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FOREWORD

The notorious TET Season came and went in South Vietnam amid a flurry of ominous prognostications of heightened enemy activity, but neither the harlequin streets of Saigon nor the concertina-fringed bases in the countryside provided the scene for the TET Offensive of 1971. The more sage observers of the Vietnam War have long since abandoned any attempt to predict when the enemy will act, but there is some foundation for the suggestion that if he had planned to increase his activity in January, he may have been subsequently diverted by continued allied pressure in Cambodia. Miscellaneous intelligence reports indicated that large-unit movement across the border continued during the month, and one informant reported that the local VC in Khanh Hoa Province had been ordered to concentrate on political warfare as Main Force units were needed in Cambodia: whether this shift in tactics represented a general trend throughout the southern regions of the country remains to be seen.

The relative quiet to the north, however, was sonorously counterpointed by the eruptions of mines, mortars, and machine guns deep within the U Minh Forest, where members from all branches of the South Vietnamese armed forces and their American advisors continued to meet strenuous resistance. The most pernicious problems for the Naval assets engaged in TRAN HUNG DAO XVII were the mines, which
claimed all the six heavy craft sunk during the month; two USN RAID advisors lost their lives in one of the mining incidents.

Another new TRAN HUNG DAO operation was initiated on 12 January at Tan Chau under the OPCON of RADM H.S. Matthews, Deputy COMNAVFORV. TRAN HUNG DAO XVIII was devised in response to numerous sinkings of merchant ships carrying fuel and ammunition between the Cambodian border and Phnom Penh. A severe POL shortage in the Cambodian capital, caused in part by enemy blockage of Route 4 between Phnom Penh and the port of Kompong Som, made resupply via the Mekong all the more crucial. The TRAN HUNG DAO XVIII Operation was therefore a convoy escort operation consisting of Vietnamese Naval assets and employing both ARVN and Cambodian ground troops for bank security. Five convoys were successfully sent from Tan Chau to Phnom Penh during January.

As of 28 January, 16,495 USN personnel remained in South Vietnam.
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<tr>
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Operation SOLID ANCHOR

The inception of the new year failed to generate any relief for the combined United States and Vietnamese forces of Operation SOLID ANCHOR. The last American-controlled naval operation, functioning in one of the most hostile areas of South Vietnam, continued to suffer from supply and repair difficulties and incessant Communist harassment. During the month, a brazen enemy bombarded the Nam Can Advanced Tactical Support Base four times, killed three of the allies and wounded 40. CTG 116.1 reported that his forces killed 18 Communist soldiers and captured 33.

The SOLID ANCHOR commander was again plagued with vast incapacitating material difficulties during January. Of the ten PCFs assigned to the Nam Can AO, generally only one was totally operational, while four on the average were completely inoperative. The remaining "Swift" boats experienced systems malfunctions which limited their capabilities in various degrees. The assault craft of RIDs 41 and 44 presented an equally dismal record with an average of only 44% availability. COMNAVSUPPACT Saigon, in attempting to explain this unsatisfactory level, pointed to the lack of preventive maintenance by VNN boat crews, incomplete and untimely submission of work requests, and the physical limitations of the Nam Can repair ammi.
The abrupt cancellation of regularly scheduled VNN resupply runs to the isolated Nam Can ATSB in early January forced CTG 116.1 to adopt ad hoc measures. As the operation's artillery ammunition, and POL supplies reached dangerously low levels, the USS PARK COUNTY (LST 1077) was selected to make the risky but uneventful voyage up the Song Bo De on the 10th of the month. By the end of January, vital stores remained depleted, and COMNAVSUPPACT Saigon was employing air lifts to SOLID ANCHOR as a stop gap relief measure.

CTG 116.1 made an effort during the month to replace the "Swift" boat fleet at SOLID ANCHOR with a like number of PBRs. He argued that the smaller, swifter PBRs would be more suited to the tactical situation and might maneuver more easily in the shallow, serpentine canals of his AO. The PCFs, in addition to presenting vast maintenance difficulties, are limited in use to the major rivers, the Song Cua Lon and Song Bo De. COMNAVFORV denied this request, however, insisting that the PBR pump systems often failed when operating in shallow, muddy water, such as that of the SOLID ANCHOR AO. Moreover, this switch would require a complete revamping of the Nam Can repair facility which was equipped to accommodate only ailing PCFs.
The small, isolated Nam Can base endured no less than four mortar barrages at the hands of the increasingly bold enemy in January. The first two attacks, occurring on the evenings of 9 and 23 January, were relatively mild, averaging ten rounds apiece and inflicting only a few very slight fragmentation casualties. Biet Hai troops swept the area after both attacks and discovered two fresh mortar pits approximately 2,000 meters northeast of the base.

The Viet Cong celebrated the arrival of TET by launching a much more intensive attack on the night of 25 January when they lobbed 75 to 100 82 mm mortar rounds into the SOLID ANCHOR base camp. The rounds impacted throughout the ATSB but were concentrated near the waterfront. Two American and six Vietnamese sailors were wounded, and an ASPB and ATC were badly damaged. Several rounds landed in the ARVN compound across the Cua Lon River and wounded five soldiers. Riverine crews attempted to get all their boats underway as Seawolf helicopters, OV-10 aircraft, and SOLID ANCHOR howitzers returned fire at the suspected enemy position.

The TET holidays concluded with a brief mortar barrage in the early morning hours of 31 January. While the SOLID ANCHOR base remained unscathed, six ARVN soldiers were wounded by rounds which fell short on the river’s south bank. A local intelligence source suggested that these attacks were manifestations of an avowed Communist
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intention to destroy the allies' Nam Can base. By month's end, CTG 116.1 was maintaining a peak defensive posture to cope with such an eventuality.

Allied river boats were ambushed seven times during January but managed to escape serious damage as the enemy continued to employ quick hit and run tactics. An American advisor attached to RID 44 was slightly wounded on 9 January when his boat was hit by B-40 rocket fire as it beached for a DUFFLEBAG sensor implant mission six kilometers south of SOLID ANCHOR (WQ 015 634). In one of the more effective enemy efforts, Communist guerrillas attacked boats of RIDs 41 and 44 on 18 January with B-40 rockets and automatic weapons fire. The incident occurred at WQ 270 740, 30 kilometers east of the Nam Can base, while the boats were enroute to support an operation in the Dam Doi Zone. Three American Navymen, two U.S. Marine advisors, and nine Vietnamese were wounded and their ATC damaged. Another RID 41 boat was ambushed the following day in the Dam Doi Zone (WQ 305 765) as it was operating in support of Vietnamese Marines along the bank. In suppressing the VC automatic weapons fire, the crew killed two guerrillas and in the ensuing ground sweep, captured a third. The prisoner, a 15-year-old VC rocket squad leader, stated that he was part of a predominately NVA company which was conducting ambush operations in the Dam Doi Zone. His unit, recently arrived from a rest and training camp near Ca Mau, carried six long range 82 mm mortars.
The SOLID ANCHOR LSSL 330 was hit with rocket and small arms fire on the 25th of the month 25 kilometers east of the ATSB (WQ 241 680). The escorting PCFs and Biet Hai forces suppressed the enemy fire, but not before the USN advisor and one Vietnamese crew member sustained slight fragmentation wounds.

U.S. Navy Seals of Detachment Golf, Whiskey and Zulu Platoons, experienced the most harrowing month to date of their in-country tours. Extending into the heart of guerrilla strongholds, the Navy commandos gravely weakened Viet Cong attack capabilities by capturing a vast amount of weapons and supplies in January. Their surreptitious raids were not entirely one-sided, however, for while they reported killing 14 and capturing 21 of the enemy, the Seals themselves suffered extensive casualties of one killed and ten wounded.

During the first two weeks of the month, the Seals avoided heavy enemy contact and concentrated on interdicting Viet Cong supply routes and training the newly arrived LDNN unit. On one occasion, a small squad deprived the guerrillas of their monthly rations by capturing 3,000 pounds of rice and shrimp, while on another, Seals seized an arms cache of over 400 grenades. On the morning of 12 January members of Whiskey Platoon, involved in blowing up log and mud barricades in a canal 12 kilometers northeast of Nam Can (WQ 05 02), killed two VC who were approaching their position.
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LT Couch’s Whiskey Platoon Seals combined with a UDT squad, a PF platoon and Seawolf helicopters to deal the enemy a decisive blow on 17 January PF and local informer intelligence revealed the location of a large Ho Chi Minh memorial and Viet Cong hospital and storage complex in the jungle 25 kilometers southwest of SOLID ANCHOR (VQ 807 504). The Seals and PF team inserted at a point five kilometers from the objective at 0515H and for the next hour, patrolled southward by sampan through a network of canals. Along the way they encountered Viet Cong sentries at various checkpoints, but the PF guide gave the correct response to their challenges, and the Seals succeeded in capturing three of them. The undetected group arrived at the VC stronghold at 0615H, whereupon they captured three more guards. At this point an enemy soldier in a nearby hootch spotted the invaders and fired at them briefly, alerting his cohorts. Their position revealed, the allies called in a Light Helo Fire Team to suppress fire while they set about destroying the supply site.

Utilizing all available personnel, the commando group rounded up nine VCI and 35 Communist sympathizers and abandoned the supply area to permit the gunships to rake it with fire. Later in the morning the UDT team blew up the Ho Chi Minh memorial tower adjacent to the supply site, and the combined force withdrew under air cover. At 1205H a small Seal/PF squad reinserted at the mouth of the Rach Cai Hoang
(WQ 807 559), entered a suspected VC hamlet, and captured five VC and 30 suspected sympathizers. The Seals loaded all their detainees into eleven sampans, and the LSSC with one engine operative, began towing the reluctant caravan from the area. By 1800H the PF squad had commandeered three Vietnamese fishing junks to assist in towing the captured fleet back to the PF outpost.

The results of this day-long operation were impressive. The combined forces, while not sustaining a single casualty, had destroyed 100 pounds of pharmaceutical supplies, a VC infirmary and pharmacy, three tons of rice and shrimp meal, 500 pounds of general store goods, 100 gallons of gasoline, 15 sampans, an indoctrination center, three supply hoochies, and ten defensive bunkers. The additional captured material, including 150 pounds of medical supplies, 50 pounds of documents, 200 pounds of sundry stores, four junks, and 14 sampans, was turned over to the PF commander along with the 20 captured Viet Cong. The remainder of the evacuees were absorbed in the Go Cong Resettlement Area.

The small Seal detachment advising the new LDNN team at SOLID ANCHOR was not so fortunate during January. As a 12 man Seal/LDNN unit was extracting from a simple interdiction patrol five kilometers southeast of SOLID ANCHOR (WQ 045 665) on 19 January, its LSSC was directly hit with two B-40 rockets and small arms fire.
The explosions threw several people overboard, ruptured the starboard fuel bladder, damaged the controls and radio, and incapacitated the coxswain. One USN advisor, LT James F. Thames, was killed along with two LDNNs. The second American advisor and another LDNN were wounded. A fifth LDNN was lost and never recovered. As the crew attempted to bring the craft under control and extinguish a gasoline fire, the Viet Cong detonated several claymore mines with negligible results. The uninjured LDNNs returned fire and caused their assailants to flee their ambush site.

A quick reaction force of Zulu Platoon Seals boarded SEA LORDS and Seawolf helicopters at SOLID ANCHOR to attempt rescue of the remnants of the disabled squad. The rescue party had effected the difficult insertion into the narrow canal by 1410H after several Seals, braving enemy automatic weapons fire, dove out of their helicopter from a height of 30 feet. As the small reaction force drove the enemy back from the canal banks and Seawolves provided air cover, the SEA LORDS helicopter swooped down to medevac the wounded. The reaction force then swept the contact area and recovered eight launch bombs, ten launchers, and assorted grenades and mortar rounds abandoned by the enemy. After all allied personnel were extracted, Seawolves and ARVN artillery saturated the entire area with rockets and shells for the next two hours but were unable to confirm any enemy casualties.
Five more of the Navy’s counter-guerrilla specialists were wounded at month’s end while attempting to insert on a mission to destroy a VC hootch complex. On the afternoon of 30 January, the SEA LORDS helicopter carrying a seven man Zulu Platoon squad was hit by ground fire, and one Seal was wounded. After the injured man was returned to the base, the remaining Seals inserted near their objective, 11 kilometers east of SOLID ANCHOR (WQ 144 775). Two of the commandos were wounded immediately, and when the squad tried to extract after a brief but intense skirmish in which five VC were killed, two more Seals were wounded. This exchange was particularly poignant for the wounded Americans; their platoon was scheduled to cease operations the following day in preparation for return to the United States.

The SOLID ANCHOR Biet Hai unit assisted in thwarting the enemy’s strike capability during January by seizing several small ammunition caches, patrolling the banks of the Cua Long and Bo De Rivers, and conducting nightly ambushes outside the base perimeter.

On 23 January the 7th Vietnamese Marine Infantry Battalion and Battery"B"departed SOLID ANCHOR for Saigon and were replaced by the 1st Battalion of the 32nd ARVN Regiment. Three days later this unit departed after being relieved by the 44th ARVN Ranger Battalion.
COMMAND OF OPERATION SOLID ANCHOR changed hands on 23 January when Captain Robert E. Spruit, USN, relieved Colonel Francis W. Tief, USMC. Captain Spruit, the Senior Advisor to CTF 212 and Commander of Delta Naval Forces, assumed the job as additional duty, and Colonel Tief, who had only been at Nam Can since 9 December, returned to Saigon as Senior Marine Advisor.
The initiation of Operation TRAN HUNG DAO XVIII, the Upper Mekong River convoy operation, was the primary Task Fleet 21 innovation during January. As ARVN forces intensified their offensive against major Communist strongholds within the Khmer Republic, enemy pressure on allied naval forces in South Vietnam's Military Region III and northern Military Region IV continued to abate. Allied units of Operation SOLID ANCHOR, the last American-controlled naval operation, and Operation TRAN HUNG DAO XVII in the U Minh Forest, enjoyed no New Year's reprieve, however, as hostile activity continued at a high pace in these Ca Mau Peninsula AOs.
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TRAN HUNG DAO I

As in the TRAN HUNG DAO IX operation to the east, enemy infiltration efforts through the TRAN HUNG DAO I AO were again muted during January. In 19 fire fights the allies sustained one killed and two wounded while killing seven of the enemy.

One possible reason for the low level of hostile activity was the temporary disestablishment of the Cambodian border patrol along the Vinh Te Canal when the only available repair ship, the USS SATUR (AKL 23) left the area on 6 January. Patrolling was resumed on 14 January when YR-71 relocated at Tan Chau and assumed responsibility for boat maintenance.

Another possible explanation of inactivity stemmed from what the Senior Advisor of River Patrol Division 55 called the "marginal effectiveness" of his crews. In a message to CTF 212, the advisor commented that "in spite of assignments, boats frequently go to positions of their own choice, remain in the villages, moor in two or three boat sections, cook after dark, and play commercial radios. The single [man on] watch is frequently found asleep by the advisor, and WBGPs are never varied and often set in view and hearing of fishermen" 1. The advisor concluded, however, that while his protégés' attitudes were poor, their ability was good and the situation

1. SA RPD FIVE FIVE Msg, DTG 110830Z February 71

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was improving.
The few engagements between TRAN HUNG DAO II forces and the enemy during January tended to confirm the supposition that the latter is more interested in political warfare and in reestablishing comms-liaison routes than in ambushing river patrols. While there were but five friendly and four enemy-initiated fire fights throughout the month, there were numerous indications that the enemy had not lost his tenacity in the area. That he was still determined to cut LOCs and thereby reduce GVN access to some of the more remote villages was evidenced on 22 January at 0130H as the Ben Soi Bridge was shaken by a mine explosion that destroyed two of its sections. Repairs were quickly accomplished, and traffic soon resumed. A large arms cache (216 B-40 rockets, 65 B-41s, and 500 boosters) was found by a Rural Development Cadre on 6 January five miles east of the Vam Co Dong on the Tay Ninh-Hau Nghia (KT 42 17). The NILO at Tra Cu speculated that the cache may signal the renewed use of the An Ninh Corridor as a comms-liaison route. An anti-personnel radar has accordingly been positioned at XT 42 16 and, having communications with both Go Dau Ha and Tra Cu NOCs, should provide for a quick response to sightings in the area.

Activity on the rivers themselves was about average, with one or two unusual developments. During a daylight transit on 26 January, RPD 64 boats came across two VC flags in trees along a stretch of
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River four kilometers from Moc Hoa (XS 064 890). There were also leaflets exhorting American soldiers to lay down their arms and return immediately to apprehensive wives and mothers across the sea. This was the first sign of VC activity on that part of the river in at least five months.

One of the rare mining incidents in the TRAn Hung Dao II AO happened at 1228H, 15 January, when the civilian tug, MOBY DICK, enroute to Tan An with barge in tow, detonated a submerged explosive four miles from Tuyen Nhon without incurring major damage. The PBR escorts were unable to follow up on the contact.

Numerous radar contacts the night of 1 January prompted two PBRs of RPD 64 to set a WBGP at 2052H 5.5 kilometers north-northwest of Tuyen Nhon (XS 253 821). At 2152H the radar unit reported from three to five people approaching the boats on the north bank. The PBRs commenced firing runs, and the radar unit heid eight men running north, at which time the boats dropped five 60mm mortar rounds into the vicinity. Three of the VC were estimated killed. At 2300H the same night, crewmembers of two ATCs from RID 48 sighted and sank two sampans two miles northwest of Ben Luc (XS 590 788). The number of occupants remained undetermined.

VNN sailors of two RPD54 boats sighted a sampan emerging from

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a canal at 2110H, 5 January, 13 miles northwest of Tan An (XS 420 765), opened fire, and sank the sampan. One VC was confirmed dead, two more considered probably dead, and one wounded. Various documents were also captured.

The pre-positioned claymore mine was again employed by the enemy at 1906H, 13 January, when two RPD 53 boats enroute to their WBGP position four miles west of Ben Keo (XT 161 423) received a B-40 round which missed, then the claymore, which hit the cover boat and wounded two VNN sailors.

Two RID 47 ATCs accounted for another dead VC at 2215H, 21 January, when in a WBGP three miles north of Go Dau Ha (XT 335 295), they observed three VC approach their position and opened fire. One of the enemy was ascertained dead and the other two presumed so.

Two VC suspects were detained at 2000H, 11 January. The crews of two RPD 53 boats were in a WBGP four kilometers from Ben Keo (XT 185 415) when they spied and detained two female occupants, both of whom they turned over to Tay Ninh Sector for questioning.

Attacks on bases and adjacent villages were rare, although Moc Hoa and Tan An personnel experienced some activity. At 2355H on 7 January, what was apparently a B-40 rocket was fired at ATSB Moc Hoa from the opposite bank; return fire was initiated with unknown results. The
village of Moc Hoa also received two mortar rounds the night of 21 January. At the PBR MOBASE II, located near Tan An (XS 570 650), a swimmer-sapper was sighted at 2143H, 22 January, 80 feet off the barge. A subsequent EOD inspection of chains and hull revealed no explosive devices.

The Seawolves undoubtedly accounted for the majority of the reported kills for the month, although most of these were unconfirmed kills. One incident in which corroboration was possible occurred eight miles east of My An (XS 066 657) at 2023H, 14 January, when Seawolves 42 and 45 were called on to support a surrounded Regional Forces Company. Four VC bodies were found the next day.

Harbor Clearance Unit One representatives successfully salvaged two fuel ammis sunk last month at TRAN HUNG DAO II bases. A small 11,000 gallon ammi was raised on about 12 January at Ben Keo and towed to Ben Luc. A larger 70,000 gallon ammi was refloated on 26 January and also taken to Ben Luc.

Some internal changes occurred for Task Group 214.1 during the month. Commander Huynh Kim Gia, VNN, relieved Lieutenant Commander Pham Van Tieu, VNN, as CTG 214.1 on 15 January. RPD 53 also received a new commanding officer as Lieutenant Phan Thanh Thuan took over from Lieutenant Nguyen Van Thuan on 18 January at Ben Keo.
A slight rearrangement of assets took place on 12 January as RID 48 departed Ben Luc for MOBASE II at Tan An and was replaced by ten PBRs from RPD 54.

January thus did not produce an appreciable increase in river or ground activity as might have been expected from the TET season. There were continued reports that more NVA main force units were moving into the AO, and the NILO at Tay Ninh reported on 8 January that captured documents stated that two regiments of the NVA Seventh Division had moved into his province. The Third Riverine Area Intelligence Officer remained skeptical of reports of an overall large influx, however, though he did not discount the possibility that more main force units may appear in an attempt to divert ARVN troops from further Cambodian incursions, especially as more U.S. troops are withdrawn.

So far as the success of the VNN interdiction effort was concerned, traffic on the waterways was consistently light, although there were some signs that old commo-liaison routes were still being used and that new ones were being attempted. Local informants reported that from six to 12 undetected river crossings took place the week of 15 January just north of Ben Luc between the Luong Hoa and Thu Thua Canals. This segment of the Vam Co Dong is bordered on either side
by pineapple fields which provide good cover and which are regarded as a very likely haven for local VC. It was considered probable that the crossings took place because Ben Luc was without assets at the time.
TRAN HUNG DAO V

TRAN HUNG DAO V river boats of River Division 52 and River Assault Group 24 failed to inflict a single enemy casualty during the month of January. CTG 216.1 reported that his men engaged in only three fire fights, all initiated by the enemy, in the Upper Saigon River AO. The only friendly casualties in January resulted from mistaken identity and carelessness. On the afternoon of 19 January, three RAG 24 boats were proceeding north 19 kilometers northwest of Phu Cuong (XT 679 228) when crewmembers saw three men on the east bank and opened fire. Firing terminated when the 38th ARVN Regiment Headquarters radioed that the men were ARVN troops. The wounded men were medevaced within an hour.

Four VNN sailors were wounded by their own grenade on 25 January in the village of Dau Tieng. The crewmen of three RPD 52 PBRs interrupted their daylight patrol to go into the village for some refreshment. While sitting in a local establishment, one sailor produced a fragmentation grenade, pulled the pin, and dropped it into a glass. The ensuing explosion wounded four sailors and a small child sitting nearby.
In the two months after the Vietnamese Navy assumed control of Operation TRAN HUNG DAO VI, hostile activity in the Kien Giang Province AO continued to decline. While the VNN commander, CTG 212.5, reported that his river patrol boats participated in 23 firefights during January, the allies did not suffer a single fatality. Two Vietnamese and one American sailor were wounded in the month's fighting, while the enemy suffered 11 killed.

The Kien Giang Province Viet Cong intensified their campaign of random terror against the local population during January. On 18 January guerrillas fired 18 81mm mortar rounds into the heart of Rach Gia City. Five days later, a hamlet six kilometers south of Rach Gia (WS 129 003) received three 107mm rockets which killed five civilians and wounded ten. PBRs from RPD 61 picked up the wounded citizens and took them to the Rach Soi I SB for treatment, and OV-10 aircraft from Binh Thuy arrived to place air strikes on the suspected enemy launch site. Four more civilian inhabitants of Rach Gia City were wounded on 25 January by still another mortar attack.

While the ISB Rach Soi was never directly threatened during the month, CTG 212.5 continued his efforts to strengthen base defense to cope with any eventuality. Base personnel gave particular emphasis
to increasing bunkering and sand bag protection of living and medical facilities.

Three River Patrol Division 58 PBRs engaged in a brief but vicious fire fight in a canal 29 kilometers northwest of Rach Gia (VS 863 240) or the night of 6 January. The PBRs had established a WBGP in the Luynh Quynh Canal in support of a Ninth ARVN Division drive into the Three Sisters area when crewmen saw a group of sampans shuttling personnel across the waterway to the south of them. The allies opened fire and called in Seawolves and OV-10 aircraft. While both the PBRs and the aircraft received heavy return fire, they did not sustain any casualties. There were five secondary explosions around the enemy positions, and soldiers who swept the area reported finding numerous blood trails, suggesting the probable deaths of five Viet Cong.

One PBR of RPD 58 was seriously damaged by B-40 rocket fire on the morning of 9 January, three kilometers south of Rach Soi (WS 135 055). As four PBRs were returning to TRAN HUNG DAO VI headquarters after an all night WBGP, Viet Cong attacked the last boat in the column with B-40 rockets and AK-47 fire. One rocket hit PBR 7648 at the starboard waterline, two feet aft of the bow, ripping an 18 inch hole in the hull. The boat captain was able to
beach his sinking craft as the crews of the other boats fired back at the
every position. PBR 7648 continued to receive automatic weapons
fire for several minutes until Seawolves and the other boat crews
suppressed all enemy activity. The patrol officer established a defensive
perimeter around the disabled boat, and within four hours, a salvage team had towed the PBR to ISB Rach Soi.

On the night of 29 January, crewmen of two PBRs of RPD 58 saw
enemy movement approaching their WBGP position (WR 200 865)
from a distance of 300 meters and took the area under fire.
The boats then received return fire, including four hand grenades,
from a second enemy position only 50 meters away. Apparently
the first observed enemy movement was a ruse to distract the crew's
attention from the second VC group attempting to creep within
grenade range of the PBRs. The allied boat gunners, joined eventually by
OV-10 planes, continued firing and claimed to have probably killed
six Viet Cong. Two Vietnamese crewmen were slightly wounded.

Seals of Detachment Golf, Romeo Platoon travelled 35 kilometers
southwest of Rach Soi on 14 January to attempt interdiction of VC infiltra-
tion along the Kien An District coastline. As the group slowly worked
its way north checking sampans along the way, it captured two Viet
Cong and their weapons at VR 845 723. Shortly thereafter, the Seals saw

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a man jump from another sampan 100 meters away and begin to swim ashore. One Seal disembarked into the sampan of the two captured VC as the rest of the unit went to pursue. At this point, one of the captured Viet Cong broke loose from his bonds and tried to grab his guard's weapon. The Seal was forced to shoot him. The other Seals were unable to capture the swimmer but believed that they wounded him.

Romeo Platoon Seals were only partially successful in attempting to destroy a Viet Cong district office and weapons repair facility later in the month. On 24 January, the commandos inserted at WR 12° 800, nine kilometers south of Kien An, after helicopter gunships had strafed the area. Half of the group patrolled eastward, searching hootches and destroying VC ordnance. While the Americans killed two VC who attempted to evade, one Seal, QMC D. L. Cunningham, was wounded from a small secondary explosion. The remaining Seals drove a small band of VC from a hootch but were unable to pursue them because of a network of booby traps along their escape route. As the Seals extracted by air, helicopter gunships placed air strikes on the enemy positions and received light but ineffective return fire.
The anticipated attack and the projected spring offensive which was to begin on TET, the onset of the lunar New Year, failed to materialize, and action during the month of January was light. The most active allied unit was LT Davis's Seal Detachment Alpha, 8th Platoon, which attempted to interdict the enemy’s logistic sources and lines of communication. Two major fire fights and a PBR's collision on the river with a police boat were the most significant actions in the TRAN HUNG DAO VIII AO.

On 21 January at 0745H, a RAG 21/33 Monitor boat, escorted by an FOM, was taken under fire by B-40 rocket and AK-47 fire while transiting the Tong Doc Loc Canal (XS 245 590) enroute to My Phuoc Tay. The Monitor received three B-40 rockets, and the FOM received two B-40 rockets. Both boats returned fire, but in the encounter, one VN sailor and the Monitor's U.S. advisor, GMGI Samuel H. Barnett, were blown overboard into the canal. The VN sailor survived, but the advisor, wounded in the legs, disappeared in the water and was reported missing. After suppressing the enemy fire, the FOM, which was carrying RF troops, beached and put ashore the troops for a sweep of the banks of the canal. The Vietnamese NOC at the RAG 21/33 base requested Seawolf support and received it immediately. On arrival, no targets were available,
and the Seawolves set down to medevac the wounded VN. A dustoff also arrived to medevac the remaining Vietnamese casualties to My Tho. An MSSC boat with an EOD team embarked arrived on the scene and futilely searched for the missing advisor. On 22 January at 1900H, RF troops found the body of GMG1 Barnett floating in the canal near the point of the past operation at XS 240 590. The results of the encounter were one VNN sailor, one RF soldier, and one USN killed, and eight VNN sailors and four RF troops wounded. Although the enemy was successful with five rocket hits, damage to the FOM and Monitor was mostly confined to the superstructure, and both were towed to Dong Tam for repairs.

RADM Matthews, Commander TRAN HUNG DAO, noting the intense struggle, stated: "While the loss of one ARVN, one VNN, and one USN is regretted, it is noted that due to your (217.1 units) rapid reaction, the enemy suffered a greater loss than we know about. Continue to emphasize readiness for attack when in operating areas, keeping in mind, he will ambush where we least expect it. Keep Charging."

1. CMD TIP msg of 221000Z
On 23 January at 1320H, RPD 53 boats with a RAG 21/33 FOM and escorts were transiting the Kinh Xang Canal (XS 344 562 to XS 347 561) in Dinh Tuong Province, 14 kilometers northwest of Dong Tam when the PBRs were fired upon from the southwest bank with B-40 rockets and small arms fire. One PBR immediately beached due to extensive damage, burned and finally sank. Seawolves and Cobra helicopters were immediately requested and made several strikes in the area. Another PBR ran aground but was pulled off as soon as the enemy fire was suppressed by a RAG boat. Three Americans, two believed serious, and two Vietnamese were wounded. Enemy casualties were unknown. This was the first transit of this area by boats of RPD 53, the division which had just relieved RPD 54 as CTU 217.1.2. The PBRs were returning to Dong Tam after an initial familiarization patrol when the attack occurred.

On 27 January at 0035H, in a bizarre incident that caused the death of a VNN PBR captain, a PBR from RPD 53 collided with a police boat on the My Tho River (XS 496 460) in Dinh Tuong Province. The accident was caused as a result of the PBR ramming the police boat which was anchored in the middle of the river without any lights showing. After the collision, the police boat moved downstream to the east and anchored again without rendering
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assistance to the two VNN who had fallen overboard, one of whom drowned. A second police boat arrived later along with RPD 53 boats and an Army helo to assist in the search. At 0830H, the search was concluded when the body of PBR boat captain Tran Phuc Hoa was found in the vicinity of XS 496 440.

The organization of TRAN HUNG DAO VIII assets and personnel at the start of the New Year was as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Unit</th>
<th>Advisor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CTU 217.1.1</td>
<td>RAG 21/33</td>
<td>LT R. L. Lassiter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CTU 217.1.2</td>
<td>RPD 53</td>
<td>LT S. A. Wood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CTU 217.1.5</td>
<td>RID 45</td>
<td>LT F. Mauney</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CTU 116.7.7</td>
<td>HAL 3 Det 7</td>
<td>LCDR Gordon</td>
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TRAN HUNG DAO IX

Overt enemy activity in the Tran Hung Dao IX AO was virtually non-existent during January. Allied pressure on main body Communist forces in Cambodia vastly diminished the threat of cross-border infiltration, and TG 212.3 PBRs and PCFs did not engage the enemy in a single fire fight during the month. Most activity shifted to the western sector of the AO where YRBM 20 at Tan Chau became the command post for the newly established allied convoy operation into Cambodia. Additionally, a VNN Mining Interdiction Division 93 detachment was established at An Long.
The new Vietnamese commander of Operation TRAN HUNG DAO X (CTG 212.6) enjoyed a relatively quiet month in what had recently been a highly hostile AO. While the Ca Mau headquarters was attacked once and Vietnamese river boats participated in ten fire fights, only three allies were wounded in January, and none were killed. Enemy losses inflicted by TG 212.6 units were reported as eight killed.

As intelligence reports of impending enemy attacks on the still incompletely finished Ca Mau LSB and the temporary headquarters at the adjacent PRU base continued to pour in, the American base commander (CTG 116.2) cancelled all other building projects in early January in order to devote total manpower resources to base defense construction. Moreover, nightly ambushes were set by all available forces, including two PF platoons to the south of the base, PRUs to the north, and PSDF troops in the hamlets to the east and west.

Despite these extensive precautions, an enemy unit staged a brief attack on the PRU base just before midnight on 15 January. After firing a brief barrage of automatic weapons fire from northwest and south of the base, the guerrillas lobbed a launch bomb into the moat on the north side of the base. As the base defenders temporarily suppressed the enemy fire, Seawolves arrived overhead, and after exchanging fire with the concealed insurgents, drove them away. The only
casualty reported was a PSDF soldier wounded by a fragmentation grenade which was hurled at him by a fleeing Viet Cong west of the base.

In the ensuing ground sweep, two launch bombs, three launch tubes, and assorted firing mechanisms were captured. A local informant reported that 10-15 VC carrying five bodies had fled the environs of the ASTB following the attack.

CTG 116.2 reported that a quick reaction to DUFFLEBAG sensor activation possibly thwarted another enemy attack on 26 January. A local intelligence source indicated that the ATSB's accurate mortar fire killed or wounded half of a 12 man local VC unit which had moved into an attack position.

Navy Seals of LT Moran's Detachment Alfa, 9th Platoon methodically killed or captured various unsuspecting members of the An Xuyen VC infrastructure during January. A squad captured a village VC finance accountant and killed a "liberation" committeeeman on 4 January in a hamlet 12 kilometers northeast of Hai Yen (VQ 908 928). On 7 January Kit Carson Scouts led a seven man squad to a point 34 kilometers south of Ca Mau to capture two Viet Cong, one the wife of a district level communist who had managed to escape his hootch moments before the green-faced commandos entered it.

Acting on ARVN intelligence, a Seal squad, a Kit Carson Scout,
and a guide inserted by sampan at a point 14 kilometers southeast of Hai Yen (VQ 908 705) at dawn on 22 January. After trudging through 1200 meters of mud, the Seals entered a Viet Cong hootch but found it empty. Two VC with weapons then escaped an adjacent hootch as the squad approached, but the Seals finally managed to kill one guerrilla and wound another when a second pair tried to flee. As the Seals evacuated the hamlet along with six refugee families, they came under small arms fire but escaped unharmed under the cover of Seawolf air power.

The enemy sustained the greatest single loss of the month in the Song Ong Doc AO at the hands of two gunfire support ships steaming offshore in the Gulf of Thailand. The shore based allied spotter reported that fire from HMAS PERTH (D-38) and USCGC RUSH (WHEC 723) killed 64 and wounded another 16 members of an NVA Battalion which was poised near Trun Thuat Hamlet (VR 850 038), waiting to attack VNN boats on the Song Ong Doc.

The only serious incident involving TRAN HUNG DAO X river assets (RPD 62 and RID 43) during January occurred on the 14th when an Armored Troop Carrier of RID 43 was ambushed five kilometers west of the Song Ong Doc ATSB (VR 925 008). Two Vietnamese and one American advisor were wounded when the boat was hit with B-40 rocket
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and small arms fire from the south bank. Seawolves of Detachment Three, OV-10s from Binh Thuy, and the accompanying river boats saturated the suspected enemy position with over 78,000 rounds of assorted ammunition, but were unable to report inflicting any casualties.

On 23 January the USS WINDHAM COUNTY (LST-1170) relieved the USS GARRETT COUNTY (AGP 786) as the TRAN HUNG DAO X and Seawolf Detachment Six support ship. This job was in turn assumed by the USS HUNTERDON COUNTY (AGP 821) on 30 January.
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TRAN HUNG DAO XIV

Action in the TRAN HUNG DAO XIV AO during the month of January was again light, extending the lull that has persisted the last few months. Operations still continued with Seal Team One, Detachment Golf, X-ray Platoon as it pursued an intense interdictory effort in keeping the enemy off balance and on the move. This campaign coupled with the relentless patrols by 217.1 units and the 7th ARVN Division's effort to penetrate, occupy, and pacify Kien Hoa Province, this long time VC stronghold, finally paid dividends. The Seals were involved in seven operations of a varying nature, and RPD 56 in their constant patrols were instrumental in thwarting the enemy's penetration of waterways in Kien Hoa Province on 10 and 12 January, producing nine probable enemy casualties.

On 10 January at 1645H crewmen of two PBRs of RPD 56 detected one sampan with three passengers crossing the Ham Luong River (XS 594 140), 12 kilometers southeast of Ben Tre in Kien Hoa Province. As the command boat approached the sampan, all three passengers dove overboard, and PBR personnel dropped concussion grenades in the area, probably killing the three VC. The sampan and three radios were captured in the one-sided engagement.

On 12 January in the same area at 1000H, PBR crewmembers

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of RPD 56 detected one junk with six personnel crossing from the north bank to the south bank on the Ham Luong River in the vicinity of XS 586 140. As the PBRs approached, the junk took flight and was taken under fire. The six occupants tried to flee but were presumed killed by allied fire. One junk and one kilogram of documents were captured.

Seal Team One, Detachment Golf, Xray Platoon, acting on intelligence reports, searched an area which was believed to be a VC rear services area at XS 922 151, 45 kilometers southeast of Ben Tre in Binh Dai District, Kien Hoa Province on 14 January at 1500H. The Seals discovered a solidly built and well camouflaged structure complex which was promptly destroyed along with other captured enemy supplies. Black Ponies were then called in place strikes in the area, destroying bunkers and hooches. At 1750H, Seals continued the search of the area and discovered two smaller complexes which they destroyed. Four individual weapons, 25 kilos of documents, five kilos of medical supplies, two claymores, and 13 grenades were seized. A total of six hooches, four sampans, 2000 kilos of food stuffs, and various sundry supplies were destroyed. One VC was wounded and captured, and three VC were killed. There were no friendly casualties incurred during this mission.

On 15 January at 0930H, three Seals, three US EOD, and three VN
EOD embarked aboard a Boston Whaler and an LSSC and departed from Ben Tre for XS 637 314 at the mouth of the Rach Ba Tru, the position of many bunkers which were sighted by the Seals in previous operations. After calling in Black Pony aircraft for initial strikes, the EOD personnel departed the LSSC and proceeded to blow up the remaining bunker complexes. In the process of the operation, one member of the VN EOD team tripped a booby trap, receiving bad wounds to the right foot and lower right leg. The wounded VN EOD member was medevaced at 1150H to Ben Tre.

On 29 January at 2030H, Seals conducted a search and destroy mission in Truc Giang District, seven kilometers north of Ben Tre City (XS 513 375), in Kien Hoa Province. The Seals were inserted by MSSC and patrolled the area searching hootches as they went along. At 0100H, the coxswain of the MSSC heard a sampan and fired a warning shot which prompted the occupants of the craft to evade. The coxswain took them under fire and killed three of them while destroying their sampan. A five man Seal element was left at the hootch site while a ten man unit patrolled to the west. At 0110H, the ten man element encountered a group of VC which initiated a firefight, resulting in one Seal being killed and two wounded. Black Ponies were called in for support, and the other Seal unit rejoined the group for added assistance. At 0150H, the Vietnamese interpreter was wounded as the allies extracted under heavy enemy fire.
fire. After the Seals completed extractions, the Black Ponies raked the entire area. The results of the encounter were one American killed and two Americans and one Vietnamese wounded. Enemy casualties were three VC killed.

On 25 January, TRAN HUNG DAO XIV was terminated and TRAN HUNG DAO XIX was initiated. TRAN HUNG DAO XIX AO will include the old AO plus other selected areas of Kien Hoa Province.

As of the first month of the new year, the organization, units and advisor personnel were as follows:

CTU 217.2.1       RAG 23/31       LTJG R. E. Brown
CTU 217.2.3       RPD 56         LT J. D. Gilbert
CTU 217.2.4       LSIL
CTU 217.2.4.1     CG 34/35       LT B. R. Moffett
CTU 217.2.5       HAL-3         LTJG T. E. Arnold
CTU 217.2.6       RID 42         LT C. Votava
The TRAN HUNG DAO XVII AO, encompassing the heretofore unpenetrated U Minh Forest, continued to be one of the most active naval AOs in the Republic of Vietnam. During the month of January, the level of enemy activity was particularly intense on the waterways where Communist mining tactics achieved a marked degree of success.

Six allied boats were either sunk or received severe incapacitating damage as a result of floating or command detonated mines: (HQ 1258, HQ 1259, HQ 5152, HQ 1256, HQ 6002, and an LCM-6).

The mining threat which continued unabated throughout the month was continuously expounded upon by intelligence units. General Nghi (CG 21st ARVN) informed Deputy COMNAVFORV at mid-month that the VC were increasing training of sapper units in the U Minh Forest and were expected to launch another mining campaign against VNN craft, and he specifically mentioned the formation of another 140-man sapper company to mount a more successful mining campaign. This information was later confirmed by a document captured by the 21st ARVN which detailed the enemy military objectives in the Rach Gia area during the first six months of 1971. An objective which the document particularly stressed was the destruction of GVN