

Ground and air operations dominate Vietnam War coverage but the Navy played a major role there too.

Ground combat in the jungles of South Vietnam and the air war over North Vietnam are how most people visualize the Vietnam War. But there was more to it than that. Although you might not know it from the publicity it has received, the United States Navy also played a major role in the war.

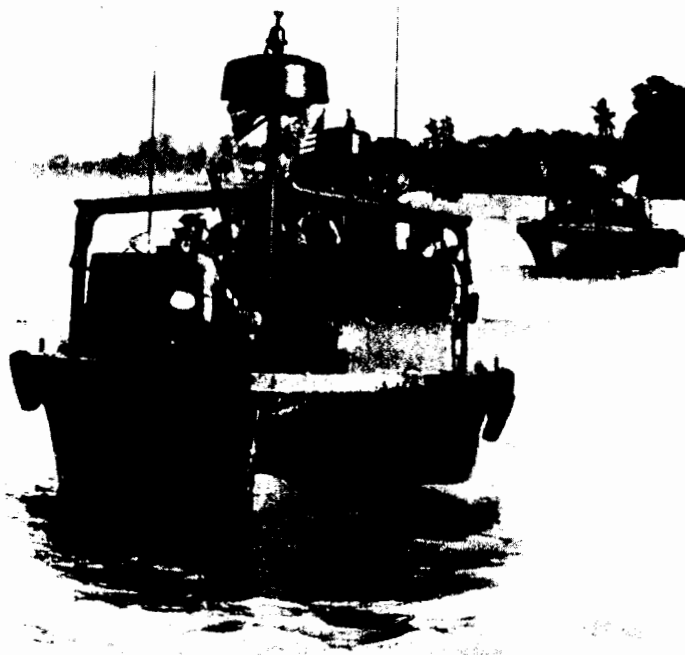
Our sailors were there in the beginning on board the USS *Maddox* in the Gulf of Tonkin in 1964, and they were there in the end on board the USS *Okinawa* during the evacuation of Saigon in 1975. And they were there throughout the war as well—on board the carriers on Yankee Station; on the battleships, cruisers and destroyers along the coast; and on the swift boats and river assault craft in Vietnam's inland waterways.

Some 1,842,000 Americans served in the Navy during the Vietnam era, more than served in either the Air Force or Marine Corps. Among other decorations and awards, naval personnel won 14 Medals of Honor for conspicuous bravery in action.

During the course of the war, 1,626 naval personnel were killed in action, 4,178 seriously wounded and 5,898 slightly wounded in action.

One of the several purposes of *Vietnam Magazine* is to balance its coverage to include all of the war's many aspects. This includes the diversity within the several armed services as well as between them. For example, the U.S. Navy itself was split into at least four separate entities during the war.

These included the U.S. Seventh Fleet's Task Force 77, the attack carrier striking force operating from Dixie and Yankee stations in the South China Sea, that conducted air operations over North and South Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia.



"Give me a fast ship..." A flotilla of river patrol boats (PBRs) prepares to go in harm's way in the Mekong Delta during Operation Bold Dragon III on March 26, 1968.

Then there were the battleships, cruisers, destroyers and other surface combatants of the Seventh Fleet's Task Group 70.8 that provided naval gunfire support for allied forces as well as bombardment of enemy forces ashore.

Under command of U.S. Naval Forces Vietnam in Saigon was the Coastal Surveillance Force (Task Force 115) responsible for Operation Market Time, the interdiction of enemy supply lines in Vietnamese coastal waters, and the River Patrol Force (Task Force 116) and Riverine Assault Force (Task Force 117) which were part of the joint Army-Navy Mobile Riverine Force organized to cut enemy supply lines in the 3,000 miles of South Vietnam inland waterways.

Finally there were such specialized naval units as the more than 10,000 men of the amphibious construction battalions (SEABEES) and the super-secret Navy SEALs, who were engaged in special operations all over Indochina.

In this issue, contributing Editor John F. Wukovits tells of one of the major brown-water naval operations of the war, Operation Giant Sling-shot. More than 1,000 fire fights took place during this 515-day operation to disrupt enemy supply lines from Cambodia into III Corps and IV Corps.

Then there is contributing editor Lawrence Greenberg's account of the "Great Thunder," the USS *Newport News*, which served three tours in Vietnam waters. A heavy cruiser, the *Newport News* carried nine 8-inch rapid-fire guns in three triple turrets and was second in size only to the battleship *New Jersey*. During her first deployment alone she fired a record 59,421 rounds at enemy positions ashore.

That's not all. There is also an interview with former Secretary of the Navy

James Webb, a Marine combat veteran of the Vietnam War, as well as an account of how Marine Lieutenant Wes Fox won the Medal of Honor while commanding a rifle company in Vietnam.

Also in this issue is the tragic story of *Groupe Mobile 100* and its *Bataillons de Corée* which were annihilated during the closing days of the First Indochina War. Serving with the U.S. 2nd Infantry Division during the Korean War, these French "Korea Battalions" had earned three U.S. Presidential Unit Citations for bravery there.

If you want to learn more about the complexity and diversity of the Vietnam War, this issue provides a start toward that understanding. H.G.S.