

..... PARTING SHOT



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Over the Bounding Main

The overwhelming majority of the some 2.8-million American men and women who served in the Vietnam War shared the memorable, strange experience of flying to the warzone in chartered commercial passenger jets with uniformed flight attendants and airline food. But tens of thousands of troops arrived in Vietnam in 1965 the way millions of American World War II and Korean War troops did: aboard crowded troop transport ships.

That included some 4,000 paratroopers from 101st Airborne Division's 1st Brigade of the 327th Infantry who disembarked from

the U.S.S. *General LeRoy Eltinge* (AP-154) at Cam Ranh Bay on July 19, 1965. The men had left Fort Campbell in Kentucky on the first leg of their journey to Vietnam on July 2.

The *General LeRoy Eltinge*, which was launched late in World War II, was named after a West Point graduate who became deputy commander of the American Expeditionary Forces in World War I. The ship moved massive numbers of troops and materiel during World War II and the Korean War and served on refugee missions in the fifties and early sixties, including during the 1956

Hungarian Revolution and the Lebanon Crisis of 1958. It was relegated to reserve status in 1962, then returned to active duty in May 1965 to ferry troops and supplies from West Coast ports to Vietnam as the U.S. war escalated markedly.

Francis Cardinal Spellman, the Catholic Archbishop of New York, an outspoken Vietnam War hawk, journeyed to Fort Campbell to offer moral support to the 1st Brigade troops as they prepared to ship out. Among other things, the Cardinal handed prayer cards to the men as they went off to war.

—Marc Leepson ♦