

World War II, Korea, Viet-Nam & Today

Military

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Bosnia extended

NATO ambassadors have agreed to an indefinite extension of the force in Bosnia. They also want to create a Multinational Specialized Unit (MSU) of 800 personnel to conduct police operations. Britain, Germany and France have not rushed to pledge any specific commitments. So far it appears to be a U.S. show.

MSU missions?

If the mission of the MSU becomes hunting down and arresting war criminals... look out.

Pakistan's subs

Pakistan has taken delivery of the first of three French submarines.

Army gets an "F"

In a series of war games conducted by the Army After Next (AAN) project using units with the latest high-tech equipment, the enemy force quickly found a weakness. The mid-east scenario in the 2010 to 2025 time-frame looked like an easy win for U.S. forces designed for rapid deployment and a quick victory. The enemy simply withdrew to large cities where U.S. forces that followed were chewed up.

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AAN test

The AAN, part of the Army War College, found that the small, brigade-sized units designed for rapid deployment have difficulty in laying siege to a large city and the Army, in its rush for high-tech units, has overlooked "back to the basics" training in urban warfare. Decisive battles of the future, such as Desert Storm, may not be won in the open, but coastal areas and cities. We must stop training to fight the last war.

Lessons learned

The brass does not like to take the lessons of our operations in cities in Somalia and Panama and look to the future. These are soldier-intensive battlefields where expensive tanks, Bradleys and aircraft play limited roles as the infantry slugs it out, building by building.

Satellite photos

India purchased satellite photos of Pakistan's missile program. India also is seeking its own spy satellite.

Israel on Egypt

Israeli intel considers Egypt a major military threat. Egypt is considered to be actually spending 133% of their published military budget. They feel Egypt regards Israel as an enemy. Egypt has the most modern military in the Mideast, after Israel, and it happened with U.S. help.

Egypt's military

The Egyptian army now has four armored divisions with 3,500 tanks and their army can now manufacture M1A1 Abrams tanks. Their air force now has F-16s with AMRAAM missiles and a navy with U.S. Harpoon missiles. They also have eight motorized army divisions with British and Soviet anti-tank missiles.

China's missiles

Of the 18 CSS4 long-range missiles China has, most are aimed at the U.S.

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390th Bomb Group

A museum is operated as a memorial to the men of the 390th Bomb Group, 8th U.S. Army Air Force, near Parham village in Britain in the old control tower at Parham Airfield, Farmlingham, Suffolk. It's open to the public and for those interested in more details write Mr. Mervyn Wilson, 412 Burton Road, Derby DE3 6AJ, U.K. The sacrifices made by American airmen of World War II have not been forgotten.

DOD troop cut

The Pentagon announced it will cut personnel strength by another 24,000 because it cannot find the \$1.2 billion it would take to keep them on active duty. The Army will lose 8,000; the Navy 14,000; the Marines 1,800 and the USAF 695. A House subcommittee opposes the cuts but cannot find the needed money. The Senate does not oppose the reductions. The military's Quadrennial Defense Review considered a 60,000 troop cut as feasible, so more troop reductions can be expected.

Huge casualty impact

How long will America hang in there if several U.S. ships are sunk and hundreds die... or if a U.S. brigade must fight its way into a major city and, after days of fighting, our KIA's number in the hundreds? This is a reality as our military capabilities continue to erode and we keep deploying small units on peace-keeping missions.

Khmer Rouge leaders

The fact that some former Khmer Rouge leaders have found positions in government, with amnesty, cause concern that the movement is not yet finished, even with Pol Pot's death.

Turkish Navy

They have just received two new mini-corvettes armed with Harpoon missiles from Germany and have two more on order. Turkey is also interested in obtaining up to three small aircraft carriers.

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Troops of the Army's 101st Airborne Division prepare to mount an operation with a Navy PACV unit.

The Naval Command in South Viet-Nam

from "By Sea, Air and Land," by Edward J. Marolda

In contrast to the carrier, amphibious and naval gunfire support forces and, at least during early 1965, the coastal patrol force, which Commander Seventh Fleet directed, the Navy's forces within South Viet-Nam were operationally controlled by COMUSMACV. Initially, General Westmoreland exercised this command through the Chief, Naval Advisory Group. But the increasing demands of the war required a distinct operational rather than an advisory headquarters for naval units. As a result, on 1 April 1966, Naval Forces, Viet-Nam, was established to control the Navy's units in the II, III and IV Corps Tactical Zones. This eventually included the major combat formations: Coastal Surveillance Force (Task Force 115), River Patrol Force (Task Force 116) and Riverine Assault Force (Task Force 117). The latter unit formed the naval component of the joint Army-Navy Mobile Riverine Force. Commander Naval Forces, Viet-Nam (COMNAVFORV) also controlled the Naval Support Activity (NSA), Saigon, which supplied naval forces in the II, III and IV Corps areas. Naval Support Activity, Danang, provided logistic support to all American forces in I Corps, where the predominant Marine presence demanded a naval supply establishment. NSA Danang was under the operational control of Commander III Marine Amphibious Force.

COMNAVFORV also commanded the Naval Advisory Group and the Seabees of the 3d Naval Construction Brigade; the Military Sea Transportation Service Office, Viet-Nam, which coordinated the gargantuan sealift to Southeast Asia; the Officer in Charge of Construction, Viet-Nam, who handled in-country construction by civilian contractors; the Naval Research and Development Unit, Viet-Nam, which tested new equipment in the field; and Commander Coast Guard Activities, Viet-Nam.

River patrol

The great strategic and economic importance of South Viet-Nam's extensive inland waterways made it clear from the beginning of the war that the Navy would be in the front rank of the allied forces. Laced by 3,000 nautical miles of rivers, canals, and smaller streams, the fertile Mekong Delta south of Saigon, where the largest segment of South Viet-Nam's population lived, constituted the country's rice bowl. Northward along the coast to the DMZ, sizable rivers stretched inland past vital population centers such as the old imperial capital of Hue. Throughout the country the road and rail system was rudimentary while the waterways provided ready access to the most important resources. The side that controlled the rivers and canals controlled the heart of South Viet-Nam.

Game warden

U.S. naval leaders were determined that allied forces would command these waterways when they established the River Patrol Force on 18 December 1965. From then until March 1966, the Navy procured river patrol boats (PBR) in the United States, prepared the crews at the Coronado, CA, and Mare Island, CA, training centers and deployed the units to Southeast Asia for Operation Game Warden. On 15 March 1966, the River Patrol Force was also designated River Patrol Squadron 5 for administrative and supply purposes. By 31 August 1968, the force consisted of five river divisions, each controlling two 10-boat sections that operated from combat bases along the major rivers or from ships positioned in the rivers. The Navy reconditioned each of the ships so they could serve as floating base facilities for a PBR section and a helicopter detachment.

The PBR, the ubiquitous workhorse of the River Patrol Force, was manned by a crew of four blue-jackets, equipped with a Pathfinder surface radar and two radios, and commonly armed with two twin-mounted .50-caliber machine guns forward, M-60 machine guns (or a grenade launcher) port and starboard amidship, and a .50-caliber aft. The initial version of the boat, the Mark I, performed well in river patrol operations but was plagued with continual fouling of its water-jet engines by weeds and other detritus. When Vietnamese sampans came alongside for inspection they often damaged the fragile fiberglass hull of the PBRs. New Mark IIs, first deployed to the delta in December 1966, brought improved Jacuzzi jet pumps, which reduced fouling and increased speed from 25 to 29 knots, and more durable aluminum gunwales.

PACV

Task Force 116 also employed the experimental patrol air cushion vehicle (PACV), three of which operated in the Mekong Delta during 1966 and 1967 as PACV Division 107. During 1968, the PACVs deployed to the Danang area as Coastal Division 17. Although able to move with great speed over shallow,

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A Navy UH-1B of HAL-3, the "Seawolf" squadron, lifts off Vinh Long Airfield to provide overhead cover to nearby PBR units.

fort, the allies had killed or captured 69 of the enemy; destroyed Viet Cong supply bases, training sites and other logistical facilities; and, at least for a time, restricted enemy movement in the zone.

The enemy, however, remained a potent threat. In one month, August 1966, Viet Cong mines in the Long Tau heavily damaged SS *Baton Rouge Victory*, a Vietnamese Navy motor launch minesweeper and MSB 54. In November, a Viet Cong mine sank MSB 54, and on the last day of the year, American forces discovered a Soviet-made contact mine in the shipping channel. The Americans and the South Vietnamese intensified minesweeping operations and the enemy continued to fight back. In February 1967 Communist recoilless rifle fire and mines destroyed MSB 45 and heavily damaged MSB 49.

9th Infantry Division

By the spring of 1967 the rapid buildup of allied forces in the Rung Sat area, the refinement of tactics and improvement of weapon systems began to reduce enemy effectiveness. During the year Vietnamese Regional Force and U.S. Army 9th Division troops conducted aggressive sweeps ashore in coordination with the helicopter, PBR and MSB units; the better equipped LCM(M)s aug-

mented the minesweeping force at Nha Be. SEALs began sowing mines throughout enemy-held areas, and both PBRs and MSBs added rapid-fire, 40-millimeter grenade launchers to their armament. From mid-1967 to mid-1968, the Viet Cong continued to ambush shipping on the Long Tau with mines, 122-millimeter rockets, rocket-propelled grenades, recoilless rifles, machine guns and small arms. Quick response by allied reaction forces, however, often cut short these assaults. Thus, ship damage and personnel casualties were relatively light. Other attacks never occurred because PBR and SEAL patrols upset enemy plans or the MSBs and LCM(M)s swept up mines. Consequently, the Communists were unable to sever the vital lifeline to Saigon, even when their forces were fighting for survival during the Tet and post-Tet battles of 1968.

Game Warden operations in the central reaches of the Mekong Delta began on 8 May 1966 when PBR River Section 511 of River Division 51 at Can Tho patrolled a stretch of the Bassac River. Soon afterward, other units initiated surveillance of the upper Mekong and the My Tho, Ham Luong, and Co Chien arms of the mighty river that emptied into the South China Sea.

In two-boat random patrols Task

Force 116 sailors checked the cargo and identity papers of junks and sampans plying the waterways, set up night ambushes at suspected enemy crossing points, supported the SEALs with gunfire and transportation, and enforced curfew restrictions in their sector, usually no more than 35 nautical miles from the base.

Mekong Delta

Game Warden operations in the central delta registered only modest success from 1966 to 1968.

Only 140 PBRs were on station to patrol many miles of river and canal. As a result, they could canvass only the larger waterways. Still, the Task Force 116 patrol forced the Viet Cong to divert troops and other resources to defense and to resort to less efficient transportation on smaller rivers and canals. During 1966 the task force refined its tactics, evaluated the performance of its boats and weapons in combat, and regularized its operational procedures. At the same time naval leaders repositioned the LSD and LST support ships inland because heavy seas at the river mouths made operations from there difficult. The year 1967 opened with the accidental loss of a PBR during launching operations from Jennings County and the first combat loss of a river patrol boat.

These events foreshadowed a busy and dangerous year for the Game Warden sailors who boarded over 400,000 vessels and inspected them for enemy personnel and contraband. In the process, the River Patrol Force destroyed, damaged, or captured over 2,000 Viet Cong craft and killed, wounded, or captured over 1,400 of the enemy. The U.S. Navy suffered the loss of 39 officers and men killed, 366 wounded, and 9 missing in battle.

The Tet Offensive of 1968 fully engaged Task Force 116. Because of their firepower and mobility, the PBRs stiffened the defenses of numerous delta cities and towns that were under siege by the enemy. The river patrol boat units were key elements in the successful allied stands at My Tho, Ben Tre, Chau Doc, Tra Vinh and Can Tho. The enemy prevailed only at Vinh Long, where the Viet Cong overran the PBR base forcing the defenders to withdraw to Garrett County. Despite this and a few other temporary setbacks, Task Force 116 reestablished firm control of the major delta rivers by mid-year and helped cut short the Viet Cong attacks on Saigon.



Army medics and fellow soldiers help wounded 9th Inf. Div. troopers return to the river assault craft after a fierce battle ashore.

marshy areas, such as the Plain of Reeds, the PACVs proved to be too noisy and too mechanically sophisticated for riverine war in South Vietnam. After the Tet emergency, the craft were shipped back to the United States for reevaluation.

A key component of the Game Warden operation was its air support element. Initially, the Army deployed detachments of two Bell UH-1B Iroquois helicopters and their crews to PBR bases and river-based LSTs. Beginning in August 1966, however, air crews from the Navy's Helicopter Support Squadron 1 replaced the Army personnel. Then on 1 April 1967, the Navy activated Helicopter Attack Light Squadron (HAL) 3 at Vung Tau with responsibility for providing Task Force 116 with aerial fire support, observation and medical evacuation.

By September 1968, the 421-man "Seawolf" squadron controlled detachments of two helicopters each at Nha Be, Binh Thuy, Dong Tom, Rach Gia, Vinh Long, and on board three LSTs stationed in the larger rivers of the Mekong Delta. The UH-1B "Hueys," armed variously with 2.75-inch rockets; .50-caliber, 60-millimeter and 7.62-millimeter machine guns; grenades; and small arms, were a powerful and mobile complement to the Game Warden surface units.

SEALS

The River Patrol Force commander led other naval forces, including the highly trained and skilled SEALs. By mid-1968, the 211-man SEAL Team 1, based at Coronado, fielded

twelve 14-man platoons, each composed of two squads. Generally four or five of the platoons at any given time were deployed to South Vietnam, where one or two of them served with the special operations force in Danang and another three operated from Nha Be as Detachment GOLF in support of the Task Force 116 campaign in the Rung Sat Special Zone. Beginning in early 1967, the Atlantic Fleet's SEAL Team 2 provided another three platoons, two of which were stationed with the Game Warden units at Can Tho. These units launched SEAL operations in the central delta area. Although focused primarily on the areas to the south and west of Saigon, the SEALs also mounted operations in the I and II Corps Tactical Zones.

These elite naval command units carried out day and night ambushes, hit and run raids, reconnaissance patrols, salvage dives and special intelligence operations. Normally operating in six-man squads, the SEALs

used landing craft, SEAL team assault boats (STAB), 26-foot armored trimarans, PBRs, sampans and helicopters for transportation to and from their target areas. Mobile, versatile and extremely effective in their dangerous work, the SEALs were a valuable fighting force in the riverine environment of Viet-Nam.

Mines

Mine clearance forces also were essential to the security of Viet-Nam's waterways. Nowhere was this more crucial than on the rivers near Saigon, the country's most vital port. Viet Cong mining of the main shipping channel, the Long Tau River, which wound its way through the Rung Sat Special Zone south of the capital, could have had a devastating effect on the war effort. Consequently, on 20 May 1966, the Navy established Mine Squadron 11, Detachment Alpha (Mine Division 112 after May 1968) at Nha Be, under Commander Task Force 116.

From 1966 until mid-1968, the minesweeping detachment operated 12 or 13 minesweeping boats (MSB) reactivated in the United States and shipped to Southeast Asia. The 57-foot, fiberglass-hulled vessels were armed with machine guns and grenade launchers and carried surface radars and minesweeping gear for clearing explosives from the key waterways. The Navy also deployed three-boat subordinate units to Danang and Cam Ranh Bay. Detachment Alpha's strength increased in July 1967 when the first of six mechanized landing craft (LCM(M)) that were specially configured to sweep mines arrived at Nha Be.

Rung Sat

Game Warden operations got underway in early 1966. Naval leaders set out to secure the vital water passages through the Rung Sat and to establish patrols on the large Mekong Delta rivers. On these latter waterways, the Viet Cong transported arms and supplies brought in from Cambodia, shifted guerrilla units and taxed the population. The Navy created two separate task groups to direct operations in the respective areas.

On 26 March 1966, U.S. Navy, U.S. Marine and South Vietnamese forces kicked off Operation Jackstay, the war's first major action in the Rung Sat. PBR units (including one section from Tortuga), minesweeping boats from Nha Be, SEALs and helicopters operated together to sweep the area. At the end of the 12-day ef-

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