

HEADQUARTERS  
539TH AMPHIBIAN TRACTOR BATTALION  
APO 72

2 November 1945

313.3

SUBJECT: Transmittal of Historical Summaries of 539th Amph Trac Bn.

TO : Commanding Officer, Hqs Base K, AFWESPAC, APO 72.

Attention: Historian, S-2

1. Transmitted herewith are information copies of Historical Summary of 539th Amph Trac Bn from activation to 1 October 1945 and Historical Summary of 539th Amph Trac Bn from 30 September 1945 to 1 November 1945 submitted in accordance with Memorandum 104, Hqs Base K, AFWESPAC, 17 August 1945.

2. The originals of these histories are being sent to AFWESPAC through 14th Anti-Aircraft Command, the headquarters to which this unit is assigned.

DAVID W. INGRAM  
Major, F.A.  
Commanding

2 Incls:

1. Historical Summary fr activation to 1 Oct 45 (2 copies)
2. Historical Summary fr 30 Sep 45 to 1 Nov 45 (2 copies)

REF ID: A62800

HEADQUARTERS  
539TH AMPHIBIAN TRACTOR BATTALION

AFO 72  
1 November 1945

I

This Historical Summary of the 539th Amphibian Tractor Battalion for the period from activation, 14 April 1944 through 31 October 1945, is submitted in accordance with MUSECO Circular 62, 19 July 1945.

II

The 539th Amphibian Tractor Battalion was activated in the East Garrison of Fort Ord, California on 14 April 1944, by Section K, General Order 11, Headquarters III Corps, dated 14 April 1944. The new unit, under command of Major George W. Barick, consisted of Battalion Headquarters, Headquarters and Service Company, Medical Detachment, and line companies "A", "B", and "C". The battalion was first assigned to the 13th Armored Group for administration and POM training. On 3 June 1944 the unit was reorganized under T/O & E 17-125, 17-126, 17-127, which eliminated one line company and increased the personnel of the other two.

Most of the enlisted men and officers entering the new battalion were assigned from tank battalions and tank destroyer battalions, with some from other sources.

After completing POM requirements, the unit was assigned to the 13th Armored Group and moved to the Main Garrison of Fort Ord on 25 July 1944. There in the cold rough surf of Monterey Bay, all personnel trained in LVT's and made final preparations for overseas movement. This training over, the unit embarked at Fort Ord on 10 October 1944, and moved to Fort Lawton, Washington for processing.

On 16 October 1944, the battalion marched aboard the USAT "Imperial" at Seattle, and debarked on Oahu, T. H., 24 October to be assigned to the 19th Armored Group and billeted in Camp Koko Head. The next camp was across the island on Kalaheo Bay, to which the unit moved 4 December 1944. The battalion was assigned to the Tenth Army by General Orders 67, Headquarters USAF, POA, dated 9 December 1944. Being further assigned to the 4th Armored Group, the unit settled down briefly in Schofield Barracks.

Ordered to New Caledonia, the unit left Oahu in six detachments during the period from 30 December 1944 to 3 March 1945, traveling in AKAs, LSTs, and LCIs. With the arrival on 20 March of the last detachment at "Camp Hatanug" on Bouloupari Peninsula, New Caledonia, the unit took over its tractors and began training in amphibian landings with the 61st Infantry Division, and the motor park rang with the clamor of repairs and alterations. During the month of April the basic arm of the unit was changed from Infantry to Armored, and the assignment changed from Tenth Army to CINCPAC (Par 2, Assignment Orders 37, Headquarters, USAF, POA, dated 26 April 1945). Here too the battalion paraded in honor of the late Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, President Franklin D. Roosevelt, and celebrated V-E day in camp and in the nearby town of LaFou. Then the unit was relieved from attachment to the 61st Infantry Division and reverted to control of the Eighth Army (Letter Order 5-6, Headquarters Eighth Army, dated 17 May 1945).

## R-E-S-T-R-I-C-T-E-D

The battalion loaded into its tractors on 26 May, swung them out to LSTs sailing off Bouloupari, and embarked for Noumea, New Caledonia. After waiting a week in the harbor to take on supplies, the convoy sailed north on 2 June 1945.

Enroute the convoy stopped at the Island of Marus in the Admiralty Group, and Ulithi in the Western Carolines, then sailed westward, arriving in Leyte Gulf on 22 June to anchor among the wrecks of the Third Fleet. Five days later the battalion made an administrative landing at Black Beach south of Dulag, and began constructing its fifth overseas camp in the palm grove along the shore.

Here the battalion remained for three months, performing garrison duties, improving the camp area, servicing its vehicles and equipment, and doing guard duty at the Base K supply dumps in Tacloban, alternating the line companies between the Tacloban and Dulag camps. To climax an all-inclusive athletic program, Company "A" won the 11st Infantry Division Basketball Tournament-- Division champions even though a non-divisional unit at the time! While here three soldiers of the battalion, Sgt James L. May, Tec 5 James G. Nichols, and Tec 5 Murray Inselbacher, each received the Soldier's Medal for rescuing other men from drowning. Also the Executive Officer, Major Willie O. Cox, assumed command on 13 August 1945 when Lt Col Erick left for the States on 15 days TDYR.

Effective 1 July the unit was relieved from assignment to Eighth Army, assigned to Sixth Army (Par 1, General Orders 63, Headquarters 11st Infantry Division, dated 27 June 1945), and attached to the 11st Infantry Division. The unit was again relieved of attachment to the division and assignment to Sixth Army, and reassigned to Eighth Army effective 1 July 1945 (Par 1, General Orders 65, Headquarters 11st Infantry Division, dated 9 July 1945). The unit reverted to Eighth Army for duty by Letter Order 7-1, Headquarters Eighth Army, dated 3 July. On 12 September the unit was again relieved from assignment to the Eighth Army and assigned to AFWESPAC (Par 1c, Letter Order GSKOP 322, Headquarters AFWESPAC, dated 21 September 1945), and on the same order was further assigned to Philippine Base Section effective the same date. The unit was now under jurisdiction of Base K by authority of a radiogram from AFWESPAC, and began preparations to move to a new area nearer to Base K Headquarters.

The tractor crews ran their vehicles up the beach to Ordnance Service Center at Dulag and turned them in on 24 September 1945. During the next few days the unit received 14 new lieutenants (Par 1c, SO 267, Headquarters Base K, AFWESPAC, dated 25 September), and 197 new enlisted men (Par 3, SO 269, Headquarters Base K, AFWESPAC, dated 27 September), the number estimated to keep the battalion up to strength after all losses of men with 60 points and over.

APPROVED:

DAVID W. HERRMAN  
MAJCE, P. A.  
COMMANDING

WILLIAM D. ZIMMERMAN  
1ST LT, INFANTRY (ARMED)  
HISTORICAL OFFICER

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R-E-S-T-R-I-C-T-E-D

HEADQUARTERS  
539TH AMPHIBIAN TRACTOR BATTALION

AFO 72  
1 November 1945

I

This Historical Summary of the 539th Amphibian Tractor Battalion for the period from 30 September 1945 to 1 November 1945, is submitted in accordance with PHIBPAG Circular 62, 19 July 1945.

II

On 2 October 1945, the 539th Amphibian Tractor Battalion moved in trucks from its bivouac area at Black Beach to a new camp area near Tacloban, and began work at once for Base K.

Company A started operating cargo trucks for Base Motor Command on 8 October, Company B for Base Quartermaster on 15 October. Both companies ran their trucks 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and maintained repair and service facilities on the same schedule. These policies continued after 19 October when Company A was assigned to Base Quartermaster along with B. By the end of the month the battalion was operating 119 M/R cargo trucks in addition to those on its T/O & E.

Many personnel changes were made during October. At last orders started coming in to move the oldsters and high-point men to replacement centers, and by 12 October all enlisted men with 80 or more points, as well as those over 35 years old, were in depots waiting for transportation to the States. In all, 69 enlisted men and five officers passed around their good-by hashishoon. Though these personnel losses were partially offset by the arrival of 11 new enlisted men (par 36, SO 297, H<sub>1</sub> Base K, AFWESPAC, dated 25 October 1945) and a new Medical Officer, Captain Douglas G. Carroll, the present-for-duty strength was reduced to 23 officers, one warrant officer, and 578 enlisted men when the month ended. However, an additional two officers and 36 enlisted men were on order to leave the unit on 2 November (par 1, SO 99, 539th Amph Trac Bn, 31 October 1945), cleaning out the 75-point officers and 70-point men.

Major David W. Ingram assumed command of the battalion (par 1, General Orders No. 13, 539th Amph Trac Bn, 19 October 1945) when orders came sending Major Willie O. Cox to the replacement center to await shipment. Captain Harvey E. Ayers moved up to S-3 and Acting Executive Officer (par 1, SO 95, 539th Amph Trac Bn, 22 October 1945).

Two orders affecting the unit's status came down this month. First the battalion was relieved of all previous assignments and attachments, and assigned to 11th Anti-Aircraft Command (par 15, OSMOP 322, Letter Order, AFWESPAC, 15 October 1945). A later order, effective 15 October, assigned the unit to AFWESPAC and to 11th AA Command, and attached it to Base K for duty (par 32, OSMOP 322, Letter Order, AFWESPAC, 21 October 1945).

APPROVED:

DAVID W. INGRAM  
Major, F. A.  
Commanding

WILLIAM B. ZIMMERMAN  
1st Lt, Infantry  
Historical Officer