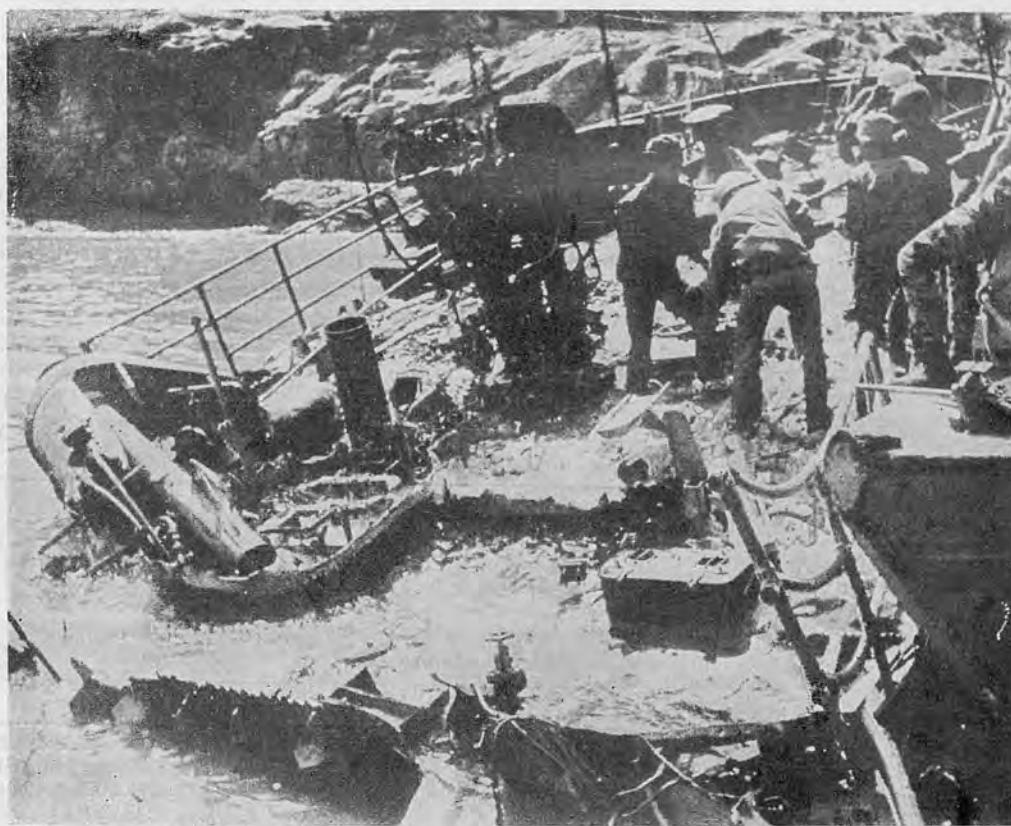


VC TRAWLERS BLASTED

In what has been described as the most important naval battle of the Vietnam conflict, three enemy trawlers were destroyed and a fourth turned back March 1.

The apparent plan of the infiltrators was to resupply Viet Cong units along the full length of the country, following the beating they had taken during their recent "Tet" offensive.



END OF FUTILE ATTEMPT—U.S. and Vietnamese Navy crews begin salvage operations on one of three enemy trawlers that were destroyed while attempting to infiltrate arms and ammo into South Vietnam

(Official U.S. Navy Photo)

The 100-foot, steel-hulled trawlers had been detected hours earlier at different points off the South Vietnamese coast by Operation Market Time coastal surveillance units. Shortly after midnight they began crossing into the 12-mile contiguous zone.

Running dark and flying no flag, each trawler was chal-

lenged as it neared the coast, but all refused to answer. One trawler had reversed course and headed for the open sea before reaching the 12-mile limit, but the other three chose to make a run for the beach.

One of the munitions-laden craft was forced into a cove 10 miles north of Nha Trang,

on the central coast, and was trapped there by U.S. "Swift" boat and South Vietnamese Navy craft. The trawler opened fire on the patrol boats. During the duel that followed the enemy craft



VOL. 2 No. 10 U.S. Naval Support Activity, Saigon, March 16, 1968

suddenly exploded, and was completely destroyed.

The second trawler was forced onto the beach 40 miles southeast of Chu Lai, during a running gun battle with U.S. Navy and Coast Guard units. Within minutes ground troops were flown to the beach. When capture of the trawler looked imminent, it was destroyed by her own crew. The resulting blast disintegrated the ship, scattering bits of the ship and cargo throughout a two square mile area.

Meanwhile, the third trawler, heading for the mouth of the Cau Bo De River, was in a fierce battle with other U.S. Navy "Swift" boats and Coast Guard Cutters off the Ca

Mau Peninsula. Before she could reach the river mouth, two massive explosions ripped her apart and she sank.

After daylight, salvage operations were begun at all three sites. So far, 600 enemy carbines, 41 sub-machine guns, 11 light machine guns, a heavy machine gun, 22 AK-47 automatic assault rifles, 36 rocket propelled grenade launchers, an assortment of hand grenades, rifle grenades, mortar rounds, detonators and ammunition have been recovered. Also 14 enemy dead were found near the trawler at Nha Trang.

During the gunbattles with the three trawlers two U.S. Navymen were wounded. The total extent of enemy personnel casualties is unknown.



North VN Junk Detained

CNFV—A 35-foot North Vietnamese ammunition-laden junk and four North Vietnamese men were detained by U.S. Navy and Coast Guard forces March 1, when their junk entered South Vietnam's territorial waters. A second North Vietnamese junk beached in the surf.

The action took place at 3 A.M. off the mouth of the Cua Viet River, 5 miles south of the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ).

A U.S. Navy "Swift" boat (PCF 81) was on a routine patrol of the area when the crewmen detected the two crafts about 800 yards off the beach. They illuminated the area with flares and requested assistance from the Coast Guard Cutter Point Ellis. When the "Swift" boat went alongside the junk, the crewmen observed the cargo of assorted rifles, grenades and cases of

ammunition. The crew was then taken into custody where questioning revealed they were North Vietnamese.

The second junk evaded toward shore in the surf, where its occupants attempted to carry off part of the cargo. The Point Ellis took the second junk and its fleeing occupants under .50-caliber machine gun fire, with unknown results.

The detained junk was turned over to the Coast Guard Cutter Point Caution for transfer to the U.S. Marine Corps base at Danang.

ENEMY TRAWLER—Traveling with no flag and cruising at night with no lights, this trawler was intercepted and destroyed while trying to land arms and ammo on the South Vietnamese coast, 10 miles north of Nha Trang.

(Official U.S. Navy Photo)

EDITORIAL

Our Nation's Highest Court

WE all have a personal stake in our Government. And whether we realize it or not, that personal stake is what makes our country great. Basically, it translates into teamwork.

But working together is not enough. We should know and understand how our Government functions.

As responsible citizens, we can benefit from a periodic review of the steps by which our Nation's laws are enacted and by refreshing



our knowledge of the constitutional system of self government. It's part of our great American heritage.

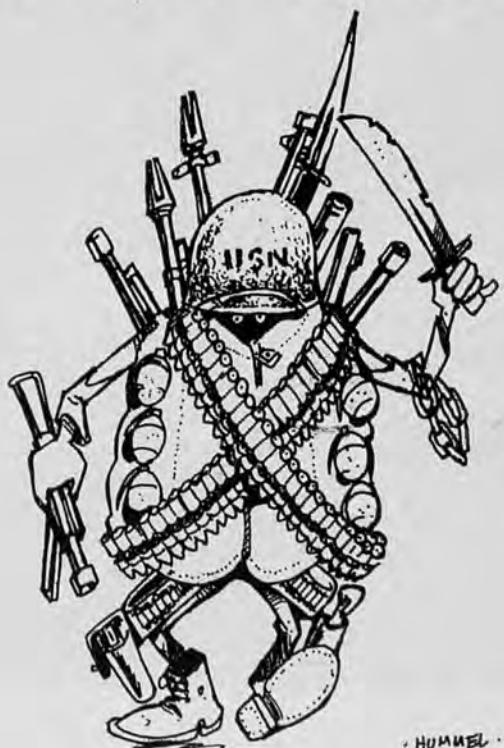
We know our Founding Fathers wrote the basic law of the land—the Constitution. We also know they distributed the power of the federal government among three separate branches: (1) The EXECUTIVE made up of the President and his Cabinet; (2) the LEGISLATIVE (Congress); and (3) the JUDICIAL (made up of the Supreme Court and the other federal courts).

Let's look at the latter and the Supreme Court in particular, which came into being Sept. 24, 1789, when the Judiciary Act became law.

French Statesman and Author Alexis de Tocqueville in his "Democracy in America" (1835) described the place and function of the Supreme Court in the government of the United States in language which remains basically sound. He said:

"The peace, prosperity, and the very existence of the Union are vested in the hands of the (justices of the Supreme Court). Without them the Constitution would be a dead letter: the executive appeals to them for assistance against the encroachments of the legislative power; the legislature demands their protection against the assaults of the executive; they defend the Union from disobedience of the states, the states from the exaggerated claims of the Union, the public interest against private interests, and the conservative spirit of stability against the fickleness of the democracy. Their power is enormous, but it is the power of public opinion. They are all-powerful as long as the people respect the law; but they would be impotent against popular neglect or contempt of law..." (AFNB)

Hummel's Vietnam



BEWARE OF THE SAIGON WARRIOR..

BE A HAPPY HIPPI

By Chaplain R.A. Canfield

If you want to be a "Hippy", just protest. It doesn't make much difference what you are protesting, as long as you're protesting. If you're against "it" you're on the team. But if you conform brother, you're strictly from hunger!

And so it goes. Make like a Christian and you don't belong... except to the family of God... and He's dead, so who cares? There are super-sophisticates running around today who seem to have the edge... real swingers like Hugh Hefner of Playboy and Dr. Timothy O'Leary of LSD fame. They're not dead like God. This is the "Hippy" crowd and they claim that within their influential circle you can find all the happiness and freedom

you desire. "Come and be happy with the hippies!" they cry. Many have responded.

Heavens to Betsy. What more does Christ have to offer! (That is, if He is alive!) Sacrifice! Giving of self! Loving neighbors! Being your brothers' keeper! A life of servitude! Seeking the kingdom of God! Suffering!

Nuts! Who wants to go that route? Well, praise God there are many who do and more often than not they prove to be the salt of the earth. Of course, it means looking to the Bible for God's thoughts instead of Playboy for man's actions... to the Gospel instead of LSD for assurance and hope... and to a living God rather than a confused "Hippy" for inspiration and eternal happiness.

But we have to choose between being victorious in the Christian life of being a "Happy Hippy." So take your choice brother!

Did You Know?

NAVAL FACTS ~ BY HUMMEL

JACKSTAFF NEWS SAIGON-VIETNAM



NAVAL EXPRESSIONS

LUCKY BAG: LARGE LOCKER WHERE THE MAN STOWS ARTICLES OF CLOTHING THAT WERE ADMIRAL. THIS TERM ORIGINATED IN 1838.....

LUCKY MAN BAG

The Jackstaff News

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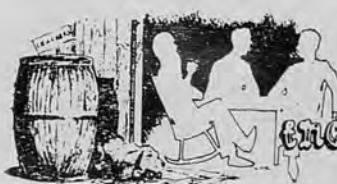
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M

The CRACKER BARREL

By Charlie Noble

I've noticed a lot of our food service personnel shunning and in general avoiding the cycle menu concept. I think the main reason is a misunderstanding of the cycle menu. It was introduced into the Navy as a way to make your job easier. It can ease the time consuming task of each week spending one to two days making out a menu, reviewing it, submitting it to the supply officer, typing the smooth and getting it approved; then distributing it in time for the watch captains to plan their breakouts. The menu will still have to be reviewed, and possibly changes and substitutions made, but the time robbing chore of the basic plan is finished once you establish a 3, 4, or 6 week cycle. You can avoid once and for all the embarrassing occasions of serving the same meals on the same

day of the week, or worse, following a Sunday night supper with the same item on Monday night.

Your stocking objectives become much clearer and your stock will rotate in a more orderly manner with the cycle menu concept. Now let's clean up one more misconception. If you serve on Monday dinner week 1, pot roast of beef; come two weeks later when we are back to the week 1 menu, you can change the pot roast to a variation; Sauer-bratten or a boiled New England dinner. What you have established for balance and stock rotation, is the use of a moist heat beef meal. However, there is absolutely nothing wrong with leaving it as pot roast! I recommend a review of some of the past issues of *Navy Food Service*, particularly the February 1968 issue on cycle menu.

CRUISE BOOK SALE

Clearance price \$2.00 ea. Contact JO3 William Kobler, NAVSUPPACT, Code 03, APO 96214 or call Tiger 4761.

Garrett County Acts As Temporary Home for Refugees

The Game Warden support ship USS *Garrett County* (LST 786) successfully completed an emergency assignment as a temporary base for U.S. naval forces which were forced to evacuate their bases when fighting erupted in the Mekong Delta city of Vinh Long during the recent Tet offensive.

The *Garrett County*, which had been operating on the lower Co Chien River since December 7, 1967, proceeded some 20 miles up river to Vinh Long to aid River Division 52, River Patrol Section 523, Naval Communications Security Group, the Naval Support Activity's Vinh Long detachment, and SEAL Team Six. Ten river patrol boats (PBRs) of River Patrol Section 522 proceeded ahead of the ship and under sniper fire evacuated personnel from the Vinh Long bases. Under cover of UH-1B gunships, *Garrett County*, with her 40mm cannon trained on the waterfront, passed by the city without incident and anchored at the junction of the Co Chien and Tien Giang Rivers, about two miles from the embattled city to begin support port activities.

Immediately, PBRs of River Patrol Section 523 and River Assault Group vessels arrived to obtain food and ammunition for the battle to regain their bases in the city and food for distribution to the 2,500 civilian refugees who had been evacuated to An Binh Island just across the of Task Force 117.

river from Vinh Long. Over 150 American, Korean, and Vietnamese civilians including women, children and a group of eight nuns were brought aboard, fed and transferred to Dong Tam via USS *Mark* (AKL 12). C-rations were also distributed to Vietnamese civilians who had sought refuge on three ferries when one ferry terminal was attacked.

Garrett County's two hospital corpsmen worked around the clock treating the wounded Vietnamese military and civilian personnel which had been evacuated to the ship by River Patrol Section 522 PBRs as other members of the *Garrett County* crew worked tirelessly rearming and refueling helicopters, breaking out ammunition and C-rations and feeding the large numbers of transient personnel.

On the fourth day of her temporary role, *Garrett County* was joined by USS *Benewah* (APB 35), USS *Askari* (ARL 30), USS *Washita* (LST 1166), USS *Colleton* (APB 36), two barracks ships and the units

One Man Battle Saves Ammo Barge

By JO2 D.L. Jimenez, USCG

A Coast Guardsman attached to the U.S. Coast Guard Explosive Loading Detachment at Cat Lai prevented an ammunition barge with 150 tons of explosives from exploding after it was hit by enemy mortar rounds.



INSPECTION—Coast Guard Engineman First Class Robert J. Yered inspects palletized 750-pound bombs on a barge at the Cat Lai munitions depot 10 miles east of Saigon.

(Official U.S. Coast Guard Photo by JO-2 David L. Jimenez)

Engineman First Class Robert J. Yered, a Coast Guard advisor to the Army's 11th Transportation Battalion at this munitions unloading site, braved a hail of enemy small-arms fire and the potential explosion of tons of explosives to extinguish a barge fire caused by an enemy mortar attack.

The unloading site is located at the Cat Lai Army Depot about 10 miles east of Saigon on the Saigon River. At 1 a.m. on February 14, enemy forces began a small arms and mortar fire attack against two ammunition laden freighters in mid-stream. They had set up positions across the river from the anchored ships which were in the process of unloading their cargo onto barges.

A 130-foot barge alongside the SS *Neva West* sustained two hits and a fire broke

out on the aft end of the barge.

Yered donned his flak-jacket and helmet, and dashed on the main deck to investigate damage and possible casualties on the *Neva West*. After checking the ship he rushed to the rail overlooking the barge and began fighting the fire that was burning on the barge, three-quarters full of pallets of ammunition.

After 15 minutes, the fire was still not extinguished due to small secondary explosions and Yered climbed from the main deck of the ship onto the barge. Discovering the fire was beneath the pallets, and that the fire hoses were not long enough to reach the flames, he called up to Army Sergeant Douglas Box to get a bucket. Yered went back on board the barge and began throwing 60-pound

pallets of ruptured and red-hot mortar shells over the side.

On receiving the bucket he drew water from the ship's main engine cooling discharge pipes and extinguished the fire. During the hour long battle he waged against the fire and exploding munitions, he did not realize that the enemy was still peppering the side of the ship with small arms fire.

In the meantime military police arrived in patrol boats to clear the enemy from their positions across the river. Yered received slight burns to his right hand. There were no other casualties reported. There was minor small-arms and shrapnel damage to one ship and the port side of the *Neva West* was hit from the wheel house to the waterline.

VC Hit Two American Ships

Viet Cong troops hit two American ships transiting the Rung Sat Special Zone February 25.

The first incident occurred when the merchant ship, *Arizona State*, was hit by three rounds of recoilless rifle fire 18 miles southeast of Saigon.

Personnel aboard the ship reported that they also received small arms fire from the west bank of the Long Tau River.

U.S. Navy river patrol boats (PBRs) rushed to the area and blasted the enemy positions.

A U.S. Army light helicopter fire team flew to the area to cut off enemy escape routes. Later, U.S. Navy "Seawolves",

flying armed helicopter gunships, arrived on the scene to relieve the Army helicopter team.

One enemy bunker was destroyed by the rocket and machine gun firing runs by the Nha Be-based helicopters.

Later in the morning, VC troops fired on the tug boat, *Patrick*, while it was traveling

up the Long Tau River, 10 miles southeast of Saigon.

Once again PBRs and an Army helicopter fire team rushed to the area and blasted enemy positions on the east bank of the river.

There were no friendly casualties in either action and the extent of enemy personnel casualties is not known.



MISSION ACCOMPLISHED—Smoke rises from a VC stronghold in the Mekong Delta after Navy Seals moved in on a search and destroy operation.

SEALS Hit VC Stronghold

Story and Photos

By

JO1 Tom Walton

There were still several hours before daylight when the U.S. Navymen boarded their boats and pulled away from the River Patrol Force base at Vinh Long in the Mekong Delta, 55 miles southwest of Saigon.

The array of boats was cruising the dark, silent channel of the Co Chien River to carry out an operation against the Viet Cong.

The boats and the men are peculiar to the war in the Mekong Delta. Making up the flotilla were river patrol boats (PBRs), assault support patrol boats (ASPBs) and the heavily-armed and armored "Monitors".

The 31-foot fiberglass

PBRs normally operate in pairs with their crews trained to prevent VC movement on the rivers and canals in the delta. The ASPBs and the "Monitors" are part of the Army-Navy Mobile Riverine Force (MRF) and their crews are trained to support ground troops during riverine operations.

The ASPBs provide gunfire support and minesweeping for the MRF, but for this opera-

tion they were serving as landing craft, carrying Seals, the Navy's highly-trained counter-insurgency experts.

Although all of the sailors are specially trained for this kind of warfare, Seals are by far the most unconventional. Most of their anti-guerilla activities are of the covert type, but this operation was



RIVER FORCE MOVES IN—River assault craft and river patrol boats move up the Rach Thom/Mo Cay Canal.

strictly overt. They would destroy a VC stronghold.

With the first light of dawn the flotilla of small boats moved into the Rach Thom Mo Cay canal toward their target. Just ahead of the boats armed Navy helicopters began blasting bunker positions

VC resistance was limited to sporadic small arms fire, but there was no doubt about his presence. Nearly every structure there was adorned with VC flags and inside of some were pictures of communist leaders.

By the time the Seals had finished sweeping the area, they had 51 suspects rounded up. Some 40 to 50 bunkers were destroyed along with a number of structures which included a VC propaganda center and two tax collection stations.

The enemy complex was along the canal bank. The two lead ASPBs landed their Seals at the upper end while the second two did likewise at the lower end.

As the Seals moved in, the choppers hit bunkers in the surrounding area and the boats patrolled the canal and hit positions there.



ENEMY BUNKER—A Seal checks out an enemy bunker along the Rach Thom/Mo Cay canal during the operation.



SEAL RAID—Seals leap from an assault boat during a raid on a VC base in the Mekong Delta.



TONS OF GRAVEL—Equipment Operator First Class Leon L. Snider uses a bulldozer to scrape gravel taken from the Pon River into piles which will then be picked up by front end loaders and put into trucks. (Official U.S. Navy Photo)



TWO JOBS—Hospital Corpsman Second Class Thomas J. King cuts reinforcing bars used in constructing concrete machine gun bunkers at Lang Vei. Each Seabee had to perform the duties of at least one other man in addition to his own. (Official U.S. Navy Photo)

A Thorn In Charlie's Side

By
Roger Busby

The average American's concept of a Seabee is that of a grenade throwing, rifle shooting, bulldozer driving John Wayne slashing a wide swath through a formidable enemy, each day filled with adventure and daring-do.

However, the average Seabee in Vietnam puts in countless days doing just what he is trained to do-hard, dirty and unglamorous work, seven days a week, 12 hours a day, adding to the reputation of the Seabees as the best construction force in the military.

Thus, it is not surprising when the military is faced with a particularly tough and vital construction task, the Seabees are called on to see that it is done right.

Such a job was the relocation and rebuilding of a strategic Army Special Forces Camp at Lang Vei.

Situated on a hill, one mile from the Xe Pon River which separates Laos and South Vietnam, the site commands a principle supply and infiltration route used by the North Vietnamese. The Special Forces had used the camp as a base for directing artillery fire against the enemy and disrupting troop movements south along the Ho Chi Minh Trail.

Therefore, the camp was a thorn in the enemy's side - a thorn that had to be removed.

In early May the camp was hit hard by a vicious mortar barrage followed by a ground attack. The camp was overrun and destroyed by the enemy while every American there was either killed or wounded.

And the North Vietnamese thought the thorn had been removed.

But, because of the camp's great strategic value, the Army decided to rebuild and remain

the site. The job of rebuilding was handed to the Seabees of Naval Mobile Construction Battalion Eleven (MCB-11), based at Dong Ha.

Equipment Operator Second Class Theodore K. Meadow was the first Seabee to arrive at the camp. Working with an Army Special Forces sergeant they toiled for many days clearing a mine field which covered the site picked for construction of the new camp.

After clearing the mine field, Meadow started bulldozing a corn field on the west side of a hill facing the Laotian border. One morning in July Meadow left the old camp for the one mile drive to the new

site accompanied by a Civil Irregular Defense Group (CIDG) security squad. Shortly after arriving there they were ambushed by a North Vietnamese force.

When his carbine jammed after firing two clips, Meadow drove his bulldozer off the hill and joined the other Seabees in camp.

Using the camp's mortars, they held the attacking force off until 70 additional CIDG arrived and drove the enemy back across the river in a six-hour battle. A Special Forces member credited the Seabee with killing at least three North Vietnamese soldiers in the fight.

Numerous smaller incidents took place at the river itself. Because the camp did not have a water supply, a water truck was driven to the river each day.

Equipment Operator Daniel W. Turrissi was wounded during one such trip to the river. An Army truck had become stuck and Turrissi was using his bulldozer to free it when the party was ambushed. He was back on duty two days later.

Other than by radio, the camp's only link with civilization is a

dirt and asphalt road to Ke Sanh, seven miles to the east. Over this road passed all construction equipment and supplies. Barely passable in dry weather, it became a driver's nightmare during the monsoon.

Each day Seabee and Special Forces drivers negotiated the road to bring water, rice, fuel and other cargo to their camp. When it rained, the road was "a series of axle-deep potholes and ruts broken occasionally by a strip of asphalt," as one Seabee put it.

But, despite the difficulties, Seabees continued their work to complete the camp on schedule. Seven days a week, 12 hours a day. Through heat, cold, rain and dust, and even the thick, enveloping fog that sometimes covered the site for days on end, the Seabees worked.

Their trucks and equipment broke down, repair parts and supplies were delayed, the rains slowed work and throughout the deployment the enemy harassed them. But each morning Seabees made the one mile trip to that lonely hilltop to complete the project in October.

Today, the Special Forces Camp at Lang Vei stands as a proud testimonial to the spirit and dedication of the Seabees of MCB-11. The camp is still a thorn in the side of the North Vietnamese, but now the wound is deeper and the thorn is harder to get out.

And the irritation grows....



ANOTHER MACHINE GUN BUNKER starts with the first yard of concrete poured into forms laced with steel reinforcing bars. Seventeen of these bunkers were built to provide interlocking fields of fire. (Official U.S. Navy Photo)

APL-55 — Logistic Support

Story by JOSN ANDERSON
Photos by PHILIP H. HARRIS

APLs (auxiliary personnel lighters better known as non propelled barracks craft) have long been used by the U.S. Navy to serve as support craft. Not since the Second World War though, have the APLs served such an important support function as they have in South Vietnam's war.



PATCH UP—DC2 John A. Dankson and DC3 Ray Beets of the APL-55's Damage Control Division fiberglass a Mark II PBR hull.



INGENUITY—MR2 J. J. Yenovich and ENFN Richard Clark, manufacture a repair bushing on a milling machine in the Repair Division shop aboard the APL-55.



ENGINE REPAIR—EN3 T.C. Dobson of the APL's Repair Division repairs a Mark II PBR engine.

These river patrol force units need the life-lines of logistic support. Providing this vital logistic support to one of these river patrol units, River Section 534 of River Squadron Five in the Mekong Delta, is Naval Support Activity Saigon's floating support detachment—the APL-55.

Under the command of COMNAVSUPPACT Saigon (Commander, U.S. Naval Support Activity, Saigon) the APL-55, directed by her Officer in Charge, Lieutenant John M. Schantz, provides complete logistical support to the sixty-six officers and men of River Patrol Section 534. These men of River Section 534 patrol the My Tho and Ham Luong Rivers with its many

barracks to a maintenance and repair facility complete with precision tools and machinery. After being fitted out in Cam Ranh Bay with a crew, supplies and equipment, the APL-55 was moved to An Thoi, located on Phu Quoc Island in the Gulf of Thailand. There she served as part of the support and repair team with the USS Krishna (ARL-38) providing support for Coastal Division 11 from mid 1966 to September 1967.

Lieutenant J.M. Schantz took charge of the APL-55 in June of 1967 and proceeded once again to Sasebo, Japan for overhaul with a skeleton crew of thirteen men. She left the shipyard after two and a half months and was taken to the NAVSUPPACT Saigon, Detachment Cat Lo. At Cat Lo she was again outfitted with a crew, provisions, ammunition and a large stock of PBR repair parts. In January of 1968, the newly formed River Section 534, which mans the Mark II PBRs, moved on board. She then deployed to the Mekong Delta.

NAVSUPPACT Saigon's APL-55 provides the same material support as any other shore base or installation can provide but with much more versatility. The "Apple 55", as she is affectionately called by her crew, provides messing facilities to the 190 Navymen in the immediate area, including the 118 men of her own crew. On board, she has the necessary tools, equipment and machinery for all repair and maintenance of the new Mark II PBRs, such as engine overhaul, fiberglassing hulls, electronic repair and a host of other very essential



SICK BAY—HM1 Kermit Knight treats YN1 in the ship's sick bay.

and important jobs.

As the Officer in Charge stated, "With such a hard charging river section as 534, providing support is a very difficult and full time job."

There are many unique assets of this floating support detachment that are prime examples of versatility and ingenuity. The APL-55 has a helicopter deck for quick resupply missions and emergency medical evacuations (MEDIVACS). She has a complete communications center that handles all the message traffic for the APL-55 and the river section. Once while the APL was moored at Vinh Long, the communications center, with all of its highly specialized electronic gear, handled the communications

guard and message traffic for eight different commands—a very complicated job for the men assigned to the Communications Division.

She has five 100-kilowatt generators which provide the necessary power to operate

all the repair equipment aboard the craft. She provides her crew with water daily with a system, installed which provides 2,000 gallons of fresh water per day. The OIC said jokingly, "We have enough water for the crew to take a shower once a day."

The APL-55 carries food, supplies, and ammunition sufficient for a crew of 190 for at least three weeks. The most important feature of the APL-55 is her mobility. Moving around the discretion of the commanding officer, the APL never becomes a target for Viet Cong or enemy shore parties.

Providing mobility to a 2,500-ton ship, there are two LCM 8s and two LCM 6s (landing craft) which are used as tug boats.

"Apple 55" can go where she is required to go, at

tributaries in their PBRs (river patrol boats) in the Mekong Delta region of South Vietnam.

Prior to Vietnam service in 1965, the APL-55 was moored in Sasebo, Japan and was used as a transient barracks craft until the need arose for a floating support base for the PCFs ("Swift Boats") in the IV Corp Area. When the APL-55 was chosen for the task, a million and a half dollars were invested into improving the craft with modern living accommodations and also changing the craft's characteristics from a floating

MOBILITY—Naval Support Activity Saigon's APL-55 can provide complete logistic support to the Mekong Delta Area.

Support and Mobility

Anthony G. Popowitz

13 F.C. West

companion craft for floating drydocks and overseas mobile units.

for freedom. This war, different from conventional wars, has found the Navy engaged in an unusual type of warfare — Riverine Warfare.



Henry Smith in the APL-55's fully equipped

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Since leaving Dong Tam in January she has traversed approximately 125 miles of delta rivers.

The APL-55 is armed with several 81 mm crew-served mortar positions on her superstructure, a number of .50 cal. machine gun mounts at various places about the craft plus the normal allowance of small arms provided to each NAVSUPPACT Saigon detachment.

Periodically, the LCMs drag the surrounding river with a chain-drag mine sweep to prevent Viet Cong saboteurs from mining the craft. Although her armament is primarily for self-defense, during the recent VC Tet Offensive she turned her mortars on the Viet Cong who were attempting to overrun allied outposts near Vinh Long. By providing fire power support to the city of Vinh Long itself, the APL-55 has been given credit for helping save the city from the Viet Cong. She also assisted the

NAVSUPPACT Detachment Vinh Long with PBR repair and maintenance service and ammunition. Once again her mobility proved to be a great asset during the VC offensive for "Charlie" never found her due to the fact that she was constantly traversing the My Tho and Ham Luong Rivers.

One third of the APL-55 is repair and shop spaces. On board are the IC Shop, Overhaul Shop, Machinery Repair Shop, Electronics Shop, Ordnance Repair, Carpenter Shop and Damage Control Shops. The IC Shop repairs and maintains all inter-communications equipment while the Electronics Shop repairs and maintains all radar and electronic gear. A large Machinery Repair Shop overhauls the PBR engines, grinds valves and does other mechanical work. The Repair Division often makes their own repair parts using lathes and milling machines. A Carpenter Shop does extensive fiberglass repair on the PBR hulls and other carpentry work on the APL-55.

The 118 NAVSUPPACT men aboard are of the highest caliber, all dedicated to their jobs. Besides working long hours, seven days a week and having no liberty, they stand security watches on a port and starboard basis. To help boost their morale, the men are shown movies nightly on the mess decks which are exchanged frequently with other ships in the delta. At every noon meal the mess tables in the galley have table cloths to provide the men with a more "home-like" atmosphere. The APL has a

well stocked ships store and serves "the best food in the delta".

As the OIC stated, "The men of the APL and the river section get along together very well. They work side by side ensuring that their jobs are done to the best of their ability. Often the men of the APL switch duties with the river section crew. By doing this, they both get a better understanding of each other's jobs and the need for perfect maintenance".

For civic action, the crew



PROTECTION—GMG2 J.T. Foss (left), GMG2 Charles Mauney (middle) and YN2 Richard prepare to fire one of the several 81MM mortars used for defense aboard the APL-55.

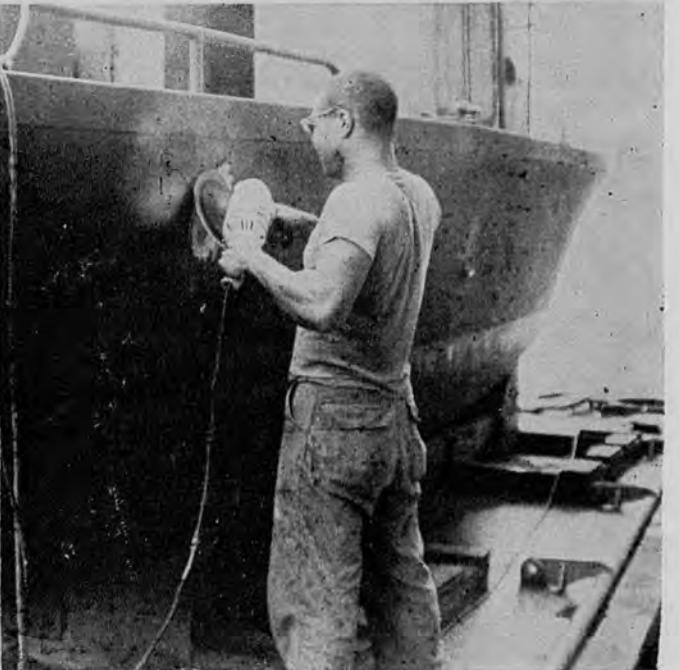


RADIO CHECK—RM3 Walter Dufrain handles the communications traffic for the APL-55 and River Section 534.

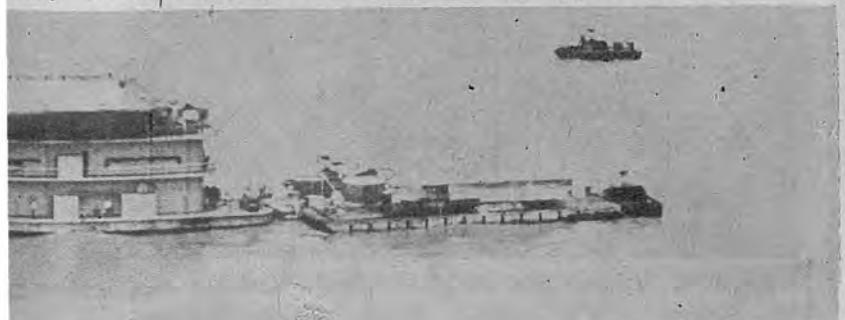
sponsors the two corpsmen from the craft's sick bay to hold a MEDCAP (medical civic action program) twice monthly to Vietnamese villages located in the vicinity. These corpsmen and a number of the crew proceed to the villages by "Mike" Boat (LCM) with supplies, donated clothing and medical assistance.

The APL-55 with her versatility, mobility and dedication is another example of NAVSUPPACT Saigon's continuing efforts to provide complete logistic support, wherever and whenever needed.

To the men living aboard her, she is more than just a barracks craft—she is the life-line of logistic support.



SANDING—DC2 Maurice A. Law of the Damage Control Division sands the fiberglass hull of a newly repaired PBR.



logistic support for two river sections anywhere in South Vietnam's Mekong

DELTA PEOPLE HELPED



COUNTERPARTS — Lieutenant Kenneth C. Jacobsen, left, U.S. Naval Advisor to Vietnamese River Assault Group (RAG) 31, discusses operations with his Vietnamese Navy counterpart, Lieutenant Truong Thanh Tan, commanding officer of the RAG.



FACE TO FACE — A Vietnamese River Assault Group (RAG) sailor checks the identification papers of the occupants of a sampan on the Mang Thit-Nicolai canal.

Story by JOE E.T. Tompkins
Photos by PHIL L.R. Robinson

For the Communist insurgents, the ability to carry on the war in south Vietnam depends largely upon their success in supplying the Viet Cong troops fighting there.

For the South Vietnamese and other Free World Forces, on the other hand, any reduction in this VC supply capability represents an easing of the battle strains against friendly troops and creates a more favorable atmosphere for pacifying the country's population.

Because both sides understand these facts, the battle for control of important lines of communication such as rivers, canals and roads continues.

In the Mekong Delta region, an area of approximately 7,000 square miles, hundreds of navigable waterways lace the rice-rich lowland, providing avenues of transportation for the thousands living there. It is over these water arteries that the farmer must transport his produce to the market places. Thus the importance of keeping them open and secure from Viet Cong harassment is unquestioned by the Vietnamese Government.

From along the southern border with Cambodia to the South China Sea, two large rivers flow through the delta, the Mekong and Bassac. About 60 miles from the sea, the larger of the two streams, the Mekong River, branches into three additional rivers—the My Tho, Ham Luu and Co Chien. Between these huge rivers, which are more than a half-mile wide at some points, flow hundreds of

navigable connection canals that link the remote villages and hamlets with each other and with larger cities.

One such canal connecting two of the rivers is the Mang Thit-Nicolai, located in Vinh Long Province between the Bassac and Co Chien Rivers about 40 miles from the sea. Composed of the Mang Thit River and the man-made Nicolai canal, this transportation artery is vital to the economy of the area, saving the farmers and merchants valuable time in transiting from one point to another. Through the use of the Mang Thit-Nicolai canal complex, the amount of time required to transport goods from the city of Can Tho (on the Bassac River) to Vinh Long (on the Co Chien) is reduced by as much as two days.

Until last summer, the Mang Thit-Nicolai canal had been closed to civilian use. It was on August 8, that the waterway was declared open to commercial traffic.

Knowing the importance of the canal, the Vietnamese Government had begun a campaign on February 17, 1967, to wrest control of the area from the Viet Cong. Prior to the beginning of the campaign, the VC used extortion as a means of getting supplies and collecting "taxes" from users of the waterway. It was also a major supply route for them.

Designating the region adjacent to the canal as a "Special Zone," the Vietnamese Government sent two



LIAISON — Chief Gunner's Mate Edmund B. Canby uses the military radio to maintain liaison between American and Vietnamese forces fighting the Viet Cong in South Vietnam's Mekong Delta.



DOUBLE INSURANCE—Patrolling FCM boats of the Vietnamese River Assault Group (RAG) 31 insure that the craft using the Mang Thit-Nicolai canal do not contain supplies of arms for the enemy.

Army battalions, five Popular Force (local village or hamlet military units) platoons, three Regional Force (provincial military units) companies and one company of Police Field Forces (a segment of the National Police) there to organize and pacify the population, to open and provide security for the canal.

Vietnamese River Assault Groups (RAGs) based at Vinh Long were used in the campaign to provide armed landing craft and gunboats for troop lift, patrol and gunfire support for the ground operations.

During the course of the campaign, the combined Vietnamese ground and naval forces constructed 11 new outposts to help in controlling the 31-mile long waterway.

They also built bridges, class-

rooms, roads, medical facilities and a market place while pacifying five former VC-controlled hamlets.

While returning 824 families to their villages from which they had been displaced by the communist insurgents, the Vietnamese Armed Forces secured the entire length of the canal as well as everything within a mile on both sides. Some 30,760 people live within these boundaries.

Employing the Chieu Hoi (open arms) Program, the campaign thus far has netted over 50 Hoi Chanh (government ralliers). Many of these former VC were relocated in the seven "New Life" hamlets established along the canal.

Regaining operational control of the canal from the VC was no easy task. Many long and hard battles were fought



CANAL INSPECTION — A patrolling FCM boat of Vietnamese River Assault Group (RAG) 31 inspects a commercial junk on the Mang Thit-Nicolai canal.

and are sometimes still waged by units at all levels. From the beginning of the Mang Thit campaign in February, through December of 1967, the combined Vietnamese

forces killed 536 and captured 158 of the Viet Cong. They captured 95 enemy weapons, as well as a large quantity of ammunition and equipment. At the same time, they destroyed two VC grenade factories, 10 propaganda centers and 235 booby traps along the canal.

As the canal becomes more and more secure and safe for travel, the number of civilian craft using it is increasing rapidly. Even before the canal was declared formally "open" on August 8th, there was a noticeable increase in its traffic. During the period between June 1st and Decem-

ber 1st, 1967, there were more than 940 craft of the 60 to 100 ton class using the canal, as well as thousands of smaller sampans and junks.

The Vinh Long based River Assault Groups had the main responsibility of patrolling the Mang Thit-Nicolai canal on a 24 hour basis until it was formally declared open. Each RAG would spend ten days patrolling the waterway while the other was being used to support other Mekong Delta operations.

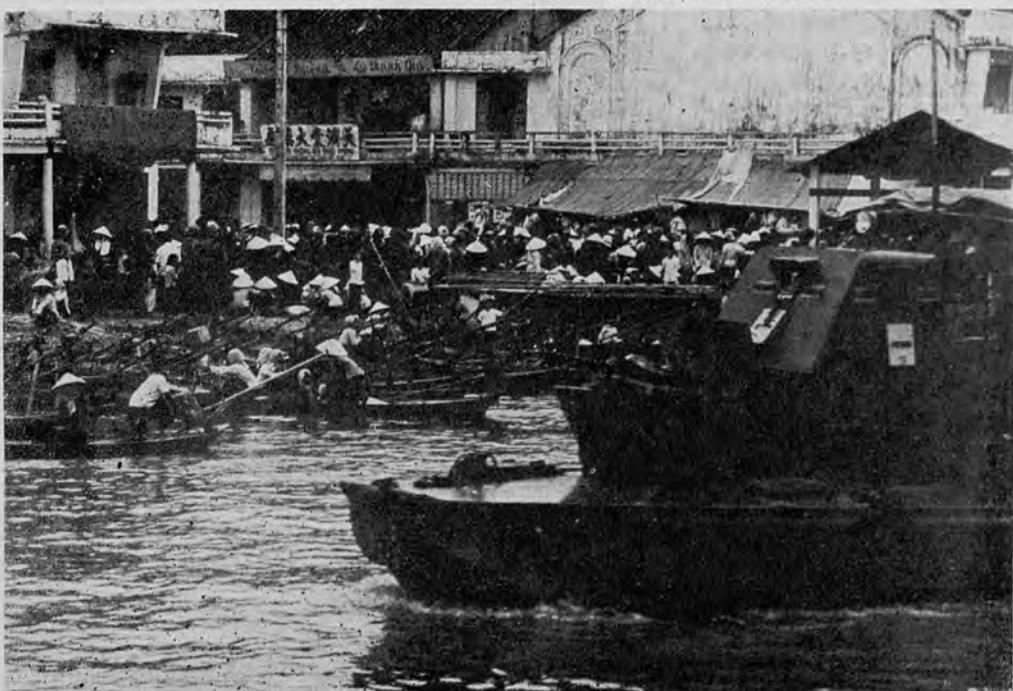
It has shown the people that their government is actively interested in the peasant farmers and merchants of remote regions, as well as the heavily populated metropolitan areas.

As the former U.S. Navy Advisor to RAG 31, Lieutenant Robert N. Tidball, put it, "The Vietnamese RAGs played an important part in

"It has also demonstrated to what lengths the South Vietnamese Government is willing to go for the benefit of the people."



SEARCH ASHORE — A Vietnamese sailor from River Assault Group (RAG) 31, armed with an M-60 machine gun, checks the inside of a thatched-roof house near the bank of the Mang Thit-Nicolai canal.



SECURITY — Hundreds gather at the market place in the village of Minh Duc as a Vietnamese River Assault Group 31 river patrol craft provides security by patrolling up and down the Mang Thit River.

Seawolves of the Delta

Story by JOC Dick Rose
Photos by PH1 Dan Dodd

"All of our scheduled flights are routine," insists Lieutenant Commander Sam Aydelotte. But he insists with a smile, because "routine," in this case, only means that his "Seawolf" pilots can expect the unexpected on each flight.

LCDR Aydelotte is the former officer-in-charge of U.S. Navy Helicopter Attack (light) Squadron Three (HAL-3), Detachment Three, at Vinh Long in the Mekong Delta, 65 miles southwest of Saigon.

He likes to point out one recent flight by a two gunship light helicopter flight team to illustrate what can happen on a "routine" mission.

It began as an hour-and-a-half-reconnaissance mission over Viet Cong occupied territory on the northeast bank of the Co Chien River, about 20 miles southeast of Vinh Long. There was a Navy combat correspondent aboard the lead chopper, while a Navy combat photographer rode the cover ship.

By the time we returned, over four hours later, we had been involved in three separate firefights, survived a mortar attack and an attempt to blow up the refueling depot," he said.

The basic job of the "Seawolves" is to serve as a unit of the Navy's Task Force 116 (Operation Game Warden), which has as its mission the prevention of Viet Cong movements on the rivers of the Mekong Delta, and the Rung Sat Special Zone swamp area surrounding the shipping channel to Saigon. The flight referred to was part of this job.

LCDR Aydelotte, whose call sign is "Seawolf 35," was the pilot of the lead ship. His co-pilot on that trip was his prospective relief as O-in-C



ROCKET RUN—An armed gunship helicopter, flown by Navy "Seawolves," makes a rocket run on Viet Cong ambush sites in the Mekong Delta.

of the detachment, Lieutenant Commander Eugene Rosenthal. They were followed by "Seawolf 33," Lieutenant (junior grade) Mike Peters, flying his last mission in Vietnam, and Lieutenant (junior grade) Bill Mackie.

Crewmembers of the lead ship were Aviation Structural Mechanic Third Class Jack Williamson, Jr., the crew chief and left door gunner, and Aviation Machinist's Mate Third Class Jerry Lassiter, the right door gunner. Their counter-parts on the cover ship were Airman Wendell Maxwell and Airman Robert Nunes.

A Vietnamese Army unit was under fire by an estimated platoon of VC in an area 45 miles southeast of Vinh Long. (LST 838).

The two gunships scouted the area for 35 minutes, maintaining contact with ground forces advisor, but finding no activity. Just as LCDR Aydelotte requested permission to depart the area because of an impending fuel shortage, LTJG Peters received sniper fire from the tree line.

Airman Maxwell dropped a smoke marker in the area of fire and both helos attacked the tree line area with automatic weapons and rocket fire.

After 15 minutes, the Seawolf's attack was broken off so that the two choppers could refuel and re-arm aboard the operation Game Warden support ship Hunterdon County (LST 838).

Tre. A U.S. Army L-19 aerial observer reported an estimated 300 VC in the area. There was also a request for medical evacuation of one of nine U.S. Navymen wounded in the battle.

Later the Vinh Long helicopter team was joined en route to Ben Tre by Hunterdon County "Seawolves" Lieutenant Bill Barnes, Ensign Jim Beard, Lieutenant (junior grade) H. Wade Turner and Lieutenant (junior grade) Marv Bulson.

LT Barnes went in to recover the seriously wounded man, who was then taken to Dong Tam.

The helicopters continued to fly over the area, returning and suppressing ground fire. The sector advisor then called in two Air Force F-100s for an air strike on the area.

After 36 minutes, permission to secure for refueling and re-arming and to clear the area for an impending air strike was requested and granted.

As LT Barnes returned from Dong Tam, LTJG Peters left for Vinh Long to repair two bullet holes in his main rotor.

Then a fourth helo, based at Dong Tam, joined the



MAKING ADJUSTMENTS—Aviation Structural Mechanic Second Class Thomas L. Johnson reaches for a wrench held by Aviation Structural Mechanic Third Class Jack L. Baumert as he makes adjustments to the rotor head of a Navy armed gunship helicopter.



HIT THEIR MARK—"Seawolf" pilots watch smoke rise from the target area after a rocket run.



MAP CHECK—Lieutenant (junior grade) William C. Mackey checks his map coordinates as he flies over the Mekong Delta.

three remaining at Ben Tre. While the ships were being re-armed, a Vietnamese soldier noticed a wire running through the grass. LT Barnes cut the wire and traced it to a command-detonated satchel explosive charge hidden in a group of fuel drums near a 10,000 gallon fuel bladder 100 yards behind the parked choppers.

Ten minutes after the discovery of the explosive charge, a mortar attack on the air field began. Ten mortars rounds hit the airfield before all four choppers completed the scramble and were airborne. None was hit. The four choppers made several rocket attacks on the area from which the mortars were coming. A later investigation by the Army revealed two 82mm mortars were destroyed and seven enemy killed.

Four hours and five minutes after he took off on the "routine" reconnaissance mission, LCDR Aydelotte returned to Vinh Long.

Although few of the missions have as much excitement as this one, all of them are a challenge to the training and abilities of the "Seawolves," all of whom are volunteers.

The original 32 volunteer pilots, already proficient in

fixed-wing aircraft and helicopters, arrived in Vietnam between June and December 1966. They studied for three months under Army pilots at Soc Trang, Bien Hoa and Vinh Long, learning combat tactics and gaining familiarity with the "Hueys".

New pilots assigned to the unit were given 15 hours of aircraft familiarization at Fort Benning, Georgia, and then received their in-country training from the now-experienced original "Seawolves".

The gunners and crew

chiefs also trained at Fort Benning. They were instructed in the use of the M-60 machine gun as a helicopter weapon, as well as tactics, aerial observation and night gunnery. They also underwent brief maintenance training at Fort Eustis, Virginia.

The Vinh Long Detachment of HAL-3 now consists of eleven Pilots and the enlisted crew members. They have two armed UH-1B "Huey" helicopters, and one "slick," an unarmed maintenance helicopter. The "Hueys" are former Army choppers which have been modified for Navy use.

They are supported by a maintenance crew of one officer and thirty-four enlisted men, who are also responsible for servicing the choppers of three other HAL-3 detachments — Dong Tam, Binh Thuy and aboard an LST on the Bassac River.

The maintenance crew members were trained at various Army bases in the United States, depending on their specialties.

Pilots and crew stand duty on a daily rotation, 24 hours on, 24 hours off. In addition to the scheduled missions they are always in a standby status in case of a

"scramble" — an emergency call for assistance from a river patrol boat (PBR), an outpost under attack or any time their heavily-armed choppers are needed.

Each helo has four externally-mounted M-60 machine guns, two pods of seven 2.75 inch rockets, two internally-mounted M-60s, two M-79 grenade launchers, one spare M-60 and assorted M-16 and personal sidearms for defense, should a chopper be forced down in enemy territory.

The maintenance men service the "Hueys," keeping them in top condition; the crew chief checks out the aircraft and assures everything is running smoothly; the door gunner makes sure all of the weapons are operating properly; the co-pilot assists as navigator, controls the external M-60s and directs the door gunner's fire, and the pilot fires the rockets, and flies the craft. Together, they comprise the fighting team known as "Seawolves" routinely flying patrols, routinely scrambling to hit the Viet Cong and save American lives, and routinely fulfilling their impressive list of responsibilities.

As LCDR Aydelotte puts it, "For the 'Seawolves' of the Delta, doing the outstanding is routine — sometimes we do even better."



LOADING—Airman Robert Nunes, loads the ammunition box for the externally-mounted M-60 flex-guns. There are two ammunition boxes for each set of flex-guns.



SERVICE—The Helicopter Attack (light) Squadron Three Maintenance Division services one of the unit's choppers.

VN Navy Headquarters Attacked

By
LT Robert Kay

Heavy automatic weapons fire signaled the beginning of a VC attack against the Vietnamese Navy Headquarters in Saigon, on the first day of the enemy's recent "cities offensive".

The attack was initiated by a 13 man VC demolition squad which attempted to breach the compound gates and occupy the compound for use as a command post.

The VC "sapper" squad, arriving in a civilian sedan, killed the two street barricade guards at Me Linh Square and took command of the checkpoint.

Minutes later, the first of the two VC teams launched an assault on the front gates of the compound.

The defense of the compound was under the direction of the Command Duty Officer, Lieutenant Commander Giam and the Saigon Naval Base Duty Officer, Lieutenant Dinh.

LCDR Giam ordered the gate sentries to withdraw into the compound in order to clear a fire zone for the

two .30-caliber machine guns positioned on the second floor of the headquarters building.

LT Dinh assigned the defensive positions and began the counter-attack.

Unable to breach the main gates, two sappers in a suicidal effort, detonated a charge of T-N-T against the wall of the front building of the compound. The blast was not large enough to penetrate the wall.

LTG Ledoux ran to the advisor's building to establish contact with the U.S. Military Police who had arrived on the scene. Meanwhile, the VC at the checkpoint were preparing for a second assault on the front gate.

From an exposed position on the second floor, LTG Ledoux spotted several VC regrouping for the assault and directed

Military Police firepower to their position.

The combined Vietnamese Navy and Military Police fire successfully halted the second assault.

Exposing themselves to fire by the remaining VC, the Vietnamese sailors succeeded in pulling the wounded to a waiting ambulance in the compound.

They then left the compound again to provide cover for the ambulance run to the hospital while capturing one VC hiding in a pile of construction material across the street.

One other VC was captured in further fighting and, with the exception of one escapee, was killed.

MRF Now Full Strength

The Navy's River Assault Force (TF 117) in Vietnam reached full strength this past month when the final increment of its 100 riverine assault boats joined the force while it was operating on the Bassack River near Can Tho.

The final units to arrive on February 23 were four Assault Support Patrol Boats (ASPBs), fast moving craft that are used primarily for minesweeping and for escorting the force's heavier Armored Troop Carriers (ATCs).

Their arrival marked the end of a year-long build-up that began on March 8, 1967 when the force's first boats were delivered. Most of the 100 assault boats are conventional amphibious landing craft that have been heavily armored to withstand the stern punishment they receive during fire-fights with the enemy in the narrow canals and streams that make up the Mekong Delta.

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