

COMMANDER RIVER ASSAULT FLOTILLA ONE
FPO San Francisco 96601

To the families and friends of RivFlot One:

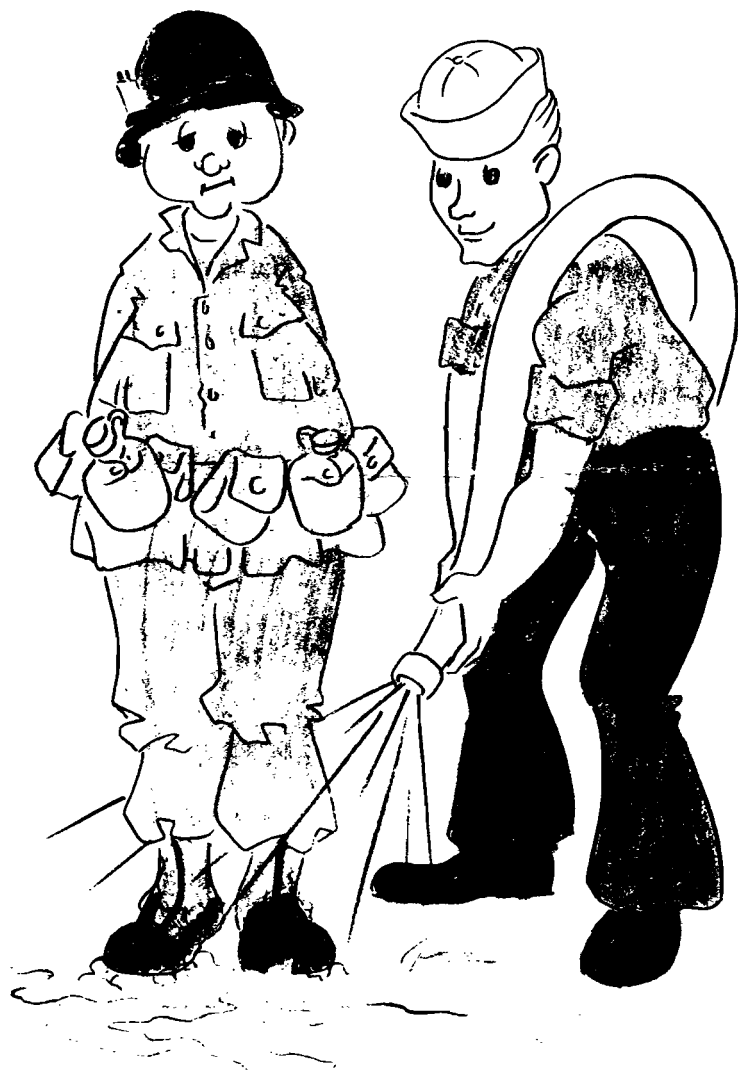
The one thing that always stands out as I look back over my previous Navy assignments, is the high caliber of officers and enlisted men with whom I have had the privilege to serve.

River Assault Flotilla One is no exception. During the short time the flotilla has been in existence, there have been demonstrations of judgment, initiative and zeal by the personnel in this command that would make any commander proud.

Building this flotilla from nothing in September to a trained combat unit now on the job in Vietnam wasn't easy, and it never could have been done without a lot of hard work by a lot of fine people in the flotilla. The accomplishments of these men have not come without sacrifices on the part of those of you whom we have had to leave at home. Unfortunately, as many of you already know, these separations are unavoidable if our country is going to take a stand against the threat of communist domination of the world's weaker nations. Your men have done well in the days since they departed for Vietnam and it should be a source of both pride and reassurance to you to hear that they are fast becoming a top flight combat outfit.

Armored Troop Carrier (ATC)





We have to hose the mud off the troops when they come back from the "field".

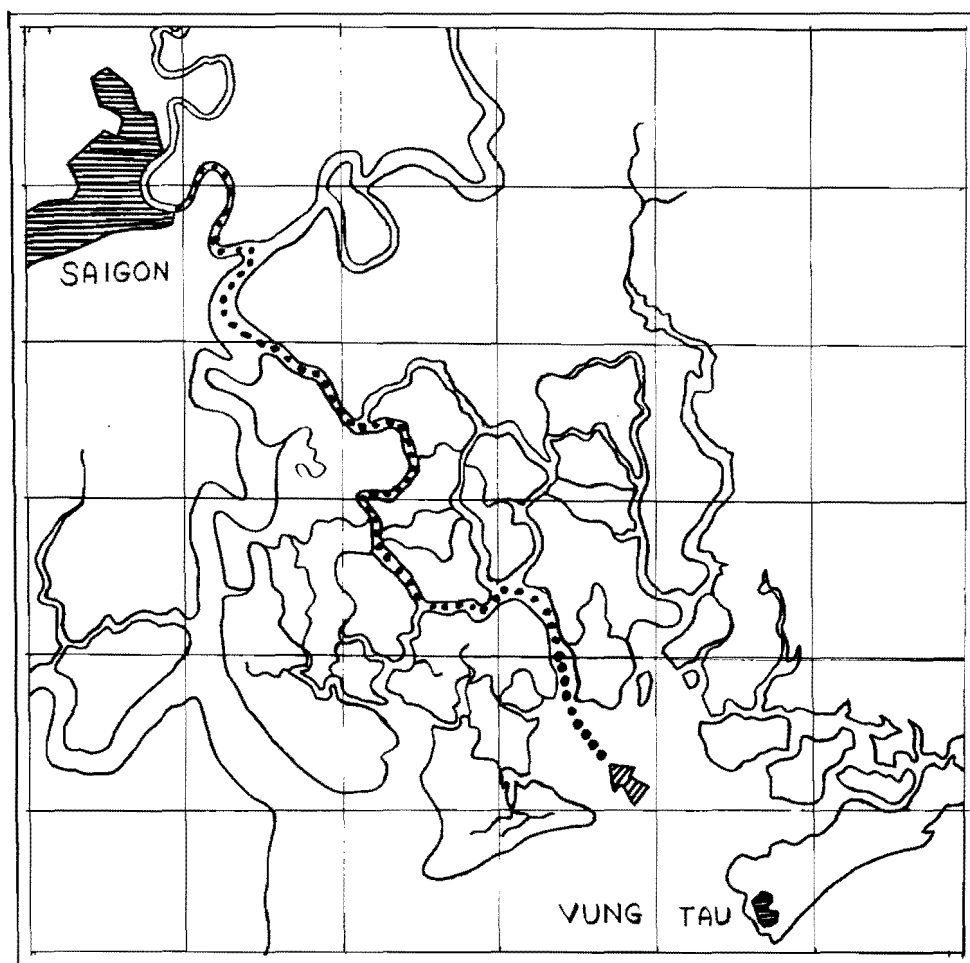
From time to time while we are out here, I hope to write you about our activities and to relay my appraisal of our efforts. My purpose in writing this first letter is to give you some idea of the flotilla's current mission. We are here in Vietnam to support the Army in their search and destroy operations against the Viet Cong and are currently operating in the Rung Sat. Let me explain.

The Viet Cong had been stepping up their harassment on the ships and patrol boats plying the main shipping channel to Saigon. On the 15th of February, they mined two minesweepers and shot and damaged another one. The next day, a part of the Army's 9th Infantry Division was ordered into the Rung Sat to stop these attacks and we were ordered to support them. Rung Sat, the Vietnamese name for the swamp surrounding the main shipping channel, consists of mangrove and brush covered mud flats interlaced with hundreds of tide water channels. It is our job to transport the troops from the base ship through this maze of waterways and put them ashore at strategic

places. Once the soldiers are ashore, our boats stay in the area to provide blocking patrols and gunfire support when necessary.

This joint Army/Navy effort has succeeded in destroying several enemy base camps and many bunkers along with significant quantities of supplies. More important, is the fact that the Viet Cong activities on the shipping channel have been drastically reduced since our operation began.

To accomplish this task, the flotilla has two squadrons of boats, River Assault Squadron Nine and River Assault Squadron Eleven. Their boats are specifically designed to move troops and supplies to and from an operational area in which rivers and waterways abound. We call this a riverine assault operation. RAS-9 has been assigned to this job since February and RAS-11 has now moved into the operation. USS Askari, a repair ship, is also with the flotilla to keep the assault boats in operation, and has performed admirably. We are using the amphibious assault ship Montrose for our afloat base.



The main shipping channel to Saigon goes through the Rung Sat swamp



Our boat crews are wearing Australian fatigue hats so these good Navy men won't be confused with any of our brother servicemen in greens.

We operate from Vung Tau harbor about 35 miles southeast of Saigon. The City of Vung Tau is considered to be a secure area, that is, the Viet Cong have not been active here for a long time. Unfortunately, the pace of operations doesn't give us much time for liberty, but we have had several parties ashore on the excellent beaches in the area to break the pace.

Mail from home is a much bigger morale factor than the limited amount of liberty we have been able to enjoy. I can assure you that a letter from home does wonders for the man who receives it.

Before closing I want to add a note about safety. Knowing how concerned you are for the safety of your loved ones in the flotilla, I think you would like to know that much has been done in the construction of our boats to insure their safety and we are always on the lookout for better operating procedures and protective devices.

As new developments occur I will be in touch with you.

Sincerely,

W. 'C.' WELLS
Captain USN

Commander River Assault Flotilla One