

CHARLES THIBODEAU

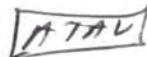
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[We are compiling material related to the service of Army Transportation Units during the Vietnam War. The major command structure used during that period is presented below with a separate page for each major unit. Any additions, contributions or corrections that you could make would be appreciated. Personal stories and pictures are especially welcome. Transportation units attached to Divisions and MACV are also part of our history. Please email [Ralph Grambo](mailto:Ralph.Grambo@uoregon.edu) if you think you can provide interesting items.]

ATAV WEBPAGE RESOURCES				
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ARMY  
TRANSPORTATION  
ASSOCIATION VIETNAM



## USARV Transportation Elements

The command was created in July 1965 to control support and logistical units for the Army combat units in Vietnam.

[Highway Traffic Center from David Lupinski](#)



### Aviation Logistic Support--34th General Support Group

[PIPESMOKE Item from Bob Morris](#)

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[Information on several Battalions from AVIAN 34 from George Arzente](#)

[Pipesmoke Professionalism--George Arzente](#)

1st Transportation Battalion	5th Transportation Battalion	14th Transportation Battalion	15th Transportation Battalion	58th Transportation Battalion	520 <sup>TH</sup> Trar B

ACADEMIC.UOFS.EDU/FACULTY/grambo/atav/157deg.htm

<http://academic.uofs.edu/faculty/grambo/atav/USARV.htm>

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Aircraft Maintenance Depot Seaborne	Aircraft Maintenance 101st Airborn	Aircraft Maintenance Support	Aircraft Maintenance Ist Cav.	Aircraft Maintenance and Support	Aircraft Maintenance and Support
66-72 	68-72 	65-72 	65-71 	66-72 	

**Aviation Support Listing**

Unit citations awarded by the U.S. cover specific time periods which may be found in DA Pamphlet 672-3. Many units were awarded multiple citations.

Company	Type	Dates	Typical Location see Map below
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Unit citations awarded by the U.S. cover specific time periods which may be found in DA Pamphlet 672-3. Many units were awarded multiple citations.

Company	Type	Dates	Typical Location see Map below
20th Trans	Direct Support	67-71	[REDACTED]
56th Trans	Direct Support	64-72	[REDACTED]
79th Trans	Direct Support	65-72	[REDACTED]
142nd Trans	Direct Support	68-73	[REDACTED]
303rd Trans	General Support	68-70	[REDACTED]
330th Trans	General Support	63-72	[REDACTED]
335th Trans	Direct Support	65-71	[REDACTED]
339th Trans	Direct Support	62-68	[REDACTED]
357th Trans	Direct Support	68-69	[REDACTED]
368th Trans	Direct Support	66-72	[REDACTED]
388th Trans	Direct Support	67-73	[REDACTED]
<a href="#"><u>539th Trans</u></a>	General Support	67-71	[REDACTED]
540th Ttans	General Support	65-71	[REDACTED]
604th Trans	Direct Support	65-72	[REDACTED]
605th Trans	Direct Support	66-72	[REDACTED]
608th Trans	Direct Support	68-72	[REDACTED]
610th Trans	General Support	66-72	[REDACTED]
<a href="#"><u>611th Trans</u></a>	General Support	62-73	[REDACTED]

The following historic information was provided [CW4 George Arzente](#) and is from AVIAN 34

<http://academic.uoris.edu/faculty/grainoorw/avav/USAIVY.htm>

11/13/03

published in 1970. He is also in the process of starting a Website for the 539th Trans Company. Contact him directly if you can help with material for his project.

### **34TH GENERAL SUPPORT GROUP**

Until early in 1966, supply and maintenance for the Army's aircraft in the Republic of Vietnam came under the control of the US. Army Support Command. This organization was composed of two Transportation Battalions (Aircraft Maintenance and Supply) the 14th with one direct support company and the 765th with one general and two direct support companies. Supply support was handled by the Aviation Supply Point at Tan Son Nhut Air Base, which was carrying 8,000 line items in support of 660 aircraft.

Major General John Norton, then Commanding General of the US Army Support Command, Vietnam, realized that his organization would be unable to handle the large aircraft buildup projected for 1965 and 1966. To meet this problem, General Norton appointed an ADHOC committee and gave it the project of creating an aviation logistical support organization capable of meeting the demands of the projected aircraft buildup.

The committee was given two guidelines. First, the new organization should be structured to provide one-stop maintenance (i.e., support at one location not only for the aircraft, but for its associated avionics and weapons systems as well). Secondly, the new organization should be able to grow with the expected buildup of aircraft.

Based on the recommendations of the committee, the 34th General Support Group (Aircraft Maintenance and Supply) was formed provisionally in November 1965. It was activated in January 1966 and given the responsibility of .... providing command and control of assigned and attached units performing the aircraft, avionics and air armament maintenance functions in the Republic of Vietnam". This mission includes aircraft maintenance and supply support for all Free World Forces in Vietnam.

Upon activation, the Group was composed of the 14th and 765th Transportation Battalions, along with assets drawn from the Army Support Command. During the first year of its existence, two more battalions were brought to Vietnam and placed under the control of 34th Group. The 58th Transportation Battalion (Aircraft Maintenance and Supply) (General Support) and the Floating Aircraft Maintenance Facility (FAMF), 1st Transportation Battalion (Seaborne) raised the Group's strength to four battalions. In March 1967, another General Support Aircraft Maintenance and Supply Battalion-the 520th was added, and in February 1968, the US. Army Aviation Materiel Management Center (AMMC) was placed under the operational control of the Group.

With the addition of these organizations, the 34th Group has been able to render general support to all Army aircraft in Vietnam. It is providing back-up direct support to divisional units in-country, including the 101st Airborne, Americal, 4th Infantry, 25th Infantry, and the 1st Cavalry (Airmobile) as well as the 1st Aviation Brigade. Other USARV aviation units receive direct support from the 34th Group.

In addition to meeting the needs of US. Army aviation, 34th Group also provides logistical support to elements of the Royal Australian Air Force, Republic of Korea Air Force, Royal Thai Army, US. Navy, US. Air Force, and the US. Marines.

## 14TH TRANSPORTATION BATTALION "RELIABLES"

The 14th Transportation Battalion (Aircraft Maintenance and Supply), commanded by LTC Tommy Mansfield, provides direct, backup direct, and general support maintenance for aircraft, armament, and avionics to aviation units in Military Region 2. With headquarters in Nha Trang, the 14th is made up of five companies.

The 79th Transportation ('company (ADS) at Qui Nhon provide' maintenance and technical supply support to 279 aircraft in the northeastern section of the Military Region 2. With an area of operation extending from the southern border of Military Region 1 to An Khe, this unit has the most diversified supply mission within the 14th Battalion. It stocks approximately 11,000 Federal Stock Number items.

Under the command of Major Samuel J. Kowal, the 79th is responsible for retrograding and in-processing the majority of aircraft received by the 14th. It is also the Direct Support Unit (DSU) for the Theater Aircraft Reparable Program (TARP).

The 604th Transportation company (ADS) at Camp Holloway in Pleiku provides maintenance and supply support for 293 aircraft and stocks 9,100 lines of aircraft supplies. The unit's area of responsibility is the northwestern sector of Military Region 2.

The Commanding Officer of the 604th is Major Arthur A. Williams. The 608th Transportation (ADS) at Dong Ba Thin maintenance and supply company provides port for 380 aircraft and stocks 10,200 lines of aircraft supplies. Commanded by Major George H. Fasching, the 608th has the largest area of responsibility in the 14th Battalion, extending from the sea westward to the Laotian border throughout the southern portion of Military Region 2.

The 540th Transportation Company (AGS) is located at Qui Nhon and provides general support maintenance and aircraft recovery throughout the 14th Battalion's area of responsibility. It represents the battalion reserve for back-up direct support maintenance as well as providing general support activities for approximately 1038 aircraft. The 540th is under the command of Captain Frank R. Muse.

The 614th Light Equipment Maintenance Company (GS), commanded by Major Bobby R. Harris, provides support for avionics, communications, navigational, and flight control equipment in Military Region 2. It supports the 14th Battalion through three platoons are each located with the 79th, 604th and 608th companies.

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## 58th TRANSPORTATION BATTALION "VIKINGS"

The 58th Transportation Battalion (Aircraft Maintenance and Supply), commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Glenwood N. (Mikey) Parrish, provides direct, back-up direct, and general support to more than 1,100 Army aircraft in Military Region 1. Although the majority of aircraft it supports belong to the Army, the 58th also gives assistance to U.S. Marine, Vietnamese, and Korean aviation units.

The 58th Battalion's headquarters detachment and three companies are all located at Red Beach, Da Nang. Together they possess a network of closely related shops for specialized avionics and aircraft armament repair in addition to providing command and control for the continually expanding aircraft

maintenance and supply requirements in their area.

Commanded by Major Charles Thibodeau, the 142nd Transportation Company (ADS) supports 225 aircraft. Included in this number are 14 different types of helicopters and fixed-wing aircraft. The company's allied shops are staffed by sheet-metal repairmen, engine technicians, prop and rotor specialists, hydraulic mechanics, and technicians.

In addition to aircraft maintenance and repair-parts support, a well equipped armament shop is constantly rewiring, adjusting, and repairing armament systems of the numerous assault helicopters it services. The 142nd also has a CONUS retrograde facility which has evacuated more than 65 aircraft during the first six months of 1970.

"Fast and Sure" is the motto of the 610th Transportation Company (AGS). Commanded by Major John Webster, this unit is responsible for providing general support to more than 1,000 aircraft, as well as reassembling, test flying, and issuing all Army aircraft arriving in Vietnam through DaNang. Most of the aircraft handled by the 610th belong to the Americal and 101st Airborne Divisions.

Although the 610th is classified as a general support unit, it does perform back-up direct support maintenance when necessary and has the capability to perform limited depot-level maintenance (with the exception of mainframe repair). It also provides technical assistance teams to various aviation units in area for needed on-the-spot assistance.

The 263rd Light Equipment Maintenance Company (GS), commanded by Major Roy Doubrava, is responsible for maintaining the avionics systems of all Army aircraft in Military Region I. Although the unit averages more than 130 work orders a day, it has never had a customer aircraft lose a day out of action due to an avionics. The 263rd lives up to its motto of "Finest Support".

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## **520TH TRANSPORTATION BATTALION "SUSTAINERS"**

The 520th Transportation Battalion, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Robert E. Ainslie, provides direct, back-up direct, and general support maintenance for over 1,100 Army aircraft and associated armament and avionics Systems within the northern and western half of Military Region 3. One direct support company of the battalion is located at Cu Chi, while the battalion headquarters and the remaining units and elements are located at Phu Loi.

The 539th Transportation Company (AGS), located at Phu Loi, has been operating in Vietnam since 23 March 1967. Commanded by Major Wilbur R. Mixter, the "Hexmates" provide general support and backup direct support for 1,100 aircraft.

Commanded by Major Edward D. Collins, the 165th Transportation Company has recently moved from Bien Hoa to Phu Loi. Serving customers in the Bien Hoa, Long Binh and Saigon areas, the "Sword Sharpeners" provide supply and maintenance support to more than 275 aircraft. This move to Phu Loi has centralized supply and maintenance operations resulting in quicker and more responsive customer support.

Providing direct support maintenance for units from Tay Ninh to Cu Chi, the 20th Transportation Company, commanded by Major Larry H. Woodard, is located at Cu Chi and supports over 270 aircraft.

The 605th Transportation Company (ADS), commanded by Major Raymond E. Collins, provides direct support and backup direct support to over 500 aircraft belonging to units stretching from Quan Loi to Bear Cat. Assigned to the battalion on 1 April 1967, the "Pacesetters" average more than 35,000 man hours per month on their supported units' aircraft.

The Aviation Electronics Company, Central (Provisional), commanded by Major Roger D. Shiley, is the only provisional Avionics Company in the Republic of Vietnam. AVEL Central, with platoons at Phu Loi and Cu Chi, completes an average of over 5,000 avionics work orders monthly.

In addition to its line units, the 520th Transportation Battalion is responsible for the operation of the Army Aviation Refresher Training School which provides updated training in armament, aircraft, and engine repair for all aviation units in the Republic of Vietnam.

The "Pipesmoke" Recovery Section, which has become synonymous with the term "aircraft recovery" in the Republic of Vietnam, is also a member of the 520th Team. The only consolidated recovery section in the United States Army, "Pipesmoke" has recovered more than 3,500 aircraft since it was established in April 1967.

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## 765TH TRANSPORTATION BATTALION

### "STRAIGHT ARROWS"

The 765th Transportation Battalion (Aircraft Maintenance and Supply), is completing its sixth year of operations in Vietnam. Comprised of three aircraft direct support companies, one aircraft general support company, and an avionics general support maintenance company, the 765th provides maintenance and supply support to the southern part of Military Region 3 and all of Military Region 4. The battalion has direct support companies in Long Thanh and Vinh Long, while the remaining three subordinate units are located with the headquarters in Vung Tau. LTC Allison Nicholson is the Commanding Officer.

The 330th Transportation Company (AGS) is one of the largest and most versatile aircraft maintenance companies in the Army. It has operated in Vung Tau since 22 April 1963, placing it among the oldest support companies in Vietnam. Commanded by Captain Michael R. Kinla, the "Checkmates" support over 1,000 aircraft. Projects included in the 330th's work schedule are the repair of UH-1 "Huey" and AH-1G "Cobra" tailbooms and the fabrication of mounts and controls for the "Nighthawk" weapons system.

The mission of the 388th Transportation Company, located in Vung Tau and commanded by Captain James E. Clay, is providing direct support maintenance to Army aircraft, aircraft armaments, and related supply and recovery support (rigging crews) to non-divisional aviation units in the southern half of Military Region 3 and all of Military Region 4.

The 611th Transportation Company at Vinh Long provides direct maintenance and supply support to aircraft units in Military Region 4. Commanded by Major Leonard J. Spanjers, the company is the southern-most unit in the 34th Group.

The 56th Transportation Company, located at Long Thanh North airfield, provides direct and back-up support to the 34th Group. The company is commanded by Captain James E. Clay.

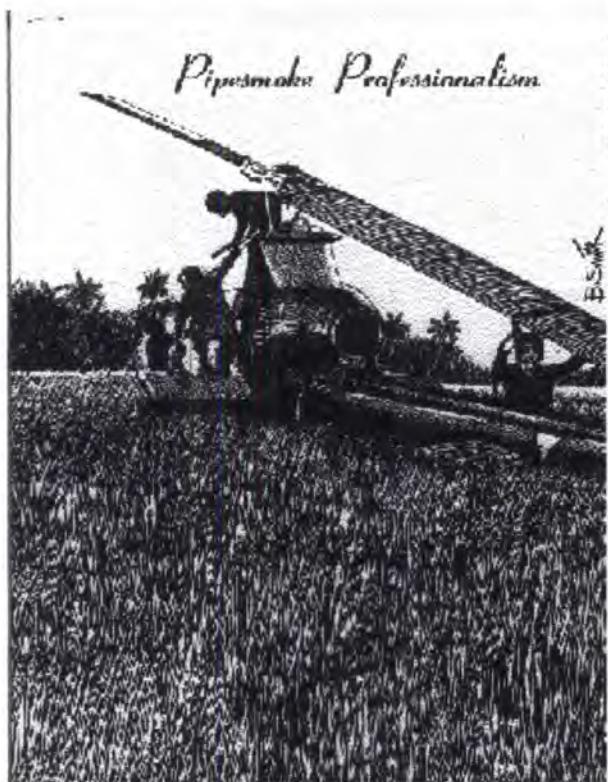
direct support maintenance to a total of 42 customers with more than 427 aircraft. This number comprises 273 rotary wing and 155 fixed-wing aircraft.

The 317th Light Equipment Maintenance Company (GS), with four platoons in Vung Tan and one each in Vinh Long and Long Thanh, provides avionics support to all units in the southern half of Military Region 3 and all of Military Region 4. In addition, the unit has provided specialized support for aviation units from as far north as Da Nang to as far south as Soc Trang. Captain John R. Wilhams is the Commanding Officer of the 317th. Many avionics systems, including the repair of airborne weather radar and the Ground Control Approach radar system are supported exclusively by the 317th. The unit's accomplishments include the processing of more than 10,000 work orders a month, administration of a Doppler Radar system School, and the return of more than 7,000 items to the supply system during July and August of 1970.

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## Pipesmoke Professionalism

from George Arzente



Although the 34th Group, as a maintenance and supply organization, performs a vital but rather unglamorous mission, it does include one unit that is involved with a very exciting job day after day. The "Pipesmoke" recovery team of the 520th Transportation Battalion is responsible for most of the field and maintenance extractions of downed Army aircraft in Military Region 3, many of which are performed under the adverse conditions of enemy fire, darkness, and bad weather. Traditionally, recovery of aircraft in Vietnam has been a coordinated effort between the direct support company, supplying a rigging helicopter with crew to prepare the downed aircraft for recovery, and the general support unit providing the CH-47 "Chinook" for the lift. The "Pipesmoke" recovery team is a unique unit in that both the rigging and extracting elements are under unified operational control. This is made possible due to the close proximity of the 520th Battalion units and results in the most efficient, best equipped, and most highly trained recovery unit in Vietnam.

Recoveries are categorized in two ways. Routine Maintenance evacuations involve the aerial transfer of aircraft that are not operational due to mechanical failures, repairable combat damage or accidents. These aircraft require airlifting from one secured area to another for repairs. The second type of recovery is known as a Field Extraction and involves disabled aircraft that have been forced down beyond the safety of base camp perimeters. To keep these aircraft out of the hands of the enemy, immediate extraction is essential.

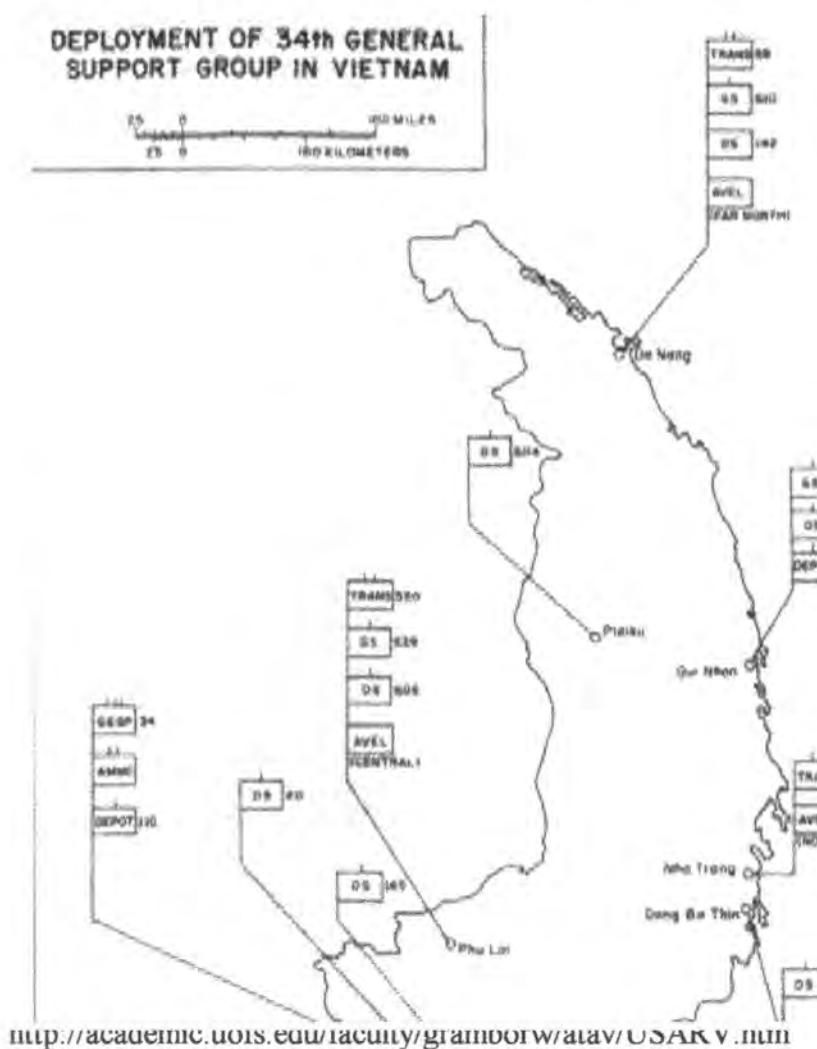
Averaging approximately 45 maintenance evacuations and 40 field extractions a month, the men of "Pipesmoke" have made more than 3,500 recoveries since April 1967. This figure represents not only

recoveries made - for maintenance and supply customers of the 520th - Battalion, but all other aviation units within Military Region 3 that require assistance. During the recent Cambodian operation the Pipesmoke team followed aviation units across the border and recovered aircraft for both the United States Army and the Vietnamese Air Force.

Late last fall, "Pipesmoke" achieved a notable first when it recovered a fully equipped CH-47 "Chinook" by using a "C" model CH-47 and airlifted it from Phu Loi to Saigon. This recovery marked the first time a "Chinook" had been recovered in Vietnam without having been first stripped of all detachable components, and demonstrated that the valuable helicopter could be moved out of danger much faster than was ever thought possible.

Requests for recovery missions come to the "Pipesmoke" operations center in Phu Loi by telephone from the owning unit or by air-to-ground communication from an aircraft at the scene. The "Pipesmoke" crew members are briefed on the mission and prepare the necessary rigging gear and Once on the scene, the recovery is made swiftly and carefully. Each man has a specific job, and in coordination with other members of the team, performs with long-practiced skill.

The personnel of "Pipesmoke" are drawn from the 520th Battalions resources. The enlisted personnel are all volunteers and hold highly sought positions. The men of "Pipesmoke" are considered to be the finest and most knowledgeable maintenance personnel in the 520th Battalion and hold a prestigious reputation throughout the 34th Group.



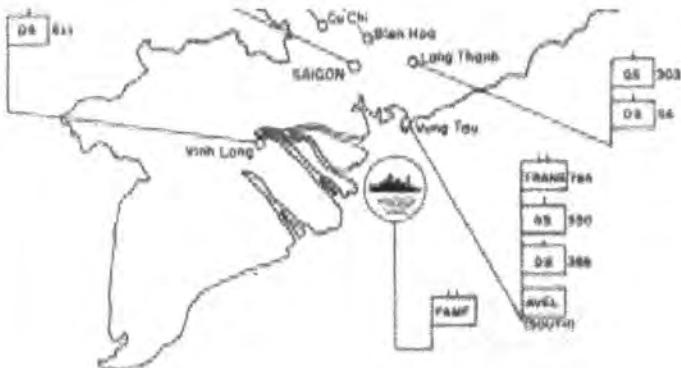
## Pipesmoke

Item contributed by [Bob Morris](#)

Here is a some history about the 605th Transportation Company (ADS) as I remember it. Also, I'm was not a transportation MOS soldier, I was 34D2 (EDP Repairman), which is a Signal Corp MOS.

\* 605th TC (ADS) - The (ADS) was Aircraft Direct Support. When I was with the unit, we were station in Phu Loi (about 25 clicks north of Saigon). I believe the unit moved into the delta area in 70 or 71. The unit had three functions, salvage, repair and parts.

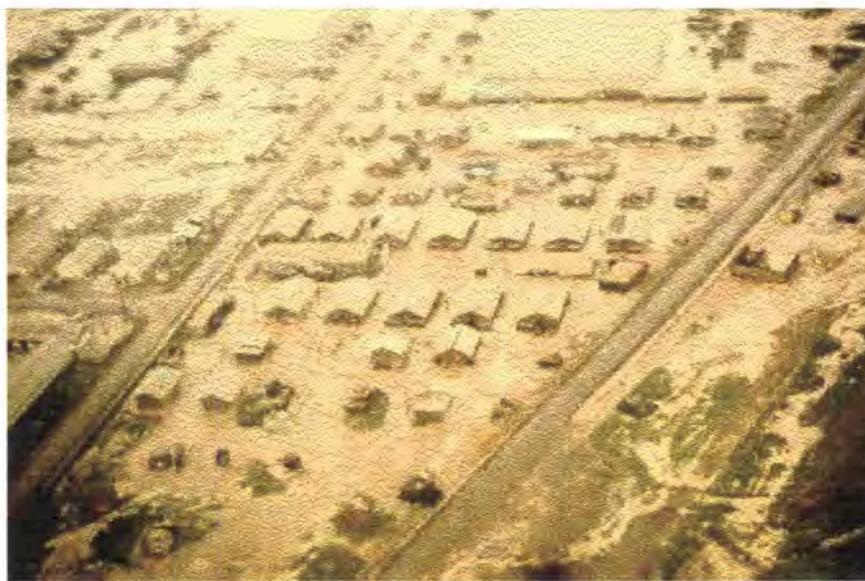
Salvage - This is where the Pipesmoke name was used, it was the unit's call sign. We had (I believe) four UH-1 "Hueys" and 4 CH-47 "Chinooks". The "Pipesmoke" platoon was



and serviced all the near by units. This where I worked. We had a NCR 500 computer system that was mounted in two 40 foot van trailers next to the warehouse. All the aircraft parts that we had on were inventoried on this system and I was the repairman.

As with any Army unit, we were always short on people for different jobs, so one of my "other" jobs with the unit was truck driver. I OJTed on a 5 ton tractor and flat bed trailer for a couple of weeks, then was cut loose making the twice weekly trip to Saigon/Ton Son Hnut.. That was a lot fun (I hated working on the computer system).

Another interesting fact about my unit, about 25-35% of the unit from Oct 68 to Oct 69 was made up of Army Reservists from Greencastle, PA. I don't remember the unit's name, but they were activated, training for a year at Fort Lee (I think) and then were deployed to RVN as fill ins to the 520th TC Bn. Thats about all the history of the 605th that I remember, hope it helps. And again, thanks for the ATA page.



HQ building (white roof), officer and senior NCO billets. Building below the HQ building is the mess hall. The next row down were troop billets, then the "Club" with it's outdoor movie screen in front, volleyball court and supply/arms room on the right. The next row of buildings were troop billets (mine was the middle one). The next row was an empty building and another troop billet. The last small building by the road on the right was one of the most important buildings around (especially late Monday mornings), the crapper. The circle at the bottom left was the shit pit, were Papa-san burnt the

responsible from recovering any aircraft wreckage from the field. The word "Pipesmoke" was painted on the roof of operations shack.

Repair - The unit has a repair and maintenance hanger. The was quite a few civilians from the LSI corp. that lived in our company area and worked in this area.

Parts - Unit had a parts warehouse

Aerial view of the 605th Transportation Company (ADS) at Phu Loi, take sometime between April and June 1969. The unit was located between the tow roads that intersect at the bottom of the picture and let out the west gate onto highway ???. The large building at the top right center was the maintenance hanger. The buildings in the row below the hanger was the billets that the civilians from LSI lived in. The next row is the company's

barrels from the crappers.



The large building was the parts warehouse, building on the right was the warehouse office and the trailer behind the barrel blast wall was the computer van (this was my primary work area). Photo was taken from the motor pool.



Inside the computer vans. This was a NCR 500 computer system, which was a magnetic card ledger system for tracking parts from the warehouse. There were also 3 IBM keypunch machines and a card sorter.





A "lift", Pipesmoke at work.

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### The Army's Navy



**USNS Corpus Christy Bay, The Floating Aircraft Maintenance Facility**

Photo from Bob Morris

"The most unique unit assigned to the 34th was the *USNS Corpus Christy Bay*, also known as the 1st Transportation Battalion (Depot)(Seaborne). In actuality, this was a floating aircraft maintenance facility which arrived on 12 April 1966 carrying 370 Army maintenance personnel and 130 civilian crewman. Thirty seven maintenance functions were consolidated aboard this ship, allowing it to function as a depot level

repair facility capable of doing complete overhaul and of fabricating components. Additionally, it carried a library of 180,000 engineering drawings on film and could broadcast over closed circuit TV drawings to satellite maintenance facilities. The Corpus Christi Bay arrived in Cam Ranh Bay in April 1966. She moved out of Cam Ranh Bay on 21 Sep 1966 and sailed to the harbor at Qui Nhon to be near the 1st Cavalry, the unit she primarily supported. The majority of support performed by this vessel was in open rice paddies and jungle clearings. [The U.S. Army in Vietnam, Leroy Thompson, p 132-133] I also found a picture of it anchored at Vung Tau [r.g.]

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### Army Aircraft Maintenance and Support in Vietnam

Growth of Aviation Logistic Support in South Vietnam From an austere beginning when two helicopter companies arrived in Vietnam on 11 December 1961, the total number of U.S. Army aircraft increased to 510 by 1 January 1965 and then further increased to a peak of 4,228 by September 1969. When the buildup commenced in 1965, the U.S. Army Support Command Vietnam had one aircraft maintenance and supply battalion (765th Transportation Battalion) to provide backup direct and general support for all Army aircraft in-country. This battalion was located at Vung Tau and consisted of direct support companies and one general support company. The three direct support companies were located at Vung Tau, Saigon, and Nha Trang. They provided back-up support for separate aviation companies having their own organic or attached direct support and they provided direct support for small aviation detachments that lacked this capability.

The decision reached was to establish a separate headquarters under the direct command of U.S. Army Vietnam. This basic organizational structure has operated throughout the Vietnam Era with only

one minor variation. Originally, the command was under the staff supervision of the U.S. Army Vietnam G-4. In October 1967, staff supervision was changed to the U.S. Army Vietnam Aviation Officer. Following the September 1965 decision to establish a separate command, the next two months were spent in developing an organizational structure and preparing the necessary authorization documents. In November 1965, a group headquarters was established on a provisional basis and finally, on 17 January 1966, a U.S. Army Pacific General Order was published activating the 34th General Support Group.

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