

## **1099<sup>th</sup> Transportation Company (Medium Boat)**

### 159<sup>th</sup> Transportation Battalion, “Hit the Beach”

The 159<sup>th</sup> Transportation Battalion was activated at Ft Eustis, Virginia, on 1 September 1953. At that time it had lettered LCM boat companies, from A, B, C and D. With the end of the Korean War in 1953, the Army disbanded its Engineer Special Brigades and transferred the responsibility for amphibious landings to the Transportation Corps. The 159<sup>th</sup> Transportation Battalion assumed the responsibility for operating landing craft for combat and logistical support during joint amphibious operations and tactical mobility, combat and logistical support in the ship to shore missions. It became the only designated combat battalion in the Transportation Corps. Many of its original members were veterans from the inactivated 2<sup>nd</sup> Engineer Special Brigade, which had conducted the Inchon landing.

Each medium boat company was authorized two 65-foot steel hull command boats, one 46-foot steel hull control boat and 33 landing craft mechanized. Its first eight to ten landing craft were the WWII vintage LCM-6s but by 1955 the battalion received the newer LCM-8s.

In 1954, the battalion commander, LTC Michael D. Isrin, January 1954 to February 1957, received authorization for the battalion to blouse their boots, wear the green leadership tabs and red patch or “high water mark” on side of their trousers at knee level to denote shore party. He developed the unit insignia and the motto, “Hit the Beach.”

The Soviet Union tested their first nuclear device in 1949 which heightened the fear of a war. The shortest distance for Soviet long range bombers to attack the United States with nuclear bombs was across the Arctic Circle. The US Air Force explored the feasibility of establishing a line of Distant Early Warning (DEW) stations from Thule, Greenland to the tip of Alaska in 1952. In February 1952, the 373<sup>rd</sup> TWP conducted Operation Support of North Atlantic Construction (SUNAC) 52. The deployment to Thule Greenland to conduct the LOTS operation during Support North Eastern Command (SUNEC) 54 became the first deployment for the 159<sup>th</sup>. Landing craft were prepositioned in Thule, Greenland and crews of the boat companies participated in annual SUNEC LOTS operations every year until 1964.

In May 1959, the 1099<sup>th</sup> received the larger and faster LCM-8s. With LCM-8s, the unit was capable of transporting 720 short tons of general cargo per day in ship-to-shore or shore-to-shore operations. The primary mission of the unit was to provide and operate landing craft for the movement of personnel and cargo for Army water terminal operations. LCM-8s were well suited for river and inland waterway operations due to its shallow draft. The LCM-8 is steel welded, twin 27 inch screw craft. It is powered by four marine GMC 6-71 diesel engines designed to land heavy equipment, trucks, trailers, and tanks. The craft are 73 feet long and 24 feet wide. When fully loaded the craft can carry 60 short tons. The LCM-8 could carry 200 personnel on short missions. The craft traveled between nine and twelve knots fully loaded. The 1099<sup>th</sup> became known as the “River Rats”.

From 21 August to 23 September 1961, the 11<sup>th</sup> Terminal and 159<sup>th</sup> Boat Battalions of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Transportation Terminal Training Group conducted Exercise DARK SKY at Fort Story, Virginia. The purpose was to conduct LOTS operations at night using new infrared techniques. This method had only been tried before once at Camp Wallace, Virginia. A beach reconnaissance team (BRAT) searched and marked the beach, then the security force landed in the first wave of landing craft of the 329<sup>th</sup> Heavy Boat, 1097<sup>th</sup>, 1098<sup>th</sup> and 1099<sup>th</sup> Medium Boat Companies. The 73<sup>rd</sup> Floating Craft Maintenance Company of the 159<sup>th</sup> Battalion also supported the operation. The 11<sup>th</sup> Battalion provided the 105<sup>th</sup>, 117<sup>th</sup>, 123<sup>rd</sup>, 124<sup>th</sup> and 264<sup>th</sup> Terminal Service Companies. The training objectives included the use of infrared lights in night ship-to-shore operations, cargo documentation, signal communication, composite battalion command concept, local and rear area security and damage control.

On 25 September 1959, the Battalion was reorganized as HHC, 159<sup>th</sup> Transportation Battalion with Companies A, B, and C reorganized and redesignated as the 1097<sup>th</sup>, 1098<sup>th</sup> and 1099<sup>th</sup> Transportation (Medium Boat) Companies, respectively. D Company was disbanded. On 13 December 1965, HHC, 159<sup>th</sup> was redesignated HHD, 159<sup>th</sup>.

#### Cuba Missile Crisis

On 20 October 1962, while on an Annual Army Training Test at Smith Island, North Carolina, the 159<sup>th</sup> Battalion was altered for proceed to Kings Bay Army Terminal, Georgia, then Ft. Lauderdale, Florida, for the possible invasion of Cuba because the Soviet Union had placed missiles on the island. At Ft. Lauderdale, Florida the company supported the First Armored Division. Below is an account of a crewmember from the voyage south:

“It was Sept 1962 when the alerts started, and usually were terminated at the Fort Eustis sea buoy. The final alert saw us keep on moving down the James River (entire units of the 1097<sup>th</sup> and 1099<sup>th</sup> Medium Boat Companies, approximately 40 LCM 8's and the ST 2122 (small tug). The remaining units in the Third Port (LT 2088, LT 1956, *BDL John U.D. Page*, and numerous J-boats, Q-boats and other craft) left shortly afterward. The Mike boats continued south in the Intra-coastal waterway operating 24 hours a day in a waterway built mainly for daylight operation. The large tugs and the *U.D. Page* traveled outside due to deeper draft requirements. At that time, I was a PFC aboard the LCM 8142 (1097<sup>th</sup>). The 329<sup>th</sup> Heavy Boat Company (LCU's) traveled mainly on the outside most of the voyage to Kings Bay, Georgia (at that time an undeveloped naval property) Charleston, South Carolina Army Terminal was a stop over, where entire engines were changed out in a matter of hours. To boat crews who were hard pressed to get any spare parts just a month earlier, this sent a message that this was the real thing, and a mood of determination took over the entire operation. Running southbound in the intra-coastal was not without miscues, some laughable. A wrong turn up some tributaries ended up, like, a long island traffic jam! As the convoy moved southward, there were areas where the banks were lined with people yelling encouragement to the boat crews, they were more aware of the goings on at the time than we were!!” Paul Carty, 1097<sup>th</sup> Trans Co.

“I do not remember the day we left but it was cold. We were put on alert sometime in Oct. 62. All the company Mike boats were pulled out of the water at 3rd Port and new bearings, shafts and props replaced if needed. All we were told is to get the boats in top condition. We all knew what was going on in Cuba from the news so we knew that was the direction we were heading. We departed from Ft. Eustis out to the James River heading east. The HQ. J-boat in the lead vessel with Capt. Mandina, Top Sgt. Steinfield and some other brass aboard. I believe there was a 65 ft. ocean going tug in back of them. The rest of us in the Mike boats just fell in line in no order. As we got into Norfolk, I thought they would load us onto Navy ships to take us south. Instead, we headed into the locks just south of Norfolk and into the inter-coastal water way. When we hit the locks only a few vessels could enter at a time so we had to wait our turn. A lot of the guys did not pack all there gear as they thought this was just another alert and meant nothing. Well that started our journey south with hardly any sleep for the next 10 days or so. When you are 20 years old and a coxswain on a Mike boat, if something breaks you are going to catch hell for it. I has a engineer and a new seaman on board who did not operate a boat too well. So it was me at the wheel all night for many nights and I would let the other 2 guys operate for a few hours during the day and take a cat nap. We had no security to speak of. Who was going to mess with these Mike boats on the inter-coastal waterway. Most people at that time did not even know that the Army had landing crafts or tugs or even the *Page*. When the bridges over the water way had to be opened to let us pass ,the people in the cars would get out and wave and even throw food into the well deck. Some of those bridges stayed open for a long time with all the boats passing through. They all knew we were heading to Cuba.

“They set up a mess tent in one of the mike boat well decks so when it was time for chow we would just pull along side and get it. If there was room we would stop along the banks. The inter-coastal is not a wide waterway in most places. All the company sergeants were aboard the mess boat. When we got down into Florida one of the best places we ate dinner at one evening was in Fort Pierce. Just ran the mikes up to the shore or tied up at the docks. People were coming out in droves to see us as they had all hear on the news about this large convoy heading down the inter-coastal.

“Don't want to get too far ahead of myself. We pulled into Kings Bay Georgia which was a Navy weapons depot. There we waited for a few days as this was out turning point. Russia did not budge to remove the missiles, so they installed 2 racks of .50 caliber machine guns on all the Mike boats. It had a maintenance trailer on my boat which they removed and put on a duce and a half and a trailer filled with ammo. All the company had to sleep on shore in pup tents. Only problem with that was the place was loaded with rattle snakes and water snakes. Several of the guys were bitten. I went back to the mike boat and slept on a litter over the engines. Nice and warm and no snakes. After leaving Kings Bay we headed south again to Port Everglades.

“We did have to maintain a little radio silence between the mike boats unless a problem came up with a boat. I happened to have a good working radio aboard my mike C-11 and did a lot of relaying from the command J-boat to the last vessels who the J-boat could not reach. We had constant problems at night with the command vessel getting lost and

having to stop or mikes braking down. We were stretched out for miles. Well doing all the radio relaying that I did, a southern Major we had in the company, who's name I do not remember, but who liked to chew on cigars came up to me when we arrived in Port Everglade to thank me for the radio work. He gave me and my crew a 24-hour pass into Ft. Lauderdale.

“Port Everglades at that time in 1962 was not too large of a port area. There was only a small pier area for the smaller freighters that came in. The 159<sup>th</sup> took command of the entire port. Most of the mike boats were run up on the beach area around the port. They were also bringing a lot of 90-day wonders in to bring the company to full battle strength. The boat crews stayed at a old college dorm in Ft. Lauderdale. I mainly stayed on the mike boat. I always took boat watch at night. There was plenty going on in the port area at night. The 329<sup>th</sup> with the LCU's came down the coast as they drew to much water for the inter-coastal. We could shower and eat chow on the LCU's. All the residents of Ft. Lauderdale were bringing us food and drink.

“We did a little bit of amphibious training but not much. We ran a few time runs down toward the Keys, I guess just to see if we could make the run to Cuba on our own or load the boats on ships for transport to Cuban waters. We were well trained anyway. 1099<sup>th</sup> spent a lot of time in Little Creek. We took more Marines and Army personnel to the beach in amphibious assaults at Ft. Story than I can count. We also trained with the Navy who at that time called themselves ‘beach jumpers’ who are now the SEALs. They would take the jumpers several miles out into the Atlantic off of Ft. Story and have them jump from a chopper and try to make it to shore. It was a long 3-mile swim for some, if they could not make it, we would scoop them out of the water with the ramp down. We also were well trained with the M2 carbine which was our weapon, at that time, as well as the .50 caliber machine gun.”

Bill Muller, 1099<sup>th</sup> Trans Co.

The Soviet Union withdrew the missiles and the 159<sup>th</sup> Battalion returned on 1 December.

As of December 1964 the unit had seventeen LCM-8's, two tug boats, and one command and control J-boat (work boat).

### Vietnam War

The three medium boat companies preceded the 159<sup>th</sup> Battalion to Vietnam. The US Army had three major ports that supplied the units in the field. One medium boat company was assigned to each one. The 1099<sup>th</sup> operated out of the Saigon area.

The 1099<sup>th</sup> advance party arrived in Vietnam in May 1965, and was first based at Tent Camp ‘B’, later to become the MAC-V compound, just outside of Tan Son Nhut Air Base. After a stay of approximately two months, the 1099<sup>th</sup> was moved to Tent Camp ‘C’ later to become Camp Davis (also known to the boat people as the Fish Market). In July 1965, the rest of the company arrived in Vietnam and settled in at Camp Davis.<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Submitted by Richard Starks, 15 February 2006.

In September 1965, the company was assigned to the 11<sup>th</sup> Transportation Battalion (Terminal) of the 4<sup>th</sup> Transportation Command (Terminal) at Cat Lai Army Terminal near Saigon, Vietnam. The III and IV Military Regions in Vietnam, due to canals built by Vietnamese slaves for Dutch and French colonists, made it advantageous to utilize the waterways for transportation. Rivers, like the Mekong, cut the country in slices that did not have bridges connecting roads. The irrigation canals were excellent for waterway transportation and other combat duties. They were more developed than the road network in the country. More cargo was delivered by boats. For this reason, the 11<sup>th</sup> Battalion needed another medium boat company - the 544<sup>th</sup> which arrived in January 1966.

A medium boat company usually had seventeen LCM-8's. Sixteen were task craft and one was a maintenance and salvage boat. Organizationally, the unit comprised of a headquarters company, two boat sections, and a supply and maintenance platoon. The company performed various duties from recovering downed helicopters from the Dong Nai River, pushing cargo barges when tugs were unavailable in the Saigon area, pushing gravel barges from the French Fort to Tan An for the US 9<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division, to direct combat support missions that put the boats and their crews in the middle of the fight.

The vast majority of cargo was handled through the Saigon port complex. Cargo ships reached Saigon by the Long Tau Channel. The ships were only allowed to travel the channel during daylight, because the Long Tau snaked through the Rung Sat (Forest of Assassins) region, which was never under friendly control. The Rung Sat was classified as a free fire zone, meaning the area was occupied by enemy combatant forces—the Viet Cong (VC). The area immediately north of Saigon was a prime target for the VC since it contained the main US military installations. The area was mostly swamp and the best means of transport was by boat.

The 1099<sup>th</sup> normally transported ammunition and general cargo. General cargo was normally unloaded at the pier. Ammunition and petroleum ships were not normally unloaded at a pier due to the explosion hazard. Ammunition was off loaded from ships in Vung Tau onto barges and then the barges were hauled to the Saigon area and other ammo points along the river by LCM 8s (Mike Boats). The barges would be taken to ammo points such as Binh Trieu, Nha Be, Long Binh, Bien Hoa, Cogido and an ammo point down by "Tomahawk Island" just a short ways from Cat Lai.

Cat Lai became a port for ammunition barges in late 1966 or early 1967 when the 1099<sup>th</sup> moved there. Ammunition and petroleum ships would then tie up to anchorage buoys in the middle of the river and the ammunition would be loaded onto barges or lighter boats (LCU's and LCM's). From Cat Lai the ammunition was pushed up to depots at Long Binh and Bien Hoa. One boat, "Cat Lai Static," was on a moments notice to deliver electric forklifts and batteries to ocean vessels to unload ammunition. Other boats performed routine duties such as hauling cargo from Saigon to Vung Tau and back. Others hauled ammunition either as cargo or by pushing barges Cat Lai to Cogido (the port for the depots at Long Binh and Bien Hoa). The River Rats motto was "We haul anything, anytime, anywhere."

“As far as I know, LCUs did not go up the river past the Newport Bridge at the North end of Saigon, as the bridge was too low for an LCU to get under. Nor did they go up the river past Cat Lai toward Bien Hoa as the river was too shallow for an LCU to go that far up the river. Even if an LCU could go up the river toward Bien Hoa, all the farther they could go would have been Cogido, of course, that is if they could have gotten under the Cogido Bridge. Even if they could get under the Cogido Bridge, they would have had to navigate the river from Cogido to Bien Hoa, getting past the rocks in the middle of the river, (at low tide, the rocks would stand a good 4 or 5 feet out of the water) and then an LCU would have had to get under a railroad trestle just past the rocks in the middle of the river and before reaching Bien Hoa, and then go on up to Long Binh. An LCU wasn't maneuverable enough to navigate the rocks and then go under the railroad trestle. LCMs had a hard time making it, so I know that an LCU couldn't make it. As I stated earlier, to my knowledge, ships didn't start tying up to the anchorage buoys in the middle of the river off Cat Lai until after Sep 1966 or early 1967. If remember correctly, (it's been 40 years since then) ships were starting to tie up to the anchorage bouys at Cat Lai, but the 1099<sup>th</sup> did not start working those ships until after I left country in Sep 1966. Static boats were at Cat Lai after the 1099<sup>th</sup> moved to Cat Lai in 1967, but prior to that, the 1099<sup>th</sup> placed a static boat(s) at Nha Be to move barges around and get them set up to be moved out to ammo points along the river. This was done starting in 1965 through at least Sep 1966 when I left country.”

Richard Stark, 1099<sup>th</sup> Medium Boat, 1964-1966

The 9<sup>th</sup> Division was the first “riverine” division in the US Army. The division was specifically equipped for combat operations in river delta operations, like the Mekong Delta. The best way to transport troops and equipment in such an environment was by boat. A portion of the division's forces was afloat, while the rest was land based. The portion afloat lived aboard LST's and barracks ships. The riverine force operated in the Mekong Delta for two years.

From the company's arrival in 1965 and into 1966, the unit was responsible for embarking and staging the 1<sup>st</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry Divisions, 173<sup>rd</sup> and 196<sup>th</sup> Infantry Brigades, the 48<sup>th</sup> Transportation Group (Truck), and an Australian Task Force, since there were no piers for their transports to dock. Additionally, the 1099<sup>th</sup> developed the general cargo line haul movement between Vung Tau and Saigon. Navigating in the murky waters of the Saigon and Soi Rap Rivers were challenging enough, but the company also had to contend with Viet Cong snipers, rockets, and mines.

In January 1967, the 1099<sup>th</sup> used four boats to evacuate almost 6,000 villagers and their animals from the Iron Triangle area in Operation Cedar Falls. The Iron Triangle was a haven for VC. From this area upriver from Saigon, the VC would launch attacks on US installations. The company provided medium boat support during 1967 and 1968 to tactical missions of the 199<sup>th</sup> Light Infantry Brigade and provided line haul cargo missions between Saigon and the Mekong Delta. Part of the company took on a direct combat support role for units of the 199<sup>th</sup> Light Infantry Brigade. During this extended stay in the field the elements transported rifle companies, conducted combat assaults, and

search and destroy missions in the Mekong Delta. A few of the elements rarely returned to Cat Lai.

These units lived on their boats and subsisted on C-rations and food purchased from villages. The boats were not built with living, latrine, or showering facilities. Since the 1099<sup>th</sup> ran the canals while the 544<sup>th</sup> ran the main rivers, crews built lower hooches with collapsible masts so they could travel under the lower bridges. Laundry was performed by putting soap in the pockets and dragging the clothes behind the boat. The crew showered either in the rain or with a mud shower in the engine room with river water. The crews built makeshift shacks from wood with canvas walls. Boats that had to travel under low bridges had lower shacks. Most men however felt fortunate to have regular army mattresses compared to their comrades sleeping on the ground in the field. One or two M-60 machine guns were mounted on top of the shack and two 50-caliber machine guns were mounted on the quarterdeck. Many boats operating away from station also fashioned holes from large caliber weapons and pockmarks from smaller caliber weapons. The crew consisted normally of six members: a coxswain, first mate, chief engineer, assistant engineer, and two seamen. The men usually dressed casually—sandals, shorts, flack jackets, and helmet.

In early 1967, the company commander received a request to mount a 105mm howitzer on an LCM-6. Only the Navy had LCM-6s. They did not have as much power as the LCM-8s. The company commander called for volunteers for two crews. SP4 David L. Miller volunteered to be the coxswain. His LCM-6 received the howitzer and the other boat served as a back up. His boat carried the four man crew of the howitzer and a platoon of infantry. General Westmoreland came down to look at the howitzer on the LCM. The crews had to tear down their hooches built around the pilot house. After Westmoreland left, they rebuilt their hooches.

The two LCMs would anchor out in the South China Sea in the mouth of the river. They would receive a call giving them the grid coordinates of where to go. They would reach the destination and drop ramp on the beach. The gun would fire several rounds of beehive to clear the area, then the infantry would sweep the area of enemy and provide security. The artillery would then provide fire support for infantry in another location. To adjust rounds, the boat would have to use its screws to turn directions as the howitzer could only turn so far in the well deck of the LCM. Upon completion of the fire mission, the two boats would pull back out into the mouth of the river and wait. The infantry and artillery rotated their crews weekly.

Two LCM-8s were later modified into offensive tactical craft. One boat had its well deck covered with a platform. Helicopters utilized the platform as a helipad for UH-1B and UH-1D helicopter gun ships. The second boat had a 105 mm Howitzer and 4.2” mortars mounted on the decks. Some elements returned only every few months to Cat Lai for resupply of material and crewmen; mostly they operated from desolate firebases accessible from helicopter or boat. The 1099<sup>th</sup> even once transported a herd of water buffalo to replace water buffalo killed during a firefight. The goodwill gesture injured 50% of the soldiers involved in the transport.

In the first half of 1969, the company provided support of Logistics-Over-The-Shore (LOTS) operations with the 321<sup>st</sup> Transportation Company (Truck) and 124<sup>th</sup> Transportation Company (Terminal Service) while also continuing its combat support role. For the second half of 1969, the 1099<sup>th</sup> moved supplies throughout the Cogido, Saigon, and Vung Tau area and still providing combat support to Vietnamese and Army Ranger troops.

In 1970 the 1099<sup>th</sup> was reassigned to the 159<sup>th</sup> Transportation Battalion (Terminal) where it operated to the boundaries of the III and IV Corps Tactical zones and the South China Sea and Codigo, Saigon and Bien Hoa areas and hauled fuel and ammunition to the 164<sup>th</sup> Combat Air Group (CAG) at Ca Mau where it flew in support of the 21<sup>st</sup> ARVN Division during the search and clear operations in the enemy stronghold, U Minh Forest, during the last part of November 1970. The U Minh Forest was a vast mangrove swamp and forest extending across the border of Kien Giang and An Xuyen Provinces of Military Region 3 on the coast of the Gulf of Thailand. It was one area in that Region where the enemy felt secure to launch attacks. In order to support the 164<sup>th</sup> Combat Aviation Group, the 1099<sup>th</sup>'s LCM-8's were fitted with 5,000-gallon POL tanks or 10,000-gallon bladders to haul JP4 from the mouth of the Song Ong Doc River to Thoi Binh in the U Minh forest. The company also had a maintenance boat along with other boats to carry ammunition. Ten minutes past midnight on 27 December 1970, SSG Elroy F. Wells' Mike boat came under attack by enemy rocket fire and he was killed. Because of the numerous ambushes the company had numerous soldiers earn the Silver Star Medals and the company earned the Valorous Unit Award, Meritorious Unit Commendation and was recommended for the Presidential Unit Citation.

The 159<sup>th</sup> Transportation Battalion was inactivated in June 1971 so the 1099<sup>th</sup> along with the 440<sup>th</sup> Terminal Transfer Company were attached to the Delta Logistical Support Activity (Provisional) under the 48<sup>th</sup> Transportation Group that month.

The 1099<sup>th</sup> remained in Vietnam until 28 February 1972 when it was inactivated. The 1099<sup>th</sup> was the most decorated boat transportation unit in Vietnam. For its service in Vietnam the unit earned the Army Meritorious Unit Commendation for Vietnam 1965-1966, 1966-1967, 1968, and 1970-1971 and the Republic of Vietnam Cross of Gallantry with Palm for Vietnam 1971 decorations. The unit also received campaign credits for Vietnam, Defense Counteroffensive Phases I to VII, Tet Counteroffensive, Sanctuary Counteroffensive, Consolidation I and II, and Ceasefire. The company also received the National Defense Transportation Award for the most outstanding Army Transportation Unit for 1966 and 1970.

The 1099<sup>th</sup> was reactivated at Fort Eustis, Virginia on 21 October 1972. On 4 June 1974, the company was transferred to the 10<sup>th</sup> Transportation Battalion (Terminal). On 16 June 1979 the 1099<sup>th</sup> was inactivated and its 15 LCM-8s were transferred to the 464<sup>th</sup> Transportation Company (Medium Boat), a Reserve unit at Alexandria, Virginia.

LSV-4

On 15 May 1988, the unit was reactivated as the 1099<sup>th</sup> Transportation Detachment at Fort Eustis, Virginia under the command of CW4 Nicholas “Nick” Indra. The 1099<sup>th</sup> Detachment accepted Logistics Support Vehicle (LSV) 4, *USAV LTG William B. Bunker*, built at the Moss Point Shipyard in Pascagoula, Mississippi on 10 June and sailed on its maiden voyage to Panama City, Florida from 19 June to 4 July. On 12 July, the boat set sail for Cheatham Annex Yorktown, Virginia arriving the next day. During the rest of the year it supported LOTS training at Curtis Bay, Maryland and Fort Story and Little Creek, Virginia and delivered three LARCs to the Army Depot Charleston, South Carolina. During 1989, the vessel participated in WARRIOR EXPRESS, hauling 38 vehicles for the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division, 5-13 March; then AHAUS TARA in Panama, Honduras and Savannah, Georgia, 28 March – 27 April; SOLID SHIELD retrograde 23-26 May, JLOTS 89 at Fort Story, 28 May – 8 June; BRIGHT STAR support and retrograde between Baltimore, Maryland and Wilmington, North Carolina, 19-21 August and 27 September – 2 October.

#### Operation JUST CAUSE

LSV4 sailed to Panama from 2 December 1989 to 27 December 1989 to deliver 37 communication vans in support of Operation JUST CAUSE. During this deployment the vessel carried elements of the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division from Morehead, North Carolina, to Rodman Naval Base, Panama and back to Wilmington, North Carolina.

#### Operation DESERT SHIELD/DESERT STORM

On 4 August 1990, Iraq invaded Kuwait. President George Bush responded by deploying the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division to Saudi Arabia to prevent the Iraqi Army from seizing the oil field there. On 8 August 1990, the 1099<sup>th</sup> Detachment was placed on alert status in response to Iraq invading Kuwait four days earlier. After loading eight causeway sections from the US Army port at Charleston, South Carolina, LSV4 departed Fort Eustis on 4 September 1990 for Ad Damman, Saudi Arabia. The detachment arrived in-country on 16 October 1990. For the next eight months, the 1099<sup>th</sup> provided support for all four branches of the US military hauling cargo throughout the region to include explosive ordinance, over 400 track vehicles, and pieces of captured Iraqi equipment. Most of the detachment’s voyages occurred on western Persian Gulf coastal region to include Ad Damman, Jebel Ali, Jubayl, Ra’s Al Mishab, and various ship-to-shore missions from the ship *LASH Atlantico*, *USNS Denebola*. On 24 January 1991, the unit’s Zodiac was returning from LSV1 and was chased by a Saudi patrol boat. The crew promptly attempted to surrender to their pursuers, but was not apprehended. On 12 March 1991, LSV4 was the first vessel to enter a Kuwaiti Port of Ash Shu’aybah. Most notably, the detachment made five runs through mined passages off the coast of Kuwait to bring desperately needed humanitarian supplies to the people of Kuwait. During its Persian Gulf service, the 1099<sup>th</sup> transported almost 3000 pieces of cargo weighing over 26,000 tons. The detachment returned to Fort Eustis, Virginia on 29 June 1991 after completing over 25,000 miles since its departure. For its service in Operations DESERT SHIELD and DESERT STORM the unit received two campaign streamers. After commanding the detachment for four years, CW4 Nick Indra handed command of the *Bunker* and detachment over to CW4 Steven Belch in 1992.

## Haiti, Operation UPHOLD DEMOCRACY

In 1994, President 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 this crisis, CW4 Charles Brewster assumed command of LSV4 in June 1994.

A flotilla of Army watercraft from 10<sup>th</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> Transportation Battalions (Terminal) sailed down to Haiti. The LCU 2000s of the 329<sup>th</sup> Transportation Company (Heavy Boat), 24<sup>th</sup> Battalion joined the LCUs of the 97<sup>th</sup> Transportation Company (Heavy Boat), LT801 (towing BD6701) of the 73<sup>rd</sup> Transportation Company and LSV1 and LSV4 of the 10<sup>th</sup> 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 10<sup>th</sup> Transportation Battalion, it provided command and control of the task force. The 10<sup>th</sup> Transportation Battalion was configured for forced-entry. The boats were uploaded with the 7<sup>th</sup> Transportation Group port opening package of rolling stock (vehicles) for any contingency. They took the sectional floating causeway and barge derrick (BD) heavy crane in the event that the Haitians sabotaged the port.

LSV 4 was the first vessel to depart 3<sup>rd</sup> Port on 12 September 1994 while all other vessels departed on 13 September. The convoy initially anchored off of the coast of North Carolina at 0800 hours and waited for the other vessels. The LCUs of Brewster's serial departed that morning and joined LSV4. The LCUs, LT801, LSV1 and LSV4 sailed as a convoy to Haiti in two serials. CW3 John Marino, vessel master of LSV1, commanded the first serial and CW5 Brewster, vessel master of LSV4, commanded the second serial, which consisted of the LCUs of the 97<sup>th</sup> Transportation Company. MAJ Thomas Baker, XO of the 10<sup>th</sup> Terminal Battalion, was designated the Task Force/Convoy Commander. MAJ Baker rode with the first serial and remained at Third Port for the latest possible intelligence on the situation before leaving. The first serial sailed past the second serial at 1930 on 13 September. The second serial joined up behind the first and sailed under radio silence except for navigational aids.

At 0040 hours on 18 September 1994, the convoy arrived at Grand Turk Islands in the Bahamas and went into a holding area. The vessels just sailed around in a big square for 10 hours. They stopped there to pick up three LCUs loaded with 5,000-gallon fuel tankers. These vessels had left three to four days prior to the others to support refuel operations for air operations. They also picked up commercial tugs and an FSS ship, *Nashville*. The *Nashville* was loaded with combat equipment and vehicles for the US Marines. The fleet departed at 1050 hours that night.

The fleet arrived at Port Au Prince at 0400 hours on 20 September. By that time the military junta had agreed to step down from power and allow Jacque Aristeed to become president of Haiti. They also agreed to allow the US Armed Forces to use its ports. There was no longer a need for a forced-entry. Much of what was taken down would have to return. LSV4 was that last vessel to discharge its cargo and rolling stock. It

discharged 21 pieces of equipment and picked up nine pieces and 15 stevedores for opening the port. On 21 September 1994, LSV 4 was ordered to proceed to the port of Cap Haitien with a port opening package. Major Baker was still the Task Force Commander. While at Cap Haitien, LSV 4 earned the nick name of “Laundry-Shower-Vittals” as the vessel and crew provided the only hot meals, shower point, and MWR facilities to over 400 Army, Navy, Marine, and US Coast Guard personnel. The cooks made over 10,000 meals. The vessel crew rigged a multi-person shower point in the stern tunnel using the fire main system and pumping fresh water through the system. While there, the Navy and Marine personnel ashore were ordered to depart within a very short time frame. To accomplish this, LSV 4 was tasked to develop a method to expedite the transfer. LSV 4’s stern was sunk to within six inches of the water while the bow ramp was still on the shore – this allowed the Marines’ wheeled and tracked vehicles to roll onto a Navy 1600 series LCU. The LCU had placed its bow ramp onto LSV 4’s main deck. This operation allowed the Navy and Marines to meet their departure time by cutting three days of tidal changes from the equation.

While in Haiti, the LSV 4 became the Command and Control vessel in Port-Au-Prince when Hurricane George swept through leaving much damage and death on the land. On 1 December 1994, CW4 Brewster was promoted to CW5 in the Port-Au-Prince by BG Sullivan, Commander Task Force 190. LSV 4 returned home in time for Christmas after spending over 90 days in Haiti – the last initial convoy vessel to return.

During early 1995, LSV 4 established a training standard with the Navy SEAL units located in the Norfolk area. On a bi-weekly basis, the various SEAL units made training assaults onto and under LSV4 no matter where she was located, to include underway. LSV 4 participated in a JLOTS conducted at Craney Island and Little Creek Navy Base. During this exercise, LSV 4 conducted the only night approach, discharge, load of 140 ton crane, and retraction from the causeway pier at Craney Island and the only night approach, discharge of the 140 ton crane at Little Creek beach next to the Chesapeake Bay Bridge. In May 1995, LSV 4 transported a Quartermaster Company from Fort Lee, Virginia to Fort Buchacan, Puerto Rico for a two week training exercise. While in Roosevelt Roads, Puerto Rico, LSV 4 performed two missions for the National Guard by moving two 140 cranes to Ponce. The sea trip took 12 hours for both cranes while the road trip would have taken three days for each crane.

CW4 Findley M. Glenn, born and raised in Scotland, replaced Charlie Brewster as the skipper of the *Bunker* in July 1995. During his command of the boat, they retrograded equipment from the Haitian refugee camps at US Marine Corps base at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba to Port Canaveral, Florida. They made numerous voyages to this tourist port and considered it one of their best port calls. Many of the refugees were HIV positive and at that time people did not understand how the disease was transmitted so people were afraid to touch anyone with the disease or anything they touched. After the Haitians returned to the island, all their tents, cots and other life support items were bulldozed into a central pile and set on fire. Glenn passed command of the detachment and boat to CW4 Gorge Gonzales in March 1997.

## Kuwait

In July 2000, Pat May had assumed command of LSV4. Meanwhile, the 7<sup>th</sup> Transportation Group had deployed LSV1 and LSV6 to the Mediterranean Sea to provide ferry support between Brindisi, Italy, and Durres, Albania from 16 April to 15 September 1999. This was in support of the deployment of TF HAWK to Kosovo. After the mission came to a close, US Central Command (CENTCOM) sent the task to reposition an LSV in Kuwait. LSV6 redeployed back to Fort Eustis on 30 September 1999 while LSV1 changed crews at Rota, Spain then sailed to Kuwait. In 2001, LSV1, 335<sup>th</sup> Transportation Detachment, needed to go into maintenance and 10<sup>th</sup> Battalion sent LSV4 over to temporarily replace it. LSV4 was supposed to remain in Kuwait until 8 October 2002, but CENTCOM then requested two LSVs.

The 7<sup>th</sup> Transportation Group planned to replace LSV1 with LSV6 and in preparation for its deployment, LSV6 was fitted with two small tug cradles (ST 900s) on 28 March 2002. The two small tugs from 8<sup>th</sup> Transportation Company (FC) were uploaded on 2 April and on 9 April; LSV6 sailed with additional Special Operations Equipment from Fort Polk, Louisiana to the CENTCOM area of operations to replace LSV1 which was long overdue for scheduled shipyard maintenance. Along the way, LSV6 delivered the two small tugs to Hythe, England on 26 April where they were to be prepped for Army Preposition Stock (APS) storage and eventual delivery to Kuwait APS. LSV6 deployed under DESERT SPRING deployment orders, which were for an indefinite period of time. FORSCOM recommended that the 7<sup>th</sup> Transportation Group rotate LSVs every year. LSV1 would be due to return in the summer of 2002 since its crew had been deployed since 1999. With LSV4 and LSV6 in theater, they moved significant amounts of APS equipment from other locations in the Gulf to Kuwait in preparation for the impending war with Iraq.

As the likelihood of military operations increased, CENTCOM directed that 7<sup>th</sup> Transportation Group reposition part of its maritime fleet early. The 7<sup>th</sup> Transportation Group held a Group-wide FTX RESOLUTE MONGOOSE '02 from 1-5 November 2002. As part of that FTX, 24<sup>th</sup> Transportation Battalion completed the upload of twelve vessels; 5 LCUs, 5 LCMs, 1 large tug and 1 small tug, and equipment on the *MV Tern* on 5 November for forward stationing for the President's war on terrorism. This part of the exercise was called Operation U-Tern. During the operations two LCM-8s from the 1098<sup>th</sup> Medium Boat Company assisted the US Coast Guard as picket boats providing security for the *Tern*. The 824<sup>th</sup> Transportation (Medium Boat) Company (USAR) with 67 soldiers became formally assigned to the 24<sup>th</sup> Battalion on 12 November. The *Tern* departed on 9 November and it would take nearly a month to arrive in Kuwait.

CW3 Michael Wichterman, Marine Systems, S-3, 7<sup>th</sup> Trans Group, recommended to COL James Veditz, the 7<sup>th</sup> Group Commander, that they begin exchanging crews on the LSVs instead of rotating the boats. He anticipated that the one-year deployments would be too hard on the limited populations of US Army Mariners in 7<sup>th</sup> Group. He recommended that they rotate the crews every six months (180 day TSC tours). Wichterman also explained that a one-year tour was a PCS tour and DA regulations would lock the crew on station back at Fort Eustis for one year so that they could not PCS nor deploy for any

length of time away from 7<sup>th</sup> Group. This one-year lock down was called “dwell time.” With only one LSV remaining at Fort Eustis, 7<sup>th</sup> Group would not be able to deploy it without replacing the crew because of this required “dwell time”. Wichterman also showed Veditz how replacing the crews every year would force him to tap into the pool of senior warrant officers who, in the past, would never have been considered for LSV level command positions (less-than-stellar performance). Veditz would have to place these senior warrant officers in positions where their maritime skill levels would not match up to the level of command responsibility. COL Veditz liked Wichterman’s plan especially since it saved a tremendous amount of money in fuel costs. There was a lot of resistance at higher levels particularly on the 180-day deployments versus one year tours, especially Combined Force Land Component Command (CFLCC) and FORSCOM, but Veditz convinced them that this was the best plan. From then on, 7<sup>th</sup> Group would rotate the crews of the LSVs. The 24<sup>th</sup> Battalion switched the crews of LSV6 in October and the 10<sup>th</sup> Battalion switched the crew of LSV4 in June and December. As soon as the crew stepped on the airplane bound for the AOR, they officially received the designation of the detachment assigned to the LSV. CW4 May was the last commander of the 1099<sup>th</sup> Det to command for more than a year.

#### Operation IRAQI FREEDOM

The weapon inspection teams had departed Iraq in 1998 because of their lack of cooperation. Rhetoric and accusation increased between the President George Bush administration and that of Saddam Hussein in Iraq over the issue of weapons of mass destruction. On 8 October 2002, Congress granted President Bush the power to launch a US military attack on Iraq.

Meanwhile the pressure picked up against Hussein’s regime. On 8 November 2002, the UN Security Council had passed Resolution 1441 requiring Iraq to comply with the disarmament agreements signed after the war. The UN Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC) led by Hans Blix entered Iraq on 27 November. The increasing tension led to the threats of offensive military against Iraq if it failed to comply fully and accurately with the UN accords agreed to after Iraq’s surrender following Desert Storm. While the Iraqi Government did send a weapons disclosure to UNMOVIC and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) by 17 December as required, many doubted its accuracy. The UN inspection teams had been allowed to reenter the country had were not denied access to any location, but however, failed to turn up any evidence of weapons of mass destruction. This provided a leverage for the UN Inspection teams to travel unfettered throughout the country.

On 18 December 2002, 7<sup>th</sup> Transportation Group finally received its deployment order for the Persian Gulf. The 6<sup>th</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> Battalions would deploy to the Persian Gulf leaving the 10<sup>th</sup> Battalion behind. The UN Inspection Team had a deadline of 27 January 2003 to report back to the UN Security Council with their findings. That was seen as the trigger event for military operations.

As the year began, 7<sup>th</sup> Group soldiers continued to deploy overseas. The 11<sup>th</sup> Transportation Battalion deployed to Kuwait to operate out of the Port of Ashuaiba. The 24<sup>th</sup> Battalion arrived at Arifjan. The 24<sup>th</sup> Battalion then moved its command post from

Arifjan to Naval Base (KNB) on 28 January 2003. It was augmented by LCUs from the 824<sup>th</sup> Transportation Company (USAR) out of Tampa, Florida and Moorehead City, North Carolina. The battalion conducted logistics-over-the-shore (LOTS) operations to offload ammunition. LSV4 and LSV6 relayed back and forth to Qatar to bring container into port. This was a day run where one LSV was in port while the other was at Qatar. The TSV also ran rolling stock back and forth from Qatar, KNB and Bahran. On occasions the TSV would sail laps around the LSVs as a joke to show them how fast they could sail. LCU 2019, 2024, 2027, and 2029, and LCM 80, 82, 91 and 98 conducted ship-to-shore discharging their cargo on the Navy ECLAS causeway. The LSVs discharged their cargo on the beach ramp north of the main naval base. The 567<sup>th</sup> Trans (Motor) Company cleared cargo from the beach. The LSV4 remained in Kuwait in support of CENTCOM operations.