on the 20th, PCFs 71 and 102 destroyed three huts and one sampan.

In response to a request from Go Cong sector authorities on
the 21st, PCF 68 provided naval gunfire against a suspected Viet
Cong platoon staging area approximately 24 miles south of Saigon.
As a result of the Swift boat's firing, one structure and two sam­
pans were destroyed and six structures and four sampans were damaged.

Swift boat crewmember prepares to load 81-mm mortar.

Also on the 21st, PCF 24 responded to a request from sector
authorities and conducted a naval gunfire mission against enemy huts
and sampans on the south bank of the mouth of the My Tho River,
approximately 30 miles south of Saigon. Six huts were extensively
damaged by the Swift boat's fire.

In her second gunfire mission of the day, PCF 24 fired on a
Viet Cong village and concentration of enemy sampans approximately
42 miles south of Saigon. This mission resulted in the destruction
of six huts and six sampans. In addition, eight huts and six
bunkers were heavily damaged.

On the 27th, at the request of Kien Hoa sector authorities,
PCFs 36 and 68 took an enemy position on the south bank of the My
Tho River, approximately 32 miles south of Saigon, under fire. The
Swift boats damaged six structures during the mission.

Also on the 27th, USCGC POINT SLOCUM took two beached junks in
the Long Toan Secret Zone under fire and destroyed both of the craft.

On the 28th, while conducting a naval gunfire mission that had
been requested by sector authorities, PCF 40 received heavy automatic-
weapons fire from the beach approximately 38 miles south of Saigon.
The Swift boat sustained one hit which caused slight damage to the
boat and no personnel casualties. The extent of enemy material and
personnel casualties was unknown.

Fourth Coastal Zone

Routine MARKET TIME detections were also extremely low in the
Fourth Coastal Zone during February as only 2,971 craft were detec-
ted, less than one-third of the total recorded in January. More
OPERATIONS IN THE FOURTH COASTAL ZONE

February 1968

A - PCF 9 - 15 Feb
B - USCGC CAMPBELL - 14 Feb
C - USCGC BERING STRAIT - 4 Feb
D - CAMPBELL - 8 Feb
E - BERING STRAIT - 2 Feb
F - PCF 74 - 14 Feb
G - PCF 71 - 7, 9 Feb
H - Trawler - 1 Mar

SCALE:

0 - 30 NAUTICAL MILES

CONFIDENTIAL
than 800 of the detected craft were inspected and over 1,000 were boarded. Occasional heavy weather in the Gulf of Thailand, plus rigid restrictions imposed on coastal junk and sampan traffic, was primarily responsible for the low number of detections in the Fourth Coastal Zone during the month. As in the Third Coastal Zone, Fourth Coastal Zone patrol units were called upon to provide numerous naval gunfire support missions and engaged in several hostile fire incidents.

On 2 February, in response to a request from U. S. Army authorities at Song Ong Doc, USCGC BERING STRAIT (WHEC 382) provided naval gunfire against an enemy position approximately 30 miles north of Ca Mau Point. Responding to corrections transmitted by an airborne spotter, the cutter destroyed two structures and damaged two structures and two sampans.

On the 4th BERING STRAIT conducted another naval gunfire mission in response to a request from the same authorities. This mission, which was accomplished approximately 36 miles north of Ca Mau Point, also utilized an airborne spotter and resulted in the destruction of 6 structures, 2 sampans, 40 meters of trench and 3 rice storage piles. A later report from U. S. Army authorities at Song Ong Doc also credited BERING STRAIT with killing two Viet Cong and wounding eight during the mission.

PCF 71 received heavy hostile fire on 7 February from an area
17 miles east of Ca Mau Point while probing the area for a possible evading sampan. While withdrawing to seaward the Swift boat suppressed the enemy fire, destroying two bunkers and damaging three. In a follow-up mission in the same general vicinity on the 9th of February, PCF 71 destroyed two additional bunkers.

Swift boat crewmembers board and search suspicious craft in Gulf of Thailand.

On the 8th, Song Ong Doc authorities requested that a naval gunfire mission be fired on a suspected enemy battalion that was operating in an area approximately 33 miles north of Ca Mau Point.
along the coast of the Gulf of Thailand. USCGC CAMPBELL (WHEC 32) responded to the request and destroyed four structures, three rice piles and one large sampan.

Swift boat conducting gunfire mission against enemy position along coast of Thailand Gulf.

A Viet Cong company operating 27 miles north of Ca Mau Point was the target for a naval gunfire mission fired by PCF 74 on 14 February. The mission, which was requested by U. S. Army authorities at Song Ong Doc, resulted in an estimated 10 Viet Cong killed and 20 wounded.
Also on the 14th, CAMPBELL provided naval gunfire against a Viet Cong battalion approximately 37 miles north of Ca Mau Point. Utilizing an airborne spotter, the cutter killed an estimated four Viet Cong and wounded two others.

On the 15th PCF 9 fired a naval gunfire mission against three targets located near the city of Ha Tien on the coast of the Gulf of Thailand near the Cambodian border. Responding to corrections transmitted by an airborne spotter, the Swift boat destroyed 10 structures and killed an estimated 3 Viet Cong.

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MARKET TIME UNITS

During the month of February the Vietnamese Navy had an average of five PGMs, four PCEs and one MSC assigned daily to MARKET TIME forces. In addition, the Royal Thai Navy had one PGM assigned to MARKET TIME forces in the Fourth Coastal Zone during the last half of the month.

At month's end, aircraft from three patrol squadrons were providing air surveillance for Operation MARKET TIME. A detachment of Patrol Squadron TWO (VP 2) and a detachment of VP 17 were flying SP-2H Neptunes from Cam Ranh Bay. Meanwhile, a detachment of VP 26 flew P-3B Orions from U Tapao, Thailand.

On 5 February MARKET TIME air surveillance forces suffered
the loss of an aircraft and its 12-man crew when a P-3B assigned
to VP 26 crashed at sea from an as yet undetermined cause. The
aircraft, which was operating from U Tapao, Thailand, was on a
routine MARKET TIME patrol when it crashed approximately 25 miles
south of Phu Quoc Island in the Gulf of Thailand.

Captain Carl H. HERRICK, USN, relieved Captain Ralph DI CORI,
USN, as CTF 115/COMCOSURF FOR on 21 February.

Throughout the month the following U. S. SEVENTH Fleet ships
operated a MARKET TIME units during the indicated inclusive dates:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DER 327</th>
<th>Dates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>USS BRISTER</td>
<td>3-24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USS CAMP</td>
<td>1-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USS PALGOUT</td>
<td>1-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USS KOINER</td>
<td>15-29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USS FORSTER</td>
<td>15-29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USS LONE</td>
<td>3-15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USS SUMMIT COUNTY</td>
<td>1-29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USS WHIPPOORWILL</td>
<td>1-21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USS CONFLICT</td>
<td>6-29</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>USS PERSISTENT</td>
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<tr>
<td>USS ASHEVILLE</td>
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<td>13-29</td>
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<td>USS GALLIP</td>
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<tr>
<td>USCGC ANDROSCOGGIN</td>
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<td>USCGC CAMPBELL</td>
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<tr>
<td>USCGC DUANE</td>
<td>1-14</td>
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<tr>
<td>USCGC WINONA</td>
<td>15-29</td>
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<tr>
<td>USCGC BERING STRAIT</td>
<td>1-4</td>
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</table>
DETTECTIONS, INSPECTIONS, BOARDINGS BY MARKET TIME UNITS

- Detections
- Inspections
- Boardings

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

1967

1968
MARKET TIME STATISTICAL SUMMARY
February 1968

1. U. S. Ships/Craft:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>DEH</th>
<th>MSO</th>
<th>MSC</th>
<th>WPB</th>
<th>PCF</th>
<th>LST</th>
<th>PG</th>
<th>WHEC</th>
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<tr>
<td>Daily average number of craft on patrol</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
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2. U. S. Activity:

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<th>Wood - Day</th>
<th>Night</th>
<th>Steel - Day</th>
<th>Night</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Detected</td>
<td>15,890</td>
<td>8,942</td>
<td>596</td>
<td>580</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total Inspected</td>
<td>6,276</td>
<td>3,496</td>
<td>408</td>
<td>404</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Boarded</td>
<td>4,204</td>
<td>1,204</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Detained</td>
<td>29 Junks</td>
<td>240 People</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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OPERATION STABLE DOOR

During February Operation STABLE DOOR patrols detected 24,150 junks and sampans; 1,689 of these were inspected and 2,372 were boarded. The boardings resulted in the detention of 11 junks and 177 suspicious persons.

All STABLE DOOR units maintained maximum patrols and surface surveillance postures during the first seven days of February. On the 8th all units returned to normal operations. During the month strict curfew restrictions were imposed in the harbors for which
STABLE DOOR units were responsible. Accordingly, the total number of detainees was drastically reduced.

On 15 February a STABLE DOOR unit commenced limited operations in Vung Ro Bay. The unit, designated CTU 115.9.5, became fully operational on 21 February 1968.

Inshore Undersea Warfare Unit ONE (IUWU 1) continued operations in Vung Tau during the month and a total of one junk and five persons were detained for improper identification, curfew violations and suspicious actions.

During February, IUWU 2 at Cam Ranh Bay detained 6 junks and 31 persons.

On two occasions during the early morning hours of 3 February, the sighting of possible enemy swimmers in Cam Ranh Bay Harbor was reported to IUWU 2. Random grenade drops and a search by Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) personnel produced negative results. On the 5th of the month another possible swimmer sighting was reported and again, a search of the immediate area by harbor patrol craft and EOD personnel produced negative results.

Traffic was extremely light in the Qui Nhon Harbor during the month as IUWU 3 detained only one person for improper identification.

IUWU 4 continued operations at Nha Trang during the month and detained a total of 140 persons and 4 junks.

On 1 February, and again on 2 February, IUWU 4 patrol craft
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received hostile small-arms fire from the vicinity of Hon Mieu Island. The fire was not returned because of the proximity of the Mui Chut Lighthouse and a nearby village.

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The opening days of February saw GAME WARDEN units continuing their aggressive counter attacks against the Communist insurgents who had launched an all-out offensive against the cities and government and military installations throughout the Republic. The Viet Cong and North Vietnamese Army troops struck in a country-wide, coordinated attack on the morning of 31 January during Tet, the Vietnamese Lunar New Year holiday, with devastating fury in an attempt to gain a major victory. GAME WARDEN units were embroiled in some of the bitterest fighting ever seen in the Delta since GAME WARDEN operations were begun. The Homeric performance of the PBRs, helicopters, SEALS and LSTs in supporting friendly ground action substantially contributed to the failure of the enemy who suffered extremely high casualties.

In recognition of the role played by GAME WARDEN units, Major General G. S. ECKHARDT, USA, IV Corps Senior Advisor, sent the following message to CTF 116 on 12 February:

SINCE THE VC OFFENSIVE STARTED 31 JAN, I HAVE RECEIVED MANY REPORTS FROM ADVISORS THROUGHOUT IV CORPS OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF YOUR COMMAND IN COMING TO THEIR ASSISTANCE DURING THESE CRUCIAL TIMES. I KNOW YOU HAVE SUFFERED SOME GRIEVOUS LOSSES BUT YOUR MEN HAVE COVERED THEMSELVES WITH GLORY BECAUSE OF THEIR COURAGE AND DEDICATION. YOU HAVE DEALT THE AGGRESSORS A HEAVY BLOW WHICH SPEAKS WELL FOR THE PROFESSIONALISM AND CAPABILITY OF YOUR ORGANIZATION. PLEASE PASS MY DEEP APPRECIATION TO ALL CONCERNED AND BEST WISHES FOR CONTINUED SUCCESS.
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In I Corps Tactical Zone, PBRs shifted their role of river interdiction to that of escort of logistical transport along the Perfume River, to counter the numerous hostile incidents aimed at stopping the flow of much-needed supplies into the battle-torn city of Hue.

In the Delta, the continuation of the initial phase of the Viet Cong offensive found Task Force 116 units engaged with the enemy on many fronts. Navy armed helicopters and PBRs played a major role in preventing the cities of Ben Tre and Mo Cay, in Kien Hoa province, from being completely overrun by the Viet Cong forces. During the first 48 hours the "Seawolves" of Helicopter Attack (light) Squadron THREE, Detachments 5 and 6, were practically the only air support the province had. They continued to provide around-the-clock air strikes for four days against intense ground fire. PBR units from River Sections 531, 532 and 534 provided fire support, blocking forces and medical evacuation transportation for the city of Ben Tre. USS HARNETT COUNTY (LST 821), on 5 February, provided fire fighting equipment and a damage controlman to assist in extinguishing the fires which still burned in the city.

At Vinh Long the Viet Cong intensified their attacks within the city and, on 1 February, U. S. Navy personnel were forced to evacuate their compound and move to the Vietnamese Navy River Assault Group base and thence to USS GARRETT COUNTY (LST 786) which had
steamed upriver from her normal station on the Co Chien to a position off Vinh Long to support the friendly troops engaging the enemy. The ship also took aboard over 150 American, Korean and Vietnamese civilians. Included in the evacuees were eight Irish nuns from a girls' school that was overrun by the Viet Cong. The evacuees were fed and made as comfortable as possible and subsequently transferred to USS MARK (AKL 22) and transported to Dong Tam.

At Chau Doc, SEAL and PBR units, operating on the upper Bassac river near the Cambodian border, rallied their firepower in support of friendly forces and aided in driving the enemy from the city. (See JANUARY 1968 Supplement).

At Sa Dec on 2 February, four PBRs routed 150 Viet Cong who had seized the Cao Lanh ferry landing. The next day PBRs conducted repeated firing runs along the Sa Dec Canal, in the vicinity of the city, against an estimated 200 Viet Cong positioned to attack the city. On 5 February, PBRs and a Navy light helicopter fire team supported Duc Ton District headquarters during a nine-hour ground and mortar attack.

At My Tho SEALs provided security forces to defend U. S. billeting areas, employed their explosive ordnance disposal capability to remove unexploded mortars in the city and captured a Viet Cong cache of weapons, mortars, rockets, grenades and small-arms ammunition.
GAME WARDEN support LSTs effectively engaged in repeated shore bombardments against enemy troop concentrations as the ships transited the rivers bringing their shipboard-based PBR sections and helicopter detachments to critical areas.

Commander Naval Forces, Vietnam directed the following message on 6 February to CTF 116 citing the performance of GAME WARDEN units during the Tet campaign:

I HAVE BEEN GREATLY IMPRESSED BY THE OUTSTANDING PERFORMANCE OF TASK FORCE 116 DURING THE PAST WEEK. ALL GAME WARDEN FORCES HAVE ACQUITED THEMSELVES IN A MANNER THAT HAS SIGNIFICANTLY ENHANCED AN ALREADY FINE REPUTATION. MANY US AND ALLIED INSTALLATIONS OWE THEIR CONTINUED EXISTENCE TO TIMELY SUPPORT OF GAME WARDEN UNITS. ALTHOUGH IN MANY CASES WE HAVE BEEN ON THE DEFENSIVE THE ENEMY HAS PAID DEARLY FOR HIS ACTIONS. THE B-40 ROCKETS CAPTURED BY CTU 116.1.1 ARE PARTICULARLY NOTEWORTHY. SUCH A LOSS WILL SERIOUSLY REDUCE ENEMY EFFECTIVENESS. WELL DONE. RADM VETH.

Action throughout the remainder of the month continued at a rapid pace as the Viet Cong continued their harassing mortar and rocket attacks against military installations and GAME WARDEN units. During the month 288 Viet Cong were killed in action—the highest monthly kill total to date. In the first seven days of the month alone, "Seawolves" killed 86 of the enemy while PBRs accounted for 19 more. Three PBRs were destroyed: one by enemy fire at Chau Doc and two by misdirected friendly fire during the fierce fighting at Vinh Long.
I CORPS RIVER PATROL GROUP

The increase of logistical requirements for northern I Corps made the uninterrupted transport of cargo on a 24-hour daily basis on the Perfume and Cua Viet rivers mandatory. Due to the increased importance of these rivers as primary lines of communications, river security became paramount in view of the numerous hostile fire and mining incidents in and along these water routes. Recognizing the critical importance of safe, timely movement of cargo along the Perfume River to Hue, PBR support of Commander Naval Support Activity Danang logistic craft became a first priority effort. PBR operations during the month of January, and particularly during the period of increased hostilities since Tet, confirmed that the PBRs were making valuable contributions to the security of waterways in I Corps. As a result the Commanding General, III Marine Amphibious Force, requested that additional PBRs be sent to I Corps to augment the assigned 10-boat river section, thereby providing additional river coverage on the Cua Viet.

The determination of the enemy to disrupt the flow of logistics up the Perfume River was evidenced by the repeated attacks on the Navy convoys as they made their daily transits.

Early on the morning of 3 February PBRs were requested to evacuate a U. S. Marine Corps security force from a petroleum tank farm, east of Hue, which was being overrun by Viet Cong. While
Operations in the Perfume River

A - Ambush - 8 Feb
B - USMC Security Force - 3 Feb
C - PBR 80 - 8 Feb
D - PBR 80 - 23 Feb
under heavy enemy automatic-weapons fire two PSRs charged in and picked up the entire force of 15 Marines, 1 U. S. Navyman and 1 Vietnamese and returned them to Tan My. Three Marines were wounded, one critically, in action. Enemy casualties were undetermined.

Billow of smoke comes from the shoreline near the Toan Thuan Hoa village in I CTZ where a helicopter unleashes rockets at an enemy gun emplacement. One of the Navy PSRs was lightly damaged by enemy guns during the fight against North Vietnamese troops in the village.

On the afternoon of 8 February, a PBR patrol, escorting an LCU from Hue to Tan My, came under heavy automatic-weapons and recoilless-
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rifle fire about one and one-half miles downriver from the LCU ramp. PBR 80 received a hit from a recoilless rifle in the port engine. With the engine out of commission the boat headed for the Mobile Support base at Tan My. One crewman suffered head wounds when the round impacted. Three PBRs downriver scrambled to assist the patrol and encountered a second ambush at the mouth of the Bo River. The enemy automatic-weapons fire was suppressed and the recoilless-rifle site was taken under heavy fire from the boats. All units returned safely to Tan My without further casualties. Enemy losses were unknown.

Shortly after noon on 23 February, PBR 80, operating with another PBR, was again hit by enemy fire near the spot where the boat was damaged on the 8th. This time the Viet Cong scored a B-40 hit on the starboard bow leaving a five-inch diameter hole above the water line. The enemy position was taken under fire by the PBRs and U. S. Army armed helicopters. There were no friendly casualties and enemy casualties were undetermined. The patrol continued on to Hue to escort a LCM/LCU convoy back down the river. Shortly after the patrol's arrival the enemy mortared the ramp. There were no personnel or material casualties; however, during the return transit the convoy received heavy automatic-weapons and B-40 rocket fire from the initial ambush site. Suppressing fire was delivered by all units and the Army helicopters. One LCU was hit by automatic-CONFIDENTIAL 34
weapons fire, wounding one U. S. soldier and five Vietnamese troops, and one LCM received a B-40 rocket hit. The PBRs did not sustain any casualties. The remainder of the transit was made without incident.

RING SAT SPECIAL ZONE RIVER PATROL GROUP

During the month minesweepers from TU 116.4.2 came under repeated attacks from Viet Cong hiding in ambush along the Long Tau shipping channel.

On the morning of 8 February, two minesweeping boats (MSBs), operating on the Long Tau, were fired upon from ambush about 12 miles southeast of their base at Nha Be. The enemy attacked with automatic weapons and fired three rockets which fortunately missed the boats. As the MSBs cleared the ambush area they returned the Viet Cong fire and suppressed it. Shortly thereafter a PBR patrol sped to the assistance of the MSBs and came under enemy fire from both banks of the river. The two-boat patrol engaged the enemy and suppressed the fire. A U. S. Army light helicopter fire team joined in the attack against the enemy positions and received automatic-weapons fire in return. The helicopter attack was followed shortly thereafter by a fixed-wing air strike. The combined strikes destroyed three bunkers and damaged three others. With Navy armed helicopters now providing overhead coverage to prevent the Viet Cong from utilizing withdrawal routes and PBRs providing blocking
RUNG SAT SPECIAL ZONE OPERATIONS
February 1968

A - PATRICK - 25 Feb
B - MSBs - 20 Feb
C - Mines - 24 Feb
D - Comm Cable - 21 Feb
E - ARIZONA STATE - 25 Feb
F - MSSs - 8 Feb
G - LCM/MSs - 18 Feb

SCALE: 5 Nautical Miles
forces on the river, Vietnamese Regional Force troops swept the area. The sweep netted negligible results.

At 0615 on the morning of 18 February, two Landing Craft Medium/Minesweepers (LCM/MS), operating 15 miles southeast of Nha Be, had just completed their downriver sweep operation on the Long Tau and had swung north to head back upriver. The boats were just off the west bank of the river when suddenly an RPG 7 rocket round slammed into LCM/MS 8 just aft of the port .50 caliber machine gun. The bright flash of the impacting round momentarily blinded the boat captain, BM2 Robert D. GRAY, USN. He and one other crewmember were also wounded by flying shrapnel. BM2 GRAY and his crew quickly rallied to the attack and commenced firing against the enemy ambush point from which enemy automatic-weapons fire raked the port side of the boat. After clearing the kill zone, the two boats joined in making two firing passes on the ambush site, suppressing the enemy fire. PBRs operating in the area arrived on the scene and reconed the area with fire. Enemy losses were undetermined. One additional Navyman received minor wounds during the engagement. LCM/MS 8 sustained a hole in the armor plating from the exploding rocket and 37 bullet holes along the port side.

On 20 February MSBs 33 and 46 became the target for enemy rocket fire, three miles southeast of Nha Be. Fortunately, the four RPG-type rockets passed over the boats. PBRs and Navy "Sea-
wolves" put in strikes on the area from which the fire originated; enemy casualties were unknown. There were no U. S. losses.

Viet Cong communications line recovered from Long Tau River south of Nha Be.

On 21 February a special minesweeping detail swept the Long Tau, three miles southeast of Nha Be, at a location where electrical wire was swept three days previously. When more wire was
recovered, a U. S. Navy Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) team attempted to locate and recover a possible mine plant. No mine was found, however, the sweep operation netted about 100 yards of double-strand communication wire, of which approximately 50 yards was enclosed in split Betelnut logs anchored to the bottom of the river with rocks. From the physical appearance of the recovered material it appeared that this was an attempt to provide a communications link across the Long Tau at a known Viet Cong crossing point.

Six of these Viet Cong water mines were recovered on the Long Tau River just south of Nha Be on 24 Feb. The mines were contact type and free floating and were tied two to a group.
On 24 February a routine PBR patrol, operating about four miles southeast of Nha Be on the Long Tau River, sighted three clusters of metallic objects floating with the tide. The objects were recovered by EOD personnel and identified as floating contact mines. Each cluster contained two mines, which were about the size and shape of a standard U. S. Navy office wastebasket, with a conical cover and painted turquoise. Two flashlight-size horns protruded from the top of each mine and contained electrical contacts connected in parallel with three 1.5-volt flashlight batteries and four U. S. 75-mm recoilless-rifle rounds. This was the second report of contact watermines in the Rung Sat Special Zone; the first being reported in December 1966.

On 25 February the Viet Cong attacked two American ships transiting through the Rung Sat Special Zone. In the first incident SS ARIZONA STATE was hit by three rounds of recoilless-rifle fire, six miles southeast of Nha Be on the Long Tau River. About one-half hour later the commercial tug PATRICK was hit by one round of recoilless-rifle fire. PBRs and armed helicopters quickly responded to both attacks taking the ambush sites under fire with undetermined results. Both ships suffered only minor damages. There were no personnel casualties.
DELTA RIVER PATROL GROUP

Operations in the Mekong (My Tho) River

On 4 February Mark II PBRs 725, 727, 728 and 731 suffered heavy losses while engaged in action on the upper Mekong River, just south of the Cambodian border. The boats, from RIVSEC 535 based at Binh Thuy, were operating from the U. S. Army's Special Forces' Camp Thoung Thoi. At 1430 the PBRs received a call requesting support for a Regional Force unit pinned down by an estimated company of Viet Cong. As the patrol proceeded up the Honh Ngu Canal it encountered sporadic small-arms and automatic-weapons fire, which was returned by the PBRs. Proceeding further towards the besieged outpost, the fire became intense with rockets and automatic-weapons fire. The patrol reached the outpost and called in an artillery strike which saturated the river bank along the entire length of Viet Cong concentration. At 1650 the artillery lifted and the patrol commenced a high-speed exit of the area, requesting an air strike as they exited. Once more, as they exited, the PBRs received heavy rocket and automatic-weapons fire with PBRs 728, 731 and 727 receiving direct rocket hits. One rocket hit PBR 728 in the stern which put her out of control, causing her to beach and partially sink, stern first. PBR 731 returned to the beach to recover the crew who had abandoned the boat. FN William E. Hayenga, USN, the PBR 731 engineer, unarmed and without regard
Operations in the My Tho River

A - Helos - 17 Feb
B - Helos - 19 Feb
C - FBRs - 7 Feb
D - USS MARK - 29 Feb
E - SRI THAI - 2 Feb
for his own safety, went ashore and, while under heavy fire, assisted two survivors to PBR 731. PBRs 725 and 731 then exited the river and returned to the base camp. Artillery and air strikes were requested to destroy PBR 728 to prevent exploitation by the enemy, which was then accomplished. Despite efforts on the part of the crew, PBR 727 sank in 40 feet of water due to rapid flooding. It was secured to the beach by lines and subsequently recovered. Total U. S. casualties were eight U. S. Navymen wounded and one boat totally destroyed. This was the first combat loss of a Mark II PBR. The forward gunner on PBR 725, CMG3 Thomas J. CRAGHEAD, USN, later died of his wounds. Although seriously wounded CRAGHEAD continued to provide suppressing fire during the rescue operations of the five PBR 731 crewmen. Enemy casualties were 12 killed (plus 10 probable).

On 7 February a PBR patrol detected a Viet Cong ammunition stock pile partially hidden under a hay stack, about five miles southeast of My Tho. As the lead boat closed the bank to take the target, identified as at least 18 boxes of U. S. 105-mm howitzer rounds and 1 box of .50 caliber ammunition, under fire, the boat received sniper fire. The sniper fire was returned and suppressed. The hay stack, when hit by the PBR's fire, exploded in an orange-yellow fire ball 50 feet in diameter. There were no friendly casualties. In the exchange of fire, PBR crewmen killed one Viet Cong.
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On 17 February, while flying a reconnaissance mission in an area about 12 miles northeast of Go Cong, a Navy light helicopter fire team detected a large concentration of sampans, some measuring over 40 feet. It was estimated that there were over 300 sampans including about 50 of the large type. The "Seawolves" made multiple attacks on the sampans until their ammunition supply was exhausted. They then rearmed and refueled at Go Cong and returned to the area where they destroyed 3 large sampans and severely damaged or destroyed 20 of the smaller types. In addition to the attack on the sampans the Navy armed helicopters put in an air strike against a tree line where 300 Viet Cong were reported to be located. When the three-hour mission was finished the "Seawolves" had killed 30 of the enemy. In view of the saturating fire of the armed helicopters it was very probable that the number of wounded Viet Cong was high. There were no friendly casualties.

Two days later Navy "Seawolves" attacked two camouflaged Viet Cong troop sampans detected about a mile northwest of Go Cong. As the helicopters made their firing runs the enemy engaged the "Seawolves" with ground fire, wounding one of the Navy flyers. The enemy fire, however, did not deter the accuracy of the "Seawolves'" firepower as they destroyed 1 junk and killed 26 communist troops. A ground sweep conducted later that same day by Provincial Reconnaissance Units recovered 17 AK-47 automatic weapons, 4 Chinese
Communist machine guns and 1 U. S. M-60 machine gun.

On the morning of 21 February PBRs operating 10 miles west of My Tho went to the aid of the Thai tanker SRI THAI when that ship was attacked by enemy recoilless-rifle fire. The PBRs made an immediate firing run along the river bank and were ready to commence another when the tanker began to smoke. The PBRs broke off their attack and went to assist the tanker that had been hit twice. Medical aid was given to two seriously wounded Thai crewmen who were later evacuated to Dong Tam. Navy "Seawolves" arrived and teamed up with the PBRs for a combined attack on the enemy positions. The attack was followed by fixed-wing air strikes that leveled the recoilless-rifle ambush site. The day's action netted 2 Viet Cong killed, 9 structures destroyed, 24 structures damaged and 2 sampans destroyed. There were no friendly casualties except for the two Thai crewmen. Minor damage was sustained to the merchant ship. This area had been the scene of four recoilless-rifle attacks to shipping in a four-day period. On 25 February, after the seventh attack on shipping in seven days, CTF 116 offered to escort all shipping through the area with PBRs.

The presence of a PBR escort did not deter the determined enemy for, on 29 February, USS MARK (AKL-12), a Delta supply ship was attacked with recoilless rifles, heavy automatic, semi-automatic and small-arms fire in the same area of the previous ambushes. One
A - Helos - 3 Feb
B - PBR - 7 Feb
C - HUNTERDON CTY - 21 Feb
D - Helos - 9 Feb
recoilless-rifle round impacted on the starboard side maindeck amidship. The exploding projectile penetrated the hull and ruptured a fire main and fuel tank vent line. Flying shrapnel inflicted wounds to 12 men stationed in a repair party. The ship had gone to general quarters prior to entering the attack area. The escorting PBRs immediately charged the Viet Cong firing position on the south bank and encountered additional heavy fire. The patrol boats completed two firing passes touching off several secondary explosions. These were followed by four more secondary explosions set off by a "Sea-wolf" strike. There were no further friendly casualties and losses to the Viet Cong were undetermined when contact was finally broken off.

Operations in the Ham Luong River

On the morning of 3 February a light helicopter fire team from TJ 116.3.8 conducted a devastating strike against enemy troops, located about a mile south of Mo Cay. As the "Seawolves" raked the communist troops with machine gun and rocket fire, moderate automatic-weapons fire was encountered. The armed Navy helicopters killed 35 Viet Cong, destroyed 3 structures and damaged 2 others. The "Seawolves" sustained no casualties.

On 7 February PBRs operating on the Ham Luong River, about five miles east of Mo Cay, engaged and sank a Viet Cong troop-transport sampan loaded with Viet Cong youths. An intelligence
agent reported 50 of the youths were killed or wounded in the engagement.

On 9 February "Seawolves", defending Giang Tron subsector in Kien Hoa Province, reported receiving a voluminous hail of enemy fire, more rapid than any previously encountered, from what seemed to be a Vulcan-type weapon.

Shortly before midnight on 10 February, Navy "Seawolves" were scrambled to support a Vietnamese outpost, located on the lower Ham Luong about three and one-half miles north of Than Phu, that was under attack. The outpost defenders marked the enemy target area with a flaming arrow and .50 caliber tracers. The two armed helicopters directed their 2.75-inch rockets and machine guns against the target and suppressed the Viet Cong fire. The "Seawolves" killed 15 of the communist insurgents and wounded 13 and destroyed 1 B-40 rocket launcher.

On 21 February USS HUNTERDON COUNTY (LST 838) provided shore bombardment in support of a friendly ground operation conducted about 10 miles upriver from the mouth of the Ham Luong. For about two hours the ship provided saturation fire against various targets to the north of the river as directed by the ground commander. On one occasion the ship's fire impacted in the middle of a Viet Cong platoon killing at least 10 of the enemy. There were no casualties sustained by HUNTERDON COUNTY.

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Operations in the Co Chien River

On 12 February a Navy light helicopter fire team, on a routine patrol on the lower Co Chien River, was advised that 200 Viet Cong were located about four miles south-southeast of the town of Cau Ngan. The enemy was in contact with Popular Force troops who were being forced to retreat in the face of the massed enemy attack. The "Seawolves" put in their air strike along a tree line starting a fire that spread when fanned by a high wind. Eight Viet Cong were killed and 22 wounded in the action; 34 structures were destroyed. There were no casualties sustained by the "Seawolves".

On 20 February USS GARRETT COUNTY (LST 786) conducted a shore bombardment against a reported enemy troop concentration located on the northern outskirts of the city of Phu Vinh. The ship's 40-mm cannon fire killed 20 and wounded 20 Viet Cong.

Operations in the Bassac River

Navy light helicopter fire teams, flying numerous missions in the opening phase of the Viet Cong offensive in support of beleaguered outposts and ground units along the Bassac River, exhibited themselves in a highly professional manner. On 31 January 27 communist insurgents were killed and 16 others were wounded in one air strike. In three separate strikes conducted on 2 February a total of 72 of the enemy were killed by the "Seawolves" air power.

On 4 February a PBR patrol detected a sampan and junk exiting
Operations in the Co Chien River

A - HUNTERDON CTY
20 Feb

B - Helos - 12 Feb

SCALE:
0 MILES
from a canal, 15 miles southeast of Can Tho. As the patrol pursued
the two crafts, the junk trying to evade, capsized in the waves; the
sampan managed to slip back up the canal. As the PBRs closed the
area the enemy fired upon them with a heavy barrage of automatic
and small-arms fire from at least 12 firing positions on both banks,
followed by eight rounds of B-40 rockets from the south bank. All
rockets missed their targets. Four additional PBRs were soon on
the scene to assist while two more set up a blocking position to
the north to prevent a possible Viet Cong crossing. Navy "Sea­
wolves", a LCM(R) with 5-inch rockets and USS JENNINGS COUNTY (LST
846) were directed into the area to blast the enemy position. Cap­
tured in the encounter was a cargo of crates containing 60 rounds
of B-40 rockets. An additional crate and a bundle of green uni­
forms sank and were not recovered. Another enemy crossing attempt
was prevented, with the attendant loss of valuable rockets, by
GAME WARDEN forces. Casualties inflicted upon the Viet Cong were
undetermined. There were no friendly losses.

On 10 February, while on a routine PBR patrol, PBR 58 was
struck by what was believed to be a 40-kilogram command-detonated
water mine, about 11 miles southeast of Can Tho. The mine, how­
ever, only achieved a low-order detonation, blowing a 1- by 2½-foot
hole just forward of the coxswain flat causing extensive damage to
the underwater hull. The boat was beached but before salvage
Operations in the Bassac River

A - PSR - 10 Feb
B - PSRs - 4 Feb
C - PSRs - 1 Feb
D - Helos - 31 Jan
E - PSRs - 22 Feb
F - Helos - 12 Feb

SCALE:
0 MILES

SOC TRANG

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operations could be completed the river tide flooded the boat. The
damaged boat was later returned to Binh Thuy for repairs.
There were no personnel casualties.

On 12 February Navy "Seawolves" killed 11 and wounded 1 Viet Cong while
supporting an outpost under attack about seven miles northeast of Soc Trang.

On 14 February GAME WARDEN units encountered the heaviest
concentration of enemy firepower to date in the vicinity of Tan Dinh Island. The action began when a two-boat PBR patrol,
making a routine night transit between Tan Dinh Island and May Island, came under intense automatic-weapons fire from both islands. The boats made two firing passes employing all weapons but were unable to suppress the enemy fire. The patrol was shortly joined by two more boats who also engaged the enemy while the Viet Cong continued their fire. A light helicopter fire team attacked the targets, identified as at least six .50 caliber positions and ten .30 caliber positions, plus AK-47 and small arms firing positions. The helicopter fire did not deter the enemy gunners. Three more PBRs joined in the melee as all boats continued to receive extremely intense automatic-weapons fire. Fixed-wing F-100 jets were called in and hit the target area with bombs and napalm followed by additional helicopter strikes. Five PBRs made a final firing pass and once again received extremely intense automatic-
weapons fire and 12 B-40 rockets. During the action that lasted for three and one-half hours, three Navymen were wounded, four PBRs were hit and one F-100 was shot down by the well-fortified and entrenched Viet Cong forces. Casualties inflicted on the enemy were undetermined.

On 17 February, LT(jg) Frank G. BOYCE, USN, attached to SEAL Team Detachment ALFA, Eighth Platoon, led 60 Vietnamese Provincial Reconnaissance Unit (PRU) troops in a mission against a Viet Cong-controlled area in Ba Xuyen Province. The PRUs captured 23 Viet Cong and accounted for a possible 20 Viet Cong killed. One PRU was killed.

On 22 February a PBR patrol, while on an intelligence/psychological operations mission, was ambushed with automatic weapons from both sides of a narrow channel at the northwest section of Nai Island. The patrol returned the fire and headed for the Bassac River. As the patrol was about to exit the channel six B-40 rockets were fired at the boats. PBR 37 was hit in the after .50 caliber gun, destroying the gun. PBR 56 took two rounds in the starboard bow below the water line. Two crewmen were wounded and both boats were peppered by flying shrapnel. The patrol returned to Binh Thuy where repairs were made. Enemy casualties were undetermined.

GAME WARDEN UNITS

On 15 February CTF 116 directed the commanders of Task Groups
116.1, 116.2 and 116.3 to implement a proposal approved by the Senior Advisor, IV Corps Tactical Zone, providing for a ready-for-action USN/VNN package force for use in joint RF/PF small-unit operations. The force was intended to be used primarily against enemy staging areas and tax collection points along the Mekong Delta waterways.

On 16 February, in order to develop commo-liaison/line of communication intelligence in support of the GAME WARDEN mission, CTF 116 initiated an experimental operation employing SEALs in conjunction with PRU troops in Phong Dinh, Vinh Binh, Chau Doc and Kien Giang provinces. Six SEALs from Detachment ALFA, Eighth Platoon, and two from Detachment ALFA, Seventh Platoon, were to operate as two-man units in each of the four provinces. Additional SEAL personnel were to be deployed to exploit intelligence gathered by the SEAL/PRU teams. The two-week operation was to be the basis for future expanded intelligence gathering activities.

On 18 February a study of enemy vulnerabilities submitted by CTF 116 to COMNAVFORV included this assessment of the Tet Offensive: "The offensive campaign recently conducted by the Viet Cong cost the enemy a high price in lives lost, but has not diminished his capability to continue the insurgency at pre-campaign intensity for an indeterminate period. GVN forces have been severely hampered by the necessity to defend the population centers. GVN re-
sources have been spread thin, thus permitting the Viet Cong a wide selection of targets. If the enemy objective was to demonstrate that the GVN and FWMAF could not effectively defend the people of the Delta he must be judged successful... There is no evidence, however, of the Vietnamese people rallying to the VC cause."

On 19 February USS HUNTERDON COUNTY (LST 838) changed to the operational control of CTF 116 and arrived on station in the Hau Luong River. After embarking River Section 532 (TU 116.3.4) and Helicopter Attack (Light) Squadron THREE, Detachment FIVE (TU 116.3.8), HUNTERDON COUNTY relieved USS HARNETT COUNTY (LST 821) as TU 116.3.6 and commenced GAME WARDEN operations.

On 21 February CTG 117.4, the operational commander of the three Patrol Air Cushion Vehicles (PACVs) operating in Vietnam, changed to the operational control of CTF 116 for a period of about one week to evaluate the suitability of PACVs for GAME WARDEN operations. The PACVs were determined unsuitable and returned to CTF 117.

On 22 February HARNETT COUNTY changed to the operational control of CTG 76.8.

On 24 February SEAL Team Detachment ALFA, Ninth Platoon, relieved SEAL Team Detachment ALFA, Sixth Platoon and assumed TU 116.2.0.

On 25 February Commander River Division 55 and RIV SEC 521
became elements of Task Force CLEARWATER, established under
the operational control of Commanding General, III Marine
Amphibious Force, to provide security for naval logistics craft
operating on the Perfume and Cua Viet rivers.

GAME WARDEN STATISTICAL SUMMARY
February 1968

1. PBR Statistics:
   a. Total Patrols (two boats): Day 816.5  Night 844
   b. Total Contacts: Day 42,211  Night 3,015
   c. Total Inspected: Day 10,098  Night 1,186
   d. Total Boarded: Day 21,524  Night 788
   e. Total Detained: 579
   f. Sampans/Junks Detained: 1
   g. Total Patrol Hours: 41,158.5

2. Helicopter Fire Team Statistics:
   a. Total Flight Hours: 1,334.7
   b. Helo Missions:
      (1) Preplanned strikes: 261
      (2) Reaction: 208
      (3) Targets of Opportunity: 221
      (4) Support: 296

3. GAME WARDEN Totals:
   a. Fire Fights:
      (1) PBR: 52
      (2) Helo: 106
      (3) LCPL: 1
b. Sampans Destroyed: 135 Damaged: 176 Captured: 12

c. Junks Destroyed: 3 Damaged: 2

d. Structures Destroyed: 329 Damaged: 227

e. Enemy KIA: 288 KIA (Poss.): 27 WIA: 64 Captured: 11

f. Friendly KIA: 2 WIA: 61

g. Friendly Battle Damage:
(1) PBR: 72
(2) Helo: 25

h. PBR "Medevac": 82

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MOBILE RIVERINE FORCE OPERATIONS

The early days of February found the Viet Cong continuing their aggressive and bold Lunar New Year (Tet) Offensive against the major provincial cities of South Vietnam. The Mobile Riverine Force rose to the occasion by immediately coming to the defense of several beleaguered Delta cities. As the general situation throughout the Mekong Delta rapidly deteriorated, the MRF assumed an offensive posture and launched several intensive search and destroy operations. As the month ended and the Viet Cong offensive was stalled, the MRF made plans to return to Dinh Tuong Province, confident that their courageous actions had added immeasurably to "saving the Mekong Delta".

Operations in Dinh Tuong Province

Shortly after midnight on the morning of 1 February, units of RAD 91, transiting south on the Ruong Stream in Giao Duc District seven miles northeast of Sa Dec, were ambushed by a heavily bunkered enemy force. However, this time the riverine units were anticipating a possible ambush in the area -- the scene of the 4-6 December Battle of Ruong Stream in which the Viet Cong lost 266 men. As the riverine assault craft approached the three-mile portion of the enemy-
infested waterway where the previous attacks had taken place, the artillerymen on the artillery barges were directed to level their 105-mm howitzers and load them with deadly "Beehive" anti-personnel rounds.

At twenty minutes past midnight history repeated itself, and the unsuspecting Viet Cong initiated their ambush, employing automatic-weapon, rocket and recoilless-rifle fire from both banks of the 30-yard wide stream. The troop-laden ATCs, the ASPBs, monitors, and artillery barges retaliated with an awesome array of firepower at point-blank range against both banks of the stream. Enemy fire was silenced. Enemy casualties were undetermined while friendly losses amounted to one U. S. Navyman killed. A monitor boat captain, Boatswain's Mate Second Class William M. COHER, USN, was instantly killed during the 25-minute running gun battle.

Reassembling at the Mobile Riverine Base (MRB), anchored near Vinh Long, the MRF refueled, rearmed and resupplied in the fiery glow of the holocaust emanating from Vinh Long City. Due to the priority of operations in Dinh Tuong Province and fearing a possible assault on the district towns of Cai Be and/or Cai Lay, the riverine craft deployed to a holding area just south of Cai Be and about six miles north-
east of Vinh Long, where they awaited further orders.

By 1000 on 1 February when the attacks on Cai Be and Cai Lay failed to materialize, the MRF was tasked to reinforce the besieged city of My Tho. Minutes after receiving the urgent plea for assistance, the MRF withdrew elements of the 3/47th Infantry Battalion from the temporarily secured Vinh Long Airfield, and commenced the 25-mile transit to My Tho.

At 1515 the assault troops from elements of the 3/47th and the 3/60th were beached at the My Tho waterfront, and became heavily engaged with the fiercely resisting guerrillas. Meanwhile, the MRB relocated from the vicinity of Vinh Long, followed the assault boats down river and arrived at Dong Tam shortly after 1500.

The battle for My Tho raged continuously for the next 21 hours as ground elements conducted a northward advance through the western portion of the city and waterborne elements provided blocking support along the My Tho waterfront.

By the morning of 2 February the combined US/GVN military forces had sufficiently subdued the Viet Cong offensive so that the striking power of the MRF assault units could be better utilized in another area of the badly battered Mekong Delta.

Prior to withdrawing from the once quiet provincial capital the MRF left 115 dead Viet Cong on the sanguineous battlefield.