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VIETNAM

MONTHLY HISTORICAL SUMMARY

October 1970

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FOREWORD

It was a tumultuous month for USN forces and their counterparts and not particularly marked by successes. Combat operations were disrupted in the First and Second Coastal Zones by Typhoons Joan, Kate, and Louise, a devastating triad that claimed the lives of two USN sailors near Coastal Group 16 east of Quang Ngai City, when their skimmer was swept out to sea during a rescue mission. The furious rain-filled gusts also blew away the roofs from a number of dependent shelters on Binh Ba Island (Coastal Group 26) and caused the worst flooding in northern South Vietnam in many years. Fortunately, the enemy was equally impaired by the change in weather and did not manage to detonate a single watermine in the Cua Viet River after a record high last month.

The enemy was not so quiet in Military Region FOUR, however, where on 20 October just before midnight, a mortar attack on the BREEZY COVE ATSB at Song Org Doc drove all occupants to their boats and virtually demolished the floating base. Friendly casualties were surprisingly low considering the abruptness of the onslaught, but the extensive material damage and psychological victory could not be discounted.
Activity in the Delta was light during October though there were ominous indications of a major offensive build-up occurring. An indication of this was the movement of enemy personnel, the successful mining of two PBRs at Song Ong Doc, and the sinking by watermine of another VNN ISSL.
CURRENT OPERATIONS
(As of 31 October 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.
Operation SOLID ANCHOR

The oft-quoted statement that "these are the times that try men's souls" continued to describe operations in the SOLID ANCHOR area during the month of October. Plagued by enemy ambushes and minings, serious logistics problems, inadequacies in base defense, marginal material condition of assigned units, and increasing VC harassment of the Ham Rong II Hamlet, the USN and VNN personnel of SOLID ANCHOR had their hands full.

The lack of adequate resupply of SOLID ANCHOR by the assigned VNN LSM was the subject of a message from COMNAVSUPPACT Saigon to the CNO, VNN on 20 October. In this message COMNAVSUPPACT, Saigon stated that "Nam Can’s location and mission do not permit the drastic reduction in operations which would result from failure to resupply."

Another logistics problem has had a serious effect on VNN morale at SOLID ANCHOR. This is the quantity of food rations given to the VNN daily. In this instance, CTG 16.1 made the comment, "The VNLSC [Vietnamese Navy Logistics Support Command] has not visibly responded to the food need of the VNN at SOLID ANCHOR. This, coupled with the fixed daily rations given by the U. S. has caused an impasse..."
and daily affects morale of the VNN and thus the every day working relations with the U.S. at SOLID ANCHOR. The message also appealed for assistance in helping to alleviate this grave situation.

The serious matter of base defense also continues to pose problems for SOLID ANCHOR commanders. The core of this problem was put forward by CTG 116.1 in a message on 1 October when he said, "I consider the security of SOLID ANCHOR marginal due to the absence of a company-sized force to provide perimeter security in depth and to provide indirect defensive fires." At this time he also requested that a reinforced USMC rifle company be assigned to SOLID ANCHOR to fill this gap. This request was still under consideration by higher commands at month's end.

Another matter of great concern at SOLID ANCHOR is the increased boldness of the Viet Cong in their harassment of woodcutters and civilians in Ham Rong I and II. The Viet Cong have destroyed or confiscated great numbers of sampans on which the villagers rely for their fishing and woodcutting. In one instance a 15-year-old woodcutter from Ham Rong II was shot to death by the Viet Cong for cutting wood south of the annex. On two occasions the RF and PF outpost at Ham Rong I came under enemy fire, (small arms on 15 October and 10-15 launch bombs on 17 October).

2. CTG 116.1 MSG DTG 31H030Z OCT 70.
3. CTG 116.1 MSG DTG 01H000Z OCT 70.
In perhaps their boldest move to date, 15-30 Viet Cong entered Ham Rong II on the night of 22 October and kidnapped two civilians while wounding four others. Although several steps were taken to avoid further occurrences of this type in the future (59 M-1 Carbines with 177 magazines and associated weapons system components were received by CTG 116.1 for distribution to the Ham Rong PSDF on 27 October) and numerous other steps were contemplated, COMNAVFORV was forced to admit on 31 October that while Ham Rong I security is acceptable, Ham Rong II security is tenuous to non-existent.  

The Viet Cong continued to ambush SOLID ANCHOR's waterborne assets with discouraging regularity in October. There were a total of nine rocket ambushes which caused damage to two PCFs, three ATCs, one CGB, two ASPRs, and one LST and wounded three U.S. and 12 Vietnamese sailors and four Vietnamese Marines. One of these ambushes took place on 17 October when A-5168 and A-5169 of the newly arrived RID 41 were attacked on the Cua Lan (vicinity WQ 150 678). The lead boat, A-5169, was hit on the port side by four B-41 rockets which wounded one Vietnamese sailor and damaged the hull and 20 mm mount. A-5168 was struck by three B-41 rockets on the port side and also had one man wounded. One of the rockets struck her at the waterline and the craft beached in order to control flooding after clearing the keel zone.
Viet Cong command-detonated mines were also introduced for the first time into the SOLID ANCHOR area of operations in October. On 26 October, two boats from RJD 41, ATC 1278 and M-6539, were proceeding north on the Cai Nhac Canal (vicinity WQ 082 754) when the lead boat, ATC 1278, struck a mine. The crew attempted to beach the stricken craft, but after beaching, the boat slid back, settled to port, and sank in less than three minutes. One U. S. and seven Vietnamese Navy men were wounded. All personnel were picked up by the Monitor which then turned about and proceeded south with Seawolves providing cover. In the vicinity of WQ 083 748, the Monitor struck a mine which knocked out one engine. A tragic result of the mine's detonation was the complete destruction of a sampan with four people aboard which had been using the Monitor as an escort to New Nham Canal. All of the passengers were believed killed in the explosion. The M-6539 was able to return to SOLID ANCHOR under its own power. A sweep of the area discovered all the signs of command-detonated mines (30 feet of three strand polyethylene cord with one charred end in stream and 100-150 feet of light insulated electrical cord).

On 31 October, three units of RJD 45 discovered another command-detonated mine in the same area (vicinity WQ 084 728). Fortunately they were able to avoid it and trace the wires which led to a bunker about 25 meters from the canal's bank. Attempts to recover the mine, which
appeared to contain 70 to 100 pounds of explosives, were unsuccessful, and as the detonating wire had been cut, the EOD diver could not explode the charge. As it was unlikely that it could be re-rigged for detonation, the mine was left in the canal.

The SEALs assigned to SOLID ANCHOR were also kept busy during the month. On 22 October, twelve SEALs from YANKEE Platoon of SEAL Team ONE, Det GOLF, along with four UDT personnel, three Killers, a Scout, and a POW guide were inserted into an area 18 kilometers southwest of SOLID ANCHOR in the vicinity of VQ 828 568. Their mission was to capture a group of VC village officials and to liberate a hamlet consisting of some 40 civilians. With Seawolves and U. S. Army gunships providing cover, the SEALs entered the hamlet and commenced searching hooches and destroying bunkers. The six VC captured and 33 other detainees were taken to SOLID ANCHOR by U. S. Army Slick helicopters. Four kilos of documents were also captured and ten bunkers, ten hooches, and 16 sampans were destroyed.

The SOLID ANCHOR site received distinguished visitors on two occasions during the month. On 2 October, Admiral J. J. Hyland, CINCPACFLT visited SOLID ANCHOR with COMNAVFORV and CNO, VNN. On 24 October, Vice Admiral Johnson, COMPHiBPAC visited the site with COMNAVFORV.
Operation BREEZY COVE

North Vietnamese and Viet Cong forces in the Ca Mau Peninsula scored their greatest victory in many months when they drove the allies from the Advanced Tactical Support Base (ATSB) at Song Ong Doc on 20 October. Earlier this month, enemy sappers blew up two PBRs of River Patrol Division 62. The action throughout the BREEZY COVE AO was rather one-sided, as the combined USN and VNN command reported killing only three of the enemy in sporadic fire fighting.

Two PBRs of River Patrol Division 62 became victims of the first swimmer sapper attack in the Song Ong Doc area on 6 October. PBRs 36 and 37 were beached 25 meters apart in a waterborne guardpost on the north bank of the Song Ong Doc River six kilometers from the river's mouth (VR 861 001). At 0155H an explosion erupted beneath PBR 37, ripping the craft apart and sinking it immediately. The second PBR quickly backed away from the bank to gain a clear field of fire. As the crew began firing at possible enemy positions, a second explosion tore into the hull of PBR 36, overturning it and presumably killing all aboard. It appeared that explosives had been attached to the hulls of the boats while they were moored in WBGP positions. As the enemy troops began firing small arms from hidden positions along the banks, Seawolves and additional Vietnamese patrol boats arrived.
in the area to saturate both banks of the river with fire. Monitor 1 and
Zippo 3 scrambled from the Song Ong Doc ATSB to search for survivors
and to attempt recovery of the sunken crafts. Seaman Vincent J.
Wronoski, an American advisor on one of the assisting PBRs, dove into
the water in the midst of heavy enemy fire to personally rescue three
wounded VNN sailors and a wounded USN advisor, EN3 Kenneth G. Mason.
Seaman Wronoski was recommended for the Silver Star for his valorous
deeds, while Petty Officer Mason was recommended for the Bronze
Star for his earlier efforts to save PBR 37 and to direct fire against
the enemy. The five VNN crew members of PBR 36 and their U. S.
adviser, CM2 Edward W. Withee, were initially reported as missing
in action, but one Vietnamese sailor's body was recovered the next
afternoon and the remaining five the following day. Petty Officer
Withee was recommended for the Bronze Star for previous heroic
action with RPD 02.

SEAls of Detachment GOLF, A Platoon, were flown up from
SOLID ANCHOR to inspect the contact area but were unable to discover
any clues to the sapper activity. On 7 October, however, the crews of
PBRs 13 and 17, while checking fishing boats in the river mouth,
spotted five men in a sampan carrying NVA documents and no identifi-
cation. Interrogation of the prisoners revealed that they were members
of the swimmer sapper team which had mined the two PBRs on 6 October.
They had trained in the area for three days prior to their attack,
meanwhile observing the PBR waterborne guardpost positioning and tactics. On the day of the attack, three sappers hid along the canal at a suspected WBGP site and waited for the PBRs to arrive. After midnight, they floated downstream to the two river boats and attached 105 mm mines, set with tuning devices, to the hulls. It was suspected that these mines were converted 105 mm Howitzer shells which an Army helicopter had recently dropped several kilometers south of Cà Mau. The helo had dropped 200 shells of which only 18 were recovered.

Two USN advisors sustained minor wounds on the evening of 9 October when their PBRs were attacked with B-40 rockets. PBRs 26 and 33, drifting silently down a canal five kilometers east of Song Ong Doc (VQ 850 998) came under rocket and small arms fire from both sides of the stream, but did not receive any direct hits. ADRI Charles Miller and Seaman David A. Hillibush were slightly wounded by shrapnel.

Units of Operation BREEZY COVE took a brief respite from the war to perform a humanitarian rescue mission in mid-October. On the morning of the 16th, a SEA LORD helicopter reported a Yabuta junk aground in rough seas near the shore one kilometer north of the Song Ong Doc River mouth (VR 79 01). Two PBRs of RPD 62 departed the ATSB to investigate and rescued two men from the junk who were
trying to reach Song Ong Doc by sampan. The commanding officer of RPD 62 took charge of the rescue operation and dispatched two village fishing junks to the stranded craft. The rough seas prevented their approach and at 1825H, two PBRs with swimmers attempted to float a line to the junk. This failed also, as did an effort by crewmembers of the USCGC BERING STRAIT (WHEC 382) to reach the vessel in a rubber raft. Intelligence reports indicated the presence of a Viet Cong unit three kilometers north of the junk, so twenty Popular Force troops were deployed to the beach to prevent their approaching it. Junks from Song Ong Doc passed food to the stranded crew, but were unable to get them off the junk. The vessel remained grounded for the next three days, defying all salvage efforts, but was finally refloated during an exceptionally high tide with the assistance of local village junks.

Enemy infiltration southward from the U Minh Forest gravely increased pressure on the Song Ong Doc ATSB in October. Deputy COMNAVFORV consequently solicited recommendations concerning base defense and possible relocation of the ATSB. It was agreed that the most serious weakness was the lack of substantial troop support around the Song Ong Doc perimeter. A 30-man Popular Force platoon was assigned to cover the 2,500 meter long outer perimeter. This placed the helicopter pad, Seawolf berthing units, ammunition
bunker and Duffle Bag complex in an extremely vulnerable position. In addition, the increasing pacification of the river area with the consequent development of civilian housing made it difficult to distinguish the enemy from the general populace. Because of these two weaknesses, the Vietnamese district chief promised to relocate the civilian population and increase ground defenses by adding an additional RF company, an armed propaganda platoon, a mobile Hoi Chanh platoon, and a mortar squad. COMNAVFORV requested mercenary or Mobile Strike Force troops, but MACV was unable to provide them. At mid-month, a complex network of Duffle Bag sensors, supported by Naval gunfire support, was still the best deterrent against enemy troop movement in the area.

CTG 116.2 reiterated his original proposal to move the ATSB 15 kilometers upriver to Old Song Ong Doc, the district capital. He maintained that relocation would permit more effective base defense and would allow RPD 62 to routinely patrol east of Old Song Ong Doc, an area in which the enemy had previously operated with relative freedom. This request was again denied, however, as the mining threat at the river's mouth would be greatly increased if the ATSB were moved inland and because it would create difficulties in resupplying from the BREEZY COVE support ship, USS GARRETT COUNTY (APG 786).
The worst fears of CTG 116.2 were realized on the evening of 20
October when the ATSB at Song Ong Doc was attacked and largely
destroyed by an estimated company-sized enemy force. The allies were
forced to flee the area in their river craft in the midst of heavy enemy fire.

At 2330H, the ATSB received 82 mm and 60 mm mortar fire from
the north bank of the Song Ong Doc River, and automatic weapons and
rocket fire from the south bank. In addition, an element of enemy
troops attacked with rockets and small arms from the protection of
the village of Song Ong Doc, located 500 meters east of the ATSB on
the north bank. As the general quarters alarm was sounded, Navy
personnel began to effect the emergency plan of immediate abandonment
of the base by river boat. Detachment SIX Seawolves scrambled
immediately and began placing strikes on targets of opportunity, while
the gunfire support ship USCGC BERING STRAIT (WHEC 382) began
lobbing shells into prearranged positions on the south bank of the river.
A withering hail of automatic weapons and rocket fire swept the base,
however, momentarily pinning down the allies and preventing their escape.
Within about ten minutes, the first crewmen reached their PBRs and RACs,
manning their heavy machine guns, and began to suppress fire on the
river banks. By 2345H over 90% of the base personnel were embarked
on river craft, and boats began medevac runs to the USS GARRETT
COUNTY (AGP 786), anchored near the mouth of the river. By this time,
spreading flames on the ATSB and occasional explosions had made the rescue of remaining sailors extremely hazardous, but by 0005H, all wounded men were evacuated, with the exception of one missing in action, and the Naval Operations Center was transferred to a River Assault Craft. The enemy ceased fire at 0010H as Navy OV-10 aircraft arrived overhead and began placing strikes on suspected mortar positions north of the village. The USCGC BERING STRAIT ceased fire with the arrival of low-flying fixed-wing planes. Within six minutes after complete evacuation of the base, it was completely ablaze and was being rocked by huge secondary explosions. The fires on the base raged throughout the night and were finally extinguished by spray from Monitor boats shortly after dawn.

By 0050H, after all wounded USN and VNN sailors had been medevaced, PBRs began picking up wounded civilians from the village which had been caught in the crossfire. Casualties with minor wounds were taken to the GARRETT COUNTY while the more seriously injured were flown to Ca Mau.

The friendly casualties resulting from the Song Ong Doc battle were, considering the intensity of attack, "amazingly low," according to Deputy COMNAVFORV. Two USN were killed and 26 wounded by enemy fire, while the Vietnamese Navy suffered five wounded.
Approximately 20 more USN suffered minor cuts and abrasions while scrambling to their boats. Short enemy mortar rounds which landed in the village killed seven civilians and wounded an additional 33. GMG3 Thomas S. McGarry, an advisor with RPD 62, was killed when he was struck by a B-40 rocket as he attempted to lead a group of men to their PBRs within moments after the assault began. He was recommended for the Bronze Star Award for his actions. RMSN John D. Drake, initially reported as missing, was later found dead on the ATSB.

Among the other casualties, of all wounded by shrapnel from mortar shells and B-40 rockets, only six were injured seriously.

The USS CARRETT COUNTY (AGP 786) received virtually all of the casualties from the Song Ong Doc conflagration. Establishing an emergency battle dressing station in the ship's wardroom, two hospital corpsmen, assisted by members of the crew, treated 16 VNN sailors, 25 Vietnamese civilians, and 35 USN personnel. An additional 60 civilians were temporarily evacuated to the ship when mortar and rocket fire drove them from their homes.

The ATSB was, for all practical purposes, completely destroyed by an estimated 40 mortar rounds and the numerous secondary explosions. The damage was so extensive, in fact, that CTG 116.2 reported that there was no danger of the enemy recovering any vital material from the abandoned base. When SEALs and EOD personnel
checked it the following morning, they found no booby traps or any other evidence of enemy presence on the ammis. All the buildings were completely destroyed, and five of the ten barges were deemed irreparable. All base structures, machinery, electronics material, and every reefer except one were destroyed by explosions or fire. The shore based Duffle Bag Complex, the Popular Force outpost, and the Detachment SIX helicopter pad and barracks, however, were unharmed by the vicious barrage. Throughout the evacuation process, all the PBR and RAC boats miraculously escaped injury.

Intelligence analysts reported that the attack on the Song Ong Doc ATSB was extremely well planned and coordinated. The attack came from three sides of the base simultaneously, and it appeared that mortar positions (later found by RF and PF forces) and sightings had been prepared in advance. The accuracy of the indirect mortar fire from east of the village indicated the probable use of a spotter with a radio on the south bank of the river. The Song Ong Doc village chief stated that an influx of strange people into the village prior to the attack aroused his suspicion, but he did not inform U. S. personnel of this. During the attack, the enemy used the village area to launch B-40 rockets with no effective resistance from Popular Force troops. The village chief and a local informant later stated that a reinforced North Vietnamese company, the 1105th, had conducted the attack. Reports from civilian
intelligence sources varied somewhat as to enemy strength and intention. One source claimed that the enemy forces had numbered over 240 soldiers and that they had initially planned a ground assault on the ATSB after the indirect fire attack.

Despite the destruction of their support base, BREEZY COVE units were back on routine patrol the following afternoon. The USS GARRETT COUNTY assumed temporary support functions for all TG 116.2 boats. During daylight hours, all PBRs of River Patrol Division 62 and all craft of River Assault Squadron 15 assigned to CTG 116.2 operated from the ATSB site, but moved back to the support ship at night. RAC boats staged from the USS GARRETT COUNTY at all times.

On 26 October COMNAVFORV sent a brief but decisive message to Deputy COMNAVFORV: "Reconstitute ATSB Song Ong Doc at original location." This directive remained in effect for the remainder of the month as plans for salvage and rebuilding of the razed base were initiated. VNN RID 43 was ordered to relieve RAS 15 at Song Ong Doc.
Operation SEARCH TURN

Despite apparently heavy enemy infiltration southward through the Three Sisters and Seven Mountains area, Operation SEARCH TURN units did not witness a major increase in hostile activity during October. The Viet Cong suffered seven killed and seven captured in 14 firefights, while three Americans and one Vietnamese were wounded. The communist guerrillas were apparently seeking to strengthen their forces threatening Song Ong Doc, Ca Mau, and Nam Can (SOLID ANCHOR), while avoiding major confrontations to the north.

The Fourth Coastal Zone Intelligence Officer reported that the monsoon flooding throughout Kien Giang Province permitted easy and covert water travel, even through heavily wooded areas. Civilian informants and PBR crews all reported an increase in water traffic during October, and in some cases suspected communist agents traveled in groups as large as 300 men.

As enemy movement through Kien Giang Province increased, CTG 116.3 requested additional river craft to patrol his vast AO. Plans were accordingly made to transfer ten PBRs of River Patrol Division 61 stationed at Ha Tien (Operation TRAN HUNG DAO I) to the Rach Soi area.
A combined PBR and Seawolf strike on 4 October accounted for the largest single allied victory of the month in the SEARCH TURN AO.

Four PBRs of River Patrol Group 58 in a WBGP sighted heavy movement on the east bank of the Rach Gia - Long Xuyen Canal four kilometers northeast of Rach Gia (WS 125 095). Boat captains radioed for helicopter assistance and withheld their attack until the aircraft were overhead.

The PBRs and Seawolves apparently encountered a large enemy force as their fire was answered with a heavy barrage of recoilless rifle and automatic weapons fire. One Vietnamese sailor was wounded and medevaced by Seawolf. Navy OV-10s scrambled to the scene to provide additional air support, and artillery was placed throughout the area as friendly units departed. While the boat crews and pilots never saw an enemy soldier, their fire was ostensibly devastating as soldiers at a nearby friendly outpost reported that they had killed an estimated 30 communist troops.

USN advisors of Operation SEARCH TURN made the unpleasant discovery during October that the enemy was apparently monitoring their communications system. On the afternoon of 11 October, an advisor on a PBR enroute to a waterborne guardpost received a call in English on the tactical radio net. The call was repeated, using the advisor's proper call sign, but no message was transmitted.
Later that evening a much more serious incident occurred.

As a brief firefight involving the PBRs and Seawolves subsided, the VNN patrol officer received a transmission from what he thought was a friendly outpost in the immediate area. The caller reported enemy movement in the immediate vicinity of the outpost and requested a helicopter strike. This information was relayed through advisor channels and the TG lb. 3 Naval Operations Center requested clearance to fire. When district permission to attack was granted, the Seawolves began their final approach. At this point the PBR advisor intervened as he had contacted the friendly outpost and discovered that they did not request an air strike, and in fact, had an ambush team stationed in the area. The strike was immediately cancelled.

This potentially disastrous episode lucidly revealed the sophistication of the enemy’s communications deception techniques. This deception attempt indicated that the communists not only knew the allied radio frequency and were monitoring it, but had an English language capability as well. The enemy, it was felt, probably obtained the boat advisor’s call signs during pre-patrol radio checks.

Four of RPD 58’s PBRs drove away a small enemy force attempting to assault a sector outpost on the night of 20 October. Boat crews, waiting in a WBGP 18 kilometers southeast of Rach Gia (WR 190 872), saw four Viet Cong approaching the outpost. The outpost defenders
and PBRs opened fire simultaneously with all weapons, and the VC responded with small arms and recoilless rifles. The enemy fire was suppressed, but shortly thereafter the guerrillas tried to attack two of the PBRs from the opposite side. A heavy barrage of fire thwarted their efforts, and the allies claimed three probable kills.

The Viet Cong occasionally assaulted a non-military target. On 25 October a tug towing a barge laden with cement on the Ha Tien – Rach Gia Canal was stopped by five Viet Cong in two sampans at VS 685 366. The communists ordered the crewmembers off the vessels and then boarded and searched the vessels. The Viet Cong then took a box of explosives below deck in each vessel and detonated the charges, sinking the tug and its tow. They then departed to the north without taking any prisoners. As this tug and barge did not present a particularly lucrative target, it appeared that the Viet Cong were attempting to block the shallow canal. The Fourth Coastal Zone Intelligence Officer felt this act was in retaliation of GVN harassment of communist strongholds in the Kien Guong mountains. They failed in their efforts, however, as there was a space of twenty feet between the boats through which traffic could pass.

Navy SEALs operating under CTG 116.3 were extremely active during October, and in one case assumed the role of civilian law enforcers. Two civilians who had been causing trouble with the
local population and had stolen a sampan and motor, were posing as
Vietnamese SEALs in Rach Soi. Reacting vehemently to this effort to
sully their good name, a squad of Vietnamese and American SEALs
tracked them down, and with the help of witnesses and a Kit Carson
scout, captured them. The men were turned over to provincial
security authorities for punishment.

On the last day of October, the main GVN force in Kien Giang
Province, the 21st ARVN Division, began operations to stall enemy
infiltration through the U Minh Forest. The ground sweep concentrated
on the area west of the Cal Lon River and a SEARCH TURN PBRs were
deployed to establish a blocking force on the other side of the river
at WR 18 78.
Operation BLUE SHARK

COSDIV 13 PCFs 694 (LTJG Kime) and 48 (LTJG Peters) gave outstanding support to a platoon of RF and PF troops they inserted into an area of the Vung Liem District of Vinh Long Province (vicinity XS 252 185) on the morning of 13 October. The "Swifts" placed H & I fire into the area during the insertion in order to contain any guerrilla forces present. Then, as the friendly troops made their sweep, the PCFs came into contact with the enemy, and a fierce ten minute firefight ensued in which eight VC were killed, six by the PCFs' 50 calibre fire. The RF and PF troops and the supporting swift boats also destroyed six bunkers and three hooches and detained two VC suspects during this BLUE SHARK mission.

The same two swift boats were in action with RF and PF troops on 24 October. Once again, the troops were inserted into the Vung Liem District of Vinh Long Province (vicinity XS 262 184), and contact with the enemy came shortly thereafter. In this encounter, one VC was killed and two others wounded. Of even more importance was the capture of a VC document listing the names of 110 local Viet Cong in Vung Liem District.
Task Fleet 21

While enemy activity during October was sporadic in most parts of the Third and Fourth Riverine Areas, it greatly intensified in the Ca Mau Peninsula. There was increasing evidence of heavy infiltration southward from Cambodia into the U Minh Forest, and this communist build-up culminated in the destruction of the Song Ong Doc Advanced Tactical Support Base on 20 October.

Deputy COMNAVFORV expanded his efforts to limit blatant Viet Cong trafficking on the rivers and canals of the Mekong Delta by improving search techniques. Plans were initiated for the publication of a quality search manual in both English and Vietnamese.
Operation TRAN HUNG DAO 1

Despite intelligence reports of heavy communist infiltration southward across the Cambodian border, river patrol units of Operation TRAN HUNG DAO 1 seldom encountered guerrilla forces during the month of October. The enemy was apparently seeking to pass through this area quietly in order to augment their forces in the U Minh Forest and Ca Mau areas.

While water craft of CTG 212.4 were unmolested, U. S. Navy Seawolves were quite busy and on several occasions thwarted attempts by enemy troops to cross the Vinh Te Canal along the Cambodian border. The helicopters of HAL-3, Det 5, flying from the ATSB at Vinh Gia and often working with Army air and boat assets, claimed to have probably killed 83 communist insurgents during the month.

On 10 October they assaulted an estimated 100 Viet Cong attempting to transit the Vinh Te Canal.

Another indication of excessive enemy movement through the TRAN HUNG DAO 1 area was the extremely high number of electronic sensor activations during October. CTG 212.4 reported an average of over 170 Duffle Bag activations per week, easily the highest number of all TRAN HUNG DAO and SEA LORDS operations.
Because of the decline of enemy offensive aggressiveness along the Vinh Te Canal and its increase to the south, the commander of Operation TRAN HUNG DAO I ordered 10 PBRs of River Patrol Division 62 to detach from CTG 212.4 and proceed to Rach Soi, headquarters for Operation SEARCH TURN, in late October. The PBRs were to operate from the newly established Kien An Support Base, 16 kilometers south of Rach Gia.

A Vietnamese sailor became the month's only friendly casualty on 10 October when he attempted to dismantle a fragmentation grenade. The grenade exploded in the face of Pham Duc Trung, a crewmember of HQ 1276, who was apparently attempting to extract the grenade's pin ring to use it as a personal decoration.
Operation TRAN HUNG DAO II

Activity in the TRAN HUNG DAO II AO was abnormally low during October. There were only a handful of engagements, none involving more than three or four of the enemy at any one time, and none of which produced serious casualties on either side. In fact, the drop in activity provoked a message of admonition on 27 October from CDR S. Van Westendorp, USN, Senior Advisor to the VNN General Reserve Command, in which he stated:

Review of recent activity in the THD II AO shows cause for concern due to a significant lack of contact with the enemy, (i.e., two contacts in the past two weeks). While this lack of activity may have been attributable in the summer to the successful operations in Cambodia, originator feels that paucity of contact since then may be attributable to other reasons. These may be due either to laxity in conducting operations or to stereotyped operational procedures. I feel that it is highly unlikely that Charlie has been at a standstill or has disappeared from the scene.

He further urged modifying any aspects of the daily routine which might diminish patrol effectiveness.

CTF 274.1 forces received newly formed RID 46, which departed Dong Tam for Ben Luc on 14 October to operate in the THD II AO. The new division relocated from Ben Luc to Tan An the afternoon of 26 October.
Operation TRAN HUNG DAO V

Operation TRAN HUNG DAO V/READY DECK followed its familiar pattern in October of being the least active of all Naval riverine operations. Members of River Patrol Division 52 and River Assault Group 24 reported only three incidents of contact with the Viet Cong, and the allies did not sustain any personnel or material casualties. The enemy made his presence felt, however, by jamming radio communications emanating from the Phu Cuong base in the latter part of the month, and by harassing Army units in the area. CTG 216.1 did not claim to have inflicted any casualties on the enemy during the month.
Operation TRAN HUNG DAO VIII

Activity throughout the TRAN HUNG DAO VIII AO was light to moderate. No major actions took place although light skirmishes continued.

At 1430H on 7 October, nine SEALs from Detachment ALPHA, Eighth Platoon, one LDNN, one interpreter, and two guides along with My Tho Police Intelligence personnel departed Dong Tam in search of a VC sapper squad in the vicinity of XS 435 405. On arrival at the suspected area, the occupants fled. An investigation of the area revealed a bunker and sampan which were later destroyed.

Enroute to their base camp, a U.S. Army helicopter was sighted crash landing in the vicinity of XS 412 405. The SEAL team immediately diverted to the area assisting the crew and providing security and at 1700H the helicopter was repaired and departed.

In a preplanned operation against five known VC strong points, TRAN HUNG DAO VIII units placed numerous rocket and 7.62 mm area saturation strikes against bunkered positions in the vicinity of XS 304 447, approximately nine kilometers west of Dong Tam at 1405H on 15 October. There were 40 VC spotted heading southwest from the area. Seawolves were scrambled and in conjunction with Army artillery completely saturated the area with rocket and mortar
fire. STABs inserted RF and PSDF troops for a sweep of the area.

Results of the operation were one VC killed, three VC probably killed, 15 CHICOM grenades, one AK-47, and assorted explosives captured, four sampans and 150 kilos of rice were destroyed.

At 1100H on 22 October, RAG 21 and 33 FOMs underway received AK-47 fire from the east bank of the Kinh Xang Canal in Dinh Tuong Province, 11 kilometers northwest of Dong Tam from an estimated platoon of VC. Using 50 calibre and 30 calibre machine guns, the RAG units suppressed the enemy activity. Results of the encounter were one USN wounded and unknown VC casualties.

Pacification of Dinh Tuong Province continued as members of UDT 13 and VN EOD Team 10 at Tong Doc Luc - Ba Beo Canal in the vicinity of XS 135 613 destroyed a dam and created a channel six feet deep and 50 feet wide at 1400H on 10 October. It is significant to note that sampan traffic on the Tong Doc Luc - Ba Beo Canal west of My Phuoc Tay was nonexistent prior to the operation. As a result of this action, sampans are now sighted moving from My Phuoc Tay. Further clearance projects on the waterways are continuing.
Operation TRAN HUNG DAO IX

Task Force 212 celebrated its first anniversary during October and enjoyed one of its calmest months since its inception. River craft of Operation TRAN HUNG DAO IX (BARRIER REEF) like those of TRAN HUNG DAO I to the west, rarely made contact with enemy troops.

During the lull, a new River Patrol Division, 63, was created when RIVPAT Divs 62 and 57 were turned over to the Vietnamese Navy at Phuoc Xuyen on 15 October. Offensive activity declined sufficiently during the month to allow CTG 212.3 to send three of his Armored Troop Carriers to Song Ong Doc to augment strike capabilities in the threatened BREEZY COVE area.

The only significant incident reported by CTG 212.3 was of a non-hostile nature. A Vietnamese PBR with a USN advisor aboard caused a minor furor when it inadvertently strayed into Cambodia on 20 October. While transiting from the USS SPHINX (ARL 24) to Chau Doc, the crew of PBR 7754 of RPD 63 was informed by a VNN support ship which they encountered near the Neak Luong Ferry Landing, that they were 13 miles into Cambodia. Vietnamese newsmen took photographs of the boat at close range before the boat returned to the SPHINX at 1630H. There was no contact made with the enemy while across the border. The crew claimed that they had been given wrong directions to YRBM 20 by the SPHINX quarterdeck watch, who in turn stated that they had given no directions whatsoever. Both the VNN boat captain and the USN advisor had made the trip previously and were thought to be familiar with the waterways.
Operation TRAN HUNG DAO XIV

Activity throughout the TRAN HUNG DAO XIV AO was extremely light. The major action was the sinking of the VNN LSSL 226 at 0520H on 3 October while anchored on the Co Chien River in the vicinity of XS 410 116. The ship experienced an explosion on the port side, capsized and sank within five minutes. Cause of the explosion was thought to be a water mine. Two VNN were wounded, with no deaths and no one missing.

Investigation of the sinking by HCU ONE Team FIVE aboard YDB-2 revealed that the LSSL 226 was on the bottom in eight meters of water. One large hole caused by an explosion was found in the area of the engineering spaces.

The probably direction of attack was by swimmer from Con Giai Island. Using the period of low visibility and the current of the water, the swimmer attached the mine to the anchor chain by means of a long line which would allow the mine to drift back to the ship. A timing device was probably used to allow the swimmer time to exit the area by continuing down stream with the current.
Vietnamese Naval Operations in Cambodia

Vietnamese Navy craft of Amphibious Task Force 211 (CTF 210) continued to operate in Cambodia during October, mainly on the Mekong and Bassac Rivers south of Phnom Penh. The VNN craft in Cambodia at the beginning of the month were as follows:

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<th>RAID 70</th>
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<th>ATC</th>
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<tr>
<td>RAID 73</td>
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At 0400H on 28 October a mine detonated between an ATC of RAID 70 and a Monitor of RID 42 which were beached in a nest three miles south of Neak Luong (WT 260 400). It was not known how the mine had been placed. The ATC was sunk and the Monitor received minor damage. One VNN sailor was killed and one was wounded.
Rung Sat Special Zone

Activity throughout the Rung Sat Special Zone was light to moderate during October. At 0005H on 4 October, the USS TUTUILA (ARG 4) was at anchor 500 yards northeast of the Nha Be Navy Base when the crew detected bubbles on the surface of the water on the starboard bow, 75 yards out. Six concussion grenades were dropped in the area and a swimmer was sighted with head and shoulders above water. The swimmer was fired upon with a shotgun and believed to have been hit and disappeared. A second swimmer was sighted drifting downstream in the same area. The anchor chains and underwater hull of the TUTUILA were checked with negative results. Results of the action indicated that two VC swimmer sappers were probably killed.

Seven air and water mobile operations, Chuong Duong 44-70 through 45-70, were conducted in the vicinity of the Nha Be Navy Base.

On 7 October, Chuong Duong 44-70 was initiated in the vicinity of VS 070 775. Results of the operation were no friendly or enemy casualties. One M-16 rifle and one fishing net were captured; six bunkers, two structures, one sampan, and one base camp were destroyed.

On 13 October, Chuong Duong 45-70 was initiated in the vicinity of VS 938 580, 22 kilometers south of the Nha Be Navy Base. Results of the operation were no friendly casualties, 32 VC killed, and 12
assorted small arms were captured along with two kilos of documents.

Chuong Duong 46-70 and 47-70 were concluded without contact with the enemy.

On 20 October, RSSZ PRUs made contact with an estimated 30 VC in the vicinity of XS 943 847, 2.5 miles north of the Nha Be Navy Base. Seawolves and Black Ponies were called in to place strikes and received heavy ground fire. One Seawolf sustained damage but was able to return to its base. Results of the encounter were one USN wounded, four VC killed and one VC captured. In addition, PRUs captured three rifles, assorted documents, and destroyed 500 kilos of rice.

On 21 October, Chuong Duong 48-70 was initiated in the vicinity of YS 078 545. RF Company 875 was inserted by sampan 21 miles southeast of the Nha Be Navy Base for a sweep of the area. Contact was made with an estimated VC squad which evaded. A VC base camp was discovered and destroyed. RSSZ PRUs were inserted by U. S. Army Slicks four miles southwest of Nha Be for an area sweep. Contact was made with a VC squad which also evaded after a brief firefight. An ASPB of RAD 153 six miles southeast of Nha Be received two grenades and small arms fire from the west bank in the vicinity of XS 039 773. The craft returned the fire and Seawolves placed strikes in the
Results of the operation were one USN wounded, one VC suspect detained, three structures damaged and four destroyed. One kilo of documents was captured.

Chuong Duong 49-70 was concluded without contact with the enemy.

Chuong Duong 50-70 was initiated on 29 October in the vicinity of XS 938 580. As of the first day of operation, contact with the enemy was not established.

Casualties for the month were one USN killed and five wounded. One VNN was killed and five were wounded. Enemy casualties were 45 killed. In addition, eight VC and 20 individual weapons were captured.
**Long Tau Shipping Channel**

At 0845H on 10 October, the merchant ship KOREA, proceeding north on the Long Tau Shipping Channel reported that it was aground 50 meters from the east bank in the vicinity of YS 040 710. Two U. S. Army tugs attempted to pull the stricken ship from the mudbank without success due to the ebbing tide and returned to Newport to await the flooding tide. At 2200H, three U. S. Army tugs arrived at the grounding site and in the span of 43 minutes pulled the ship from the mudbank.

The merchant ship KOREA immediately continued to transit north under her own power.
Only RAID 74 was assigned to CTF 211 during October, continuing its patrol, in conjunction with the 32nd Regiment, 21st ARVN Division, of the Bay Hap Canal just northeast of Cai Nuoc Village (WQ 02 73) in the Ca Mau Peninsula. RAIDs 70 and 73 continued operating in Cambodia, and RAID 75 in the THD XIV AO.

October was a relatively placid month for RAID 74, marked only by one major firefight and by the sinking of ATC HQ 1232.

The sinking took place at 0700H on 5 October and was the result of a leak in the port exhaust pipe where it joined the hull. The boat went down by the stern while she was tied up at the pier in Ca Mau in about 15 feet of water. A three-man salvage team was requested from Harbor Clearance Unit ONE, which arrived at the sink site on the morning of 14 October, from Vung Tau. Progress was hampered the first three days for want of an operable P-250 pump, which finally arrived from Dong Tam on 17 October. The boat was refloated and patched by the evening of that day, towed to the USS ASKARI and later to Dong Tam for more durable repair.

A firefight occurred at 0815H on 4 October as seven boats with ARVN troops embarked, proceeding north on the Trem Trem River to WR 050 460, took numerous B-40 rounds and small arms fire from the east bank of the river at WR 055 455. Four of the boats were hit
by rocket rounds but the fire was eventually suppressed and the troops inserted at the pre-ordained spot. Later in the day, after the ARVN troops had been extracted and the boats were returning to the base, they were again hit at 1415H at approximately the same position, again from the east bank of the river (WR 052 458). This time five boats took hits, two of which had been hit in the morning skirmish. The total casualties from the two enemy ambushes were 13 ARVN WIA, four ARVN KIA, nine VNN WIA, and two USN advisors wounded. GMG2 Robert Saltgen and EM2 Albert Thawley received minor shrapnel wounds to the face and neck and were taken to Third Surgical Hospital, Binh Thuy, for treatment.

The Senior Advisor to RAID 74, LT Judd Potter, USN, in a subsequent report, expressed distress at the results of the two engagements, noting that no attempt was made by ARVN to land and pursue the enemy, that in both cases some of those wounded had been riding on the bow of HQ 5327 despite his recommendations to remain inside the tank deck, and that the poor material condition of several of the boats had hampered their combat effectiveness.
River Assault Groups

The river assault groups of the Vietnamese Navy continued normal river patrol and troop lift operations during the month of October. There were a number of small encounters with the enemy.

At 0815H on 9 October while transiting the Song Tac Canal to the north, two FOMs of RAG 30 came under automatic weapons fire from the east bank of the canal about 3.5 miles east of Cat Lai (YS 009 923). The boats returned the fire and suppressed it. When the RAG Commandment arrived on the scene about five minutes later, the enemy began firing again. The boats once again suppressed the fire. An RF sweep of the bank at 1000 produced no results.

On 14 October a Commandment, a Monitor, two LCM-6s and two FOMs of RAG 25/29 were working in support of RF operations in An Xuyen Province. At 1045H they inserted a platoon of RF Company 500 for a sweep about 17 miles north of Ca Mau (WR 175 403). At 1515H the boats took small arms fire from both banks at that location. A RAG crewmember spotted about 15 VC on the banks. The fire was returned and suppressed.

At 1520H on 17 October, an LCM, RPC, and Monitor of RAG 28 were in transit north on the Rach Can Giouc about 2.7 miles south-southwest of Cholon (XS 779 823) when they took two rounds of B-40 rocket