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US Army Use of Rail in Theaters of Operation

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Abstract

The Army routinely uses rail to transport the majority of its equipment from home station or mobilization station to training areas or ports of embarkation. Consequently, most units have personnel experienced at uploading and securing military equipment on rail cars. This experience translates very well using rail in the United States and Germany, but in other theaters of operation, the rail system is not always as modern, compatible, or efficient as that in the afore mentioned countries.

From the American Civil War through World War II, the US Army had to deploy railroad units with their own locomotives and rail cars into the theater of operations because the shortage of rail either because of increased demand or sabotage of the existing rail system by a retreating enemy. At the beginning of the Korean War, the US Army deployed active duty railroad battalions from Fort Eustis to Korea. This was the transition in the use of rail units, because the railroad units worked with the existing Korean Railroad. Only later did the Army Transportation Corps deploy locomotives to the theater with trained Soldiers to operate them. From the Korean War onward, the US Army has utilized the host nation rail network if one existed. Only twice since World War II (Vietnam and Operation Iraqi Freedom), did the Army deploy railroad detachments into the theater of operation but failed to use them other than to coordinate railroad traffic with the host nation. Consequently, the vast majority of rail moves in theater have been coordinated and supervised by Transportation Corps officers or Unit Movement Officers. While the expertise of the Army railroad Military Occupation Specialty (MOS) would have been useful, it was not used.

Based upon the history of the military use of rail in theaters of operation since the Korean War, the Army has not deployed a railway battalion. Many of the TC officers coordinating rail, have said they could have used the help of a railroad expertise such as a railway detachment to help them with coordinating and supervising rail moves. If the US Army wants to justify the existence of the railroad MOS, then it needs to deploy railroad detachments to contingencies for rail movements. Because of the planning and coordination required with host nation rail, there is time available to deploy a railway detachment for the short term operation. For prolonged use of rail, the detachments can train up the units using the rail. If the rail MOS is done away with then more training is needed for TC officers and Unit Movement Officers, since the responsibility of coordinating rail falls upon them.

While rail can be easily interdicted by a guerrilla threat, this threat can be easily mitigated or countered.

Purpose of Study

A study of the use of rail during military operations from the Civil War through the current operations in Iraq and Afghanistan provides insight into trends and what military assets are needed to utilize this means of transportation in the theater of operation.

Civil War

MG Joseph E. Johnston's use of the rail to reinforce quickly MG P. G. T. Beauregard during the Battle of First Bull Run in 1861, introduced the American military to the advantages of rail on military operations. BG Jackson timely arrival on the battlefield was able to beat back the Union Army that had been victorious up to that point.

Because the animals consumed part of their load, the radius of resupply for animal-drawn wagon averaged about 150 miles at the speed of a walking man, three mph. Rail increased speed of transportation to about 10-15 mph and distance to the length of available track. Railroads could transport larger numbers of troops and supplies faster so Congress authorized President Abraham Lincoln to take over the operations of all railroads on 31 January 1862. This resulted in the organization of the United States Military Railroad (USMRR). The railroad came into prominence as a means of military transportation so much so that the vast majority of battles and campaigns were fought along or for control of railroad lines.

Lincoln appointed D. C. McCallum, General Superintendent of the Erie Railroad, as the Military Director and Superintendent of Railroads with the rank of brigadier-general. This organization ensured the movement of military troops and supplies had the highest priority but the President left the operations of the railroads within the United States to the railroad companies themselves. Instead, the USMRR limited itself to the operation and repair of railroads seized in the Confederate states. This organization's significant contribution to the war was its centralized control of the railroad and priority for military operations.

To ensure successful rail operations, McCallum set up schedules for the movement of supplies forward. He urged the Secretary of War to issue on 11 November 1862, Special Order No. 337, which stated that military officers would give the expeditious unloading of rail cars their highest priority and the consequence of delaying rail operations would result in dismissal from the Army. The purpose of the railroad was to deliver men and supplies to the Army rear. From there, wagons would deliver the cargo to the Corps.

On 22 April 1862, Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton appointed Hermann Haupt, Chief Engineer of the Pennsylvania Railroad, colonel as the Chief of Construction and Transportation of the Department of Rappahannak. He was given the authority to seize, maintain and operate all railroads and utilize all equipment needed to facilitate military transportation. The management of rail in the East fell entirely under his direction and no other military officer had the right of interfere. This arduous task required the reconstruction of all railroads and bridges destroyed by Confederate forces. Since both sides recognized early the importance of the railroad's contribution to the war, they made

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every effort to destroy all railroads in the hands of the enemy. Consequently, the Army assumed responsibility for the construction and repair of all railroads and bridges. For this reason, railroad operations would fall under the Engineer Department until the creation of the Transportation Corps during World War II.

Haupt organized the USMRR Construction Corps for rail and bridge construction, and was just as effective at destroying the enemy's rail. Haupt originated the idea of using prefabricated bridge trusses in order to expedite the repair of destroyed bridges. McCallum applied his techniques of reconstruction to other theaters of the war. By war's end, Haupt's Construction Corps had laid 650 miles of track and built over twenty-six miles of bridges. The 400 feet long bridge over the Potomac was one of its greatest achievements.

Haupt's two great accomplishments included the evacuation of a great number of wounded from the Union defeat at the Second Battle of Bull Run that prevented further disaster. For this he was promoted to brigadier-general. At the Battle of Gettysburg, Haupt organized the rail support that provided for the evacuation of two to four thousand wounded men along with the steady flow of 1,500 tons of supplies a day. On 14 September 1863, Secretary Stanton removed Haupt, who still worked his private business, after he refused to sign an appointment to work for the military without official rank and pay.

In September 1863, LTG Longstreet moved his corps of 12,000 men 800 miles in 12 days to reinforce Braxton Bragg's Army of the Tennessee at the Battle of Chickamauga. Two weeks later, Union Army moved XI and XII Corps of 25,000 men 1,200 miles in 12 days. GEN Sherman estimated that his 473-mile rail line during the 1864 Atlanta Campaign did the work of 36,800 wagons and 220,800 mules.

By the end of the war, the USMRR maintained sixteen railroad lines in the Eastern Theater and nineteen in the West. It had an inventory of 419 locomotives and 6,330 rail cars. The Union's use of the railroad and telegraph in the movement and coordination of operations between theaters contributed greatly to winning the war. By Executive Order of 8 August 1865, the USMRR ceased its control of railroads. The Union's success in its use of the railroad came from its centralized control while the South, fighting for the right of each state to determine its own destiny, left the management of the rail system to the commercial businesses.

Indian Wars

In 1869, the first railroad finally connected the East and West Coast of the United States. The expansion of railroad allowed the Army to extend its forts further inland away from the rivers. The railheads served as supply depots for further transportation of supplies into the area of operations.

By the time of the 1885-86 Geronimo Campaign, railroads pretty well crisscrossed the country and could deliver supplies to most military forts. General Nelson Miles tied in heliographs and telegraph with the railroad network of New Mexico and Arizona to

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rapidly shift forces to the reported sightings of Geronimo and his Chirocahua Apaches. Miles also established his headquarters in a rail car so he could more closely monitor operations. While this method did not result in the capture of Geronimo, it drove him out of the United States as his band of warriors found no resting place.

Spanish American War

From the invasion of Cuba in June 1898, all US wars would be fought overseas requiring force projection. Rail was used to transport troops to the various training camps throughout the country and to the ports of embarkation.

World War I

As soon as Congress declared war, the American Railway Association formed the Railway War Board composed of railway executives and representatives from the six territorial military departments. It, however, was unable to handle the flow of traffic, deal with antitrust laws and labor problems. In December 1917, the President invoked the 1862 law, took control of the railroads and established the United States Railroad Administration under Director General of Railroads William McAdoo. It succeeded where the other organizations had failed.

According to the Quartermaster Manual of 1917, in time of war the Corps of Engineers had responsibility for the construction, maintenance, and repair of all roads, ferries, bridges and railroads under military control to include the construction and operation of armored trains. The Rail Transportation Division of the Purchase, Storage, and Traffic Division supervised rail traffic. In the Zone of Interior (theater of operations), rail was used to haul men and material from the Base Section at the port to the Intermediate Section where trucks would pick them up and haul them as far as possible into the Advanced Section.

The American Expeditionary Force (AEF) wanted their own rolling stock because most French boxcars carried 10 tons versus 30 tons for American boxcars. Smaller French locomotives could pull trains of no more than 50 cars. An American train required a crew of seven, another reason to get as much out of a load behind one locomotive as necessary. The ever increasing size of American commitment and the demands of supplying the AEF made it difficult to figure out what they needed as far as transportation. Initial recommendation on heavier cars was made on 24 July 1917 after members of commission viewed rail and port operations in British sector. Larger capacity train loads could clear ports faster than smaller capacity train loads of French equipment.¹

General John J. Pershing approved the Americans running their own trains to their own terminals, but the AEF did not begin operating their own lines until the summer of 1918. Supervisory talent from civil life had to be recruited and trained for duties not only in the military, but also in foreign railroad methods. There were delays in arrival of railway personnel, locomotives, cars, and other equipment; long drawn out completion of new

¹ William J. Wilgus, *Transporting the A.E.F in Western Europe 1917-1919*, Columbia University Press: 1931.

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construction; continued reorganization of AEF TC Corps (8 times in 16 months); and the Americans had to adapt to the French railway practices. Plans had to be approved, and rules and regulations formulated for men who had never worked together. The lack of adequate peacetime preparation intensified the difficulty of creating an organization that would operate a railway network equal in size and volume of traffic to many of the largest in the United States.²

The 11th through 19th Engineer Regiments arrived in France to conduct railroad operations; however, all but one was sent to assist in the operation of French and British lines. The AEF then combed the combat divisions for Soldiers with civilian railroad experience to organize five new battalions of rail troops in early 1918. The US Army learned during the Great War that European rail cars and locomotives were smaller than those in America and during the next war; the US should deploy its own railway capability to move more men and material.

World War II

When the war broke out, the Chief of Engineers still had responsibility for the building and maintaining of railroads and the training of railroad units. The Quartermaster General had responsibility for the utility of the railroads, for rail and water movement of troops and supplies including the ocean going transports. The War Department General Staff had direct supervision of the Ports of Embarkation. In 1942, the Transportation Corps took the operations, maintenance and utility of the railroads from the Engineer and Quartermaster Departments to form them under the Military Railroad Service.

As had been done in the previous war, the President enacted the 1862 law and federalized the railroad. The Transportation Corps managed all aspects of transportation of troops and material from their point of origin at the post or plant to their arrival at any of the three ports of embarkation at San Francisco, New York and Hampton Roads.

Learning the need to deploy with larger and more powerful American rolling stock, the newly formed Transportation Corps needed railroad units to operate the railroads in theater. Prior to the war, the War Department had entered into an agreement with the railroad companies that in the event of war, the companies would each sponsor a railroad operating battalion or railroad shop battalion. They would provide key personnel and training for recruits. The battalions were organized into Railway Divisions. To manage the railroad operations in the North Africa and Mediterranean Theater of Operations, the railroad units fell under the 1st Military Railway Service (MRS). The 2nd MRS assumed responsibility for all railroad operations in Northern France. The 3rd MRS was created in post-war Japan.

In concept, once a base of supply was established in the theater of operations, the railroad pushed supplies as far as possible then truck companies distributed it to the divisions. This line of communication remained simple and short around the Mediterranean Coast, but once on French soil, the North Africa Theater of Operations Service of Supply would

² Wilgus, *Transporting the A.E.F.*

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attempt to establish a Communication Zone with a Base Sector, Intermediate Sector and Advance Sector. Railroad pushed supplies as far as possible, and then truck companies would transfer supplies around blown railroad bridges to the next railhead where the rail dropped off supplies in the Seventh Army rear. As the German Army retreated from North Africa up the boot of Italy, they improved their skill at sabotaging rail and port, but the Army railroad personnel were even more adept at salvaging and repairing what remained and combining it with what they brought to have the rail line operating in a matter of days.

The Army advanced too fast for each sector to build up the required days of sustainment so the logisticians developed the "skip echelon logistics." They did not build up the supply base in the intermediate sector but had the trucks push supplies from the Seventh Army rear directly to the division rear. To avoid confusion with the logistics operations in Northern France, which preceded it, the base sector became known as Delta Base and the Continental Advance Sector became known as CONAD.

The Germans did little damage to the railroad in Northern France since the US Air Force and French underground had done it for them, in order to prevent the German Army from reinforcing the beaches with armor. Consequently, no functioning rail existed between Normandy and Paris. The fighting in the hedgerows allowed the over-the-beach operations to sustain the slow pace of the war. However, with the breakout of the hedgerows with the taking of St Lo, in August 1944, the race was on. The Germans retreated faster than the American Army could pursue. Until the railroad battalions could reestablish a functioning rail system, the European Theater of Operations would need lots and lots of trucks.

Advance Sector (ADSEC) of the European Theater of Operations (ETO) had consolidated all the truck companies into the Motor Transport Brigade (MTB) to reduce waste of resources by centralizing management of wheeled vehicles for beach clearance. Communication Zone (COMZ) formed the Motor Transport Service under Colonel Loren A. Ayers with the trucks organized into Motor Transport Divisions. The transportation planners confiscated as many trucks and drivers as possible from arriving divisions and designed a system of one way traffic to the front and back by another route, known as the Red Ball Express, the first of many Expresses. In concept the trucks would leave from their base and drive the round trip then rest on day and repeat the process. In spite of the Herculean effort of the truck drivers, trucks could not provide the needed sustainment, the advance of the First and Third Armies came to a halt in September and would not start up again until November. Bottom line, the truck could not sustain the two US Armies and the advance came to a halt for several months.

European Theater of Operations (ETO) Service of Supply similarly used the skip echelon logistics with the Normandy Base and ADSEC. The railroads, once repaired, pushed cargo as far as feasible then trucks picked up cargo at the railroad depot. Trucks moved their motor pool with the advancing railhead. From there the trucks pushed cargo to the Corps depot then returned. Convoys then returned to their base. Division and Corps

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trucks then drove cargo on to the user. In emergency cases, trucks delivered ammunition right up to the user.

There were two routes to supply Russian, one by sea through the port of Leningrad and the other overland through Iran, the Persian Corridor. The Americans were selected to build a highway and railroad through Iran because the British had a reputation of colonizing countries and the Americans did not. The 3rd Military Railway Service ran a railroad in Iran that started from Bandar Shahpour on the Persian Gulf Bandar Shah to the Caspian Sea, a distance of 866 miles.

Korean War

With the invasion of South Korea by the North Korean Army on 24 June 1950, the US Army Transportation Corps had two railroad battalions and a grand railroad division at Fort Eustis as part of the General Reserve; but due to budget cuts during the Truman administration, the battalions were wholly understrength and untrained in rail operations. Fortunately, Korea had a developed rail infrastructure.

On 1 July, the 8059th Army Unit (AU), Transportation Railway Service (Provisional), was organized in Japan and arrived at Pusan on 9 July to assume supervision over the employees of the Korean National Railroad (KNR) and was placed under the Transportation Section of the Pusan Logistic Command. It supervised the railroad operation and maintenance, but the KNR provided the crews for the locomotives.³

On 18 July, the 709th Transportation Railway Grand Division arrived in Korea to control operations and movements of KNR by establishing communication offices at various locations along the railroads, but control was limited primarily to expedite troop and supply movement through management of critical rolling stock since the tactical situation and lack of storage areas prevented efficient rail control.

On 26 August, the 8059th AU and 709th Transportation Railway Grand Division were inactivated and their assets were transferred to Transportation Section Rail Division to create the 3rd Transportation Military Railway Service (TMRS) at Pusan. That same month, the 714th Transportation Railway Operating Battalion (TROB), 764th and 765th Transportation Railway Shop Battalions (TRSB) were three active duty railway units sent to Korea, but were wholly understrength and only about 20 percent of their personnel had any railroad experience. The KNR had 153 functioning steam-powered locomotives, 344 passenger cars and 3,655 freight cars. Since the railroad men of the 712th TROB had little training in operating rail and the Koreans had a functioning rail infrastructure, the American railroad men rode the trains to ensure the Koreans adhered to schedules. The 764th TRSB from Japan ran heavy shops for major repair. The 765th TRSB supervised the KNR back shops and operated the engine houses and side tracks at Pusan, Kyongju, Taegu, Taejon, and Yongdungpo (YDP), and supervised repair of locomotives, passenger

³ Carl R. Gray, Jr., *Railroading in Eighteen Countries*, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1955.

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and freight rolling stock and put new equipment into service, and operated all hospital cars in Korea and converted buses to run on rails.⁴

On 15 September, the X Corps landed at Inchon threatening the North Korean line of communication, forcing them into a retreat and the US Army followed them up the Korean Peninsula. In their retreat the North Koreans demolished rail and bridges. On 16 September, the 3rd TMRS moved to Taegu and organized two rail reconnaissance groups for Advance Service. The 3rd TMRS and KNR repaired the track and bridges behind the advance of the Eighth Army. On 7 October, Eighth Army crossed the 38th Parallel and the 3rd TMSR moved to Seoul on 18 October. The 714th TROB established rail transportation offices from Pusan to Taegu and on 12 October it assumed operational control of all Korean rail activities from Taegu south to the coast. It moved Sindong and began operating as a rail traffic regulating organization rather than as a railway operating unit. Eighth Army units occupied P'yongyang, the North Korean capital on 19 October. The X Corps landed at Wonsan on the east side of the peninsula on 25 October. With the expansion of rail operations, the 3rd TMRS would turn over the back shops at Yongdungpo (YDP) to the Koreans on 11 November. By then it had 233 operational locomotives. The problem was the shortage of rail cars. The 3rd TMRS estimated it needed about 8,700 but the KNR had about 7,000 and 500 were in bad shape. This caused delays in turn-around time and did not allow time to take cars off circulation for routine maintenance.⁵

On 1 November, however, the Chinese poured across the border driving the Eighth Army back to the 38th Parallel. The Chinese threat to Seoul force the 3rd TMSR to relocate its headquarters back to Taegu on 18 December. The railroad was used to expedite as much material as possible south. On 1 January 1951, the 714th TROB moved back to Pusan to run rail operations of Taegu.

The 712th TROB was a US Army Reserve unit sponsored by Reading Railroad Company. The 712th was alerted in late July or early August 1950 and called into active duty on 5 September 1950. At the time, the 712th was made up of 16 officers and 60 enlisted men, most from the Reading Railroad, a few from the Central Railroad of New Jersey, and a few with no railroad affiliation other than interest in railroads. At Ft Eustis, while the cadre was training, fillers started to arrive to bring the battalion up to its authorized strength of 880. Many of these people had some railroad background and were quickly slotted into berths. Others were given "Block-Operators" training or for those who went to "C" Company; into T&E service, workouts on the Ft. Eustis railroad. Upon completion of the training the 712th TROB left Fort Eustis in early December bound for Korea by way of Japan. The 712th TROB arrived on 5 January 1951 and moved to Sindong, then

⁴ Gray, *Railroading in Eighteen Countries*.

⁵ 714th Transportation Battalion History in the Historical Files of the US Army Transportation Center and School.

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Yongchon, and Taegu, where it ran railroad operations from Taegu north to YDP and across Han River into Seoul.⁶

On 20 February 1951, the 764th TRSB returned to Japan, less its personnel and equipment which were consolidated into 765th TRSB. In June and July 1951, the war settled into a stalemate roughly along the 38th Parallel and the 3rd TMRS turned over a substantial part of the Korean rail back to the Koreans. On 2 August 1951, the 714th TROB turned its functions over to the 724th TROB, which had arrived on 25 June 1951, and returned to Fort Eustis. The 724th TROB, a US Army Reserve unit sponsored by the Pennsylvania Railroad operated rail yards in and around Pusan and trains north to Taegu then handed responsibility of rail operations over to the 712th TROB. In late 1951, diesel-electric locomotives began to arrive in Korea with trained military crews to operate them.

At Fort Eustis, the 714th Transportation Battalion, along with the 729th TROB and 756th TRSB were attached to the 702nd Transportation Railway Grand Division. The 764th TRSB was inactivated in Japan on 21 November 1951 and the 712th TROB was inactivated in Korea on 20 January 1955. The 765th TRSB was also inactivated in Korea on 1 December 1955.

The Korean War represented the last war where the Transportation Corps deployed railroad battalions and supervised the railroad in a theater of operation. Since the Korea had a functioning rail infrastructure, the Transportation Corps initially used it railroad men to ride on the locomotives to ensure the KNR adhered to military schedules. As modern diesel-electric locomotives became available with trained operators, the TROBs began to run their own rail.

At Fort Eustis, the 763rd Transportation Battalion (Railway Shop), activated to replace the 765th and the 774th Transportation Group (Railway) similarly activated to replace the 709th Division, were inactivated on 3 June 1965. This left just the 714th Transportation Battalion (Railway Operations) (Steam and Diesel Electric) (TBROS&DE) as the only active railway unit remaining in the United States Army.

Vietnam War

The US Army assumed a greater role in the ground war in South Vietnam during the summer of 1965. There were two more increments of troop build-ups over the next two years. South Vietnam had well engineered railroad that ran the length of the coastline from Saigon to Hue, 59 serviceable locomotives and over 500 serviceable freight cars, but had suffered from years of interdiction by the Viet Cong. Beginning in June 1966, the Saigon Government and US agencies combined to restore the railroad and rolling stock. The US Army was interested in the railroad for its potential of moving bulk cargo at low rates. The operation of the railroad was left in the hands of the Vietnamese, but the US Army assigned technical advisors to the railroad to keep it up to date. The 714th

⁶ 712th Transportation Battalion History in the Historical Files of the US Army Transportation Center and School.

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TBROS&DE trained up 11 rail detachments at Fort Eustis for the war. Only two deployed to Vietnam.⁷

2LT Forrest Becht and Bob Stiltenpol were assigned as commanders of the 525th and 526th Rail Detachments of the 714th TBROS&DE respectively right out of Transportation Officers Basic Course in the fall of 1966. On 27 December, they deployed with their 12-man detachments by air with their M16s to Oakland where they boarded a troop ship bound for Vietnam. They arrived at Vung Tau on 20 January 1967 and were bused to Saigon. They fell under the Traffic Management Agency (TMA) and Becht's 525th Rail Detachment was assigned to the rail yard at Saigon and Stiltenpol's 526th Rail Detachment was assigned to the Port of Qui Nhon. Since the Vietnamese ran the railroad, the US Army rail detachments just processed Transportation Movement Dispatches (TMD) and conducted port clearance. The 525th pushed cargo primarily to the logistic base at Long Binh and the 526th pushed cargo to the Phu Cat Air Base. This work did not require the full 12 personnel so half of them were turned over to the TMA for reassignment. By September, the new commander of the 3rd Region, TMA felt that the work load did not require even an officer and five Soldiers so he reduced the detachment in Saigon to just two enlisted men who worked with two Vietnamese. This was the extent of rail operations during the Vietnam War.⁸

The normal line of communication to the front was deep draft vessel to the port then rail as far as feasible then truck to the front. Part of the reason the US Army did not maximize the use of rail was because it only ran the coast line and was too easily interdicted. Army and Navy watercraft could safely more deliver straight to a series of military ports or beach ramps along coast and then military tractors and trailers could haul cargo inland to the forward camps.

The 714th TBROS&DE back at Fort Eustis had served primarily as a railroad training unit and saw no deployments since the Korean War. Its inactivation on 22 June 1972 brought an end to the last railroad unit on active duty. From then on the use of rail would primarily fall on the training of TC officers and the Army Reserves.

In 1976, the 729th Transportation Battalion (Railway), (USAR) in Middletown, Connecticut, was inactivated and divided into three detachments, each with a distinct mission (train operations, right of way maintenance, etc.). In the early 1980's, the detachments were reorganized into a single table of distribution allowances (TDA) unit, the 1205th Transportation Railway Services Unit (TRSU) and given the mobilization mission of supporting Military Ocean Terminal Sunny Point (MOTSU), North Carolina. The 757th Transportation Battalion (USAR), a railway battalion with World War II service, was inactivated at Milwaukee, Wisconsin on 16 December 1980 and then reactivated at Milwaukee on 16 May 1985, and then the headquarters moved to West

⁷ LTG Joseph M. Heiser, Jr., *Logistic Support, Vietnam Series*, Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 1991; and History of the 714th TBROS&DE in the Historical Files of the Transportation Center and School.

⁸ Forrest Bach email to Richard Killblane, November 7, 2007 – January 6, 2008.

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Allis, Wisconsin on 1 July 1987.⁹ These were the only two remaining railway battalions in existence.

Operation Desert Shield/Desert Storm

During the summer of 1990, Iraq invaded the neighboring country of Kuwait and fearing further invasion into Saudi Arabia, the United States deployed to the latter. Downsizing of the commercial rail industry during the previous two decades left it with sufficient manpower and equipment to meet military requirements for deployment. At that time, the Army Reserves only had two remaining Railway Operating Battalions. The 757th Transportation Railway Operating Battalion in West Allis, Wisconsin and 1205th Transportation Railway Services Unit (TRSU) in Middletown, Connecticut with a detachment in Sunny Point, North Carolina.

12 men of the 1205th Transportation Railway Services Unit (TRSU) were called to active duty for 30 days during the first phase of Operation Desert Storm to support railroad operations at military installations and depots. These volunteers were called to active duty based upon their skills and were again activated in November for 60 more days until all units in the Persian Gulf were redeployed to their home stations. After Desert Storm, many installations and depots expressed concern about the effectiveness of rail support of any future conflicts.¹⁰

On the afternoon of 12 January 1991 the entire 1205th was activated in support of Operation Desert Shield for 180 days. The 1205th TRSU provided support to the Military Ocean Terminal, Sunny Point (MOTSU) in the rail movement of cargo as well as maintaining over 97 miles of track on the Terminal, the access line and the Leland interchange. Military crews provided augmentation to Civil Service crews that normally perform the rail mission throughout the year. Since no active Army railroad units existed in the Army inventory, the 1205th performed a critical mission as evidenced by the main body activation of 237 plus days. Due to around the clock operation, some crews were short handed when individuals were absent due to sick call, leave and medical appointments. Since this caused a slowdown in the operations several members of the 757th Transportation Battalion were recruited to augment the 1205th. These additional soldiers allowed the port to continually serve four to six ships at a time. On Sunday 8 September 1991, the 1205th returned home to Middletown, Connecticut. There was a private ceremony of about 450 people to include US Senator Christopher Dodd and many others. 46 members of the 1205th continued on at MOTSU to help with the retrograde mission until 26 July 1992.¹¹

A handful of members of the 1205th TRSU remained at Sunny Point some as temporary base employees). For several years, their status was vague, since no detachment had been

⁹ Statement of Service: Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment, 757th Transportation Battalion, Center of Military History.

¹⁰ Major John A. Watkins, USAR, "Rail Support of Military Operations," *Army Logistician*, Jan-Feb 1997; 1205th Transportation Railway Operating Bn, Global Security.org, <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/agency/army/1205trans.htm>.

¹¹ 1205th TROB

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officially activated and they were still counted against slots at the 1205th's home station in Middletown. There was no system for inducting new members since the detachment was not "officially" there.¹² In 1994 the 1205th TRSU was redesignated as the 1205th Transportation Railway Operating Battalion (TROB) under the 94th Army Reserve Command (ARCOM) but remained a TDA organization.¹³

Finally, in 1995 the unit's status was made official as Detachment 1. Since then, local area recruiters have been able to help the detachment grow. Originally authorized 22 personnel with slots from the main element in Middletown, Det 1's authorized strength climbed to 40 in late 1996. Then came news that it would be redesignated as a company in about a year. By the end of 1996, we received word that the entire 1205th would be moved from Middletown to MOTSU, where it could better support the base.¹⁴

Bosnia-Herzegovina

In October 1995, MG James M. Wright, who had recently assumed command of the 21st Theater Army Area Command (TAACOM), received the charter from US Army Europe (USAREUR) to plan the deployment and support of the 1st Armored Division into Bosnia. Wright immediately assembled his commanders and staff of the USAREUR, 21st TAACOM, V Corps, 3rd Corps Support Command (COSCOM), and 1st Armored Division at the Grafenwoehr Training Area, Germany to develop the plan for deploying and sustaining a Bosnia operation over the next 43 days.¹⁵

The 21st TAACOM options for deploying the 1st Armored Division to Bosnia were either by rail or ship. The water deployment option consisted of moving by barge down the Danube River or out of Bremerhaven, Germany down to the Croatian seaport. To travel by rail, NATO needed the permission of Hungary and Croatia to travel through their countries. *Deutsche Bundesbahn* provided the rail carrier for the move from Germany to Hungary. Commercial rail provided the primary mode of transportation and the companies needed a minimum notice of 57 days to accommodate any changes. The 1st Transportation Movement Control Agency (TMCA) did its best to lock in unit rail movements seven days before their scheduled departure dates, but a myriad of circumstances, such as rail sabotage, transit restrictions in five different countries, restrictions on outsized cargo, and late delegation of contracting authority, required last minute changes made to the movement schedule, often on an hourly basis, during the period 11 to 29 December. The French rail union went on strike in November and tied up 500 outsized cargo railcars until the strike was called off on 15 December. Military rail move was not allowed to interfere with commercial rail traffic, so it only moved at night.¹⁶

¹² Tim Moriarty, "Recent Army Rail History," *Army Logistician*, July 1997.

¹³ 1205th TROB

¹⁴ Tim Moriarty, "Recent Army Rail History," *Army Logistician*, July 1997.

¹⁵ LTC John W. Collins, Jr., and COL J. Stephen Koons, "Deploying for Joint Endeavor," *Army Logistician*, May 1997; Keith Morrow email to Richard Killblane, 9 September 2008; and Morrow telephone interview by Richard Killblane, 9 September 2008.

¹⁶ Collins and Koons, "Joint Endeavor;" Morrow email; and CSM Dwayne Perry interview by Richard Killblane, 8 September 2008.

The movement plan had the 1st Armored Division dropped off by rail at the Intermediate Staging Base (ISB) then move by road the rest of the way. The Joint Movement Control Center (JMCC) conducted a last minute route reconnaissance of the roads in Croatia and BG Pat O'Neal, Deputy Division Commander, wanted to use the rail all the way to the crossing of the Sava River at Zupanja, Croatia. The Joint Movement Control Center (JMCC) had chosen to cross the Sava River at Zapunja, because both banks belonged to Croatia. Unfortunately, four years of war had destroyed all the bridges over the Sava and the Army Engineers would have to erect a temporary bridge across the river. COL John Race, Director of the JMCC, tried to explain to O'Neal that the rail line would not support the heavy Abrams tanks, but the General said he had talked with a local in Croatia in December who said the rail line could. Race had received his information from the Croatian National Rail Authority and convinced the General of his plan. Neither was there any area large enough for a staging area at Slavonski Brad, so the Intermediate Staging Base in Hungary was used as the railhead. Equipment would travel by rail and the personnel would arrive by bus to the Intermediate Staging Base. From there the heavy equipment of the 1st Armored Division would be loaded on HETs for transport overland through Croatia into Bosnia.¹⁷

The 1st Armored Division deployed by rail from Germany to the Intermediate Staging Base at Taszar, Hungary in December 1995. Every annual rotation from then on was done by rail from Germany until the 2000 when the units from continental United States (CONUS) started arriving for the rotation.

In 2000, 49th Armored Division (AD) of the Texas Army National Guard would replace the Regular Army and conduct the Stabilization Force (SFOR) mission. The 49th Aviation Brigade (TX NG), commanded by COL John M. Braun, provided the headquarters element for the aviation slice, which consisted primarily of the 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment from Fort Carson, Colorado. The 49th Aviation Brigade sailed aboard the *Saudi Abha* from Corpus Christi, Texas to the Port of Rijeka, Croatia in March 2000. The ship carried 259 pieces of cargo including 53 helicopters from the 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment. The 839th Terminal Battalion and a Movement Control Team from the 14th Movement Control Battalion offloaded the ship and prepared it for onward movement by rail.¹⁸

The passengers landed at Eagle Base in Bosnia, then CW4 John Lane, the Unit Movement Officer, rode down to the port with two crews, air and ground. They inspected the equipment, the flight crew and mechanics got the helicopters ready to fly, while other crews got the milvans and rolling stock ready move to the railhead. The helicopters were cocooned in plastic, so the crews had to unwrap and get them ready to fly. Then air crews

¹⁷ Morrow email and interview; and Race interview, 31 May 2001.

¹⁸ 1LT Sean Linehan, "Teamwork starting point for 49th Aviation brigade," *SFOR Informer Online*, March 29, 2000, <http://152.152.94.201/sfor//indexinf/84/rijeka/t000327k.htm>.

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flew the ground crews back by OH58Ds, UH60s, AH64s, and some CH47s. The aviation package moved to Comanche Base.¹⁹

On 7 March 2000, the 49th Armored Division (AD) assumed control of Multinational Division-North during a Transfer of Authority ceremony held at Eagle Base. The unit redeployed the same way it had arrived, by rail to Rijeka, and then by boat to CONUS in October 2001.²⁰

Kosovo

For the second deployment to Kosovo, MG Grange, Commander of 1st Infantry Division (Mechanized), did not want to deploy by boat and tasked 1st TMCA to deploy his Kosovo force (KFOR) from Germany through the “Eastern Swing Route” rail lines down to Thessaloniki, Greece (Thess for short) and back up to Skopje. A hypersensitivity to the perceived threat by at the port of Thess motivated the desire to move by rail. MG Richard A. Hack, Commander of the 21st Theater Support Command (TSC), became convinced that the “17 November,” a Greek terrorist group responsible for rocket attacks, bombings, and primarily assassinations, presented a real and present danger to seaport of debarkation (SPOD) operations during rotations. MAJ Earl F. Kennedy, Plans Officer for 1st Theater Movement Control Agency (TMCA), spent a lot of time trying to convince senior officers that “17 November” was no longer a credible threat especially to large military operations.²¹

Aside from the perceived threat, movement by rail was more efficient. To upload by rail, go to Bremerhaven, load on a ship, sail to Thess, unload, then upload to rail and move north to Skopje required too many changes in modes of transportation which made for a more inefficient operation. But the justification for the rail move was less about efficiency and more about defeating some undefined and unconfirmed threat.²²

When asked if an overland route was feasible to avoid exposure in Thess to the terrorists, Kennedy with the help of two key German civilians, Heinz Schneider and Michael Riedl, to study the proposal. Because of the experience with moving units into and out of Bosnia, they knew in theory possible the rail move was in theory feasible. MAJ Kennedy spent the next few weeks flying with a small committee including Germans and often a representative from the *Deutsches Bahn* to every country along the proposed route to work with each country on the route to determine how a train might pass all the way to Kosovo. The *Deutsches Bahn* was typically German in their efficiency with the upload and movement, and they helped a lot in the conversations with the railroads along the route.²³

¹⁹ CW4 John Lane interview by Richard Killblane, 25 September 2008.

²⁰ History of SFOR.

²¹ LTC (R) Earl Kennedy email to Richard Killblane, 8-23 September 2008.

²² Kennedy email.

²³ Kennedy email.

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Kennedy emplaced liaison offices (LNO) with several of the key countries, most notably Bulgaria and Romania, to smooth out the bureaucracy. 1st Theater Movement Control Agency, which provided the LNOs, had started the LNO system back in Stabilization Force (SFOR) for Hungary, Croatia and expanded it to include Romania and Bulgaria. Kennedy's group rented an apartment approved by the embassy, sent the LNOs down for six months at a time in civilian clothes and put them next to the host nation movement control office to iron out paperwork issues.²⁴

The two biggest challenges were in Radomir, Bulgaria, where Kennedy's team would need secure lodging and offload railhead, in a part of the country that was stuck in 1965. Every detail had to be worked out, how to feed, sleep, move, work, etc. In Former Yugoslavia Republic of Macedonia (FYROM), Kennedy's team had to deal with bridges and railheads but at least the force could bunk down at Camp Able Sentry (CAS) in Skopje, Macedonia. Coincidentally, the rail lines on the eventual route went to within a few miles of the port of Thess before turning north to Skopje.²⁵

The second issue was track restrictions (mostly tunnel with and height) along the route in southern Bulgaria and northern Greece for heavy loads, including M1s. With a little ingenuity, they developed a controversial but workable plan. They planned to take the heavy tanks to Sofia and then divert to Radomir, the closest station to the FYROM eastern border. The rail line east from Skopia had been abandoned in the early 1990s after the USSR collapsed. The rail beds were there and many of the spans but the rest was still on the drawing board. Kennedy's planners decided to haul the tanks as far as possible by rail, download them in Radomir, then put them on HETs and drive them west to Skopje, but another problem arose. The loads were too heavy for some of the old Soviet era bridges. Kennedy took a team of Army Corps of Engineers experts and drove the route, examining each bridge. They determined that there were only a few that could not take the load. So, Plan C was to drive the HET to those bridges, download the tanks, and drive each one separately over the bridge, reload then repeat at each of the four bridges.²⁶

Kennedy deployed with V Corps to sit in Camp Able Sentry where he could coordinate the move from the front. The "Heavy" train carried Abrams tanks from their home stations in Germany to Radimir. Kennedy used Peg Devereux in Radomir to cover the offload. The tanks then traveled by HETs with MPs and movement control troops onward movement to Camp Able Sentry. The downloading at the bridges worked like a dream. The 27th MCB took the rail from CAS to Kosovo. The DCG of V Corps was the lead in CAS, but when the test went well, pretty soon the duty fell to much lower ranking people for later rotations. The entire trip took about three days, and worked brilliantly with everyone and everything arriving safely at Skopje.²⁷

²⁴ Kennedy email.

²⁵ Kennedy email.

²⁶ Kennedy email.

²⁷ Kennedy email.

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A short 70 km resupply leg from Skopje to Grlicka, just south of Bondsteel, proved essential during winter months when the pass was shut down. The redeployment rail used to transport equipment from Kosovo to Bremerhaven.²⁸

Operation Enduring Freedom - Afghanistan

Since Afghanistan is a land-locked country, the 21st Theater Support Command (TSC) opened a 4,000-mile rail line of communication (LOC) from Germany through Poland, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, and Russia to Uzbekistan in December 2001. The shipping time for containers filled with Defense Logistics Agency and Army and Air Force Exchange Service cargo over this route averaged less than 26 days. From Uzbekistan, the cargo moved into Afghanistan by contract truck convoy. Problems of coordinating rail through the former Soviet Union for US military operations were difficult and the move was hindered by delays and custom inspections. There were also delays at the drop off point in Uzbekistan which caused some fresh foods to rot.

Operation Iraqi Freedom

Detachment 1, 757th Transportation Battalion

On 2 January 2003, Detachment 1, 757th Transportation Battalion was mobilized and arrived at Fort McCoy on 5 January. The eight-man detachment, led by CPT Josef W. Sujet, arrived in Arifjan, Kuwait on 10 February as the advance party of their battalion, and then moved to the Kuwaiti Naval Base (KNB) where planning for the occupation of Umm Qasr was underway. That same day the rest of the battalion was called to active duty, but the deployment order would be cancelled.²⁹ The detachment would establish rail operations at the port of Umm Qasr under the control of the 24th Transportation Battalion, which conduct port operations. The rail detachment was tentatively scheduled to begin movement to the port sometime after the first week of the war. On 8 March, however, twelve days before the start of the war, the port mission was lost to the British forces who had expressed renewed interest in controlling the mission. The 17th Port and Maritime Regiment (UK) would then replace the role of the 24th Battalion. MAJ Sujet was able to convince the British commander, LTC John Ash, of the necessity to utilize Detachment 1, 757th TC and it was attached to them. Det 1 worked directly with the 52nd Port and Maritime Squadron led by Major Neil Llewellyn. On 10 March, the eight railroad Soldiers at KNB moved to the port of Shuyabah in order to link up with the 17th Port and Maritime Regiment. The war began on 20 March and the detachment received orders to begin moving on 24 March. On 23 March, the other two members of the Detachment arrived in Shuyabah and movement of the advance party to Umm Qasr commenced on the 24th. The advance party consisted of members from the 17th Port and Maritime, CPT Joe Sujet and SSG Keith Styles from Detachment 1, and a contingency from the United States Naval Warfare Group. The main body followed on 25 March.³⁰

Although the port of Umm Qasr had been secured prior to the arrival of their, the city had

²⁸ George Atkinson email to Richard Killblane, September 5, 2008.

²⁹ Statement of Service: 757th Trans Battalion.

³⁰ Josef W. Sujet, Memorandum for United States Army Reserve Command, Historian, Subject: Detachment 1, 757th TC Deployment Narrative, 5 November 2003.

not. Fighting had continued in Umm Qasr through the first week of April. The detachment conducted a visual inspection of the track contained within both the new port and the old port. On 25 March, they received word the first humanitarian aid ship, *HMS Galahad*, would arrive on 27 March. Detachment 1 had the mission to have a locomotive with four flat-cars at the old port ready to receive the first load from the *HMS Galahad* at 1500 hours on 28 March. It first had to overcome several obstacles. First, they had to inspect four kilometers of track between the ports. This area was still unsecure, as fighting for Umm Qasr was still continuing. Second, there were two in-operational shunting locomotives available for the mission. A shunting locomotive was an undersized locomotive used for yard operations. Third, a 100-meter section of track was partially buried at the entrance to the old port and its condition was unknown. The last obstacle was a 10-meter beam bridge located between the ports whose condition had to be properly evaluated.³¹

The Detachment organized several teams to overcome these obstacles. CPT Joe Sujet and CPT Mark Blanek, the operations officer for Detachment 1, led the track reconnaissance. The condition of the track between the ports had proven to be in fair condition to include the bridge. They would restrict speed on this section of track to five mph as a result. 10 minutes after the reconnaissance was completed fighting broke out in Umm Qasr with small arms fire. The buried track was dug up and also proved to be in fair condition. The shunting locomotives needed batteries and had some wiring problems. The railroad men acquired batteries and parts to repair the wiring and within hours had the locomotives running. The flat-cars were attached to the shunter and arrived at the old port at 1515 hours on the 28th. The British offloaded the first shipment of humanitarian aid in Iraq directly to the flat-cars and the train hauled it to the new port for temporary storage. Unfortunately, the main line north of the new port leading to Basrah had not yet been inspected and Basrah had not been secured yet either. Basrah was taken shortly after but the main line still needed to be reconnoitered. The roadways were open sooner than the rail and the humanitarian aid was hauled by truck as a result.³²

Over the next couple of weeks, efforts focused on completing the assessment and minor maintenance of the 22 miles of track at both ports. Due to a lack of equipment, the men could only perform minor track maintenance. The original mission of Detachment 1 was to serve as the advance party of the 757th Transportation Battalion which would be released from active duty on 4 June.³³ Consequently, the Detachment was not equipped to perform any significant repairs to either track, locomotives or rolling stock. This problem continued throughout the deployment. The overall condition of the track was fair as it had not been targeted during the air campaign. During this period, representatives from the 1st Marine Expeditionary Force (1st MEF), United Nations, and Coalition Forces Land Component Command (CFLCC) came to Umm Qasr to discuss the feasibility of redeploying forces, hauling humanitarian aid, and standing up the IRR respectively. The USMC was adamant about redeploying their tracked vehicles by rail but the Iraqi rolling

³¹ Sujet, 757th TC Deployment Narrative.

³² Sujet, 757th TC Deployment Narrative.

³³ Statement of Service: 757th Trans Battalion.

stock capabilities could not handle such a mission effectively. This was not evident at this time, however, because a complete assessment of the rolling stock was not completed yet. The UN was looking at all courses of action for hauling aid to the people of Iraq but the need was immediate and there was quite a bit of work to be done to open the line to Baghdad at that time. The UN decided that trucking would be their best course of action at that time and the need for aid was not as great as initially perceived. CFLCC tasked LTC Bob Pelletier to work with the Iraqi Railroad (IRR) to get them operational again.³⁴

The British secured Basrah during the second week of April and then Detachment 1 conducted a rail reconnaissance to Basrah on 12 April. That same day, Gunnery Sergeant Myers of 1st MEF, a rail inspector in the civilian life, conducted an aerial reconnaissance of the line between Basrah and Baghdad, since CPT Sujet did not have enough personnel to accompany the aerial reconnaissance, as his Soldiers were needed for force protection during the Basrah mission. The reconnaissance found the Basrah train station with five operational locomotives. This was critical because at this point the only locomotives they had found were the two shunters incapable of hauling trains over long distances. The reconnaissance also found locomotive operators. A liaison was established with the IRR management of Basrah which helped speed things along. Three sections of track were damaged just outside of the station so they could not run a test train back to Umm Qasr that day. The Iraqis, however, were eager to send back to work and had the track repaired the next day. On 14 April, they ran a test train from Basrah to Umm Qasr with no problems. On 19 April, a ceremony was held in Umm Qasr officially opening the line to Basrah.³⁵

The 1st MEF reconnaissance went well also. The line from Basrah to Baghdad seemed to be intact with the exception of one section of track near As Samawah. A major facility was located in the same area with locomotives and rolling stock. The 1st MEF reconnaissance was unable to land for a closer inspection due to time constraints, so CPT Sujef scheduled another reconnaissance for mid-April, which found no track defects, but located 25 locomotives and hundreds of pieces of rolling stock. On 21 April, the Iraqi Railroad began operating the line from Baghdad to Basrah.³⁶

Not many military planners were aware of rail capabilities or its potential, which became evident because the railroad still did not have any customers or cargo. The priorities, as established by the British, were: food for oil, humanitarian aid, passenger service, commercial, and finally, military supplies, which was in disagreement with Detachment 1's intentions but was out of their control. LTC Pelletier was already scheduling passenger service between Baghdad and Basrah which would begin shortly. The food for oil and humanitarian aid missions never materialized. It would be a long while before rail would be used for commercial goods which allowed Detachment 1 the opportunity to utilize rail for logistical support to the forward areas.³⁷

³⁴ Sujet, 757th TC Deployment Narrative.

³⁵ Sujet, 757th TC Deployment Narrative.

³⁶ Sujet, 757th TC Deployment Narrative.

³⁷ Sujet, 757th TC Deployment Narrative.

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After the fall of Baghdad International Airport (BIAP), LTC Jeff Helmick's 6th Transportation Battalion received the order to establish a railhead at Gharma. On 1 May, BG Jack Stultz, Commander 143rd Transportation Command (Forward); COL Jim Veditz, Commander 7th Transportation Group; LTC Chris Craft, Deputy Commander 7th Transportation Group; LTC Jeff Helmick and CSM Dwayne Perry drove up to Gharma to reconnoiter the site. In concept, cargo would be loaded aboard the train at Umm Qasr and pushed up to the railhead at Gharma. The 6th Transportation Battalion needed cargo handlers and trucks to push out from there. LTC Andy Bowes' 87th Corps Support Battalion would establish a 3-million gallon fuel bag farm there. Helmick ordered 2LT Olson to move his cargo handlers to Gharma. The next day, 2LT Tyler Olson's 2nd Platoon, 551st Cargo Transfer Company (CTC) moved to Gharma where they operated the first ever rail operation with American Soldiers in Iraq. They had to scramble to locate or purchase the rail kits with the help from the 6th Battalion S4.³⁸

On 2 May, CSM Perry led the 6th Battalion command and control element of 12 Soldiers to Gharma. Helmick had full confidence in Perry's ability. Perry selected his camp in a remote location from the main camp. He located a compound enclosed by with 20-foot high adobe wall that would make a good secure motor park for his trucks. He brought up a mobile kitchen trailer (MKT) and some guard towers they had previously constructed. The battalion also sent two medium truck companies, 15 HETs, part of the HHD and a signal slice up there to clear cargo out of the railhead. The rest the battalion was going to close Cedar and move up to Gharma in a month. Likewise the 7th Transportation Group (Forward) turned the command and control of the Tallil operation over to the 171st Area Support Group then relocated to Gharma and named it, Forward Logistics Base (FLB) Resolute.³⁹

The initial plan was to transport 20 Connexes per day and establish a schedule that would allow for three trains to run in each direction daily. Detachment 1's efforts to establish a liaison with the Iraqi Railroad management in the southern region proved beneficial for both parties and had a great effect on its ability to accomplish the mission, but CPT Sujet could not accomplish the rail mission with just ten Soldiers since the Iraqi rail workers were not yet reintegrated. LTC Pelletier spearheaded the effort to stand-up the Iraqi Railroad to include its workforce. Detachment 1 worked with the management in Basra and Umm Qasr to establish standards and expectations for their workforce. The Soldiers of Detachment 1 would primarily supervise the 75 or so Iraqi workers in the Umm Qasr area. The different work ethic proved the most challenging part of the mission. The Soldiers had to set goals, and ensure the Iraqis completed them in a timely manner.⁴⁰

Detachment 1 appropriated \$10,000 worth of tools through a British Quick Impact

³⁸ LTC Jeffrey Helmick, "Operation Enduring Freedom/Iraqi Freedom Executive Summary;" and "6th Transportation Battalion Historical Report."

³⁹ Perry interview, "6th Transportation Battalion Historical Report."

⁴⁰ Sujet, 757th TC Deployment Narrative.

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Program (QIP) for the Iraqi workers. Since looting was prevalent throughout Iraq, tools were otherwise not available. Other issues included appropriation of repair parts, security forces organic to the Iraqi Railroad, communication systems (VHF, fiber-optics), discretionary funds, and worker attendance which were problematic. The purpose was not only to get the rail infrastructure up and running in the short term but also to provide a basis for planning the long term re-construction of the system. On 29 April, the Iraqi Railroad was officially reconstituted, just in time for the first shipment of cargo to arrive in Umm Qasr on 4 May.⁴¹

On 7 May, the first and only train to leave under British control pushed north to Gharma carrying 12 containers of Class I. The 52nd Port and Maritime Squadron called an End of Mission and redeployed within a week and they officially handed the rail mission over to Detachment 1, 757th TC on 8 May. Cargo began to trickle in. Mostly Class I, but also Class II, Class IV, Class IX, unit equipment and AAFES supplies. The first week, a total of six trains pushed north, which was difficult because Detachment 1 did not have heavy equipment or movement control support like 7th Group. Detachment 1 utilized port assets for loading cargo and provided its own movement control and cargo documentation. Eventually, it received support for both issues.⁴²

BG Jack Fletcher wanted the Corps' rear boundary pushed back to the Kuwaiti border. COL Veditz also surmised that the center of gravity of theater transportation was shifting back to Kuwait with the arrival of the 32nd Transportation Group and KBR getting ready to assume the line haul mission. Not only that, but because of the isolation of Gharma railhead made it vulnerable to constant attacks. On 11 May, COL Veditz turned Gharma over to his deputy, LTC John J. Lambusta. On 1 June, Lambusta had his 7th Group Tactical Operations Center tear down their camp and CSM Perry returned with his 6th Battalion element to Camp Cedar on 3 June.⁴³

With only 25 operational locomotives in Iraq at that time, a number of these would be used for passenger service between Baghdad and Basrah, and eventually some would be used to haul cargo between Baghdad and five other nodes that were set up after Gharma to include Diwaniyah, Taji, Baghdadi, Bayji, and Mosul. There were not enough operational locomotives to sustain three trains daily from Umm Qasr. This would become increasingly worse as the locomotives began to break down along with rolling stock. Detachment 1 repaired as much possible in Umm Qasr by cannibalizing parts from other rail cars. An organized effort to repair locomotives and rolling stock began in October with parts from Baghdad. Trains were cancelled just as often for a lack of locomotives as they were for a lack of cargo. Another key event which happened during the May time period was the coordination with Bechtel, one of the contractors helping rebuild Iraq. One of their missions was to build a second rail line from Umm Qasr to Shuaiba, Iraq near the vicinity of Basrah. The primary source for their decision to build the track was

⁴¹ Sujet, 757th TC Deployment Narrative.

⁴² Sujet, 757th TC Deployment Narrative.

⁴³ Veditz interview; Lambusta interview, "6th Transportation Battalion Historical Report."

the assessment performed by Detachment 1.⁴⁴

Eventually, the 18th Corps Support Battalion, commanded by LTC Bruce Ferry, arrived to take command and control of the mission on 9 July and Detachment 1 began to receive more cargo. On 6 October, rail was designated as the primary mode of transporting goods in Iraq. The main reason for this was the ability to haul vast amounts of cargo with a drastic reduction in friendly casualties. The arrival of the 18th CSB alleviated many of our problems and allowed Detachment 1 to focus on its technical mission. With the presence of the 18th Corps Support Battalion and the gradual increase in the Iraqi Railroad's capabilities, Detachment 1 called an End of Mission on 1 October.⁴⁵

Under the command of Detachment 1, 757th Transportation Battalion, 135 trains were pushed north with a total of 3,798 containers weighing 22,788 short tons. During this period, 162,000 convoy miles were saved using rail assets. This was all accomplished with the technical skill of only 10 Soldiers. A much higher level of success would have been achieved with the presence of the 757th Transportation Battalion and at least one of its line companies. The lack of personnel and equipment restrained the detachment's ability to accomplish its mission more effectively. It is also critical to note that without the participation of Detachment 1 rail may not have been utilized at all after the British left. The British called an End of Mission after the first train pushed when the Iraqi Railroad was not in place yet. It is likely that the rail mission would have ended there or at least be substantially delayed. The importance of utilizing rail assets in future conflicts cannot be overlooked. At the end of the day it can be said that the men of Detachment 1, 757th Transportation Battalion were instrumental in the outstanding success of the rail mission in Iraq.⁴⁶ The Detachment returned to Reserve status on 1 November 2003.⁴⁷

By January 2004, the Iraqi Railroad was being used to haul mostly Class IX parts from Umm Qsar to Taji and then to retrograde broken parts (not broken vehicles) back. Initially the rail pushed water. The Iraqis would cut the rail in order to derail the train then climb aboard and steal the cargo. Even though it was parts to vehicles they did not have, the Iraqis stole anything.⁴⁸

During the Uprising of Al Sadr's Madhi Militia in April 2004, the Iraqi railroad was attacked and the last time the Americans used that rail line for many years was when the rail cars rolled into Taji on fire.

101st Airborne Division: Baghdad to Mosul, 2003

When V Corps directed the 101st Airborne Division to move to Mosul during OIF1, the 101st was south of Baghdad and coincidentally, they had to give up the HET platoon they had borrowed from the 7th Transportation Group because the 4th ID had arrived in theater

⁴⁴ Sujet, 757th TC Deployment Narrative.

⁴⁵ Sujet, 757th TC Deployment Narrative.

⁴⁶ Sujet, 757th TC Deployment Narrative.

⁴⁷ Statement of Service: 757th Trans Battalion.

⁴⁸ CPT James Word interview by Richard Killblane, 22 September 2008.

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and the HETs were needed to move them. The 101st Airborne Division would conduct the longest air assault operation in history, but since they had to give up the HETs, LTC Matthew Redding, Division Transportation Officer of the 101st Airborne Division, had to find another way to move his non-rotable equipment north. The division sent an Advon party to Mosul and discovered a rail line there. Someone talked to the rail manager and learned that the railroad had been operational but had mostly run passengers. That person called MAJ Redding and told him about the functioning rail system. Redding then drove to Baghdad and found the rail manager. The manager was a Baathist but also a businessman. He was excited to support the rail movement. MAJ Redding wrote out the request and showed the rail manager where to submit the claim for fuel and costs based upon the Iraqi rail tariff for cargo.⁴⁹

During the looting, MAJ Redding and 14 rail managers had locked up the locomotives and as many cars as they could, while looters stripped off wooden planks off of the rail cars. It took a week of preparation to repair the rail cars. 40 percent of the decks were missing and they had to improvise spanners. They managed to have four passenger cars and 35 flat bed cars available to haul the equipment. CPT Jansen DeLoach, his warrant officer and NCO from the 613th Movement Control Team arrived on 4 May to help load the cars. DeLoach drove a 40-ton crane on a flat car without any wooden planks by rolling the tires on the I-beams. It took four convoys with the HETs over four days and three nights to move all the non-routable equipment to the rail yard in Baghdad. Loading was an adventure because of the 130 degree heat. Because of the threat of looting, they had to provide perimeter security of 25 soldiers from different units for their equipment. Their only concern came from local Iraqi children who gathered out of curiosity and the “Ali Babbas” (local Iraqi term for thieves) who tried to steal tea and sugar from the warehouse or the manufactured home materials. After the rail load was completed, MAJ Redding released the HETs to return to their parent unit.⁵⁰

The original locomotive that was planned for the move had maintenance issues so the rail manager gave them a smaller one. This was not an issue traveling across the flat desert, but when they reached an uphill climb past Bayji, the small engine could not pull the load. The train had no radio so they passed on their trip tickets the old fashion way to someone running along the rail station as the train rolled by, like the Old West. Since the locomotive did not have enough power, they sent a request via an automobile to Mosul for another engine. The engine arrived and helped pull the train up the four-mile slope. They completed the movement in 36 hours without any air conditioning. The temperature was recorded as 120 degrees outside and 150 inside the cars, so after four hours into the mission the passengers rode on the flat cars. The Iraqis at Mosul had a big party waiting for the train. It took six to seven hours to download the equipment.⁵¹

Once in Mosul, the 101st Airborne Division continued to use rail and in July 2003, MAJ Redding received a donation of \$10,000 from National Defense Transportation

⁴⁹ LTC Matthew Redding interview by Richard Killblane, 20 March 2008.

⁵⁰ Redding interview; CPT Jansen DeLoach email to Richard Killblane, October 1, 2008.

⁵¹ Redding interview.

Association (NDTA) in supplies to overhaul the Mosul rail station. The entire time the 101st Airborne Division used the railroad, it was not attacked.⁵²

In August-September 2003, the railhead was open and the 101st sent empty containers to Basra as Mosul became an airfield. Preparing for the retrograde, the division sent back tents, containerized equipment and some vehicles. Insurgents did interdict so they used the rail mostly to ship Class I. The 101st Airborne Division redeployed in February and March 2004.⁵³

Mosul Rail, March 2004

The 497th Movement Control Team (MCT), commanded by CPT Richard Hellig arrived at Mosul in January 2004. It replaced two movement control teams and an US Air Force TALC. In March, CPT Brian Patnode, also of the 497th MCT at Mosul, received a call from Multi-National Corps-Iraq (MNCI) rail ops in Baghdad. Around 400 living containers came down from Turkey and became stranded at FOB Marez with the ultimate destination to the Marines out west. They could not get the 200 trucks needed to move them, so Patnode suggested to BG Carter Hamm, commander of Multi-national Division-North, indirectly by email that they could move them by rail. Most officers had little confidence they could move it by rail, but Patnode knew the 101st Airborne Division had moved equipment by rail the year before. BG Hamm gave the green light.⁵⁴

They could not move a rough terrain cargo handler (RTCH) or any other material handling equipment (MHE) down to the rail yard in Mosul and in addition, the security required for the rail yard would have been extensive, so Patnode spoke with his commander, who gave permission to meet with the Iraqi manager downtown. Luckily the main rail line traversed directly between Marez and Diamondback. Patnode needed to convince the local rail manager to bring the trains to Marez and block rail traffic for a few hours while they loaded. The manager who spoke English was very supportive. To load the containers, the Army had to actually build a rail head. Patnode had to beg and borrow to get units to level the ground. Army Engineers stationed at Marez then flatten out a 200-meter wide ground between Diamondback and Marez, adjacent to the main rail line. They could then divide the train and load the living containers in two different areas. Patnode contracted KBR to build the other ramp, which they charged around \$2K. KBR handled one side while Soldiers from the 44th Corps Support Battalion, out of Fort Lewis, loaded at the other side. Working in close proximity to the FOB gave a sense of security. Ultimately they were able to ship all of the containers, minus the ones on the two trains that were attacked in route.⁵⁵

1st Sustainment Brigade at Taji, 2008

The last time that rail had been used at Taji was when the train rolled in on fire during the al Sadr Uprising in April 2004. In middle January 2008, MAJ Michael McGee, 719th

⁵² Redding interview and DeLoach email.

⁵³ Redding interview.

⁵⁴ Brian Patnode email to Richard Killblane, June 30, 2006.

⁵⁵ Patnode email, June 30, 2006.

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Movement Control Battalion at Anaconda, warned the 1st Sustainment Brigade (SB) at Taji they were planning to use the rail line. To reduce the number of military convoys on the road and energize the Iraqi economy, COL Kevin G. O'Connell, Commander of the 1st Sustainment Brigade, wanted to use Iraqi rail. In early February, LTC Gumelot, the plans officer of 316th Expeditionary Sustainment Command, came down to meet with MAJ Ira Baldwin, Support Plans Officer-Transportation 1st Sustainment Brigade; 2LT Jesse Estrada Jr., Commander of the 528th MCT; representatives of the 2-25th Infantry Division; KBR; and the Base Defense Operations Center (BDOC). Their mission was to execute a proof of principle or feasibility study to see if a locomotive rail and flat cars could make it all the way to Taji. MAJ McGee came down for a series of meetings and brought her rail section. MAJ Baldwin became the 1st Sustainment Brigade coordinator for the rail operation.⁵⁶

Taji had a rail line that fed right into the camp and to reopen the rail yard, the 1st Sustainment Brigade had to remove the derelict rolling stock in the rail yard damaged in April 2004. Because of the insurgent threat, this operation involved entire base defense. Force Protection had to bring the back scatter van to X-ray the locomotive when it came in. They would also have to block traffic inside and outside the gate to allow the locomotive to enter Taji. The date for the operation was originally set for 9 February but was pushed back to 10 March because of the lack of resources. The Iraqis were very excited about working with the Americans and would take the rolling stock to Baghdad and repair it.⁵⁷

On 20 March, the Iraqi railroad workers came in to clear the Taji rail yard of all derelict rolling stock. CPT Justin Cuff, A Battery, 2-11 Field Artillery from Hawaii, had his battery provide security inside the perimeter while C Battery, commanded by CPT Nick Cherry, provided security on the perimeter and in the immediate area outside. Cherry's Soldiers were in full battle rattle waiting to block traffic inside the wall. His men had also conducted the x-ray scan and search of the locomotive with sniffing dogs. The RMFS crane lifted the concrete barriers behind the metal gate blocking the rail line and the locomotive entered. 2LT Estrada's MCT inherited the job of escorting Third County Nationals (TCN) inside the perimeter.⁵⁸

Once all the flat cars were connected the train was ready for inspection. The artillerymen again searched the train while it waited at the perimeter road, and upon completion the inspection, the crane lifted the two concrete barriers, other Soldiers in battle rattle opened the gate. They had to wear individual body armor (IBA) this close to the wall for fear of truck bombs. Strykers blocked local Iraqi traffic outside the wall and HMMWV gun trucks blocked traffic inside the wall. The locomotive pulled and around 1430, the train cleared the gate and rolled for Baghdad with 52 flat cars having left two behind.

⁵⁶ 2LT Jesse Estrada, Jr., and MAJ Ira Baldwin interviews with Richard Killblane, 20 March 2008.

⁵⁷ Estrada and Baldwin interviews.

⁵⁸ Richard Killblane's observations of the operation.

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The next step was to pick up empty containers to haul to Basra on 25 March, but the mission was postponed due to echelons above 316th Expeditionary Sustainment Command (ESC) interest. Someone from the 316th ESC called asking the 1st Sustainment Brigade to delay their rail move so certain VIPs could observe it. Since there were so many pieces involved in the coordination, it would take months to reschedule the next rail move.

Interdiction

Steel track can be destroyed with just a few pounds of explosive, thus making rail very easy to interdict by a guerrilla threat. However, simplicity of rail makes it just as easy to repair. In fact, Sherman's army during its advance to Atlanta was so successful at repairing track and bridges, the Confederates found it took them more time to destroy the track and bridges than it did Sherman's engineers to replace them. The futility of the effort became a deterrent to rail interdiction.

During the Vietnam War, the Army of the Republic of Vietnam built an armed and armored locomotive that resembled a tank which patrolled the rail ahead of trains looking for mines and explosives.

During World War I, the Czechoslovakian Legion trapped fighting in Siberia after the Bolshevik Revolution armored their trains and controlled significant amount of the Trans-Siberian Railway. They were able to successfully evacuate through Vladivostok in Eastern Russia.

While rail is vulnerable to interdiction, this threat can be mitigated by hardening trains and increasing the speed of repair.

Conclusion

Where available, rail has played a significant role in moving equipment into the theater of operations and still remains a viable means of transportation. Up through the Korean War, railroad was king of land transportation, but larger trucks and improved highways have provided significant competition with rail, especially for containerized cargo. However, the limited number of HETs makes rail a viable option for moving heavy equipment to this day. The days of deploying with locomotives and rolling stock ended with the Korean War and the Army has relied upon Transportation Corps officers and Unit Movement Officers for coordinating rail movements with foreign countries. In all cases there have been delays and difficulties due to cultural, language and equipment differences. Soldiers with railroad expertise may have been able to expedite these movements.

Based upon the history of rail use over the last 50 years, there has not been a need for any railway unit larger than a detachment. The railway units have managed rail rather than operate it. For rail movements with short notice, a few of these railway detachments need to be active duty, while forecasted use of rail can pull units from the Reserves. One of the most successful experiences in the past has been borrowing railroad expertise from commercial railroad companies and using them to form railway organizations. With

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recent reductions to manpower, the last remaining railway battalion, 757th, is on the chopping block. In the effort to preserve this valuable capability, the Chief of Transportation is looking at restructuring the capability into railway detachments with a management focus rather than a battalion with a operator mission.