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FOREWORD

Enemy activity within the Republic of Vietnam remained low to
light in all Military Regions during most of the month of September.

Of particular interest was the increase in mining incidents
which affected all Military Regions. Mining on the Cua Viet River
reached an all-time high when on 27 September, seven mines were
discovered within a 15 hour period.
### CURRENT OPERATIONS
(As of 30 September 1970)

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* TRAN HUNG DAO VI will operate as TG 212.5 when activated.  
** TRAN HUNG DAO X will operate as TG 212.6 when activated.
SEALS - A SEAL team just returned from a mission, giving a
smoke break prior to debriefing. The Vietnamese fighting the SEALs
is a Kit Carson boost, serving with the famed Kit Carson Squadron.

former Viet Cong who have returned to the Government of Vietnam,
Operation SOLID ANCHOR (THD IV)

Operation SEA FLOAT passed into the annals of Naval history on 1 September when CTG 116.1 moved ashore to the SOLID ANCHOR site. All remaining personnel were transferred ashore by 3 September. Unfortunately, this move ashore did not solve the many problems which plague the CTG 116.1 forces. Instead, it brought about another serious problem, that of base defense.

This problem of base defense was the subject of a great deal of study by the U.S. Navy command throughout the month. Aside from a shortage of both USN and VNN personnel to man the base, and the shortage of defensive material and weaponry (A number of U.S. and VN sailors were sent to SOLID ANCHOR without weapons - a situation which was later corrected), the disadvantages of the SOLID ANCHOR site itself were brought to light. In a message sent to COMNAVFORV on 20 September CTG 116.1 stated that:

"The physical SOLID ANCHOR site is considered unsatisfactory from a defensive point of view. The frontage is long and the depth is narrow. The appendage of a helo pad and airstrip, the lack of adequate ammo and POL storage and the neat symmetry of the quarters and warehouses all provide advantages to the attacker." 1

1. CTG 116.1 msg DTG 200040Z SEP 70.
This shaky defense posture was not enhanced by the disestablishment of the Kit Carson Scouts which also occurred during the month. The loss of the KCS and their camp on SOLID ANCHOR's eastern flank "creates an exposed relatively open flank to the enemy, which SOLID ANCHOR is incapable of filling at this time."²

The assets of SOLID ANCHOR did, however, receive a most welcome addition when the 6th Vietnamese Marine Battalion, along with an artillery battery were ordered into the SOLID ANCHOR area of operations on 2 September. The last of these troops arrived on 5 September. Their presence provides the SOLID ANCHOR command with the large strike force which it had been sadly lacking since the departure of the Mobile Strike Force troops in May of this year.

Another continuing concern of CTG 116.1 has been the deplorable material condition of the RID 45 craft assigned to SOLID ANCHOR. This condition reached its nadir on 25 September when of the 11 RID 45 craft assigned, nine were non-operational due to material deficiencies and the other two were sunk (The sinking of these two craft will be discussed later). In an attempt to bolster the River Assault Craft forces, RID 41 was ordered to replace RID 45 at SOLID ANCHOR. This shift had not yet occurred at month's end.

² CTG 116.1 msg DTG 181610Z SEP 70.
A group of dignitaries visited Seabee (Third Naval Construction Battalion) construction sites during September.

Colonel S. F. Lapping, Deputy Chief of Psyops Division, CCMUSMACV, gained some firsthand knowledge of U.S. Navy psyops efforts during his visit to 30 September.

Commander M. B. Brisbois relieved Commander T. A. Kellerher as CTG 116.1 on 1 October.

Operational activity in the SOLID ANCHOR area of operations remained at a high level throughout the month. There were a total of 13 ambushes of SOLID ANCHOR units by the enemy in September. These attacks resulted in damage to three PCFs, two ATCs, an LSM, and a civilian tug, and the wounding of three USN and nine VNN personnel. The enemy also successfully attacked two RID 45 units nested off the SOLID ANCHOR site on 25 September with water mines. ASPB 5167 and ATC 1269 were sunk while ASPB 5165 and 5166, and ATC 1267 were damaged. Six VNN personnel were wounded while another eight were missing and presumed drowned. One U.S. Navyman was injured during rescue attempts.

In a tragic incident on 27 September, two U.S. Navy Seawolves sighted smoke from campfires and requested firing clearance from the SOLID ANCHOR NOC. The NOC granted clearance and the
Seawolves commenced their strike. They immediately ceased fire when they observed a yellow smoke grenade, indicating a friendly unit. Unfortunately, seven Vietnamese Marines, part of a company sized unit making a sweep, were wounded before the cease fire. Only the quick reaction of the Seawolves in halting the strike when they observed the yellow smoke averted what might have been a more serious incident.

SEALs from Zulu Platoon of SEAL Team ONE, Det GOLF hit the jackpot on a mission conducted 13 kilometers east of SOLID ANCHOR (vicinity WQ 128 720) on 23 September. The SEALs found a bunker and hootch complex containing a VC or NVA rocket and rocket launcher factory and weapons repair facility. The SEALs, along with a UDT demolition element destroyed hundreds of rockets, numerous rocket launchers and mines, approximately 350 disassembled SK3 rifles, plus a wide range of weapons manufacturing machinery and other assorted weapons. They also captured 45 pounds of documents. In all the SEALs and UDT personnel destroyed 80-90 percent of the munitions and severely damaged the machinery before extracting. A follow up patrol the next day destroyed more of the munitions and machinery. The SEALs on this patrol noted that the bodies of three VC killed the previous day had been removed from the area, indicating that the VC had returned after the SEAL attack.
SEALs from GOLF Platoon under LT Dyer, along with Kit Carson Scouts, did not meet with the same success as their comrades when they attempted to raid a VC training camp 22 kilometers northeast of SOLID ANCHOR (vicinity WQ 208 740) on 26 September. Instead of the eight armed VC their intelligence source had indicated would be present, they ran into a heavily armed force of approximately 20 men. This force hit the SEALs with M-79 grenades and heavy automatic weapons fire which wounded three SEALs and three KCS before the SEALs were able to call in Seawolves which provided cover for a medevac and a successful extraction by MSSC and LSSC. Ten of the enemy were killed during the encounter (5 BC, 5 probable).
Operation BREEZY COVE

While Operation BREEZY COVE SEALs and river assets experienced a moderate measure of hostile action in September, an encounter between Navy Seawolves and a massive enemy ground force was the most significant action reported by CTG 116.2. There were a total of 12 firefights during the month, and the allies reported finding the bodies of 12 enemy troops.

Navy SEALs of Detachment GOLF made several contacts with the Viet Cong after inserting in the area south of the Bay Hap River on the morning of 13 September. The SEALs first battled a five man enemy unit armed with automatic weapons at VQ 953 743, and shortly thereafter encountered 40 communist troops at VQ 964 736, seven of whom were wearing light blue uniforms. The SEALs reported killing six of the enemy (body count) and six (probable). They recovered assorted weapons and communist documents.

Seawolves from Song Ong Doc were involved in one of the Navy's greatest operational losses in September. On 15 September three American helicopters (two USN, one USA) were shot down in the vicinity of "VC Lake" (VQ 94 95). The incident began in mid-afternoon when Seawolves inserted elements of a Regional Forces company six kilometers south of the city of Song Ong Doc (VQ 93 97). Shortly
thereafter, the ground troops made contact with a large enemy force and urgently requested medical evacuation for six seriously wounded troops. Dustoff 86 attempted extraction, but heavy ground fire drove it away, and it was forced to wait for helicopter gunship support.

While waiting, it withdrew southward to Solid Anchor, approximately 30 kilometers away to medevac two life or death cases. Seawolves 12 and 32 of Detachment Three were scrambled from Ca Mau, and Seawolves 62 and 65 left Solid Anchor to provide cover for the second extraction attempt. As they overflew the contact area at 1700H, all four aircraft were hit almost immediately. Seawolf 62 was saturated with large calibre machine gun fire and crashed into a rice paddy dike at VQ 930 960 with two of its crew killed and two wounded. Moments later Seawolf 12 was hit, and the pilot radioed that the ship was going down. To avoid a ground assault by the enemy, the pilot elected to guide the disabled aircraft into the shallow "VC Lake." Seawolf 65 sustained hits in the pilot's pedal linkage and was forced to withdraw and limp toward Ca Mau. Seawolf 32, flown by LTJG Xucuhko, was simultaneously hit in the fuel cell and though losing fuel at a critical rate, hovered over her Detachment Six sister ship to provide cover for Dustoff 86 which sought to extract the crew of Seawolf 12. In the process, Seawolf 32 sustained at least eight additional hits but was able to remain airborne. This task completed, the rescue helicopter braved withering fire to save the two wounded survivors of Seawolf 62.
Seawolf 32 then escorted Dustoff 86 out of the fire zone and headed toward Song Ong Doc, requesting that boats be sent up the Song Ong Doc in case the crippled helicopters could not make it to the ATSB. CTG 116.2 responded immediately, sending boats eastward from Song Ong Doc and calling additional boats from their assigned patrols in case assistance was needed. Meanwhile, Dustoff 86 flew to the 3rd Surgical Hospital in Binh Thuy with the two wounded men. Throughout the episode Army Cobra helicopters in the area were unable to provide assistance as they were involved in other actions.

At 1732H three Navy Slicks arrived at the crash site to recover the bodies of the two Seawolf 62 crewmen but could not land because they had no gunship cover. They were able to land an hour and a half later when an Army Cobra arrived to provide fire protection. The enemy's obdurate anti-aircraft gunners had apparently stayed in place for they then shot down the Cobra whose crew was quickly extracted by a Dustoff helicopter. One of the SEA LORDS Slicks then landed to extract one of the bodies from Seawolf 62. Navy OV-10 aircraft waiting overhead were denied firing clearance because of the presence of friendly troops in the area.

By 2255H it was reported that Seawolf 62 was engulfed in flames, and it appeared that the enemy forces had moved on the helicopter after dark, removed the remaining body, stripped away the guns,
and set the aircraft on fire. The following morning, the body was found a short distance from the helicopter. OV-10s then destroyed the downed Seawolf 12 in VC Lake and an ARVN demolition team blew up Seawolf 62. An Army Chinook helicopter lifted out the Cobra.

The total friendly casualties for this engagement were two USN killed and two USN wounded. LTJG William A. Pedersen and ADJ3 Jose Pablo Ramos were killed when Seawolf 62 crashed. The other two crewmen of that aircraft, LTJG William L. Ford and AMS3 James P. Plona, were both wounded.

The helicopter crewmen involved in this massive battle agreed that the incident showed signs of a skillfully planned ambush rather than of spontaneous anti-aircraft fire. Several men, probably guerrillas acting as decoys, were spotted in close proximity to Seawolf 12 after it crashed and seemed to be attempting to draw the other aircraft in for a landing by waving white and red flags or handkerchiefs. The NILO at Ca Mau indicated that there were no friendly units within two kilometers from the crash site. Whenever the Seawolves would make a pass, the hidden enemy gunner units would not disclose their positions by firing until the helicopters' ordnance would no longer bear on them. According to the pilots involved, the enemy force numbered approximately 500 to 1000 men who, because of their deadly accuracy with large calibre automatic weapons, appeared to be extremely well trained.
This battle was the first significant contact to be reported in the "VC Lake" vicinity in some time. According to ARVN intelligence sources, the headquarters of the 95th North Vietnamese Army Regiment has been located in this area, but the unit was beginning to move into the U Minh Forest as the local Viet Cong were unable to support them. This attack, according to intelligence analysis, might indicate a reverse of that trend.

The only major administrative change for the month occurred when CDR C. R. Christensen, USN, relieved LCDR K. J. Rhea, USN, as CTG 116.2 and SOPA ATSB Song Ong Doc on 22 September. CDR Christensen was formerly Assistant Senior Advisor to CTF 212.
Operation SEARCH TURN

COMNAVFORV ordered an increase in the number of daytime patrols and inspections of river traffic in the SEARCH TURN (TG 116.3) Operation area during September. Intelligence reports had indicated possible enemy movement of war materials from the U Minh Forest to Cambodia. Possibilities for communist mobility was great as the heavy monsoon flooding in the area allowed the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese to travel in sampans over normally dry land. Allied river craft, engaging in a total of nine firefights, battled several large enemy units in the last week of September and reported killing eight (body count) by the end of the month.

PBRs of River Patrol Group 58 battled with an estimated company size communist force on the night of 23 September. The crews of PBRs 51, 54, and 55 observed heavy movement 100 meters inland from their WBGP position on the Kinh Tu Canal, eight kilometers northeast of Rach Gia (WS 141 119). At 2009H the allies began firing into the area with all weapons and finally received automatic weapons fire in return. Navy Seawolves expended all their ordnance on the target site, and soldiers from a nearby ARVN outpost at WS 136 112 began firing at the enemy but could still not suppress the return fire. Two SEARCH TURN OV-10s patrolling nearby arrived to place their entire load on the estimated 50-100 man guerrilla force which then temporarily
ceased firing. At 2110H the ARVN outpost itself was attacked as the
defenders observed numerous lights moving toward them. The PBRs
and Detachment Eight Seawolves rushed to the area to assist, and
after a brief exchange of fire, the lights were extinguished, and
firing on the outpost ceased. As the river craft returned to the
original contact area, crew members observed troop movement along
the bank and interpreted it as enemy forces sweeping for battle
casualties. The PBRs and Seawolves again fired into the area, and
this time received no return fire. As the ground movement ceased,
the sailors heard sampans moving west along Ta Keo Creek and
adjoining canals, but the proximity of their allied boats precluded
the use of artillery. OV-10s placed air strikes, and Seawolves illuminated
the area with flares, but no enemy were sighted. There were no more
incidents during the night.

The following day several local inhabitants told an allied
interpreter that the Viet Cong had suffered six killed and ten seriously
wounded in these engagements. The communists had aroused animosity
among the indigenous population by forcing them to treat the wounded and
bury the dead. The Viet Cong apparently extorted a considerable
amount of money to conduct the burial ceremony.

SEALs of Detachment GOLF, KILO Platoon captured a
Viet Cong tax collector on 25 September in a village 21 kilometers
south of Rach Gia (VR 966 880). Reacting on intelligence provided by
a Kit Carson Scout, the SEALs inserted in the small village at 1515H, and were searching hoochies when they heard movement and voices in the adjacent woods. One man, armed with a rifle, escaped as the allies approached, but another Viet Cong, identified as a tax collector, was captured. The allies began to receive small arms fire from a position 50 meters away, but a Seawolf was called in to suppress fire. The ground troops extracted without casualties and returned to Rach Soi.

A column of eight boats of RPD 58 was ambushed six kilometers southeast of Rach Gia (WS 130 025) on the evening of 26 September while enroute to a WBGP. PBR 7649, the third boat in the column, received two B-40 rockets on the starboard side and was forced to break away from the column with five wounded VNN sailors. The remaining boats, assisted by Seawolves and additional RPD 58 PBRs, took the contact area under fire, and crew members claimed killing five of the enemy. They also reported seeing over 30 NVA fleeing the area. PBR 7649 attempted to return to the Rach Soi base at top speed, but was forced to beach after covering only about three kilometers. The river craft sank to the extent that only one inch of freeboard existed, but within 30 minutes the boat had been pumped out enough to allow towing back to Rach Soi.
Intelligence investigation revealed that the ambush team, probably the same group which had attacked PBRs 51, 54, and 55 three days earlier, had forced the civilian population to move out of the area earlier in the day. The nearby Regional Force personnel were aware of these developments but made no effort to warn the PBRs, according to VNN officers and USN advisors.
**Operation BLUE SHARK**

Activity in the BLUE SHARK area of operations maintained its moderate level of the past few months in September. The majority of U.S. Navy missions were conducted by the three SEAL teams operating in the AO. Enemy losses during the month were placed at 17 killed (13 BC, 4 probable) and eight captured. Nineteen U.S. sailors were wounded in BLUE SHARK action.

On the morning of 16 September, eight SEALs of SEAL Team One, Det GOLF, HOTEL Platoon under the command of LT Todd were inserted by two U.S. Army S'ick helicopters into an area five kilometers north of Thoi Thuan (vicinity XS 905 185). The target was a VC base camp. The SEALs entered the undefended camp and found it to consist of three hootches and six heavily fortified log and earth bunkers, all of which were well constructed. One of the bunkers gave signs of being used as a VC medical aid station.

Documents captured in one of the hootches stated that the area was used as a combination base camp, medical aid station, and rear services area manned by 20 to 25 men. The documents also indicated that the area was used as a VC R&R center with the necessary facilities for "sexual tension release." After the bunkers and hootches were destroyed by the SEALs and helo air strikes, the SEALs
cleared the area, probably killing one VC who attempted to flee when
the SEALs neared their extraction site.

Mines and booby traps have played an increasing role in VC
and NVA operations in the Republic of Vietnam in recent months and
the BLUE SHARK area of operations was no exception as the following
incidents illustrate:

On the morning of 27 September, seven SEALs from the 8th
Platoon of SEAL Team TWO Det A inserted into an area nine kilometers
west of Dong Tam (vicinity XS 322 422) in search of a suspected VC
unit. The SEALs were supported by Black Ponies, Seawolves, and
four STABs. The squad found a large VC base camp, observed
movement and heard voices throughout the area. The SEALs resumed
their patrol and took two VC under fire. Suddenly, they tripped
a VC claymore which wounded every member of the SEAL squad
(one seriously). Only the rapid response by Seawolves, Black Ponies,
Dustoff helicopters, and another SEAL squad saved the wounded
and the pinned-down SEALs from further casualties as they were
receiving fire from VC on both sides of their position. Under the
protective cover of supporting fire the wounded SEALs were
lifted out.
In a similar incident on 30 September, ten SEALs from JULIETT Platoon of SEAL Team ONE, Det GOLF along with their guide, one KCS, and an interpreter were wounded by two command detonated mines while they were inspecting a VC munitions plant in Bac Lieu Province 15 miles southeast of CG 36 (vicinity XR 301 384). The SEALs still managed to kill seven VC (5 BC, 2 probable) and, with Black Pony support, to destroy most of the VC munitions (approximately 30 mines and 200 grenades) before being extracted by Dustoff helicopters.
As in previous months, hostile activity was extensive in the southern SEA LORDS campaign area, particularly around Operations SOLID ANCHOR and BREEZY COVE, and quite limited to the north. September action thus followed the recent pattern of communist buildup in the Ca Mau Peninsula and weakening of pressure in Military Region III.

Deputy COMNAVFORV issued new directives to all allied riverine forces during September instructing them to ameliorate their search procedures. Recognizing that "currently the Viet Cong move with impunity on the waterways confident that they will not be searched, or if searched, the examination will be casual and incomplete," Rear Admiral Matthews called for a transfer of emphasis from quantity to quality of the inspections. Daily situation summaries from individual operations traditionally report high numbers of crafts inspected and boarded, but it was believed that sophisticated concealment techniques used by the communists have rendered most cursory examinations completely ineffectual. False bottoms, concealed hatches, underwater towing systems, and other hidden devices may be discovered only after careful perusal. Deputy COMNAVFORV emphasized that even though it will become necessary to search fewer boats, a thorough scrutiny resulting in discovery of enemy materials will slow down
Viet Cong movement and limit their confidence to move freely.

Consequently, RADM Matthews ordered random daytime search and inspection operations on major Delta rivers and in barrier operations in Chau Doc, An Giang, and Kien Phong Provinces. Boat crews were to be specifically instructed in communist evasion and concealment techniques. The following characteristics were found to be fairly common among enemy craft:

**Speed:** Enemy craft frequently have two motors or fittings for two motors.

**Construction:** Enemy craft are not worn or broken, but of solid and generally sound construction.

**Appearance:** Enemy boats are usually either heavy sampans with rounded hatch covers or light, open sampans.

**Actions:** The Viet Cong may blatantly ignore hailing, but once alongside, they are often extremely accommodating.

In keeping with recent concern expressed by COMUSMACV, Deputy COMNAVFORV also reissued directives delineating the rules of engagement for tactical operations. Recent operations in the Fourth Military Region had apparently resulted "in the death and injury to a considerable number of civilians." Many of the casualties, RADM Matthews felt, were caused by a misunderstanding on the part of helicopter pilots as to their obligation to fully identify friendly and
civilian positions before firing. A pilot who receives permission to fire from the designated control agency does not have free rein to fire until he has positively identified these allied and civilian positions. Additionally, Deputy COMNAVFORV indicated that in the Mekong Delta, there is no such thing as a "free fire zone," a term which implies indiscriminate, uncontrolled and uncoordinated firing within an area. Specified strike zones are established by Commanding General IV Corps for a specific period of time, but pilots must still obtain appropriate clearance before attacking the area. All commanders and senior advisors were instructed to adhere strictly to these regulations.

NAVFORV intelligence analysts provided important insights into Viet Cong anti-boat tactics by translating a VC document captured in the TRAN HUNG DAO I Operation area. The document outlined the following experiences and tactics:

a) Tactical boat formations are crowded and become disordered when attacked.

b) Small arms can be used effectively against boats on small rivers and canals.

c) When attacked unexpectedly the return fire from boats is ineffective and disordered, and when ambushes are pre-planned, air strikes and artillery have difficulty locating the site.

d) Fire on the banks becomes weak when troops are landed.
The Viet Cong document established six guidelines for ambushing USN and VNN river craft:

a) Plan carefully, and when under fire, reinforce each other.
b) When taking boats under fire, aim for the hull at the waterline.
c) Deploy fire power into teams 300 and 400 meters apart.
d) Each team should have infantry fire support.
e) Select positions which will avoid flame throwers.
f) Opening fire must be accurate and fast, not giving the boats time to react. Then withdraw to another position for fire support.

These enemy tactics are by no means innovative which is in itself significant as the VC are known for sticking to well established routines.

In September, the 12 River Patrol Divisions (formerly River Patrol Groups) of Task Fleet 21 were assigned as follows:

| RPD 51 | RSSZ       |
| RPD 52 | CTG 216.1  |
| RPD 53 | CTG 214.1  |
| RPD 54 | CTG 214.1  |
| RPD 55 | CTG 212.4  |
| RPD 56 | CTG 212.3  |
| RPD 57 | RSSZ       |
| RPD 58 | CTG 116.3  |
| RPD 59 | CTG 212.3  |
| RPD 60 | 1st Coastal Zone |
| RPD 61 | CTG 212.4  |
| RPD 62 | CTG 116.2  |
The boats of TRAN HUNG DAO I (TG 212.4) experienced very light action during September. They were involved in only six firefights, all of them minor, and the allies suffered no casualties.

River craft of TG 212.4 took time off from the war to perform several humanitarian missions during the month. LCMs assisted in the evacuation of 100 Vietnamese nationals when floods from the monsoon swollen Mekong River drove them from their homes at Thuong Thoi (WS 285 947) on 15 September. The following day, crewmen of River Patrol Division 61 rescued four Vietnamese women whose sampan had sunk on the Upper Bassac River (WS 246 714). While on routine patrol, the allies heard cries for help emanating from midstream. When they illuminated the area, they discovered the four women clinging to a construction barge and took them aboard.

A case of mistaken identity resulted in two Civilian Irregular Defense Group personnel wounded on the evening of 20 September. At 1940H, PBR 7591 of RPD 55 took a friendly CIDG ambush position located at VS 820 612 under fire. The boat made two firing runs on the position, wounding two men who were subsequently medevaced to YRBM 20. One hour later the PBR struck a fishing stake at VS 866 615 and was forced to beach with a large hole in the hull bottom. The boat was salvaged and towed to Binh Thuy for repairs.
TRAN HUNG DAO II

Although September brought a marked decrease in activity in the
TRAN HUNG DAO II AO as measured by the number of firefights (nine
enemy-initiated and five friendly-initiated), the month proved more
expensive than usual as one VNN refueler was sunk and a USN Black
Pony downed. Only one of the enemy was killed, and there were no
friendly fatalities due to hostile action.

At 0025H on 1 October, units of RID 43 on patrol near the Ben Soi
Bridge (XT 096 478), came under heavy mortar, rocket, and small arms
fire. In the course of the melee, an LCM-6 with refueling capability
(HQ 9170) was sunk by what was first thought to be a mortar round.
From the nature of the damage it was concluded that a large floating
watermine had caused the boat to sink. A salvage crew on CSB-2
surveyed the wreckage the morning of 8 October and reported that the
boat had been hit in the starboard engine area. Only one VNN was
injured in the incident, with enemy casualties unknown. Salvage efforts
were begun the morning of 13 September by YLLC-1; the work was
completed the afternoon of 16 September, and HQ 9170 was beached on
the south bank of the Vam Co Dong opposite the Ben Keo base. After
assessment by the NAVSUPPACT Repair Office, it was decided to tow
the boat to the Saigon Shipyards for repairs, and YLLC-1 was dispatched
for that purpose on 28 September.
On 29 September at 1700H, a Boston Whaler carrying the Senior Advisor for RPD 59, LT Smelly, was en route from Ben Luc to Tuyen Nhon when she began receiving automatic weapons fire from XS 346 790. A PBR patrol was scrambled and Black Ponies called in. The Black Ponies commenced their strike at 1716H, and during the engagement one of the planes was hit by a rocket and caught fire. The pilots bailed out, were soon recovered by Army Slicks, and taken to Dong Tam. The plane crashed at XS 319 863. A group of Tuyen Nhon District RF troops were inserted by PBR and swept the area with negative results.

There were no other engagements of consequence for the month. On September 28 at 0153H the Moc Hoa ATSB and village came under mortar and rocket attack. Four B-40 rounds were fired at the ATSB, two of which hit the ammuns, injuring two USN and two VNN personnel. Injured personnel were: BMC Joseph Zagar, USN, SN Wayne H. Brant, USN, and VNNs Ly Kim Qui and Le Van Van. All the injured were attached to R.VDIV 535, and none received major wounds.

Two USN sailors were also the victims of a tragic non-combative accident. On the morning of 3 September, FN Gary L. Ruff and SN Paul J. Backus were burning 81 mm mortar increment bags at the Tra Cu ATSB. Vietnamese children in the adjacent CIDG camp who witnessed the incident claimed that the men packed the bags into a 105 mm cannister and placed one concussion grenade each into the
They were running clear of the area when the cannister exploded. Ruff was killed and Backus seriously wounded by the resulting shrapnel.

TRAN HUNG DAO II assets at the end of September were as follows:

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<td>Tra Cu</td>
<td>1 ATC, 7 APSB</td>
<td>1 MON, 1 CCB</td>
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<td>Go Dau Ha</td>
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<td>1 ZIP, 1 REF</td>
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<td>1 REF, 10 PBR</td>
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<td>Tan An</td>
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<td>RIVDIV 535</td>
<td>Moc Hoa</td>
<td>10 PBR</td>
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</table>
TRAN HUNG DAO V

The TRAN HUNG DAO V (READY DECK) AO continued to be one of the most inactive of the Vietnamese War during September as allied units participated in only two brief firefights.

A Vietnamese PBR of River Patrol Division 52 was struck with one B-40 rocket and automatic weapons fire while in a waterborne guardpost seven kilometers southwest of Phu Cuong (XT 976 068) on the evening of 2 September. Three crewmen were wounded, two seriously, while the American advisor, EN3 Thomas A. Hughes, sustained minor fragmentation wounds.

Initial plans to move all USN personnel to the new VNN base at Phu Cuong and to dismantle the ATSB were abandoned by mid-September. CTG 216.1, including all USN advisors, continued to maintain the original base, presumably until a RVNAF or ARVN unit can be found to replace them.
TRAN HUNG DAO VIII

TRAN HUNG DAO VIII units continued to assert their presence in Dinh Tuong Province. Activity for all units continued at a light level.

On 4 September all units were scrambled to provide support for CTG 217.2 (TRAN HUNG DAO XIV units) during the salvage operation of ASPB 5125 and ATC 1240. Seawolves scrambled to provide fire support for SEAL Team Det A, 8th Platoon in Dinh Tuong Province 16 kilometers from Dong Tam, on a treeline just south of the SEAL position where small arms and automatic fire was received. After suppressing the fire, the Seawolves turned to provide assistance to an RF/PF outpost in Kien Hoa Province, 20 kilometers southeast of Dong Tam (XS 572 323) which was under attack. Small arms and automatic weapons fire were encountered and a secondary explosion was noticed upon completion of the strike.

On 28 September, two River Patrol Boats, 7563 and 7569 of RPD 54, operating in Dinh Tuong Province, Ca Lay District, 19 kilometers from Dong Tam, received fire from the south bank of the Tong Doc Loc Canal. PBR 7563 was sunk by enemy fire in the area of XS 280 581. The remaining PBR was under attack until
Seawolves and Black Ponies provided suppressing fire in the area.

STABs of STABRON 201 scrambled to tow PBR 7569 to My Tho.

Sporadic small arms fire continued while Seawolf 76 evacuated one
U.S. and one VNN wounded personnel. One company of RF/PF personnel
was inserted into the area by Army Apache aircraft to conduct a
sweep from the south. Also 22 Kit Carson Scouts were inserted
on the north and south banks of the Tong Doc Loc Canal. At the
conclusion of the sweep, two VC had been captured.
TRAN HUNG DAO IX

River assets of Operation TRAN HUNG DAO IX (BARRIER REEF) enjoyed their lowest level of activity in many months as they engaged in only three firefights in September. There were only two allied casualties resulting from direct enemy fire.

Combined PBR and air strikes accounted for an estimated four Viet Cong dead and another ten wounded on the night of 11 September. The crew of PBR 7669 in a WBGP 18 kilometers southeast of Moc Hoa (XS 100 734) sighted two VC or NVA and took them under fire with unknown results. Ten minutes later at 2308H, 30 more enemy troops were seen attempting to cross the Grand Canal at XS 085 740. PBRs 7669 and 7662 attacked them as OV-10 aircraft placed air strikes, and PBRs 7672 and 7673 formed a blocking force to the east. All firing ceased within 45 minutes and Popular Force troops conducted a ground sweep, finding one enemy dead, numerous blood trails and drag trails, and assorted weapons. An Army light fire team placed a final strike on the suspected trail of the fleeing enemy.

River boats are perhaps the most vulnerable when moored on a canal bank during a nocturnal WBGP. Two American advisors aboard ATC 51 of River Assault Squadron 15 were wounded on the night of 15 September 18 kilometers southwest of Moc Hoa (WS 928 767) when
an unknown assailant hurled a hand grenade into their boat. The unit immediately saturated the south bank with fire and called in Seawolves to illuminate the area. As no enemy could be located, the craft returned to the Advanced Tactical Support Base at Phuoc Xuyen to treat the minor shrapnel wounds of SN James C. McMinn and RMSN William L. Diggins.

Four U.S. Navy men were injured as a result of faulty ordnance handling at the Phuoc Xuyen Advanced Tactical Support Base on the evening of 23 September. As the crew of PBR 6123 (RIVDIV 532) was offloading ammunition from their boat to the utility ammi, the boat captain inadvertently activated a trip flare. It began to burn in his hand and fell into a nearby 426 round .50 calibre ammunition can which was being used to transport small items of ordnance to the storage bunker. The can contained 16 offensive hand grenades, four pop flares, three trip flares, and nine smoke grenades. The boat captain ordered the area cleared, and the ordnance in the box detonated in about 30 seconds. Four U.S. personnel received only minor fragmentation wounds and were soon returned to duty, while a more seriously wounded Vietnamese Regional Force soldier was medevaced to Binh Thuy. Holes were blown in the ammi, the PBR received extensive damage to the hull, radar, and after guns, and the Vietnamese casualty's sampan was sunk.
Another U.S. Navy sailor was lost by drowning during September. A PBR advisor, EN3 Johnny C. Jones, slipped on the bow of his boat and fell into the canal alongside the ammi at the Phuoc Xuyen ATSB. He surfaced once but his head struck the keel of his PBR and he again went under. Several USN and VNN personnel immediately dove into the canal, but could not locate Jones. All the boats in the area were moved away from the ammi and EOD divers conducted a search for the body, recovering it the following day.
Salvage operations on the sunken ASPB 5125 and ATC 1240 commenced at 0700H on 2 September by members of HCU-1 and attached EOD Team 12 units. HQ 5125 was raised by 1530H, 2 September, and transited to Dong Tam that evening. The other boat was raised at 1645H on 4 September and towed to Dong Tam at 2000H. The salvage operations were conducted smoothly and without major incidents, although at 0710H on 4 September, enroute to the salvage site, HCU-1 units and accompanying RAID 75 boats underwent a recoiless rifle and automatic weapons attack on the Mo Cay Canal (from XS 474 236 to 479 238). The enemy fire was suppressed with the help of Seawolves. Only minor damage was done to the boats. Three VNN sailors received minor wounds, and BM1 Donald Groce, received rather serious wounds in the legs and head and was medevaced to Third Field Hospital, Saigon, and then to Japan.

A third sinking took place in the early morning of 5 September when HQ 6532 sank mysteriously while tied up alongside the south quay wall at Logistics Support Base, Dong Tam. An investigation revealed that the boat crew had been dropping concussion grenades, causing a DC plug inserted in the bottom of the boat in lieu of salt water valves to loosen. The boat was easily salvaged, having sunk in fairly shallow water with about three feet of the bow protruding above the surface.
One VCI was captured six kilometers south of Ben Tre City (XS 500 240) at 1300H, 9 September, by RAG 23 units with a Hoi Chanh embarked. The VC, a 19-year-old girl, stated she was involved in collecting intelligence on VNN operations in Dien Phong Province. She was later turned over to the Kien Hoa Sector.

At 1045H, 12 September, RAID 75 picked up another man 11 kilometers south of Ben Tre (XS 540 183). The man said he wanted to Chieu Hoi and presented two Safe Conduct passes. He claimed he had been working for the VC for six years in an engine mechanic section responsible for repairing engines for sampans used to move troops and weapons and commo-liaison material across the Ham Luong River. Still a third VC was picked up by RAID 73 units at 1130H, 17 September, 12 kilometers south of Ben Tre (XS 545 175). This one had been working as a local guerrilla for the past seven years; he was turned over to Kien Hoa Sector.

The only major firefight for the month occurred at 1355H, 20 September, five kilometers south of Ben Tre (XS 490 242) when RAID 75 and RAG 23 units received automatic weapons fire from the south bank of the Mo Cay Canal. The enemy fire was suppressed by the boats at 1405H, and at 1420H, 20 Kit Carson Scouts were inserted at XS 493 246, with RAG 23 units used for support. At 1430H these
boats received automatic weapons fire from XS 494 240. Black Ponies were scrambled, and at 1440H the RAG boats received more shots and M-79 grenades from the north bank of the Mo Cay. The KC Scouts were extracted, then inserted again at 1600H at XS 492 250; 40 minutes later they contacted a 10-man VC force, one of whom they captured with no casualties to themselves. At 1700H all ground forces were extracted, and the engagement came to an end. The outcome of the afternoon’s activities was three VNN wounded, one of them seriously, and no boat damage. An on-scene interrogation of the captured VC revealed that 17 VC were killed or wounded by the boats' return fire and Black Pony strikes, but subsequent sweeps were unable to confirm this number.
CAMBODIAN OPERATIONS

Operation TRAN HUNG DAO XI, which began on 9 May, was disestablished on 27 August. Eighty-two VNN personnel were killed, 271 were wounded, and one was listed as missing during the course of the operation. Enemy casualties during the three and a half months were 681 VC killed and 79 VC captured. In a total of 40 lifts, 82,070 refugees were transported from Cambodia to Vietnam. River assault craft of Task Force 211 continued to operate on the Mekong River in Cambodia, however, without USN advisors.

At 1200H on 10 September, an ATC of RAID 71 was conducting a sampan search in an area 30 miles northeast of Chau Doc (WT 273 332) when the crew detected a buoyant mine attached to the side of their boat. The crew pulled up the light nylon line which was attached to an inflated rubber inner tube and an explosive charge estimated to weigh about 30 pounds. The device was cast adrift and exploded several minutes later. The last sampan searched prior to the discovery of the mine was intercepted by another boat in the area and the four occupants were detained. Search procedures were modified to prevent further incidents of this kind.

At 1220H on 16 September, a Monitor and an ATC of RAID 73 were escorting some LCM-8s from Neak Luong to Phnom Penh when they were ambushed with B-40 rockets and automatic weapons fire six
miles southeast of Phnom Penh (WT 050 751). The boats immediately returned and suppressed the enemy fire. The ATC took two B-40 rocket hits which caused minor damage and wounded two Vietnamese sailors. Enemy casualties were unknown.

At 1000H on 20 September, Operation Tran Hung Dao XVI was initiated with the insertion of the Ninth Battalion of the VNMC on the Bassac 21 miles north of Chau Doc (WT 075 160) and the 41st ARVN Ranger Battalion on the Mekong five miles north of the border. The insertion was made by river assault craft of Task Force 210. USS BENEWAH, anchored in the Mekong just south of the Cambodian border, served as an afloat command post for the operation with CTF 210, CAPT Thong, embarked.

The operation was organized as follows:

Task Group 210.1 Bassac Assault Group - RAIDs 72 and 73
   RID 41
   RAG 21/33

Task Group 210.2 Mekong Assault Group - RAID 70
   Det RAIDs 71, 72, and 73
   Det RID 41
   Det RPD 55

Task Group 210.3 Neak Luong Operational HQ - RAID 71

Ground Forces - 7th Battalion, 369th Brigade VNMC
   9th Battalion, 369th Brigade VNMC
   105th Howitzer Battery, 369th Brigade VNMC
   41st Ranger Battalion
The operation continued until 1200H on 27 September with numerous landings and ground sweeps. Five ASPBs and three ATCs were damaged by enemy fire, and seven VNMC, one VNN, and four RF personnel were killed, 35 VNMC, seven VNN, five RF, and one ARVN were wounded. There were 132 of the enemy killed by ground forces, 19 killed by air, and 12 captured. There were 275 detainees.
RUNG SAT SPECIAL ZONE

Combined operations were continued in the Rung Sat Special Zone (RSSZ) during the month of September. Six such operations were conducted and were named Chuong Duong 38-70 through Chuong Duong 43-70. The Chuong Duong operations were all very similar in concept, with the usual insertions by Slick helicopter, cover by USN and USA LHFTs, sweeps by RF companies and PRUs, and extractions by ASPBs or Slicks.

The most significant Chuong Duong operation was 38-70. At 030628H two ASPBs at XS 969 581 were fired upon with two B-41 rockets and other small arms fire from the west bank near Quang Xuyen, 12 kilometers south of the Nha Be Navy Base. One ASPB received one B-41 rocket on the port side resulting in four USN personnel wounded. The ASPB although damaged continued in company and commenced a firing run to the north where additional fire support was requested from USN LHFT on an enemy position located at XS 968 580. Results of Chuong Duong 38-70 were six U.S. wounded, nine VN wounded, and two VN killed. Four bunkers were destroyed and assorted turtle mines, M-79 duds and booby trap grenades were captured.
In a special operation (110600H - 151800H) near Long An and Can Giuoc (XS 807 745), 15 kilometers southwest of the Nha Be Navy Base, two PF platoons supported by a Zippo boat and a Douche boat (water Monitor) and Seawolves conducting a sweep northward through the area came into contact with enemy forces. At 151000H, the Zippo boat and Douche boat came under B-40 rocket and heavy automatic weapons fire at XS 807 745. Three B-40 hits were received by the Zippo, wounding two USN personnel and two PF personnel plus moderate damage to the boat. One B-40 round glanced off the Douche boat bow causing light damage. USN helicopters and fire teams were scrambled to the area and placed suppressing fire on the enemy position.

Various other insertions, sweeps, and extractions were made during this period. In addition, the Zippo boat made burn runs for a total of 20 minutes of flame time. Douche boats destroyed two bunkers and accumulated 30 minutes of water time. Results of the Long An (PF waterborne) operation were two PFs missing, three PFs wounded, two USN wounded, four enemy killed and three captured. Materials captured were: two B-40 rocket launchers, two B-40 rocket rounds, three AK-47 rifles with magazines, 40 rounds of 7.62 ammunition, and a small quantity of food.
PRU and Chuong Duong operations during the month accounted for 14 enemy killed and 10 probably killed. Three enemy and 15 individual weapons were captured. Friendly casualties during the month were six killed and 22 wounded, of which eight were USN.