miles southeast of Nha Be. When the sampans attempted to evade, the patrol boats opened fire on them. Simultaneously, the PBRs came under heavy automatic-weapons and small-arms fire from enemy positions on both banks of the river. The PBRs cleared the area to evacuate one seriously wounded crewman by medical helicopter. In the meantime Navy "Seawolves" put in air strikes on the area of the attack. Upon completion of the air strikes, the PBRs, with air support being provided by the "Seawolves", returned and recovered two enemy sampans containing 12 one-quarter pound blocks of TNT, one blasting cap, documents and personal gear. Three Viet Cong were killed in the action. In addition to the seriously wounded PBR sailor, two others received slight wounds.

On 9 December, a Chinese Communist hand grenade landed in the lead boat of a two-boat night patrol operating on the Long Tau river about 10 miles down river from Nha Be. The grenade, thrown from concealment along the river bank, was immediately picked up by the patrol officer, Lieutenant (junior grade) C. OEHLER, USN, and thrown overboard where it exploded harmlessly in the water. The enemy ambush site was taken under fire by the PBRs and Navy helicopters with unknown results.

On 21 December, while at anchor in the Long Tau river about one mile from the U. S. Navy base at Nha Be, the U. S. merchant ship SS SEATRAIN TEXAS was damaged by a floating explosive charge.
The explosion, which occurred at about 0210, blew a hole amidships on the starboard side, extending five feet above the waterline and two feet below. PEBs were rushed to the scene to provide security for the ship which got underway in anticipation of beached on the bank of the river to prevent sinking in the shipping channel. The ship, however, was able to control the flooding with her pumps and anchored close to shore. Temporary hull repairs were made by the Navy harbor clearance unit and the ship proceeded to Saigon with a load of general cargo. This incident was the first swimmer/sapper attack in this area since the sinking of the SS EASTERN MARINER in May 1966.

On the afternoon of 23 December, a SEAL platoon was landed by helicopter in an area about six miles east of Nha Be, their base of operations. The platoon patrolled to the east and about three hours later came under automatic-weapons fire. The first burst of the enemy fire killed Seaman F. C. ANTOINE, USN, the Navy point man, and a Vietnamese LDNN and wounded one other Navyman. The platoon quickly established a defensive position and engaged the enemy. During the ensuing fire fight two more SEALs received slight wounds. As the SEALs fell back from the heavy enemy force (it was suspected that the platoon had come upon an enemy base camp) the dead and one wounded SEAL were evacuated to Nha Be by a helicopter using a McGuire Rig. The remaining personnel were later extracted by helicopter and
DELA RIVER PATROL GROUP

Operations in the Mekong (My Tho) River

On 1 December PBRs and Navy "Seawolves" supported a Vietnamese outpost, located about one and a half miles north of Sa Dec, under attack by communist forces. At the request of the Kien Van subsector advisor, a PBR was dispatched to aid in the counter-attack. The patrol boat commenced firing runs and received automatic-weapons and rifle-grenade fire from the beach in return. Two additional boats arrived shortly thereafter to assist in suppressing the Viet Cong fire. The enemy targets were then taken under attack by Navy armed helicopters and once again the enemy responded with ground fire. Artillery fire was called in to suppress the enemy. When the artillery mission was complete, Popular Force troops from the outpost reported the location of a platoon of Viet Cong. Navy "Seawolves" put in a strike against the platoon and once again encountered ground fire. For the second time artillery fire was called into the area and the PBRs landed a Regional Force unit, from Kien Van subsector, to join the Popular Forces in a sweep of the area. The determined enemy broke contact leaving 19 bodies behind. There were no U.S. casualties.

On 10 December two PBRs, in support of a SEAL operation, were
OPERATIONS IN THE MY THO RIVER

LEGEND:
X - PBK INCIDENT
O - HELICOPTER INCIDENT
B - SEAL INCIDENT

SCALE:
0 1 MILES
on a blocking station 26 miles southeast from My Tho on the My Tho river. The patrol officer was advised by the SEAL team that a water taxi with Viet Cong aboard was en route up the Khem Canal. The PBRs intercepted the water taxi which had 10 men and about 30 women and children on board. As the PBR crewmen commenced a search, several passengers started throwing documents into the river. Several documents were recovered from the water. One bandolier of ammunition and several additional documents were taken from the taxi. Fourteen of the passengers failed to have identification papers. The water, taxi, with all occupants, and the documents were turned over to Vietnamese authorities at Binh Dai.

Later the same day, 10 miles northwest of Sa Dec, a PBR patrol teamed up with Vietnamese Provincial Reconnaissance Unit (PRU) personnel to thwart a Viet Cong crossing of the Mekong River. The PBRs landed three three-man listening posts in the suspected Viet Cong crossing area at 2030. Contact with the enemy was made shortly thereafter when a large group of Viet Cong came upon one of the PRU positions. The PRUs attacked the enemy and withdrew under the fire cover of one PBR, while the second boat recovered the PRUs. Five of the enemy were killed in the fire fight between the PRUs and the Viet Cong. There were no U.S. casualties and only one PRU was wounded in the action.

The first hostile action between the communist insurgents and
units of the new River Section 534 occurred on 13 December. The River Section, using the first of the new Mark II PBRs, had commenced combat patrols on 11 December. The action commenced at about 1045 when PBR 20 received about 150 rounds of small-arms fire from enemy positions on the south bank of the My Tho river, about 12 miles southwest of the PBR base at My Tho. PBRs 12 and 16 quickly rallied to assist PBR 20 and, after a short engagement, suppressed the enemy fire. A Navy "Seawolf" also put a strike into the area. Lieutenant William A. EARNER, USN, the patrol officer, resumed the patrol following its baptismal under fire. The casualties inflicted upon the enemy were unknown. There were no friendly casualties.

At 2030 on the 20th of December, a squad of SEALs was landed by SEAL team assault boat in an area about five miles southeast of My Tho. Squad 7A patrolled south where they encountered, one hour later, three males. The Navymen tried to detain the subjects, however, they were killed when they tried to escape. The squad continued south and upon hearing barking dogs and enemy warning shots the patrol conducted evasion movements and swung north. The squad came upon a house containing an unknown number of males who attempted to escape. Opening fire, the SEALs killed three more Viet Cong. At 0200 the squad was withdrawn. At 2130 squad 7B was landed in the vicinity of squad 7A and patrolled in a southern direction where
they detected Viet Cong warning shots. The squad made a simulated withdrawal and established an ambush site. The squad detained one Viet Cong suspect and withdrew at 0115 on the 21st. Although enemy contact was made, neither squad was able to reach the planned ambush site due to Viet Cong activity in the area. One SEAL was wounded slightly during the patrol.

**Operations in the Ham Luong River**

On 7 December a Navy helicopter light fire team conducted a patrol along the length of the Ba Lai River, a specified strike zone. As the two helicopters flew along the river they detected river traffic in the restricted area and commenced attacks. When the "Seawolves" had completed their morning patrol, the Navy flyers had destroyed four structures and one sampan; damaged eight structures and five sampans; and killed four Viet Cong and wounded 16 others. The enemy casualty figures were confirmed by the Binh Dinh sector advisor several days after the airstrikes.

On 15 December, PBRs 7-16 and 7-12, on a routine upper Ham Luong River patrol, came under heavy small-arms and automatic-weapons fire from the north bank of the Cai Cam river, located about five miles west of Ben Tre. PBR 7-16 was hit by a B-40 rocket or a rifle grenade in the bow, causing minor flooding. Both boats also received numerous small-arms hits, while returning the fire and clearing the area as a "Seawolf" put in an airstrike. In the
meantime, PBR 7-19 and 7-20, on blocking stations on the Ham Luong River, also received enemy fire. These boats, however, were able to suppress the fire with their guns. Enemy casualties were unknown and there were no friendly casualties. This was the fourth fire fight in this area in three days.

On the evening of the 15th, USS HARNETT COUNTY (LST 821) fired a harassment and interdiction mission at a target located six miles southeast of Ben Tre on the west side of the Ham Luong river. The ship saturated the Viet Cong area with 1,033 rounds of 40-mm at the request of the Mo Cay sector advisor. Twenty Viet Cong were killed and one recoilless-rifle was damaged in the shore bombardment.

On 18 December, Commander River Division 53 conducted Operation PREAKNESS II along the Ba Lai River, utilizing units from River Sections 531, 532 and 534 and helicopters from detachments Five and Six of Helicopter Attack (Light) Squadron THREE. The objectives of the operation were to collect intelligence and destroy targets of opportunity along the river, a known Viet Cong supply route. The initial transit of the river was quiet, but the PBRs encountered enemy fire twice on the return transit. The fire was returned and suppressed on both occasions with no friendly casualties. The operation resulted in three Viet Cong structures and four sampans destroyed.

On 21 December a Navy helicopter light fire team on routine patrol noted heavy sampan traffic on the Ham Luong river about nine
miles south-southeast of Ben Tre. As the helicopters arrived in the area, three sampans attempted to evade and were taken under fire. Shortly thereafter the "Seawolves" placed strikes against two loaded sea-going junks and three other loaded sampans attempting to evade. Four Viet Cong were killed; two junks and two sampans were destroyed; and two structures and two sampans were damaged.

On the morning of 28 December, a PBR patrol operating seven miles south of Ben Tre was ambushed from the west bank of the Ham Luong river. During the fire fight that ensued, PBR 110 was hit in the radar dome by a recoilless-rifle round, wounding five crewmen--two seriously. The flying shrapnel also punctured the fuel oil cooler causing a minor fire that was quickly extinguished. Four additional PBRs converged on the area of the ambush and immediately encountered enemy fire. The patrol boats made repeated passes at the enemy firing positions but were unable to suppress the fire. Navy "Seawolves" continued the attack until the enemy broke contact. Enemy losses were not known.

At 2345, 29 December an explosion was felt by the crew of USS HARNETT COUNTY (1ST 821) while at anchor in the Ham Luong river, 15 miles from the river mouth. The repercussion and sound was slightly more than that felt and heard from concussion grenades used defensively against enemy swimmers. An immediate investigation revealed an explosive device, attached to the side cleaner...
A Viet Cong mine used unsuccessfully against USS HARNETT COUNTY (LST 621) on 29 December 1967 while the ship was anchored in the Ham Luong River.

staging with a metal hook, at frame 18 on the port side located two feet below the water line. A similar device was found at frame 25 in the same position. Wires attached to the devices led aft around the screw guard and then underwater to the beach where the Viet Cong had established a command-detonating position. Explosive ordnance disposal personnel recovered the two devices and found that the Viet Cong blasting caps used were defective, resulting in a low order detonation. Had the command-detonated charges, each containing 120 pounds of U. S. Composition C-4 and 40 pounds of Chinese communist
TNT, exploded as designed, serious damage would have been incurred by the ship. In addition to the above explosive, several unused, new U. S. blasting caps were found in the bottoms of the explosive containers. The following morning SEALs conducted an operation in the area of the sabotage attempt to obtain intelligence relative to sapper activity in the area. Three Viet Cong were killed and five detainees were turned over to intelligence officers for questioning.

Operations in the Co Chien River

On 13 December a U. S. Air Force F4C Phantom crashed in the Co Chien river about 2,700 yards ahead of USS GARRETT COUNTY (LST 786), located five miles north of Phu Vinh, near the river mouth. Six PBRs, a helicopter and an LCVP with a hospital corpsman aboard were immediately dispatched to the scene. The pilot was recovered from the water; however, an extensive search, augmented by four additional helicopters, failed to find the co-pilot. PBRs assisting in the search came under enemy fire, however, the patrol boats and Navy "Seawolves" returned the fire, achieving a secondary explosion. One sailor was wounded in the exchange of fire. Enemy casualties were unknown.

At 2033 on the evening of 15 December, the forecastle sentry on USS GARRETT COUNTY (LST 786), anchored about nine miles northwest of Phu Vinh, detected a noise near a PBR moored alongside the
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LST. When the area was illuminated a swimmer was seen with his hands on the ejector pumps of the patrol boat. The swimmer submerged immediately upon being detected. Concussion grenades were dropped at random around the ship, while a picket boat and a light helicopter fire team conducted a search of the area. The search achieved negative results. Shortly thereafter the ship shifted to another anchorage.

A UH-1B ("Huey") helicopter takes off from the flight deck of USS HARNETT COUNTY (LST 821) anchored in the Co Chien River.

On 21 December, a Navy "Seawolf" fire team on routine patrol received enemy fire from a position about three miles northeast of
Phu Vinh. The helicopters returned and suppressed the fire and observed a heavily-loaded motorized sampan. The "Seawolves" then launched a machine-gun and rocket attack against the sampan, killing three Viet Cong and destroying the craft. The "Seawolves" then swung up the river a short distance where they detected several more loaded sampans. Once again the helicopters opened fire, killing seven more of the enemy. The airstrike also destroyed seven sampans and damaged three others. There were no casualties sustained by the flyers in the action.

Operations in the Bassac River

On 1 and 2 December, PBRs and Navy "Seawolves" supported Popular Force troop operations about 12 miles southeast of Can Tho. On 1 December PBRs made a canal incursion off the west bank of the Bassac and landed 40 of the Vietnamese troops. The patrol boats and helicopters provided pre-landing fire and, following the landing, covered the flanks. The Vietnamese, led by Sergeant THANH, commenced a sweep of the canal and engaged the enemy. The combined fire power of the friendly forces killed three of the Viet Cong. When the operation was completed, six motorized sampans were destroyed, 28 sampans damaged and 30 structures damaged. One Viet Cong was captured and two suspects were detained. There were no friendly casualties. The next day Popular Force troops were landed, and supported by PBRs, on Nai Island. The troops, once again led by
LEGEND:
X - PBR INCIDENT
O - HELICOPTER INCIDENT
W - SEAL INCIDENT

OPERATIONS IN THE BASEC RIVER

SCALE:
0  5 MILES

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Sergeant THANH, engaged the enemy while Navy "Seawolves" and PBRs provided fire support and established blocking positions on both sides of the island. The PBRs and helicopters came under enemy fire while conducting a medical evacuation for two wounded Popular Force troops. The Navy helicopters suppressed the fire with strikes placed on the Viet Cong positions. Six hours after the troops were landed, contact with the enemy was broken off and all friendly forces were withdrawn. Three Viet Cong were killed and three large motorized junks and one structure were destroyed. Also destroyed was a food cache of eggs and rice found in a Viet Cong storeroom. There were no U. S. casualties. This was the eighth recent Popular Force operation led by Sergeant THANH and supported by PBRs and Navy helicopters. These operations have demonstrated a notable increase in the efficiency, organization and tactics of this Popular Force unit.

On the night of 11 December, Navy helicopters from Binh Thuy and USS HUNTERDON COUNTY (LST 838) teamed up to form a three-helicopter heavy fire team in response to a request for support of Tra On, a district town that was under heavy mortar attack. The fire team made repeated firing runs against the enemy positions, killing 12 of the attacking forces. PBRs evacuated three Popular Force troops and one civilian to Can Tho for medical treatment. There were no U. S. casualties.
On the evening of 16 December, a PBR patrol using drifting tactics was conducting a silent surveillance of the canal formed by Dong Dien Island and the southern islet on the lower Bassac River. During the patrol, with the PBRs within 30 feet of the bank, the sailors were alerted by a sudden silencing of normal activity along the bank. The alerted sailors immediately spotted a swimmer within ten feet of the boat and, when the range had closed to about seven feet, the PBR crew opened up with machine-gun and small-arms fire, killing the Viet Cong. The swimmer's body was not recovered and it was not determined what type of ordnance the swimmer carried.

During the period 21-23 December, PBRs provided a rotating exfiltration blockade around Tan Dinh Island on the lower Bassac while Navy "Seawolves" provided overhead cover in Operation BOLD CAROUSEL. The island, located 13 miles southeast from the PBR base at Binh Thuy, had been a notorious area for Viet Cong-initiated attacks against the River Patrol Boats. While the boats patrolled in a clock-wise rotation at 2,000 yards intervals, units of the ARVN NINTH Division conducted a sweep of the island. The Viet Cong were successful in avoiding ground contact; therefore, the ground sweep achieved negligible results. Throughout the two-day action, the PBRs and helicopters were engaged on 58 separate occasions by the enemy from positions on the island and mainland. Units of Vietnamese River Assault Group 25 joined with the GAME WARDEN units in a heavy
counter-fire against the numerous Viet Cong positions. During the operation, 12 U. S. Navymen were wounded (one serious), 19 PBRs sustained multiple bullet and shrapnel damage and two helicopters received bullet hits. In addition, one helicopter supporting the operation crashed at Binh Thuy as a result of mechanical failure, injuring four crewmen. U.S. forces killed two Viet Cong, captured one and detained 35 suspects. Four sampans and five structures were destroyed during the operation that could be termed a "running gun battle".

On 25 December, during the Christmas Truce period--241800 to 251800--a PBR patrol, operating on the Bassac just south of Tan Dinh Island, was attacked by enemy forces. At 1450 the lead boat of the two-boat patrol received one B-40 rocket round in its starboard side. Eight rounds of rifle grenades plus automatic and small-arms gunfire were also directed against the boat. Two PBR sailors were wounded when the rocket hit, causing major damage to the boat's hull. The PBRs retaliated with their weapons, but were unable to suppress the enemy fire. The boats were forced to withdraw from the kill zone, but only after Navy "Seawolves" commenced an air strike on the Viet Cong positions. After the air strike, the helicopters directed 105-mm artillery fire from Cau Ke onto the enemy positions. Twenty Viet Cong were killed and four were wounded, 19 civilians were wounded, and one crew-served weapon and three
small arms were destroyed by the friendly fire power.

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GAME WARDEN UNITS

On 1 December USS HARNETT COUNTY (LST 821), with River Section 531 and Detachment Five of Helicopter Attack (Light) Squadron THREE embarked, shifted station from the Co Chien River to the Ham Luong River. USS HUNTERDON COUNTY (LST 838) departed from her station in the Ham Luong River en route to Danang with River Section 521 embarked.

On 5 December River Section 521 arrived in Danang in preparation for PBR operations in I Corps Tactical Zone. Commander U. S. Naval Forces, Vietnam, assumed operational control of River Section 521. The operational control was exercised through the First Coastal Zone Advisor and Commander I Corps Tactical Zone River Patrol Group.

On 6 December River Section 522 embarked aboard USS GARRETT COUNTY (LST 786), changed to the operational control of Commander River Division 52, and assumed task element designator 116.1.2.4. Detachment Four of Helicopter Attack (Light) Squadron THREE, embarked aboard GARRETT COUNTY, changed to the operational control of Commander River Division 52, and assumed task element designator 116.1.2.8.

On 6 December Commander I Corps Tactical Zone River Patrol Group/Commander River Division 55 changed to the operational control of Commander U. S. Naval Forces, Vietnam, through the First Coastal Zone.
On 6 December USS HUNTERDON COUNTY (LST 838) changed to the operational control of Commander Task Force 76.

On 7 December GARRETT COUNTY arrived on station in the Co Chien River and commenced normal GAME WARDEN operations.

On 14 December River Section 535 arrived at Binh Thuy with five Mark II PBRs, changed to the operational control of Commander Task Force 116, and assumed task element designator 116.1.1.5.

On 21 December River Section 524 was activated at Nha Be.

On 22 December light helicopter fire teams based aboard GAME WARDEN support ships began making random patrols of the Binh Dai, Thanh Phu, and Long Toan Secret Zones. The primary objective of the patrols was to detect attempted Viet Cong infiltration from seaward.

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GAME WARDEN STATISTICAL SUMMARY
December 1967

1. PBR Statistics:
   a. Total Patrols (two boats): Day 756 Night 753.5
   b. Total Contacts: Day 56,582 Night 3,799
   c. Total Inspected: Day 14,033 Night 1,069
   d. Total Boarded: Day 32,312 Night 2,501
   e. People Detained: 774
   f. Sampans/Junks Detained: 0
DETECTIONS, INSPECTIONS, BOARDINGS BY GAME WARDEN UNITS

150,000
140,000
130,000
120,000
110,000
100,000
90,000
80,000
70,000
60,000
50,000
40,000
30,000
20,000
10,000
0

JUL AUG SEP OCT NOV DEC JAN FEB MAR APR MAY JUN JUL AUG SEP OCT NOV DEC

1966
1967
g. Total Patrol Hours: 35,955.5

2. Helicopter Fire Team Statistics:
   a. Total Flight Hours: 1,237.15
   b. Helo Missions:
      (1) Pre-planned strikes: 71
      (2) Reaction: 157
      (3) Targets of opportunity: 208
      (4) Support: 336

3. GAME WARDEN Totals:
   a. Fire Fights:
      (1) PBR 148
      (2) Helo 105
   b. Sampans: Destroyed 153 Damaged 195 Captured 12
   c. Structures: Destroyed 150 Damaged 168
   d. Bunkers: Destroyed 16 Damaged 5
   e. Enemy: KIA 137 KIA (Foss.) 101 WIA 43 Captured 6
   f. Friendly: KIA 1 WIA 44
   g. Friendly Battle Damage:
      (1) PBR 27
      (2) Helo 23
      (3) LCM 1
   h. PBR MEDEVAC: 12

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Task Force 117 units land elements of the 2nd Brigade, U. S. NINTH Infantry Division and the VNMC 5th Infantry Battalion along the banks of the Roung Stream in the Mekong Delta during a two-day phase of Operation CORONADO IX.
During the month of December, the Mobile Riverine Force concentrated its efforts on locating and destroying the major Viet Cong units in a series of riverine operations in Dinh Tuong and eastern Kien Phong provinces. Since early November, in response to operational guidance, the MRF has operated almost exclusively against nomadic Viet Cong battalions roaming throughout central and western Dinh Tuong province. The enemy response to this saturation tactic has been largely to retire to the northern areas of Dinh Tuong which were generally inaccessible by water because of the low bridge clearances and massive canal obstructions. On 4 December the 5th Battalion, Vietnamese Marine Corps and the U. S. Army/Navy elements of the MRF teamed up in a search and destroy operation, killing 234 of the enemy in a single day of operations in an area north of the My Tho River in Dinh Tuong and Kien Phong provinces.

In order to remove any confusion resulting from the unique numbering system for CORONADO operations, an explanation of the system was deemed appropriate.

(1) A CORONADO operation continued under the same number as long as the MRB remained in the same area.

(2) Therefore, when the MRF was operating from the Mekong River, striking at targets in Dinh Tuong, Go Cong and northern Kien Hoa, over a 2-3 month period, it was all aggregated as CORONADO IX.
(3) However, if the MRF relocated to the juncture of the Van Co and the Soirap rivers, for example, for a short series of strikes (a week, or even less), a new operation, CORONADO X would commence. If they, then, returned to the Dinh Tuong area again, they would commence Operation CORONADO XI.

OPERATIONS IN DINH TUONG AND KIEN PHONG PROVINCES

On the evening of 3 December the assault elements of the MRF began relocating its forces in preparation for Operation CORONADO IX (4-6 December) to be conducted in western Dinh Tuong and eastern Kien Phong provinces.

Movement from Dong Tam to the objective area commenced during the night when the barge-mounted artillery, accompanied by elements of River Assault Division (RAD) 92, got underway for the Fire Support Patrol Base (FSPB), 30 nautical miles up river. The artillery was followed by RAD 112 with the VNMC 5th Infantry Battalion embarked; RAD 111 carrying the 3/47th Infantry Battalion; and RAD 91 with the 4/47th Infantry Battalion on board.

Meanwhile, as a deceptive measure, the Mobile Riverine Base delayed relocation to its new anchorage, six miles east of Sa Dec, until the assault boats were in the objective area. At 0630 on 4 December, the MRB got underway from Dong Tam escorted by several ASPBs. Upon arrival in the objective area, DEFCON II was set and maintained to counter the increased threat of enemy attack against
the MRB while in this area.

At 0735 on the same morning in the Chao Duc district of Dinh Tuong province, heavy contact with the enemy insurgents was rapidly established when the riverine craft of HAD 112, with Vietnamese Marines embarked, were immediately ambushed with automatic weapons and rockets shortly after they entered the Huong stream from the Mekong river.

Fighting their way through the heavily bunkered ambush positions, the assault boats continued up the 30-yard wide stream about two miles. Approaching the preselected landing zone, the boats were again taken under attack with intense recoilless-rifle, automatic-weapons and B-40 rocket fire at point-blank range from both banks, with the heaviest concentration of fire coming from the west bank.

The Navy riverine craft, with all available firepower saturating the area, turned into the Viet Cong fire and disembarked the Vietnamese Marines. The elite VNMC battalion immediately launched a devastating attack against the 502nd Viet Cong Local Force Battalion and local guerrillas. This action again highlighted the tenacity, professional competence and aggressiveness of the VNMC battalion.

Meanwhile, HAD 111 with the U.S. 3/47th Infantry Battalion embarked was also taken under fire from the initial ambush position. They also fought their way through the ambush site, however, instead
of proceeding up stream, the boats turned into the western bank just north of the Viet Cong positions. The U. S. Army troops then conducted a successful counter-attack against the fiercely-resisting insurgents.

Throughout the day-long battle, RAD 111 and 112 supported the ground maneuvers from the waterways by providing gunfire support and waterborne blocking stations to prevent the Viet Cong from exfiltrating from the objective area.

As a result of the first day of operations, the enemy casualties amounted to 234 killed with eight Viet Cong prisoners and 42 weapons captured. The Vietnamese Marines accounted for the majority of the enemy casualties and also suffered the heaviest losses with 40 killed and 103 wounded in action. Two U. S. Navy sailors, Fireman Adrian E. Howell, USN, and Seaman Robert J. Morris, USN, were killed and 68 Navymen were wounded in the battle, while U. S. Army casualties consisted of nine soldiers killed and 89 wounded.

The total cumulative results for this phase of Operation CORONADO IX (4-6 December) amounted to 266 Viet Cong killed with over 5,000 rounds of small-arms ammunition and 321 assorted weapons (including grenades, mines and carbines) captured. There were also 161 bunkers and 126 sampans destroyed, 108 Viet Cong suspects detained and eight prisoners-of-war captured.

During the afternoon of 5 December, RAD 112 backloaded the VNM
5th Battalion and returned to Dong Tam to allow the battalion to reorganize and obtain replacements for their killed and wounded losses. Meanwhile, RADs 111 and 91 continued to support the U. S. infantry units in the objective area on 5-6 December.

On the morning of 6 December the MRF relocated to the vicinity of the junction of the Mekong and Co Chien rivers without incident. This culminated a highly successful operation which rendered yet another Viet Cong haven unsafe for the enemy and added substantially to the RVN/U. S. presence in the Mekong Delta.

Captain Robert S. SALZER, USN, on his first riverine combat operation with the MRF since assuming command on 2 December, described the action as follows: "To a newcomer in one of these actions, the battle of the boats is incredible. The crossfire between the Viet Cong and our rugged craft at 25 yards is like nothing in naval warfare since the days of the great frigates."

Intelligence obtained during and after the battle of the Ruong Stream (4 December) confirmed that the well-armed enemy force consisted of major elements of the 502nd Local Force Battalion augmented by local guerrilla units. During the battle, the riverine craft sustained 43 hits, excluding automatic-weapons and small-arms hits. These hits included 34 B-40s (RPG-2), four B-41s (RPG-7), three 57-mm's, one B-50 and one claymore mine. There were 23 boats damaged in the action, but none were forced to leave the battle area because
of battle damage.

On 9 December, after artillery batteries from the MRF and Dong Tam were positioned about four miles west of Cai Be on the Mekong river, RADs 91 and 111 lifted the 3/47th and the 4/47th Infantry Battalions to assault positions in western Cai Be district of Dinh Tuong province. Airmobile and riverine operations failed to establish any organized enemy resistance and later in the afternoon the ground troops were returned to the MRB. Enemy losses consisted of three killed and 18 bunkers destroyed. There were five soldiers and one sailor wounded in the one-day operation.

The next morning the 3/47th and the 4/47th Infantry Battalions conducted a riverine assault in the Giao Duc district with the objective of regaining contact with the 502nd Local Force Battalion. At approximately the same time, the MRB relocated back to a position four miles east of Sa Dec to better support the operation. RADs 91 and 111 supported the infantry, and provided water blocks, troop lifts and fire support on 10 and 11 December. In a series of light skirmishes with the enemy, there were nine Viet Cong killed, two wounded, four captured and 35 bunkers destroyed.

During Operation CORONADO IX (10-11 December) the riverine craft searched 524 exfiltrating sampans and detained 47 suspects. Twelve recently acquired Vietnamese Navy interpreters provided invaluable on-the-spot assistance in questioning indigenous personnel.
concerning Viet Cong movements.

After a two-day maintenance period, during which time plans
were formulated for the next operation, the MRF commenced Operation
CORONADO IX (14-16 December) in the Cam Son Secret Zone.

During this operation a new tactic, developed by CTF 117, was
employed. Every major contact made with the Viet Cong by the MRF
had been triggered by TF 117 assault boats. To fully exploit this
potential to generate contact, to provide maximum protection for
the troop laden boats and to react promptly to attack, a riverine
armored reconnaissance element (RARE) was established. The RARE
consisted of two monitors, two ASPBs and two ATCs with APC flame-
throwers embarked, which would precede the troop carriers.

The RARE was initially utilized on 14 December, when the MRF
was tasked with the assignment of penetrating the Ba Rai Stream,
the scene of tenacious Viet Cong resistance in the past. Although
the enemy chose to avoid contact on this day, the concept of a
riverine armored reconnaissance element was accepted for utiliza-
tion in future riverine operations.

Operation CORONADO IX (14-16 December) yielded the following
results: six Viet Cong killed, and four prisoners captured. The
assault forces also destroyed 73 bunkers, 42 booby traps, three
tunnels and two sampans. Friendly battle casualties consisted of
24 U. S. soldiers wounded from booby traps, and two Vietnamese.
Marines also wounded. There was one Vietnamese Marine killed and three wounded from non-hostile action.

Following relocation from the confluence of the Mekong and Co Chien rivers to Dong Tam on 17 December, TF 117 units commenced moving ashore and to the remaining ships of the MRB. The next evening, the Viet Cong mounted a mortar attack against the Dong Tam base, landing 16 rounds of 82-mm mortar rounds in the northwest section of the base. There were no personnel casualties and no material damage to any of the MRF units.

On 18-19 December the MRF conducted a two-day preventive maintenance period and made preparations for the next operation.

In the early morning hours of 21 December an ASPB, A-111-4, the lead minesweeper of several riverine craft transiting the Xang Canal in the Long Dinh district of Dinh Tuong province, two miles northwest of Dong Tam, was mined. As a result of the explosion one U.S. sailor, Radioman Seaman Frederic P. WEBB, USN, was killed and three others were wounded.

The boat's hull was dished in, but not holed, and the damaged ASPB returned to the MRB under its own power. Considering the accuracy of the 75-pound command-detonated mine, which exploded 3-4 feet to starboard of the keel, the ASPB suffered only moderate hull damage. Although the keel was bent upward, and several frames and transverse and longitudinal stringers were bent inward and
deformed, the rugged craft could have confirmed the mission if the tactical situation had dictated and replacement personnel were placed aboard.

Operation CORONADO IX (20-22 December) a riverine strike operation, was scheduled to be conducted in the Cai Lay district of northern Dinh Tuong province in search of the Viet Cong 514th Provincial Mobile Battalion.

Major contact with the Viet Cong guerrillas was never established, although in a series of light skirmishes during this period, the enemy left 11 of their dead comrades on the battlefield. The MRF also captured six Viet Cong prisoners, 40 Chinese Communist grenades and four weapons, while destroying 42 bunkers, three mines, and three booby traps. During this period there was one Navyman killed and five were wounded, while the U.S. Army had seven men wounded. There were also two Vietnamese Marines wounded during these encounters.

On 24 December, after a brief one-day respite, the MRF struck at the Viet Cong again in a two-battalion saturation patrolling and surveillance operation designed to deny enemy forces their resupply routes during the Christmas truce period. This phase of CORONADO IX (24-26 December) was conducted in the Long Dinh district of Dinh Tuong province and the Giong Trom district of Kien Hoa province.

RADs 91 and 92 supported the two infantry battalions and
established waterborne blockades throughout the truce period, however, very little enemy activity was noted. During the Christmas truce period, 10 ASPBs were committed in conjunction with PBRs from TU 116.3.1 for interdiction of Viet Cong resupply routes between Kien Hoa and Dinh Tuong provinces. Although results of the patrols were negative, plans continued for further evaluation of PBR/ASPB teams.

The Viet Cong lost 15 men to the troops of the MRF and also had over 120 bunkers and eight sampans destroyed in the two-day operation. There were two sailors wounded but both injuries were as a result of non-hostile action.

On 26 December, another mining incident occurred against an ASPB of the MRF on the Xang canal, seven miles northwest of Dong Tam. A-111-1 was transiting the narrow waterway when the mining took place. The boat was lifted out of the water far enough so that her screws were visible to accompanying units, however, the rugged minesweeping boat suffered only minimal damage. The boat's crewmembers were severely jostled, but uninjured. A subsequent out-of-the-water underbody inspection by USS ASKARI (ARL 30) revealed no apparent hull damage and, after replacing both screws which had several nicks and gouges (not associated with the mining), A-111-1 was placed in the water and returned to duty.

This incident occurred just five days after another ASPB minesweeper was mined on the Xang Canal. It proved interesting
to note that in both incidents only the lead minesweeper was hit, and no attempt was made to allow either ASPB to pass unmolested in order to mine a troop carrier. This would indicate that the Viet Cong respect the effectiveness of the ASPB’s minesweeping capability; and therefore, command-detonated the mines against the lead boats in order to assure a hit.

On 28 December a riverine strike operation was commenced in the Cam Son/Ban Long Secret Zones and included water and air interdiction and saturation patrolling in the Ham Long district of western Kien Hoa province and the Cai Be, Cai Lay and Long Dinh districts of western Dinh Tuong province. Operations during this period, which continued until the end of the month, were characterized by harassing small-arms fire and no significant contact with the enemy.

The cumulative results for this phase of Operation CORONADO IX (28-31 December) were: five Viet Cong killed, one wounded and eight prisoners captured. There were an additional 39 Viet Cong suspects detained. The units of the MRF also destroyed 87 bunkers, 10 huts, three booby traps and one sampan. Meanwhile, on the waterways the Navy riverine units searched 588 sampans. Friendly casualties consisted of 10 U. S. Army soldiers wounded.

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RIVERINE ASSAULT FORCE UNITS

On 2 December, in change of command ceremonies aboard USS BENEWAH (APB 35), Captain Robert S. SALZER, USN, relieved Captain Wade C. WELLS, USN, as COMRIVFLOT ONE/COMRIVSUPPRON SEVEN/CTF 117.

Captain Robert S. SALZER, USN (left), relieves Captain Wade C. WELLS, USN (right), as COMRIVFLOT ONE/COMRIVSUPPRON SEVEN/CTF 117 at a change of command ceremony aboard USS BENEWAH (APB 35) on 2 December.

General William C. WESTMORELAND, USA, COMUSMACV, presented Captain
WELLS with the Distinguished Service Medal for his outstanding services in organizing and leading the MRF. In addition, Brigadier General Nguyen Viet THANH, ARVN SEVENTH Infantry Division Commander, presented Captain WELLS with the Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry with Palm for his participation as Commander Task Force 117 during Operation CORONADO II from 29 July to 4 August 1967.

Three Patrol Air Cushion Vehicles (PACVs) arrived at Vung Tau on 4 December, and departed the same day for Dong Tam. On 8 December the PACVs commenced a Delta orientation and shakedown training program prior to commencing riverine operations with the MRF.

A Patrol Air Cushion Vehicle (PACV) in the Mekong Delta.
On 31 December USS PITKIN COUNTY (LST 1082) relieved USS BLANCO COUNTY (LST 344) as the MRF resupply LST.

On 16 December Admiral John J. HYLAND, USN, Commander in Chief U. S. Pacific Fleet, visited the MRF and presented two Silver Stars, one Bronze Star, one Navy Commendation Medal, and two Purple Hearts to the Navymen of the MRF. One of the Silver Star recipients was Lieutenant Raymond W. JOHNSON, CHC, USN.

During Operation CORONADO (CONCORDIA I) on 19-21 June 1967, Chaplain JOHNSON, embarked in the Medical Aid Boat, was standing by to render services needed. At 1005, "A" Company, 4/47th Infantry Battalion came under intense automatic-weapons, recoilless-rifle and small-arms fire. As hostile fire continued pouring from a fortified tree line, Chaplain JOHNSON left the relatively secure aid boat and ran onto the battlefield to render aid to wounded soldiers of the MRF. Disregarding the heavy enemy fire, he commenced carrying the wounded soldiers back to the aid boat. In so doing, he encouraged volunteers to follow his example and was instrumental in recovering a large number of helplessly wounded men. Although wounded himself by shrapnel during his second trip into the field, he continued on with his evacuation of the wounded until all of the men were on board the aid boat.

On 17 December, in anticipation of USS BENEWAH (APB 35) and USS COLLETON (APB 36) departing the MRB for generator replacement,
TF 117 units commenced movement ashore and to the remaining ships of the MRB. The AMMI pontoons were moved to Dong Tam, to APL 26 and to USS WESTCHESTER COUNTY (LST 1167). RAS 11 staff and the flotilla staff moved ashore, while RAD 111 moved to the WESTCHESTER COUNTY. RAD 91 remained in APL 26 and was joined by RAD 92.

The next day COLLETON departed for the Shipyard Repair Facility at Subic Bay for a restricted availability. During this availability period the MRF support ship was programmed to replace generators, and also receive a modification to provide space and facilities to support a combat surgical team. On 29 December, BENEWAH departed for Vung Tau for a restricted availability alongside USS TUTUILLA (AG 4). The major job during this period consisted of generator replacements.

CTF 117 shifted his pennant to USS WESTCHESTER COUNTY (LST 1167) at 191200H and the staff moved ashore to the headquarters of the U. S. Army 2nd Brigade, NINTH Infantry Division at Dong Tam.

On 27 December, the VNMC 5th Battalion was pulled out of the MRF by the Vietnamese Joint General Staff (JGS), and was relocated to II Corps. This surprise move severely limited the effectiveness of the MRF to conduct sustained strike operations, and also made it more difficult to adequately encircle any exfiltrating insurgents.

In their first operational employment on 29 December, two Patrol Air Cushion Vehicles (PACVs) of TG 117.4 landed infantry...
squads into the operation area. Although the troops were successfully lifted to their destination, both PACVs experienced mechanical and/or electrical difficulties which resulted in one of the vehicles being air-lifted back to Dong Tam by a "Flying Crane" helicopter.

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U. S. NAVAL SUPPORT ACTIVITY, DANANG

Naval Support Activity (NAVSUPPACT), Danang continued to off-load and clear cargo expeditiously during December despite occasional inclement weather associated with the northeast monsoon and enemy harassment. The Danang port had a total throughput of 211,741 short tons during the month. A new monthly tonnage record was established at Dong Ha during December as 4,882 short tons of cargo were back-loaded, exceeding the previous record set in November 1967 by over 320 short tons. NAVSUPPACT Danang also recorded the lowest end-of-month backlog since August 1967 as 49 ships were worked and 40 were completed.

The overall net supply effectiveness for the Danang-Chu Lai support complex increased slightly during the month to 91.5 percent. Overall gross effectiveness increased from November's 85.5 percent to 87.8 percent. The increase in effectiveness was attributed to the receipt of stock in the pipeline and a decrease in demands from previous months.

Petroleum, Oil and Lubricant (POL) replenishment was made to all sites during the month despite the adverse effects of monsoon weather on seaload lines. Aviation POL products are now supplied directly to the Marine Air Group SIXTEEN complex at the Danang Air Base via pipeline from the Marble Mountain tank farm. With the completion of this system, the fuel complex at NAVSUPPACT Danang...
became the largest fuel installation in the Republic of Vietnam, with a storage capacity of 515,000 barrels. On 9 December, with the seaload line at Cua Viet inoperative, and surf and channel conditions precluding bladder boat transit, the first SKILAK\textsuperscript{*} to carry fuel to I Corps Tactical Zone delivered 130,000 gallons of diesel fuel to Dong Ha. With the first phase of the tankerage construction nearing completion at Tan My, the NAVSUPPACT fuel section assumed operation of the fuel facility on 15 December.

\textsuperscript{*} A utility yard craft capable of carrying 330 short tons of dry cargo or 86,000 gallons of liquid cargo at a speed of 10 knots.
During December the Danang Public Works Department personnel figure exceeded 4,000 for the first time in the history of the command. It was believed that this figure represented a record high figure for a Navy Public Works organization.

Continued silting of the Cua Viet and Tan My channels caused them to be closed to LST traffic throughout a large percentage of the month. The Cua Viet channel was closed to LSTs on 7 December when the maximum mid-channel depth decreased to 12 feet and the channel edge depth decreased to between nine and 12 feet. The Cua Viet channel was reopened to LST traffic on 29 December and on the following day USS CONCONTINO COUNTY (LST 603) entered Cua Viet and offloaded at the LST ramp. The Tan My channel was closed to LSTs on 10 December when the continual silting had decreased the depth in mid-channel to six feet. At month's end, the Tan My channel was still closed to LST traffic.

The continuous effort involved in keeping the strategically important channels at Cua Viet and Tan My open by dredging suffered a serious setback on 6 December when the dredge DAVIDSON suffered major damage to her rudder posts and screws while engaged in a rescue operation near the Cua Viet channel. The normal out-of-service time occasioned by such an incident is approximately one month, with dry-docking usually being required, but through a coordinated effort, necessary repair parts were flown from Portland, Oregon, to Danang...

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and installed with the dredge in the water, thus permitting the
dredge to be back in service in only 11 days. At month’s end,
COMUSMACV had directed the procurement of a second hopper dredge
for use in I CTZ.

River Patrol Boat (PBR) Mobile Base ONE with 10 PBRs arrived
at Danang on 2 December for further transfer to Tan My. A defi­
ciency existed in spare parts for the PBRs and, as of 31 December,
only 53 percent of the required items had been received. At month’s
end, action was being taken by COMSERVPAC to expedite the procurement
of necessary PBR parts for NAVSUPPACT Danang and Mobile Base ONE.

NAVSUPPACT Danang and its detachments continued to be harassed
by enemy attacks during December. There were 25 hostile fire inci­
dents involving sniper fire on exposed perimeters, vehicles, or
bunkers during the month. Three of these incidents involved cease­
fire truce violations during the Christmas and New Years truce
periods.

On the night of 26 December the Marble Mountain transmitter
site came under heavy small-arms fire and received approximately
six mortar or grenade rounds within the perimeter. There were no
personnel casualties resulting from the attack and material damage
was limited to superficial shrapnel holes in the roofs of the
transmitter and generator buildings.

On 11 December Cua Viet received 11 incoming artillery rounds.
One of the rounds struck the southern edge of the ramp and two rounds hit in the river near the ramp. No personnel casualties or material damage resulted from the attack.

Cua Viet came under attack on two separate occasions on 16 December. One NAVSUPPACT Navyman was killed and two were injured as a result of these attacks.

At 0355 on 12 December, an explosion from an estimated 20 pounds of explosive extensively damaged several rooms of NAVSUPPACT's foreign claims office in downtown Danang. Personnel casualties caused by the explosion consisted of minor injuries to two Navymen attached to, and asleep in, the foreign claims office. Two additional explosion incidents with Vietnamese nationals as victims on the 12th and 23rd indicated an increase of terrorist activity within the city of Danang.

Santa Claus arrived at NAVSUPPACT Danang via air and sea as 1,200 Christmas trees were received for further transfer to I CTZ military units. In addition, 5,000 toys were distributed in the Danang area through military personnel who sponsored numerous Christmas parties for Vietnamese children.

The number of patients admitted to the NAVSUPPACT Danang hospital during December totaled 1,077. Of this total number received at the 467-bed hospital, 329 were admitted for combat injuries, 541 for various diseases and 207 for non-combat injuries.
A total of 446 persons were treated and returned to duty during the month and 329 were evacuated out of Vietnam.

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An overall view of the RAG/PBR support base at Vinh Long.
The Naval Support Activity (NAVSUPPACT), Saigon, detachment at Qui Nhon was attacked by a Viet Cong sapper platoon during the night of 22 December. At 2329 on the 22nd, a Vietnamese Navy command junk was destroyed at the pier by an explosive charge. General Quarters was sounded immediately and a search of the area revealed a second charge in a PCF. The charge was removed by the Swift boat crew and all Swifts got underway and provided 81-mm illumination for the base perimeter. The Vietnamese Navy killed one Viet Cong and probably killed another in the water in the vicinity of the junk pier. At 0121 on the 23rd, base and boat personnel secured from General Quarters and a maximum security watch was set with the boats anchored in the inner harbor.

The attack was continued at 0213 when an explosive charge was detonated alongside the CPO quarters and Viet Cong in the vicinity of the enlisted barracks commenced automatic-weapons and small-arms fire, and threw grenades into the barracks. A second Viet Cong was killed during this phase of the attack. Once again the Swift boats provided illumination and a USAF AC-47 Dragonship and an Army UH-1B helicopter gunship furnished illumination and interdiction fire throughout the remainder of the night until all forces secured from General Quarters at 0747.

At 0815, during a sweep of the entire base perimeter by U.S.
Navy forces, a blood trail and web gear were found inside the perimeter at the north end of the base. A wounded Viet Cong, armed with a Chinese Communist AK-47 assault rifle and grenades, was discovered and killed.

U. S. Navy or friendly casualties resulting from the attack included: CPO quarters destroyed by a 50-pound satchel charge, messhall damaged by small-arms and automatic-weapons fire, two U. S. Navymen and one Korean civilian killed in action, and 16 U. S. Navymen wounded in action, two of whom died later during treatment. Three Viet Cong were killed during the action and the following enemy material was captured: 10 Chinese Communist fragmentation grenades, five grenades improvised from 61-mm mortar heads, two Chinese Communist AK-47 assault rifles, and one automatic pistol.

On 25 December the Qui Nhon detachment again received small-arms fire but no contact was made with the enemy.

Following the attack, measures were taken to improve base defense. All vegetation in the area between the double perimeter fences and in gullies leading onto the base was cleared. In addition, barracks, key administration buildings and communications buildings were sandbagged.

The number of line items stocked by NAVSUPPACT Saigon increased to 46,781 during December. The overall supply effectiveness reached a new high in December; net effectiveness was 85 percent and gross