

1966-67

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ANNUAL HISTORICAL SUPPLEMENT OF THE
109TH QUARTERMASTER COMPANY (AIR DELIVERY)

1 January 1966 - 31 December 1967

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
I. MISSION AND CAPABILITIES.	1
II. ORGANIZATION.	2
Personnel.	2
III. CONUS TRAINING MISSIONS	2
Air Force Phase II & III Crew Training	2
Forklift Field Test.	2-3
IV. OVERSEAS MOVEMENT	3
Alert Orders	3
Change of Command.	3
Departure of Main Body, Advance Party	3
Arrival of Advance Body and Main Body at Cam Ranh Bay, RVN	4
V. LOCATION OF COMPANY	4
Completion of Billets and Operational Areas.	4
Rigging Line	5
VI. ARRIVAL OF 383D QUARTERMASTER DETACHMENT.	5
Origin	5
VII. COMBAT MISSIONS	5
Maintenance of Parachutes.	5
Rigging Capability	5
Direct Exchange of Personnel Parachutes.	6
PLADS and LAPES mission.	6
VIII. SOLDIER OF THE MONTH AWARDS	6
IX. REASSIGNMENT OF UNIT.	6
X. AIR DROP MISSIONS	6
November 1966.	6
December 1966.	7
XI. SUPPLEMENT TO UNIT HISTORY.	

The mission of the 109th Quartermaster Company (Air Delivery), as stated in TOE 10-407E, dated 16 December 1964, is to provide parachute packing, temporary storage and rigging of supplies and equipment for air drop by Army, Air Force, and/or other service aircraft, and to render technical assistance in the recovery and evacuation of Quartermaster air drop equipment. At full strength the 109th is capable of:

a. Requisitioning, receiving, storing, and preparing (to include packing of parachutes and rigging of loads) 200 tons daily of selected items of all classes of supplies and equipment for air drop by free, high velocity, or low velocity drop techniques.

b. Maintaining prescribed levels of Quartermaster air drop equipment and selected items of all classes of supplies and equipment required for air drop operations.

c. Performing organizational maintenance on TOE air drop equipment, and providing direct exchange for personnel and cargo parachutes used in Army aircraft.

d. Assisting, as required, in the loading of supplies in aircraft for air drop, and the ejection of supplies from aircraft in flight.

e. Supplementing, when necessary, the capabilities of other units engaged in parachute packing, parachute maintenance and air drop support operations, and providing technical assistance in recovery and evacuation of air drop equipment.

The 109th, as organized, has four Air Delivery operating platoons, each having a total capability of supporting all aspects of a mission independently (except for mess, supply, and administrative support), an Air Delivery office which has operational control over the operating platoons, and a company Headquarters which has command control over all elements, providing supply, maintenance, mess, and administrative support for the company as a whole. At full strength this unit has 6 officers, 4 warrant officers, and 257 enlisted personnel.

The 109th was stationed at Fort Campbell, Kentucky, from 20 September 1965 to 22 July 1966, assigned administratively to U. S. Army Garrison, and operationally to Support Command, 101st Airborne Division. The unit's primary mission at Fort Campbell was the support of Air Force Phase II & III crew training. This mission consisted of rigging heavy drop loads, assisting in loading the platforms onto the C-130 aircraft, providing personnel to fly with the aircraft, and recovering the loads and Quartermaster air drop equipment from the drop zone. A float of no less than 65 completely rigged loads was maintained at all times as back-up for the mission, and approximately 600 cargo parachutes maintained in a packed condition. During the period 1 January 1966 to 10 June 1966, a total of almost 600 heavy drop loads were rigged, air dropped, and recovered by the 109th in support of the mission. Support of the mission by the 109th was discontinued on 10 June 1966, the 109th preparing for overseas movement.

From approximately 15 April 1966 to 15 June 1966, the 109th was involved in the field testing of the Pettibone 10,000 lb capacity

1 Driven Rough Terrain Fork Lift and the Anthony 6,000 lb capacity Rough Terrain. Two of each type were shipped to the unit from Government Experimental Test Agency, Fort Lee, Virginia. An officer and NCO were sent from GETA to observe and direct the tests, and a trained civilian sent from Fort Eustis, Virginia, to train the 109th's mechanics on maintenance of the fork lifts. The unit provided the drivers and mechanics necessary to insure 24-hour operation of the fork lifts, five days a week, during the two-month period. The 10,000 lb Pettibone proved to be especially valuable to the 109th both in loading heavy drop loads onto the unit's transport vehicles for delivery to the aircraft and in the speedy recovery of the loads from the drop zone. Both of the two types of fork lifts are now available in the supply system.

On/about 1 May 1966, the 109th received its overseas movement alert orders. The Air Force Phase II & III Crew Training Mission was discontinued on 10 June and the fork lift test terminated on 15 June. By 5 July, the unit's equipment had departed Fort Campbell. On 20 July a change of command ceremony was held, Major Herbert R. Kimmel, QMC, relinquishing command to then Captain Christopher C. Crotty, QMC. Major Kimmel commanded the 109th from 8 February 1965 to 20 July 1966.

On 21 and 22 July 1966, the main body of the 109th departed Fort Campbell, flying by commercial jet, and on 23 July 1966, boarded the U.S.N.S. General John N Pope, and departed Tacoma, Washington, on the same day.

A 20-man advanced party also acted as the rear detachment, remaining at Fort Campbell till 2 August 1966. The advanced party was

able for turning in all remaining station property, transferring buildings, etc. On 1 August 1966, Brigadier General Mathison, U.S. Army Garrison Commander, Fort Campbell, noticed the 109th's motto, "The World is our Drop Zone", painted artistically on the 60 foot water tower at the corner of 47th Street and Kansas Avenue; volunteers were assembled from the 109th advanced party, and the water tower received a new coat of paint on 1 August. At 1200 hours, 2 August, the advanced party departed Fort Campbell Army Airfield, aboard an Air Force C-130 Hercules.

The advanced party arrived at Cam Ranh Bay at 1400 hours, 5 August 1966. It was determined that the 109th was assigned to the 96th Supply & Service Battalion (DS) commanded by Lt Col Arthur J. Gregg, and that the main body of the 109th was not expected until sometime in September.

Land-clearing operations began on 8 August on the extreme northern end of the Cam Ranh Peninsula, approximately five miles north of Cam Ranh Bay Air Field, in the vicinity of the 6th Convalescent Center. By 1200 hours, Thursday, 11 August, the advanced party was able to begin pitching tents (G.P. Large) for the accomodation of the main body, which arrived in Cam Ranh Bay at 0700 hours, 12 August 1966.

The 109th remained in its original area for two days, then on Sunday, 14 August, moved approximately one mile south, onto the hill overlooking the 6th Convalescent Center and the South China Sea.

By the middle of October, both the 109th and its support unit, the 623rd AM Co (AER&D), had constructed and moved into prefabricated tropicalized billets, and the operational area was completed by the 1st of November.

The 109th operational area, as it now exists, consists of two 200 foot long maintenance tents which are used for parachute packing, and one 100 foot tent used for organizational maintenance. Besides the tents, there is about 50,000 square feet of outside storage space. The 109th, because of the necessity of rigging and storing class V supplies, was forced to establish its rigging lines in the Army-Air Force ASP, located south of the Cam Ranh Bay Airfield and approximately 10 road miles from the 109th area proper. There are two rigging lines, covered by maintenance tents. Storage space, at present, is inadequate, but improvements are planned.

By 7 November, all personnel and equipment of the 383d QM Detachment (AS) were effectively moved from Saigon to Cam Ranh Bay, and were attached to the 109th. This detachment was originally formed at Fort Lee, Virginia; its personnel then coming from the 109th, which was stationed at Fort Lee until 20 September 1965. The 383d departed CONUS in June 1965.

With the additional personnel of the 383d, the 109th now has a capability of rigging 250 short tons per day.

The 109th now has the responsibility of maintaining and storing, in a packed condition, approximately 5,000 cargo parachutes to be used in support of various contingency plans. The unit is capable of rigging 250 short tons per day over an indefinite period of time, the restraining factors being availability of back-up air item supplies and the availability of aircraft.

The unit is responsible for providing direct exchange on all Army aircraft emergency parachutes in combat zones II, III, and IV, a total of 1,656 parachutes. The 109th has one direct exchange facility in Saigon, which supports zones III and IV, and a direct exchange in Cam Ranh Bay, supporting zone II.

In addition to the two above missions, the 109th must also maintain a certain number of LAPDS (Low Altitude Parachute Extraction System) and PLADS (Parachute Low Altitude Delivery System) kits complete, for use in air drop. These systems were recently adopted from the Air Force.

For the past four consecutive months, September thru December, 1966, a member of the 109th Air Delivery Company has won the distinguished 1st Logistical Command Soldier of the Month. For the month of September, SP5 Edgar Ray Jr., RA 19818081, since promoted and now a member of the 623rd QM Co.; October, SP5 Gary E Siden, US 55817669, since promoted; November, SP4 James G Lee, RA 15717235; and December, SP5 Richard Dunn, RA 19835689, since promoted.

On 10 December, the 109th was reassigned to the 278th Supply & Service Battalion (CS), commanded by Kay L Wieland, MAJ, QMC.

The 109th was given its first heavy drop mission in Vietnam on 21 November 1966. Air drops were made on 21, 23, 27, and 28 November; a total of 123.29 short tons of JP-4 (aircraft fuel) and 19.20 short tons of rations (meal combat individual) were delivered by air drop in support of combat operations. 73 8' modular platforms and 24 A-22 containers were utilized in delivering the above supply items.

The 109th closed out 1966 with an emergency resupply mission on 31 December. The mission consisted of air dropping 46.07 short tons of Class V supplies. A total of 56 A-22 containers were utilized in rigging and dropping the supplies. Two 109th Personnel, Billy J. Mathis, SSG E-6, RA 14485630, and Donald E. Baker, SP4 E-4, RA 18742502, parachuted in, to act as recovery supervisors on this mission.

SUPPLEMENT TO UNIT HISTORY

1 January 1967 - 31 December 1967

During the second week of the year 1967 the 109th went through extensive preparations in order to bring its stocks up to date after the air drops of the previous year. Immediately thereafter, the unit was subjected to a Command Maintenance Management Inspection and passed it with an outstanding score in both material and maintenance operation.

Our first distinguished visitor of the year 1967 was the United States Army Vietnam Commander, General William C. Westmoreland. He was very delighted and impressed with the location and the set up of the unit and its billeting facilities. At the time of his visit here General Westmoreland stated that he had asked for an air delivery unit in Vietnam in order to "relieve the load on the helicopters". He asked our commanding officer if we could perform our TOE mission of 250 short tons a day. In the subsequent months of the year the General obtained his answer by means of actual experience.

In the month of March the unit was given the mission to participate in a test drop conducted by the U.S. Air Force. Fifty C-22 containers were rigged and delivered to Ton Son Nhut Air Base for the test. Two rigger-qualified personnel accompanied the air drops. In the latter part of the month of March the unit conducted two air drop missions which consisted of 31 short tons of different classes of supplies.

The primary mission of the unit was put to a test during Operation Junction City during the month of April. A total of 551.25 short tons were dropped in a

short span of time. While the unit was involved in preparing for the air drop missions, General Lullis, Deputy Commanding General of 1st Logistical Command came to pay us a courtesy visit and observe the operation.

During the latter portion of the month General Dunn, MACV J4 came to visit the air delivery center. Since Operation Junction City was the first operation where a large amount of air drops were used, many interested officers wanted to get a first hand explanation of the unit capabilities and mission. It was also during Operation Junction City that the 109th made the largest 24-hour air drop in the Air Delivery field. Five hundred and three short tons were dropped then.

The month of May began uneventfully until the very last week when Admiral U.S. Grant Sharpe Jr., Commander in Chief of the Pacific and Air Marshall Sir Rochford Hughes, Commander of the British Far East Air Force, Royal Air Force, honored our unit with their visits.

During the month of June Major Albert B. Lanier Jr. took command of the unit from Major Christopher C. Crotty who had completed his tour in Vietnam. Major General Dwight F. Beach, Commanding General United States Army Pacific visited our unit during June and the subsequent month a complete turn over of personnel took place within the structure of the unit. Also during August Specialist Fourth Class Gregory J Franz was selected Soldier of the Month for the United States Army Support Command at Cam Ranh Bay and went on to obtain the 1st Logistical award for the same achievement only this time surpassing all other troopers within the Logistical Command.

The first portion of the year 1967 with its sporadic air drops and important dignitaries proved to be very dull in comparison with the numerous

missions received and successfully accomplished during the latter part.

On 3 September 1967 the unit received orders to move fifty-three riggers and enough equipment to rig CDS and LAPES for an indefinite period of time. The mission assigned to the detachment was to support the Marine Corps at Khe Sanh out of a base of operations located at Da Nang Air Force Base.

On 10 September personnel and equipment were returned from Da Nang after having successfully air delivered five hundred and thirty-eight short tons of construction material which was used for repairing the Khe Sanh Airfield. The unit received a congratulatory message from Lieutenant General Cushman, Commanding General, III MAF, Da Nang, for a job well done in the air drop at Khe Sanh. Two weeks after our personnel returned from Da Nang the unit, once more, received the mission to move personnel and equipment to Da Nang for another air drop mission. Upon arrival at Da Nang, after being airlifted there, the detachment began rigging and dropping class II and IV supplies. By the end of September a total of 124.3 short tons of supplies had been dropped into Khe Sanh. The mission at Da Nang continued while the remainder of the unit at Cam Ranh Bay received a number of air drop missions which brought our total dropped in support of the Marine Corps at Khe Sanh to 2,071 short tons.

It was during October that the unit lost Specialist Fourth Class Charles L. Baney who died in a crash of a C-130 at Khe Sanh. Specialist Baney was flying the aircraft as an inspector in order to insure the proper rigging of the aircraft. It was also during October that the unit was

Used to the Command Maintenance Management Inspection. Once more our unit came through with flying colors.

The new month brought a new Battalion Commander, LTC William G. Laub. Both LTC Laub and LTC Weiland, the departing Battalion Commander, visited the unit in order to familiarize the new commander with our operation.

The 383d Quartermaster Detachment, which had been attached to the 109th since early 1966 was ordered to move to Bien Hoa to begin operations as a separate air delivery unit.

With the departure of the 383d Quartermaster Detachment and visit of President Lyndon B. Johnson to Cam Ranh Bay the 109th Quartermaster Company spent another year in Vietnam.

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