1.htm>

⁶⁹ Dehart interview

⁷⁰ Dehart interview

⁷¹ Dehart interview

Operation UPHOLD DEMOCRACY

President Bill Clinton pressured the military junta in Haiti to turn the government over to the duly elected president, Jacque Aristeed. The military junta held out to the last possible moment. The initial plan for Haiti was a forced entry. The planners expected the Haitian military to obstruct the seaport, so they needed LOTS capability and a port opening package delivered by watercraft.

During the summer of 1994, the 73rd received the new 800-series tug, LT-801, and put it to the test almost immediately. The LT-801 *MG Nathanael Greene* was the first boat from the 73rd to deploy to Haiti for Operation UPHOLD DEMOCRACY in September 1994. A flotilla of Army watercraft from 10th and 24th Transportation Battalions (Terminal) sailed down to Haiti. The LCU 2000s of the 329th Transportation Company (Heavy Boat), 24th Battalion joined the LCUs of the 97th Transportation Company (Heavy Boat), LT-801 of the 73rd Transportation Company towed barge derrick (BD) 6701, and LSV1 and LSV4 of the 10th Battalion set sail on 13 September 1994 to form the largest flotilla of watercraft in convoy since the Cuban Missile Crisis. Since the majority of the watercraft belonged to the 10th Transportation Battalion, it provided command and control of the task force.

The 10th Transportation Battalion configured for forced-entry. The boats uploaded with the 7th Transportation Group port opening package of rolling stock (vehicles) for any contingency. They took the sectional floating causeway and BD heavy crane in the event that the Haitians sabotaged the port.

LT-801, skippered by CW4 Jay Dehart, towed the 558th Floating Machine Shop from Fort Eustis down to Port au Prince, Haiti, and was the second American boat to enter the port (the first was its escort, an LSV). LT-801 dropped the Floating Machine Shop, which went to work immediately. Upon its arrival, the crew of LT-801 was assigned to clear pier space for the American ships to follow. The tug traveled to each ship in the port and armed with a 9mm Beretta, CW4 Dehart ordered their crews to clear the pier space. All of the crews protested or claimed that their boats were not operational, so the tug crew towed them out to the harbor and forcibly anchored them. After clearing the piers at Port au Prince LT-801 sailed to Cape Haitian for the same purpose. The crew of LT-801 cleared an estimated three dozen ships of various sizes to open up space for the American ships that followed.⁷²

LT-801 worked with Army divers to salvage three old wrecks and clear more pier space. Two were still partially above water but one had to be completely raised from the bottom of the harbor. The Army divers managed to float this ship using several plywood patches after days of work. The plan was to tow the ship out to deep water and let it sink again, where it would not be in the way. LT-801 towed it out to the spot, leaving one Soldier on

⁷² Dehart interview

board with a life vest, ready to cut the line incase the tow started to sink. Instead of knocking out the plywood patches, which were far below the deck, the tug started shooting water directly into the hold from its pumps. The ship would not sink; finally the tug pushed the boat over until it started going down.⁷³

LT-801 also spent time shuttling fuel barges from Guantanamo Bay, Cuba to Port au Prince and Cape Haitian. They moved at least 12 250,000-gallon fuel barges, filled with all types of fuels, including JP5 and diesel.⁷⁴ They also did sealift ship assists, helping to berth large sealift ships. The new 800-series tug was much more powerful than any previous Army tugs and also had much more powerful water pumps. LT-801 was called out to a sinking 400-foot cargo ship that had rolled to one side. The tug's pumps emptied the water and righted the ship in six hours. The US Coast Guard was then able to apply concrete patches as a temporary fix until the ship could get to a shipyard for repairs. The captain, however, was ready to take on cargo and get underway. The cavalier attitude towards safety and navigation exhibited by many of the Haitian boats surprised the Soldiers from the 73rd. At the end of their deployment they were glad to have avoided any serious accidents.⁷⁵ LT-801 sailed back to Fort Eustis, towing an LCU in need of extensive repairs. LT-803 *MG Anthony Wayne* with a crew from the 73rd took LT-801's place for the next few months until the operation ended. LT-803 was another 128-foot tug on loan from a reserve unit.

Routine Duty Again

The Army had plans to purchase 14 LT-800 series tugs but stopped funding after the construction of the sixth 120-foot tug. Instead the Army found it cheaper to modernize the old 100-foot tugs from Flight 1 status to Flight 3. In 1992, the three tugs, LT-1960, LT-1973 and LT-1974 *Champaign Marne*, were sent to Hythe, England for overhaul of their 1200-mph diesel engine, propulsion, electronics and crew accommodations with more modern equipment. Both had been constructed by the Higgins Boat Company of New Orleans in 1954. The three tugs had been on duty in the Azores as part of MTMC Transportation Terminal Unit Azores. LT-1973 and LT-1974 had arrived there from France since before 1968 and LT-1960 arrived from Korea in 1982. The tugs had transferred crews, docked cargo ships and tankers in support of the USAF Lajes Field. After the overhaul, the three tugs were uploaded on the American Cormorant as preposition.

During mid-1997, LT-1974 was sent to Fort Eustis and assigned to the 73rd Transportation Company for crews to train on, since tug crews needed to be trained on how to operation Flight 3 tugs in preposition. LT-1974 was the only such tug at Third Port. LT-2085 had been sent to Baltimore and the other was converted into a fire tug. For the first year, LT-1974 just sat tied up at the pier, since it arrived without any fenders. It took the crew a couple months to put the tires on. The Kort nozzle required the engine

⁷³ Dehart interview

⁷⁴ Dehart interview

⁷⁵ Dehart interview

to be operating for the tug to turn which took the new crew time to get used to. The Flight 3 tugs had a swinging hook on the stern for towing European style while tugs in the States either pushed or towed from the H-bit.

ST-1974 participated in Operation SAIL 2000, another international tall ships exhibition, from 16-20 June 2000. It served as the fire/emergency response vessel for the event, working in cooperation with the Norfolk Fire Department. It towed a floating causeway to the event to increase the berthing space available to all of the visiting ships. On 18 June a strong storm (50-60 mph winds) nearly wreaked havoc on some of the tall ships. The floating causeway broke loose and was threatening three of the ships berthed nearby. The crew of ST-1974 had gotten underway as the storm approached and was able to pin the loose causeway to the pier until two civilian tugs arrived to secure it. The crew received a citation from the Norfolk Fire Department for their actions. ST-1974 later sailed up to New York City, towing the floating causeway that ultimately served as a docking platform for VIPs, including President Bill Clinton, who attended the traditional parade of ships on the Fourth of July.⁷⁶

In July 2000, LT-806 *COL Seth Warner* sailed to Guantanamo Bay, Cuba to pick up a 100-foot tug, sailing directly from the Chesapeake around the Eastern side of the Bahamas. LT-806 towed the tug up to the Baltimore Coast Guard shipyard where it underwent conversion to a fire-fighter. Ultimately the converted tug was delivered to MOTSU, Sunny Point, NC.

Operation IRAQI FREEDOM

By 2002, Saddam Hussein failed to comply with the UN Resolution to verify that it had disarmed all efforts to build weapons of mass destruction. President George Bush tired of the UN's inability to force compliance. As the likelihood of military operations against Iraq increased, CENTCOM directed that the 7th Transportation Group preposition part of its maritime fleet early. In April 2002, the 24th Transportation Battalion had received the task to begin planning for the transfer of selected watercraft to the CENTCOM Area of Operations (AOR). By August, the 24th Battalion was directed to take the lead in planning for the transfer. The 24th Battalion conducted detailed planning with the US Coast Guard, Norfolk Naval Base Harbor Control, Military Sealift Command and MTMC. The Group's smaller vessels would have to deploy aboard the *MV Tern*, a float-on/float-off (FLO/FLO) vessel. The 7th Transportation Group held a rock drill to walk its leaders through the uploading steps of the *MV Tern* on 22 October.

A rock drill was a walk-through rehearsal, based on the idea of leaders moving rocks around a map or sand table to show how each subordinate element would maneuver in relation to the others. The concept, regardless of how elaborate, provided a way for all participants to see what the others would do and anticipate

⁷⁶ CW4 Randy Milligan, interview, 28 July 2007

any problems. These rock drills followed a sequence that raised questions to be answered at the subsequent rock drill. Rather than the traditional method of the staff conducting all the planning, the rock drill allowed the subordinate maneuver and support commanders to shape the plan. The staff just worked out the details. During the 22 October rock drill, young enlisted Soldiers and junior officers of the 24th Battalion walked across the large floor map confidently demonstrating the process of each vessel loading. When it was over, everyone to include the senior officers in the audience clearly understood the operation.

The 7th Transportation Group followed with FTX RESOLUTE MONGOOSE 02 from 1-5 November. LTC Patterson brought his entire battalion headquarters to Fort Story to again work with 7th Group. The relationships developed during these events would pay huge dividends during later operations in Kuwait. As part of that FTX, the 24th Transportation Battalion completed the upload of twelve vessels; five LCUs, from Tampa, Florida, and Morehead City, North Carolina, and five LCMs, one large tug and one small tug, and equipment, aboard the *MV Tern* on 5 November for forward stationing. This operation was appropriately called U-TURN. The perfecting “Rock Drills” paid off, the upload operation went off without a hitch, even though the weather went from a perfect fall day to blowing a near gale by the end of the upload. It would take the *Tern* nearly a month to reach Kuwait.⁷⁷

The small vessels aboard the *MV Tern* would require a support package upon their arrival in theater. HHC, 7th Transportation Group deployed five personnel of the Caretaker Advan Team to Kuwait on 29 November. The Main Body of the Caretaker Team sailed to Kuwait the next day aboard the *MV Tern*. The Caretaker Team comprised marine engineers with the responsibility to maintain the vessels deployed aboard the *MV Tern* in an operational status awaiting the arrival of 24th Battalion. On 5 December, 95 personnel from 24th Battalion and 824th Heavy Boat Detachment deployed to Kuwait temporary duty to download the *MV Tern*. These were mainly vessel crews. A couple days before the download, over 200 Soldiers at Arifjan came down sick with the symptoms of food poisoning. There were so many people sick that LTC Jim Herson had to scrape together different crews to offload all the boats. SGT Eric Lehman had the privilege to drive the first boat (M-8582) off the *MV Tern* when it arrived. After completing the download and safely mooring the vessels at KNB, the detachment returned to Fort Eustis.

With the beginning of the ground war in Iraq on 21 March 2003, the US Marines seized the port of Umm Qsar, Iraq, and then began to clear the city. This Iraqi port would become the lifeline for humanitarian aid for the Iraqi people. However, the port was obstructed with derelict vessels and mines blocked the entrance. The Royal Navy mine sweeper immediately began clearing the waterways of any mines while the *Royal Fleet Auxiliary Sir Galahad* waited offshore to deliver humanitarian aid destined for the Iraqi people. With half the port swept for mines by 25 March, the Task Force Naval Special

⁷⁷ LTC Patterson interview.

Operations notified 24th Transportation Battalion to send in Large Tug 1974, *Champagne Marne* and crew to help clear the port of derelict vessels.

Early on 26 March, CW3 Mark Godlewski's crew went in and located an operational Z-drive tug and began clearing the berths of derelict vessels over the next two days. LT-1974 arrived the next day and began clearing the port. Two mines were in the channel leading to the port that day. The tug had driven over them. Evidently, the tug had entered at a time when the tidal condition submerged the mines deep enough to allow LT-1974 to pass safely over them. This, however, further delayed the *RFA Sir Galahad*. In harbor rehabilitation, tugs are some of the first vessels in to clear the piers and waterways. LT-1974 towed the Iraqi vessels *Miram* and *Rasoola* out of the way. On the 28th, the *Sir Galahad* arrived at New Pier for a CNN moment. The Army's tug and crew left the publicity to the resupply ship and slipped back out of port on its way back to Kuwait Naval Base. Because of this service, the Secretary of the Navy awarded the Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal to LT-1974. This is the first time an Army vessel has received such an award from the Navy.

The 567th Transportation (Motor) Company cleared cargo from the beach to the ammo yard while host nation vehicles cleared the yard. The 24th Battalion downloaded containers at KNB at times faster than they could be transported out of the port. At one time enough containers of ammunition built up in the ammo yard to blow away KNB and part of Kuwait City. The battalion also augmented the line haul capabilities of the 106th Transportation Company by sending a platoon forward to operate trucks into Iraq.

Campaign Credits

World War II

East Indies

Papua

New Guinea

Luzon

Korean War

UN defensive

UN offensive

CCF intervention

First UN counteroffensive

UN summer-fall counteroffensive

Second Korean winter

Korea, summer-fall 1952

Third Korean winter

Korea, summer 1953