



MOTOR POOL MESSENGER

the official monthly newsletter of the **MILITARY TRANSPORT ASSOCIATION**
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Issue: May 2024

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ON THE COVER...



A U.S. Army Hughes OH-6 Cayuse, the 'Loach' scouting the skies of Vietnam in 1968.

Following WWII, the technology of rotary-wing flight made significant advances, especially when used in military operations. The Korean War proved the necessity for this type of aircraft being used in regard to search and rescue missions.

In 1960, the US Army issued Technical Specification 153 and established the Light Observation Helicopter (LOH) program. This eventually gave way to the "loach" nickname, and was intended to provide the US military with such a light-class, rotary-wing craft that could fulfill a number of purposes: search and rescue, close air support, MEDEVAC, observation, transport, reconnaissance and attack roles.



Production of the Hughes OH-6A Cayuse, 1967. (Photo Credit: Bettmann / Getty Images)

The LOH program provided an opportunity for several companies to come up with their own unique designs. The Aircraft Division of Hughes Tool Company came up with the Model 369, which became

one of three finalists, alongside designs from Bell Helicopter Company and Fairchild Hiller.

The Model 369, had a distinctive teardrop-shaped fuselage, that led to personnel sometimes referring to it as the "flying egg". This aspect was further bolstered by the use of self-sealing fuel tanks that lowered the likelihood of a post-impact fire breaking out. It was crashworthy and provided excellent external visibility. Its four-bladed full-



articulated main rotor made it particularly agile, and it was suitable for personnel transport, escort and attack missions, and observation. It had a cockpit for two crew members, along with two removable seats in the passenger cabin.

The Model 369 was powered by an Allison T63-A-5A series turboshaft engine, and took its maiden flight on February 27, 1963, at Fort Rucker, Alabama, where it competed against ten other prototype aircraft produced by Bell and Fairchild-Hiller under the military designation OH-6A. During the testing phase, it became clear the Bell prototype was underpowered, so it was dropped. Up against Fairchild Hiller, Hughes Tool Company purposely undervalued its cost estimates, earning the company favor – and the contract. The U.S. Army requested 714 helicopters in May 1965, a number that was later increased to 1,300. Hughes's price was \$19,860 per airframe, without the engine.

The vernacular name for this unique flying contraption would become the Hughes OH-6 Cayuse Loach, a single-engine light helicopter designed and manufactured by the Hughes Helicopters company. Its formal name is derived from the Cayuse people.

Early on in its career, the OH-6 demonstrated its performance in a particularly prominent manner via the setting of 23 individual world records for

helicopters during 1966 in the categories of speed, endurance and time to climb.

In December 1967, the first OH-6As arrived in South Vietnam. Its straightforward design made it easier to maintain than most other helicopters, its relatively compact 26 feet main rotor made it easier to use in tight landing zones. While its light aluminum skin could be easily penetrated by small arms fire, it also crumpled and absorbed energy in a crash while the rugged structure protected key systems and its crew. The OH-6 was relatively difficult to shoot down, and its occupants would often survive forced landings that would have likely been fatal onboard other rotorcrafts. Typically, missions were flown during the daylight, starting at dawn; common roles included the clearance of landing zones and general intelligence/observation flights.



While in Vietnam, Loach helicopters operated as part of air mobile teams. They were employed in hunter-killer tactics, wherein they flew low over the jungle as bait to draw enemy fire. When the opposing forces exposed themselves, the crew would call upon an accompanying Bell AH-1 Cobra to attack. Infantrymen would also launch an assault from the ground.

A sobering statistic: Out of 1,419 Loaches built, 842 were destroyed in Vietnam, most shot down and many others succumbing to crashes resulting from low-level flying. In contrast, of the nearly 1,100 Cobras delivered to the Army, 300 were lost.

Following the April 1980 failure of *Operation Eagle Claw* (the attempted rescue of American

hostages in Tehran), it was determined that the military lacked aircraft and crews who were trained and prepared to perform special operations missions.

To remedy this shortcoming, the Army began developing a special aviation task force to prepare for future attempts to rescue the hostages: *Operation Honey Badger*.

The architects of the task force identified the need for a small helicopter to land in the most restrictive locations and that was also easily transported on Air Force transport aircraft. They chose the OH-6A scout helicopter to fill that role, and it became known as the *Little Bird* compared to the other aircraft in the task force, the MH-60 and the MH-47. As a separate part of the project, armed OH-6As were being developed at Fort Rucker, Alabama.

The pilots selected to fly the OH-6A helicopters came from the 229th Attack Helicopter Battalion and were sent to the Mississippi Army National Guard's Army Aviation Support Facility (AASF) at Gulfport, Mississippi, for two weeks of qualification training in the rotorcraft. The armed OH-6s from Fort Rucker joined the training program in the fall of 1980.

Operation Honey Badger was canceled after the hostages were released on 20 January 1981, and for a short while, it looked as if the task force would be disbanded and the personnel returned to their former units. But the Army decided that it would be more prudent to keep the unit in order to be prepared for future contingencies. The task force, which had been designated as Task Force 158, was soon formed into the 160th Aviation Battalion. The OH-6A helicopters used for transporting personnel became the MH-6 aircraft of the Light Assault Company and the armed OH-6As became the AH-6 aircraft of the Light Attack Company.



ATTENTION MEMBERS!

THE NEXT MTA MEETING WILL BE HELD ON THURSDAY, MAY 2nd 2024... MEETING WILL BE HELD AT THE WHIPPANY AMERICAN LEGION IN THE MEETING ROOM IN THE BASEMENT

Food at 6:00PM...Meeting starts at 7:00PM

MTA Meeting Minutes

Thursday, April 4, 2024 at the American Legion Hall in Whippany, NJ

*Recorded by Jean Swanick
Submitted by Michele Heusel*

The meeting was called to order at 7:00pm with the Pledge of Allegiance and a moment of silence. A motion to approve last month's minutes was made by **Jim Mescher** and seconded by **Andy Salzano**.

Treasurer's Report- ending March 31, 2024, submitted by **Al Mellini** is as follows:

Beginning balance	\$ 42,907.09
Income	\$ 1,505.73
Expenditures	\$ 1,912.31 (donation + swap meet expense)
Closing balance	\$ 42,500.51

A motion to approve the Treasurer's Report as presented was made by **Ken Gardner** and seconded by **Jean Swanick**.

President's Message- Our swap meet is right around the corner. Thank you to those who have already signed up to assist, we do have some areas that need a few extra hands. Please contact Gary if you have availability and didn't get to sign up on the sheet.

Membership- **Dave Steinert** updated the club that our current, fully paid membership stands at 106 plus an additional 23 life members.

Newsletter- Nothing to report at this time.

Parades- **Andrea Antonelli** will be sending around sign-up sheets, particularly to fill Memorial Day slots as we have several parades that day. An e-mail will go out as well to the club.

Quartermaster- **Gary Schultz** and **Michele Heusel** have received the new MTA womens' and mens' shirts to be sold at the show. There is limited vehicle flag inventory left, cost of \$18 and dash plaques are \$6.

Swap Meet- **Jim Mescher** addressed the group noting we are in a good position and all permits have been secured. **Ken Gardner** has the banners tonight to be signed out as well as lawn signs. Please display signs 2 weeks prior to the show. Only 2 uncovered outdoor, 2 covered outdoor and 2 Richards Building spaces remain unsold per **Tim**

Swanick. Multiple re-enactors are planning to attend the event, thanks to the efforts of **Pat Dolan** and **Dennis Vecchiarelli!**

Website- Nothing to report tonight.

OMS7- Nothing to report, getting ready for meet.

New Business- Two club members were presented with the **Harold Ratzburg Award** tonight, for their dedicated efforts to the club over many years. Congratulations to **Pat Dolan** and **Al Mellini!**

Andrea Antonelli mentioned to the group that when there are convoys for soldiers returning from deployment, such as to Picatinny, it would be a nice gesture for the club to participate in the convoys to show our support. Some research would need to be done as to how we can become informed of these events.

Old Business- Gary asked **Pete Shaw**, an original founder of the group, to speak a little bit about the beginnings of the MTA club. Interesting to note there was no set meeting place. Members would simply rotate houses to hold the meetings.

For the Good of the Club- **Gary Schultz** reminded everyone of the Hot Dog Johnny's Trail Ride taking place May 11th; an additional trail ride is being put together by **Chris VanOrden** to Sunrise Mountain at Stokes State Forest, then on to High Point, for June 29th. Due to steep hills and short turns, this is for jeeps and light MV's only. It should be noted there is no gas available past Yetter's Diner so please be prepared. Restroom availability will be primitive only-more details to come. Looking to bring your vehicle out, meet new friends and relax at the same time?

It's only a few weeks until "cruise night season". **Tim Swanick** mentioned the Starlight Cruisers will be starting in May on Fridays at the Boonton Walmart. Rutt's Hut in Clifton will be hosting on Tuesday nights and Dianne's Dairy in Towaco (by the Red Barn restaurant) opens their season this Saturday, April 6th from 1-5.

With no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned at 7:35pm with motions by **Jean Swanick** and **Andrea Antonelli**.

Respectfully submitted!

Jean Swanick recording the minutes in **Michele Heusel's** absence.

MTA 2024 Parades						
393	TOWN	PARADE DATE	LINE UP	KICK OFF	MUSTER LOCATION	MTA CAPTAIN
	Hawthorne	27-May			WAITING FOR DATA	Lesione
	Intrepid Carrier	May 25-26			WAITING FOR DATA	Dolan
x	Madison	27-May	8:30	9:30	31 Kings Road	Dolan
	Maywood	4-Jul	8:00	9:00	East Hunter Ave	Lesione
x	Midland Park	25-May	9:00	10:00	280 Godwin Ave	Lesione
x	Morris Plains	25-May	8:30	9:30	Franklin Place and Speedwell Ave	Dolan
x	New Milford	27-May	8:00	9:00	Cecchino Dr by H.S. & River Rd	Lesione
x	Nutley	27-May	10:00	11:00	The Nutley Oval on Franklin Ave	Vecchiarelli
x	Parsippany	27-May	11:00	Noon	Route 202	Dolan
	Randolph	6-Jul	10:00	11:00	Quaker Church Rd at Dover Chester Rd	Schultz
	Rochelle Park				WAITING FOR DATA	Lesione
x	Secaucus	18-May	10:30	Noon	11 Enterprise Ave North	Lesione
x	West Caldwell	27-May	8:30	9:30	Bloomfield Ave and Forest Ave	Vecchiarelli
x	Wyckoff	27-May	10:30	11:30	Cornerstone Church, 495 Wyckoff Ave	Lesione

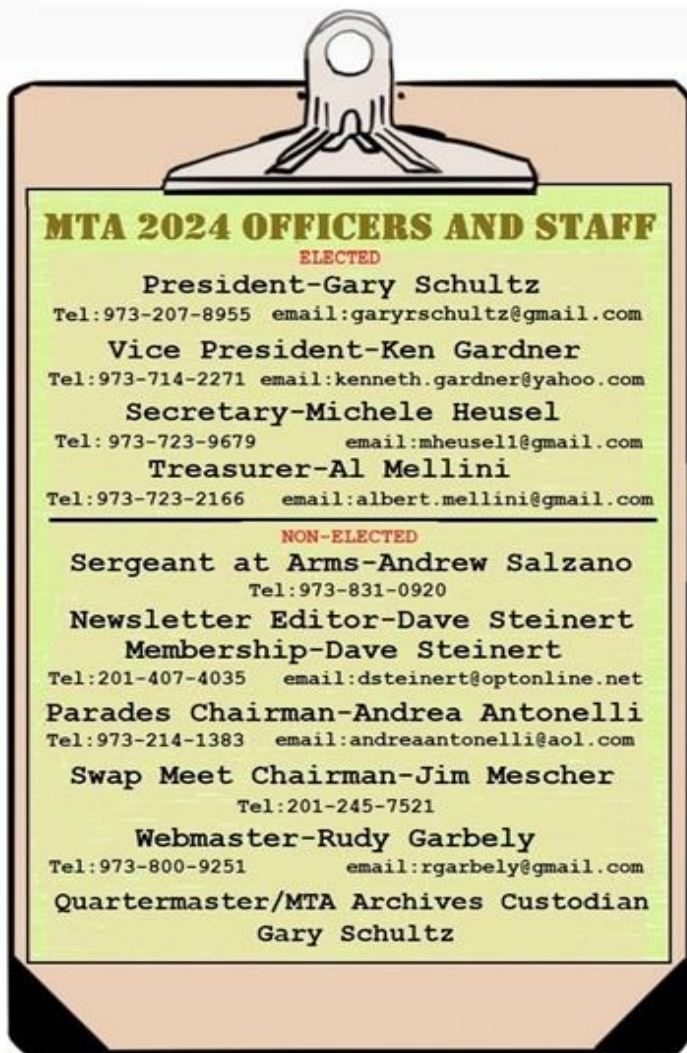
Memorial Day parades in yellow Midland Park, Morris Plains and Secaucus are SATURDAY parades

"Fill a Willy's Jeep" Project **THANK YOU!!!**



Thank you MTA Club Members for supporting my campaign for veterans!

It was a HUGE SUCCESS....together with the community we collected over \$7,000 in items including food, clothing, personal care items, puzzles, games, gift cards and more. Another \$1,000 in donations were made to the VA Medical Center of Lyons on behalf of the "Fill a Willy's Jeep" project. We were able to fill 2 military Jeeps, a humvee and a Jeep Wrangler. A special shout out to Gary Shultz, Al Melini, Tom Tanis, Andrea Antonelli & my parents for helping with delivery & convoy to the VA! The impact of this project was beyond what I imagined! **Thank you for your support! Nick Heusel**



MTA 2024 OFFICERS AND STAFF

ELECTED

President-Gary Schultz
Tel: 973-207-8955 email: garyrschultz@gmail.com

Vice President-Ken Gardner
Tel: 973-714-2271 email: kenneth.gardner@yahoo.com

Secretary-Michele Heusel
Tel: 973-723-9679 email: mheusel1@gmail.com

Treasurer-Al Mellini
Tel: 973-723-2166 email: albert.mellini@gmail.com

NON-ELECTED

Sergeant at Arms-Andrew Salzano
Tel: 973-831-0920

Newsletter Editor-Dave Steinert
Membership-Dave Steinert
Tel: 201-407-4035 email: dsteinert@optonline.net

Parades Chairman-Andrea Antonelli
Tel: 973-214-1383 email: andreaantonelli@aol.com

Swap Meet Chairman-Jim Mescher
Tel: 201-245-7521

Webmaster-Rudy Garbely
Tel: 973-800-9251 email: rgarbely@gmail.com

Quartermaster/MTA Archives Custodian
Gary Schultz

In 1965, the strategy of using helicopter-borne fighting forces was a new concept and basically untested. Many U.S. Army units in Vietnam initiated tactics spontaneously. The U.S. Army began to use Bell OH-13 Sioux and Hiller OH-23 Raven helicopters, once artillery spotters, to scout ahead of UH-1D Huey formations for landing zones and enemy locations.

Unfortunately, three-quarters of the country of Vietnam is geologically composed of mountainous and hilly terrain that prohibited the underpowered, obsolete helicopters to exceed their limits: They could neither fly fast enough to escape enemy fire nor carry enough armament to pose a meaningful threat.

Units in Vietnam began sending UH-1Bs outfitted with rocket pods and machine guns to circle over the scouting helicopters at around 600 feet and attack anything that might interfere with the imminent troop landing. But the Hueys proved too slow to do the job properly, and the need to replace both scouts and protectors was immediately evident.



THE "HELICOPTER WAR" – VIETNAM

Part 4

"The Loach Arrives in Vietnam"

By David Steinert

"You were right in the enemy's face with a helicopter and had to know what you were doing," recalls warrant officer Clyde Romero of his 1,100 hours flying scout missions over South Vietnam in 1971. *"It's like a street cop going into a bad neighborhood. You can have all the guns, vests, and radios you want, but you need street smarts or you're going to be dead within an hour."*

Most of the combat aircraft that fought and flew in Vietnam focused on higher altitudes and speeds that helped them escape enemy anti-aircraft weapons. But U.S. Army crews flying Hughes OH-6A Cayuse "Loach" helicopters flew low and attracted enemy fire—to set up the shots for the Bell AH-1G Cobras that circled above them. These "hunter-killer" missions, were among the most hazardous of the Vietnam War. These missions tested the resolve of the OH-6 pilots and the aerial observers sitting beside them. Although many were still teenagers, their survival depended on well-honed instincts and quick-reflexes.

In August 1967, the AH-1G Cobra arrived in Vietnam, which became the ultimate attack helicopter followed by the first Hughes OH-6A observation helicopters that arrived in Vietnam in December 1967.

As the obsolete H-13s were phased out, Loaches were partnered with Cobra gunships. The OH-6A Loaches, manned usually with a pilot and an observer and sometimes a door gunner aboard. They flew as little as 10 feet above the treetops at between about 45 and 60 mph, scouting for signs of the enemy. Cobras flew circles 1,500 feet above the scouts, waiting to pounce on whatever the Loach found.

For the majority of the Vietnam war, there was no formal Army training offered to prepare scout pilots and observers on what to expect in battle. Army headquarters developed doctrine by building on what worked in the field, rather than the other way around, and each unit in-country did things uniquely. Though Cobra pilots were trained Stateside, most Loach pilots didn't take control of OH-6s until arriving in Vietnam. *"You had a couple of flights in the Huey, then you*

rode front seat in a Cobra,” scout pilot Allan Krausz remembers. Krausz was ordered to Vietnam in April 1971, and today teaches Army students how to fly the Eurocopter UH-72 Lakota, a twin-engine trainer. After around 10 hours at the controls of a Loach, the pilots were deemed worthy of flying in combat.

Missions began every day at dawn, when crews were briefed on where to fly and what to look for. The Loach pilots and observers came to know the local geography intimately and could spot anything out of the ordinary.

Most engagements were 25 to 50 feet away when the Cobra opened up on the Viet Cong. As the Loach flew among the trees, the rear-seat pilot in the Cobra circled above and kept a close eye on the little scout and the front-seat gunner jotted down whatever the Loach observers radioed.



US Army soldiers work on a Hughes OH-6 Cayuse that was shot down in Tây Ninh province, South Vietnam, December 1967. (Photo Credit: BOB WILDAU / AFP / Getty Images)

Upon encountering enemy fire, Loaches were to leave immediately, dropping smoke grenades to mark the target so that within seconds, the Cobra could roll in. Loach crews were equipped with small arms and returned fire as they fled. They could also use grenades and on occasion even homebuilt explosives; more aggressive units mounted forward-firing miniguns. Cobras generally attacked with rockets, preferred for long-range accuracy, switching to the less-accurate chin-mounted machine gun and grenade launcher only if they were far enough away from friendly troops.

Warrant officer John Shafer was 21 when he arrived on October 16, 1970, to fly Loaches. “I was just out of flight school when I went to Vietnam.” He flew Loaches for the next 11 months, and today is an accountant in Seattle.

“I had a wingman shot down,” pilot John Shafer says. “They went down in the jungle, and both [members of the crew] survived. I had another lead that went through 150 feet of trees, and they survived

The observers and gunners had even less experience. “There was one day of initial training,” says Bob Moses, who was first trained as a tank crewman and then as infantry before a sudden transition to helicopter door gunner. “I went up in a Loach with an M60 machine gun to get used to firing the weapon. That was about it.”

Another such gunner was 19-year-old Joel Boucher, drafted and sent to Vietnam from 1967 to 1969. Boucher quickly discovered that life as a qualified crewman was

extremely dangerous. “We flew down along the Ho Chi Minh Trail,” he says of the supply route that wound through Vietnam and neighboring Laos and Cambodia. “The NVA [North Vietnamese army] was everywhere. Each time we went out, we got shot at!”

John Shafer himself had brushes with disaster, and his luck nearly ran out on a mission west of Dak To, near the border with Laos. “I got shot down on my 22nd birthday,” March 27, 1971. “I was flying wing and just dropped into the AO [Area of Operations]. Following the lead, we got peppered with rounds.” The Loach developed a bad vibration, but he made it about half a mile before he had to land. “Just as I set it down, the tail rotor spun off. The enemy was moving toward us when a [command and control] ship picked us up. Cobras rolled in and blew the downed aircraft up—taking with it about 15 bad guys standing around it.”

The hunter-killer tactic worked well for a few years, but by the time the United States left Vietnam, it was obsolete. In 1972, as U.S. troops slowly withdrew, the NVA began a major push that became known as the *Easter Offensive*. The campaign included the first major use in the war of Soviet-built, shoulder-launched anti-aircraft missiles. SA-7 Grail heat-seeking missiles could down a Loach before its crew even realized they were under fire. The Cobras high above had a few seconds of warning—they could spot the missile’s exhaust plume—but were all the more tempting because at their higher altitudes they were more easily seen than the smaller Loaches. The North Vietnamese deployed hundreds of the missiles, and from then on, both hunter and killer tried to stay well hidden.

By the end of the war, the Loach’s replacement was imminent. The Bell OH-58A Kiowa, powered by the same Allison T-63 engine as the OH-6, was being distributed to Army units, replacing the OH-6

Continued in the next issue of Motor Pool Messenger...

CLASSIFIEDS

To add or remove listings from the Classifieds, please email Dave Steinert at dsteinert@mtaofnj.org or call 201-407-4035.

For Sale: Own the world's best tailgating/cooking trailer. MKT 95 in operational condition. Includes 2 M-59 Ranges and 4 MBU V3 burners, griddle, and V3 Power Converter with correct MBU Branch cabling. Asking \$5000. Call John at (973)600-9486.

For Sale: 1963 Dodge M43 B1 w/o winch in very good condition. Comes with a large amount of spare parts and accessories. If there is an interest, contact Michael Maglio at 973-697 9419.

For Sale- Military 500 Gallon Water Buffalo for sale; \$300 or BO. Call John Sobotka at (862)-266-6284.

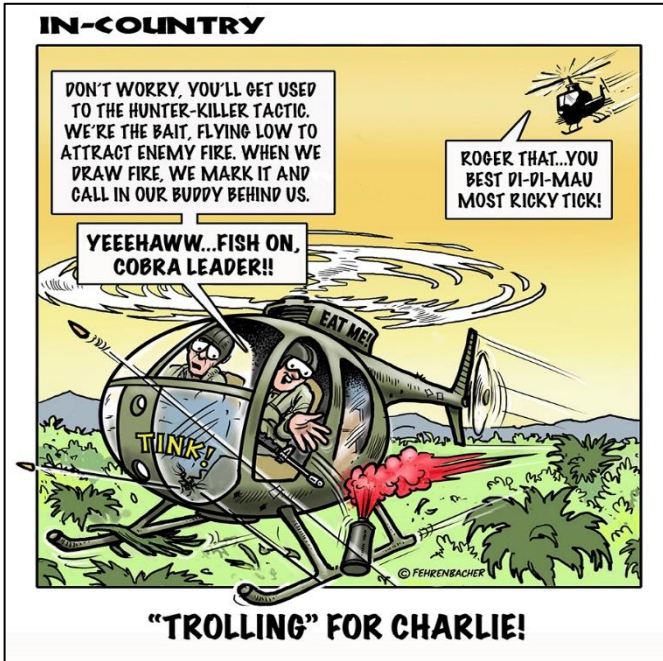
WANTED: Hello MTA Members, I am in search of a 1953 Dodge Power Giant D300 early two-whole Hydrovac brake unit. This unit can be found on many similar sized vehicles. Please contact me for any information / leads @ Bob Leach (mobile) 201-663-1093 or Email : robertleach59@aol.com.

WANTED: Hello MTA Members, I Am In Search Of Garage Space To Rent. I have two antique vehicles and other items I need to store. Please contact me for any information / leads @ Bob Leach (mobile) 201-663-1093 or Email : robertleach59@aol.com.

Military Transport Association

P.O. Box 391
Budd Lake, NJ 07828

**THE NEXT MTA MEETING WILL
BE HELD ON THURSDAY, MAY 2nd
AT THE WHIPPANY AMERICAN
LEGION POST AT 7 PM**



a chapter of the Military Vehicle Preservation Association

The Military Transport Association is dedicated to the education and preservation of historic to present military vehicles. Members enjoy restoring, displaying, and operating military vehicles of all types, from bicycles to tanks.

But trucks and Jeeps aren't all we do! Join today and participate with us at our annual Toys for Tots train ride and toy drive, help at our annual Swap Meet at the Sussex County Fairgrounds, or attend our special events for veterans. Our lively, informative monthly meetings are held in Whippany, NJ.

You do not have to own a military vehicle to be part of this exciting and active hobby - you just need a desire to do your part in keeping our military history alive. All you need to join the MTA is to fill out the the form below, include your dues payment, and mail it to the address below. Alternately, you can give your form and dues to any MTA member you meet at any of our events.

Name: _____

Street: _____

City: _____ State: _____ ZIP: _____

Phone: (____) _____ - _____ (cell preferred)

Email: _____

MTA Membership Level: Single (\$30) Family (\$35)

Are you a member of MVPA? Yes No

Military vehicles owned: _____

Return form with \$____ annual dues and \$____ donation to:

Military Transport Association, Inc.
P.O. Box 391
Budd Lake, NJ 07828

Contributions, gifts, or membership dues made or paid to the Military Transport Association, a 501(c)(4) organization, are non-refundable or transferable, and are NOT deductible as charitable contributions for federal tax purposes.

for more information, visit our website at www.MTAofNJ.org