

8th Transportation Company



*8th Transportation Patch
mouseover for a 'reasonable' description*

The 8th Transportation Company combines the lineage of two World War II companies thus evolving from a truck and watercraft lineage. Leading into the Vietnam War, it became a helicopter company, and then would become one of two lighter air cushion vehicle companies in the Army, thus giving it one of the most diverse histories of any transportation company.

A Truck Company

On 1 May 1936, Company H, 23rd Quartermaster Regiment was constituted in the Regular Army and later redesignated as Company H, 23rd Quartermaster Truck Regiment on 16 June 1942. On 20 August 1942, it was activated at Camp Barkley, Texas, and then reorganized and redesignated as the 3348th Quartermaster Truck Company on 15 December 1943.

It was converted, reorganized and redesignated as the 3348th Transportation Corps Truck Company on 1 August 1946. It inactivated on Guam on 30 September 1946.

While on inactive status, it was redesignated as the 8th Transportation Truck Company on 22 January 1948 and then activated on Guam on 20 February 1948. It reorganized and redesignated as the 8th Transportation Heavy Truck Company on 17 October 1949. It then inactivated on Guam on 26 June 1950.

It later reactivated at Fort Eustis, Virginia on 7 May 1951. It reorganized and redesignated as the 8th Transportation Company (Medium Truck) on 25 August 1953. It inactivated at Leghorn, Italy on 15 September 1954.

Consolidation into a Helicopter Company

The 8th Transportation Company was consolidated with the 580th Transportation Company (Active) and designated as the 8th Transportation Company (Light Helicopter) (CH-21) on 18 May 1956.

The 369th Harbor Craft Company, Transportation Corps constituted in the Army on 26 April 1944. It activated at Camp John T. Knight, California on 8 May 1944. It reorganized and redesignated as the 369th Transportation Corps Harbor Craft Company on 1 March 1945. The company operated in the Pacific and earned campaign credit for New Guinea, Leyte, and Luzon, and it inactivated in Japan 28 February 1946.

The 580th Transportation Harbor Craft Company redesignated and allotted to the Regular Army on 11 March 1949. It then activated at Fort Eustis, Virginia on 2 May 1949 and later inactivated at Fort Eustis on 1 September 1952. It redesignated as the 580th Transportation company (Helicopter) (Army) on 29 October 1953 and activated at Fort Bragg, North Carolina on 25 November 1953. It consolidated with the 8th Transportation Company at Fort Bragg, North Carolina on 18 May 1956.

Vietnam War

In 1961, the United States stepped up its support of the war in Vietnam with the increase in advisors. The first American units to arrive in Vietnam were transportation helicopter units. The 8th and 57th Transportation Companies (Light Helicopter) (CH-21) sailed to Vietnam with 82 H-21 Shawnee helicopters and 400 men aboard the *USNS Card*, a former US Navy aircraft carrier converted to a Military Sea Transportation Service ship. It docked at the port of Saigon on 11 December 1961. The 8th and 57th were the first two American light helicopter companies to arrive in Vietnam, symbolizing the beginning of America's commitment of the South Vietnamese cause and heralded the age of air mobility.

On 12 January 1962, the 8th Light Helicopter Company, commanded by Major Charles M. Hardesty, Jr., and 57th Light Helicopter Company, commanded by Major Robert J. Dillard, quickly went into action and air lifted approximately 1,000 Vietnamese paratroopers in H-21 Shawnee helicopters into a suspected Viet Cong headquarters complex ten miles west of Saigon, where they successfully surprised and defeated the Viet Cong and also captured an elusive underground radio transmitter. This operation was the two companies' first baptism of fire and from then on the H-21s transported troops and supplies in support of the Army of South Vietnam.

In January and September 1962, the Army deployed the 33rd, 81st, and 93rd Light Helicopter Companies, of 20 CH-21s each. Other lift and maintenance companies followed the next year. The helicopters would hopefully free the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) from the roads, which were too easily ambushed, and the US advisors

would raise the level of competence of the Army. The 8th TC Company was also the first helicopter unit to have a crewmen earn the Purple Heart for wounds suffered in action. On 15 July 1962, an 8th Company CH-21 carrying a crew of four and LTC Anthony J. Tencza, the Senior Advisor to the ARVN 22nd Infantry Division, and two ARVN passengers was shot down near Dak Rode in the Central Highlands on a reconnaissance mission. LTC Anthony J. Tencza; CWO Joseph A. Goldberg, pilot; and SP5 Harold L. Guthrie, crew chief; SP5 James Everett Lane, aviation mechanic and door gunner; and one of the Vietnamese passengers were killed in the crash. The pilot, MAJ R. F. Cornell, and one Vietnamese survived. MAJ Cornell was found floating down a jungle river five miles from the crash site. SP5 Lane was posthumously awarded the Silver Star Medal for engaging the enemy during this fight.¹

Letter of Commendation from General Le Van Ty, Chief of Joint General Staff, RVNAF
5 Jun 62:

During the period of its special assignment to the II Corps, the 8th U.S. Helicopter Company, under the Command of Major Hardisty has participated in all operations in the 2nd Corps Tactical Zone, thereby assisting this Corps in achieving very important results.

This Company was especially helpful in the following Helicopterborne operations: Konhanung on 31 March 1962, Hailong on 3 April 1962 and Ngan Son on 5 April 1962, in which 63 enemy troops were killed, 18 were captured and 1 Training Center and 1 Munitions factory were destroyed. 12 weapons of various types, many mines and important documents were confiscated.

In a spirit of close cooperation and devotion to duty, all personnel of all ranks in the 8th U.S. Helicopter Company struggled to complete their assigned mission without regard to danger and obstacles.

As Chief of the Joint General Staff of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Vietnam, I am very happy to note the sincere and effective work of Major Hardisty as well as that of all personnel of the 8th U.S. Helicopter Company and I hope that Chief MAAG will extend my warmest congratulations to those concerned.

By 1963, the Army deployed additional aviation helicopter companies to Vietnam. Both the 8th and 57th Transportation Companies inactivated in Vietnam on 25 June 1963 and reflagged. The 57th became the 120th Aviation Company and the 8th was reflagged to the 117th Aviation Company. The remaining new troops were assigned directly as advisers to ARVN units or to the US Army Support Group, Vietnam, the forerunner of the United States Army, Vietnam.

¹ James Everett Lane, The Virtual Wall, <http://www.virtualwall.org/dl/LaneJE01a.htm>.

The 8th Transportation Company was reactivated at Fort George G. Meade, Maryland as the 8th Transportation Company (Medium Truck) (Cargo) on 1 May 1967.

Lighter Air Cushion Vehicle (LACV)-30

The Lighter Amphibian Air Cushion Vehicle (LACV-30) was the third generation of amphibious vehicles replacing the family of LARCs. The LACV-30 could transport 30 tons at 40 knots, four times faster than the LARCs but only half the tonnage of a LARC LX. Yet the speed enabled it to move twice the tonnage as a LARC in the same amount of time. Training on the first LACV-30s began at Fort Story in 1983 and a completely new facility complete with a flyway to the water was built on the western end of the post to accommodate these air-cushion vehicles.

CPT Peter A. Notarianni and 1SG William S. Wendt were assigned to provide the leadership for the men and equipment that would form one of the two new LACV-30 companies. The JLOTS exercise, ODSOC II conducted 1983, tested the new LCV-30. On 2 October 1984, the 8th Transportation Company (Air Cushion Vehicle) was activated at Fort Story as part of the 11th Transportation Battalion. CPT Thomas P. Watts was the company commander. This was the second air cushion vehicle (ACV) company stationed at Fort Story and would be fully equipped with four new LACV-30s by 31 October 1985. The 331st Transportation Company was the first LACV-30 company. The 8th received its first four LACV-30s, numbers 17, 24, 25 and 26. Each company would have 12 vehicles.

What made the air cushion vehicle company unique is air cushion vehicles were powered by aircraft turbine engines, which consumed JP5 fuel. Consequently, the company required aircraft mechanics and fuel handlers. The maintenance and high cost of operation were its drawbacks.

In 1984, Fort Story, Virginia host JLOTS II, the largest peace-time JLOTS since the Vietnam War. The operation tested the Navy's Temporary container Discharge Facility (TCDF).

From 22 June to 1 July 1988, three LACV-30s of the 8th Trans Company participated in a JLOTS exercise Special Operations Exercise (SOCEX) '88 at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina designed to qualify members of the 6th Marine Expeditionary Brigade for deployment in hostage rescue missions. From 14 to 31 August 1988, the company participated in a 7th Trans Group JLOTS exercise LOGEX '88 at Fort Story. The company kept four LACV-30s on the water 24-hours a day.

In May 1989, the 8th Trans Company deployed six LACV-30s aboard the *USNS Cape Mohican* to Onslow Beach, North Carolina in support of Task Force 10 for Joint Exercise SOLID SHIELD '89. In November 1989, the 8th Trans Company had two LACV-30s loaded and secured aboard an FSS at Lambert's Point. The company deployed four LACV-30s to North Carolina on a Navy LSD, the *USS Hermitage* in support of SOCEX 1-89. The LACV-30s served as aggressors against an amphibious task force composed of various naval ships to include its flagship, the *USS Guadalcanal*. Additionally, 20

soldiers established a hasty defense at Shelly Point, located on the tip of Bogue Marine Corps Auxiliary Airfield. This SOCEX was designed to qualify the 22nd Marine Expeditionary Unit in special operations such as hostage rescues. The unit received a satisfactory rating on selected Army Training and Evaluation Preparation (ARTEP) tasks.

The LACV was a maintenance-intensive vehicle and the army determined to retire the hovercraft from the inventory in 1994, so the 8th and 331st Transportation Companies were inactivated. Most of the LACV-30s were sold to Champion Contractors, Inc. of Anchorage, Alaska.

Awards

Philippine Presidential Unit Citation, Streamer embroidered 17 October 1944 to 4 July 1945.

VAC, 15 March 1962-7 March 1965

VCC Phase III, 1 June 1967 – 29 June 1968

TCC, 30 January 1968 – 1 April 1968.

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US Army Vietnam, *Tour 365*, Winter 1968.