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NEWS STORY FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE - PLS PASS TO LCDR GAMMELL
1. TASK FORCE 117, THE U.S. NAVY'S COMPONENT OF THE MOBILE
RIVERINE FORCE, WAS ENGAGED IN ITS MOST INTENSIVE AND PROLONGED
FIRE FIGHT SINCE EARLY DECEMBER IN OPERATIONS AGAINST VIET CONG
GUERRILLAS TUESDAY IN THE MEKONG DELTA.

IN WHAT STARTED OUT TO BE A ROUTINE RECONNAISSANCE IN FORCE
OPERATION ON THE RACH CAI CAM CANAL NEAR THE CITY OF VINH LONG,
ARMORED GUNBOATS OF RIVER ASSAULT DIVISIONS 92 AND 111 WAGED A
RUNNING BATTLE THROUGHOUT THE DAY AD INTO THE NIGHT. FIFTEEN
SAILORS WERE WOUNDED IN THE ACTION AND ONE IS REPORTED MISSING.
IN ONE OF THE FIRE FIGHTS OF THE DAY, NO FEWER THAN 24 VIET CONG
ROCKETS WERE FIRED AT THE RIVER ASSAULT CRAFT.

THE FIRST SIGNIFICANT CONTACT OF THE DAY OCCURRED SHORTLY AFTER 11
A.M. AS RIVER ASSAULT DIVISION 111 BOATS WERE PREPARING TO LAND INFANTRY
MEN FROM BRAVO COMPANY, 3/60 INFANTRY BATTALION, 2ND BRIGADE,

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NINTH INFANTRY DIVISION, ALONG THE SHORES OF THE RACH CAI CAM CANAL.
ASSAULT SUPPORT BOATS SLEEPING FOR MINES AT THE HEAD OF THE COLUMN
RECEIVED HEAVY ROCKET, AUTOMATIC WEAPONS AND SMALL ARMS FIRE
FROM BOTH BANKS. THE ATTACK BY AN ESTIMATED COMPANY SIZE VIET
CONG FORCE LEFT ONE ASPB WITH TWO B-40 ROCKET HITS. THE FIRE
FIGHT CONTINUED INTERMITTENTLY FOR 25 MINUTES BEFORE THE
GUERRILLAS BROKE CONTACT.

THIS WAS THE FIRST IN A SERIES OF CONFRONTATIONS THAT
CONTINUED SPORADICALLY THROUGHOUT THE DAY. AFTER SUPPRESSING THE
ENEMY FIRE, THE TASK FORCE

ASSAULT CRAFT IMMEDIATELY BEACHED
WITH BRAVO COMPANY GONE ASHORE. BEFORE THE RAMPS OF THE NAVY
BOATS HAD CLEARED THE BEACH, THE INFANTRYMEN CAME UNDER HEAVY
FIRE FROM THREE DIFFERENT SIDES.

AT NOON, A SUPPORT AND REACTION FORCE OF FOUR MORE ASSAULT
CRAFT, LOADED WITH AN ADDITIONAL COMPANY OF INFANTRYMEN, WAS DISPATCHED
INTO THE FIELD BY TF 117. THEY CAME UNDER HEAVY ATTACK IMMEDIATELY
UPON ENTERING THE AREA OF OPERATIONS. OFFICERS EMBARKED IN THE
BOATS ESTIMATED THAT 24 ROCKETS WERE FIRED AT THE BOATS IN FEWER
THAN 10 MINUTES.

MORE BOATS AND TROOPS WERE RUSHED TO THE AREA LATER IN THE
MIDNIGHT. ARTILLERY AND AIR STRIKES POUNDED ENEMY POSITIONS THROUGH-

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OUT THE DAY AND EARLY EVENING.

AT 8 P.M. AN ASSAULT SUPPORT PATROL BOAT TOOK A DIRECT HIT AND SUFFERED TWO CASUALTIES. RIVERINE ASSAULT CRAFT RESPONDED TO THE RENEWED CONTACT WITH 20MM AND 40MM FIRE AND SUPPRESSED THE ENEMY ATTACK, WHICH WAS COMING FROM A BUNKER ON THE BEACH.

THE LAST SIGNIFICANT CONTACT OF THE NIGHT CAME TWO HOURS LATER WHEN RIVER DIVISION 92 BOATS WERE AGAIN ENGAGED IN A HEAVY FIRE FIGHT WITH THE ENEMY. DARKNESS AND THE DENSE FOLIAGE ALONG THE BANK OF THE CANAL HINDERED ATTEMPTS TO PINPOINT THE VIET CONG, BUT THE ASSAULT CRAFT'S HEAVY FIREPOWER WAS ABLE TO SILENCE THE ENEMY'S GUNS.

ALTHOUGH ENEMY FIRE WAS HEAVY AND AT TIMES WAS RECEIVED FROM THREE DIRECTIONS SIMULTANEOUSLY THE RUGGED BOATS OF TF 117 SUFFERED MINOR DAMAGE AND REMAINED IN POSITION TO PROVIDE FIRE SUPPORT FOR THE ARMY TROOPS. MOBILE RIVERINE FORCE CASUALTIES WERE LIGHT IN BOTH ARMY AND NAVY ELEMENTS. THERE WERE 64 VIET CONG KNOWN DEAD AND 27 ASSAULT WEAPONS CAPTURED.

THE ASSAULT CRAFT AND TROOPS REMAINED IN THE AREA OF OPERATIONS THROUGHOUT THE NIGHT. AT DAWN TWO ADDITIONAL COMPANIES OF RESTED

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INFANTRYMEN AND FRESH BOAT CREWS MOVED INTO THE RACH CAI CAM IN AN ATTEMPT TO RELOCATE THE ENEMY BEFORE THEY COULD FLEE THE AREA.

TUESDAY'S FIGHTING FOLLOWED ON THE HEELS OF THE MOBILE RIVERINE FORCE'S MOST EXTENDED PERIOD OF CONTINUOUS OPERATION IN ITS ONE YEAR HISTORY. AS OF FEBRUARY 7, THE FORCE HAD BEEN IN THE FIELD FOR TEN STRAIGHT DAYS DURING WHICH TIME 253 VC HAVE BEEN KILLED IN ACTION AND 163 DETAINEES HAVE BEEN TAKEN. DURING THIS SAME PERIOD, 11 AMERICANS HAVE BEEN KILLED IN ACTION AND 164 HAVE BEEN WOUNDED.

TASK FORCE 117 IS COMMANDED BY CAPTAIN ROBERT S. SALZER, USN, WHOSE ADMINISTRATIVE TITLE IS COMMANDER RIVER ASSAULT FLOTILLA ONE. COMMANDING OFFICER OF THE SECOND BRIGADE IS COLONEL BERT A. DAVID, USA.

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