

# South From Alaska

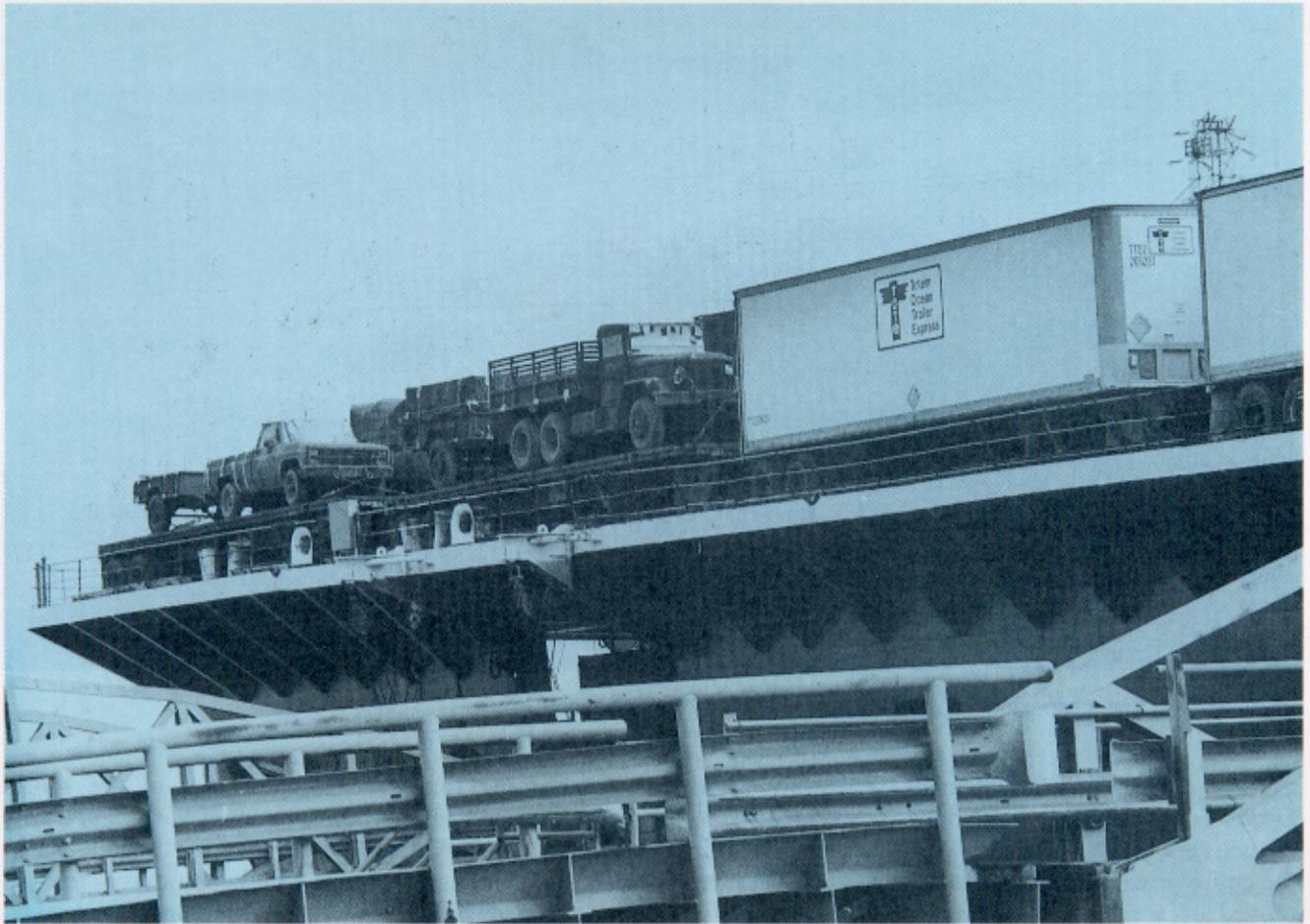
by Chuck Wullenjohn

A 6th Infantry Division task force uses commercial transportation to deploy to Fort Chaffee, Arkansas.

Major deployments of units from installations in the continental United States (CONUS) to overseas locations are not unusual. In fact, overseas deployments are made regularly during exercises like Team Spirit and Reforger. But deployments going the opposite direction, from overseas to CONUS, are rare. One of these "rare" deployments to CONUS took place last summer when 1,200 soldiers of the 6th Infantry Division (Light) deployed with over 325 pieces of equipment from Fort Wainwright and Fort Richardson in Alaska to the Joint Readiness Training Center (JRTC) at Fort Chaffee, Arkansas. The move provided an excellent opportunity to test the capabilities of the commercial transportation industry to support an Army deployment.

The 6th Infantry Division deployed to Fort Chaffee to participate in realistic combat training. The JRTC complements the highly successful training program conducted at the National Training Center (NTC) at Fort Irwin, California. The NTC sprawls across thousands of acres of hilly desert, offering superb maneuvering terrain for armored and mechanized infantry units. By contrast, the wooded terrain of Fort Chaffee's JRTC is ideal for training light infantry and other nonmechanized forces. Since it opened in October 1987, the JRTC has hosted, on average, a task force of approximately 1,000 soldiers (usually one battalion with appropriate supporting elements) every





□ Vehicles of the 6th Infantry Division are inspected and prepared for shipping (left) and then loaded aboard a roll-on, roll-off ship at the port of Anchorage (above).

other month. "Warfare" at the JRTC is a simulated conflict fought on a mythical Third World "island" in the Atlantic Ocean. In this scenario, troops arrive by air to take part in round-the-clock combat.

The 6th Infantry Division contingent arrived at Fort Chaffee from Alaska at the end of July. The soldiers' deployment over several thousand miles required the use of the four major transportation modes—road, rail, sea, and air. It was the first time the 6th Infantry Division had made a major CONUS deployment in over 10 years. As a light division, the 6th Infantry Division is capable of deploying all of its soldiers and equipment by air. To save money, however, only the troops deployed by air. Equipment was moved by surface carriers.

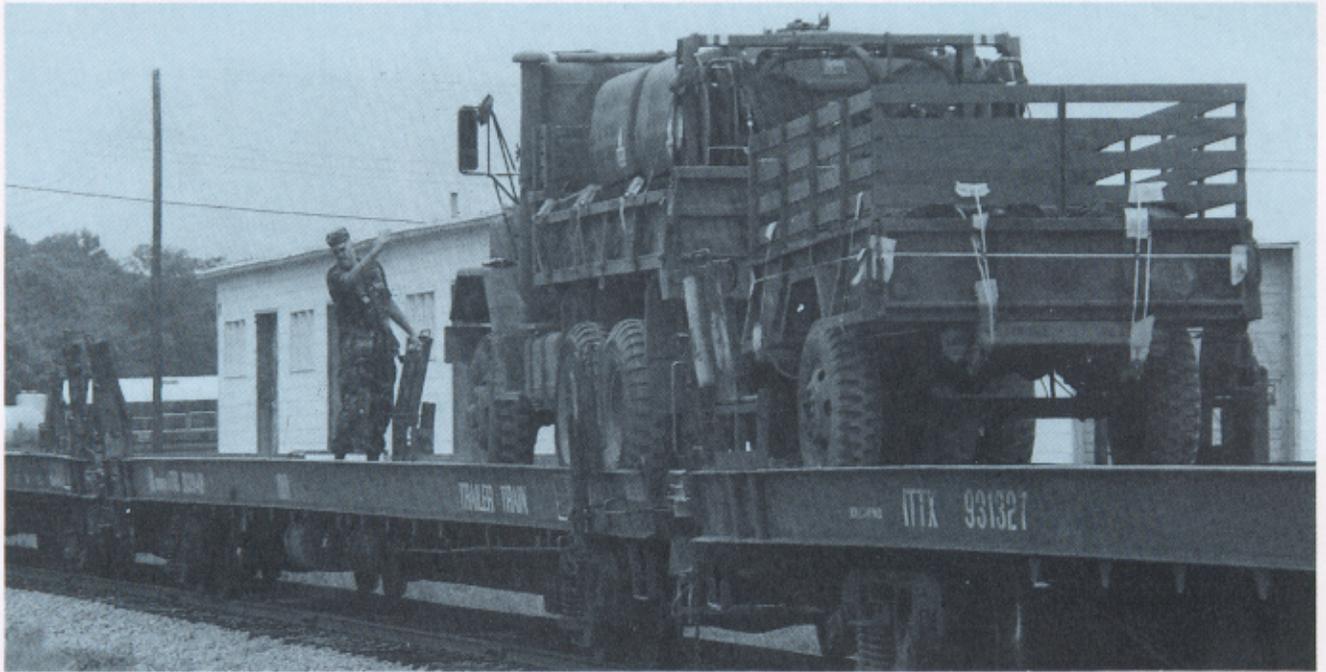
As the Department of Defense agency responsible for managing the surface movement of soldiers and equipment, the Military Traffic Management Command (MTMC) solicited bids for transporting the division's equipment from Alaska to Fort Chaffee. The Union Pacific Railroad submitted the lowest bid and was awarded the contract in early June. MTMC

Western Area officials at Oakland Army Base, California, coordinated the movement with the 6th Infantry Division transportation office and the railroad to ensure that all service requirements were fully met.

Only one road connects Fort Wainwright and Anchorage, so planners decided to move equipment to port by both road and rail. The vehicles and trailers were moved from their home stations to dockside by 40-foot flatbed trailers pulled by heavy haulers or by rail flatcars hauled by Alaska Railroad trains.

Totem Ocean Trailer Express moved most of the equipment from port facilities in Anchorage to Tacoma, Washington, aboard its two roll-on, roll-off vessels, the *Greatland* and the *Westward Venture*. A third vessel, a rail barge operated by Alaska Hydrotrain, carried a smaller amount of equipment from Whittier, Alaska, to Seattle, Washington.

Union Pacific personnel and commercial longshoremen met the vessels at Tacoma and Seattle and proceeded to discharge the vehicles and load them aboard flatcars the railroad had marshaled for the move. An



□ Vehicles are unloaded from rail flatcars at Fort Chaffee.

average of 20 flatcars was loaded each day. Totem Ocean Trailer Express and Union Pacific security personnel kept a watchful eye on the equipment during the entire process. As the cars were loaded, they were moved by a nonstop unit train to Fort Chaffee.

According to Ken Butcher, government traffic product manager for the Union Pacific Railroad, movements like the Alaska-to-Fort Chaffee deployment are viewed quite seriously by the railroad. "We do 50 or so unit moves like this each year," he notes. "Our advertising slogan calls Union Pacific a 'mainline of defense' and we view our strategic mobility role as exactly that." Union Pacific lines include 22,000 miles of track, stretching from Seattle to New Orleans and from California to Texas, and pass several major military installations.

Union Pacific normally keeps unit trains of military cargo moving along at a rapid clip, stopping only to refuel locomotives or change crews. The railroad has dedicated a pool of 450 89-foot flatcars solely to military service. These cars are leased from Trailer-Train at the railroad's own expense. Union Pacific can also marshal approximately 600 60-foot flatcars when needed.

The railroad delivered the 78 cars of cargo to Fort Chaffee on 24 July, 4 days after leaving Tacoma. A smaller quantity of equipment—9 railcars carrying 35 vehicles—was delivered to Camp Gruber, Oklahoma, at approximately the same time. Redeployment of the equipment—using the same modes of transportation in reverse order—took place in late August.

According to Alan Estevez, chief of the traffic management and programs branch of the inland traffic directorate at MTMC Western Area headquarters, "Here in Western Area, we handle unit moves for major exercises like Reforger and Team Spirit each year, while National Training Center rotations take place on a regular basis. We've established excellent ongoing relationships with our carriers. The Union Pacific, for example, provided a team of people at Fort Chaffee during the redeployment to help solve any problems and to give advice. Actions like these really show the partnership that exists between the military and the commercial transportation industry."

The commercial transportation industry is vital in maintaining the Army's ability to transport troops and equipment in both peace and war. But it is during times of peace—as demonstrated by the move of the 6th Infantry Division task force from Alaska to Arkansas—that the system is thoroughly tested and all the players get to know and work with each other. An old axiom states, "The more you sweat in peacetime, the less you bleed in war." The effort expended in the 6th Infantry Division's deployment will help prepare the Army and commercial carriers for the jobs they will have to do during a mobilization.

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