

## **329<sup>th</sup> Transportation Company (Heavy Boat)**

The 329<sup>th</sup> Harbor Craft Company Transportation Corps was activated at Charleston Port of Embarkation, South Carolina, on 1 May 1943. It arrived at the New York Port of Embarkation on 16 January 1944 for deployment to England. The company departed NYPE on 29 January and arrived in England 9 February. On 6 October 1944, it deployed to France. The following year, on 21 April 1945, the company was redesignated the 329<sup>th</sup> Transportation Corps Harbor Craft Company. It left France on 23 September 1945 and arrived at Hampton Roads Port of Embarkation, Virginia, on or about 3 October 1945, where it was inactivated on that same date at Camp Patrick Henry, Virginia.

Two years later, the 329<sup>th</sup> Company was then allotted to third Army and activated at Tampa, Florida on 7 May 1947. On 23 July, it moved to St Petersburg, Florida. On 21 October that year, it was redesignated the 329<sup>th</sup> Transportation Harbor Craft Company. On 3 December 1950, it was changed to Class A, Organized Reserve status then inactivated again on 31 December.

### **Heavy Boat**

On 15 August 1952, it was withdrawn from the Army Reserves as the 329<sup>th</sup> Transportation Company Heavy Boat then activated and allotted to the Regular Army at Fort Eustis, Virginia, as part of the 159<sup>th</sup> Transportation Battalion (Boat) on 15 August 1952. Two detachments participated in Exercise NEACOM for nine months in 1953.

The company participated in Operation LANHIBEX from 30 March to 6 April 1960, Operation TARHEEL from 18 April to 26 April 1960 and Operation CAMNID from 6 June to 27 July 1960. The 329<sup>th</sup> along with the 1097<sup>th</sup> and 1098<sup>th</sup> Medium Boat Companies, 461<sup>st</sup> Amphibious Truck Company and the 554<sup>th</sup> BARC Platoon supported Operation JAMLEX from 25 October to 7 November 1960. They operated under the command of the 6<sup>th</sup> Transportation Battalion. The operation tested the “through the beach” concept to support the 1,500 man Marine landing team at Camp Lejuene, North Carolina. The operation was conducted in four phases with the DUKWs and landing craft discharging troops, tanks, artillery and supplies on the beach to establish a foothold. The BARCs established a ferry across the inland waterway. The second phase concentrated on the logistical support of combat forces even utilizing helicopters for emergency resupply and medical evacuation. During the second phase the amphibians and landing craft moved troops and supplies across the New River. During phase four helicopters lifted a battalion of Marines to Camp Davis and Bogue Field for further maneuvers.

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.

In September 1962, the 329<sup>th</sup> Company along with the rest of the 159<sup>th</sup> Battalion deployed to Fort Lauderdale, Florida, for the possible invasion of Cuba during the Missile Crisis, from 19 October to 11 December 1962. It had twelve LCU 1466 series: 1513, 1515, 1531, 1532, 1546, 1554, 1573, 1577, 1578, 1579, 1584, and 1593. The vessel was 115 feet long and 38 feet wide. It could carry 180 tons of cargo.

“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 Ga. (at that time an undeveloped naval property) Charleston S.C 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!!

“Kings Bay Georgia was a rendezvous point for all the units. I was transferred to the LCU 1515 of the 329<sup>th</sup> Heavy Boat as helmsman (among others). We headed south via offshore, and the Mike boats stayed inside in the waterway. After a fuel stop in Ft. Pierce, Florida, we proceeded south to Port Everglades Florida. The sight that awaited us there as we entered from sea was staggering. The harbor was crammed with U.S. Navy LST's, OAS (Organization of American States) LST's and the 1098<sup>th</sup> Medium Boat, which had come across from New Orleans. All of the landing craft were loading the Second Armored Division which came by rail from Ft Hood, Texas. As the days passed, more tugs and diesel powered submarines appeared. The larger naval vessels were anchored in a line stretching from Jupiter Florida to the keys!

“I believe that the Ft. Eustis railroad 777<sup>th</sup> diesels actually hauled train loads to Florida also. There was tension in the air, and all concerned were aware of the gravity of the situation, however we did not know that Soviet missiles were already pointed at

American cities. This information we learned later! We also learned that we were to be the first wave by sea other than paratroopers, who obviously would be from the air. It was ironic that the Navy had been caught shorthanded with landing craft, and the Army was to be in the primary assault landing! Eight Navy LSD's were anchored offshore waiting to load the Mike boats for the attack in the event that it came to pass. Fortunately, the situation was resolved, and the most perilous event of the cold war was averted. It took about 70 days for all of the units to return to their home base at Ft. Eustis. When the units were back at home base, the training was changed considerably, and modification of equipment design was put in motion. All was a result of the Cuban Crisis! In my humble opinion, it was a job well done by all concerned. "

Paul F. Carty, 1097<sup>th</sup> Medium Boat Company, 159<sup>th</sup> Battalion (Boat) Battalion

The company was alerted to deploy to Vietnam in November 1965. The 329<sup>th</sup> would deploy to Vietnam with only 8 LCU 1466 series. In March 1966, in preparation for deployment to Vietnam, it transferred LCU 1513, 1515, 1531, 1532, 1554, 1573, 1578, and 1579 to the 5<sup>th</sup> Transportation Company (Heavy Boat) also at Fort Eustis. In February 1966, LCU 1578 was deactivated and replaced by LCU 1554.

### **Vietnam War**

The US Army Vietnam assumed a greater role in the ground war in Vietnam requiring three incremental build-up of forces beginning in the summer of 1965. The three medium boat companies of the 159<sup>th</sup> Transportation Battalion deployed to Vietnam during the first build-up and the second build-up in the summer of 1966 required the 329<sup>th</sup> Heavy Boat and the 159<sup>th</sup> Battalion headquarters.

The 329<sup>th</sup> Heavy Boat Company, under the command of CPT Joel P. Dalton, preceded the 159<sup>th</sup> Battalion and deployed to Vietnam with eight LCUs aboard the *USNS General W. H. Gordon* out of Charleston, South Carolina, and arrived in Vietnam on 24 May 1966. The crews flew from Richmond, Virginia, to Oakland, California, then boarded a troop ship at Oakland Army Terminal and after 18 days sailing with one stop in Okinawa arrived in Vung Tau around 4 June. The company had held a memorial ceremony at sea for the WWII dead. LCUs 1556 and the 1567 were waiting for the men when they arrived.<sup>1</sup> It took several days to offload the LCUs because they were only able to offload one boat a day. The heat took its toll on the men. Once the boats were offloaded they sailed Vung Tau where the headquarters operated for its first year of the war.

The river and canal system in the southern part of Vietnam was more developed than any road network. The LCUs initially delivered cargo to units based at My Tho, Vinh Long and Can Tho.<sup>2</sup> For some reason the 329<sup>th</sup> Heavy Boat predominately received the missions to haul guns, ammunition and armor to combat bases while the 5<sup>th</sup> Heavy Boat did the majority of the PX runs to Saigon. It might have had something to do with the disappearance of a pallet of cameras destined for a PX.

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<sup>1</sup> Robert Kenny email to Richard Killblane, January 25, 2010.

<sup>2</sup> Kenny email, January 25, 2010.

At approximately 0900 on 23 August 1966, the Victory Ship, *SS Baton Rouge Victory*, ran into an underwater mine while sailed the Long Tau River to Saigon with a full load of cargo consisting of tractors, automobiles, mail, and general cargo. The mine blew a 35' x 45' hole in the port side of the engine room killing seven merchant seamen and No. 3 hold instantly flooding the ship, but the vessel master managed to run it aground avoiding the blocking of the ever-important channel.<sup>3</sup> LCU 1556 sailed downstream past it as the VC fired at the LST from the bank.<sup>4</sup>

On 4 September 1966, the LCUs of the 329<sup>th</sup> Heavy Boat hauled troops and equipment of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Brigade, 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division from Vung Tau south to the Rung Sat Special Zone for Operation Baton Rouge.<sup>5</sup> The deep water Long Tau Channel wound its way from the South China Sea through the mangrove swamp of the Rung Sat to the port city of Saigon. The Big Red One conducted search and destroy operations to rest this vital life line from the Viet Cong.

In December 1966, the 9<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division arrived in Vietnam and the 329<sup>th</sup> Heavy Boat along with an LST moved the Division from Saigon up the Mekong River to its new home at Dong Tam in III Corps Tactical Zone. After that the 329<sup>th</sup> ran missions to Dong Tam.<sup>6</sup>

In August 1967, the 159<sup>th</sup> Transportation Battalion at Qui Nhon received the task to conduct a small LOTS operation at Sau Huynh in support of in support of 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division at Duc Pho during Operation MALHEUR. Sau Huynh had been a peaceful fishing village with a salt flat on the border between I and II Corps where the Viet Cong collected and preserved their fish. LCU 1581 delivered a clam scoop crane up to Sau Huynh with a LCM and LARC LX as support. They spent one week dredging out the sand bar for the LOTS operation. They were the first boats into Sau Huynh.

In December 1967, five LCUs later transported 155 millimeter self-propelled howitzers and ammunition on the tail end of Operation CORONADO for Mobile Riverine Force 117.

When the Tet Offensive broke out on 31 January 1968, the enemy captured the city of Hue and severed most of the land supply routes to the US Marines fighting to take the city back. The 329<sup>th</sup> had to keep the life line open to the Marines by hauling needed food and ammunition up the Qua Viet. LCU had always been ambushed going up the Qua Viet and Perfume Rivers but the intensity increased during Tet. The enemy similarly tried to close down supplies running up that river but the sealed compartments of the LCUs made them virtually unsinkable. From the moment a boat passed Tan My at the mouth of the Perfume and the first bend in the river past Qua Viet, the boats were under constant enemy fire for the three-hour trip up stream. The guerrillas on the banks of the

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<sup>3</sup> Command History, Harbor Clearance Unit One, 1 Feb 66-1 Jan 67, OPNAV Report 5750-1, 17 June 1967, <http://www.seastory.us/hcu1/66history.html>.

<sup>4</sup> Kenny email, January 25, 2010.

<sup>5</sup> Rung Sat in Vietnamese means “killer jungle” or “forest of assassins.”

<sup>6</sup> Kenny email, January 25, 2010.

river inflicted up to forty percent casualties on each run with the rolling ambushes. Traveling at about five miles an hour going up stream, one group of guerrillas could move up ahead of the boat and set up another ambush while the LCU traveled into the kill zone of the next group of guerrillas. The LCUs hit the beach with engines running. Once the ramp dropped on shore, the crew ran to the nearest bunker while Seabees unloaded the precious cargo, all the while artillery impacting around them. When the deck was clear, the crew ran back on the boat and pulled out into the river as fast as possible for a return trip through the same gauntlet of enemy fire. During one trip, one LCU was destroyed in the Qua Viet by a command detonated mine under the water, set off by a Vietnamese presumably fishing on the bank of the river.

The 329<sup>th</sup> took so many casualties that they were borrowing crews from the other heavy boat companies and eventually had to ask the Navy for volunteers. Quite a few sailors volunteered. The crews were so critical that the Armed Forces Police could only detain the crew members until their boats were loaded and ready to leave. Consequently, the crews went to Navy clubs to let off steam, free of the fear of punishment for anything short of murder and mayhem. Boats left at 0500 just before daylight. Five or Six LCUs and Navy YFUs, depending upon availability, would convoy to their destination. They convoyed because of the volume of supplies needed up river. After a month and a half, the 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry swept the banks of the rivers as an extension of Operation PEGASUS and the ambushes became isolated instead of continuous. The Marines and ARVN recaptured Hue.

In April 1969, the 329<sup>th</sup> Heavy Boat joined the 159<sup>th</sup> Battalion at Vung Tau where it provided direct support to combat units in Dong Tam, Muc Hoa, Tan Anh, Binh Thuy and Vinh Long. During June 1969, it participated in Project BUDDY where it trained ARVN soldiers to operate the LCUs. During this time, 1969 through 1970, the 5<sup>th</sup> and 329<sup>th</sup> Heavy Boats Company headquarters were combined at Vung Tau. CPT Murphy commanded both. The combined companies had 27 LCUs, 2 J-boats, 4 reefer barges and 5 tugs. The headquarters moved to Cat Lai in early 1970.

The 329<sup>th</sup> then operated out of Da Nang and delivered cargo up the Perfume and Qua Viet Rivers to Hue and Dong Ha. It became known as the "Travel'n Terrapins." On the afternoon of 2 November 1970, LCU 1563 left Da Nang hauling a load of ammunition to Tan My. At 1010 the next day, a helicopter spotted it capsized. That had been unusual since there had been no storm and LCUs were hard to capsize. There had been no call for help. The boat washed up on the Cu Lau Re Island. Upon inspection there had been no sign of hostile action and neither the cargo nor the crew was found. On 6 November only the body of Billy H. Peoples, wearing a life jacket, washed up on the island. When lost at sea, the Army listed the crew members as missing in action for a year then as presumed dead. The remains of Perry C. Kitchens was turned over on 16 March 1977 and the remaining eight crew members; Jerry D. Martin, Richard C. Dority, Dennis I. Day, David L. Ginn, Calvin A. Norris, James R. Pantall, John D. Shemake, David W. Woods, remain unaccounted for.

As part of turning the war over to the Vietnamese, the 329<sup>th</sup> began turning over its LCUs to the ARVN. For substitute, the US Navy gave the 329<sup>th</sup> its YFUs as it pulled out. In 1970, the 329<sup>th</sup> received nine YFUs, one YW and one YOG from the Navy. By 2 April 1972, the 329<sup>th</sup> had turned over its LCUs to the ARVN 305<sup>th</sup> Heavy Boat Group and was inactivated.

The Company earned two Meritorious Unit Citations for 1966-1967 and 1968, and the Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry with Palm. It participated in the campaigns Counteroffensives Phase I-VII, Tet Counteroffensive 1968 and 1969, Summer-Fall 1969, Winter-Spring 1970, Sanctuary Counteroffensive and Consolidation I.

### **Fort Eustis, Virginia**

On 21 October 1972, Captain Charles E. Koonce and Sergeant First Class Lloyd G. Purvis as the acting first sergeant received the colors of the 329<sup>th</sup> Transportation Company were reactivated at Fort Eustis. It fell under the control of the 11<sup>th</sup> Terminal Battalion. It received its first replacement 1466 series LCU, 1545, in November. The following story is of her shake down cruise as reported in the 1973 Annual Historical Report of the 329<sup>th</sup>.

“On Tuesday 14 November 1972, CPT Charles Koonce asked a very welcome question, ‘How soon can you be ready to sail for Hoboken, NJ?’ Not only was the crew very anxious for a long trip but they needed it, for this was to be the first shake down cruise for the LCU 1545 with her new crew. Twenty four hours later with the mad rush of pre-sail checking of fuel, food, water, machinery and safety equipment under the watchful eye of CW2 Barton, they were steaming out to sea. As usual Mother Nature did not cooperate with the 45 and her crew, for the weather got rough. And if one has ever been on a flat bottom landing craft one knows it doesn’t take much to make her decks heave on the open sea.

“At about 2200 hours, with the wind from the North at 25 to 30 knots, and seas running from the North at 4 to 7 feet, the mast broke. Luckily, the mast stays and yolk held it up during the journey.

“With rough seas and a broken mast, the 45 steamed all day and arrived in New York at 1645 hours on the 17<sup>th</sup>. Here they found refuge at the Coast Guard Base, Covemore Island and went about repairing the radio. The crew needing rest, were allowed to go to the big city to try their luck.

“On Saturday, the 19<sup>th</sup>, the crew found themselves underway for Hoboken and their cargo. The cargo was loaded and secured by 1600 hours so they set sail for Manhattan where the action was, or so they thought. Arriving on the scene, the crew was dismayed to discover that a ‘pony’ beer was \$1.75.

“The following morning the crew set sail, minus the anticipated hangovers, for home. True to form, Mother Nature again provided heavy seas and wind and rain from the

South. Wet and Cold, the crew arrived at Fort Eustis, at 1105 on the 20<sup>th</sup>, tired and disgruntled with the weather they encountered but ready and willing to do it all over again.”

The company received LCU 1583 in February 1972. The company needed eight boats to be at full strength. In June it received three vessels from the 612<sup>th</sup> (Heavy Boat) Company after it stood down. By December, the company had picked up six LCUs (1540, 1545, 1560, 1583, 1587, and 1590) with the hope of picking up four more. They company picked up 1561 and 1575 the next year to give the company a full strength of eight LCUs. The company’s LCUs participated in local ship-to-shore training at Fort Story or were tasked to haul cargo and equipment for the Army along the Atlantic Coast. Sometimes the boats supported the emergency deployment readiness exercises (EDRE) of 7<sup>th</sup> Transportation Group battalions and elements of the XVIII Airborne Corps.

In March 1974, LCU 1560 steamed towards Hoboken, Jew Jersey to help recover a sunken J-boat of the 73<sup>rd</sup> Transportation Company. A small tug towing a refloated J-boat unfortunately sunk in rough seas off of Myrtle Beach. The company dispatched LCU 1583 “Pete’s Pirates,” skippered by SFC Bent Peterson, to the scene. With the help of divers, they refloated the tug and returned with tales of adventure on the high seas. In May 1974, LCUs 1540, 1583, and 1590 participated in 2<sup>nd</sup> Marine Division Operation GRAND SLAM at Morehead City, North Carolina. The boats sailed down the inland coastal waterway to Camp Lejuene. For many of the boat operators, this was the first time that they had driven inside the stern of an LST. The LCUs conducted the usual ship-to-shore operations.

In 1976, the company picked up three more LCUs (1522, 1543, and 1587) from the 5<sup>th</sup> Transportation Company. With the end of the Women’s Army Corps and the integration of women into the Combat Support and Service Support military occupational skills, PFC Dawn Robinson, a cook aboard LCU 1583, signed into the company as the first female soldier in the company in April 1976. In May, the company participated in Exercise SOLID SHIELD with the Navy and US Marines at Morehead City and Milehammock Bay, North Carolina.

In 1977, the 329<sup>th</sup> transferred to the 10<sup>th</sup> Battalion. Beginning in October that year, the company also received its six new LCU 1600s: 1667, 1668, 1669, 1670, 1677, and 1678. From July to August 1977, the company’s LCUs 1522, 1540, 1543, 1583 and 1590 participated in a JLOTS exercise at Fort Story with the 24<sup>th</sup> Transportation Battalion. In September and October, LCU 1522, 1543, 1545 and 1583 participated in Exercise BOLD EAGLE 77 in Florida. The 3,000 nautical mile voyage to Eglin, Air Force Base and back was the longest trip by an LCU. While sailing through the Gulf of Mexico, LCU 1543 rescued a commercial shrimp boat that was taking on water, yet they got in trouble for arriving late at Eglin. In November 1668, under the control of WO1 Harwood, the 329<sup>th</sup> participated in the first attempt to marry up an LCU 1600 with a Navy LSD.

Up until 1977, the company was still known as the “Traveling Terrapins” or even “Terrible Terrapins,” depending upon unit morale at the time, and they even had box

turtle as a mascot kept in a rock-lined pit in front of the orderly room. In 1977, Captain Charles Beck, Jr., did not like the idea of a turtle as the mascot, because it was slow and was not an inspiring military mascot. However, the men loved the name because LCUs were slow, especially when going up river. The company then became known as the "Seadogs." This name did not last long.

In January 1978, the company sent LCUs 1543, 1545 and 1590 to Morehead City to be readied for turn in to the 824<sup>th</sup> Transportation Company. In February and March the company received its last two LCUs, 1679 and 1670. From October to December 1978, LCU 1669 and 1677 participated in Operation GALLANT EAGLE in Florida. LCU 1669 also participated in the rescue of a commercial fishing boat. LCU 1678 and 1679 participated in Operation PIGGY BACK in October and November, where they picked up and delivered LARC XVs from Maine and delivered them to South Carolina. LCU 1679 ran aground at the mouth of Cap Cod Canal but the immediate action of the crew prevented it from sinking. She spent two weeks in Boston for repairs.

In 1979, the company continued to turn in the older LCUs, 1522 in March and 1560 in April. In July 1979, the 329<sup>th</sup> became known as the "Vikings" or sometimes the "Fighting Vikings." In February 1980, the crews moved aboard the LCUs to reside permanently. This was done to enhance the training in Skill Qualification Tests (SQT), Army Training and Evaluation Program (ARTEP), certification and maintenance.

LCUs 1668, 1669, 1670, 1677 and 1678 participated in JLOTS LIFELINE II at Fort Story from May to June 1981. The LCUs performed bow-to-stern marriages with *LSD Speigel Grove* and *FS790 General Sutton*. The company participated in LOTS LIFELINE 82, from April through May 1982. During which, LCUs 1668, 1669, 1670 and 1779 transported heavy equipment of the 497<sup>th</sup> Port Engineer Company in convoy to the US Army Depot at Charleston, South Carolina, 1678 hauled material handling equipment to Fort Story and LCU 1587 transported material handling equipment to Fort Story and Little Creek. LIFELINES became annual LOTS training exercises. In September 1982, LCUs 1669, 1677 and 1678 deployed to Camp Lejuene, North Carolina to fire weapons and support the 2<sup>nd</sup> Landing Support Battalion's Field Training Exercise. The LCUs transported all the equipment to and from Milehomoc Bay and Onslow Beach. Captain Donald Parker commanded the company from 1979 through 1982 and went on to become a brigadier general.

On 18 August 1983, LCUs 1668, 1677, 1678 and 1669 loaded onto the *USN Nassau* to sail down to the coast of Honduras where they would participate in the SOUTHCOM Exercise AHAUS TARA II. LCUs 1669 and 1678 were dropped off at Puerto Castilla and transported troops and equipment between there and the port of Puerto Cortez. LCUs 1669 returned on the *USS Raleigh* and 1678 returned on the *USS Pensacola* in December. The 43<sup>rd</sup> Support Group of the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division presented them with a Certificate of Appreciation for their outstanding support during the exercise.

The *Nassau* continued through the Panama Canal and dropped off LCUs 1668 *Belleau Wood* and 1677 *Brandywine* at San Lorenzo on the Pacific side. There they delivered



cargo and equipment for the US Marines to build an installation on Tiger Island in the Gulf of Fonseca, between Nicaragua and El Salvador. This was the sea line of communication from Nicaragua supporting the insurgency in El Salvador. Since the United States had thrown in its support with El Salvador, this base would monitor enemy supply traffic. The two LCUs finished their work in February 1984 but the Navy did not have any lift available to take them back. They instead sailed 870 miles to Panama where they supported the 193<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Brigade while waiting for a Navy lift back to Fort Eustis. In April, they participated in a humanitarian support mission to transport essential equipment and supplies for the construction of a bridge in a village for the San Blas Indians. Finally the Navy informed them that it could not provide any ships capable of bringing the two LCUs home until the end of the year.

Captain William T. Brown, commander of the 329<sup>th</sup> considered having the LCUs self-deploy back. This had never been done before. The furthest that any LCU had sailed was to Puerto Rico or Florida Panhandle. The obvious route was straight up the coast, which crossed through the territorial waters of Nicaragua. Since the United States was supporting Contra efforts to overthrow the country, Brown felt the LCUs would need Naval escort. This was not available so the planners decided that the LCUs should instead sail down the coast of Colombia and then up the Caribbean Island chain, hopping from island to island. The crews which planned the route flew down and replaced the other crews and on 21 May 1984, the two LCUs started their journey. They ran into gale force winds after leaving the Netherland Antilles and had to seek safe haven in Bonaire for 48 hours. The boats became a tourist attraction during their layover. After the weather cleared, they made their way for St Georges, Grenada then St. Lucia. After refueling on St Lucia, they set sail for Roosevelt Roads Naval Base, Puerto Rico, where they remained for three days. They married up with LT 1972 from the 73<sup>rd</sup> Transportation Company returning from Exercise OCEAN VENTURE 84. The three vessels arrived at Mayport Navy Station, Florida, where the 100-foot tug remained. LCUs 1668 and 1677 arrived at Fort Eustis on 17 June 1984 completing a 3,800 nautical mile journey.

For this deployment and participation in a JLOTS at Fort Story, GALLANT EAGLE in California and STANDARD AURA (Leg III), the 329<sup>th</sup> Transportation Company earned the TRADOC and FORSCOM unit of the year award for 1884.

From December 1985 to March 1986, LCU 1670 participated in Exercises BLAZING TRAILS 86 in Panama, and LCUs 1519, 1579 and 1668 participated in PUENTE DE LA PAZ and KINDLE LIBERTY 86 in Costa Rica. LCU 1668 received the "Cutting Edge Award" from the 193<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Brigade for its outstanding performance while participating in KINDLE LIBERTY. Captain Kathleen M. Gainey commanded the 329<sup>th</sup> from 1984 through 1987 and later became a brigadier general.

From May to June 1989, LCUs 1669, 1678 and 1679 participated in LANTCOM Exercise SOLID SHIELD at Camp Lejuene.

From July to September, LCUs 1668, 1669, 1670 and 1678 participated in Operation KODIAK transporting deactivating New York US Army National Guard M58 tanks primarily from Albany, New York down the Hudson River, out of New York Harbor, into Narragansett bay, through the Cape Cod Canal, out to sea and up the coast of Maine, through the Bay of Fundy, and into the Saint Johns river to a Canadian Forces Base (similar to the National Training Center) called CFB Gaugetown. The M58s were to be outfitted and used by Canadian Forces as a brigade plus size opposing force (OPFOR). Particular to this mission was the transit into Saint Johns, Canada, where the entrance into the river was only accessible during a 14 minute period during each high tide when the traditional waterfall at the river mouth actually became even with the tide elevation (sea level) and the rushing outbound current flowing over the rock ledge/waterfall stood still for a very short period of time. The transit of the LCUs through this choke point brought out hundreds of spectators who lined the highway bridge that spanned the gorge at the reversing waterfalls to view the movement of the LCUs through the falls.

On 27 September 1989, LCUs 1670, 1677, 1678 and 1679 deployed to Charleston, South Carolina, within eight hours of commitment for Hurricane Hugo disaster relief. They were primarily used as ferries tasked directly to FEMA to move relief supplies, local government support base equipment, and utility crews from Charleston proper out to Sullivan's Island, since the bridge that connected Sullivan's Island to the mainland had been destroyed during the hurricane. LCUs 1677 and 1679 were released by FEMA on 14 October and returned to Fort Eustis. FEMA released LCUs 1670 and 1678 on 1 November, and these two vessels were then tasked by the 7<sup>th</sup> Transportation Group to proceed to Savannah, Georgia to meet up with LCU 1669, 1670, and 1677 to pick up 24<sup>th</sup> Transportation Battalion equipment being returned from a BRIGHT STAR exercise that was held in Egypt. All the LCUs loaded this equipment on 4 November and began the return trip to Fort Eustis in a severe early winter ice storm that swept the eastern seaboard, arriving on 8 November. Upon arrival back to Third Port, the installation Harbormaster had to have a Large Tug break ice in the Skiff's Creek channel and in the harbor so the LCUs could enter port and moor. 9 to 11 November found all these LCUs and the entire Third Port Tug fleet tasked out to local communities in Hampton Roads breaking ice in various entrance channels to allow small boat traffic and primarily watermen out of the ice bound harbors and coastline.

In 1990, the 329<sup>th</sup> Heavy Boat received LCUs 1672 and 1673 from the 97<sup>th</sup> Heavy Boat. The 329<sup>th</sup> also was one of the first units to test the Global Positioning Satellite System. When 10<sup>th</sup> Battalion and 7<sup>th</sup> Transportation Group deployed to Saudi Arabia for Operation Desert Shield/Storm in 1990, 329<sup>th</sup> Heavy Boat was attached to the 71<sup>st</sup> Transportation Battalion on 13 November 1990 and was released back to 7<sup>th</sup> Group in August 1991. During the period that 329<sup>th</sup> Heavy Boat was assigned to the 71<sup>st</sup>, LCU 2005 (*Brandy Station*) and LCU 2007 (*Broad Run*) was detached for 8 months to US Army SOUTH to support SOUTHCOM operation AHAUS TARA in Panama, Columbia, and Honduras. These were a series of nation building projects that involved moving military construction units and material to the various locations. Primary locations included Nombre de' Dios (Bay of Gold), and Bocas del Toro in Panama, Puerto Castillia and Cortez in Honduras, and the boarder area in the Pacific between Panama and

Columbia. This exercise support eventually produced the first FOT&E data on the LCU 2000 vessel and ultimately lead to many of the first critical changes and upgrades the vessel class received over the next 10 years.

During early 1991, 329<sup>th</sup> Heavy Boat traded in its older LCUs for the newer LCU 2000s. It picked up LCUs 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2015 and 2016 from Pascagoula, Mississippi. The 97<sup>th</sup> Heavy Boat received LCUs 2001 through 2007.

In 1994, the Transportation Battalions of 7<sup>th</sup> Group became multi-functional. In that sense, each battalion had the capability to perform a variety of roles rather than just one. The 329<sup>th</sup> was transferred to the 24<sup>th</sup> Battalion.

The United States pressured the military junta in control of the government in Haiti to step down and allow the duly elected president Aristead to assume office. In September 1994, the 329<sup>th</sup> Heavy Boat deployed to Haiti as part of the 10<sup>th</sup> Transportation Battalion of 7<sup>th</sup> Transportation Group for Operation Uphold Democracy. This was the largest flotilla of Army watercraft since the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962. Initially, this was planned as a forced entry operation but after the military junta stepped down, the military operation shifted to peacekeeping and nation building. Because of the deplorable state of the road networks coupled with the fact that if a truck slowed down, the populace would overwhelm it and steal the cargo. Army watercraft out of Port Au Prince supplied the US Army units in the outlying areas, such as Cap-Hatien, Point Lobardi, Port de Paix, Anse D'Hainault and Les Cayes. The United nation assumed responsibility for peacekeeping in Haiti in December.

On 12 January 1998, 392<sup>nd</sup> Transportation Company, 24<sup>th</sup> Battalion received the USARSO mission to support the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) with one LCU to transport a US Coast Guard self-contained, drug interdiction package from Florida. The package consisted of two 40-foot containers, one "people pod" for berthing of seven to ten Coast Guard personnel and the other for recreation facilities. Two 8'X8' CONEXs on top of the containers contained parts and tools while another contained their water for drinking and showers. They placed a 20-ton crane in the center of the well deck with two Fountain cigarette swift boats on each side. The crane would lift the swift boats into and out of the water. The Coast Guard brought their own fuel aboard a civilian tank truck. It would usually take about a day to load. Once loaded the boat was under the operational control of the Coast Guard.

The LCU delivered the package to USARSO Headquarters at Roosevelt Roads, Puerto Rico. They would provision the vessel for ten days then sail to a location designated by the Coast Guard, anchor and wait. The Coast Guard carried secure communications equipment. Everyone on board the LCU had to have a secret clearance. Their destination was always kept secret from the crew until they set sail for fear of eavesdropping by the drug smugglers. They first sailed to St Thomas. This was very boring work for the LCU crew as they would just anchor for ten days. If the Coast Guard received information of possible drug smuggling, then they would launch the swift boats to check out the target. After ten days the LCU would return to port for two to three days

to restock on provisions, then put back out to sea for another ten days. This became the routine. The crew had time to perform a lot of maintenance on their vessel. The first mission concluded on 5 February.

On 3 July 2002, Captain Theresa Placette, commander of the 329<sup>th</sup> cased the company colors for the last time. The 329<sup>th</sup> Transportation Company of the 24<sup>th</sup> Battalion was inactivated.