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COMMANDER
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VIETNAM
MONTHLY HISTORICAL SUMMARY
May 1971

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FOREWORD

Naval actions continued to decrease in May, reaching a near standstill in four AOs and remaining very light in five AOs. However, in the TRAN HUNG DAO VI AO the activity was heavy, with an unprecedented 160 enemy slain; in the TRAN HUNG DAO IV AO the number of engagements doubled; while in the TRAN HUNG DAO XVII AO, the U Minh forest campaign continued to be one of the key combat zones, accounting for 45 enemy casualties. The TRAN HUNG DAO XVIII Mekong Convoys were extended, and the three convoys of the month continued to bring POL safely to Phnom Penh, where the POL stocks were nearly exhausted.

The enemy again took recourse in sapper activity, with a drastic increase to 17 watermining incidents on the Cua Viet, including the sinking of a water taxi which caused the death of 30 civilians. Elsewhere, there were five minings in the U Minh and one on the Upper Saigon River. Enemy sappers, in an ambitious venture, succeeded in blowing up six POL tanks at Cam Ranh Bay on 23 May.

MARKET TIME operations underwent a revision of the Inner Barrier, shifting from fixed patrol stations to the "cloud concept" of specially formed task units patrolling in high threat areas.

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ADM E. R. Zumwalt, the CNO, arrived in South Vietnam on 27 May, his first appearance in country since his departure as COMNAVFORV which ended just over a year ago. The Admiral reviewed NAVFORV, and the Navy's Vietnamization and Helping Hand programs begun during his Vietnam tour.

The ACTOVLOG program was highlighted by the turnover of LSB An Thoi, while seven LCMs were turned over quietly elsewhere. The flagging ACTOVLOG program was given a boost by CHNAVADVGRP with the creation of Logistics Assistance Teams of up to 40 advisors to supplement the advisory personnel at ten LSBs and six lesser bases throughout the Delta.

The U.S. Navy in-country strength continued to decline in May. As of 3 June there were 11,310 naval personnel in South Vietnam, a reduction of just less than 1000 men in the course of the month.
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Maintenance problems, particularly those relative to planned preventive maintenance, continued to plague VNN TRAN HUNG DAO Operations. The senior American advisor to Deputy Commander TRAN HUNG DAO sent a strong message to all TRAN HUNG DAO advisors urging them to offer creative guidance to help their counterparts with this tremendous task. He said, in part,

"It is clear that one of the basic problems inhibiting operational performance in the TRAN HUNG DAO campaigns is the poor material condition of assigned units... The only way to put more boats on the line is to reduce the need for major repairs."

Further, he stated,

"A high state of readiness depends primarily on effective maintenance at the operational level... It is imperative that the Vietnamese Navy be impressed with the need for such practices and concentrate on preventive maintenance."¹

During the month of May plans were being drafted for the closing of ATSB Song Ong Doc and ATSB Ca Mau, to be replaced by ISB Ca Mau, now under construction across the Song Ong Doc from ATSB Ca Mau.

¹. SA DEPCOMTHD msg 200856Z May 71
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In conjunction with the base closings at ATSBs Song Ong Doc and Ca Mau, a plan has been formulated to close out TRAN HUNG DAO X and TRAN HUNG DAO XVII, replacing them both with TRAN HUNG DAO XXI, probably in late June or early July.

Cambodian convoys continued to deliver vital POL products to Phnom Penh. Supplies of POL were down to the bare necessities toward the end of the month but the last of three convoys for May arrived and temporarily staved off complete exhaustion of the supply.

There was one special convoy in May, named Operation TRAN HUNG DAO XXII, which carried the Prime Minister of the Republic of Vietnam to Phnom Penh for talks with Cambodian officials. The convoy departed Tan Chau on 25 May and returned to Tan Chau on 26 May. The trip was uneventful and the operation was dismantled on 26 May.

Training in the use of the new Air/Ground Crypticity Code continued and during May various training missions were flown with good results. Limiting factors are unavailability of helicopter assets due to operational commitments and inability to get firing clearances.
Activities in the TRAN HUNG DAO II area of operation remained characteristically light throughout the month of May. Ho Chi Minh's birthday passed on 19 May without any special incident to break the routine of monsoon deluge. The personnel on PERs encountered the enemy twice during the month, capturing three sampans and two women, with no fire having been returned from the five men who fled the scenes. Three mining attempts were unsuccessful on the upper Vam Co Dong River. USN Seawolves placed 19 strikes with undetermined results, four support strikes which destroyed two bunkers, and responded to two radar contacts of Viet Cong which resulted in 11 Viet Cong killed. DUFFLEBAG sensors proved the most valuable reliable source of intelligence on enemy movements in the area for the month. One hundred and fifty five millimeter artillery battery personnel fired harassment and interdiction fire at sensor activations on 49 different occasions, about 10 rounds each time for an average of 10 minutes, with the reaction time being generally less than 10 minutes. On 13 occasions PBRs in waterborne guardposts were alerted to sensor activations, and on 23 different occasions, friendly troops in the area of sensor activations were warned, with no artillery fire instigated in these instances. Base defense sensors were activated
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twice. On one occasion, artillery was out of range; and once communications with artillery could not be established; and twice, heavy rains invalidated the sensors' information.

A 13 April contact with the VC had a PSYOPS sequel ten days later. When a sampan was sunk by RPD 54 boats, some highly exploitable documents were recovered. From this intelligence, the 3rd RAIO produced PSYOPS taped broadcasts and leaflet drops. H & I fire was directed at known targets from Tra Cu and Bao Trai. A ground sweep was then conducted on 25 April; the final results were two Chieu Hoi's and additional exploitable information.

On 1 May two PBRs from RPD 64 made contact with three VC, 17 kilometers northwest of the ATSB Moc Hoa. The PBRs were on a day patrol in the vicinity of WS 875 948, escorting some "Mike" boats, when two men were seen fleeing on the north bank of the Vam Co Tay, which aroused the interest in the PBRs. A closer examination of two nearby sampans revealed suspicious ordnance, whereupon the area was taken under fire, with the patrol officer and the forward gunner pursuing the VC on foot, but to no avail. Two women were captured in the sampans, along with a CKC rifle, an M-1 rifle, some ammunition, and a

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mine apparently fabricated from a 2.75 rocket projectile.

In the early hours of 5 May, a watermine exploded approximately 50 meters north of the Go Dau Ha Bridge on the Vam Co Dong River, lending credence to the report of a 50 man reconnaissance platoon operating nearby. A second incident occurred the next morning at the same bridge, when small arms fire from the guards exploded a mine floating towards the bridge. Two hours later, at Rach Re Bridge (XT 251 414) guards fired at VC sappers who fled leaving behind 30 kilos of C-4 blasting caps. The sapper battalions involved were believed to have come from Cambodia in February.

TIGHT JAW activations under the DUFFELBAG program were proving their worth in the area during the month of May. A 121030Z May message stated that the District Chief of Tuyen Nhon Province informed CTU 214.1.8 and his Senior Advisor that the TIGHT JAW activations were his major source of intelligence and that TIGHT JAW intelligence was the only intelligence that proved reliable. One hundred and fifty five millimeter artillery fire generally was used for harassment fire at the sensor activation areas. The artillery batteries fired for ten minutes duration at each of several targets each night. Troops were at
times alerted of enemy movements by sensor activations; on 21 May a troop sweep responding to a sensor activation resulted in the capture of three sampans, with two VC killed in the sweep. PBR crews also used sensor activation intelligence for choosing sites for waterborne guard posts.

A 19 May message from the Senior Advisor CTG 214.1 commented on the prosecution of night-rider contacts. Sources revealed that the reaction time of river craft to night-rider contacts resulted in less than optimum prosecution of targets. It was suggested that contacts detected within the triangle whose points were Go Dau Ha, Tuyen Nhon, and the river confluence be called in to Ben Luc where the Seawolf detachment had a scramble time of 20 minutes maximum anywhere within the triangle.

Ho Chi Minh's birthday passed on 19 May without the significant enemy activity that had long been predicted in the intelligence reports. The Tan Son Nhut weather predictions proved more reliable, as the monsoon rains poured daily, having a noticeable effect on the outlying areas of Long An Province. USN Seawolves observed large areas under water, allowing the enemy greater mobility throughout the area.
On 21 May, at 2108H, a Navy Seawolf of CTU 116.7.4 scrambled for a radar contact from the Tra Cu radar site. Ten to 15 people were observed in the vicinity of XS 439 019, where the helo placed multiple rocket and machine gun attacks after gaining the proper clearance. There was no enemy response, but the Tra Cu radar reported approximately five people retiring after the strike. It was considered that seven of the enemy were probably killed by the air strikes. Twenty four rockets, the normal Seawolf payload, were fired, as were 1350 rounds of 50 caliber and 5000 rounds of 7.62mm from M-60 machine guns. Where the Seawolves normally placed up to several strikes each day at suspected VC sites, the results were generally unknown. Other gratifying instances than the 21 May strike were strikes supporting PF outposts and river boats under attack, where the results were well defined, and where allied gratitude had been forthcoming.

On 25 May at 2235H, crews of two PBRs of RPD 54, while in waterborne guardpost, spotted a sampan with three VC attempting a river crossing eight kilometers south of Ben Luc in the vicinity of XS 663 680. The sampan was taken under fire, giving no response, and was captured, along with an M-16 and a kilo of documents which indicated an infiltration route, and an enemy order of battle chart. The three enemy were believed to have been killed. This
was the first contact on the Vam Co Dong south of Ben Luc since 10 October 1970.

Four intelligence reports in the month of May, from different sources, told of enemy units moving from the Angel's Wing/Parrot's Beak areas of the Cambodian border to the vicinity of Go Dau Ha, as the enemy was apparently moving back into Vietnam with the onset of the wet season. A 6 May intelligence report noted that a VC commo-liaison and transportation unit crossed the Vam Co Dong (XT 469 039) by sampan with supplies and troops regularly. The crossing point was given as XT 468 039, and was guarded by two armed units posted 30 meters on each side, with regular crossing time at 1700H. Eight separate intelligence summaries reported small units of VC seeking to control roads within the southern area of TRAN HUNG DAO II, with routes 4, 225, and 226 specifically mentioned. Throughout the month, intelligence summaries indicated increased emphasis by the enemy on building resources for a "big operation" due to take place before July.
Activity in the TRAN HUNG DAO IV AO increased during May as a total of 38 firefights occurred, a twofold increase over April. These actions resulted in the death of 21 enemy troops and the wounding of 14 friendly troops, including five U.S. Four VC were captured in action and there were two mining incidents.

The first action of note in May occurred on 1 May when Seawolf helicopters on a routine visual reconnaissance patrol spotted a group of uniformed men armed with small arms and a B-40 rocket launcher at WQ 155 695. After receiving proper clearances, rocket and minigun strikes were placed in the area between 1410H and 1440H. The helos received small arms fire on all passes and probably killed two of the enemy.

At 0925H on 2 May the VC were up to their tried and true tactic of PCF ambush from the south bank of the Cua Len River at WQ 195 705. Two PCFs, HQ 3902 and 3926, were on routine patrol when the VC opened up with two B-40 rockets which hit PCF 3926 in the superstructure amidships wounding one VNN (seriously) and causing moderate damage. Fire was returned and suppressed the enemy attack and a Seawolf strike provided additional firepower. Enemy casualties were undetermined.
On 5 May the Cai Nhap Canal at WQ 075 082 was the scene of another ambush, this time against units of RID 46 in steaming order: HQ 9174, 2176, and 6540. The boats were heading north and were struck from the east bank, long a favorite position of the guerrillas, with one B-40 rocket striking HQ 9174 in the coxswain flat, wounding one USN advisor and four Vietnamese (one seriously). The American advisor called in a Seawolf strike which covered the withdrawal of the boats to a safe site. The wounded were then medevaced by Sealord helicopters. Enemy casualties were unknown. EN3 Robert C. Simmons received the Bronze Star Medal for his direction of return fire, air control of Seawolf and Sealord aircraft, and prompt attention to the wounds of his shipmates although wounded himself.

The ARVN Rangers were the main element in a combined operation with VNAF, Seawolf, and Sealord aircraft on 7 May in the vicinity of WQ 150 778. The Rangers were inserted at 0930H and during the sweep captured 33 VC sympathizers (three males, the remaining males had evaded), approximately 200 detonators, several grenades, and a quantity of foodstuffs. Twenty newly constructed shelters were destroyed in the two brief firefights, however, no casualties were incurred by either side. The Rangers were extracted at 1430H and returned with their prisoners to ISB.
On 8 May, a patrol attached to RID 44, proceeding north on the Cai Nhap Canal at WQ 078 770, spotted a watermine. The lead craft in the three boat convoy, HQ 5113, countermined the device with a concussion grenade from a distance of 50 meters. The advisor on the scene estimated that the mine weighed 150 pounds. No connecting wires or mooring arrangements were located and there was no damage or casualties.

Seawolf aircraft were again involved in an early morning firefight when, at 0715H, on 9 May, while on a routine patrol, they were fired upon with automatic weapons from a known VC stronghold at VQ 774 542. The "Wolves" returned and suppressed the enemy fire but one helo suffered moderate damage and one pilot was injured slightly. Enemy casualties were undetermined.

The largest and most sophisticated combined operation of the month took place on 10 May commencing at 1010H in the vicinity of WQ 053 658. Units of the 42nd Rangers, Seawolves, Black Ponies, Sealords, and RID 44 took part in this well executed maneuver of forces. After insertion by RID 44 rivercraft, the lead company of Rangers made immediate contact with an enemy
force of unknown size. At 1025H the second company made contact with a similar enemy force at WQ 043 657. Both enemy groups evaded, the former to the south, the latter to the west, with Rangers in hot pursuit, never losing contact. At 1042H the ubiquitous Seawolves arrived and placed strikes under the direction of the command and control Sealord held with the ARVN Battalion Commander and his U.S. counterpart embarked. At 1119H Black Ponies arrived overhead and subsequently placed fire suppressive strikes in support of the ARVN units. Seawolves placed a total of seven strikes, Black Ponies two, and the ARVN 105 battery at Nam Can contributed 23 rounds of artillery support. In the afternoon a third company was inserted at WQ 045 645 by helicopter as a blocking force. They swept north and were immediately fired upon by approximately one machine gun, claymores, and booby traps. They then linked up with the second company that had been inserted and were extracted by RID 44. The first company was resupplied by air and remained in the area in night ambush positions. Friendly troops suffered seven wounded while enemy losses were six personnel killed with numerous blood trails sighted. Two suspected VC, 12 claymore mines, 24 VC grenades, 11 launch bombs with launchers, and nine propellants were captured. Two bunkers, four sampans, seven houses, five kilos of rice and four kilos of dried fish were destroyed.
COMNAVFORV commended CTG 214.2 stating "It is most gratifying to note the results of the 42nd ARVN Battalion operations. Actions of this nature, utilizing all available assets, exemplify a high level of combat readiness and professional standards. Please extend a well done to all elements involved in the operation." 1

A tragic incident occurred at 0900H on 11 May on the Cai Nhap Canal at WQ 082 752 when five Vietnamese civilians from Ham Rong Hamlet were abducted by the enemy. Included in the group were the Assistant Security, the Village Tax/Customs Agent, and three soldiers. As soon as the abduction was reported, CTG 214.2 sent helicopters out to visually check the surrounding area. He also made a visit to the affected hamlet and re-emphasized that all GVN officials should be escorted by GVN naval craft during their travels. He further assured the people that all possible steps would be taken to find the missing persons.

While patrolling routinely on 12 May at WQ 115 676, 16 kilometers east of Nam Can, PCFs HQ 3902 and 3930 sighted an enemy rocket ambush site on the south bank of the Song Cua Lon at 1815H. No enemy personnel were in sight so the boats

1. COMNAVFORV msg 111149Z May 71
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teached and captured three B-40 rockets, four launch tubes, and 15 meters of wire. They also destroyed the bunker before proceeding back to the base.

Another mining incident, the second of the month, occurred on the Cai Nhap Canal on 13 May at WQ 079 760. Three craft of RID 46, HQ 1282, 6541 and 6542, were patrolling on the canal when a mine of indeterminate size and type detonated between a Tango and Zippo boat. There was no damage and no casualties, and after placing precautionary suppressing fire on both banks to ward off a possible ambush, the boats proceeded on patrol.

On 16 May, while engaged in a visual reconnaissance mission, Seawolves spotted five males with weapons evading at WQ 134 836. The enemy was taken under fire at 1740H and two were killed. No friendly casualties were incurred.

The Cai Nhap Canal was the scene of yet another ambush on 18 May at 1451H. Three rivercraft of RID 44, Alfas 5113, 5109 and Tango 1215 were proceeding on a routine Cai Nhap patrol when they were hit at WQ 078 770 by one or two B-40 rockets, striking HQ 5113 at the waterline. The boats quickly returned fire and the enemy evaded. Three other craft from RID 44 which were proceeding north on the canal were alerted and sped to the scene. At 1509H
Tango 1215 spotted and recovered three launch bombs on the east bank. At 1630H, Alfa 5113 lost its battle with the water and sank. A security detail of VNN Seals (LDNN) was set and salvage efforts were to commence the next day. There were no personnel injuries.

At 0826H on 19 May, PCFs were ambushed on the Song Cua Lon for the third time during May. This time the attack occurred at WQ 150 629, almost the identical spot where PCFs had broken up an ambush attempted on 13 May. This ambush was carried out with small arms fire only and the PCFs, HQ 3900 and 3927 quickly gained the upper hand using a devastating mortar barrage. Seawolves were called in and the enemy fire was completely suppressed. The boats beached and found three bunkers about ten meters apart and two B-40 rounds. The enemy had apparently evaded to the west and their casualties were not determined. There were no friendly casualties.

The alert Seawolves struck again on 19 May when on another routine patrol at 1845H three armed evading males were spotted running from a loaded sampan. They were taken under fire and the results were two dead VC and one sampan destroyed. Once again there were no friendly casualties.
PCFs again came under the persistent guns of the An Xuyen guerrillas on 22 May as they once again struck from the south bank of the Cua Lon River at WQ 180 705. This time the B-40 attack occurred at 1250H and involved three PCFs, HQ 3926, 3902, and 3930. HQ 3930 was hit in the bow causing moderate damage but no personnel casualties. The retaliation was both swift and sure as all boats opened up with mortars and 50 caliber machine guns. The embarked advisor then directed a Seawolf strike on the enemy. When the fire had been suppressed a landing party went ashore and found one dead enemy soldier and one AK-47 rifle.

The last significant river engagement of the month occurred on 29 May at 1022H when LSSL HQ 228 was attacked from the north bank of the Song Bo De (WQ 246 673). The ship was fired upon by B-40 rockets and A/W fire and took three hits from the deadly rockets. One rocket exploded in a locker; one was a dud which an alert crewman threw over the side; and one hit the galley door main deck, causing shrapnel wounds to four VNN seamen. The ship cleared the kill zone, called for air support, cleaned up the damage and then re-entered the kill zone and beached at 1200H. The landing party recovered 11 launch bombs, 17 launch tubes, eight propellant charges and a document identified as the operation order for the ambush. There were also numerous enemy blood trails but no
bodies were sighted. PCFs were called in earlier at 1030H, to transport wounded Vietnamese crewmen to ISB Nam Can. Enroute they were taken under fire from the north bank of Song Cua Lon but the enemy missed his mark with three B-40 rockets and was rewarded for his boldness with a Seawolf strike which succeeded in suppressing all fire. There were no casualties and the PCFs continued on their medevac mission. In another combined operation, RID 46 inserted a company of the 42nd ARVN Rangers at WQ 063 775 on 30 May. The Rangers stormed ashore at 1300H and immediately made contact with a VC force estimated to be one squad. Seawolves, orbiting overhead in support of the operation, were called in and placed strikes on the guerrillas. The enemy force broke into three groups and fled leaving heavy blood trails. Two VC were killed; one sampan and one M-2 carbine were captured. There were no friendly casualties.

Four Seals of Team One, Detachment Golf, Oscar Platoon interdicted enemy lines of communication on four occasions, harassed the enemy infrastructure, and advised the local LDNN (VNN Seals) during the month of May.

On 12 May, eight Seals accompanied by an interpreter were inserted by SEALORD Slicks at 1830H in the vicinity of WQ 244 781.
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in order to interdict a known commo-liaison route. Upon insertion
the commandos patrolled to a hootch in the treeline 25 meters
from the intended ambush site. Security was set and shortly
thereafter an enemy male was captured as he made his way back
to the hootch. At 2010H four sampans containing nine persons were
hailed and they immediately made attempts to evade. The sampans
were taken under fire and three VC were killed and three additional
were probably killed. The four sampans were destroyed and the
Seals were extracted by helicopter at 2030H and returned to ISB
Nam Can.

On 13 May at 0700H, seven SEALs, one guide, and one interpreter
were inserted by a SEALORD helicopter at WQ 130 630 to find and
destroy a VC training site. With Seawolf air cover overhead, the
Seals patrolled 50 meters to a VC hootch. Three males evaded,
were taken under fire and two were killed. The other enemy
soldier was probably killed but his body could not be found. Further
patrolling led to the discovery of the training site which was abandoned.
A cache of rice totaling 2000 pounds was discovered, and the training
site was leveled. The SEALs extracted by helo at 0830H and returned
to base.

The SEALs struck again on 17 May when they carried out an

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ambush operation in the vicinity of WQ 098 834. The Seals inserted
using one MSSC at 2245H on the 16th, patrolled 7000 meters from
the Ba Hinh outpost and at 0530H set the trap. The ambush was
abandoned at 0900H with no success and a search of the area was
begun with Seawolves called in to provide air cover. Contact was
made with three VC who evaded to the west and again with a small
enemy force in a treeline. Seawolf strikes were placed in the
treeline but fire was not suppressed. The volume of fire picked
up forcing the Seals to withdraw to the other side of the canal
with three wounded, one serious. The VC advanced to the canal
and continued sporadic harassing fire. The two wounded Americans
and two other members of the patrol were extracted by Seawolf
aircraft. At 1030H, under Seawolf air cover, the remaining Seals
were extracted by an Army Slick. Results of the operation were three
Seals wounded; four VC were killed and one was wounded.

Seals conducted an ambush operation again on 29 May at
VQ 81 65. The Seals were inserted by sampan and patrolled to the
target area. Upon reaching the target area the Seals came under
fire from a sampan 50 meters to the south. They returned the fire,
killing four of the enemy and capturing a sampan, two M-1 rifles
and a carbine. The Seals then extracted and returned to ISB Nam Can.

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In a peculiar incident on 4 May at 1145H on the base at Nam Can, an Alfa boat of RID 44 tried to get underway while still moored to the berthing ammi. The ammi was pulled into the river causing the footbridge to the bank to fall into the river. Repair or salvage of the footbridge was not possible because of the absence of a heavy lift capability in the Nam Cam area. Due to this error in judgement by the boat captain there was no access to the base for sailors living on the ammi other than by sampan.
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TRAN HUNG DAO V

Enemy activity was light to moderate throughout the month of May. CTG 216.1 reported that his units engaged in five fire fights with the enemy, sustaining four Vietnamese casualties. (three killed and one wounded). No enemy casualties were reported.

TRAN HUNG DAO V assets increased during May by the return to Phu Cuong of River Patrol Division 52 boats that had been assigned to the Capital Military District and to the Rung Sat Special Zone. This brought the number of boats to 16 at Phu Cuong; four were still undergoing routine maintenance at Nha Be.

On the night of 9 May, three PBRs of RPD 52 thwarted a night crossing attempt by three VC 12 kilometers northwest of Phu Cuong. The VC were taken under fire with one probably killed. On 12 May, five RAC of RAG 22 transiting south received ten B-40 rockets from the west bank. One LCM took several hits and one VNN received minor shrapnel wounds in the arm. On 18 May, four RAC of RAG 24 reconnoitered the shore line 15 kilometers northwest of Phu Cuong (XT 679 226). A cache was found in a foxhole consisting of two M-16s, a claymore mine, and some explosives. On 24 May, five RAC of RAG 22 picked up two women VC suspects in a sampan eight kilometers northwest of Phu Cuong (XT 748 198). Two grenades were found in the boat.

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On 28 May, nine and one half kilometers northwest of Phu Cuong (XT 735 202), three RAC of RAG 24 were in a night WBGP when an explosion occurred on the starboard side amidships of the center craft, a Monitor. The craft was beached with extensive material damage; however, no personnel casualties resulted. Later that morning, ten RAC of RAG 22, 24 kilometers northwest of Phu Cuong (XT 660 260), transiting south to assist in salvage operations of the stricken Monitor, received six B-40 rocket rounds from the west bank simultaneously as a command mine was detonated. The mine sank one FOM at XT 661 270 killing two VNN crewmembers. An LCM received three B-40 hits, while another received one B-40 hit; neither sustained personnel casualties, and the material damage was of a minor nature. Seawolves were scrambled to provide air cover for the stricken units.

Seawolf helicopters of HAL-3, Detachment 4, in addition to providing support for the river units in the TRAN HUNG DAO V AO, answered a call for help when the Phu Loi Base came under 107mm rocket attack on 31 May. Multiple rocket and machine gun strikes were placed on the suspected launch sites.

The TRAN HUNG DAO V AO communications problems came a step closer to being solved with the establishment of a retransmission site at FSB Phuoc on 10 May. CONFIDENTIAL
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The site utilizes two PRC 77 transmitters and two R-292 antennas on a 60 day loan from the Army. At the close of the month, PBRs north of the Mushroom Area and the TOC at Phu Cuong were utilizing the site satisfactorily.
Enemy activity in the TRAN HUNG DAO VI AO was moderate
to heavy throughout May, with the enemy taking some of the heaviest
casualties ever in this AO. Commander, CTG 212.5 reported
that his men engaged the enemy in 20 firefights, suffering one VNN
sailor killed and three VNN sailors wounded, while an unprecedented
160 of the enemy were slain.

The units of River Patrol Division 58 continued to do an
outstanding job patrolling the various waterways throughout the AO.
Late in the evening of 3 May, three PBRs of RPD 58 lay in wait in a
WBGP in the Luynh Quynh Canal, 39 kilometers northwest of Rach Gia.
Suddenly, 20 uniformed VC/NVA soldiers were sighted and taken
under fire. The VNN patrol officer called in ARVN artillery, and
Black Ponies and Seawolves were scrambled. The PBRs sustained
no casualties. In the morning, a ground sweep revealed ten of the
enemy killed by A/S, five B-40 rockets, and numerous bloody rags
and drag trails. On 4 May, six kilometers northwest of Rach Gia,
RPD 58 PBRs again sighted the enemy and the Seawolves were called
in resulting in one enemy confirmed killed and five probably killed
by air. Again, there were no friendly casualties.

On 20 May, RPD 58 PBRs again met with heavy enemy contact.
The PBRs had divided into two night patrols; three boats in the first
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patrol and four in the second, and had assumed WBGP's in canals flanking a day long province contact (WS 154 075), six kilometers northeast and east of Rach Gia. At 0145H, on 20 May, the first patrol sighted a group of five or six VC/NVA and took them under fire. Return fire was received and suppressed, while Seawolf helicopters placed strikes in the area. At 0200H, the second patrol contacted a large group of approximately 30 VC attempting to move east. The boats opened fire and received intense automatic small arms fire in return. Seawolves were diverted to the scene to aid the PBRs. The melee continued for nearly four hours and then the enemy withdrew as dawn neared. The enemy suffered as many as 30 casualties. The VC persisted in returning to the contact scene to retrieve their dead and wounded. In so doing, they had to cross an open field in which they were extremely vulnerable to the air strikes and heavy fire from the PBRs. Incredibly, not one friendly casualty was sustained in the action. The spectacular results of this action prompted COMNAVFORV to make the following comments:

"It is gratifying to note results of the WBPS (sic) conducted by RPD 58 units and the superior support provided by HAL-3 Det 8... Establishing ambushes and posts in areas of known infiltration cannot help but reap positive results. Actions of this nature exemplify a high level of combat readiness and professional standards."
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Please extend a well done to all elements involved in this most successful operation. RADM Salzer.\textsuperscript{1}

Once again on 24 May units of RPD 58 ran into heavy contact with the enemy. The PBRs were returning to base from a WBGP when they were ambushed by a large enemy force from both banks of a canal, 12 kilometers southeast of Rach Gia (WS 180 890). Seawolves were scrambled, escorted the boats to safety, and then placed strikes in the area. The enemy fire continued and the Seawolves rearmed and again placed strikes in the area, and then medevaced the wounded. Black Ponies were scrambled while the ubiquitous Seawolves were once again rearming. The enemy strength was estimated at 40 VC/NVA on each bank, and they fought very tenaciously. SA RPD 58, embarked on the PBRs, reported that the enemy fire power was in excess of any enemy unit ever contacted by RPD 58. Friendly casualties were one Vietnamese killed, three wounded (one serious, two minor) and one PBR slightly damaged, while the enemy casualties were estimated at 20 killed and wounded. This action precipitated the following comments from SA DEPCOMTHD:

"The action... is yet another example of the fighting spirit that has become the hallmark of TRAN HUNG DAO VI, RPD 58, Det 8 and the Black Ponies. Likewise, it is a tribute to 1. COMNAVFORV msg 232352Z May 71

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the discipline, courage, and professionalism of the combined VNN and USN team. Please convey my congratulations to all personnel involved in this operation."

CAPT Crowe

On 27 May, personnel on three PBRs of RPD 53 operating in the Luynh Quynh Canal of the Three Sisters Area apprehended three VC males who wanted to "chieu hoi" to them, 29 kilometers northwest of Rach Gia. The boats, supporting the 15th Regiment, 9th ARVN Division, were approached by a sampan containing the three Hoi Chanhs. The men surrendered a MK-26 grenade, were taken aboard, and later turned over to 9th ARVN elements.

On 29 May, PBRs of RPD 61, operating from Kien An, medevaced a wounded civilian, 31 kilometers southeast of Rach Gia (WR 213 759). The man had multiple shrapnel wounds in both legs and in his right arm, and had a fractured right leg. The civilian was cutting wood west of the PBR position when he tripped an enemy grenade booby trap. Also on 31 May, RPD 61 PBRs were again approached by a sampan, this one carrying two wounded children. They had also been wounded by a booby trap grenade. The PBRs medevaced the children to ISB Rach Soi, where they were, in turn, taken to the Rach Gia Hospital.

2. SA DEPCOMTHD msg 252318Z May 71

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Acting on intelligence that a 20 man VC unit was in the area, on 30 May, RPD 61 inserted 15 PF troops at WR 146 880. The PFs made contact with the enemy unit four hours later. Four VC were killed, one AK rifle captured; no friendly casualties were sustained.

Seals in the TRAN HUNG DAO VI AO were very active throughout the month. Acting on intelligence of an enemy weapons cache, on 3 May, a mixed group of LDNNs (Vietnamese Seals), U.S., and Australian Seals were inserted by truck at WS 100 080. The cache was discovered at WS 100 100, and contained one 2.75 inch rocket, one M-33 hand grenade, and one time firing device, and helo instruments. The Seals extracted without further incident. On 11 May, three Seals of Romeo Platoon accompanied by MST 2 Det Echo, five Australian SAS, one interpreter, one guide, and one Kit Carson Scout inserted at 0300H by MSSC and LSSC on a mission of interdicting a VC squad. The group patrolled 300 meters through mud flats which were illuminated by an intermitantly exposed full moon. The group came to the mouth of a canal, set one squad up for security LP while the second squad continued on 400 meters further and set up a guard post at 0515H. At 0815H, an armed group of VC was sighted approaching the guard post and were taken under fire. The area was searched and the Seals successfully extracted, leaving behind three enemy dead. No friendly casualties were sustained.
A similar mission occurred on 20 May; however, the mission was compromised by a local civilian wood cutter. When no results were obtained, the Seals extracted without incident.

A number of units were transferred or were planning to be transferred in the TRAN HUNG DAO VI AO during May. RPD 63 was preparing to depart ATSB Song Ong Doc and Ca Mau for Rach Soi in early June. Also, RPD 61, based at Kien An, shifted operational control from CTF 210 (TRAN HUNG DAO XVII) to CTG 212.5 (TRAN HUNG DAO VI) on 26 May. At the close of the month, the redoubtable RPD 58 was making preparations to transfer from ISB Rach Soi to Op Base Sa Dec in early June.
TRAN HUNG DAO VIII

During the month of May, activity in the TRAN HUNG DAO VIII AO was light. CTG 217.1 units participated in 25 troop movements or support missions for the Seventh ARVN Division. Seventeen special missions were conducted that varied from fire support for PF troops and Zippo operations, to investigating electronic emissions for the Seventh ARVN Division. Waterborne units engaged the enemy on three occasions resulting in two enemy being killed and the capture of two VC suspects. Two Vietnamese sailors were killed and five were wounded.

CTG 116.8 and 116.7.7 air units flew 38 sorties in support of TRAN HUNG DAO VIII units resulting in the destruction of 61 bunkers, 21 hootches, 14 sampans, and various supplies. In addition they were credited with killing 24 enemy soldiers.

LTJG Clapp's Seal Team One, Detachment Golf, Victor Platoon, conducted seven operations which resulted in the capture of three VC, one rifle, and assorted ammunition.

Frequent intelligence reports have indicated the impending enemy attacks of My Tho City and the adjacent Dong Tam Naval Base. Enemy units mentioned as being in the area included the 267B, 269B, 514C, 273, and 309 battalions. The enemy attacks,
scheduled to occur on 1 May, International Labor Day, failed to materialize.

The Naval Intelligence Liaison Officer at My Tho reported changes in the VC organization in My Tho Province. The changes divided the districts into smaller areas known as "Mangs" in order to achieve closer control over the population. As a result, there appeared to be a shift from military to political goals as was evidenced by the fact that the majority of district and "Mang" level positions are now staffed by VC rather than NVA as was previously the case. More emphasis was placed on the "Mangs" to establish a grass roots power base in the countryside with which to act as a springboard for political gains in the fall. It was expected that future enemy activity in VC My Tho Province will take the form of harassment, terrorism, and assassinations to effect economy of forces and material.

CTG 217.1 waterborne units continued to press the enemy but with little success as the enemy employed his familiar hit and run tactics. On 1 May at 0300H, a RAG 21/33 Commandament 6011 and RFD 42 ASPB, while on normal patrol of Canal 28 (XS 043 515) in Dinh Tuong Province, were both struck by one B-40 rocket and then taken under automatic weapons fire by an estimated company of VC. The boats responded to the attack with suppressive fire and Seawolves
were called in for additional assistance. However, prior to Seawolf arrival, the VC broke off the engagement and disappeared. In the brief encounter, one Vietnamese sailor was killed and four were wounded. Enemy casualties were unknown. RF troops were inserted at first light but did not encounter the enemy. A Dustoff aircraft, requested at 0300H, finally arrived at 0800H and medevaced the three seriously wounded Vietnamese sailors to My Tho.

On 6 May at 1500H, an LCM-6 on patrol of the Tong Doc Loc Canal detected six enemy personnel in the vicinity of XS 265 583, five kilometers southeast of My Phuoc Tuy. As soon as the LCM-6 was spotted, the enemy attempted to evade and immediately were taken under fire. Additional fire power was provided by a monitor and another LCM-6 which were in the area. At the conclusion of the action, a landing party of eight Vietnamese sailors went ashore, for investigation and found two VC dead, each with K-54 pistols and about one kilo of documents. The search of the surrounding area revealed a bunker used as a living area plus a sampan which was confiscated. Subsequent perusal of the captured documents by the senior advisor revealed that the enemy personnel were members of the 261A unit, and also listed the ambush results of the past four months, and proposed tactics for the next two months.
On 13 May, HQ 7540 was placed into the water after overhaul at LSB Dong Tam and was accepted by the crew for operational use. On the morning of 14 May, HQ 7540 was found sunk by the stern alongside the seawall resting vertically on the bottom with the mooring line holding and awash to within a few feet of the bow. No crewmembers had remained aboard during the night for maintenance or security. The craft was immediately raised and the cause of the sinking was determined to be a broken one-quarter inch stud in the starboard sea suction hull flange. The disassembly and cleaning of engines and other repairs to the craft was estimated to require three days. On 17 May COMNAVFORV requested that the Senior Advisor RPD 53 furnish immediately the disciplinary measures taken or contemplated by VNN personnel against the boat crews or others responsible for the incident. On 18 May, the Senior Advisor RPD 53 stated that the Commanding Officer RPD 53 verbally reprimanded the boat captain and two crewmembers but that no other action was evidenced or contemplated.

On 24 May at 2300H, LCVP 2027 struck an underwater object while on routine patrol of the Kinh Hai Muoi Tam, resulting in what at the time was considered by the crew to be underwater hull damage. At the conclusion of the patrol, the boat was moored to Pier D at the Vietnamese Naval Station while the crew secured for the
evening, leaving three members on board. At 0345H, the boat started filling with water while the three crewmembers attempted to obtain pumps and dewater the craft. Their efforts were in vain however, for within ten minutes the craft sank and was at the bottom in 15 feet of water. On 25 May at 1830H, salvage operations were concluded and the LCVP recovered. The Vietnamese salvage team used the Seventh ARVN tow truck, two chain falls, and a two ton truck to right and raise the boat. An investigation of the hull revealed no damage, but it was believed that the craft sank due to a leak around the shaft packing. It was anticipated that the shaft packing would be completed during low tide and that the LCVP would be operational within 48 hours. No disciplinary action was intended for the crew as the situation indicated that the leak could not have been avoided or recognized prior to securing.

Seal Team One, Detachment Golf, Victor Platoon, continued their harassment of the enemy and interdicted the LOCs wherever intelligence sources reported favorable areas. On 1 May, an interdiction of the commo-liaison cadre at XS 523 475 was concluded without success and the group was extracted by truck and returned to Dong Tam at 0815H. Again on 8 May in the same type of operation at XS 875 282, the Seals reported no success. On 12 May, the Seal operation was concluded due to the lack of immediate extraction and
fire support capability. The lack of extraction resulted from the breakdown of the steering mechanism on the MSSC. On 14 May at 1400H, LTJG Young and one Seal captured a finance and economy cadre plus one kilo of documents and a sampan in the vicinity of XS 873 282. The VC and captured material were turned over to the district chief at Binh Dai.

In the most significant operation of the month, LTJG Young and five Seals departed Dong Tam at 1715H on 17 May in company with two squads of Vietnamese for XS 094 585 and XS 093 586, a scene of rice paddies and a treeline along a canal. While the two squads were inserted and searched the area, two VC were captured plus a huge cache of enemy weapons which were buried in 55-gallon drums with concrete covers and camouflaged. On being notified of this impressive discovery, COMNAVFORV stated:

"Impressive results such as those achieved in action reported exemplify the combat readiness of your platoon and their expertise."

In an unrelated development, EN1 William T. Doyle of Victor Platoon dislocated his left hip in a non-hostile action when his Jeep slid off the QL-4 highway, 71 miles west of Dong Tam on 20 May. He was medevaced to the 3rd Surgical Hospital, Binh Thuy.

1. COMNAVFORV msg DTG 181323Z May 71

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for treatment where his condition was reported as good.

The other casualty for the month occurred on 29 May when AN Terry L. Mize of HAL-3, Detachment 7 sustained shrapnel wounds to the back when the helicopter in which he was a crewmember received enemy fire. AN Mize was treated locally and released the same day.
The TRAN HUNG DAO IX AO was devoid of any hostile action on the waterways during the month of May; there were no firefights and no casualties. The one noteworthy event was the destruction of the helicopter pad at the ATSB Phuoc Xuyen on 21 May at 0850H. This unfortunate event occurred when a smoke grenade inadvertently was rolled onto an area under the pad which had served as a jettison area for fuel. The fuel and grass in the area ignited, were fanned by a helicopter attempting to land, and the end result was the destruction of the pad, 100 feet of wooded walkways, the fuel service tanks, and one watch tower. The fire was brought under control at 0930H and extinguished at 1030H. Thus, the only centrally located helicopter refueling and rearming station in the TRAN HUNG DAO IX AO was closed for an undetermined length of time.

Although action on the Ong Lon Canal was nil, Navy Seawolf helicopters carried the war to the enemy as they struck ten times killing eight soldiers, damaging five bunkers, and destroying one sampan. In addition, Seawolves, aided by Black Ponies, saved the outpost of Ho Bien located at WS 712 917, on the night of 23 May. The outpost came under heavy attack and just as it seemed that the enemy was going to break through the inner defense...
perimeter, Seawolves of Detachments Five and Nine configured as a heavy fire team. arrived on the scene and succeeded in driving the VC back and keeping them at bay. When the Seawolves had exhausted their ordnance, Black Pony aircraft appeared and placed their deadly strikes. Results of the action were 13 friendly killed and 16 wounded. Seven of the enemy troops were killed and numerous blood trails were found. The airmen of CTF 116.7 and CTF 116.8 were commended for their courageous and aggressive action by COMNAVFORV.
Activity in the TRAN HUNG DAO X AO was light as for the third consecutive month a total of only 11 firefights were recorded. Five friendly troops were wounded while 21 of the enemy were killed.

An intelligence report that enemy sappers attached to the C-7 Local Force Company and the U Minh 11 Battalion were active on the Song Ong Doc in the vicinity of VQ 837 974 proved highly accurate, as no less than five ABFs occurred on river traffic in this area. There was also one attempted mining at the ATSB Song Ong Doc.

Seawolves of CTG 116.7.3 flew 15 missions in support of TRAN HUNG DAO X and had contact during 13 of them. They accounted for four enemy casualties; 15 hooches and 11 sampans were destroyed.

On 3 May at 0850H, units of RID 48, in transit to the mouth of the Song Ong Doc, received rocket and small arms fire from the south bank at VQ 853 997. The rivercraft returned the fire and the enemy guns were silenced. Seawolves were scrambled but did not fire because they were unable to obtain proper clearances. There were no friendly casualties and enemy casualties were unknown.

The night of 4 May marked the first of three incidents in which wounded civilians were brought to ATSB Ca Mau.