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FEBRUARY 1970

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Enemy activity during February began on a high level on the evening of 31 January/1 February in the coastal provinces then abruptly dropped to a relatively low level where it remained until the latter part of the month. It appeared that the enemy wanted to merely make his presence felt rather than make any major military gains.

There were reports of sapper and guerrilla activity in the Cua Viet area prior to the Tet holiday and again after a brief VC cease-fire during Tet was terminated when four mining incidents occurred. Nearly every major U.S. installation was attacked in the II Corps area prior to Tet.

Activity throughout the Republic of Vietnam returned to a low level as post-Tet activity dropped off eroding speculation that a Spring offensive would ensue at the holiday's end. The lull in activity indicated that the enemy was generally avoiding contact when possible. In spite of a low activity level during mid-February, the Go Dau Ha Bridge was blown up. The main enemy objective for this period was confined primarily to resupplying and relocating its forces. It was believed that a battalion of the NVA's 88th Regiment may have infiltrated through the Barrier Reef AO while the rest of the 88th Regiment remained in Cambodia where it completed regrouping and was awaiting orders in late February.

By month's end, hostile action reached a high level particularly in the IV CTZ where 49 incidents were reported including 121 ABF's for the month. Also a general increase in incidents throughout the III CTZ seemed to point to the beginning of the Spring offensive.
Operation Sea Lords Summary

During the month of February, combined Sea Lords forces operating in the Giant Slingshot, Border Interdiction, Search Turn, and Breezy Cove campaigns accounted for a total of 337 enemy killed (by body count) and 27 captured.

Friendly casualties for this period were 20 killed and 86 wounded. A breakdown of complete USN and VNN Sea Lords statistics for February and statistical totals computed since the start of operations are located at the end of this section following the discussions of the various campaigns.
A U.S. Navy Command and Communications Boat (CCB) leads the way for Navy armored carriers (ATC) of River Assault Flotilla ONE during operations in the Mekong Delta.
During February, there was an average of 55 U.S. Navy craft and 24 VNAH craft assigned to the Giant Slingshot Campaign, and, in addition to performing escort duty, troop lifts, blocking, and support missions, these craft set a daily average of 24 KBGP's along the Vam Co Cong and Vam Co Tay Rivers. The above figures for the number of units assigned to the Giant Slingshot Campaign are much reduced from those figures of the preceding month. Several units were shifted to other operations that were taking place or were anticipated to take place in the operations areas farther westward than the area encompassed by the Giant Slingshot area of operations (AO). Intelligence had indicated that VC/NVA forces could be expected to execute a major push from the area of the Cambodian border farther to the west during the early days of February. The major offensive was to coincide with the period of celebration of TET in South Vietnam. Other units had been shifted in conjunction with the phased turnover of boats to the Vietnamese Navy under the ACTOV Program.

Even with the reduced number of units available, units of Giant Slingshot still were able to maintain a daily average of 24 KBGP's along the Vam Co Cong and Vam Co Tay Rivers. However, several of these KBGP's were conducted using only one boat in position.

The level of general activity remained nearly the same as reported in January, with the number of sightings of suspected VC only slightly reduced. The number of enemy killed in action by all units
conducting operations in this area dropped from 182 killed in January to only 55 killed during the month of February. Friendly casualties for the month of February were five killed in action and 35 wounded in action.

During the month of February, Operation Deep Channel II was successfully completed. On 8 February, 1970, the final demolition charge was exploded resulting in the connection of the Kinh Lagrange (canal) and the Kinh Gay (canal), thus providing a direct navigable waterway between the cities of Cuyen Nhon and Tra Cu for both the Vietnamese civilians living in the area and for the USN and VN forces manning the waterways of the Giant Slingshot AO.

The demolition experts continued work after the official opening of the new canal until 24 February in order to widen the canal to an average width of 25 feet and an average depth of five feet. Areas were also blasted clear for turnaround points for the patrol boats which would use the canal. The final size of the canal, as determined by the demolition experts, is 28,675 feet in length by 25 feet in width and by five feet in minimum depth.

Some problems have already been encountered in the operation of boats on this new canal. One problem that was probably expected by all is that the banks are eroding rapidly, mostly from the loosening effect of the explosives used. Another problem, an unexpected one, is that the tides in the canal appear to be independent from either side. This tidal problem tends to build up debris in the
canal and also creates unexpected periods of low water. By closely observing the tidal conditions, the boats have been able to transit the canal at medium to high tide carrying several combat troops without running aground. COMDIV 551 conducted several experimental transits of the canal under varying tidal conditions. On one of these transits, at a reduced tidal condition, his boat ran aground. COMDIV 51 reported it to be a "lonely feeling to sit high and dry on a FRR with no place to go".

Highlights of operational activity within the Giant Slingshot are during the month of February are included in the following narrative descriptions.

On the night of 6 February, the base at Tra Cu (X 477 983) in Gia Lai Province came under enemy mortar attack. At 0157 two mortar rounds exploded just outside the base defense wire to the west. General Quarters was sounded and the personnel proceeded to their assigned bunkers. There was a lull in firing by the enemy. FRR boat personnel then proceeded to scramble the boats. The enemy mortar battery commenced fire again and the next three rounds impacted in the vicinity of the pier resulting in numerous friendly casualties. Enemy fire ceased after firing six rounds at the base. The last mortar round exploded between the observation tower and the sick bay, with the observation tower and the adjacent water tank receiving shrapnel. Air and artillery assistance were called, but the enemy had now ceased all activity and Civilian Irregular
Defense personnel were operating in the area. Helicopters evacuated all casualties.

As a result of the mortar attack, friendly casualties were:
one US VIA, six "S" VIA, and six VNN WIA. The U. S. Navy personnel were:
BT3 Hem, US VIA
CT3 Rees, US VIA (Serious)
CM Pierce, US VIA (Serious)
BT3 Farschal, US VIA (Serious)
BT3 Hartzburger, US VIA (Serious)
GM3 Hollister, US VIA (Serious)
BT3 Warnick, US VIA (Serious)

A later inspection of the base revealed that the observation tower, water tower, and generator shack received shrapnel with no apparent damage. One fuel hose was severed by shrapnel and several boats had shrapnel holes above the waterlines.

On 7 February, in Tay 'inh Province, approximately 10 kilometers from Tay 'inh City (YT 160 L25) a daylight patrol under patrol officer WC Dennis, with WM2 Sanders as Boat Captain embarked in ATC-32 and with GM3 Ray as Boat Captain and embarked in monitor M-5, discovered three nippa palm rafts. The rafts were approximately three feet square with each raft having a four foot bamboo mast. Attached to the mast of each raft was a bundle of propaganda leaflets written in both English and Vietnamese and addressed to U. S. military personnel. The rafts appeared to
have been placed in this location for interception by a U. S. Navy river patrol craft.

In the early morning of 9 February, in Long An Province (Y5 789 C,6) approximately four kilometers west of Can Diouc City and approximately 15 kilometers southwest of Saigon, Boat Captain 444 Groce embarked in his Zippo boat (Z-5) and Boat Captain 32 Knott embarked in his ATC (T-35) joined forces with a Regional Forces/Popular Forces (RF/PF) unit to attack a VC/NVA base camp. Intelligence had indicated that this base camp was operated by 25-40 NVA and was used as a munitions factory. At 0400, the RF/PF deployed to form blocking units. At 0445, Z-5 entered a canal adjacent to the above listed position and commenced burning. Fifteen secondary explosions were observed. The RF/PF reported making contact with VC/NVA running to the south. Seawolves were called in and placed a strike on the area of the base camp. After the air strike, RF/PF's closed in and inspected the area. Twelve bunkers were observed. Nine bunkers had already been destroyed by the Seawolves' air strike. A RF/PF demolition team destroyed the remaining three bunkers and also destroyed two booby traps.

The significance of this action is that this was the first time that a ground assault on this area was possible. The ground forces attributed that the burning conducted by Zippo-5, which cleared the area of the majority of the booby traps, had been the major factor in the success of the ground sweep.
The U. S. Navy personnel assigned to conduct operations in the Giant Slingshot Area have learned that the enemy is tenacious when he wants to be and respect him for his tenacity. The following is an example of the enemy accomplishing his mission despite all the obstacles placed in his way.

In Phu Phia Province at Go Dau Ha City (KT 383 250) the bridge across the Vam Go Dong River was mined on 13 February at 0220H. A first hand witness, the skipper of CS3-2, who was on watch on his boat, described that he had seen an electrical flash and heard a muffled explosion, which he evaluated to mean that the explosive charge was set deep. He observed that one concrete pillar rose slightly before toppling into the river.

One span of the bridge was destroyed by the explosion but navigation of the river was not hampered by the destruction of the bridge span due to the depth of the channel under the bridge.

In carrying out his mission, the enemy sapper had successfully evaded all attempts by friendly forces to protect the bridge. On examination, the forces assigned to protect the bridge were all actively carrying out their assignments. There were Popular Force (PF) guards at each end of the bridge and a roving guard on the bridge. Floodlights were illuminating each pillar of the bridge as well as each end of the bridge. An ATC had conducted a chain sweep at irregular intervals. Concussion grenades had been randomly thrown from an ATC and from the CSB-2. There was a swimmer
not around each pillar of the bridge constructed of 55 gallon drums, expanded metal, and angle iron. However, the swimmer net around the pillar which was destroyed was rusty and deteriorated.

In the evening of 23 February, in Nau Nghia Province, 12 kilometers from Tra On City (YT 126 093) Patrol Officers PMC Gage and PMC Vicklund with Boat Captains RM Girard in PBR 866, TH Cain in PBR 868, RM Studds in PBR 870, and CM2 Farley in PBR 706 were proceeding at idle speed to a VIP waiting for an artillery mission to be concluded when the boats were attacked by an enemy unit using a 75mm recoilless rifle. The first round fired by the enemy passed over the boats and exploded on the west bank of the river. One of the covering boats immediately opened fire on the east bank. As the attack continued, the lead boat, PBR 868, was hit by two, 75mm recoilless rifle rounds, one round hitting in the chief’s quarters which damaged the radios and one round exploding on the coxswain’s flat which killed Patrol Officer Gage instantly and maimed Boat Captain Donald M. Cain.

The units continued to receive recoilless rifle and automatic weapons fire but this time from both banks. The wounded Boat Captain managed to turn his boat around and clear the kill zone. The Vietnamese gunner expended all of his 50 caliber ammunition, then manned an M-60 machine gun and took over the helm so that the rest of the crew could administer aid to the wounded Boat Captain.

The boats all cleared the kill zone but remained in the area.
A medevac helicopter (Dustoff) and artillery assistance was requested. At 1937, an Air Force Forward Air Controller arrived on station and air elements worked over the area until 2120, expending four, 5 hundred pound bombs, four 'napalm bombs, in addition to smaller caliber ammunition. Enemy casualties are unknown.

On 25 February, in Tay 'inh Province, 9.5 kilometers from Tay 'inh City (Xt 181 13) Patrol Officer SM Whitesell with Boat Captains P2 Haynes in PBR 8118 and C122 Grosz in PBR 8120 were enroute to night OP when at 2037 they came under intense enemy rocket and automatic weapons fire. One "I-0 rocket exploded against the fiberglass shield on the starboard side of boat 8118 injuring five of the embarked personnel. The units returned fire on the enemy position and cleared the area. Artillery, air, and medevac assistance was requested. Artillery took the ambush area under fire from 2014 to 2054. "Black Ponies arrived on station at 2052 and commenced strikes which lasted until 2107. Artillery and additional air strikes were conducted until 2331. Personnel wounded in this ambush and medevaced were:

P2 Leo H. Haynes, "SM VTA (Serious)
C122 Michael C. Perex, "SM VTA (Serious)
SM John P. Whitesell, "SM VTA (Minor)
SN Dale R. Williams, "SM VTA (Minor)
C123 Stanley H. Gaines, "SM VTA (Minor)
Operation Ready Deck

In Operation Tran Hung Dao V/Ready Deck, now under VNN command with a deputy USN commander, the integrated naval forces of USN and VNN units maintained constant pressure on the enemy in February through effective employment of interdiction techniques. While coordinating their operations with the 1st Infantry Division, USA, the 5th AKVN Division, and the local HVF/FF forces that have the adjacent AO's, the Ready Deck units conducted river patrols, search and destroy operations, WBGP's, troop support, and PSYOPS and ACTCN training on the Saigon and Thi Tinh Rivers extending some 43 miles from four miles south of Phu Cuong (XT 81078) upstream to Tri Tam (XT 480 460).

In February the low level of enemy activity was equally dispersed throughout the month and concentrated in the general area five to seven miles northwest of Phu Cuong where the Saigon and Thi Tinh Rivers merge (vicinity XT 755 205). There were scattered actions further up the Saigon River, but the frequency of these was considerably less than in previous months. Although the night WBGP continued to be the most effective interdiction tactic employed, the number of VC involved averaged considerably less than in December and January when larger unit crossings were successfully interrupted.

Based on intelligence information of the military and civilian VCI operating in the upper Saigon River area of the enemy's sub region one, one SEAL squad of Detachment GOLF, BRAVO Platoon, was
relocated from Giant Slingshot to the Tran Hung Dao VI area on 23 February. The unit, composed of one officer and six men, was placed under the OPCON of CTG 194.6 and directed to conduct operations in the areas on and adjacent to the Saigon and Thi Tinh Rivers from Phu Cuong north to east west grid line 30.

In addition to the SEAL squad, the following USN and VNN units were committed to the operation at the end of the month:

<table>
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<th>Type of Unit</th>
<th># of Units Assigned</th>
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<td>TG 194.6 (Whaler)</td>
<td>Whaler</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>TU 194.6.1 (RIVDIV 953)</td>
<td>PBR</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TU 194.6.3</td>
<td>LSSC</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>RPG 51</td>
<td>PBR</td>
<td>8</td>
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<td>RAG 24</td>
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The following narrative includes examples of the more significant incidents occurring in the Tran Hung Dao V/Ready Deck AC.

Four RAG 24 units with their USN adviser, LT W. R. Blakely, embarked were acting as a blocking force for an RF troop sweep on the morning of 3 February nine miles north northwest of the Phu Cuong on the Thi Tinh River (vicinity AT 745 257). Shortly after 0900H seven VC with one B-40 rocket and individual automatic weapons opened fire on the heavily armed RAC. The VNN units immediately returned and suppressed the fire. Three VC were killed and one sampan near the contact area with a small amount of personal clothing was captured. A USA LHFT, "Rebel 51," followed up the action with helo strikes with unknown results.
While conducting a search and destroy operation five miles north-west of Phu Cuong on a small canal, interlaced with the Saigon River (vicinity XT 733 208) on 9 February, LT McClumber, PCl Willard, and EN1 Wagner and their PBR's 755 and 841, and six EOD personnel observed four swimmers in the water near PBR 841. Taking them under fire, the PBR sailors killed the four VC. Two more VC were sighted fleeing across rice paddies to the northeast. They too were taken under fire and probably killed. An LHPT was requested and arrived on station around noon. The helicopter destroyed two bunkers, and under the cover of the LHPT, the EOD personnel destroyed two more recently used bunkers.

Just upstream from the intersection of the Saigon and Thi Tinh Rivers on the Saigon River (XT 750 213), RIVDIV 593 PBR's 752 and 841, under the command of BMC Gainey, were poised for action in a night waterborne guardpost on 12 February. The two PBR's heard movement on the beach. Suddenly a grenade bounced on the canopy of one of the boats. BMC Gainey grabbed the grenade and threw it overboard. The units broke the WBGP and reconnoitered the area by fire. Black Ponies were called to assist and arrived at 2010 to commence a strike. After the first pass by the Black Ponies, the PBR's received small arms and automatic weapons fire from the south beach. At the same time they observed about ten swimmers in the water crossing from south to north near one boat. Five VC were killed by the sailors while the OV-10's continued to place air strikes. At 2034, air cover departed the area, and the PBR's returned to Phu Cuong to rearm before returning to set another WBGP.
On the evening of 15 February, MM1 Rhodes, with USN PHR's 840 and 843, was silently maintaining a night WEGF on the Thí Tinh River approximately four and one half miles northwest of Phu Cuong (XT 766 216). At 2100, the sailors observed a sampan moving downstream from north to south. The sampan was taken under deadly fire that killed four VC (one probable). Concurrently another VC was spotted on the beach approaching the friendly units. He too was taken under fire and stopped, dead, in his tracks. With all movement silenced, the PHR's closed the sampan and recovered one CHICOM pistol and one pack containing food, clothing, and documents. The boats returned to Phu Cuong to rearm before they resumed the patrol.
A River Assault Division 150 Assault Patrol

Boat patrols the river near the Cambodian border searching for enemy infiltrators.
Border Interdiction

During the month of February, U.S. Navy units continued to hamper the VC/NVA efforts to move troops and logistics across the Cambodian border through the Border Interdiction Area of Operations (AO). The number of enemy contacts and sightings in the Border Interdiction AO indicates that the enemy is still trying to move through the Tran Hung Dao and Barrier Reef interdiction barriers. During the month, the enemy suffered 34 confirmed killed in his many attempts to infiltrate the area. The U.S. Navy suffered 2 killed in action and 16 wounded in action during this period.

The following incident narrative describes the activities occurring during the month of February in this area of operations. On the morning of 4 February, four PBR's were in KAGP on the Vinh Te Canal approximately 11 kilometers southwest of Chau Doc. At 0104H, one PBR at WS 033 787, sighted approximately 100 VC on the north bank of the canal and approximately 15 swimmers in the water about 150 meters distance from their guard post. The PBR immediately took this large body of VC under fire. Simultaneously, a PBR located at WS 027 784, sighted 100 to 200 VC on the south bank approaching the canal. Three of the PBR's took this group under fire when the VC started running to the south. Seawolves were immediately requested and HAL 3 DET 5 helos were scrambled at 0107H. The Seawolves placed rocket and machine gun strikes on the VC on the south bank. Black Ponies relieved the Seawolves at 0125H and continued the air
strikes. Shadow 77 arrived at 0151H, relieved the Black Ponies, and continued the strikes.

A daylight sweep of the action area was conducted. The amount of captured material indicated that the PBR’s had interrupted a large VC canal crossing. A partial listing of the material captured were 25 hand grenades, five boxes of mortar booster charges, two rounds of 82mm (high explosive) ammunition, three rounds of 60mm ammunition, 150 rounds of .51 caliber belted ammunition, 28 uniforms, 16 back packs, 38 bamboo one man rafts, 12 gas masks, 20 ponchos, one kilo of documents, 150 pounds of rice, and miscellaneous cooking utensils.

Late at night on 5 February, PBR 673 inadvertently crossed the border on the Mekong River into Cambodia. It was assumed that the crewmen became disoriented in the dark when they were returning to their station at the USS RENYAH which was located 15 miles downstream from the border. There were five crewmen aboard the PBR.

At 0020H on 7 February, four RIVDIV 515 PBR’s with Patrol Officers SMC Dunnivant and QMC Figgnett in charge were in WBGP with personnel of a Mobile Strike Force (MSF) embarked on the Vinh Te Canal about 9 kilometers from Vinh Gia City at VS 855 610. Twenty-five VC/NVA were spotted approximately 100 meters south proceeding north. The enemy was taken under fire and the MSF was inserted. At 0035H, four RIVDIV 512 PBR’s under Patrol Officers QMC Sneed and BMC Hudson proceeded to the area to assist. The RIVDIV 512 boats
carried additional personnel of the MSF and ammunition. Seavolves arrived on the scene and provided air support. The MSF swept south and came into heavy contact with an entrenched force of about 50 NVA and suffered one USA KIA, one MSF KIA, and three MSF WIA. At 0230H, one Seawolf landed in the contact area and medevaced the wounded as additional Seavolves provided overhead cover. At 0337H, a USA flare ship arrived on the scene and provided continuous illumination. Beach parties arrived, and after extraction of the MSF, commenced air strikes at 0430H. At 0520H, the USA flare ship was relieved on station. The relieving aircraft remained on station and provided continuous illumination until daylight. At 0700H, the MSF was reinterted and conducted a sweep of the area. In carrying out the sweep, the MSF discovered two NVA KIA (EC). The MSF captured three NVA, one of whom was slightly wounded. The MSF also captured six AK-47's, one SKS, 11 assorted pictures, 30 Chicom grenades, one gas mask, two diaries, 55 pounds of miscellaneous foodstuff, one medical kit with assorted drugs, 17 magazines of AK-47 ammunition, one NVA Medal of Honor, and miscellaneous documents.

On the morning of 13 February, a PFR of FFG-54 was returning from VES when personnel sighted a Claymore mine at VS 045 794 on the north bank of the Vinh Te Canal. Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) assistance was requested. The EOD team, led by LTJG Valentine, destroyed the mine in place. The EOD team reported that the mine was facing the canal and had been rigged with a monofilament line which led to a spider hole on the north bank where the
mine could have been command detonated.

The following detailed description was requested by COMNAVFORV because the large number of personnel casualties resulting from hostile action and to attempt to determine if the crafts involved were especially vulnerable to rocket and recoilless rifle attack.

PHIBIV 113 units, MSR-3, and MSR-6, were on routine day patrol in the Hanh Thanh River. Both units were at modified general quarters which meant that all personnel were manning battle stations but were allowed to smoke and move around as long as they could return to their stations quickly. All weapons were loaded and cocked. All personnel without exception were wearing fatigue pants, boots, flak jackets, and helmets. About 50% were wearing fatigue shirts under their flak jackets. The remainder were shirtless.

Units were proceeding south with MSR-3 in the lead and MSR-6 trailing behind about 75 meters. Their speed was about three knots. When the units rounded a blind corner at VS 548 602, at approximately 1542H, they were ambushed from both banks by automatic weapons, B-40's, and recoilless rifle fire.

Aboard MSR-3, one B-40 round hit the starboard side of the hull above the waterline, directly aft of the twin 50 caliber mount, piercing the hull and hurling shrapnel throughout the compartment. Some of the shrapnel continued on through the port hull and into the water. The heat of the explosion caused a fire in a clothing locker. The fire later spread to the coxswain flat before it could
be controlled. One recoilless rifle round hit about two feet aft of the B-40 round and went out the other side of the boat and doubtless contributed to the fire and shrapnel damage. Another B-40 round exploded on the forward compartment hatch which was dogged down. The entire surface of the hatch was destroyed although the knife edge cutting remained in place dogged down. A second recoilless rifle round hit the deck house just aft of the coxswain's stand on the starboard side. The round penetrated the deckhouse bulkhead, both bulkheads of the coxswain's flat, and fragmented pieces of shrapnel imbedded in a fold down cot mounted on the port bulkhead. A third B-40 round, fired at the stern of the boat, hit the port 50 caliber gunner in the chest. The impact of the round threw the Boat Captain, who was connin', forward. He hit his head on the gauge console receiving a 3 inchlash and passed out for what he estimated to be about 15-20 seconds. However, when he fell forward, his hands were on the throttles and the forward motion of his body pushed the throttles to maximum turns, propelling the boat out of the kill zone. He regained consciousness before the boat left mid-stream and he steered the boat clear of the kill zone.

MSK-6 was attacked at the twin 50 caliber mount. The B-40 round pierced the hull and some of the shrapnel went through the hull on the port side. Another B-40 round hit the starboard side of the deck house just aft of the coxswain's stand, piercing the bulkhead and expelling itself against a folded down cot and the bulkhead of the coxswain flat. The heat of the explosion caused the cot to
ignite. Approximately eight inches aft of this B-40 round, a recoilless rifle round went through the starboard deckhouse bulkhead, through both bulkheads of the coxswain's flat, and expanded itself against the port deckhouse bulkhead. A third B-40 round hit the stern on the port side where the hull joins the main deck and transom. The impact of these explosions knocked the Boat Captain, who was conning, out of the coxswain's flat, through the deckhouse door, and into the berthing area immediately adjacent. He was knocked unconscious, suffering minor internal bruises and some smoke inhalation damage to his wind pipe and right lung. A crewmember firing an M-60 from the drone operator's platform was unaware that the Boat Captain had been knocked off of the helm. The boat continued down the middle of the river until it had cleared the kill zone then veered toward the northwest bank and ran aground. The impact threw the M-60 gunner clear of the boat and onto the beach. He was unhurt. The forward twin 50 caliber gunner received minor shrapnel wounds from the B-40 which hit forward. Shrapnel from the B-40 which hit aft on the port side seriously injured a man standing two feet from the point of impact. One other man on the fantail received minor shrapnel wounds while the third man was unharmed. The unharmed man, however, later sustained third degree burns on both hands while fighting the fire on the boat.

The attack was well planned and executed. It appeared that the enemy on the northwest bank was tasked with hitting the forward 50
caliber mount and the coxswain's flat since all of their rounds landed in those areas. The enemy on the southeast bank was tasked with hitting the personnel on the fantail since all of the rounds from that bank hit on the fantails of the boats.

Without doubt, flak jackets and helmets saved three personnel from death or more serious injury than they sustained since several jackets and helmets showed signs of shrapnel damage. In addition, boat personnel from both MSR's had secured three foot by six foot flak curtains to the outboard side of the stanchions around the entire fantail of their boats. The 8.40 round which hit MSR-6 on the port side aft at the junction of the main deck and the hull detonated right below a flak curtain. Judging from the damage to the curtain, it absorbed at least 60% of the shrapnel which undoubtedly saved the life of the man most seriously injured who was standing only two feet from the point of impact and also saved the other two personnel from serious injury.

During the actual attack, the units returned fire and cleared the area to the south. The boats reported their situation and requested assistance. Four PBR's of RIVDIV 532, under Patrol Officers LTJG Bomato and BMC Garrett, and two PCF's of COSDIV 11, with LTJG Ellington and LTJG Hill embarked, were near the area of the attack.
and we: directed to proceed to the assistance of the MSH's under attack. The PBR's of NHVDIV 532 entered the area and suppressed the fire at 1558H.

The MSH's proceeded south to rendezvous with PCF's in the vicinity of V5 530 580. On rendezvous, all units received automatic weapons fire from the west bank. The units returned the fire and requested air assistance. Seawolves were scrambled from the USS JENNINGS COUNTY and were on station at 1610H. The Seawolves placed strikes in the second contact area, then medevaced the most serious wounded at 1620H.

Friendly casualties from the ambush were as follows:
ENFN Thomas Copp, USN KIA
BM3 Henry P/ Wilcox, USN WIA (Serious)
GMG3 Edward B. Yost, USN WIA (Serious)
ENFN Gerry W. Abbott, USN WIA (Minor)
EN2 Charles A. Brown, USN WIA (Minor)
GMG3 Elwood W. Arnell, USN WIA (Minor)
EN2 Edward K. Fry, USN WIA (Minor)
BM1 Jerry F. Obsworth, USN WIA (Minor)
BM3 Timothy K. Flynn, USN WIA (Minor)
BM1 Charlie J. Robertson, USN WIA (Minor)

On 16 February, COMNAVFORV notified CNO that U. S. military representatives were prepared to receive the remains of three U. S. Navy helicopter crewmembers who were killed when their helicopter
crashed in Cambodia on 28 April 1969. On the afternoon of 20 February, the Cambodian government returned the remains of the three crewmen. The remains were accepted by a U. S. Navy officer and were later turned over to the U. S. Army Mortuary Service in Saigon for identification. The mortuary service was able to confirm the identity of LTJG Hal Cushman Castle, 717624, USN and A03 Michael Edward Schafermocker, 571 62 40, USN. The mortuary service certified that no remains were received of the third Navy helicopter crewman, LTJG Richard John Reardon, 716637, USNR.

COMNAVFORW has requested to have the American Embassy in Phnom Penh to search, if possible, at both the crash and burial sites for a possible unopened grave or other evidence of the third crewman.

By 16 February, the water level in the Vinh Te Canal had dropped so low that boats were no longer capable of operating in certain parts of the canal. Ground forces, sensors, and air support were the only means of interdiction in these areas where low water conditions prevail.

On 23 February, PER's of RIVDIV 532 were en route to night WBCP when they came under intense B-40 and automatic weapons fire at VS 510 548 on the Rach Giang Thanh River about nine kilometers northeast of Ha Tien. At 1758H, PER 121 was hit in the vicinity of the coxswain's flat and PER 634 received B-40 rockets in the bow and the stern, both above and below the waterline. Both units returned fire.
and cleared the kill zone to the north. PBR 121 commenced burning and was beached. Since the crew was unable to extinguish the fire at that time, PBR 634 came alongside and evacuated the crew of PBR 121. PHR 638 and PBR 143 then arrived in the contact area and took the area under fire. Seawolves were scrambled and were on station at 1800H and placed three strike in the contact area. The Seawolves then proceeded to medevac three personnel from PBR 121. After the Seawolves departed, PCF 22 and PCF 56 fired mortar rounds into the contact area and sighted three personnel evading to the west. Additional air strikes were called in. At 1920H, with the air strikes completed, CIDC troops were inserted for a sweep. PBR 123 and PBR 124 escorted PBR 634 to Ha Tien. PBR 638 and PBR 142 towed PBR 121 to Ha Tien.

Friendly casualties were five USN WIA and one VNN WIA (Slight).

The U. S. Navy personnel were:

ITDG D. M. Bomarito, USN WIA (Minor)
HM C. M. Gandy, USN WIA (Slight)
DP3 J. A. O'brien, USN WIA (Minor)
ENFN S. R. Green, USN WIA (Slight)
GHSN H. R. Sowling, USN WIA (Minor)

The CIDC troops found one VC killed.

On 24 February, PBR's of RIVDIV 571 under Patrol Officer RDC Eubanks were operating on the Bassac River as a Resources Control Patrol. At 0920H, the patrol stopped a large water taxi in the
vicinity of VS 375 665 for a routine check. Upon boarding the water taxi, the PBR crew members noted that all the passengers appeared to be frightened. The VNN crew member of the PBR relayed to his Boat Captain that the Taxi Master had attempted to bribe him not to search the boat. During the search of the water taxi, the Vietnamese crew refused to lift the floorboards. The USN and VNN crew members lifted the floorboards and found six Vietnamese males hiding beneath the floorboards. The six suspects and all of the other occupants of the water taxi were taken to the Choi Koi District Headquarters. Later interrogation of the six males indicated that all were draft dodgers.

On 25 February, PBR 7650 of RPG 54 with EN2 Woolsey embarked as an advisor was proceeding to VCOP when the boat struck a water-mine at VS 018 778 approximately 13 kilometers southwest of Chau Doc. The explosion knocked out both engines and the PBR commenced taking on water. The crew attempted to beach the boat but the boat sunk in shallow water. A later inspection revealed three small holes in the hull. The boat was refloated and repaired. There were no friendly casualties.

On 28 February, the Cambodian government released the five members of the PBR crew which accidently crossed the Cambodian border on 5 February to the American Charge D'Affairs in Phnom Penh. They were Gary Lehnen, Michael Walker, James Hunsucker, Anthony DeLuca, and Thomas P. Glenn.
Intelligence reports throughout the month of February indicated enemy movement from the Seven Mountains into the Three Sisters area and suggested an increase in PBR patrols on the Rach Gia-Ha Tien Canal to break up this movement. In reaction to these reports, CTG 194.3 repositioned its forces within the Search Turn AO so that 75 per cent of its units were available for patrol and WBOP positions between N-S grid lines VS 60 and VS 90 along the Rach Gia-Ha Tien Canal.

Also in response to these reports, the 21st ARVN Division moved to Kien Luong with RAG 26 and the 9th Mobile Cavalry for operations along the Rach Gia-Ha Tien Canal north of the 30 E/W gridline and on the Kinh So Mo. RAG 26 forces were placed as follows: 2-3 two boat WBOP's on the Rach Gia-Ha Tien Canal between 19 and 28 E/W gridline, 2-3 two boat WBOP's north of 28 E/W gridline on the Rach Gia-Ha Tien Canal and on the Kien So Mo and Kien Vam Ray, and random Gulf patrols off the Three Sisters and northern Kien An Province.

Further intelligence reports during the second half of the month indicated attempts by elements of the 18B Regiment to gain access to the Three Sisters area and then to probable southward movement.

On 23 February, the Chief of Naval Operations, VNN, committed RAID 75 to Operation Search Turn making it a combined USN/VNN operation which was renamed Operation Search Turn/Tran Hung Dao VI. The mission of this combined effort is to conduct interdiction and troop insertion operations under current Rules of Engagement (ROE) to
prevent enemy infiltration and crossing of the Search Turn/Tran Hung Dao VI AO by conducting river patrols, visit and search operations, troop insertions, and surveillance of waterways. Escort duties for friendly convoys will be assigned by CTG 194.3, who is in overall command of the operation while the Commanding Officer, RAID 75, serves as the Deputy Commander.

Search Turn assets were also deployed on the Bu Tho, Shpuynh Quynh, Luynh Quynh Canals to counter these interdiction efforts.

At 1200Z on the 18th of the month, RIVDIV 573 choppered from CTG 194.4 to CTG 194.3 and assumed task designator CTU 194.3.3. This addition to the Search Turn operation increased total PBR assets at the end of the month to 40. Other end of the month assets included two Seawolves, three Boston Whalers, one CCB-2, one LSSC, and one LCPL.

During February, hostile fire incidents in the Search Turn AO increased from 14 in January to 17. Enemy losses, however, dropped from January's 24 kills and 20 probable kills to 16 and 13 respectively, and enemy craft losses likewise dropped from 19 destroyed and six damaged in January to seven and 12 in February - with one captured. Friendly losses, on the other hand, rose slightly from none killed and two wounded in January to two USN and one other friendly killed and three USN and two VNN wounded this month.

The following narrative describes incidents typical of February's action in the Search Turn AO.
February's Search Turn operations opened on the first day of the month with the capture of one VCI hamlet level security chief by SEAL Team DET Golf, A Squad, under LT Short. The squad departed Kien Son aboard FBR 8130 and arrived at Soc Song at 0300H. After picking up a NPFF guide and two sampans about a half hour later, the SEALS transited the Kien Lon Thung Canal, and the patrol was inserted on the Rach Gia-Ha Tien Canal 11 miles northwest of Rach Gia (VS 993 194). They moved along the canal for 500 meters, entered a hootch, and captured the security chief. While proceeding back up the canal, the VCI attempted to escape. He was shot and killed, and the sampan was overturned. The men in the first craft were rescued by those in the second sampan. A medevac was called in for a wounded SEAL who was subsequently flown out to Binh Thuy. In addition to the wounded SEAL, one M-16 and one carbine with XM 118 were lost when the sampan overturned.

While in WBG in reaction to COMNAVFOR intelligence on the Rach Gia-Ha Tien Canal 30 miles northwest of Rach Gia (VS 712 365) on 9 February, PER's 8129 and 8135 of RIVDIV 553 received B-40 and A/W fire from the south bank. The units, under Patrol Officer BMC Smith and Boat Captains SM1 Trader and EN2 Bedster, returned the fire and then cleared the kill zone. At 2030H, Seawolves were requested. They arrived on station and began a strike at 2036H. At the completion of their strike about 20 minutes later, Black Ponies were requested. Following the Black Ponies' strike, an LSSC was scrambled from Kien Son with two replacement M-60 machine guns and illumination. The LSSC rendezvoused with the FBR's at an outpost at VS 759 361, and a gunship...
strike in the area was directed with the flare ship providing illumination. The gunship sighted three sampans on the south bank. About 10 minutes later, the PBR's made a firing run in the contact area. They received A/W fire from both banks. Two minutes later, the LSSC destroyed the three sampans located at VS 712 365. Seawolves returned again to the area at 2340 to provide cover for the return through the contact area. The friendlys sustained only minor shrapnel and bullet hole damage to the two PBR's.

Acting in response to intelligence gained from MAT Team 68, subsector Kien Thanh, that VC were infiltrating a propaganda team into An Phut Village, SEAL's of SEAL Team DET Golf, Delta Platoon, B Squad, under LT Hetzer, departed Rach Soi at 1930 H on 17 February and were inserted 12 miles south southeast of Rach Gia (WR 158 884) by supporting PBR's of RTVDIV 513. The unit proceeded along a VC infiltration route and confronted a Vietnamese carrying a candle. He was taken into custody, questioned with negative results, and released. The unit then proceeded along the route for 100 meters and made contact with a VC point element.

Meanwhile, the PBR's sighted a sampan 150 meters east of the insertion point. The craft evaded to the beach. and the occupant fled. The PBR's captured the sampan and proceeded to their guardpost. Miscellaneous clothing was found in the sampan.

At 2135H, the SEAL's were extracted - five minutes after Seawolves were scrambled to provide fire support as the VC element was firing into the extraction area.
Upon departing the area, the PBR's evacuated a VN child who had received an AK-47 wound in the thigh during the VC fire. The child was picked up from a nearby outpost and taken to Rach Gia for treatment.

Enemy losses included one VC killed and one motorized sampan and NVA supplies captured.

Two units of RIVDIV 553 were proceeding to LST 838 on the early evening of 20 February and had just entered the Luynh Quynh Canal (VS 892 27la) when the forward 50 mount of the cover boat accidentally discharged 20 rounds in the vicinity of the lead boat. Both units proceeded for about 5,000 meters, beached the boats, and initiated a medevac for five injured personnel on the lead boat. Six additional 553 units scrambled to assist. Seawolves scrambled to provide air cover for the dust off. Casualties included one USN killed and three USN and one USA seriously wounded. All were medevaced to the Third Surgical Hospital, Binh Thuy.

The following evening, another unintentional firing occurred when SN Lawrence J. Ortwein of RIVDIV 575 accidentally fired an M-16 wounding himself. He was medevaced, and his unit continued its WBOP.
Breezy Cove

The level of activity in the Breezy Cove AO increased greatly during the month of February. Enemy KIA's rose to 230 killed during the month compared to 40 killed during the month January. The U.S. Navy units assigned to the Breezy Cove AO were responsible for 40 of the enemy KIA's while the Vietnamese Navy was responsible for 44 enemy KIA's. A variety of other units assigned to the Breezy Cove AO accounted for the remainder of the enemy KIA's reported. The U.S. Navy units did suffer 18 personnel wounded during the month. However, none of the casualties were serious in nature, and most were treated by the Hospital Corpsmen at the Advanced Tactical Support Base (ATSB) and were returned to duty without any further complications.

The total of ENIFF's, FRIFF's, and unilateral firings remained at 59 for the month of February, but the size of the enemy units engaged were, on the average, much larger than in preceding months.

The USS HARNETT COUNTY (LST 821) relieved the USS GARRETT COUNTY (LST 786) as CTU 194.2.4 on 22 February. This was the only significant change in the task organization during the month.

Significant actions occurring during the month of February are described in the following paragraphs.

Two PBR's of TU 194.2.1, under Patrol Officer SMC Davenport, were in WBCP at VR 995 034 in the early morning of 4 February. At 0045H, the boat crews observed an enemy attack against Old Song Ong
Riverine Strike Group

During February, all RAC formerly assigned to CTG 194.7 (Riverine Strike Group) remained out-chopped to other operational commanders with the exception of those craft undergoing overhaul.
Doc, 1.2 miles to the west of the WBGP. The units broke WBGP and proceeded west on the Song Ong Doc to rendezvous with a second PBR patrol in the vicinity. While passing Old Song Ong Doc, one enemy mortar round exploded approximately 20 feet astern of the lead boat at VR 975 023 at 0100H. The PBR patrols rendezvoused, proceeded west, and set a WBGP at VR 938 010 at 0200H. At 0400H, QM1 Walsh, the boat Captain of the lead PBR passing Song Ong Doc, discovered that he had been wounded by the shrapnel of the exploding mortar round. At 0430H, the PBR's returned to the ATSB where QM1 Walsh received treatment for a minor shrapnel wound from the corpsman.

On 8 February, a Dustoff aircraft was attempting to evacuate casualties at VR 976 131 but was receiving ground fire and was unable to accomplish the mission. At 1600H, with Seawolves providing escort, the Dustoff landed and affected successful evacuation of the casualties. The Seawolves received intense automatic weapons fire which scored three hits and wounded two of the aviators. The Seawolves were unable to suppress the enemy ground fire and returned to their base. The two pilots, LTJG C. S. Perrin and LTJG R. S. Wolfe, each suffered slight shrapnel wounds.

On 9 February, a PBR patrol embarked Duffel Bag personnel in order to make a sensor plant in the vicinity of the ATSB. At 1020H, the patrol discovered that a sensor string previously planted at VR 823 011 was missing. A VC flag was planted where a sensor had been previously planted. The patrol took the flag and position under fire.
Also on 9 February, Shotgun 49 sighted 50 VC in open terrain (VR 853 083), 9 miles northeast of the ATSB at 1740H. From 1810H until 2215H, air and surface units conducted strikes on this position. Later, an agent reported that there had been 15 VC killed, 16 VC wounded, and 30 sampans destroyed in this operation.

On 15 February at 1536H, a PBR patrol inspecting sampans on the Song Ong Doc (VR 910 008) received 3 B-40 rockets fired from the north bank and 1 B-40 rocket fired from the south bank. The patrol also received light automatic weapons fire from the north bank. The patrol immediately initiated return fire, cleared the contact area, and made a second firing run through the area suppressing the enemy fire. CTG 194.2 scrambled LHFT and requested troops from the 32nd ARVN Regiment to assist the PBR patrol. Additional strikes were placed in the contact area by both air and surface units. At 1626H, the troops were inserted. The troops did not make contact with the enemy forces but did discover one twin B-40 launcher, one coil of wire, and one CHICOM grenade. The troops were extracted at 1742H. Friendly casualties in this action were five USN WIA. They were:

ENFN R. Leathers
GMG3 D. Preston
EN3 H. Osterhout
GMG3 R. Haag
TM1 R. Haywood

On 19 February, a PBR patrol was in WBGP on the south bank of the Song Ong Doc (VQ 830 992), 2 miles east of the ATSB. At 2112H,
the patrol detected movement approximately 150 meters south of the WBGP and took the area under fire with 40mm grenade launchers. Upon cease fire, the patrol no longer detected any movement and remained in WBGP. At 2123H, the patrol again detected movement in front of the boats and took the area under fire immediately killing three VC in front of the boats. The patrol broke WBGP and continued firing. The patrol then received automatic weapons fire and observed 2 hand grenades explode on the south bank. The patrol immediately cleared the contact area to the east and then made a second firing run on the contact area. At 2127H, a second PBR patrol made a firing run and received automatic weapons and B-40 rocket fire from the south bank. At 2131H, both patrols rendezvoused and made a fourth firing run drawing automatic weapons fire again from the south bank. At 2140H, the PBR's made a fifth firing run and received 2 B-40 rockets from the south bank. At 2150H, two ASPB's arrived and made a firing run through the contact area and received no return fire from the enemy positions. Seawolves then conducted two air strikes on the contact area. At 2135H, troops, supported by Seawolves and PBR's, were inserted on the south bank and swept the contact area. The troops did not make contact but found fresh foot prints indicating that approximately 30 persons had been in the area. The troops were extracted at 2345H.

ABH1 Knight received a minor shrapnel wound on his forehead, FN Beaudet received a slight shrapnel wound on his left hand, and EN2 Raposa received a minor shrapnel wound on his right hand during this action.
Only three VC bodies were found at the contact area. Later, the National Police learned from a sympathizer that six VC had been killed and 11 VC had been wounded in this incident.

A very similar action occurred on 27 February during daylight hours. A PBR patrol heading west on the Song Ong Doc at 1539H was taken under B-50 rocket and intense automatic weapons fire from the south bank at WR 018 053. The patrol immediately initiated return fire and cleared the contact area to the west. Air and surface support units were en route to the contact area within three minutes. Troops for a sweep of the area were requested and were inserted at 1650H. The troops immediately found 3 unfired B-50 rockets. The troops then moved inland approximately 200 meters and found three bodies and numerous blood trails. The troops estimated that there had been 20 VC in the area and that over half of the force had been killed.
Market Time Raider Campaign

The Market Time Raiders continued to conduct SEA LORDS missions along the rivers and canals of the III and IV Corps Tactical Zones. There were 58 missions carried out during February which resulted in 20 hostile fire incidents, 13 friendly initiated, three enemy initiated and seven unilateral fire fights. Enemy material losses for the month were 20 craft and 83 structures destroyed, six craft and 71 structures heavily damaged. There were 23 enemy killed (19 body count, four probable) and one wounded.

There were two U. S. sailors and two Popular Force Troops wounded in these missions, and two PCF's received minor damage.

At 2345H on the night of 2 February, PCF 74, LTJG Schorpe Commanding, and PCF 87 each inserted 15 Kit Carson Scouts (KCS) on an island in the Co Chien River about six miles northwest of Tra Vinh (XS 452 080). PCF 74 extracted and then reinserted 15 KCS at 0800 the following morning. The "Swift" boats then fired a destructive mission with unknown results. PCF 74 extracted the 30 KCS at noon on 3 February without incident. The Kit Carson Scouts in their sweep of the island killed one VC and captured six others. There were no friendly casualties.

PCF 102 with CTE 194.5.3, LCDR McConville embarked, entered the My Thanh River (XR 2841) about 15 miles southwest of Soc Trang, in company with the PT MARONE (USCG WPB) on the morning of 13 Feb-
ruary and played Psyops tapes. After transitting 12 miles up the river, junks and sampans were sighted, boarded, and searched. The Rach Ca Mau was entered, and Psyops tapes were played until the free fire zone was entered at which time bunkers and structures were taken under fire as requested by Vietnamese district officials embarked. The PCF beached and conducted direct and H and I fire into the free fire zone and upon completion, the Vietnamese Psyops official spoke to people requesting that they come out to the boat. Fifty women and children came out bringing nine wounded. The wounded were treated and medevaced by the PT MARONE and PCF 102. The My Thanh River was exited at 1700 without any junks or sampans being observed. There were nine Vietnamese civilians wounded and one killed. There were no friendly casualties. Destroyed in the mission were six structures, one sampan, ten bunkers, one secondary explosion, and six structures were damaged.

The PT MARONE (USCG WPB) and PT GREY (USCG WPB) conducted a SEA LORDS missions on the afternoon of 14 February, about 20 miles southeast of Tra Vinh (XR 695 690). The WPB's entered the Song Lang Nuoc and took targets of oppurtunity under fire. There was no contact with the enemy during the mission. There were three sampans, eight bunkers, and ten structures destroyed and five bunkers and eight structures heavily damaged.

In a SEA LORDS mission on the night of 15 February, the PT GREY (USCG WPB), LTJG R. A. Montgomery Commanding, entered a
canal about 20 miles southeast of Tra Vinh (XR 722 705) and launched her skimmer for covert surveillance. A large bonfire was sighted on the beach. Three sampans approached the beach and were taken under fire as they beached. One wounded VC was taken aboard the WPR and dusted off to the Coastal Group base. There were no friendly casualties during the mission and ten Viet Cong were killed and five children were detained and turned over to Coastal Group 35 for disposition. In addition, 3,000 pounds of rice was captured, one sampan destroyed, and two sampans damaged. It appeared that the sampans were en route to a VC meeting or rally.

On the morning of 16 February, PFC's 53 and 74 inserted two platoons of Regional Force/Popular Force (RF/PF) troops and a 20 man Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) team about 20 miles southwest of Tra Vinh (XR 245 685). The "Swift" boats then acted as a blocking force and extracted the troops without any contact with the enemy. The EOD team destroyed 40 bunkers during the SEA LORDS mission.

The WBP's, PT GREY and PT PARTRIDGE took targets of opportunity under fire in a SEA LORDS mission on the afternoon of 20 February about 18 miles southeast of Tra Vinh (XR 722 770). Numerous fires were started throughout the area and one suspected arms cache was destroyed with a secondary explosion occurring. In addition, three structures were destroyed, two large piles of rice burned, and three bunkers damaged. A late report from spotter aircraft