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HEADQUARTERS
UNITED STATES MILITARY ASSISTANCE COMMAND, VIETNAM
APO San Francisco 96309

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From: Chief, Naval Advisory Group, Military Assistance Command, Vietnam
To: Commander, United States Military Assistance Command, Vietnam
Subj: Historical Review, Naval Advisory Group Activities, November 1965
Ref: (a) COMUSMACV Directive Number 870-1
Encl: (1) Historical Review, Naval Advisory Group Activities, November 1965 *cover*

1. Enclosure (1) is forwarded to Commander, United States Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (Secretary Joint Staff), in accordance with reference (a).

K. L. Wright, Jr.

K. L. WRIGHT, Jr.
LCDR, USN
Flag Secretary

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HISTORICAL SUMMARY FOR NOVEMBER 1965

- 1. (S) OPERATION MARKET TIME.
 - a. General
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1. (S) OPERATION MARKET TIME.

a. General. Task Force 115 (Operation MARKET TIME) completed its fourth month of operation under the command of RADM N. G. WARD, USN, CHNAVADVGRP, and Commander Coastal Surveillance Force (CTF 115). Data received from Vietnamese Navy Headquarters reported 20,100 junks searched and 74,000 people investigated during November. This is a decrease from the 26,700 junks and 100,000 people searched during the previous month. The decline is attributable to two basic factors:

(1) The surveillance effort of the Sea Force decreased markedly. The Sea Force ships on patrol (average of 13 daily) reported inspecting only 1,436 vessels during November as opposed to 7,100 reported searched in October, and 6,100 in September. It is probable that this decline is a reflection of dissatisfaction and low morale prompted by the publication of the officer promotion list on 1 November. All officers with two years in grade were theoretically eligible for promotion. In practice, however, only those officers serving in "front line" billets were selected; and the front line billets included only the River and Coastal Forces.

(2) The Northeast Monsoon was the second contributing factor to the decreased number of searches. Heavy surf and rough seas reduced both the "fishing fleet" activity and the number of VNN junks on patrol in the First and Second Naval Zones. Despite the deteriorating weather in the North, the Coastal Force reported a daily average of 194 junks underway. Operating in groups of two or more, these junks conducted an average of 6.8 inspections per team per day.

b. Assignment of Market Time Forces.

(1) WPBs Recalled. For the first time since MARKET TIME operations

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commenced, MARKET TIME units were forced to vacate patrol stations because of weather. Record twenty foot seas on 20 November necessitated calling the WPB's into Danang until the seas abated. They were back on station by 0800, 23 November.

(2) Operation Round-up. A plan for large scale search and investigation of junk concentrations, described in October's Historical Summary, was first executed on 19 November off the mouth of the Cau Co Chien River. This operation emphasized the need of aircraft surveillance to verify the presence and extent of the junk concentration. On the morning the plan was executed, the expected junk concentration did not exit the river mouth. The few searches that were conducted were insufficient to properly evaluate the operation. Tried again at Danang on 24 November, and at Rach Gia on 26 November, the operation proved effective and successful.

c. Incidents Involving Naval Units. Viet Cong activity continued at approximately the same level as the previous month. No infiltration attempt was discovered, although the two incidents elaborated upon below were highly suspect at the time of their occurrence. Threat of minings in the rivers increased, and the incident occurring at RAG 22 is included as an example of the difficulties posed in this field.

(1) The ZIPPER Incident. On 26 October, at about 2200H, USS CONQUEST detected a radar contact off Cape Ke Ga, with three small contacts in close proximity. About ten minutes later the larger contact changed course to seaward and the other three contacts moved toward the beach. CONQUEST was unable to sufficiently close the larger contact and could obtain no reply

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by flashing light. After approximately fifteen minutes the contact slowed and CONQUEST was able to identify it as the French ship ZIPPER, who declared she was out of Saigon bound for Nha Trang. Fuel-type drums and dunnage were observed on the foredeck. Kept under surveillance, ZIPPER arrived at Nha Trang on 27 October where Vietnamese Navy vedettes were stationed about her to watch for any attempt to off-load contraband. On 30 October a Vietnamese Navy boarding party inspected the ZIPPER's cargo and logs, but found no evidence of an infiltration attempt.

(2) Mining at RAG 22. On 18 November, on the Oriental River near Ben Luc, a mine exploded between two LCM's of RAG 22. One LCM was sunk, the other was heavily damaged, and a nearby LCVP's hull was split open. Salvage operations succeeded in removing all armament and portable equipment from both boats. The engine of the damaged LCM was recovered but attempts to salvage the sunken boat's engine were unsuccessful. The sunken LCM and the wooden hulled LCVP were a total loss. The stern section of the damaged LCM was cut off and brought to the shipyard in Saigon where it will be "married" to the bow section of an LCM damaged last year.

Incident to this mining is the reported history of careless watches and lax security at RAG 22. Since 20 June 1965, ten craft of this RAG have been mined; five of these were so heavily damaged that they were total losses. A total of 181 men have been killed or wounded. Repeated advisory suggestions to the Commanding Officer to increase the physical security of the base and eliminate lax watch standing have been ignored to date.

(3) The WEST SEA Incident. About noon on 13 November, the WEST SEA,

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a Vietnamese merchant freighter of Panamanian registry, was observed DIM about ten miles east of Cu Lao Island. That evening she showed breakdown lights. USS KOINER later confirmed that WEST SEA had in fact experienced engine trouble. Suspicion was aroused the next day when the CTF 115 operation center's plot showed a speed of advance more rapid than would be possible for a ship drifting under the influence of the wind and current effects of the northeast monsoon weather. Later in the morning of the 14th, a surveillance flight reported two junks near the WEST SEA. With these facts in mind, and knowing that the WEST SEA had been delayed by customs officials in Danang on 1 November for having unmanifested watches and sundry items on board, USS NEWELL was directed to shadow the suspect ship. On 15 November NEWELL boarded and searched WEST SEA. She confirmed the engine casualty and reported that WEST SEA's charts concurred with the known set and drift of the sea at the time, and that no suspicious material was on board. USS HISSEM relieved NEWELL about noon the same day and shadowed WEST SEA when she got underway about 2000H. WEST SEA arrived Vung Tau on 18 November and was again searched, this time by a seventeen man team headed by the USOM advisor to Vietnamese Customs. No contraband was found on board.

2. (C) OPERATIONAL ASSISTANCE.

A. LSM(H) and PayVar Activities. LSM(H)-400 visited five islands off the western coast during the period 16 to 30 November. Two days were spent at Tamassou, three at Phu Quoc, and one day each at Poulo Hama, Poulo Panjang, and Poulo Obi. The medical department treated 1353 persons. Approximately 50% of this number were treated by a doctor; the others had

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minor ailments and were given pills, salve, or treatment by a corpsman. Two hundred thirty-nine persons received dental treatment.

Other activities of the VNN Psychological Warfare Bureau included the delivery of approximately five tons of welfare material to the River Assault Groups, MSC 114 and CSC An Thoi. These commands will distribute the material to needy persons. MSC 114 and CSC An Thoi additionally received 1,200 magazines and 200 posters. A leaflet addressed to the Viet Cong on Phu Quoc was composed and 200,000 copies were printed. These were air dropped on 21 November, the same day LSM(H) 400 arrived. Difficulties in scheduling aircraft prevented dropping them a day earlier, as was originally planned. Three hundred PayWar kits were delivered by C-47 to Rach Gia, and eight hundred were brought to An Thoi by the LSM(H).

A junkman's son from Junk Division 36, accompanied by his father and aunt, was brought to Saigon by bus for a harelip operation. An Army Captain performed the surgery at U.S. Naval Hospital, where the boy was kept overnight. He was then transferred to a VNN housing area where his father and aunt had spent the previous night. In a few days all three were returned to their home. The PsyWar Bureau made the arrangements for transportation and housing and defrayed all expense.

3. (S) MAINTENANCE/MATERIAL ASSISTANCE.

a. Ships Commissioned by VNN. On 10 November, Vietnamese Navy Headquarters commissioned LSSLs 227, 228, and 229. This brings the Vietnamese Navy's LSSL force to five ships. LSSL 227 and 228 began inport training on 12 November, and on 19 November deployed to the Gulf of

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Thailand to conduct underway training. LSSL 229 remained in port to complete outfitting. She is scheduled to commence a training program in February 1966.

4. (S) PLANNING.

a. Shift of Ammunition Handling to Cat Lai. The October proposal to construct an anchorage for ocean-going ships at Cat Lai, in order to remove the ammunition handling area from the fuel farm complex at Nha Be, was approved by COMUSMACV. The Corps of Army Engineers was directed to up-date the proposal and begin necessary construction and dredging.

b. Safety of Ammunition Handling. Merchant Marine officers have reported that ammunition unloading procedures at Nha Be are not carefully or safely performed. The Vietnamese stevedores are totally inexperienced. They either lack the proper tools or use improper equipment to handle the various classes of ammunition. Lack of experienced supervisory personnel is most glaring. To combat this situation CHNAVADVGRP proposed to COMUSMACV that requests be made for two Coast Guard port security units. These teams consist of eight men (1 officer and 7 enlisted) who have special training and practical experience in handling ammunition. They would train the local stevedores in proper handling procedures and observation of safety regulations.

c. Plan to Control Merchant Shipping. Present Vietnamese law required all cargo merchants to register their shipments before sailing. This is done mainly for tax collection purposes, and little attention is given to possible smuggling attempts. The merchant captain simply declares his cargo and by circuitous methods a tax is levied. The tax is then divided by a fixed scale among public officials of all levels from the customs

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officer to district chief. Rarely is the captain's word doubted. It appears that the present income outweighs gains that could be had by hiring inspectors to check material as it is loaded on board the vessel. In those few cases where the captain's word is suspect, a man is hired to conduct a search; but this is done after the ship is loaded and is directed toward quantity of goods rather than hidden items. At best, it is cursory. An opportune situation for delivering contraband exists once the ship leaves port. Only her departure and arrival ports are known by the customs officials. All intervening stops, even if they are legitimate and scheduled, are omitted from the sailing form. It has been suggested to RVN government officials that the merchant freighters be "convoyed" to insure control of their movements. This suggestion was not well received, for the government apparently takes pride in the easy movement of foodstuffs and produce.

As it appears that the RVN government cannot be induced to apply stricter measures to lessen a potential infiltration situation, a NAVADVGRP study completed in November made the following recommendations. CTF 115 should establish a movement control branch as a function of its operations center. This branch would collect arrival and departure information from customs officials, and relay it to CSC's and MARKET TIME units along the vessel's proposed route. This information would supplement current surveillance efforts. Additionally, harbor entrance control posts would maintain surveillance of the port or channel and hail all passing vessels for identification, destination, and stops enroute. Any special interest vessels could be boarded and searched, and customs officials in the port could be

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alerted to be on guard for attempts to remove contraband.

d. Plan to Ensure Sea Access to Saigon. The Contingency Plan to ensure sea access to Saigon, submitted to COMUSMACV in October, was accepted and assigned to U.S. Army Engineers for up-dating and development.

5. (S) Marine Advisory Activities.

a. Operation BLUE MARLIN. The first combined USMC/VNMC operation was conducted during the month of November. Operation Blue Marlin commenced with the arrival of the 3rd Battalion, VNMC, at Chu Lai on 6 November and terminated when they were helilifted out of the zone of action on 12 November. Although several units of the VNMC had previously conducted combined ground combat operations, this was the first time an entire VNMC battalion was exposed to the USMC's mode of operations. A complete exchange of ideas was accomplished by leaders at all levels, and the response of the individual Vietnamese Marine to the pre-deployment training was excellent.

b. Marine Artillery. After repeated unsuccessful attempts by the Marine Advisory Unit to regain operational control of various VNMC artillery units, a battery of 105mm howitzers previously attached to the Vietnamese Airborne Brigade reverted to operational control of Task Force Alpha. This change in attitude concerning organic artillery constitutes a significant breakthrough in the task organization of deployed units. Other accomplishments in the field of supporting arms included attachment of a section of 75mm pack howitzers to direct support of the battalion assigned Capitol Military Region defense, and the commitment to deploy an additional platoon to the VNMC unit operating as part of the general reserve of 2nd ARVN Division in

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I Corps Tactical Zone. In addition, all battalions have indicated an increased and more efficient employment of organic 81mm mortars.

c. Changes in Advisory Organization. Changes in the table of organization were initiated to permit the Marine Advisory unit a more extensive sphere of influence throughout the VNMC. These changes include the request for two officers to serve as task force advisor and assistant, thereby relieving the operations advisor to re-institute efforts in the G-2, G-3 training areas; a medical advisor to assist in the training and employment of the Brigade Medical Company; and a training assistant to represent the Advisory Unit in revamping the Brigade recruit training program and in initiating an expanded and more realistic unit and crew served weapons training program.

d. VN Officer Fitness Reports. As an adjunct to the officer fitness reporting methods within VN channels, the Advisory Unit instituted a reporting system wherein U.S. Advisors at Battalion level would submit quarterly, their evaluation of Battalion and Company Commanders. The first reports, submitted at the end of November, were well received by the Commandant, VNMC.

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