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INFO ZEN/CC SECOND BRIGADE NINTH INF DIV

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DAILY INTERNAL INFO SUMMARY 11-31

SIXTEEN WERE KNOWN DEAD AND NINE OTHERS WERE STILL MISSING FRIDAY NIGHT AS A RESULT OF THE EARLY MORNING EXPLOSION BETWEEN THE PONTOONS AND HULL OF WESTCHESTER COUNTY.

ANOTHER 22 WERE WOUNDED IN THE SUSPECTED BOMBING IN WHAT RANKS AMONG THE MOST COSTLY NAVAL CASUALTIES OF THE WAR. THE EXPLOSIONS AT 3:22 A.M. OPENED TWO HOLES IN THE STARBOARD SIDE AT THE WATERLINE-- BOTH MORE THAN 20 FEET IN DIAMETER. A FIRST CLASS PETTY OFFICERS' COMPARTMENT AND AN ARMY BUNKROOM WERE THE HARDEST HIT, BUT THERE WERE ALSO CASUALTIES ON THE PONTOON AND ON RIV DIV III BOATS TIED UP ALONGSIDE.

ALTHOUGH THE SHIP BEGAN TAKING ON WATER, THE RAPID REACTION OF DAMAGE CONTROL PARTIES QUICKLY CONTROLLED THE FLOODING AND THE SHIP

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AS NEVER IN DANGER OF SINKING.

THE WOUNDED WERE PUSHED BY ASSAULT BOAT TO THE BENEWAH DURING THE EARLY MORNING HOURS AND THE MORE SERIOUSLY INJURED WERE FLOWN TO THE ARMY SURGICAL HOSPITAL AT DONG TAN.

TWO NAVYMEN WERE TRAPPED IN A FLOODED COMPARTMENT FOR FOUR HOURS AFTER THE INCIDENT. DAMAGE CONTROL MEN CUT THEIR WAY THROUGH THE DECKAGE TO FREE THE ENTRAPPED MEN, AND BOTH WERE LATER REPORTED IN GOOD CONDITION. MANY OTHER WATER-FILLED SPACES HAD STILL NOT BEEN INSPECTED BY FRIDAY EVENING, HOWEVER, AND SEVERAL OF THE MISSING WERE PRESUMED TO BE TRAPPED INSIDE.

OF THE 16 PERSONNEL KILLED, 15 WERE MEMBERS OF THE WESTCHESTER COUNTY'S CREW AND THE TWELFTH WAS A VIETNAMESE SAILOR WHO WAS TRAINING ABOARD THE TF 117 BOATS

WOUNDED IN THE EXPLOSION WERE 19 OTHER NAVYMEN AND THREE ARMY TROOPS. THE MISSING INCLUDED TWO MEMBERS OF THE SHIP'S COMPANY, ONE RV DIV 111 NAVYMAN, ONE VIETNAMESE TIGER SCOUT AND FIVE ARMY TROOPS.

ACCORDING TO LIEUTENANT COMMANDER JOHN BRANIN, THE WESTCHESTER COUNTY CO, EVERY FIRST CLASS PETTY OFFICER ABOARD THE SHIP WAS EITHER KILLED OR WOUNDED. ALL MEMBERS OF THE SHIP'S OFFICE DIED IN THE

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EXPLOSION.

THE DAMAGE ON WESTCHESTER COUNTY WAS SURVEYED FRIDAY MORNING BY US ADMIRAL ELMO R. ZUCKALT, COMMANDER NAVAL FORCES VIETNAM, WHO RETURNED TO THE MRB FROM SAIGON.

TASK GROUP ALFA GROUND AND NAVAL ELEMENTS OPERATING IN NORTHERN KIEN HOA PROVINCE FRIDAY HAD NO SIGNIFICANT CONTACT. AIR STRIKES IN THE AO, HOWEVER, ACCOUNTED FOR FIVE VC KILLED, 10 BUNKERS DESTROYED AND 12 STRUCTURES DESTROYED.

RIV DIV 112 COMPLETED ITS TAGLEFLOATING OPERATIONS WITH 3/60 ENTRY ON THE BA LAI RIVER IN THE MORNING AND RETURNED THE BOATS TO THE MRB.

RIV DIV 91 ALSO COMPLETED OPERATIONS WITH THE VIETNAMESE MARINES, UNLOADING THE TROOPS IN THE MORNING AND TRANSPORTING THEM TO A RE SUPPORT BASE FOR AN AIRMOBILE ASSAULT.

SEVERAL BOATS OF RIV DIV 151 WITH COMBAT SALVAGE BOAT-1 SUPPORTED EVACUATION OPERATIONS ON TWO SUNKEN BARGES ON THE CHO GAO CANAL TODAY.

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CO....XO...OPS...COMM...CDO....A-PERS.....

TOD: 22/1459Z/N1JY NDMQ NDNU NCBI / APL 26, 0740Z/ TMC-T-CO 2D BDE/0902Z/

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