

458th Transportation Company

The unit was constituted on 2 June 1943 as the 458th Amphibian Truck Company as part of the newly created Transportation Corps. The 458th activated at Charleston Port of Embarkation, South Carolina, on 14 June. The company organized around the DUKW, a 2 ½-ton truck that could swim. It would perform ship-to-shore operations but unlike landing craft, DUKWs did not have to stop at the water's edge. They could drive right up to the supply depot.



The DUKW was an amphibious version of the 2-1/2 ton General Motors cargo truck. It was developed by the U. S. Army during World War II as a means to deliver cargo from ships at sea, directly to shore.

On 16 November 1943, the unit departed Charleston Port of Embarkation for training in England. It arrived on 4 December 1943. The 458th as part of the 5th Engineer Special Brigade it supported the assault landing at Omaha Beach on D-Day where it earned the arrowhead for the campaign. It also participated in the Northern France, Rhineland and Central Europe Campaigns and earned the French Croix de Guerre with palm for its actions during the invasion.

The 458th returned to the United States on 24 August 1945 and was assigned to Camp Gordon Johnson, Florida. On 5 December the unit designation was changed to the 458th Transportation Corps Amphibian Truck Company. It was transferred to Fort Eustis on 15 February 1946. On 29 September 1946, it was selected to participate in Exercise Aliso Canyon and moved to Fort Lewis, Washington, for the exercise. It returned on 20 December. The unit designation was again changed to the 458th Transportation Amphibious Truck Company on 7 July 1947. In

October 1947, Camera Crew No. 1 of the Signal Corps Photographic Center completed its 35mm training film titled, "Operation of the Amphibious Truck, DUKW." The 458th was the central operating unit in the filming. In February 1950, the company was attached to Second Army and participated in Exercise Portrex.

The unit was allotted to the Regular Army on 1 August 1951 and on 1 May 1952, the company was transferred to the European Command. On 20 April 1953, the unit designation was changed to the 458th Transportation Company (Amphibious Truck). It was inactivated in France on 20 October 1953 then reactivated at Fort Story, Virginia, as part of the 10th Transportation Battalion on 26 February 1955.

The company was transferred to Camp Leroy Johnson, New Orleans, Louisiana, on 15 June 1956 where it was attached to the 394th Transportation Battalion. During the flooding of Hurricane Flossie, it evacuated approximately 1,550 civilians and towed from or helped 160 vehicles in danger. On 5 November 1956, the company participated in Operation Atlas held at Theodore, Alabama. From September through November 1958, the company participated in Operation Rocky Shoals at San Simion, California. Again the company went to the assistance of the civilian population of Kenner suburb of New Orleans by evacuating over a thousand civilians during the floods in the latter part of May 1959.

On 15 October 1959, the company participated in a logistics-over-the-shore (LOTS) exercise at Gulf Beach, Florida and another at Port Arkansas, Texas, on 5 April 1960. During the summers of 1961 to 1963, the company provided support to the Reserve Annual Active Duty Training (ANACDUTRA). During the same years, members of the company also participated in LOTS exercises in Florida and Swift Strike II with the US Marines in the Carolinas.

On 24 June 1963, the unit designation was changed to the 458th Transportation Company (Light Amphibian). It was reorganized as a Lighter, Amphibious company and traded its DUKWs in for the new Lighter Amphibious Resupply Cargo (LARC) 5-ton which began to arrive in July. The COT, MG Paul Yount, had directed the US Army Research Command (USATRECOM) in 1956 to build a boat with the ability to drive on land. The prototype was built in July 1959 with final design produced in 1963. Besson, who was COT from 1958 to 1962, was instrumental in the purchase of them. They LARC V, with a 5-ton capacity, did not handle the way it was expected so most were given to Army Reserve companies. The first active duty companies to receive them were the 165th, 305th, 344th, 458th and 461st Transportation Companies.

The LARC Vs were not assigned until the unit completed its summer training. The 458th completed its turn-in and reissue by September. It also received the 254th Detachment with the mission of providing third echelon maintenance. In December the company also received its new M-14 rifles. The company tested its LARCs in a 394th LOTS training exercise at Port St Joe, Florida, in November. They had only minor problems with starters and magnetic clutches.

After the inactivation of Camp Leroy Johnson, the company returned to Fort Story on 15 June 1964 and became a part of the 10th Battalion, 4th Transportation Command. In preparation for deployment overseas to Vietnam, the unit received an influx of helicopter trainees who were converted to seamen. In September 1966, to company under the command of First Lieutenant

Walter D. Gruff shipped out for Vietnam aboard the *USNS Maurice Rose* by way of the Panama Canal and Long Beach, California. The company's operations-base destination was Vung Tau but enroute the destination was changed to Cam Ranh Bay.

The 458th arrived at Cam Ranh Bay, Vietnam, on 13 October 1966; at that time it was the only logistical, amphibious unit in the Operating Theater. The LARC Vs and other company equipment arrived at Vung Tau on another vessel. By the time the 458th members were united with their equipment, another LARC unit had arrived at Vung Tau.

The 458th had the mission to transport men and equipment from ship to shore where ever needed. Besides the LST beach at Cam Ranh Bay, they operated at Nha Trang, Phan Rang, Phan Thiet, and Vung Ro Bay. At Phan Thiet, 5 LARCs supported the 2nd Battalion 7th Cavalry during Operation Byrd.

The company adopted the nickname, the "Sea Tigers." First Sergeant Flynn asked John Hoeker to draw a Sea Tiger. The only picture of a tiger that John could find was the Esso Tiger in a magazine ad so he used that as inspiration.

The company, while under the command of First Lieutenant R. A. "Pete" Sellers, received six Boston Whalers to conduct harbor patrols in August 1967. The company's mission was transitioning from logistical and ship-to-shore operations to inland-water security and port security tasks. As the 458th was a unit transitioning from one major mission to another, 1LT Sellers attended strategy sessions with the 18th Military Police Brigade Commander and headquarters staff to create a plan to employ and support both the Boston Whalers and the inbound Patrol Boats Riverine (PBRs). The 458th built their own flotation pier for the boats on South Beach of Cam Ranh Bay so they could remain in and near company operations area rather than use the LST beach landing site. The Boston Whalers were assigned for use until the company received its Patrol Boat, River (PBR) MK IIs in early 1968. The 458th became the only PBR company in the US Army. The Transportation Corps provided one coxswain and engine man for each boat. There was also a Military Policeman as the forward gunner and a South Vietnamese soldier as the interpreter.

The PBR crews were initially sent to the U. S. Navy facility at Nha Be, California, for training. All replacement crew members coming from the United States would go through four weeks of Army security boat training at the Naval Inshore Operations Training Center at Mare Island, California.

The company headquarters moved to Vung Tau then to a Military Police compound at Ton Son Nhut Air Base in the Saigon area in March 1968, where it came under the control of the 92nd Military Police (MP) Battalion of the 18th Military Police (MP) Brigade. It was also the only Transportation Corps unit assigned to the Military Police Corps. The company positioned detachments of four PBRs, each, to First Logistics Command ports at Qui Nhon, Vung Ro Bay, Vung Tau, Newport, Cat Lai and Cat Lo. Each PBR detachment worked with a different MP company. The detachment at Vung Tau was attached to the 720th MP Company at Long Bien. The detachment at Qui Nhon came under the control of the 127th MP Company, 93rd MP Battalion. They searched sampans and set up night ambushes to disrupt enemy supply lines.

They conducted harbor and river patrol and ammunition ship security throughout the Qui Nhon area. In total the 458th patrolled 500 miles of inland waterway and canals. The unit designation was changed to the 458th Transportation Company (PBR) under the command of Captain Edward F. Ginsburg. The next Commander was Captain Robert L. Amick, Jr.

On 29 January 1969, while flying his L19 "Bird Dog" on a routine aerial observation flight, CPT Lermon N. Jenk spotted what appeared to be camouflaged sampans and bunkers along the edge of the harbor. Jenk radioed the position of sampans and bunkers to the Army PBR detachment out of Qui Nhon patrolling the waters of Qui Nhon. Ten minutes later three PBRs nosed around through the dangerously shallow waters to investigate the dike area. The Canh Sat (national police) had confirmed that the activity was enemy. The MPs on board the PBRs called for the VC to come out and surrender. Several enemy emerged from the bunker trying to run away. The PBRs opened fire with their .50 caliber machine guns. SP4 James E. Brady's PBR came under intense enemy return fire. He received a shrapnel wound in his left shoulder but continued to maneuver his boat to advantageous firing positions. CPT Jenk wrote in his report that "the PBR crewmen maneuvered their craft and continually exposed themselves so they could place more effective fire on the enemy." All three boats fired on enemy positions radioed to them by Jenk flying overhead. Throughout the fight Brady refused medical attention to operate his boat. At one point one of the machineguns jammed and he left the helm to help the gunner fix the weapon. The boats pulled back for several air strikes. Because Brady effectively blocked the escape routes of the sampans, he had sealed the enemy escape routes by water. When they went back in the MPs searched the area and found at least 15 enemy dead, ten enemy bunkers and 20 sampans. Jenk concluded that "The courage and intelligent decisions of these PBR crewmen were in keeping with the highest traditions of the military and reflected on themselves, their unit and the United States Army. SP4 Brady earned the Bronze Star Medal with V device for his actions.

Specialist Four James A. Loux distinguished himself while engaged in military operations involving conflict with an armed hostile force in the Republic of Vietnam. Assigned to the 458th River Patrol Boat Company, Specialist Loux was a seaman aboard a riverboat transporting aviation fuel in support of combat operations near Cho Thu Bay Village. When his boat struck an enemy mine and was engulfed in flames, the enemy force laid down a deadly crossfire directed from both sides of the canal. Although gravely wounded, Specialist Loux immediately raced to his machine gun and returned fire. He continued to fire on the hostile force until the hostile force broke contact. These actions enabled the rest of the vessels to proceed on their mission. Specialist Four Loux died of his wounds on April 5, 1971. He was posthumously awarded the Silver Star for gallantry.

The 458th inactivated in Vietnam on 1 September 1971. As part of the 18th Military Police (MP) Brigade, the 458th received the Meritorious Unit Commendation for the period of 26 September 1967 to 31 October 1968 and the Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry with Palm for 1966 to 1973.

The 458th reactivated at Fort Story as part of the 79th Transportation Battalion on 21 May 1972. It again received LARC Vs. In spite of significant shortages of MOS qualified personnel - due to its recent activation - it participated in a Joint-Services test and evaluation of Offshore Discharge of Container Ship II (OSDOC II) in October 1972. This was one of very few LOTS

operations conducted after the experiences in Vietnam. These were hard years for the company. The company finally reached operational readiness rating of 96% and passed its Annual General Inspection in August 1975.

When the 305th and 461st Transportation Companies inactivated, the 458th was the only active LARC V company in the US Army. The 458th Transportation Company became the first Transportation Corps line company to have a female commanding officer, Captain Elizabeth F. Otis, 1976-1977. From 1975 through 1976, the 458th conducted a number of amphibious exercises. LOTS training at Fort Story became routine over those years. The 458th Transportation Company conducted its last water exercise, "Surf and Sand Drive" on Red Beach, Fort Story, on 19 November 1976. It inactivated on 19 March 1977.