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DECEMBER 1970

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December 1970

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FORWARD

As 1970 unceremoniously drew to a close for the 16,757 U.S. Navy-men in South Vietnam, and desultory toasts were downed in myriad hootches and barracks throughout the country, another landmark in Naval history was reached as the last assets of the "Brown Water Navy" and coastal patrol forces were officially transferred to the VNN. In relinquishing operational control of its small combatants, the USN is gradually reverting to the strictly advisory role it played prior to the large build-up of U.S. Armed Forces in South Vietnam in 1965.

The Vietnamese Navy launched another major campaign on 1 December with the inception of TRÀN HƯNG ĐẢO XVII, the first combined all-out assault on the VC-controlled U Minh Forest in the history of the war. The operation includes assets from RAIDs 70 and 71, RID 40, RAG 25/29, and RPD 61, all engaged in providing logistics support, troop lifts, and blocking forces for components of the ARVN 21st Division.

The Saigon headquarters of U.S. Naval Forces, Vietnam, was exposed to the first threat of violence in many months as activity in the capital city increased during December, partly as the result of student activity and partly from VC terrorism. On 15 December at 2050 two Vietnamese civilians placed a plastic bottle filled with gasoline into the gas tank filler neck of a USN vehicle parked outside the NAVFORV Compound, but no explosion was caused and only minor damage done to the vehicle.
At 22:55 the same night about ten students gathered on Doan Thi Diem Street adjacent to NAVFORV Headquarters with the expressed intention of burning a USN Jeep. Members of the Vietnamese Security Force arrived and dispersed them before any damage could be done. In their wake, the students left a leaflet stating that their activity was to revenge the death of a fellow student killed in Qui Nhon by U.S. Forces.

The Military Sealift Command, Vietnam, reported a possible Saigon Harbor attack the morning of 19 December, when at 0210 two 122mm rockets impacted in the city at XS 863 919 and XS 876 916, killing six Vietnamese civilians and wounding eight. Nine MSC vessels were moored in the harbor at that time, four of them USNS ships.

On a more cheerful note, VADM Jerome H. King, Commander, Naval Forces Vietnam, relayed to U.S. Navymen in the First Coastal Zone a letter of gratitude from President Thieu to General Creighton Abrams, COMUSMACV, thanking and praising U.S. Forces who were instrumental in providing flood relief for the people in the area during the disastrous storms of October. General Abrams added his own commendation to that of the President, stating "this act of humanitarianism contributed significantly to the overall Vietnamization program."

1 COMNAVFORV AND CHNAVADVGRP MSG 260023Z December 70.
**CURRENT OPERATIONS**

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<td>TRAN HUNG DAO I</td>
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<td>TRAN HUNG DAO XVII</td>
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During the month of December, Operation SOLID ANCHOR was plagued with a series of logistics, personnel, and material problems which would have tried the patience of any responsible commander. In addition to the types of problems cited above, the enemy scored several successes during the course of five ambushes of boats, two mining incidents and one mortar attack on the northern edge of the perimeter of the SOLID ANCHOR base itself. In operations during the month, one VNN sailor and one Philippine civilian were killed; three USN and 12 VNN sailors plus four Philippine civilians were wounded. Friendly forces killed a total of 29 of the enemy and captured 61. The enemy sank one ATC and damaged one monitor, one ASPB, one PCF, and two civilian tugs. There were 11 friendly initiated wildfires, while the enemy initiated 12.

Colonel F.W. Tiei, USMC, the Senior Marine Advisor, was sent to SOLID ANCHOR as a relief for Capt. E. I. Finke, as commander of TG 116.1 on 9 December.

Among the problems to which the commander of SOLID ANCHOR was forced to address himself were contamination of the fuel in the JP-5 ammo, resupply of JP-5, a lack of emergency electrical power backup for the base, the need of a significant portion of the assigned river assault craft for repairs which strained or were beyond the SOLID...
ANCHOR repair capability and the arrival of relief PCFs in a material status which precluded operations.

On 12 December, CTG 116.1 in a message to COMNAVSUPPACT Saigon noted that 18 out of a total of 25, or 72%, of his assigned assault craft were in need of repairs which required outside assistance, such as engine overhauls, bar armour repair, hull welding, and strut and rudder repair. In that day's situation summary, he reported that only nine of his assigned 25 R.A.C were available for patrol. The command faced the same staggering casualty problems in regard to its PCFs. On 20 December, CTG 116.1 reported that out of ten assigned PCFs, only one was fully operational, five were only partially able to carry out their mission, and four were in a completely non-operational status. This problem had been exacerbated about a week earlier by the arrival at SOLID ANCHOR of two relief PCFs with one operational engine apiece. CTG 116.1 brought to Senior Advisor COMCOSFLOT Five's attention the fact that PCFs with one engine were ineffective on combat patrols in the SOLID ANCHOR area of operations. COMNAVFORV ordered SA CTF 213 to take immediate remedial steps to correct the asset situation.

On the personnel front, acute problems developed also. In order to reduce the theft of personal items, a big morale factor, and the pilferage of military goods, CTG 116.1 requested the assignment of six men to form an internal security force. COMNAVFORV turned the request
down, reminding CTF 116 that although SOLID ANCHOR had an allowance of 59 NSAS personnel, over 160 were actually assigned and stating that he felt the assignment of additional personnel would only aggravate a problem which was going to have to be solved in any case as a result of the forthcoming reduced space ceiling which would become effective 1 May 1971.

On 9 December the VNN EOD Team refused to do any more work and stated their intentions to the VNN operational commander. They then packed their bags and departed SOLID ANCHOR for Saigon, leaving the two-man US advisory team to handle all EOD work. On 22 December, EOD personnel reported there was a three-man VNN EOD team at SOLID ANCHOR again, but reported that one assigned member who, when informed that VNN EOD personnel were tasked with accompanying 7th Battalion VNMC on an operation, departed the area and missed the operation.

The month concluded with a cholera epidemic, which broke out in Ham Rong Village on 30 December. Ten cases appeared, three of which resulted in death. The hamlets were immediately declared out-of-bounds to all base personnel. The SOLID ANCHOR medical team and MAT 67 immediately went to work, and by 1 January the spread of the disease was reported under control. Four people were reported dead, and 13 were medevaced, with a total of 31 people still sick.

Meanwhile there was a high level of activity as operations against
the enemy continued. The month's most serious incident occurred on 2 December. Boats of RID 41, proceeding south down the Rach Ong Đính with 200 VNMC embarked, were ambushed 11 miles southeast of SOLID ANCHOR(WQ 015 635) at 0807H. Two B-40 rockets hit the port side of an ASPB causing moderate damage and wounding the VNN forward gunner. The force then came under automatic weapons fire. The boats suppressed the fire, and VNN personnel went ashore to investigate the ambush site. They found it heavily booby-trapped and collected eight claymore mines, three B-40/41 rockets and four B-50 launch bombs. The captured ordnance was placed topside on the bow of a monitor, and the boats continued south to the point where the VNMC were to be inserted, some 300 meters south of the ambush site. While attempting to beach during the insertion, the monitor carrying the ordnance struck a mine, and its bow from the waterline upward was blown off. LT S.V. Ethridge, BM 1 H.E. Sampsell, and one other USN advisor were wounded and eight VNN personnel were wounded. Recognizing the imminent danger posed by the more than 100 rounds of 105mm ammunition in the monitor's magazine adjacent to the bow section, WO-1 Benjamin W. Rand, EOD team leader, led a group of advisors and VNN EOD personnel aboard the sinking craft and removed the most dangerous portion of the ammunition. Warrant Officer Rand was recommended for the Silver Star, three men were recommended for the Bronze Star, and seven men, including two
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VNN EOD personnel, were recommended for the Navy Commendation medal for their actions during the incident. The sinking monitor was towed back to SOLID ANCHOR by two ATCs. A VNN crew member of the monitor was found to be missing upon arrival at the base, and his body was later found in the canal.

At 0830H on 3 December while en route north patrolling on the Kinh Gai Nhat, two ATCs of RID 45 were mined about seven miles northwest of SOLID ANCHOR. One boat was undamaged, but the other suffered major shock damage and sank immediately. Two VNN sailors were wounded, one seriously. An ASPB was sent to provide assistance and Seawolves provided air cover for the helicopter which medevaced the wounded. En route to the boats, the medevac helicopter came under automatic weapons fire which was suppressed by the Seawolves. The ASPB, proceeding to the mined craft's assistance, observed a water mine explosion close aboard to port but suffered no damage or casualties.

At 1745H on 11 December two PCFs, escorting the civilian tugs STANFORD and SKIPJACK west on the Song Bo De, came under automatic weapons and B-40 rocket fire ten miles west of Nam Can (WQ 243 681). Two rockets hit SKIPJACK, one in the pilot house and one in the stock, causing moderate damage. The PCFs suppressed the fire and Seawolves placed strikes in the area. There were no friendly casualties. Again at 0940H on 19 December the civilian tug STANFORD and escorting PCFs were ambushed on the Song Cua Lon while proceeding toward SOLID
ANCHOR about 8.5 miles east of the base (WQ 111 692). Three rockets struck the tug, killing one civilian and wounding four, and one struck an escorting PCF wounding one VNN sailor. Advisor RM 3 M.J. Murphy suffered minor cuts caused by flying glass. All units proceeded to SOLID ANCHOR under their own power.

At 1405H on 20 December, boats of RID 44 transiting the Rach Cai Nhap toward SOLID ANCHOR came under B-40 rocket attack eight miles northeast of the base. There were no direct hits and Seawolves arriving only a minute later placed strikes in the area (WQ 082 740).

At 0840H on 27 December an ATC on routine patrol discovered and broke a wire which they believed led to a command detonated mine in the Rach Cai Nhap about 6.5 miles northeast of SOLID ANCHOR (WQ 078 765). EOD personnel were called to the scene, found a mine, recovered and disarmed it. The mine consisted of 60 pounds of plastic explosives in a wooden box with five electric and two non-electric blasting caps.

Beginning at 0405H on 27 December, 20 to 30 rounds of 82mm mortar fire landed on the northern edge of the perimeter of the SOLID ANCHOR base causing no casualties or damage. The fire was immediately returned with mortars, automatic weapons and small arms. Crater analysis indicated that the enemy mortar position had been to the northeast at extreme range. A thorough sweep of the area was conducted with no results.
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At 1835H on 28 December, Seawolves on routine patrol about eight
miles southeast of Nam Can received a heavy volume of automatic weapons
fire (WQ 073 566). One helicopter flying at about 1000 feet took two hits,
but fortunately continued to operate. After placing a strike, the Seawolves
returned to their base. Examination of the holes in the aircraft indicated
that they were made by rounds from a 51 caliber machine gun.

Seals of Whiskey and Zulu Platoons of Detachment Golf, Seal Team
One carried out a vigorous schedule of operations during the month.

On 20 December, seven Seals from Zulu Platoon paddled in sampans
to the mouth of the Trai Cheo Canal (VQ 973 766), six miles northwest of
SOLID ANCHOR, and spied a VC proceeding upstream. They followed
him, and 11 more VC in six sampans appeared. The Seals challenged the
group of VC, and all initially obeyed the instructions. When two of the
captives suddenly attempted to seize hidden weapons and evade, the Seals
took them under fire. Eight of the VC were killed in the ensuing melee,
and two more were probably killed as they fled. The Seals took no casual-
ties.

Vietnamese Marines of the 7th Battalion and Battery B VNMC contin-
ued to carry out reconnaissance in force operations in the SOLID ANCHOR
area of operations during December. They killed ten and captured two
of the enemy while suffering four killed and seven wounded themselves.
They captured four rifles, one pistol, 65 grenades, and miscellaneous

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medical supplies. In addition 16 craft and 45 bunkers were destroyed.
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BREEZY COVE

Allied units of Operation BREEZY COVE (CTG 116.2), seeking to stabilize operations following base relocations to Ca Mau and Old Song Ong Doc, experienced a hectic month during December. The still uncompleted base at Ca Mau was attacked, and river units engaged in eleven fire fights.

While there were several intelligence reports of large troop concentrations in the Song Ong Doc and Cai Nuoc Districts, the allies did not engage in any large confrontations. Yet when the operation was finally turned over to the Vietnamese Navy at month's end, the new VNN Commander inherited responsibility for one of the most hostile areas in Military Region IV.

Two boats of RID 43, returning up the Song Ong Doc River after re-supplying from the USS GARRETT COUNTY (APG 786) on 10 December, were ambushed by B-40 rockets, recoilless rifles and automatic weapons fire at VR 869 002. An Armored Troop Carrier received rocket rounds through the pilot house and canopy while an ASPB sustained two hits at the waterline. Two American advisors, EN 3 N.H. Demski and BMC J.D. Howe, and five Vietnamese sailors were wounded. Seawolves from Ca Mau placed air strikes on suspected guerrilla positions but reported no enemy casualties.

VNN PBRs of River Patrol Division 62 moving east along the Song Ong Doc River were attacked by B-40 rockets and automatic weapons fire during the early evening of 17 December. The boats, aided by Seawolves,
suppressed enemy fire and withdrew without casualties. The attack was potentially effective, however, as it came from both banks of the river rather than from one isolated position. This new tactic, according to NFV analysts, suggests either new and more effective leadership or the presence of well-trained North Vietnamese reinforcements.

Throughout December, salvage operations were conducted to recover the Seawolf helicopter, HSSC 5634, and the PBR lost in late November near the USS GARRETT COUNTY (APG 786) off the coast of Song Ong Doc. The salvage ship USS RECLAIMER (ARS 42) finally located the HSSC on 15 December after five days of searching, and following a week of on-station patching, delivered the refloated craft to the repair ship USS KRISHNA (ARL 38). The following day the RECLAIMER raised the sunken helicopter, and after stripping off the weapons and classified equipment, jettisoned the wreckage in deep water. By the end of the month, the missing PBR still had not been recovered.

CTG 11b. suffered his greatest loss since the razing of the Song Ong Doc ATSB when his new headquarters at Ca Mau was bombarded with mortar fire on the night of 26 December. One US sailor, EN 2 E. V. Rochez, and an Army advisor were killed while 13 American and eight Vietnamese sailors were wounded. A generator and guard tower were destroyed, and a PBR and two LCM craft sustained minor damage. Two Ca Mau Seawolves scrambled to place air strikes on the suspected enemy
positions. A ground sweep the following morning recovered several communist small arms and two sampans with blood in them.

Following the attack, the Song Ong Doc NILO reported that a local sympathizer had reported that Viet Cong would attempt to destroy patrol craft at the Ca Mau base by dropping mines from sampans near the piers. Because of the increased threat to the base, two Regional Force companies and two Popular Force platoons began deploying nightly south of the river near the PRU camp. In addition, PRUs began setting regular night ambushes to the north while PSDF troops operated in hamlets east and west of the compound.

Lieutenant Moran's Seals of Detachment Alpha, 9th Platoon, enjoyed another successful month in their efforts to eradicate the Viet Cong infrastructure in An Xuyen Province. In the early morning hours of 4 December, a four man squad ambushed and killed four Viet Cong 12 kilometers southwest of Hai Yen (VQ 797 722). After the initial contact, the group relocated fifty meters away. They ambushed a sampan at dawn, killing one of the VC and two hours later, killed still another guerrilla and captured his comrade. One of the dead Viet Cong was identified as a deputy province level finance section chief.

Two days later, the Seals attempted to aid one of their Kit Carson Scouts whose mother and brother had been abducted by the Viet Cong. A
squad led by three scouts inserted near the man's hootch 11 kilometers south of Ca Mau (WR 205 040) and rescued the scout's son who had successfully hidden himself when the VC came. The party was unable to locate the two kidnap victims but captured one guerrilla cadre member during the search.

The Seals were more fortunate on the evening of 7 December when they captured a communist hamlet assistant military chief and a supply section chief in a village 15 kilometers southeast of Ca Mau (WR 233 038). After entering the targeted hootch, pointed out by a local informer, and capturing the two men, the five man squad remained secluded in the structure throughout the night. Shortly after daybreak, a fifteen-man unit of Viet Cong, apparently aware of allied presence in the area, began sweeping through the nearby area, firing their AK-47 rifles. The outnumbered Seals called in a Seawolf strike on the enemy, and escaped during the air attack.

Seals of the 9th Platoon attempted to rescue Vietnamese prisoners of war being held in a camp 12 kilometers southeast of Hai Yen (VQ 932 768) on 27 December. Reacting to ARVN intelligence and led by local guides and a Kit Carson Scout, the five man squad attacked the small camp defended by a dozen guards. All the prisoners had recently been removed, but the Seals killed four of the guards with assistance from Seawolves and captured communist weapons, documents, and medical supplies.
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Operation BREEZY COVE officially became TRAN HUNG DAO X (CTG 212.6) on 29 December when Lieutenant Commander Nhan, VNN, relieved Commander Christensen, USN, as operational commander. The Ca Mau ceremony was attended by Vice Admiral King and Rear Admiral Chon, the Vietnamese CNO. The US Navy will continue to provide air and logistical support, and the new CTG 116.2, Lieutenant Commander W. D. Danneheim, will act as both senior advisor and officer in charge of the operation's two support bases.
The Christmas Season failed to provide a respite for the combined allied forces of Task Fleet 21. The operations and units still controlled by the U.S. Navy, including BREEZY COVE, SOLID ANCHOR, and the Seawolf helicopters and OV-10 aircraft, continued to encounter the most extensive enemy resistance in the vast Mekong Delta and Ca Mau Peninsula.

Combined ARVN and VNN forces of TRAN HUNG DAO XVII, an operation launched at the heart of the Viet Cong stronghold of the U Minh Forest in early December, sustained the greatest casualties among Vietnamese forces.

December also witnessed the further Vietnamization of riverine warfare in the Delta as command of Operation BREEZY COVE and of the Tan Chau, Kien An, Chau Doc, and Ha Tien operating bases was transferred to the Vietnamese Navy. Symbolic of the waning role of the American naval forces was the disestablishment of River Patrol Flotilla V after the official turnover of the last PBR of the Brown Water Navy at the end of December.

CTF 116, who had exercised administrative control over all river patrol boats for the past two years, assumed the title of Commander, Delta Naval Forces. Captain R.E. Spruit, the Senior Advisor to CTF 212, was assigned this position as additional duty.

COMNAVFORV expressed concern over two vital aspects of naval
operations in the Delta during December: base and boat security against sampans, and helicopter control. The former problem developed from the accidental deaths of several non-hostile Vietnamese civilians who had unintentionally entered defensive water areas. COMNAVFORV ordered extensive notification of the location of defensive areas and the posting of warning signs to keep civilians and sampans clear of these secured zones. Warning shots, fired in the air, were to be used only as a last resort in clearing a prohibited area.

The mysterious crash of a Seawolf helicopter in the jungle north of Ca Mau led to a revamping of the Navy’s aerial control procedures. On the morning of 19 December, a helicopter of Detachment 3 departed the repair facility at Binh Thuy and headed for its home base at Ca Mau. The last contact with a control center was at 025H. At approximately 1100H, the aircraft crashed in an unsecured area, 26 kilometers short of its destination (WR 321 437), and all four crewmen perished. For the next two days, the helicopter lay undiscovered, and no aviation commands, including HAL-3, reported that any aircraft were missing. Finally, on the afternoon of 21 December, a seven year old Vietnamese girl inadvertently stumbled upon the wreckage and reported it to the local authorities. The next morning an Army Reconnaissance Team located the helicopter. The bodies of the crewmen, LTJG R.H. Buzzell, LTJG A.O. Ortiz, AEC J. Ratliff, and ADJ 2 R.E. Worth, were found in shallow graves
near the wreckage. Evidence of enemy presence in the area was extensive as the helicopter, which had crashed upside down, had been riddled with bullets and stripped of all vital parts and weapons.

COMNAVFORV ordered a thorough investigation of the circumstances surrounding this bizarre and unreported crash. In addition, an extensive revision of aircraft control procedures was instituted to ensure that all Navy planes would be accounted for at all times.
COMNAVFORV took advantage of light enemy activity along the Vinh To Canal in December to further Vietnamize the TRAN HUNG DAO I Operation. The Vietnamese Navy assumed command of the Chau Doc Operating Base on the 9th of the month, and the floating American ATSB at Vinh Gia, threatened by falling water levels, was completely disestablished by the end of December. As in previous months, the quick reacting Seawolf helicopters were the best deterrent against enemy infiltration from Cambodia. VNN river units, however, were involved in 12 firefights. Three Americans were wounded during the month, and the allies reported killing eight Viet Cong.

Three American sailors were wounded during the early morning hours of 15 December when they failed to properly identify themselves. RM 3 R. A. Compton, BM 3 J. S. Oddone, and BM 3 G. O. Sitton, advisors to RID 43 craft, left their boats positioned in a WBGP, supposedly to reconnoiter the beach. For some unknown reason, they approached a nearby Popular Force outpost without notifying it and were taken under fire by their allies as they penetrated the concertina wire perimeter. The wounded men were not found by a ground sweep until two hours later.

The declining water level in the Central TRAN HUNG DAO I AO began to hinder riverine operations in late December, and it was predicted
that by mid-January, no waterborne units, including the shallow
draft PBR, would be able to penetrate the area. The allied inter-
diction effort in the western section, however, was strengthened
in December with the arrival of five Swift boats (PCF) from COSFLOT
V.
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TRAN HUNG DAO II

The enemy's presence in the TRAN HUNG DAO II AO was subdued in December, with only one enemy-initiated and four friendly-initiated firefight. There were numerous reports near the end of the month that supplies were being moved into Long An Province along the southern border of Military Region Three and that the Ben Luc Bridge and Logistics Support Base were possible targets in the near future, but nothing had happened by the end of the month.

There seemed to be a continued attempt to disrupt LOCs in the western regions as the Rach Re Bridge on QL 22, ten miles northwest of Go Dau Ha, was mined the night of 2 December; 30% of the east span was damaged, reducing traffic, often headed for Cambodia, to one slowly moving lane.

There was another unsuccessful attempt on the Go Dau Ha Bridge on 3 December, and intelligence sources reported at the end of the month that a 20 man local VC platoon had begun attempts to bribe GVN non-commissioned officers to mine the bridge. A B-40 rocket was fired at the Moc Hoa ATSB at 0028H, 29 December, but fell 20 feet short of theammo.

In general, the enemy appeared to be avoiding contact with VNN river patrols, concentrating instead on revitalizing their village and hamlet infrastructures and discrediting the CVN pacification program. Elements suspected of being in the area were remnants of the former 128th Artillery Battalion in Long An and Ham Nghia Provinces; the K6 Battalion, 1st NVA
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Regiment, lingering just south of the Military Region Three border and within striking distance of Binh Phuoc District; and elements of the 267th VC Main Force Infantry Battalion, sighted back in Ben Luc District after long absence. Most of the main force units have dissolved and merged with local units due to the weakened status of the latter over the past two years; these units have incurred heavy losses and been unable to recruit replacements from the surrounding area.

The units of 214.1 thus had a fairly serene month. The largest single contact occurred at 1930H, 5 December, when two RPD 54 PBRs in WBGP on the Van Co Tay 26 kilometers downriver from Tan An (XS 714 569) sighted a sampan moving along the south bank. They took it under fire; the sampan beached and returned fire but was no match for the PBRs. Five VC were killed and an AK-47 captured, with no friendly casualties.

Other engagements for the month were not so conclusive. On 2 December at 2030H, three boats of RPD 64 lying in wait four kilometers from Tuyen Nhon received reports of a radar sighting of five persons on the west bank, 1200 meters south of the boats' position (XS 320 819). The PBRs motored down and commenced a firing run when they were 300 meters from the suspected VC location. They received return fire and then dropped mortar rounds into the area. Results of the incident were unknown, but it is probable that three of the VC were killed.

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On 15 December at 0200H an ASPB, ATC, and Zippo from RID 46 were in a WBGP two miles south of Tra Cu (XS 502 960) when they spotted four VC on the beach 50 meters ahead. They took the four under fire and received light return fire. Enemy casualties were unknown. Another case of probable kills occurred on 29 December at 2100H when two RPD 54 PBRs in WBGP 12 miles from Tan An (XS 673 575) observed a sampan emerge from a canal and head north 50 meters ahead. The sampan opened fire first, and the PBRs returned a volley which probably killed the sampan's four occupants. Two AK-47's and four magazines were captured, along with various documents and medical supplies. Another sampan was demolished at 2330H on 22 December seven miles southeast of Tan An (XS 660 592) when it was sighted by a lone PBR from RPD 54 and taken under fire. Two more AK-47's with five clips and an M-79 grenade launcher were claimed. Finally, two Tano boats from RID 48 saw the old year out by blasting two sampans at 2300H, 31 December, three kilometers north-west of Ben Luc (XS 590 788). They took a B-40 round and small arms fire in return; enemy casualties were unknown.

A VC suspect was picked up in Long An Province at 0050H, 8 December, by two RPD 54 PBRs in a WBGP nine miles southeast of Tan An. He was turned over to the Sector and his sampan impounded. Three more persons, one from a water taxi and two from a village, were detained the morning of 30 December as the result of a day search by two RPD 53 PBRs, 12
miles from Tan An (XS 672 573).

Sappers found their mark at 0200H, 28 December, when they successfully sank a 70,000 gallon fuel ammi moored one quarter of a mile from Ben Keo (XT 220 434). The damage was extensive with all seams ruptured and the fuel contaminated, causing a severe fuel shortage for RPD 53, based at Ben Keo. As a stopgap measure, RID 46 assets were ordered to tow a small ammi from Tra Cu, thus extending the fuel supply at Ben Keo for about seven days. COMNAVFORV tasked HCU-1 on 30 December to commence salvage operations as soon as possible. Salvage had not begun by the end of the month, and the senior advisor, LSB Ben Luc, reported that salvage did not appear economically feasible.

The USN advisors attached to 214.1 received only mild harassment from the enemy; however, they had their share of troubles with their counterparts. The base defense posture at Ben Keo, for example, remained unsatisfactory, allegedly due to lax watchstanders. The senior advisor, RID 46, reported patrolling the base at 0400H, 29 December, and finding, not entirely to his surprise, that the only people awake were himself and two NOC radiomen. Thievery remained a problem at both Ben Luc, where the assistant senior advisor to RID 40 had a seabag containing mail for his men stolen the night of 11 December, and at Tuyen Nhon. The senior advisor at the latter base stated that major incidents were a daily occurrence and that both the base commanding officer and the OIC of the LSC
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detachment, both VNN lieutenants, were rarely aboard and that the highest ranking VNN officer available was a warrant.

The locations of 214.1 assets as of 1800H, 27 December, are as follows:

| 214.1.1  | RID 48       | Ben Luc |
| 214.1.2  | RID 46       | Tra Cu  |
| 214.1.3  | RID 47       | Go Dau Ha |
| 214.1.4  | RPD 53       | Ben Keo |
| 214.1.5  | RPD 54       | Tan An |
| 214.1.6  | RPD 64       | Tuyen Nhon |
| 214.1.7  | RPD 64       | Moc Hoa |
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TRAN HUNG DAO V

Enemy activity in the TRAN HUNG DAO V AO during December seemed heavy only in comparison with the lull of recent months. The allied river crews of River Patrol Division 52 and River Assault Group 24 were involved in seven firefights, all initiated by the Viet Cong, and suffered nine wounded (two USN, seven VNN) while killing six of the enemy. Most of the skirmishes followed the familiar pattern of the guerrillas launching B-40 rockets at boats in transit and the boats making imprecise firing runs on suspected enemy positions.

The most successful enemy attack occurred in the early evening of 11 December when Viet Cong fired on four PBRs of RPD 52 with rockets and machine guns, 30 kilometers northwest of Phu Cuong (XT 581 310). Two B-40 rockets hit the lead boat in the engine cover and coxswain area, wounding the entire Vietnamese crew and the U.S. advisor, EN 1 R. D. Flores. The PBR sank as the crew tried to beach it, and the wounded were quickly medevaced to Long Binh. River Assault Craft were summoned to tow the damaged boat to Phu Cuong, and the remaining three PBRs proceeded to their WBGP site.

Two other PBRs were ambushed only one kilometer away from this point (XT 573 517) four days later. A B-40 rocket exploded in the forward portion of the lead boat, slightly wounding one Vietnamese sailor. The allies retaliated with machine gun fire and reported killing two of their
A Viet Cong unit staged a daylight attack on four PBRs 29 kilometers northwest of Phu Cuong (XT 580 330) during the morning of 27 December. A B-41 rocket exploded on the splinter shield of the last boat of the column, killing one Vietnamese and wounding another and the American advisor, Seaman O. L. Boze. The PBRs, assisted by Navy OV-10 aircraft, made several firing runs on the area but could not confirm inflicting any casualties.

The forces of TRANHUNGDAOV were temporarily augmented at mid-month with the arrival of 14 craft of River Assault Group 22 in the upper Saigon River area. These additional boats were to establish WBGPs at night and act as a blocking force during daylight operations. After the new unit's familiarization with the operation, eight PBRs of RPD 52 were sent to Nha Be to assist in patrols of the Rung Sat Special Zone and security of the Nha Be petroleum depot.
TRAN HUNG DAO VI

Enemy activity in the TRAN HUNG DAO VI (CTG 212.5) area of operation continued at a rapid pace in early December, culminating in a sapper attack on the Kien An Advanced Tactical Support Base. By the end of the month, however, the aggressive allied invasion of the U Minh Forest sanctuaries in Operation TRAN HUNG DAO XVII had relieved pressure on the Rach Gia area to the north. Commander TRAN HUNG DAO VI reported that his boats participated in 22 firefights, a number exceeded only by the river craft of Operation SOLID ANCHOR. The allies reported killing 39 of the enemy in hostile action, while suffering three killed and six wounded themselves.

The recently established Kien An ATSB, jumping off point for Operation TRAN HUNG DAO XVII, was recovering from two heavy mortar bombardments in November when it was again attacked on 4 December. This third attack was not without warning. A local informer had told the allies that the Viet Cong planned to raze the base, and after the second mortar attack, the local civilian population began packing their belongings and furniture and abandoning the area. On the morning of 3 December, guerrillas lobbed 23 mortar rounds into the base but did not inflict any casualties.

During the pre-dawn hours of 4 December, a Vietnamese Popular Force sentry fired at what he thought was enemy movement along the
southeast perimeter. A U.S. Army advisor came out to investigate and casually noticed two men hiding under a bunker nearby. As he walked over to examine them, one tossed out a C-4 grenade which the soldier quickly avoided. As he shot down both of the sappers, an estimated 20 Viet Cong began to wade through the moat outside the southern wire perimeter, carrying rifles and B-40 rocket launchers over their heads. The allies set off claymore mines and raked the area with 50 calibre machine gun fire, immediately thwarting the ground attack. Navy OV 10 aircraft, flying a patrol to the south for a TRAN HUNG DAO XVII operation, were quickly diverted to Kien An to provide close air support.

A series of ground sweeps during the next two days revealed nine enemy bodies and numerous blood trails. Three of the guerrillas had died inside the perimeter. The allies did not sustain any personnel casualties and material damage resulting from B-40 rocket fire was light.

The senior advisor at Kien An reported that harassment of the ATSB did not stop with this futile attack. Local informers warned that Viet Cong strategy involved overrunning the base and burning the village. On the following day, an estimated 300 Viet Cong passed within 200 yards of the base, warning all civilians to leave. There were several sensor activations during the next week, suggesting enemy reconnaissance patrols, and on 13 December a man with binoculars and a shovel was seen 75 meters from the perimeter. The man was suspected to be a
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forward observer from an enemy mortar squad. While the base was not directly threatened during the remainder of the month, the Vietnamese CNO ordered three junks of Coastal Group 43 and 30 assault personnel from Ha Tien to Kien An to assist in base defense.

During the late morning of 8 December, an LCM towing a fuel armor from the Rach Soi Support Base to Kien An was apparently mined as it entered the mouth of the Cai Lon River (WR 108 970), eight kilometers south of Rach Gia. The small explosion tore several small holes in the hull below the waterline, but the ship, escorted by two PBRs, completed her journey without further incident. The suspected mining, the first noted near the Cai Lon's mouth, occurred at a point where river traffic is funnelled into a 40 foot channel by fish net stakes extending from the banks.

Two Seals of Detachment Golf, Kilo Platoon engaged in a brief but vicious firefight off the Kien Thanh coast on the night of 10 December. The two Americans, assisted by one Vietnamese LDNN and two Kit Carson Scouts, departed the Rach Soi support base at dusk and proceeded to a point 14 kilometers northwest of Rach Gia (VS 999 145) in an attempt to interdict Viet Cong supply traffic along the coast. They searched eight sampans but found only women and children fishing. The unit then approached a motorized sampan which appeared to be stationary. When within 25 meters, the Vietnamese LDNN called to the man but...
could elicit no response. When they closed to within five meters, the sampan began moving north and one of the passengers reached for a weapon. The Seal patrol leader, LTJG John C. Marsh, began to fire, but his weapon jammed after two or three rounds. Two more men then emerged from the floor of the enemy sampan, and all four Viet Cong opened fire on the allies. In the first burst, the patrol leader was wounded three times, a Kit Carson Scout and the LDNN were killed, and the other scout was wounded. The only unharmed man, ETSN Paul K. Barnes, unleashed a barrage of automatic weapons fire which killed all four Viet Cong and sank their sampan. His own craft sinking, Seaman Barnes recovered his wounded comrades and called in the Light Seal Support Craft with emergency signals as his radio had been lost. The wounded were quickly medevaced by Seawolf helicopters. Seaman Barnes was recommended for the Navy Cross for his heroic actions.

Carelessness and poor communications caused the deaths of several allied troops and civilians in the TRÀNHUNG DAO V AO during December. On the 18th of the month, two Vietnamese sailors were wounded when a M-79 grenade round, fired by an American watch stander on the Kien An perimeter, detonated on an overhead power line. On 21 December the crews of PBRs 7652 and 7653, positioned in a waterborne guardpost eight kilometers southeast of Rach Gia (WS 150 020) heard noises and saw sampan movement north of their ambush site. The PBRs broke
position, drifted toward the movement and illuminated with spotlights three men in the water, crossing the canal. The Navy patrol attacked with machine guns and grenades, but were immediately advised by radio that they were in contact with friendly forces. The ARVN unit's failure to notify the river forces that it would be operating in the area resulted in one killed and six wounded.

Five civilians were killed and another eight wounded in four separate incidents during December by friendly mortar fire near the Kien An base. The senior naval advisor at the base, however, suspected that many of the incidents involved Viet Cong deception of friendly firing to impede pacification in the area. Additionally, a USN sentry killed a VNN petty officer as he emerged from the water at the Rach Soi ATSB during the early morning of 27 December.
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TRAN HUNG DAO VIII

Activity for the month was limited to a small number of harassing maneuvers. Various intelligence reports indicated that the main force units in Dinh Triang Province have been instructed to avoid contact with friendly ground and air forces. Other reports indicated increased sapper activities and city fighting training of company size units in Chau Thanh and Sam Giong Districts. Army reports indicated that sappers in My Tho City were to terrorize public meetings and eating places with emphasis on bars and restaurant frequented by friendly forces. Further reports have indicated that high sapper activity will accompany mortar attacks in a coordinated effort against populated areas as well as outposts conducting successful GVN pacification operations.

On 6 December at 0630H, eight Seals from Seal Detachment Alpha, 8th Platoon, and one LDNN departed My Tho in a Seawolf for Cai Lay (XS 205 457), 22 kilometers west of Dong Tam. Acting on intelligence provided by the province chief, the two squads of Seals supported by Seawolves were inserted and promptly observed persons evading for the high brush. The Seals and Seawolves took the evaders under fire, killing three VC. The Seals then made a through search of the area, capturing four more VC and various enemy weapons and supplies.

On 6 December at 0200H, the Cai Hua Bridge (XS 111 489) was sabotaged by an enemy force of unknown size using an unidentifed explosive. The
bridge, essential to a 7th ARVN Division LOC, was 60% damaged. This bridge also provided access to the only overland route to the My Tho area in northwest Dinh Tuong.

On 15 December at 1230H, Twelve Seals from Seal Detachment Alpha, 8th Platoon, departed Dong Tam for Sam Giang District (XS 351 471), seven kilometers northwest of Dong Tam. In search of nine VC, targeted by intelligence sources, the Seals searched the hootches in the area, capturing one VC and detaining four VC suspects. At 1340H, The Seals were extracted from the area and returned to Dong Tam.

On 24 December at 0030H, the city of My Tho (XS 499 446) came under attack when three 82 millimeter mortar rounds impacted in the area, wounding one RF soldier. The three rounds came from the northwest area, the site of past enemy mortar firing operations. The last mortar attack on My Tho City was on 26 November 1970 at which time the My Tho Navy Base was fired on with two 82mm mortar rounds.

On 30 December at 1050H, the Dong Tam Navy Base (XS 413 438) came under fire when three 82mm mortar rounds impacted within four hundred meters to the southeast of the Seawolf helopad. No casualties resulted from this attack, and structural damage was of no consequence. The last mortar attack on Dong Tam Navy Base was on 8 November 1970 when one round was received. The base again was struck at 1849H in the vicinity of XS 412 434 when five rounds of 75 millimeter impacted the area. For-
Unfortunately, no casualties or damage resulted from this latest attack.
The Commander of TRAN HUNG DAO IX, responsible for thwarting enemy infiltration across an area extending from Tuyen Nhon to Tan Chau, enjoyed another exceptionally inactive month in December. There were only four fire fights involving river units, and the allies neither sustained nor reported inflicting any casualties in hostile action. The recently completed naval support base at Tan Chau was turned over to the Vietnamese Navy on 17 December.

The boats of TRAN HUNG DAO IX remained quite taxed to patrol their assigned areas as ten PBRs of River Patrol Division 56 were sent to the U Minh Forest to participate in TRAN HUNG DAO XVII. The burden was partially relieved by the arrival of five "Swift" boats (PCF) at YRBM 21 at An Long in mid-December. The new boats, the first "Swifts" to be used in this operation, were to patrol the Cau Long River and escort supply ships into Cambodia. Additionally, a mine sweeping team of Mining Interdiction Division 93 began patrolling the waterways in both TRAN HUNG DAO I and IX in December. Each team consisted of one MSM and two LCMs.
For the month of December, a light to moderate level of enemy activity existed in the TRAN HUNG DAO XIV AO. The level of activity has indicated that larger enemy units within Kien Hoa Province have broken up into smaller squad size units and have been directed into interdictory efforts, primarily LOCs and operational harassments at a low level.

On 7 December at 2200H, ten seals from Seal Team One, Detachment Golf, Xray Platoon, one LDNN, a scout, and one guide embarked aboard an MSSC (BM2 Hunt, advisor) for an area in Moc Cay District (XS 472 252), seven kilometers southeast of Kien Hoa. Acting on intelligence acquired by PO2 Thang (scout), the group attempted a raid on a sleeping area of approximately 13 assorted VC and VCI of the village and supporting guerrillas. On arrival at the suspected area (XS 480.73) at 2250H, the enemy had departed. After searching the entire area for enemy personnel and weapons, the mission was aborted and all returned back to the MSSC at 0445H for transport to Ben Tre.

On 9 December at 2200H, six Seals from Seal Team One, Detachment Golf, one scout, and one guide were inserted in Binh Dai District (XS 832 189), Kien Hoa Province, 42 kilometers southeast of Ben Tre in a capture raid against one district cadre, and two hamlet cadre. At 2205H, a sampan was noted crossing Ba Lai River (XS 630 320) and proceeded to evade. The sampan was fired upon, with both occupants abandoning the
craft. The number of enemy casualties was not ascertained, but the sampan contained one half kilo of documents. After a search of the area was conducted, the Seals were extracted at 0405H in the vicinity of XS 832 189 and returned to Ben Tre.

On 9 December in Kien Hoa Province (XS 492 270), four kilometers south of Ben Tre, a serious accident resulting from improper operation of an M-79 occurred. EN3 David A. Marshall, USN, of Raid 72, serving TAD to Raid 74, received a minor shrapnel wound in the left arm as a result of a VNN crewman firing his M-79 too close to his boat. HQ 1233 with HQ 1234 were on a patrol on Ham Luong River when the incident occurred. EN3 Marshall was medevaced to MACV compound at Ben Tre, treated by USN corpsmen and released.

On 13 December at 1230H, 12 Seals, one scout, and two guides embarked in two Slicks and conducted a heliborne operation against a suspected VC bivouac area and a number of village and hamlet VC1 of Thoi Thuan Village in Binh Thuan District (XS 890 170). After moving through the area, recent tracks indicated the VC had left just prior to arrival of the Seals. A VC was seen evading through the trees and was fired upon but escaped. At 1430H, Slicks had taken another VC under fire resulting in a probable VC casualty. At 1450H, Seals moved to a hootch 50 meters from the initial contact in the vicinity of XS 897 123 and found two women and six cups of hot tea. The men were located in adjacent bunkers and were called to
surrender. In an exchange of grenades and a suicide accomplishment, four
Seals were wounded. The suicide involved one VC, who holding a grenade
to his body with the pin out, approached the Seals and was killed, but not
before he could inflict casualties upon three Seals in the resulting explosion.
The wounded Seals were medevac'd to Ben Tre for additional treatment.

At 1610H, Seals patrolled approximately 500 meters to the southwest
(XS 897 123), searching 13 hooches and taking six prisoners. At 1825H, the
operation was secured, and the Seals returned to Ben Tre. Results of the
operation were four USN wounded, one VC killed, and one VC probably killed.

On 20 December at 2145H, five Seals from Seal Team One, Detach­
ment Golf, Xray Platoon in Giong Trom District, Kien Hoa Province, 16
kilometers east of Ben Tre, embarked with one scout aboard an MSSC and
attempted a mission to interdict a communication route. As soon as they
had been inserted, the patrol was taken under heavy automatic weapons
fire in the vicinity of XS 675 314 at 2300H, resulting immediately in two
USN killed, one USN wounded, and one VN guide wounded. The VC force
consisted of approximately 10 to 15 men. RM2 Baker, the only member not
wounded, assisted the wounded USN. RM3 Hetzell, and swam out into the
canal. The MSSC scrambled Black Ponies and Seawolves who promptly
took the area under fire while rescue efforts for both the dead, EM3 Riter
and BMC Bomar, and the wounded were continuing. After the MSSC picked
up the wounded personnel, they were immediately medevac'd. At 2330H, LT
Collins and five Seals along with four LDNN were scrambled to the area to
recover the USN killed and all weapons. In the ensuing search, no further contact was encountered.

The month of December ended with the strategy and tactics indicating a continuation of small unit terrorist and harassment incidents. Friendly forces have moved into the portions of the Thanh Phu Secret Zone areas, and PBR assets have joined TRAN HUNG DAOXIV units operating in Kien Hoa Province. The trend of enemy activity has been centered more actively against the pacification program, namely attacks by M-79 and B-40 against GVN outposts.
Effective 1 December 1970, Task Force 210, designated TRAN HUNG DAO XVII, was officially established for operational purposes. The initial participants for this operation were as follows:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Designator</th>
<th>USN Advisor</th>
<th>Unit</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CTF 210</td>
<td>CAPT Spencer</td>
<td>ATF 211</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CTG 210.1</td>
<td>LT Marleley</td>
<td>RAID 71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CTG 210.2</td>
<td>LT Kirtley</td>
<td>RID 40</td>
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<tr>
<td>CTG 210.3</td>
<td>LT Oversier</td>
<td>RAG 25/29</td>
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<tr>
<td>CTG 210.4</td>
<td>LT Zemansky</td>
<td>RPD 61</td>
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</table>

The concern for this operation was amply stressed by Deputy COMNAVFORV on 2 December when he declared the need for personnel to relieve RAID 70 and 71 advisors of their Kien An duties so that they could participate in the TRAN HUNG DAO XVII Operation. He further stated that SOLID ANCH requirements must take second place to Kien An (1st) and Ca Mau (2nd).

The specific area of operation and number of assets for each task group as of December was as follows:

CTG 210.1: RAID 70 and 71 supported units of the 33rd Regiment, 21st ARVN Division, with troop lifts and supply runs. RAID units patrolled the Kinh Can Gao from VR 945 623 to WR 128 899 with one Monitor, eight Tango boats, and five Alpha boats.

CTG 210.2: RID 40 units assisted the 32nd Regiment, 21st ARVN Division.
One CCB, ten Tangos, two Alphas, and two LCM-8s patrolled the Rach Tau from WR 060 210 to VR 997 542.

CTG 210.3: RAG 25/29 units supported elements of the 4th Rangers and patrolled the Song Trem Trem from WR 10 33 to WR 32 54. The task group consisted of two CDTs, two MONs, four LCMs, one LCVP, three FOMs, and two RPCs.

CTG 210.4: RPD 61 patrolled the Song Cai Lon from WR 105 970 to WR 305 745 providing security for units of the 9th Cavalry, 21st ARVN Division. The task group included 20 PBRs, seven LCM-8s, and one LCU.

With the formation of the operational elements, the long-awaited offense against the VC stronghold in the U Minh Forest began when on 1 December at 1015H, elements of the 21st ARVN Division were inserted at VR 97 39, WR 21 68, WR 16 48, and WR 74 78. It was not long before the enemy retaliated. At 1055H, an ATC of RID 40 received three 120mm launch bombs, 23 miles south of Kien An at WR 03 55. While two bombs missed, one of the bombs landed in the well deck but did not explode. One VNN was wounded as a result of the attack.

On 3 December at 0830H, an Alpha boat of RID 40 was struck by one of three B-40 rocket rounds fired in the vicinity of WR 100 275. No casualties resulted from this attack, and structural damage was not critical, as the boat continued on its own power.

On 4 December at 0900H, 25 miles southeast of Rach Song