

Artillery Completes Airlift to Training Site

By WALLACE MITCHELL
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The 29th Infantry Brigade's 487th Artillery yesterday finished a 50-hour, round-the-clock airlift to the Big Island for five weeks of intensive field training.

The inter-island move was a training exercise for both the troops and the personnel of the 61st Military Airlift Wing based at Hickam Air Force Base.

The first C-124 Globemaster moved away from a Hickam ramp at 5:40 a.m. Thursday. Lt. Col. George F. Thurber, aircraft commander, and Capt. Clyde Pittman, Jr., co-pilot, had it airborne 20 minutes later.

In the cavernous belly of the workhorse transport of the Military Airlift Wing were Lt. Col. Francis A. I. (Mickey) Bowers, Jr., the Artillery Battalion's commanding officer and the officers and non-coms of his command section.

Chained to the deck was a 1½-ton truck with weapons carrier and Bowers' jeep.

The plane set down at Hilo's General Lyman field



at 7:05 a. m. Under the watchful eye of M. Sgt. John Campbell and Sgt. Vernon Billingsley — Billingsley the loadmaster and Campbell an examining loadmaster — equipment and men quickly debarked as the C-124's four engines idled.

The nose ramp was up and flight engineers SM-Sgt. Joe Jackson and M. Sgt. Norman Richard were asked for taxing power 12 minutes later for the return to Hickam for another load.

So it went — every 90 minutes a plane took off from Hickam with the 600 soldiers and 400 tons of equipment until the final flight at 7:30 a.m. yesterday.

"We trained about 150 of our men for this — to load and unload — and were ready," Bowers said.

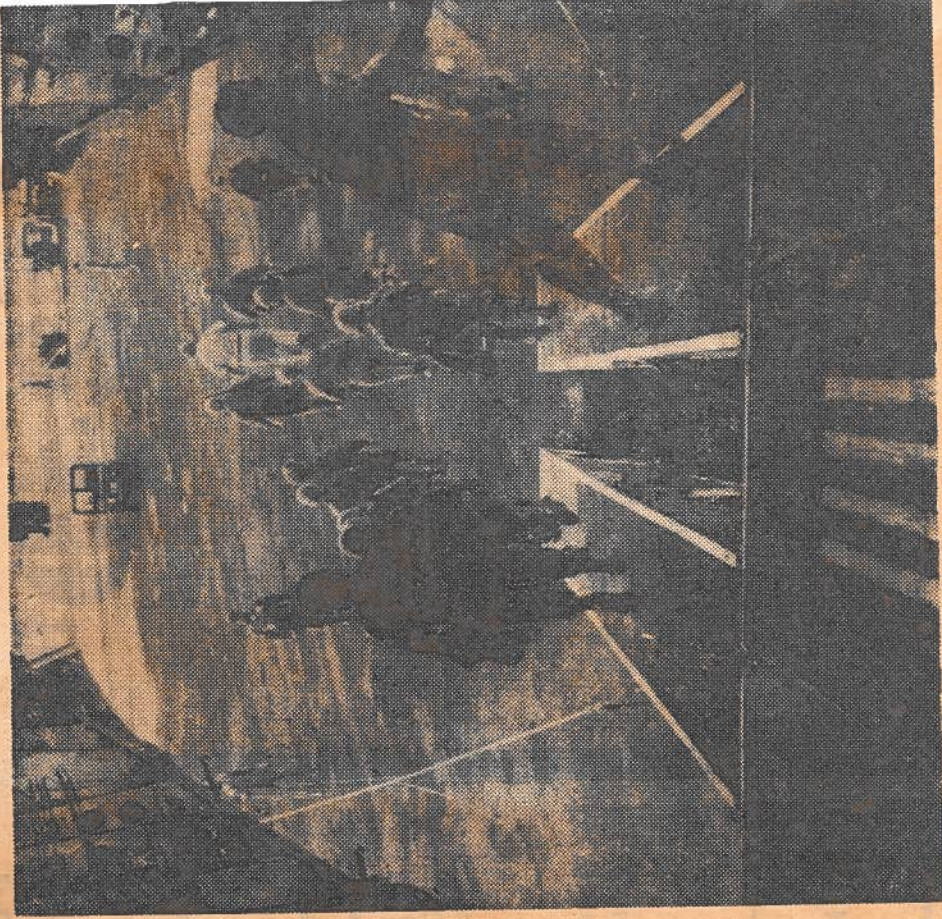
"It was a highly coordinated move with highly trained people and everything went off without a hitch," said the Wing's Sgt. Dick Carrig.

The artillery's return starting Sept. 21 will be part of a two-way operation. The 1st Battalion, 299th Infantry, will be airlifted from Hickam for its field training at Pohakuloa Training Area on the slopes of Mauna Kea.

As the foot soldiers debark at Hilo, the artillerymen will load their men and equipment aboard the C-124s for the return trip.

Sen. Daniel K. Inouye made his second trip to Schofield Friday to look over training of the 29th.

After a briefing, he lunched with Lt. Col. Fred J. Koehman, commander of the 2nd Battalion, 299th Infantry. He then went to Kahuku and spent several hours watching maneuvers of the 299th's 1st Battalion.



Men of the 487th follow their vehicles down plane's ramp.