

TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY

THE VIETNAM CENTER

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Memorandum

20 September 1999

To: Admiral Elmo R. Zumwalt, Jr.
Vice Admiral Emmett H. Tidd

From: James R. Reckner



Subj: PBR Forces Veterans' Association

One of the topics I intended to raise during our canceled meeting, and then later at the dinner at The Tivoli, but which I managed to forget entirely, was the PBR Forces Veterans' Association.

That association, whose members I visited in early July during their reunion, are now seeking a Congressional Charter for their organization. I counseled them that they had a very hard road to how to achieve their goal, but they are determined. And, as far as I am concerned, they have already earned it.

I am forwarding as an enclosure to this memo a copy of the materials their President, Kerry N. Schaefer, has sent me, with a respectful request that you consider supporting their request.

encl:

**PBR Forces Veterans Association Inc.**

732 American Inn Road
Villa Ridge, MO 63089-2214
USA



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September 7, 1999

COPY

The Honorable John Ashcroft
316 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington DC 20510

Dear Senator,

I am writing you on behalf of the PBR Forces Veterans Association, Inc. in hopes that you will assist us in obtaining a Congressional Charter for our Veteran's organization. We are a non-profit Association made up of former U.S. Navy Sailors that served aboard River Patrol Boats (PBR) during the Vietnam conflict.

We were established in 1998, and consist principally of former Task Force 116 (T. F. 116) Sailors, but our membership is also open to members of the U.S. Army 458th Transportation Co. and others of the "Brown Water Navy". Members of this organization seek continuing fraternity, and historical accuracy concerning our place in the history of the Vietnam war. Plans exist to compile an anthology of member experiences and reflections.

Presently, we are archiving our history at the Vietnam Center - Texas Tech University, Lubbock, TX. The director of the Vietnam Center, Dr. James Reckner, also served in Vietnam with River Patrol Group 52 and is instrumental in recording our history for future generations.

We count among our membership many sailors that distinguished themselves while serving aboard PBR's. Among them are Elliott Williams, Medal of Honor, Executive Director; Cecil H. Martin, Navy Cross, Vice President; Capt. Chester B. Smith, Navy Cross; Warren Westphal, Navy Cross and countless recipients of the Silver Star, Bronze Star and Purple Heart not to mention the many other decorations awarded in service to our country.

Our association has restarted the World War II Gold Star Program. The Gold Star Program is used to honor the families of our friends and shipmates that returned from the war in a flag draped coffin. We presently allow one member of each KIA's family to become an honorary member of our association.

I also believe that it is necessary to correct the spread of myths and untruths that cause the American people to believe that we are drugged out, homeless, suicidal and traumatized "victims" of the Vietnam War that are barely able to function. It is our goal to dispel those myths and untruths.

I am a life long resident of the Great State of Missouri and served 4 years with the United States Navy. I also served a tour in Vietnam in defense of our country.

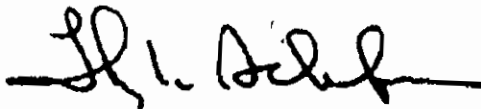
I have never failed to vote in an election, be it in person or by absentee ballot. I plan to continue my 100% voting record in this great state, as I feel it my duty to be heard at the voting box.

Your sponsorship of a Congressional Charter for PBR Forces Veterans Association, Inc. would be greatly appreciated.

I must now ask for your support in achieving this goal of a Congressional Charter for our Association and the men that fought to preserve our freedom that we all now enjoy.

I look forward to a favorable reply.

Sincerely,



Kerry N. Schaefer, President
PBR Forces Veterans Association, Inc

Enclosures:

Copy of proposed legislation
Brief history of PBR's

A BILL

To recognize the organization known as the **PBR Forces Veterans Association, Incorporated**.
Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. CHARTER.

The **PBR Forces Veterans Association, Incorporated**, organized and incorporated under the laws of the State of Missouri, is hereby recognized as such and is granted a Federal charter.

SEC. 2. CORPORATE POWERS.

The **PBR forces Veterans Association, Incorporated**, (referred to in this Act as the 'corporation') shall have only those powers granted to it through its bylaws and articles of incorporation filed in the State in which it is incorporated and subject to the laws of such State.

SEC. 3. PURPOSES OF CORPORATION.

(1). The principles underlying the corporation are patriotic allegiance to the United States of America, fidelity to its Constitution and law, the security of civil liberty, and the permanence of free institutions.

(2). The corporation advocates historical accuracy concerning the River Patrol Force's part in the Vietnam War, to gather important and Accurate historical records and to preserve those records. Preserving those records will disclose the truth and dispel myths for future historians that would write the history of the Vietnam War.

(3). To cherish the memories of the valiant deeds in arms of the River Patrol Force and promote Fellowship among it's members.

(4). To protect, uphold, and preserve the dignity and honor of the River Patrol Force at all times and on all occasions.

(5). To advance the best interests of members of the Armed Forces of the United States of America.

(6). To serve our country in peace as we did in war.

(7). To extend all possible relief to needy members of the corporation, their widows, and children.

(8). To stimulate patriotism in the minds of our youth by encouraging the study of the patriotic history of our Nation. To foster and perpetuate Americanism.

(9). The corporation is committed to correcting the adverse stereotyping of Vietnam Veterans and exerting our energies to instilling the pride in self that Vietnam Veterans so rightly deserve.

SEC. 4. SERVICE OF PROCESS.

With respect to service of process, the corporation shall comply with the laws of the State in which it is incorporated and those States in which it carries on its activities in furtherance of its corporate purposes.

SEC. 5. MEMBERSHIP.

Eligibility for membership in the corporation and the rights and privileges of members shall be as provided in the bylaws of the corporation.

SEC. 6. BOARD OF DIRECTORS; COMPOSITION; RESPONSIBILITIES.

The composition and the responsibilities of the board of directors of the corporation shall be as provided in the articles of incorporation of the corporation and in conformity with the laws of the State in which it is incorporated.

SEC. 7. OFFICERS OF THE CORPORATION.

The officers of the corporation and the election of such officers shall be as provided in the articles of incorporation of the corporation and in conformity with the laws of the State in which it is incorporated.

SEC. 8. RESTRICTIONS.

(a) **USE OF INCOME AND ASSETS-** No part of the income or assets of the corporation shall inure to any member, officer, or director of the corporation or be distributed to any such person during the life of this charter. Nothing in this subsection shall be construed to prevent the payment of reasonable compensation to the officers of the corporation or reimbursement for actual necessary expenses in amounts approved by the board of directors.

(b) **LOANS-** The corporation shall not make any loan to any officer, director, or employee of the corporation.

(c) **POLITICAL ACTIVITY-** The corporation, any officer, or any director of the corporation, acting as such officer or director, shall not contribute to, support, or otherwise participate in any political activity or in any manner attempt to influence legislation.

(d) **ISSUANCE OF STOCK AND PAYMENT OF DIVIDENDS-** The corporation shall have no power to issue any shares of stock nor to declare or pay any dividends.

(e) CLAIMS OF FEDERAL APPROVAL- The corporation shall not claim congressional approval or Federal Government authority for any of its activities.

SEC. 9. LIABILITY.

The corporation shall be liable for the acts of its officers and agents when acting within the scope of their authority.

SEC. 10. MAINTENANCE AND INSPECTION OF BOOKS AND RECORDS.

(a) BOOKS AND RECORDS OF ACCOUNT- The corporation shall keep correct and complete books and records of account and shall keep minutes of any proceeding of the corporation involving any of its members, the board of directors, or any committee having authority under the board of directors.

(b) NAMES AND ADDRESSES OF MEMBERS- The corporation shall keep at its principal office a record of the names and addresses of all members having the right to vote in any proceeding of the corporation.

(c) RIGHT TO INSPECT BOOKS AND RECORDS- All books and records of the corporation may be inspected by any member having the right to vote, or by any agent or attorney of such member, for any proper purpose, at any reasonable time.

(d) APPLICATION OF STATE LAW- Nothing in this section shall be construed to contravene any applicable State law.

SEC. 11. ANNUAL REPORT.

The corporation shall report annually to the Congress concerning the activities of the corporation during the preceding fiscal year. Such annual report shall be submitted at the same time as is the report of the audit for such fiscal year. The report shall not be printed as a public document.

SEC. 12. RESERVATION OF RIGHT TO AMEND OR REPEAL CHARTER.

The right to alter, amend, or repeal this Act is expressly reserved to the Congress.

SEC. 13. DEFINITION.

In this Act, the term 'State' includes the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, and the territories and possessions of the United States.

SEC. 14. TAX-EXEMPT STATUS.

The corporation shall maintain its status as an organization exempt from taxation as provided in the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 or any corresponding similar provision.

SEC. 15. TERMINATION.

If the corporation fails to comply with any of the restrictions or provisions of this Act the charter granted by this Act shall terminate.

Brief History of PBRs

The kind of warfare that was waged in the inland waters of South Vietnam was last practiced by the U.S. Navy during the Civil War. As a result much of the tactics were developed by trial and error. Sailors learned their lessons well and became a formidable fighting force that wrested control of the water ways from the Viet Cong (VC) and the North Vietnamese Army (NVA).

No boat came to symbolize the Brown Water Navy like the small fragile River Patrol Boats (PBR) of Task Force 116 (T.F. 116), Code named Game Warden. The sailors who manned the PBRs often fought pitched battles with the VC and NVA at ranges of mere feet.

When the Navy decided to commit river patrol forces to the inland waters of Vietnam, it found itself in need of a small fast patrol craft. The result was the PBR MK I. The boat was 31 ft long and capable of speeds approaching 28 knots. It was powered by two GM 220 Horsepower diesel engines connected by direct drive to a pair of Jacuzzi water jet propulsion pumps. The boat's armament consisted of a twin 50 Caliber machine gun mount in the forward gun tub, a single 50 Caliber machine gun on a stern mount, an M60 machine gun and a Honeywell MK18 40mm grenade launcher mounted amid ship. In addition each boat was equipped with various small arms, M-79 grenade launcher, Shotgun, mortar, grenades and side arms. The PBR was outfitted with a Raytheon 1900 radar unit and two AN/VRC 46 radios. The PBR drew only two feet of water while at rest and about nine inches of water at full speed. After the initial run of MK I PBRs, the MK II was introduced. Slightly larger and with a lower profile, the only significant difference was the beefed up aluminum gunwales to aid in protecting the boat from being damaged when coming alongside sampans and junks. Eventually there would be 250 PBRs in Vietnam.

The PBR was manned by a four man crew - normally a first class petty officer as boat captain, a gunner's mate, an engineman and a seaman. Each crewman was cross trained in each other's job encase one became unable to carry out his duties. Generally PBRs operated in two boat patrols under the command of a patrol officer who rode one of the boats in addition to the normal crew.

The sailors who took on the VC in his own territory and on his short range terms, and beat him, became a force without precedence in the history of the U. S. Navy. Enormous responsibility and demands were placed on the PBR sailors, especially the Boat Captain. The decisions the PBR boat captain would make were equal to the responsibility of the Captain of a destroyer.

PBRs logged up to 70,000 patrol hours in an average month with the PBRs being in approximately 80 firefights per month. At one time the casualty rate ran at about 6% per month. At that rate and over a years tour, nearly three out of four PBR sailors could be expected to be killed or wounded.

The PBR Sailors became the most highly decorated naval command of the war with two recipients of the Medal of Honor, fourteen recipients of the Navy Cross and recipients of untold numbers of Silver Stars, Bronze stars and Purple Hearts.

Today, many old sailors wear the Vietnam service medal. Of these, only a small portion served in the River Patrol Force. And in a sense these men are a group unto themselves. Their uniforms were not white nor even blue denim, but jungle fatigues. And rather than the traditional White hat, they wore the distinctive head gear that only those who served with the River Patrol Force was permitted to wear. These sailors proudly wore the Black Beret.