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U. S. NAVAL FORCES
VIETNAM

MONTHLY HISTORICAL SUMMARY

FEBRUARY 1971

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                                          JO3 Robert S. Drew
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FOREWORD

While the Army of the Republic of Vietnam waged a vicious assault on the Ho Chi Minh Trail network in the Laotian Panhandle in February, American and Vietnamese Naval forces struck at enemy strongholds 500 miles away in the Ca Mau Peninsula. The southern North Vietnamese and Viet Cong proved no less tenacious than their comrades in Laos as they attacked the allies' Advanced Tactical Support Bases at Nam Can, Ca Mau, and Song Ong Doc, and sank five river boats in the U Minh Forest. The enemy also began to retake the initiative along the northern coast when he repeatedly attacked VNN units and mined five river craft on the Cua Viet River. Between these two geographical extremes, hostile activity remained at a low level.

Rear Admiral Chon, CNO, VNN joined Vice Admiral King, COMNAVFORV, in Hawaii on 13 February to accept the USS CAMP (DER 251) from the U.S. Navy. As all small combat craft of the Brown Water Navy had been turned over by the end of 1970, the scope of the ACTOV Program was enlarged to include augmentation of the Vietnamese Navy's offshore patrol capability.

Coastal Surveillance Forces of Operation MARKET TIME,
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including the last U.S. Naval units afloat under the command of COMNAVFORV, detected an SL-8 trawler off Vietnam's shores in February, the first since November 1970. The alien craft, tracked with "covert surveillance" techniques, never attempted to land.

16,220 Naval personnel remained in-country at the end of the month.
**CURRENT OPERATIONS**

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Operation SOLID ANCHOR

Enemy activity in the SOLID ANCHOR AO during February seemed moderate only in comparison with the heavy onslaughts of the several preceding months. The Nam Can ATSB survived two mortar attacks, and the allies sustained two killed and 11 wounded during the month while killing 21 of the enemy.

Material difficulties remained a crucial factor in naval operations in the lower Ca Mau Peninsula during the month. In the first week of the month, the failure of an oil tanker to make a scheduled POL supply run to the isolated ATSB forced a brief curtailment of combat operations. Commanders of RDI's 43 and 44 reported that, on the average, 57% of their craft were available for operations - a slight improvement over last month. The COSTAL V PCF armada fared somewhat better with an average of 65% availability. On 14 February the USS WASHTENAW COUNTY (LST 1170) relieved the USS WINDHAM COUNTY (LST 1170) as the SOLID ANCHOR support ship.

The SOLID ANCHOR Advanced Tactical Support Base, mortared on four separate occasions in January, sustained two more mortar attacks during February. On the evening of 18 February, enemy troops lobbed approximately 25 rounds of 82mm mortar fire into the vicinity of the Nam Can base from a position due south of the ATSB. Only four rounds
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impacted within the perimeter, and the remainder fell along the waterfront and into the Cua Lon River. One Vietnamese sailor was killed and three were wounded. All boats were gotten underway without damage as Seawolves and counter-battery crews fired at the suspected enemy position.

This familiar scenario was repeated on a smaller scale on the last day of the month when three 82mm rounds landed near the Nam Can helicopter pad as another three impacted within the Ranger camp on the south bank. There were no friendly personnel or materiel casualties.

Several American advisors and Vietnamese sailors of RIDs 41 and 44 and COSFLOT V PCFs were wounded in riverine ambushes during the month. Two VNN Sailors sustained slight fragmentation wounds when ATC 1209 was hit by two B-40 rockets 17 kilometers southwest of SOLID ANCHOR (VQ 838 600) on 9 February. The allied boats were patrolling in the area where for several months Viet Cong had been restricting local woodcutters from using certain canals.

After inserting a Ranger unit on the west bank of the Rach Ong Dinh (WQ 014 639) on 19 February, two RID 44 ASPBs were attacked with rocket and small arms fire from the opposite bank. Seawolf helicopters and OV-10 aircraft scrambled to assist the moderately damaged boats. Two Vietnamese and two Americans, EM2 W. E. Buchhorn and EM2
An ARVN platoon transferred to
the area to clear the area of several land mines, B-59 rocket launchers,
and a mine-tube complex.

On 26 February a command-detonated mine exploded five meters
from ASPH 5173 at WQ 077 772 as the boat was returning to SOLID
ANCHOR from New Nam Can. The mine, consisting of approximately
60 pounds of C-4 explosives, was mounted on the canal bottom, inflicted
only moderate damage on the ASPH. The boat beached immediately to
allow ground troops to disembark for a sweep, but no Viet Cong were
found.

PCF 3903 became the last riverine casualty of the month when it was
struck by a n-40 rocket 22 kilometers east of SOLID ANCHOR (WQ 209
697) on the afternoon of 26 February. The "Swift" boat, providing escort
for a tug traveling eastward on the Song Bo De, lost use of one engine but
was able to continue its mission. There were no personnel casualties.

Seals of Detachment Golf, Whiskey Platoon assumed responsibility
for the PCF evacuation program in the entire SOLID ANCHOR AO when
Zulu Platoon departed without replacement in February. On the 11th of
the month, Whiskey Platoon Seals attempted to interdict a seven man
squad of a Viet Cong company operating nine kilometers northwest of

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the Nam Can ATSB. After setting an ambush site at VQ 934 743 at 0230H, the squad called in 105mm artillery on a prearranged area. The scheme worked, and enemy troops in blue and green uniforms exposed themselves to the Seawolves waiting to strike. At dawn, the Seals ambushed two uniformed soldiers and a sampan with two men in it. The Seals extracted by air at 1000H and reported probably killing three VC during the operation.

Whiskey Platoon Seals joined with Yankee Platoon Seals from Bac Lieu and a host of helicopters and gunfire support ships to destroy a VC weapons and supply center on 13 February. Acting on Hoi Chanh intelligence, 24 Seals, seven Kit Carson Scouts, and a UDT squad inserted along the Tac Ong Thay Canal 42 kilometers east of SOLID ANCHOR (WQ 293 745). In several hours of patrolling, during which the USCGC RUSH (WHEC 723), USCGC MORGENTHAU (WHEC 722) and Army and Navy helo gunships saturated the area with fire, the Seals discovered and destroyed approximately 45 hootches and bunkers. There were numerous VC flags and documents in the hootches, confirming the area as a Communist stronghold. Additionally, the Seals discovered approximately 100 women and children inhabiting the complex but did not detain any of them.

A SOLID ANCHOR Seal squad was only partially successful in
eliminating an 11 man Viet Cong unit occupying two hootches in the Dalu Doi District on the morning of 27 February. The commandos, assisted by a KCS and two LDNN personnel, inserted at WQ 105 845 and patrolled to the objective, eight kilometers northeast of the Kai Keo outpost. The squad divided in half so that one group could storm into each hootch, but movement in one of the hootches caused the SEALs to open fire. They killed three VC but were forced to immediately extract by helicopter without attacking the second dwelling.

The Biet Hai (Naval Rangers) counter-guerrilla force assigned to Operation SOLID ANCHOR operated almost daily during February to interdict Viet Cong supply routes and ferret out enemy defensive positions in the Nam Can AO. While the vast majority of sweeps were uneventful, a ten man unit engaged in a vicious battle at midday on 17 February. After disarming eight booby traps and patrolling through a mine field, the Naval Rangers came upon a VC trench line and bunker complex nine kilometers southeast of SOLID ANCHOR (WQ 072 662). Two VC were lying on a bunker and another appeared to be sleeping in a hammock. The patrol initiated fire and instantly killed the three exposed guerrillas. At this point an estimated 30 enemy troops hidden inside the bunker returned a withering volume of fire, including RPG and B-40 rockets. The allied patrol leader, LTJG Tran, was
killed instantly, and two other Biet Hai troops were wounded.

A Biet Hai killed two more of the enemy when he tossed a hand grenade into the bunker. The fierce battle raged at close range for nearly 20 minutes until the allied unit could withdraw.

The wounded Biet Hai were medevaced, and OV-10 aircraft, Seawolf helicopters, and the 44th ARVN Ranger artillery pounded the enemy stronghold. After completion of the bombardment, a reaction force of Biet Hai and Rangers set out for the original battle site on boats of RIDs 41 and 44, only to be ambushed by small arms while in transit. The force arrived uninjured at the bunker complex at 1510H and did not meet any resistance. An ASPB which was establishing a blocking force on a nearby canal was slightly damaged by a B-40 rocket, and crew members killed one Viet Cong with return fire.

Troops of the 44th ARVN Ranger Battalion assigned to CTG 116.1 made sporadic contact with the enemy in February during a series of search and destroy missions and nocturnal ambushes in the environs of the Nam Can base. On 3 February an ARVN company, supported by RID craft as it swept down the east bank of the Rach Ong Quyen, made contact with a small Viet Cong unit at WQ 04 65. The enemy withdrew after a brief exchange in which one ARVN soldier was slain. Another ARVN company engaged a second guerrilla element of unknown size.
six kilometers south of SOLID ANCHOR (VQ 991 628) at midday on 25 February. The allies killed one Viet Cong and captured another. ARVN troops labored throughout the month to complete construction of the new 105mm howitzer artillery emplacement on the north bank of the Song Cua Lon, adjacent to the SOLID ANCHOR base. On the 20th of the month, the two big guns were ferried across the river from the old fire support base to the new location.

Captain E. I. Finke returned to Nam Can after a three month respite when, on 21 February, he relieved Captain R. E. Spruit as CTG 116.1 when the latter departed on emergency leave.
The three southernmost naval operations in Vietnam, SOLID ANCHOR, TRAN HUNG DAO X, and TRAN HUNG DAO XVII, continued to meet fierce enemy opposition during February. TRAN HUNG DAO XVIII, the Phnom Penh POL resupply operation, operated with increased effectiveness after experiencing a hectic beginning in January. Action on the rivers of Military Region III was again light and virtually ceased along the Cambodian border.
Vietnamese Army and Navy operations against enemy strongholds in Cambodia were largely responsible for the low level of hostile activity in the TRAN HUNG DAO I AO during February. PBRs and PCFs conducting the Cambodian border patrol along the Vinh Te Canal engaged the enemy in only six brief firefights in which one Communist guerrilla was killed. There were no friendly casualties for the month. As in all other Delta operations, the quick reacting Navy Seawolf helicopters flew almost daily missions against Viet Cong staging areas and logistics routes.

Three "Swift" boats, one belonging to CTG 212.4 and two to the Fourth Coastal Zone, narrowly averted being blown up by a mine on 24 February on the Vinh Te Canal, 17 kilometers northeast of Ha Tien (VS 530 600). At 1055H PCF crew members saw three Viet Cong fleeing a position along the canal bank. A reaction team landed to pursue them and, after briefly exchanging fire with an estimated 30 VC in a nearby treeline, succeeded in killing one of the initial three guerrillas. The reaction team then discovered a wire which led from a foxhole on the bank into the canal. Divers from one of the boats retrieved a 100 pound command detonated mine lying midstream in ten feet of water. The uninjured boats made a final firing run on enemy positions before departing the area.
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By February, the normal dry season reduction in border interdiction operations and the shift of assets to provide support for the Mekong convoy operation (TRAN HUNG DAO XVIII) had resulted in complete inactivity in the central and eastern sectors of the TRAN HUNG DAO I AO. Rear Admiral Matthews, Commander, TRAN HUNG DAO, consequently recommended to CNO, VNN, that the operation standdown, and that the Fourth Coastal Zone commander be assigned responsibility for the Vinh Te Canal. This suggestion was being reviewed at month's end.
Activity generally continued at a low level in the TRAN HUNG DAO II (GIANT SLINGSHOT) AO, despite reports from various sources indicating enemy plans to conduct a significant number of attacks after TET. The Viet Cong were apparently taking advantage of the dry season to resupply their units, as intelligence sources indicated enemy plans for an offensive taking place from March to May. ARVN operations nearby in Cambodia apparently made the necessary resupply difficult. Priority targets continued to be major bridges, such as the Go Dau Ha Bridge, and patrol boats on the Vam Co Dong River. There was a continuing emphasis on small unit tactics in the TRAN HUNG DAO II AO. Numerous sightings of sapper swimmers in the area of MOBASE II at Tan An lent credence to this.

On 7 February members of RPD 54, while on day patrol, located a series of 30 spider holes and what appeared to be a sampan loading area, located on the southeast bank of the Vam Co Dong in the vicinity of XT 100 465.

At 2010H on 14 February four PBRs enroute to a WBGP were taken under fire with two B-40s, which passed astern, and light A/W fire from the north bank of the Vam Co Tay (XS 220 816). The PBRs...
made three firing runs, then cleared the area for the Seawolves that were called in. Modulation jamming was experienced by ATSB Tuyen Nhon. There were no results observed. This was the first enemy initiated firefight in the area in the last five months, and the local NILO felt that it was intended to cover movements of VC units in the area.

On 15 February, at 2240H boats of RID 47 from Go Dau Ha in a WBGP observed and engaged three VC traversing a field on the west bank in the vicinity of XT 385 285. There was no return fire, and the results were unknown.

At 1845H on 19 February two PBR's of RPD 64 received three rockets and heavy small arms fire from the south bank of the Vam Co Tay (XS 445 735) on their way to a WBGP. They made two firing runs, and then called in the Seawolves as well as two other RPD 64 units. Three VC were observed and believed killed. Later that night, at 2020H, and 14 kilometers northwest of Moc Hoa, VNN PBRs of RPD 64 in a waterborne guardpost sighted two swimmers and took them under fire, with undetermined results.

On 11 February, at 2051H the MACV compound and adjacent airfield area in Moc Hoa received three rounds of 82mm mortar.
with no effect. Twelve days later, at 230010H, the ATSB Moc Hoa was again attacked, receiving ten 60mm mortar rounds. At the same time the MACV Team 85 compound received six rounds. Seawolves scrambled but were unable to place strikes due to the presence of friendly forces in the area. There was only slight damage incurred, and no personnel were injured. The attack continued the pattern of periodic harassing fire against the city and of apparent decrease in intensity since the end of November.

The Third Riverine Area Intelligence Officer provided a detailed study concerning the infiltration of supplies and personnel through the lower THD II AO. From the confluence of the two Vam Co Rivers to XS 628 732, enemy traffic consisted of mainly guerrillas in groups of two or three who crossed to avoid ground operations or to resupply their own small caches. He further commented that there was probably no major infiltration of men or supplies in this area. Near Ben Luc, the headquarters of THD II, waterborne crossings were practically nonexistent because of the allied concentrations there.

The area between the Thu Thua canal (XS 581 767) to the Xang canal (XS 569 855) was probably the most important section of the lower Vam Co Dong river since it contained crossing points for infiltration into Gia Dinh Province and Saigon. In the area from the Xang canal to the Horseshoe, enemy groups infiltrated to resupply caches with
as many as ten to 15 persons in a group. The third RAIO stated that the primary means of interdicting enemy traffic across the lower Vam Co Dong River has been the waterborne guardposts.

The NILO at Tra Cu noted that the Loc Giang radar site had not yet reported significant detection of infiltration through the An Ninh corridor, nor had the Tra Cu radar site recorded any through Duc Hoa. The NILO commented, however, that though these radars had not yet picked up infiltration from the west, the increase in activity in northern Hau Ngia Province indicated that main force units, notably the 1696 Battalion, were being supplied during the dry season. Also, various sources indicated that enemy resupply routes were in a state of flux. (NFV Instsum 026-71).

Units of TG 214.1 - about 16 PBRs and ten FACs - were called away from TRAN HUNG DAO II activities to act as a blocking force for operation TOAN THANG 71 just inside of Cambodia on the upper Vam Co Dong River. The operation, which began on 18 February, involved combined Vietnamese forces, the naval portion of which was commanded by CTG 214.1 headquartered at Tay Ninh City. The boats acted as a blocking force on the Prek KamPong Spean from about WT 958 607 to WT 875 627 as the ARVN Task Force 225, composed of four to five battalions, drove the enemy north.
to the river. The boats reported contact with only one lone VC as of the end of February.

As no more than ten boats at a time were called away for the Cambodian operation, the THD II mission was never seriously impaired.
For the second month in a row, allied units of River Patrol Division 52 and River Assault Group 24 failed to inflict a single enemy casualty in sporadic skirmishes on the Upper Saigon River. Two American advisors and seven VNN sailors were wounded during February.

Binh Duong Province Viet Cong effectively employed their familiar quick ambush tactics when they crippled one PBR with a well placed B-40 rocket on 2 February, 35 kilometers northwest of Phu Cuong (XT 523 395). The single rocket exploded on the engine cover of one boat of a five boat column and injured two Vietnamese sailors and their American advisor. BM1 C.C. Newcomb was mortally wounded sustaining wounds over his entire body.

At dusk on 7 February, seven River Assault Craft of RAG 24 transiting north to a WBGP position received five B-40 rockets and automatic weapons fire 30 kilometers northwest of Phu Cuong (XT 578 308). Three sailors were wounded on the command boat by a rocket explosion amidships, and a B-40 detonation on the Monitor caused minor damage. A third rocket exploded in the engine compartment of an LCVP, seriously wounding one Vietnamese and forcing the craft to go aground. Army gunships and dustoff helicopters from Long Binh
Two days later, medevac removed the wounded. Elements of the 29th ARVN Infantry Group provided security for the damaged LCVP, and the following day it was towed to Phu Cuong for repairs.

A Viet Cong rocket squad staged a surprise attack on six PBRs and six RACs 36 kilometers northwest of Phu Cuong (XT 545 351) on the evening of 24 February. Three B-40 rockets struck the command boat causing slight material damage but wounding five ARVN troops and one sailor. The medevac helicopter arrived over an hour and a half later, but the request for Army gunships was never honored.

Because of chronic lack of air support and rapid medical evacuation, OTC 216I requested the establishment of a helicopter detachment at Phu Cuong. He additionally asked that a Seal platoon be sent to the Upper Saigon River AO to assist in ferreting out the elusive VC ambush teams. Because of pressing operational commitments in the Mekong Delta, Commander TRÁI HUNG DAO denied both of the requests, but promised that a Seal detachment might be provided on an ad hoc basis for specific, limited missions.
TRAN HUNG DAO VI

Hostile activity in the TRAN HUNG DAO VI AO during February reached its lowest level since the Vietnamese Navy assumed control of the operation four months previously. Allied boats engaged Communist guerrillas in firesights in which three allied sailors, including one American, were wounded, and CTG 212.5 reported that his men slew 57 Viet Cong. Communist terrorists continued harassment of the civilian residents of Rach Gia City when they lobbed two 107mm rounds into Kien Giang Province's major population center on 3 February. Six civilians were wounded.

The month's only major riverine confrontation in the TRAN HUNG DAO VI AO occurred on the evening of 11 February. Crew members of two River Patrol Division 58 PBRs positioned in a WBGP 15 kilometers northwest of Rach Gia (WS 029 170) unleashed a heavy barrage of fire on 15 people whom they saw moving 200 meters inland from the south bank. The American advisor on the PBRs believed that the unit his boats interdicted was the group which had recently attacked two ARVN outposts south of his position and was now moving north to attack a third outpost in the area. Seawolf helicopters, followed by OV-10 aircraft from Binh Thuy, placed repeated air strikes in the area and caused three secondary explosions. The advisor reported probably killing six Viet Cong in the attack.
An alert Vietnamese seaman in Rach Soi Village assisted in collecting seven Hoi Chanhs on 28 February. The RPD 61 sailor, on liberty from an operation in the TRAN HUNG DAO XVII AO, learned of several Viet Cong in the village and reported to his commanding officer who in turn led a landing party to investigate. The Vietnamese found seven cooperative Hoi Chanhs who turned in a radio and a carbine. Two of the former guerrillas who claimed to have knowledge of Viet Cong frogmen were given to the Seals for interrogation, and the remainder were turned over to the An Hoa Village police.

Navy Seals of Detachment Golf, Romeo Platoon were the most active allied forces in Kien Giang Province during February. An eight man squad, led by a guide and Kit Carson Scout, encountered a small Viet Cong unit while enroute to a hamlet to capture a Communist village finance and education chief on 6 February. As the commandos patrolled an area 17 kilometers south of Rach Soi (WR 125 834), they saw a light 75 meters from their position. Closer investigation revealed five armed VC whom the Seals immediately attacked. After the brief skirmish, the squad began receiving automatic weapons fire from the east as it searched the canal and fields for bodies and weapons. Seawolves arrived overhead to suppress enemy fire and cover the Seals as they proceeded to the targetted hooch. The dwelling was deserted but contained Viet Cong flags. The Seals extracted safely, and reported
killing two VC in the initial exchange.

At midday on 13 February, Romeo Platoon Seals conducted a helicopter raid on a suspected 14 man Viet Cong mortar team 14 kilometers south of Rach Soi. After Seawolves had placed air strikes on the area, the Seals inserted at WR 179 860 and began patrolling through tall grass toward a treeline. They encountered three VC whom they killed and then discovered and destroyed a 20 man rest area. The Seals returned to ISB Rach Soi without sustaining any casualties.

The only Seal casualties for the month resulted from a mine explosion on the Rach Soi - Kien Luong Road on 21 February. Two Americans were slightly wounded when their truck detonated a suspected 82mm round buried in the road.
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TRAN HUNG DAO VIII

Enemy activity in the TRAN HUNG DAO VIII AO came almost
to a standstill during February as only two firefights were recorded
by TG 217.1 units. Although the lull persisted on the waterways,
however, the Logistic Support Base at Dong Tam came under attack
on two separate occasions on the 12th of February. Intelligence
reports have indicated that the enemy's 267 B Sapper Battalion was
located in Son Giang District, Dinh Tuong Province, and was
probably responsible. Accordingly, on 16 February, the C.P. was
located approximately seven kilometers northwest of Dong Tam
(XS 340 465) and was accompanied by a security force of 18 troops.
The unit was armed with numerous large CHICOM mines and an
unknown number of satchel charges. The unit's main mission
was to attack and disrupt the allies LOGs at and around the Dong
Tam Base.

The Seals had an uneventful month and took advantage of the
inactivity by changing command. Seal Team One, Detachment Golf,
Victor Platoon, CTE 116.12.1.2, commanded by LTJG R. Clapp,
relieved Seal Team Two, Detachment Alfa, 8th Platoon, CTU
116.6.3, commanded by LT A. Davis, on 15 February.

On 10 February at 1630H, a RID 45 Tango boat in company...
with an Alpha boat on patrol of the Hai Muoi Tam Canal (XS 006 537) in Dinh Tuong Province was struck by three B-40 rounds from the northeast bank and AK-47 fire from the southwest bank. One VNN was killed and three wounded in the clash, and the Tango boat which received the brunt of the attack had to be towed back to Dong Tam with extensive hull and engine damage. ARVN troops were called and responded with an uneventful sweep of the banks of the canal.

On 21 February at 2055H, RAG 21/33 boats, an LCM-6, and two LCVPs on patrol of the Touy Doc Lac Canal (XS 253 586), five kilometers southeast of My Phuoc Tay in Dinh Tuong Province, were attacked by B-40 and small arms fire. LCM-6, HQ 1503, was struck by a B-40 round from the south bank which caused material damage to the 20 millimeter gun mount and slight superstructure damage. The two LCVPs were fired upon with B-40 fire but fortunately sustained no damage. One VNN sailor was killed; two VNN and two RF troops were wounded. Seawolves were called and responded with several strikes in the vicinity.

ATSB Dong Tam came under attack on 12 February at 1220H when five rounds of unknown ordinance landed within the perimeter causing no damage and again at 2050H when three rounds were received causing no damage or casualties. The two attacks signified that the
base was still targeted by enemy units as a primary objective because of its location and logistic capability. The importance of this base was stressed when on 20 February, a DEPCOMNAVFORV Repair Coordinator was established in order to coordinate repair effort for all assets assigned to Operations TRAN HUNG DAO VIII and XIX. The Repair Coordinator will assign repair priorities for all craft assigned to both AOs and schedule craft for movement to and from repair facilities. In addition, he will coordinate the assignment of repair priorities for craft from outside the two AOs, other coordinators, COMNAVSUPPACT, and CTF 214 as appropriate for repairs at LSB Dong Tam.
For the second month in a row, riverine assets of CTG 212.3 did not engage the enemy in a single firefight. YRBM-16, formally the afloat headquarters of Commander, TRAN HUNG DAO IX, took advantage of the lull to depart the area after lengthy service.
While riverine assets of Operation TRAN HUNG DAO X, including RPD 62 and RID 43, were involved in comparatively few firefights (14) during February, the enemy made his presence felt with attacks on the Ca Mau and Song Ong Doc Advanced Tactical Support Bases. Allied casualties in all hostile action included four VNN sailors killed, two missing, and 16 wounded and 11 American Navymen wounded. CTG 212.6 reported that his men killed 23 guerrillas during the month.

As with the SOLID ANCHOR operation to the south, base defense remained the most crucial problem for TRAN HUNG DAO X forces at Ca Mau and Song Ong Doc. DUFFLEBAG sensor activations, often running as high as 30 per night, indicated almost constant movement around the bases. By the end of February, CTG 212.6 was implementing a plethora of innovations to diminish his susceptibility to close range enemy attack.

The first attack following the TET holidays proved to be the least effective. In the early morning hours of 3 February, the Ca Mau Advanced Tactical Support Base received four rounds of 82mm mortar fire, and units of RPD 62 on patrol in the immediate vicinity received automatic weapons fire from the south bank. The ATSB and
boats responded with mortar and automatic weapons fire which quickly silenced the enemy guns. PFs and PRUs swept the area and recovered two 107mm launch bombs and three B-14 rockets. There were numerous spider holes directly across the canal from the base, and the PRUs found numerous blood trails leading to the south. There were no allied casualties.

Four days later, guerrillas fired 16 B-40 rockets, ten 82mm incendiary mortar rounds, and small arms fire into the ATSB from the west bank. A direct hit on a U.S. Army LCM-8 killed one American soldier, and one VN and two USN sailors on the base were wounded. Several enemy mortar rounds landed in the populated area on the west bank and set fire to about 20 hootches. One civilian died, and six children were badly burned in the conflagration. The allies returned fire, and Seawolves and Army gunships saturated the west and north banks with fire. A Vietnamese Air Force dustoff was requested for the wounded but refused to fly. Additionally, the Ca Mau hospital refused entry to the wounded children because they were too badly burned. A U.S. helicopter finally medevaced the wounded.¹

Local intelligence indicated that the VC attacking force was split into several elements on the north and south banks of the canal.

¹ CTG 116.2 MSG DTG 071750Z FEB 71
The aggressors had infiltrated their weapons into the area in sampans during the afternoon and hid themselves in hootches along the canal.

CTG 116.2 reported that the lack of coordination between PF and RF troops and the VNN gravely weakened the Ca Mau security posture. While the PRUs had patrolled nightly the area to the north of the base, the PF forces had never fulfilled their pledge to guard the southern approaches.

While the ATSB was probed or attacked seven times from the south since 27 December 1970, neither the PF platoons nor the PSDF units responsible for the security of that area reported any contact during that time. Deputy COMNAVFORV consequently ordered that one USN and one VNN "advisor" would accompany all PF ambush teams in the future.

Communist guerrillas shifted emphasis to the west on 15 February when they attacked the Song Ong Doc ATSB with 107mm and B-40 rocket and small arms fire. The blistering attack lasted only five minutes before base personnel and Seawolves suppressed fire, but four Vietnamese sailors were killed, eight VNN and seven USN sailors were wounded, and seven boats were damaged. Three Alfa boats of RID 43, one RPD 62 PBR, and the American advisor hootch all sustained direct rocket hits. American helicopters
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medevaced all the wounded to Binh Thuy. Once again, an urgent request for a VNAF helicopter was never honored. Following this attack, the allies began construction of a rocket fence across the river from the ATSB and cleared off the areas around the floating base.

The only significant riverine activity in the TRAN HUNG DAO X AO during February occurred on the 7th of the month when LCM-8 and units of RID 43 were ambushed at VR 895 002, nine kilometers west of Old Song Ong Doc. Two Vietnamese, including the boat captain, were blown overboard by a direct hit and never recovered. Two Americans and four other Vietnamese were wounded. Seawolves and PBRs from the Song Ong Doc ATSB assisted in suppressing enemy fire. RF troops inserted, and four of their number were wounded in a brief battle with the enemy. The boats were attacked again as they returned to the ATSB. A total of six boats were damaged.

LT Moran's Ninth Platoon (Seal Team Two, Detachment Alfa) continued to compile an impressive record during February. Acting on informant intelligence revealing the location of a Viet Cong hamlet chief, a Seal squad inserted at WR 248 030, 16 kilometers southeast of Ca Mau on 9 February. As the commandos approached the targeted hootch, the Viet Cong inside began to fire at the

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accompanying Army helicopters. When the gunship returned fire, the Viet Cong tried to flee but were quickly cut down. The Seals pursued and captured four VC, two of whom were wounded and died later in the day. Four other Communists were killed by the air strikes. Documents carried by the captives, identified as hamlet level VCI, revealed that the allied raid had broken up a financial meeting in the hootch.

Two days later the Ca Mau Seals struck at a Viet Cong rest area 24 kilometers southeast of Ca Mau (WQ 369 992). After a gunship saturated the immediate area with fire, the squad discovered and burned a rest complex for approximately 80-100 men. One Seal was slightly wounded with fragmentation from the Army helicopter strike.

On 17 February, Ninth Platoon Seals and their guides inserted at VR 857 038, 32 kilometers west of Ca Mau, with the intention of capturing several high level VCI Communists. The squad searched several hootches under the cover of air support and finally found one lone VC hiding in a subterranean bunker. The guide identified him as an important VC leader, but the captive, while admitting to being a member of the Communist Party for 15 years, claimed that he had quit the Viet Cong three years previously. The
Seals returned to Ca Mau and turned their captive over to provincial authorities.

Seals, assisted by Cobra gunships and gunfire support from the USCGC RUSH (WHEC-733) attacked an NVA hootch on 20 February, 30 kilometers west of Ca Mau (VR 883 088). A local agent reported that the allied attack killed one Chinese propaganda cadre member and wounded two North Vietnamese and three Chinese proselytizing cadre members.

A Detachment Six Seawolf crashed in the Gulf of Thailand on the morning of 17 February. The helo had just left the flight deck of USS HUNTERDON COUNTY (APG 838) when engine failure forced it down. A helicopter from the USS MARS (AFS 1) operating nearby quickly rescued the uninjured crew members. No attempts were made to salvage the sunken aircraft.

The Brown Water "Heavies" of RID 48 relieved the boats of RID 43 in the Ca Mau AO by the end of February. RID 43 returned to Operation TRAV HUNG DAO II which it had left three months earlier when it came to the Song Ong Doc area to replace American craft preparing for turnover to the VNN.
Activity in the TRAN HUNG DAO XVII AO was low to moderate in February, only in comparison to the furious activity which had plagued this operation since its inception in December 1970. The predominant activity centered around the enemy's use of the water mine and the subsequent salvage operations by CTF 210 units which, as in the past, could not keep up with the sunken craft at hand. To alleviate the problem of the constant mining threat, Mine Division 93 craft were ordered to report to SENADV CTF 210, and eight MSDs and four LCMs of MID 113 were requested to be transferred from Nha Be to the TRAN HUNG DAO XVII AO. In addition, SENADV CTF 210 requested on 4 February that salvage divers be made available along with EOD personnel for the clearance of sunken craft at the Kien An Naval Base.

While these preparations were made to offset the burgeoning threat which the enemy posed, the mining of craft continued. On 4 February at 0840H, an ATC (HQ 1234) was struck by a command detonated mine while transiting south on Rach Cai Tau Creek (WR 005 365) in company with eight other boats of RAID 74, 25 kilometers northwest of Ca Mau. The mine exploded below the waterline, moderately damaging the ATC. Two Vietnamese sailors were wounded in the action, and the crippled vessel was towed to the 32nd
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Command Post.

On 13 February at 0750H, a Zippo boat (HQ 6533) of RAID 75 was mined with explosives placed by sappers while the boat was in a normal night position, 25 kilometers northwest of Ca Mau (VR 990 382). After the explosion, the Zippo sank at the stern with the attendant loss of one Vietnamese sailor killed and one USN and six Vietnamese sailors wounded. One VC was killed, possibly the sapper who placed the mine on the Zippo boat.

On 17 February at 1310H, a VNN LCM-6 (HQ 1536) of Rag 25/29 and an ARVN LCM-8 (HQ 1212) were mined while transiting the Song Treh Treh, 32 kilometers northwest of Ca Mau. Two mines were detonated, sinking the LCM-6 and slightly damaging the LCM-8. Fire was not initiated on the suspected enemy due to the presence of friendlies in the area. Two Vietnamese sailors were wounded in the action.

Although the number of boats mined was fewer than in the past two months, the method of February attacks nevertheless indicated the possible strategy of the enemy in the U Minh Forest. The mining effort on the waterways has been part of a campaign against the 21st ARVN Divisions presence in the U Minh, consistent with their general tactics of dispersion, low mobility, and economy-of-force.
types of operations. The recent lull in convoy minings may be explained by a Hoi Chanh debrief that reported a plan to increase attacks on GVN OP's in the lower portion of Kien An District leading up to a series of attacks that would overrun outposts, heading north toward Rach Gia, the ultimate target. This push, starting in February, would be coordinated with a general offensive in Laos and Cambodia. The enemy might have been conserving mine ordnance for the start of this new offensive, designed to have major logistical and psychological repercussions.

Another possibility for the lull in minings might have been the effectiveness of psychological operations employed against the enemy in An Xuyen, Kien Giang, and Chung Thien Provinces. According to NILO Ca Mau, informants had read Psyops leaflets concerning the recovery of enemy mines and then agreed to lead operations which resulted in the recovery of two large launch bombs of approximately 125 millimeters, ten M-26 grenades, 1000 rounds of M-16 ammunition, and the destruction of a VC workshop containing anti-personnel mines, 105 millimeter rounds, one 250 pound bomb, and material used to manufacture mines. Also, information provided by approximately 40 of the 330 Hoi Chanhs who have recently rallied in Rach Gia was used to identify, locate and target sapper groups in the upper U Minh. Although enemy watermining was

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expected to continue in the area, Psyops was proving to be one of the most effective counter-measures available.

To lessen the possibility of the employment of enemy mines in the future, two RADRAG detectors were furnished by NRDL, Panama City, for use in the TRAN HUNG DAO XVII AO. The RADRAG detects the presence of an underwater wire having some portion exposed to the atmosphere. The operating principle is that RF energy from a commercial radio station will cause the exposed portion of the mine control wire to function as an antenna for a radio receiver towed along the bottom of the canal. When this occurs, a signal will be detected by RADRAG and transmitted through the towing cable to an operator in the towing craft.

Salvage operations in the TRAN HUNG DAO XVII AO expanded to try to raise the boats sunk in the past three months since the initial incursion into the U Minh and at the same time to keep up with the recent sinkings.

On 3 February, a survey team of AOIC HCT ONE, a salvage advisor, and four VNN divers arrived at the sinksite (XS 052 455) of HQ 6002. Before their efforts could start, a hail of enemy small arms fire greeted them, and the operation ceased until the enemy fire was suppressed. A .30 caliber machine gun and an M-79 recoilless
rifle were retrieved on the assumption of operations. The salvage of
the boat was discontinued until the survey reports could be examined.

On 9 February, salvage divers from Kien An completed pumping
and patching HQ 5152 which was sunk in the vicinity of VR 97 74. The
boat was later transferred to Kien An for additional repairs. This
achievement was noted by COMNAVFORV when he congratulated the
LDNN Mobile Diving Team on its ingenuity and dedication in
accomplishment of this difficult task. At about the same time, the
Zippo boat which was sunk on 13 February was turning out to be a
problem when after the well deck was pumped dry, it failed to float.
Another effort was scheduled using additional U.S. salvage personnel.

HQ 1212, sunk on 18 February was salvaged the next day.

COMNAVFORV declaring his elation at this sudden salvage effort,
in a message to Commander Task Force TWO ONE ZERO stated, "Salvage of
HQ 1212 is good news. Score one up with 18 to go. Keep pressing."

On 19 February, EOD personnel with explosives arrived at the
32nd CP and destroyed an old sunken French RAG boat. On the
same day, the weapons on the sunken LCM-6 were removed near the
31st CP.

1. ADMIN COMNAVFORV MSG 191420Z FEB 71
On 21 February, PBR 7715 was raised sufficiently to be towed to shallow water near Tac-Cau where it was temporarily beached; underwater holes were plugged, and the craft pumped out. PBR 7715 was then towed to ISB Rach Soi for repair. Examination on the skids showed two rocket penetrations side by side and one major hole caused by a warhead explosion.

On 23 February, HQ 1258 was surveyed and found to be in two sections. As salvage was not feasible, it was recommended that the parts be blown in place in order to facilitate the clearance of the blocked channel.

On 28 February, TRAN HUNG DAO XVII divers attached and detonated large explosive (C-4) charges to the severely burned and unsalvageable pumps and engines of the sunken PBR 7654. The remnants of PBR 7654 were scattered over a large area, and the operation was concluded.

It was a busy month for the TRAN HUNG DAO XVII divers and EOD personnel. Although they salvaged or destroyed in place numerous craft, their problems were significant. The experienced USN divers who had shouldered the responsibility of salvage operations in the past began to assume the role of advisors. During salvage operations of
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HQ 1212 it was apparent that the OINC could not effectively conduct the operation and simultaneously train the VNN divers. It was necessary for an officer advisor assisting the team during salvage operations to work closely with the VNN divers. Although this problem of supervision was brought to the attention of COMNAVFORV, a date of 24 March was tentatively set for the relief of the officer advisor. After that date, an evaluation of requirements would take place and a proper response to the matter would be made.

On 13 February COMNAVFORV ordered the HCU One representative to sail an LCM-8 and a CSB-3 from Long Xuyen on 15 February and conduct TRAN HUNG DAO XVII salvage operations. CNO VNN was requested to provide escort for salvage craft departing from Long Xuyen and on site security until the completion of operations. On 18 February, the two salvage craft arrived at the site of the sunken HQ 1212 but were without the services of EOD personnel which were requested. HQ 1212 was successfully salvaged but not without some mechanical difficulties being experienced by the CSB and the LCM-8. On 23 February, the CSB-3 arrived at Kien An but not before it had run aground several times during transit and damaged both screws. By month's end repairs were still being effected.

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The first half of the month was rather quiet for the waterborne assets of CTG 210 but in the last half, six firefights in which three U.S. sailors were wounded, the inadvertent tripping of a booby trap in which one Vietnamese sailor and one civilian were wounded, and the rally of 21 Vietnamese in sampans on 19 February to PBRs 7711 and 7713 were recorded.

The most significant firefight occurred on 11 February when units of RAID 74 on patrol in the vicinity of WR 007 363, two kilometers south of the 32nd CP on the Cai Tau River, came under B-40 and automatic weapons fire. LT Armentrout and Petty Officer Thawley received shrapnel wounds while acting as advisors on HQ 6526 as it was enroute to a waterborne guard position. EN2 Bise, advisor on another boat which was commencing its transit to Ca Mau in the same convoy, received cuts and bruises to his body when he was lifted about ten feet in the air as a result of the explosion of a watermine that struck the boat. No VNN casualties were reported.

One other firefight of mention occurred on 17 February in Kien Giang Province (WR 197 773), 24 kilometers southeast of OP Base Kien An when PBRs transiting to an assigned patrol area on the Cat Lon River were fired upon from both banks. PBR 7715 was struck by B-40 rounds on the port side near the waterline just aft of the