

Cover Sheet for DCS 314-18/66 "Adios Amigo"

In the early hours of the morning of June 28th, 1966, the first contingent of troops stationed in the Dominican Republic as part of the Inter American Police Force began the long trek home.

The first soldiers to leave were from the United States....members of the 1st Brigade, 320th Artillery, 82nd Airborne Division. Packing, crating, and other ~~occupying~~ ^{leaving} preparations ~~for~~ ^{for} departure had begun two days earlier.

Over 400 of the 82nd's Airborne troops had been stationed at Camp Coleman, some four miles from Santo Domingo, since their arrival on the 1st of December in 1965. The first hundred, mostly drivers and vehicle maintenance personnel, started their 15 mile convoy drive before dawn....they were scheduled to arrive at their point of embarkation at daybreak.

The Organization of American States had voted their job done. All of the Inter American Police Force (IAPF) were to be pulled out within 90 days. Dominican voters had elected Joaquin Balaguer as President on the 1st of June...he would assume office on the 1st of July.

The long convoy of newly painted and re-stencilled trucks rolled by points recalling the ~~past~~ troubled past 14 months in the Dominican Republic....the Duarte Bridge where, during the height of the fighting, rebels had set up barricades to keep troop reinforcements from reaching the city....through the "rebel zone" which had been sealed off by the IAPF during the revolt....past the World Fairgrounds ~~planned~~ built during the regime of the late dictator Rafael Trujillo...along the George Washington Avenue where Trujillo was assassinated....and onto Red Beach, 10 miles outside the capitol city.

Red Beach...the small, palm fringed harbor where 400 US Marines landed on April 28th, 1965 to protect American lives and property when revolution rocked ^{HISPANIC} ~~the~~ island nation.

While the first evacuation ship...the LST "Waldo County"...loaded the hundred plus artillerymen and their vehicles, another ship, the "Churchill County", stood offshore. She would beach on the 29th to pick up another contingent of men, their vehicles and howitzers. The rest of the brigade, meanwhile, returned stateside on C-130 aircraft from the Santo Domingo Airport.

But the United States contingent was only a part of the peace-keeping force that reached a peak ~~of~~ strength of over 22-thousand men on land and over 8-thousand aboard ships off-shore in May of 1965. As the artillerymen began leaving, the police force stood at 8,000. Off these, 6,800 were from the United States and the rest from Brazil, Paraguay, Nicaragua, Honduras, and Costa Rica. This entire inter-American force was commanded by Brazilian General Alvaro Braga. The United States ~~team~~ portion of General Braga's force was under the command of Brigadier General Robert Linvill.

The men of the 82nd called Camp Coleman home for nearly 7 months. Their official mission was artillery support to the IAPF. During the late 1965 Santiago Crisis, they also ran the rebel compound. Otherwise, regular Army business moved as usual....training was kept up to date...there were 140 promotions....a few demotions....

The ~~brig~~ artillerymen were also involved in a medical Civic Action program while at Camp Coleman. Led by Spanish-speaking Doctor (Captain) Neville Pereyo, the unit's Aid Station treated or gave medicine to ~~maxx~~ a monthly average of 800 to 1000 Dominicans. Doing this for 6 months, the unit distributed more medicine than any other US unit in the Dominican Republic. One Aid Station NCO noted that Captain Pereyo had spent of his own money during the program. His example was followed by the artillerymen who contributed towards a wheelchair for a bed-ridden muscular dystrophy victim living some 15-miles from the camp.

As the "Waldo County" prepared to leave Red Beach for the 4-day trip to Sunny Point, North Carolina, IAPF Commander-in-Chief General Braga and other high level officers participated in a brief ceremony of farewell near the LST.

General Braga complimented the artillerymen on a job well done. General Linvill thanked the men for performing their mission to the best of their abilities. Following the expressions of thanks, the "Waldo County" slid off Red Beach and headed home as the 81st Army Band played the Dominican and United States national anthems. The same brief ceremony of appreciation was repeated for the artillerymen leaving for home via airplane.