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VIETNAM
MONTHLY HISTORICAL SUMMARY
April 1971

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Overt enemy actions continued at a moderate level during the month of April, while mining attempts persisted in plaguing allied patrols and shipping in the Cua Viet River, U Minh Forest, and Ca Mau Peninsula, and, for the first time in over a year, the Upper Saigon River in the TRAN HUNG DAO V AO. On the Cua Viet, the VNN patrol craft and local fishermen encountered 12 mines during the month, which was eight less than the preceding month, a decrease explained by the close of the Laos LAMSON 719 Operation, which reduced the number of lucrative waterborne targets. Also, the enemy was believed to be refitting from the high point reached in the preceding month, as well as shifting to the coastal area to lay mines north of the DMZ.

While the war continued to be prosecuted, the Accelerated Turnover Program, ACTOV, achieved several milestones. The first of April marked the turnover of the last U.S. Naval operation in Vietnam, SOLID ANCHOR, to the Vietnamese Navy, the operation being redesignated as TRAN HUNG DAO IV. With the commissioning of the VNN's first destroyer, VNS TRAN HUNG DAO (HQ-1) the ex-USS CAMP, on 22 April, the Vietnamese augmented their offshore patrol capability. At the end of the month the major support bases
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at Cat Lo and Ben Luc were turned over, as well as seven lesser support bases and seven logistics support craft. These multiple turnovers of logistics assets underlined the turn in emphasis of the ACTOV Program to ACTOVLOG.

In the first trawler engagement for the year 1971, an SL-8 trawler was sunk by the combined U.S. Naval, U.S. Coast Guard, and Vietnamese Navy forces off the mouth of the Cua Canh Hao River after a two hour surface engagement on 12 April. This was the first trawler sunk since November 1970.

The U.S. Navy in-country strength continued to decline in April. As of 29 April there were 12,166 Naval personnel in South Vietnam, a reduction of over 3,000 men over the course of the month. The Coast Guard strength dwindled down to 15 officers and 84 enlisted men.
## CURRENT OPERATIONS

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CHANGE OF COMMAND

On 5 April at 0001Z, Rear Admiral Robert S. Salzer, USN, relieved Vice Admiral Jerome H. King, Jr., USN and assumed command of U.S. Naval Forces, Vietnam. In addition, he reported to COMUSMACV for additional duty as Chief Naval Advisory Group, MACV. No formal change of command ceremony was held and the assumption of command took place without the benefit of the presence of Vice Admiral King who was incapacitated by illness. Vice Admiral King stated, upon being relieved:

"Today, 5 April, I have been relieved as Commander, U.S. Naval Forces, Vietnam and Chief, Naval Advisory Group, MACV, by Rear Admiral Robert S. Salzer. I would like to express to 'All Hands' my admiration for your dedicated performance during my tour in command, both in combat and in pursuing the Navy portion of the Vietnamization Program which is of such vital importance to both the United States and to the Republic of Vietnam.

In the turbulent months since I relieved Admiral Zumwalt on 15 May 1970, the Navy in Vietnam has undergone an almost complete transition from an operating force to an advisory organization. Exceptions to this transition are the remaining Naval Combat Forces, plus certain portions of the Naval Support Activity. Even among these, the pattern of operations and the resources available have changed markedly.
Vice Admiral Jerome H. King, USN, COMNAVFORV May 15, 1970 - April 5, 1971
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Despite the inevitable problems which have accompanied the transition, I have been deeply gratified at the performance of U. S. Navymen in Vietnam. In the final tally, progress has meaning only in terms of how well we have assisted the Vietnamese Navy toward the ability to continue, on their own, the fight against the enemy. In these terms, I believe we can view the past with quiet pride.

To each and every one of you I offer my best wishes for continued success. 

Rear Admiral Salzer previously served in Vietnam from November 1967 to November 1968 as Commander, River Assault Flotilla One; Commander, River Support Squadron Seven; and Commander, Riverine Assault Force (Commander Task Force 117) where he instituted an imaginative program to develop and expand the mobility of riverine forces by implementing operations deep within the Viet Cong infested Mekong Delta. In early October 1968, he planned and subsequently carried out the combined Naval and ground Operation SEALORDS which, for the first time in the history of the Vietnamese conflict effectively integrated the efforts of the major U. S. Navy Task Forces in Vietnam, the Vietnamese Marine Corps, and the Vietnamese Navy, thereby thwarting the enemy's effort in the Mekong Delta and supporting the U. S. Army's dry season campaign.

1. COMNAVFORV and CHNADVGRP msg dtg 051511Z Apr 71.

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Military activity in the two lower regions of Vietnam continued to abate, but the problem of logistics continued to increase as many locations reported base facilities and maintenance to be lacking. The Cambodian oil resupply operation, TRAN HUNG DAO XVIII continued unabated as five more convoys were successfully escorted to Phnom Penh.

The new concept of using a brevity code, understandable to both USN and VNN personnel, to control Seawolf aircraft, continued to be utilized along with on-the-job training being conducted at various locations throughout the Delta. Another innovation being investigated is the introduction of Vietnamese "backseats" (forward air controllers) to ride in OV-10 and UH-1B aircraft to enhance communication with forces on the ground.

Operation TRAN HUNG DAO XX became fully operational in April after being initiated on 10 March to replace TRAN HUNG DAO I. The TRAN HUNG DAO XX AO differs from the TRAN HUNG DAO I AO in that it covers only the western third of the Vinh Te Canal whereas the other operation included the complete canal. Assets to be employed in the new command are 22 junks, a raider company composed of members drawn from Coastal Groups 41, 42, and 43, and four PCFs.
On 1 April, Operation SOLID ANCHOR was turned over to the VNN and renamed TRAN HUNG DAO IV. Units assigned and area responsibility did not change.
Activities in the TRAN HUNG DAO II AO remained characteristically light during the month of April, with two sampans captured but little contraband, while intelligence reports indicated that some major infiltration attempts were succeeding in the AO. This raised the question of the actual effectiveness of the operation, since the sparse contact with the enemy could no longer be considered an indication that the enemy was not attempting active and major infiltrations.

The actions occurring sporadically in April were typically minor.

On March 30 at 1955H, 25 kilometers southeast of Moc Hoa on the Vam Co Tay, two boats of RPD 64 came under B-40 and automatic weapons fire, which they returned with the aid of Seawolves that were called in. Four VNN personnel were wounded, two seriously, with one enemy confirmed dead and an AK-47 captured. On the 31st of March at 1205H, nine kilometers southeast of Tuyen Nhon, Seawolves struck to assist in the cover of a downed Army helo, killing one of the enemy. Two PBRs of RPD 64 detected a sampan two miles northwest of Tra Cu on the Vam Co Dong River (XT 463 015) on the 13th at 1535H. The PBRs initiated fire on the sampan, killing five of the enemy and capturing the boat, which contained an AK-47 and numerous documents. No friendly casualties were incurred.
Shortly after midnight at 0140H on the 18th of April, ATSB Moc Hoa received three rounds of 82 mm mortar fire, which continued the chain of infrequent and minor mortar attacks on the city. Two of the rounds landed on the north bank of the river adjacent to the base, and the other round landed in the river. There were neither casualties nor any damage incurred.

Three PBRs of RPD 54 detected the second sampan captured in the month coming from a canal on the southwest bank of the Vam Co Tay, eight miles southeast of Tan An on the night of 23 April at 2000H. The VC fled the sampan and the PBRs took them under fire, killing three of the enemy. The sampan was duly captured and contained an AK-47 and various items of clothing.

Intelligence agents reported that various successful infiltration efforts occurred during the month of April. According to a 525 MI agent report, four VC in two sampans passed through the Binh Duc Village area in Ben Luc District (XS 533 806) in early April. Some VC later reconnoitered the area for later establishment of commo-liaison routes for the transport of plastic explosives for sapper and waterborne operations in Saigon and the Long An Subregion. Another agent reported a 22-man unit crossing the Vam Co Dong on 31 March in the vicinity of XS 557 805, near Ben Luc. The unit had come from the Ba Thu area of Cambodia. The suspected route travelled was a
historical infiltration route utilizing the Bo Bo Canal (XT 26 03 -
XS 56 81). The movement furthered the troop augmentation
occurring in the TRAN HUNG DAO II AO with troops coming in from
Cambodia for the wet season. The NVA 83rd Rear Services Group
reportedly was gathering foodstuffs and military equipment to
support an offensive in Tay Ninh and Hau Nghia Provinces during
the wet months. Finally, agent reports were received of VC tax
collection on both the Vam Co Tay and Vam Co Dong Rivers and
further exemplified the increased use of the rivers by the enemy.
TRAN HUNG DAO IV

The first of April marked a significant milestone for both the U.S. and Vietnamese Navies as Operation SOLID ANCHOR, the last U.S. Navy area of operation in Vietnam, was turned over to the Vietnamese Navy and renamed TRAN HUNG DAO IV. In ceremonies held at Nam Can Captain Eugene J. Finke, USN, was relieved as Operational Commander by LCDR Nguyen Van Tuyen, VNN. Nam Can Naval Base, the home and operational control center of TRAN HUNG DAO IV, will temporarily remain in U.S. hands until the Vietnamese are ready to assume the responsibility for logistical support.

SOLID ANCHOR, originally known as SEA FLOAT, was begun in June 1969 when an advanced tactical support base was towed up the Cua Lon River and placed opposite the remains of the city of Nam Can, destroyed in the "Tet" Offensive of 1968. After fierce fighting both on land and in the rivers, the floating base was moved ashore in September 1970, and the name of the operation changed to SOLID ANCHOR, connoting the now solid nature of the base. As a result of this operation, a firm government presence has been established; 9,000 people have moved back into the area and have resettled into two hamlets. And most importantly, the Viet Cong have lost the ability to control this area.
Admiral McManus turns operational control of Operation SOLID
ANCHOR to Admiral Chon, VNN CNO.
SOLID ANCHOR base at Nam Can.
Activity was somewhat diminished during April in the TRAN HUNG DAO IV AO as a total of 15 firefights took place claiming 20 friendly wounded in action (two USN, 18 VNN) and 30 VC killed in action and 15 captured. There was one mining incident and one abortive attack on ATSB Nam Can.

Although action on the rivers and canals slackened this month, when it did occur, it was very fierce. The first incident occurred on the early afternoon of 8 April when HQ 3923 and HQ 3918 were ambushed on the Cua Lon River at WQ 195 708. The enemy, striking from well concealed positions on the north bank fired ten B-40 rockets and automatic weapons at the "Swift Boats," scoring one B-40 hit which slightly damaged HQ 3923 and wounded two Vietnamese crewmen. Seawolf helicopters were called to suppress enemy fire, and the engagement was broken off. Enemy casualties were undetermined.

On 12 April the enemy again ambushed "Swift" boats on the Cua Lon River in the vicinity of WQ 140 698, this time from the south bank, but with no success as all three B-40 rounds missed their mark. Seawolves were immediately requested and responded with devastating fire in the vicinity of WQ 140 677. Results of the strike were unknown.
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During a routine patrol on 14 April, units of RID 44 in convoy (Monitor 6531, ASPB 5133, ATCs 1213 and 1215) were proceeding up the Cai Nhap Canal in the vicinity of WQ 078 769 when a concussion grenade from the lead boat activated a watermine. There were no casualties or material damage, and the patrol continued on duties assigned.

The most bitter battle of the month came at 0920H on 15 April when a two element unit of RID 46 river craft, consisting of ATC (HQ 1276) in the lead and ASPB (HQ 5142) following, was ambushed on the Cai Nhap Canal at WQ 081 747. The ATC took only one round amidships, spraying shrapnel from stem to stern, incurring no casualties. The ASPB however, was not so lucky and took at least three and possibly five B-40 rounds, wounding all personnel on board and heavily damaging the craft. The ASPB was beached, and the ATC came about to render aid. In rapid succession the ATC started suppression fire, requested a Seawolf airstrike, and picked up the wounded men from the stricken ASPB. The Seawolves arrived on the scene and succeeded in suppressing enemy fire after which they medevaced the wounded VNN crewmembers to Nam Can. Meanwhile the ASPB slid off the bank of the canal and sank. Friendly losses were one ASPB sunk and six VNN wounded. Enemy losses were undetermined.
Seal Team One, Detachment Golf, Whiskey Platoon, at Nam Can was busy again attacking lines of communication, destroying supplies, and generally harassing the enemy deep in his own territory.

On 5 April Seals of Whiskey Platoon, acting on intelligence gleaned from a PF agent, were inserted southwest of Nam Can at VQ 962 663 at 0100H by an MSSC. They commenced patrolling in a northwesterly direction toward a suspected VC base camp, and at 1200H, they came upon the camp and a vicious firefight ensued. The outnumbered commandos pressed the attack, destroyed parts of the camp, wounded two VC, and under cover of "awesome and unrelenting fire" by Seawolf and SEALORDS aircraft, were extracted and returned to the "warmth and safety of the SOLID ANCHOR base."¹ Seawolf aircraft revisited the area after the extraction operation and completely leveled the complex. ATC P. J. McKnight who was wounded in the firefight, has been recommended for the Bronze Star Medal for his actions during this patrol.

On 7 April at 0200H, four Seals commanded by LT Couch, plus two SAS, two KCS, one guide, and one interpreter embarked in an MSSC for a search and capture mission aimed at VCI in An Xuyen Province. At 2245H, the Seal team interdicted two VC in a sampan

¹ SEALORD Spotrep No. 314, P071420 Apr 71.
at WQ 159 756 who promptly evaded in dense nipa palm growth, leaving their equipment behind. The enemy equipment was confiscated, and the sampan was sunk. The Seal team proceeded to the insertion point and patrolled northwest to WQ 152 769, and captured the VCI. After patrolling to WQ 110 756 and gaining no further results, the operation was concluded and the team returned to SOLID ANCHOR at 0300H.

The final Whiskey Platoon action of note came on 11 April at 0130H when Seals aided by Luc Luong 66 personnel (formerly Kit Carson Scouts) inserted 12 kilometers north of Nam Can at VQ 995 801 on a search and destroy mission. The Seals patrolled to the target area VQ 997 824, and on approach, received heavy automatic weapons fire from a hootch. The fire was returned, and the enemy fire suppressed. The hootch was then searched and found to contain three dead and two wounded VC along with two radio receivers, a pistol, and a grenade. The hootch was destroyed, and all friendlies returned safely to Nam Can.

The last significant action in TRAN HUNG DAO IV for April occurred on the night of 25 April when a night ambush position of the 42nd ARVN Rangers Battalion broke up an attempted attack on the base at Nam Can by sampan-borne Viet Cong. Airstrikes were
called in, and illumination was furnished by the artillery unit at the base. There were no friendly casualties, and enemy casualties were undetermined.

On 14 April at 2130H a CS canister was thrown between USN and VNN barracks at the Nam Can base. Due to the prevailing wind at that time the CS agent penetrated the VNN barracks and caused an evacuation of the area. The perpetrator of this act was thought to be someone attached to the U.S. base defense force.

In another unfortunate incident, on 10 April at 1115H, on the east bank of the Kinh Ngang Canal (VQ 997 686), two soldiers from the 42nd ARVN Rangers were “fishing” with an MK-26 fragmentation grenade. A premature detonation occurred on release of the handle resulting in one dead soldier and one seriously wounded.

The following changes took place with regard to units attached to TRAN HUNG DAO IV. On 2 April the 43rd ARVN Rangers were replaced by the 42nd ARVN Rangers. On 18 April RID 41 departed on a six day transit to Ben Luc. Waterborne units attached to TRAN HUNG DAO IV effective 30 April 1971 were as follows:

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<td>LT G. C. Cooley</td>
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<td>RID 46</td>
<td>LT J. A. Sinkovec</td>
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<td></td>
<td>COSDIV 511</td>
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Lack of effective communications in the TRAN HUNG DAO V AO was a continuing problem during the month of April. In March the Senior Advisor CTC 216.1 reported that patrol units operating approximately half way in the AO had no reliable direct communications with the NOC at Phu Cuong. A retransmission site located at FSB Phuoc was suggested to alleviate this problem. The senior advisor to River Patrol Division 52 also reported having problems in the area of repair and maintenance of communications gear, and requested the assignment of additional personnel to correct this situation.

Measures were also taken in April to improve the communications security posture of the TRAN HUNG DAO V AO. COMNAVFORV requested a block of cleared frequencies from Commander, TRAN HUNG DAO, for the construction of a rot for simultaneous change of call signs and frequencies in order to make the enemy's communication intelligence difficult.

Enemy activity in April significantly increased over that of the past few months. Two mining incidents were reported, the first such incidents in over a year. Intelligence reports attributed the increased activity to

1. SA CTG 216.1 msg dtg 101113Z MAR 71
2. SA RPD 52 msg dtg 081145Z APR 71
3. ADMIN COMNAVFORV msg dtg 011005Z APR 71
units of the 101st N' A Regiment and the 268th MF GP, both very aggressive units. The enemy apparently tried to force the return to the AO of the 25th ARVN Division, the ground unit responsible for the TRAN HUNG DAO V AO, presently employed in interdicting the enemy's supply lines in Cambodia.

On 3 April a joint VNN/ARVN operation was launched involving naval units of Riverine Assault Group 22, River Patrol Division 52 combined with the 49th/25th ARVN Division. The operation, TOAN THONG 1032Z/49, consisted of a major sweep of the Hobo Wood area (TAO bounded approximately by XT 586 322, XT 516 295, XT 510 230, XT 680 225, and the Saigon River). The operation was to have jumped off at approximately 0630H but mechanical difficulties with the boats caused several hour's delay. This time lag and numerous communications security violations gave the Binh Duong Province Guerillas the time and the intelligence needed to utilize their familiar ambush tactics. Units of RPD 52 and RAG 22 were attacked by B-40 rockets and a command detonated mine while transiting to the troop insert point. At 0905H in the vicinity of XT 595 325, a PBR was struck on the port side of the forward .50 caliber machine gun mount by a B-40 rocket causing minor material damage and slightly wounding one VNN and one USN sailor.

4 COMNAVFORV INTSUM 035-71 101005Z APR 71
5 COMNAVFORV INTSUM 082-71 070944Z APR 71

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At the same time a troop laden LCM suffered a near miss from a command detonated 105 or 155mm artillery shell mine, wounding one ARVN soldier slightly. During the same encounter, a command boat was hit on the port side at the mortar pit by a B-40 rocket causing minor material damage but wounding two and killing one ARVN soldier. Contact with the enemy was broken at 0920H and the wounded were medevaced while Seawolf helicopters from Ben Luc placed strikes in the area and provided air cover on the remainder of the journey to the troop insert point.

The ground operation itself yielded poor results. Some of the problems brought out by post operation analysis were: the ground strikes were too large for effective sweep operations; boats were sorted by radio; radio silence prescribed by the operation order was not observed during the transit thereby compromising the operation; and the nonexistence of an effective contingency plan in the event of boat casualties.

Units of RAG 22 were again attacked the following day. While on patrol prior to setting a night WBGP an LCVP and an old French FOM received RPG (B-40 rocket) fire at 1710H in the vicinity of XT 671 279. One rocket struck the LCVP but fortunately failed to explode. Later on in the evening a PBR of RPD-52 while transiting to rendezvous with another PBR spotted four VC attempting to cross the river carrying
two bags. The PBR took the men under fire, probably killing one. The bags were recovered and contained food, two fragmentation grenades, two detonating caps, personal letters and other documents. During the time of the incident, the PBR was unable to establish communications with the NOC and was unable to relay through any other units to the NOC, again highlighting the continual communications difficulties in the TiAN HUNG DAO V AO.

PBRs were also attacked by small arms and RPG fire on 24 and 26 April resulting in no casualties. The naval intelligence liaison officer (NILO) at Lam Son speculated that these attacks were probably initiated by a rear service element engaged in resupplying the 101st NVA regiment.  

The second mining incident of the month in the AO occurred on 21 April. A floating mine was discovered by units of RAG 22 six kilometers north west of Phu Cuong (XT 731 205). The mine consisted of about five kilograms of plastic explosive wrapped in a green plastic material and was kept buoyant by a one foot diameter red life ring. A plastic detonating cap was used as the fuze and was connected to wires leading to a shore. As a result of the new appearance of mining on the Saigon River, Commander, TRAN HUNG DAO V instructed both RAG 22 and RAG 24 to prepare two LCVPs with chain drags.

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6 NILO Lam Son msg 300730Z APR 71.
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for mine sweeping operations.
Hostile activity in the TRAN HUNG DAO VI AO remained at a moderate level during April. The VNN commander, CTG 212.5, reported that his forces engaged the enemy in 30 firefights in which one U.S. helicopter crewman was killed and three VNN sailors were wounded. The enemy suffered 35 killed in these actions.

During one of these actions, on 2 April, PBRs of River Patrol Division 58 observed 25 to 30 VC moving southeast along a canal six kilometers northeast of Rach Gia (WS 139 110). The boats opened fire and a Black Pony patrol was dispatched to the scene. Upon conclusion of the air strikes, the PBRs placed heavy 40 mm and 60 mm H&I fire in the contact area. There were no friendly casualties sustained; enemy casualties sustained were unknown.

The only friendly fatality of the month occurred on 19 April. While on a strike in the vicinity of WR 076 985, a Seawolf helicopter of HAL-3 Detachment Eight received enemy fire resulting in an explosion inside the aircraft. A crewmember, AO3 James Arthur Wall, USN, received fatal wounds from exploding shrapnel.
Throughout the month, units of RPD 58 operated in conjunction with the Ninth ARVN Division along the Luynh Quynh Canal in the Three Sisters area. Although contact with the enemy was slight, fresh bunkers not more than three days old were found on 23 April (vicinity VS 855 230), 29 kilometers northwest of Rach Gia, proof of enemy activity in the area.

On 26 April the Kien Giang guerrillas tried to lure RPD 58 PBRs into an ambush four kilometers northeast of Rach Gia. Three PBRs were in a WBGP when they observed an attack on a nearby outpost. The attack appeared to be of a diversionary nature, so the units prudently remained in place while calling in the Black Ponies for an air strike on the enemy positions. No friendly casualties resulted while the extent of damage to the enemy was unknown.

Both U.S. Seals and Vietnamese LDNNs although very active had few concrete results in the Kien Giang Province AO throughout the month. U.S. Navy Seal Team One, Romeo Platoon, Detachment Golf, operating out of ISB Rach Soi, carried out missions on 4 and 12 April against VC infrastructure (VCI) and VC rear service areas, however, no contact with the enemy was reported. Vietnamese LDNN Group Alfa inserted on VCI interdiction raids on 3, 14, and 16 April. On the first two dates the results were negative while on the third, one VC suspect was captured.
During April, plans were promulgated by VN Headquarters to transfer Vietnamese personnel at the Sa Dec Naval Base to the Nam Can base. The Commanding Officer RPD 58 was ordered to manage the Sa Dec base after the departure of the presently assigned personnel. The Commanding Officer RPD 58 and the Senior Advisor RPD 58 visited the Sa Dec Naval Base during the afternoon of 12 April in order to inspect the base and to ascertain any problem areas involved in the transfer. The major problem uncovered was the termination of the present mess in conjunction with the withdrawal of NSAD and VNN personnel. Other problems encountered were faulty generators, and the lack of adequate water and sewage disposal facilities. To help alleviate the messing problem, personnel of ISB Vinh Long were to be sent to Sa Dec to assist the Commanding Officer RPD 58 in opening his mess. In addition, COMNAVFORV promised aid in the resolution of the other problems prior to 1 May.

VNN patrol officers of RPD 58 continued to progress noticeably in air strike control training. Senior Advisor RPD 58 reported that the VNN officer performance has been excellent during training sessions, but that further training, especially in working out of narrow canals, was necessary prior to qualifying patrol officers in actual combat air controlling.
Activity in the TRAN HUNG DAO VIII AO was light to moderate during the month of April. Although only five firefights were recorded, the severity of the attacks are of mention and demonstrate the cunning and ferocity of the enemy. Three PBRs, one Monitor, and an LCM-6 were struck by B-40 rocket rounds wounding one American advisor and 15 Vietnamese sailors. In addition, Seals from Victor Platoon, CTE 116.12.1.2, commanded by LTJG Clapp, combined with CTG 217.1 units in four operations on the VC infrastructure, killing five VC and capturing seven.

During the month, intelligence reports were forecasting the possibility of attacks on both Dong Tam and My Tho Naval Bases. A 6 April report stated that a company of the 273rd Artillery Battalion was located about three miles west of Dong Tam (XS 357 423) and was armed with two 82 mm mortars, 120 mm mortars, two 12.8 mm AA/MGs, and an unknown number of RPG/LMGs and AK-47s. This report was later reaffirmed by another received on 9 April of the 267 B Engineer Sapper Battalion being located about 10 kilometers northwest of Dong Tam. (COMNAVFORV INTSUM 084-71 of 9 Apr 1971).

On 26 April, an intelligence report stated that the VC My Tho City Command had instructed its subordinate elements to conduct sabotage activities including assassinations, kidnappings, and acts of
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terrorism against GVN and ARVN personnel on International Force Day, 1 May. Cadre of the VC armed security force would be disguised as cyclo drivers and students in order to carry out their missions. Targets also included placing plastic C-4 explosives at bars frequented by Americans, at ARVN night stations, and at GVN installations within the city.

While the prognosticators were bringing forth reports of impending disaster on My Tho and Dong Tam, the true destruction that occurred happened on the Kinh Xang Canal. The enemy was successful on three different occasions with the deadly B-40 rockets and demonstrated his ability to inflict casualties and damage to the waterborne assets of TRAN HUNG DAO VIII.

On 1 April at 1540H, PBRs of RPD 53 were on patrol on the Kinh Xang Canal (XS 356 550), 13 kilometers northwest of Dong Tam when they were ambushed by the enemy using B-40 rockets and small arms fire. PBR 7541, the lead boat in the PBR formation, was struck immediately, beached and burned. BMI Gray, the advisor on board, and two Vietnamese sailors were wounded in the encounter, which was put down by the rapid response of devastating fire laid down by the other PBRs, and by the subsequent on scene arrival of the Seawolves who were called in for added support. The three wounded were medevaced by Dustoff for treatment to Binh Thuy. The burned PBR was later pulled off the beach and towed to Dong Tam with its hull mostly destroyed above the waterline.
On 4 April, RPD 53 craft were ambushed on the Kinh Xang Canal (XS 354 558) 14 kilometers northwest of Dong Tam in Dinh Tuong Province by B-40 rocket fire from the east bank. PBRs 7551 and 7790 were both put out of commission as a result of being struck at vital areas. EN3 J. L. Riordan, advisor on board, was wounded in the attack but required no medevac. Seawolves were called in and made a strike on the east bank. At the conclusion, both PBRs were towed to My Tho, the home of RPD 53. As a result of this attack, only four operational craft remained out of the 19 assigned for duty on the waterways. It is interesting to note that this attack was in the same location as the ambush which took place on April 1.

On 22 April, two LCVPs were on patrol on the Kinh Xang Canal (XS 398 458) when the screws of one boat became fouled. The boat was beached and the crew attempted to clear the screw when an explosive device detonated on the canal bank. The explosive device, suspected to be a grenade, was set off as a crewmember walked along the bank near the water's edge. There were no suspicious personnel in the vicinity of the incident which caused the wounding of two Vietnamese sailors who were subsequently medevaced by LCVP to Dong Tam. No damage to the boat resulted from the explosion.

On 26 April, a Monitor HQ 6502 and one LCM-6 each were struck by B-40 rocket rounds and small arms fire from the east bank
of the Kinh Xang Canal in Dinh Tuong Province. The boats were struck as they were preparing the beach with 40 mm and .30/.50 caliber machine gun fire. A sweep of the area by RF troops with Seawolf support located spider holes used for the B-40 launch sites. Nine Vietnamese sailors were wounded (four seriously) in this sudden attack while enemy casualties were unknown. The LCM-6 suffered minor shrapnel damage to the canopy but no hull damage. The Monitor had a B-40 rocket round enter the coxswain's flat causing light damage to the superstructure and control panel wiring and guages. Both craft continued on their own power to the repair facility at Dong Tam.

The Seals of Victor Platoon continued to interdict the enemy LOCs and subvert the VC infrastructure. Based upon intelligence, they made raids on various locations resulting in the capture of an ARVN deserter and the My Tho City Sapper Squad Leader, and the detaining of four suspected males.

On 10 April, CHNAVADVGRP, MACV requested that the Senior Advisor RIVPATCMD provide the reasons for the lack of RPD 53 boat availability. With the attack on 4 April, RPD 53 only had four operational boats out of an assigned 19. Senior Advisor RIVPATCMD responded on 12 April citing the six PBRs which sustained combat damage in the last two months, the transfer of PBR repair facilities from My Tho to
Dong Tam, the lack of maintenance support at Binh Thuy due to the renovation of maintenance spaces, and the lack of maintenance support from ISB Vinh Long and HQ 800 due to nonavailability of PBR spare parts and personnel for all maintenance operations. He qualified his statement that this was only temporary and that eventually maintenance support should be available for the RPDs assigned to TRA N HUNG DAO II, VIII, and XIX. To further enforce a repair policy that was stagnating, LT John H. Duncan had relieved LT T. Hardy as DEPCOMNAVFORV Repair Coordinator on 15 April. It was requested that all units utilizing the repair facilities at Dong Tam to coordinate with LT Duncan as soon as possible in order to alleviate the tremendous backlog of work presently stagnant at LSB Dong Tam.
Action in the TRAN HUNG DAO IX AO was very light in April as only two firefights were initiated resulting in no friendly casualties and no recorded enemy dead. Intelligence sources had indicated that infiltration of enemy units was increasing in this AO but no substantiating proof of this infiltration was evident. During this month RPD 62 and 63, assigned to this AO, continued to provide escort for merchant craft transporting petroleum to Phnom Penh.
Action in the riverine environment near Ca Mau and Song Ong Doc was limited to 12 firefights during April. The cunning VC of An Xuyen Province highlighted the month by directing a 15 round 82 mm mortar barrage at the Song Ong Doc subsector. Casualties were light on both sides as the enemy sustained four killed and five captured. One Vietnamese sailor was wounded.

The month started with the probing of the base defenses at Ca Mau by enemy personnel. At 2230H PBRs of RPD 62 spotted five men less than 100 meters from ATSB Ca Mau. The men evaded and were taken under fire with no evidence of enemy casualties.

On the morning of 4 April, 15 kilometers southwest of Ca Mau at VR 870 001, aggressive enemy guerrillas ambushed units of RID 48 at 0955H on the Song Ong Doc. Firing from cleverly concealed positions, the enemy attacked with B-40 rockets and small arms and hit an ASPB (HQ 5782) in the coxswain flats, slightly wounding one VNN sailor. An accurate fusilade from the river craft plus a quick airstrike from the Ca Mau Seawolves suppressed all enemy fire. Four mud covered female suspects were detained, and two sampans, and an American type helmet was captured.
The enemy attacked by fire once again on 6 April when a PF outpost three kilometers south of Song Ong Doc at VQ 971 987 was hit by rockets, mortars, and small arms. Little damage was inflicted on the outpost, but two civilians living nearby were seriously wounded. A medevac helicopter was requested from VNAF assets but was denied. The victims were subsequently carried to the hospital in Ca Mau by PBRs of RPD 62.

Dufflebag sensors proved their worth on 12 April when heavy vibrations were detected at 2010H at VR 963 014 near the Song Ong Doc base. PFs were dispatched to the scene, a known enemy mortar position, and in the brief firefight that ensued a PF soldier was killed and two VC were slain.

The Song Ong Doc area (VR 915 010) was the scene of a unique action on 16 April at 1105H when craft of RID 48, HQ 1295 and 1298, received one B-50 round, incurring no casualties. Seawolf helicopters were scrambled from Nam Can and placed a strike on the area. The boat crews went ashore after the strike and captured two B-50 launchers but found no other material or evidence of casualties. The advisor stated that he had seen a thin wire stretched across the river and just as the boats hit the wire the rocket fired, lending credence to the theory that this was a booby trap device.
The last firefight of the month occurred on 30 April on the Song Ong Doc at 1045H. Units of RID 48 on routine patrol at VQ 850 998 were attacked with one B-40 round and heavy small arms fire. The river craft returned the fire and requested a Seawolf airstrike. After suppressing the fire from the bank, the river craft beached and conducted a sweep of the area with no evidence of enemy casualties. There were no friendly casualties.

Seal Team Two, Detachment Alfa, Nine Platoon based at Ca Mau under the leadership of LT Moran, stood down on 10 April for rotation back to the United States. Relieving Nine Platoon was Papa Platoon led by LTJG Antrim. Papa Platoon forayed deep into enemy territory, interdicting lines of communications and creating havoc with the VC infrastructure.

On the night of 29 April at 1830H, Seals of Papa Platoon were inserted by SEALORD Slicks at VR 821 735 to interdict VC tax collector operations. Seawolves supplied air cover and upon insertion, the platoon split into two squads and patrolled approximately 150 meters to separate hootches. One group spotted a male evading, took him under fire and presumably killed him. When the hooches had been captured and security set, the area was searched revealing a male hiding in a bunker under the first hootch and a man and a
woman in the second hootch. The commandos then spotted another
evader, took him under fire, and probably killed him. At 1910H they
called for extraction and SEALORD and Seawolf units received
intense enemy fire on approach to the LZ. The men were finally
extracted at 1930H at a cost of one pilot and aircrewman wounded.
The Seal commander later said of the Seawolves, "Their professionalism
alone prevented the Seals from incurring heavy casualties." \(^1\)

The ATSB at Song Ong Doc was the scene of a tragedy late in
the afternoon on 5 April when a Vietnamese sailor attached to RID 48
returned to the base apparently intoxicated and started to argue with
the American (EN2 A. N. Cascio) RPD 62 advisor. The sailor
threatened EN2 Cascio with a knife and actually inflicted superficial
cuts on two other USN sailors who were witnesses to the melee.
The Vietnamese sailor was restrained by his shipmates and taken
to his boat whereupon he immediately tried to turn a .50 caliber
machine gun on the Americans. He was again restrained but not
subdued. He then picked up a concussion grenade and was advancing
on the Americans when BMI Marvin Ballard, an advisor to RID 48
appeared on the scene and attempted to disarm him. In the struggle
the grenade exploded, blowing off the VNN sailor's hand and rupturing
BMI Ballard's eardrum. Both men were medevaced to Binh Thuy

by a SEALORD helicopter.

\(^1\) Seal Spotrep 300730Z Apr 71.
Operation TRAN HUNG DAO XVII

Activity in the TRAN HUNG DAO XVII AO was moderate with the focus being on an increase of enemy mining of friendly boats patrolling along the Can Gao Canal and the Rach Tieu Dua River. During the month of April, two LCMs and two ASPBs were mined, resulting in the sinking of the ASPBs, while three attempted mineings, and 13 turtle mines and two launch bombs were discovered. In addition, waterborne units of CTG 210 were involved in five firefight, resulting in four VC killed and one captured while friendly units sustained four Vietnamese killed, six wounded, and one missing; three Americans were wounded.

The enemy was obviously placing greater emphasis in mining VNN craft since 25 mining incidents have occurred in this AO since the first of the year. The U Minh has long been an established area of enemy strength. Since the ARVN and VNN began their operations in the area, the enemy has tried to retaliate with as little risk to himself as possible. By mining, he has attempted to interdict waterborne resupply routes to the 32nd and 33rd Command Posts with little risk of loss of life or engagement. Recently captured enemy documents listed plans to attack outposts along the Can Gao and adjacent canals, indicating that the VC and NVA want to secure this area as much as possible. With the GVN outposts destroyed, the
guerrillas would have more freedom of movement along the canals and less chance of civilians betraying their operations to the allies. With the GVN outposts gone and the GVN pacification program defeated, the civilians would be sympathetic to the VC for fear of terrorist reprisals. The recent absence of Hoi Chanhs from this area could also indicate a raised enemy morale due to his mining successes.

Suggestions on how the allies would counter the enemy mining threat included more efficient sweep operations, more civilian informants, or an elimination of the convoys altogether. If the latter were accepted, supplies could either be flown in to the 33rd CP or the aircraft operating out of the CP could refuel at Rach Soi as they did before the convoys began.

Because of the length of the canal and the dense vegetation along the banks, the enemy can easily retain his ability to plant mines undetected. Since the first of the year, there have been 10 mining incidents on the Can Gao and seven incidents on the Rach Tieu Dua. On 13 April, an intelligence source reported the intentions of the LF Company in Kien An District (VR 840 512) to conduct a training course on reconnaissance and sapper techniques. During February, the 525 MI GP received reports of a three month training course in watermining sapper techniques, teaching selected students from various village units in Kien An District; the school was reportedly located about eight kilometers north of the April school report.
Infiltration into the U Minh by enemy forces has been noted by intelligence sources during the past few months and has continued to present a problem during April. Hoi Chanh has identified the Muong-Dac Creek (VR 833 625), Rach Ong Lam (VR 840 664), and theKim-Quí Creek (VR 827 575) as insertion points of seaborne infiltration craft into the U Minh. Successful infiltration in these areas reportedly occurred in January, February, and March.

With these many Hoi Chanh reports received concerning coastal infiltration into the Delta region, it is obvious the enemy is placing great emphasis in this method of resupply. It would be hard to ascertain how many times the enemy has infiltrated in this manner without detection, but the figures would probably be high (COMNAVFORVINTSUM 097-71). With the ARVN disruption of the enemy's overland supply routes in Laos and Cambodia, the enemy can be expected to increase his seaborne infiltration efforts.

Seven mining incidents were recorded in April. Also, two launch bombs and 13 turtle mines were recovered. While the number of these instances highlights the enemy's desire to mine friendly craft, the fact that these mines were recovered at the same time points to the diligent efforts executed by TRAN HUNG DAO XVII assets.

On 5 April, U.S. personnel discovered a swimmer/sapper placed watermine attached to a U.S. Army LCM-8 alongside a pier at the
Kien An Cp Base (WR 128 897). The Vietnamese EOD team 15 and its advisor were transported to Kien An to disarm the mine. The mine was found to be a small shaped charge, turtle mine, weighing about 25 pounds and rigged for time detonation. No wires were attached to the mine and it had been tied to the LCM-8 with nylon line. Further inspection of the mine revealed that it had been triggered but that the main charge had failed to explode.

Although this is the first swimmer sapper placed turtle mine discovered in the TRAN HUNG DAO XVII AO, there have been two other incidents involving swimmer sapper placed mines in the area since February. The other incidents occurred on the Cai Tau River about 500 meters apart (VR 990 382) on 13 February and 27 March.

On the same day, 5 April, two minesweepers of MID 93, HQ 1018 and HQ 1853, were both mined in the vicinity of WR 054 452 while leading a convoy of RAG 25/29 and RAID 75 units from Ca Mau enroute to the 31st Regimental Command Post (WR 212 683). The second minesweeper maneuvered to assist and was mined about twenty meters from the first. Both craft stayed afloat and were towed to the 31st Regimental Command Post. Two Americans, BM2 R. B. Fejaranez and EN2 Terry M. Tanner, and three Vietnamese sailors, were wounded. In addition, one VNN was missing.
The majority of mining incidents that have occurred in this AO have been attributed to command detonated mines and it is likely that these mines mentioned above were command detonated even though no confirmation had been issued.

On 9 April, an RF/PF unit patrolling the bank of the Can Gao Canal (VR 96 73) in advance of a major fuel and ammunition convoy from Kien An to the 33rd CP, discovered two freshly emplaced launch bombs rigged for command detonation. The first bombs, with a 30 kilogram warhead, was located about two inches below the surface of the canal, approximately 50 meters from the first. Both bombs had about 70 meters of electrical wire leading to positions off the west bank.

On the morning of 15 April, HQ 5151, an ASPB of RAID 71, was rocked by a small mine explosion while shifting positions at the 33rd Command Post (VR 945 619). The mine detonated under the fantail, blowing one of the .50 caliber mounts over the side. The .50 caliber was later recovered, cleaned and remounted on the ASPB. No friendly casualties were incurred and only minor damage resulted to the boat.

Since the first of the year, there have been nine separate mining incidents on the Can Gao Canal. The last reported mining in the vicinity of the one above occurred on 13 January when two floating mines were detonated within 100 meters of this area.
On 18 April, the 407th RF Company discovered 13 turtle mines in an area about five kilometers south of the 33rd CP (VR 951 551). The mines were not rigged and did not contain explosives. Examination of the mines revealed that they were identical to the turtle mine found attached to the hull of the U.S. Army LCM moored at ATSB Kien An on 5 April. The mines were recovered from the area between canals 24 and 30 which had been mentioned as the area of operations of the enemy U-3 mine/munitions worksite. Personnel associated with the U-3 have been involved in technical preparations for every known watermining incident on the Can Gao Canal, and it is believed that thorough and detailed sweep operations of the area would uncover additional caches. (COMNAVFORV INTSUM 096-71).

On 20 April, a watermine detonated about 15 feet off the starboard side of the lead boat (ASPB) in a 16 boat convoy proceeding north to the 32nd CP on the Rach Tieu Dua (WR 009 360). This detonation was approximately one kilometer within the site of the recent mining of an ASPB and LCM.

TRAN HUNG DAO XVII waterborne assets continued to patrol the myriad waterways in support of the many outposts that have been set up to pacify the U Minh Forest. As an example, an outpost in the vicinity of WR 166 788 on 1 April at 0130H requested assistance from an assault of an estimated 30 VC which had penetrated positions.