Throughout U. S. Naval history a wide variety of ship types and craft have been utilized in combat and support operations. In the Vietnam War, one of the special types of craft ideally suited to provide logistic support for the new concept of riverine warfare is the YRBM, or repair, berthing and messing barge.

Forty-eight miles south south-east of Saigon lies Dong Tam, headquarters of the joint Army-Navy Mobile Riverine Force. Moored here is NSA Saigon's YRBM-17, which supports the numerous craft used by the Mobile Riverine Force (MRF).

YRBM-17 was first built in 1944 at Portland, Ore., as a covered lighter. Later, it was converted to a large covered lighter. The craft was ordered to Vietnam for duty with ServPac in 1966 and it became YRBM-17.

In March 1967, Navy personnel began arriving at the Dong Tam basin to establish a support detachment. YRBM-17 and APL-26 arrived in April 1967, and full support capabilities were ready and available for personnel and craft of the newly formed MRF and River Flotilla One.

YRBM-17 was tasked with supporting the construction effort on the Navy detachment ashore and providing repair support to the MRF craft. During that time, YRBM-17 had the only Navy PONTOON DRYDOCKS -- Men from YRBM-17 perform emergency repairs on two ASPBs in drydock.

messing facilities in the Dong Tam area and fed over 300 personnel at every meal.

By late October 1967, most of the construction ashore had been completed and with the increased tempo of MRF operations, the YRBM focused on her primary mission-- repair support.

The craft also has the difficult task of supplying. Until recently, its supply officer handled all supply functions for the craft, the detachment, Navy Seawolves, Det-6 and Patrol Air Cushion support.

The YRBM's support role includes maintenance of MRF craft, overhauling, engineering, limited hull repair, all emergency repairs and other modifications.

Until repair facilities are completed ashore, the craft will continue to be the major repair unit at Dong Tam.

YRBM-17 has performed emergency repair work for and has given assistance to My Tho-based river patrol boats, SEAL support units, USS Mark (AKL-28), two NavSuppAct YFRSs and LCM-8s.

The repair complex at Dong Tam, consisting of YRBM-17, a floating crane and three pontoon drydocks, has earned the reputation of being a first-class repair facility.

During the first six months of MRF operations, YRBM-17 completely overhauled four boats every eight days in addition to performing emergency battle repairs.

Since the beginning of 1968, this repair capability has increased to the point where seven boats can be completely overhauled in a 12-day period, plus performing emergency repairs as they arise.