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NAVAL FORCES VIETNAM

MONTHLY HISTORICAL SUMMARY

MARCH 1966

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NAVAL FORCES VIETNAM

MONTHLY HISTORICAL SUMMARY

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Index

March 1966 :

PAGE

Coastal Surveillance Force :

Boirap River Patrol	1
Operation JACK STAY	3
Operation BLUE HILL II	7
Operation SOUTH WIND	9
Operation THE SHOT II	10
PCF	12
WPU	13
Aerial Surveillance	14
Hydrographic	15

River Patrol Force :

PBR	17
NSU	18
Base Construction	18

Naval Advisory Group :

Fleet Command	20
Coastal Force	21
River Assault Groups	24
Vietnamese Marines	25
Civic Action	26

Enclosures :

- (1) JACK STAY Compilation
- (2) Extract from III MAF Medical and Dental Report
- (3) Extract from III MAF Chaplains' Report
- (4) Extract from Report of Rach Gia Surgical Team

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Coastal Surveillance Force

To establish and maintain control of the area bordering the Long Tao river, the lifeline of Saigon, was the primary problem facing the United States and Vietnamese naval forces during March. Three incidents in February and March involving merchant ships transiting to Saigon emphasized the precarious situation of these unarmed, unescorted vessels. Shipping was subject to machine gun and recoilless rifle fire, resulting in groundings and shipboard fires. Viet Cong were able to take positions on the shore with relative safety, then flee into the protection of the Rung Sat Special Zone, the region starting fifteen miles southeast of Saigon through which the Long Tao winds its course.

Viet Cong control of the Rung Sat Special Zone, approximately three hundred square miles of mangrove swamp interlaced with myriad canals, was virtually unchallenged. From here they could operate freely, attacking ships then returning to hidden havens, while their engineers fabricated mines, their cadres trained recruits, and hospitals treated their wounded. To eliminate the threat would require breaking this Viet Cong hold on the Rung Sat Special Zone.

No fresh water and only limited quantities of food are naturally available in the RSSZ, and extensive infiltration is required to support troops. Known infiltration routes existed to the west, crossing the Soirap River from Go Cong and Long An provinces; with another possible route from the south, entering

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at the Dong Tranh River. To counter this a combined blockade was established, with "SWIFT" and Coast Guard units diverted from HARKIT TIME patrol to provide the nucleus. LCPLs, junks from Coastal Group 33 and Vietnamese Navy Sea Force ships were assigned at intervals to assist.

On 7 March, two Coast Guard WPLs commenced patrol of the southern reach of the Soirap. USCGC POINT WHITE was the first to prove the merit of continuous patrol by radar equipped vessels in this area. A radar contact was picked up leaving the mouth of the Vam Sat River. POINT WHITE closed and illuminated the contact, a junk with a number of men aboard. The junk opened fire upon illumination and a brief engagement ensued. POINT WHITE then moved ahead at full speed to strike the junk a glancing blow, her wash partially swamping the junk and leaving it in a sinking condition. Then, with the assistance of Coastal Group 33, four Viet Cong were captured from the water, and four carbines, some equipment, ammunition, and numerous documents were recovered from the boat.

POINT WHITE's success, experienced on her first day of patrol, demonstrated the potential of blockade action. It was decided to extend the patrol the entire length of the Soirap River to Nha Be. To provide complete radar coverage of the river, four areas were established. WPLs were assigned patrols in areas one and three, and PCF in areas two and four. River orientation patrols and intelligence briefings were first conducted; and continuous blockade patrols commenced on 15 March.

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Late in the evening of 18 March, USCGC POINT PARTRIDGE closed a radar contact near the mouth of the Soirap River, drawing fire from the junk. Fire was returned and numerous hits were observed, but shallow water precluded pursuit and evaluation.

On 22 March POINT HUDSON detected a suspicious contact with twelve men on board. When POINT HUDSON closed, the junk attempted evasion. POINT HUDSON opened fire and the occupants dove into the water. An estimated ten were killed. During this same period, 15 March to 25 March, other patrol units drew harassing fire, but no significant casualties resulted.

* * * * *

The southern-most large scale employment of United States ground troops in Vietnam, Operation JACK STAY, commenced on 26 March. Combined units of Task Group 76.5 and the First Battalion, Fifth Marines, landed on the Long Thanh Peninsula at the southern tip of the Rung Sat Special Zone, and established three beachheads. With the support of Army, Navy, Marine and Air Force pilots, the largest and deepest penetration of the Rung Sat Special Zone was launched.

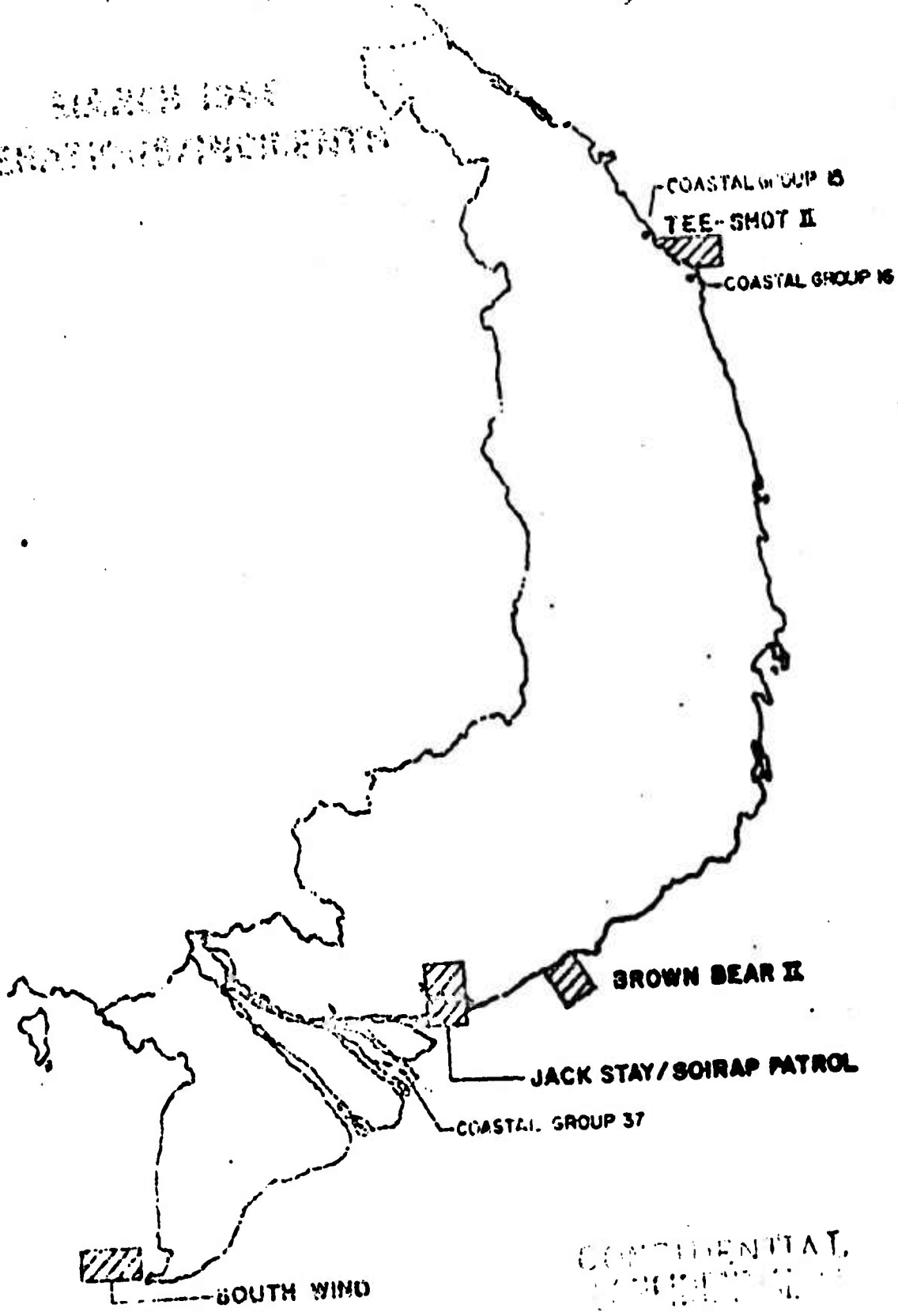
As the operation moved on, it evolved into an exercise of combined forces. Units of the Fleet Command, River and Coastal Forces of the Vietnamese Navy, as well as two battalions of Vietnamese Marines saw action. United States manned MSUs and LCPLs saw extensive action; and MARKET TIME units were employed in blockade patrols.

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OPERATIONAL PROCEDURES



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1. Team Composition:

Physicians - 4

Nurses - 3

Technicians - 1

Others - 1

2. Patient Care:

Number of Inpatients treated - 258

Number of Outpatient consultations - 171 (Clinics) and 360 (ER)

Operative Procedures Performed:

Major War Casualties - 30 Other - 77

Minor War Casualties - 93 Other - 267

Emergency - 297

Elective - 170

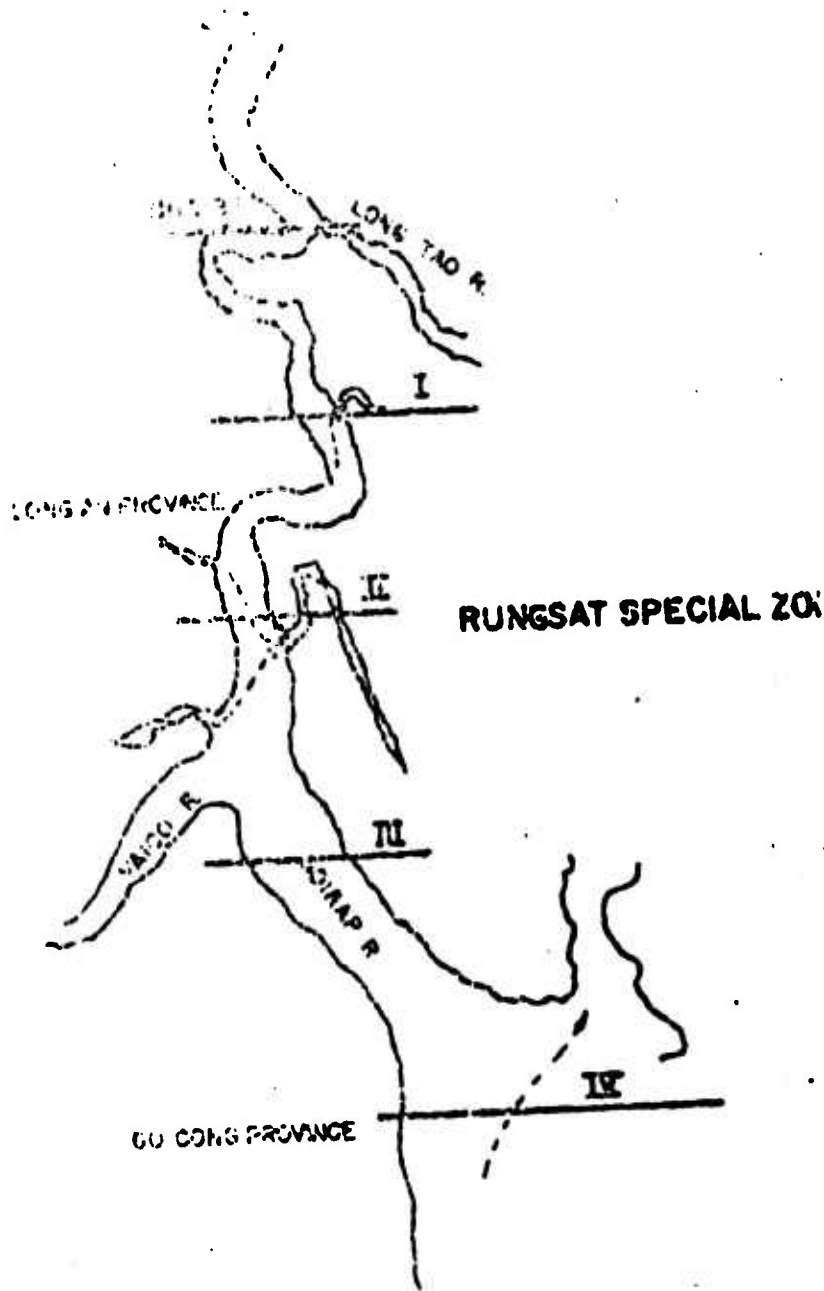
Post-Operative Deaths - 5

3. Periodic short field trips have been continued.

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1. SOI RAPH RIVER PATROL STATION
2. PROBABLE VIET CONG INFILTRATION ROUTES



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IGON
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OPERATION JACK STAY



LEGEND

- BLOCKADE PATROL STATIONS
- LCPL-SUPPORTED AMBUSH SITES
- x VC SAMPANS DESTROYED
- MARINE LANDING SITES
- ROUTE OF VAM SAT CONVOY
- ⚡ PCF 26 AMBUSHED

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Expanding on the four boat Soirap River Patrol, WPBs and PCFs were integrated into JACK STAY to counter any Viet Cong exfiltration or infiltration attempts, and to interdict possible Viet Cong movement within the RSSZ. Nine WPBs and six PCFs were committed to patrol the major waterways, the Soirap, the Long Tao, and the Dong Tranh, with six WPBs and four PCFs on station at all times. A TF 115 communications relay center was established aboard USS BELLE GROVE (LSD-2), and TG 76.5/TF 115 liaison established aboard USS PRINCETON (LPH-5). MARKET TIME units were assigned the secondary mission of supporting ground operations. On the evening of 25 March the blockade units took up stations.

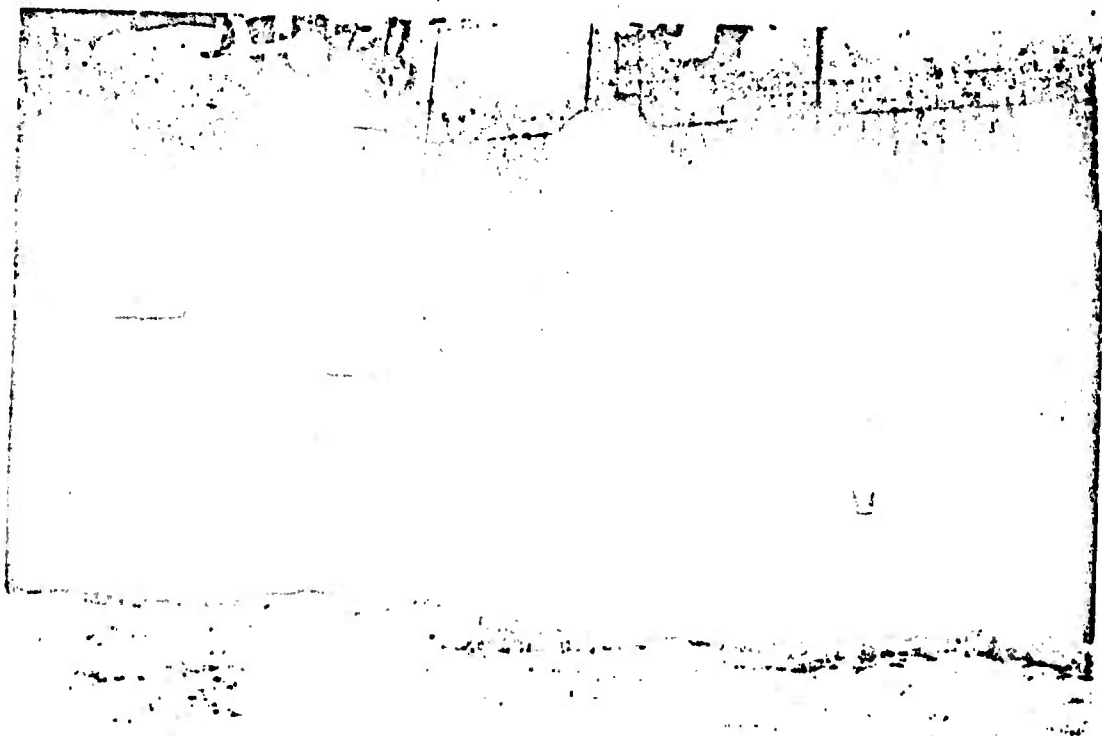
The Soirap stations saw three engagements during the operation, the first on 26 March when PCF-31 opened fire on an evading junk, which subsequently managed to reach shore. Casualties were unknown. In the same location on the 27th, a suspicious junk opened fire on PCF-31. She returned the fire, cutting the junk in half and killing five. Later that evening, POINT LEAGUE picked up an abandoned sampan, possibly deserted during the PCF-31 incident, with two carbines, grenades, ammunition and supplies aboard. In the third incident on 2 April, PCF-26 came under fire from the shore while closing two suspicious sampans. One sampan was sunk before the PCF broke off contact.

The northern reach of the Dong Tranh River was the scene of the most intense waterborne action of the operation. Here, on 27 March, PCF-26 came under .50 cal. and .30 cal. machine gun

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PCF 26 ALONGSIDE USS BELL GROVE DURING JACK STAY



CREWMEN FROM USCGC POINT LEACH VISITING

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fire from both banks. She suppressed the attack with machine gun and mortar fire, but not before suffering two personnel wounded and light material damage.

The narrow channel in that area provided an ideal location for mining, and the enemy made their first attempt on 30 March. PCF-25 experienced a mine explosion 10 yards off her starboard beam. She immediately directed fire at both banks, and received brief fire in return. On 2 April a second mining was attempted when a mine exploded 20 yards to starboard of PCF-23.

Three LPCs experienced heavy shore fire in the same area. On 29 March, while supporting ambush teams, they came under heavy fire on three occasions. Each time crew alertness and a high volume of accurate return fire silenced the attacks. No friendly casualties were experienced.

Other action involving MARKET TIME units included two WOUND-UP operations. WPBs and PCFs combined to collect forty-five junks on the Soirap River on 1 April, and forty junks on the Long Tao River on 4 April. In the first instance the junks were turned over to Vietnamese authorities for inspection, and in the second to the Vietnamese Navy. Also, on 31 March, PCF-31 and PCF-23 mortared several suspected Viet Cong positions.

On 31 March a joint United States-Vietnamese amphibious operation was conducted, the first such endeavor of the war. With Monitors and FUMs of Vietnamese Navy River Assault Groups providing a protective screen and minesweeping escort for United States

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U.S. Forward

CONVOY PROCEEDS DOWN VAN SATE RIVER



V STRAITS. NAVY FORS MUST LURING JACK JAY

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Marines embarked in landing craft, the twenty-four boat convoy worked its way seven miles down the narrow Vam Sat River. This was the deepest penetration into the Rung Sat Special Zone and the most fruitful, resulting in the destruction of a large Viet Cong training, hospital and supply complex.

The success of the penetration into the RSSZ can be attributed to the concept of coupling Vietnamese Navy experience in riverine operations and River Assault Group capabilities with an integral body of assault troops trained in amphibious warfare. U.S. advisors who were experienced in the Rung Sat Special Zone area and were familiar with Vietnamese Navy operations bridged the gap between the Vietnamese and the Americans.

Vietnamese Marines landed in the northern portion of the Rung Sat Special Zone on 1 April. Vietnamese Navy Fleet Command units joined MARKET TIME vessels on blockade patrol, and Vietnamese Coastal Force junks patrolled the western section of the Zone during the early days of JACK STAY. Again, close liaison with U.S. advisors made possible the full integration of the Vietnamese units.

A Navy and Marine Corps Civic Action Team rounded out the operation, visiting the four major villages in the Rung Sat Special Zone: Can Gio, Ly Nhon, Dong Hoa and Quang Xuyen. Medical and dental personnel treated approximately two thousand cases, while soap, vitamins, and toys were distributed. The response of the villagers was enthusiastic.

The major accomplishment of JACK STAY was the discovery and

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destruction of a large Viet Cong complex, and the capture of a large amount of enemy weapons and supplies. The extent of these facilities indicated they were used to support operations elsewhere in the country as well as in the Hung Sat Special Zone. Their destruction reduced the overall Viet Cong war-making capability, and greatly reduced the potential for attacks on river shipping.

The very nature of JACK GRAY gave it aspects which made it unique as the first large scale, coordinated operation involving United States Seventh Fleet and Vietnamese Navy and Marine Corps units. A strong precedent for future operations was established.

* * * * *

The anti-infiltration patrol concepts developed during the previous months saw further application during March in Operation BROWN BEAR II. The operation was conducted in the area immediately south of that of BROWN BEAR I, extending from Ham Thang village southwest to Thuan Bien. Participating units included USS KOINER (DEK 331), two WPLs from Coast Guard Division 103, and units from Coastal Group 31 at Ham Tan.

The planning conference was held at CSC Yung Tau on 12 March, and the evening of 13 March all units reported on station. Four patrol areas were established and assigned to the WPLs. KOINER was to conduct a random patrol of the objective area, with Coastal Group 31 patrolling as required and standing by to take custody of suspect junks.

Boarding operations were limited by seas up to seven feet

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that replacement of WPBs had become a routine evolution. Both the astern method and the alongside method were employed.

With PCF units restricted to hung bat operations and limited participation by Coastal Group 31 due to sea conditions, coverage was limited to only three units on patrol at all times. This should not be the case in future operations. While the advent of the Southwest Monsoon in future months is expected to bring increased cargo and fishing traffic, more effective participation by the smaller units - particularly PCF and Coastal Group junks - will be possible.

* * * * *

Operation SOUTH WIND was conceived and executed in response to intelligence information indicating the possibility of seaborne infiltration by submarine in the vicinity of the Ca Mau Peninsula. Intelligence sources indicated a Chinese Communist submarine would depart Cambodia on 19 March, and on 20 March offload a cargo of weapons, mines and medical supplies in the vicinity of the Ong Dec River. The possibility of submarine infiltration was evaluated as unlikely, however the possibility of infiltration by other type craft was considered feasible.

Six MARKET TIME units were diverted to the area. USS VANCE (DER 387) was designated OTC; with POINT MAST, POINT GRAY, POINT YOUNG and three PCFs rounding out the patrol. VANCE also was to provide logistic support for the WPB/PCF and berth three spare PCF crews.

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VANCE was assigned the outermost patrol area and was to maintain passive sonar surveillance until making contact. Inshore of VANCE were three WPDs, and providing close-in coverage were the PCFs. In addition, Red Track aerial surveillance flights were adjusted to provide continuous coverage of the area. Four Mark 54 depth bombs and eight paraflares were loaded on each aircraft.

All units were on station the evening of 19 March. SOUTH WIND continued for five days, with numerous surface contacts searched, none suspicious. On 23 March USS BRISTER relieved VANCE, and the morning of 24 March the operation was terminated.

Although the infiltration threat never materialized, SOUTH WIND illustrated the feasibility of rapid deployment of MAJORITY TIME units to meet a potential infiltration threat. All units were on station when required; and, again, the DER was able to provide logistic support for units away from their base, and provide for the spare PCF crews.

* * * * *

Operation TEE SHOT II was initiated in support of operation TEXAS in Quang Ngai Province. The operation was established to interdict any Viet Cong exfiltration attempts and to prevent infiltration of supporting units or supplies.

TEE SHOT II was conducted on a somewhat smaller scale than TEE SHOT I. USS PERSISTENT (MSO 491) and USS WHIPPOOHWILL (MSC 207) provided the outer barrier. Inshore were two PCFs, with reserve crews berthed in Chu Lai, and units of Coastal Groups 15 and 16.

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The operation commenced on 24 March.

On 25 March PCF 20 provided MGFS for Coastal Group 16. The operation proceeded without further incident and was terminated on 27 March.

Using a MSC vice DFK as supporting ship and OTC imposed several limitations. The MSC lacks the berthing facilities for spare PCF crews. This necessitated berthing the two spare crews in Chu Lai, and the PCF had to leave station to change crews. Coordination with the Coastal Groups and intra task group communications were seriously hampered by the lack of FM communications on the MSC and MSC. On one occasion PERSISTENT had to go alongside a Coastal Group 15 junk to borrow a PRC-10 radio in order to coordinate MGFS.

Coordination with Coastal Groups 15 and 16 was poor or non-existent. (This was aggravated by events at both these Coastal Groups, covered later under Coastal Group activities.) Promulgation of Coastal Group patrol schedules and patrol areas to the USN units would have helped alleviate this situation. In addition, the assignment by Vietnamese Navy Headquarters of specific unit and area responsibilities would enhance future operations.

PERSISTENT found that PCFs presented a poor radar picture at ranges in excess of three miles. Both PCF units were loaned radar reflectors to mount on their flag staffs, and radar return was significantly improved. PCF units also lacked Vietnamese liaison personnel.

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On 15 March, when weather conditions improved and
the possibility of inshore contacts was possible. On 16 March
the ship towed one steel hulled cargo boat, previously
sighted as suspicious, into Vung Tau for search by Vietnamese
authorities. It was later released. Otherwise the operation
progressed without incident until 17 March, when a stand-down from
operations was ordered to permit KOPS by USS PORTERFIELD.

Coastal Group 31 had reported a concentration of enemy ground
forces in the vicinity based on local intelligence sources. Prior
to clearing the area, POINT WHITE fired twenty-six rounds of 81mm
mortar and KOLINER thirty-five rounds of three inch fifty caliber.
One secondary explosion was observed. PORTERFIELD then commenced
her mission.

Additional intelligence reports from Coastal Group 31 indi-
cated a possible Viet Cong resupply by junk the evening of 17 March,
and BISHOP BARK II units were repositioned to conduct intensive,
close-in search. No resupply was detected and on the evening of
18 March BISHOP BARK II was reactivated.

Throughout the operation the absence of the fishing fleet was
a notable factor, their activity probably limited by sea conditions.
Boarding and search operations were continued without incident
until the morning of 22 March, when the operation was terminated
and units returned to normal patrol.

Utilization of the DLK "mother ship" concept was limited as
KOPS did not participate in the operation. However, KOLINER reported

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An increased tempo of PCF operations was noted during the month. In addition to continued HADIT TIM. patrols, PCF units were involved in ten incidents, experiencing their heaviest action since arrival in country. They also fired nine gunfire support missions.

The largest share of this activity was experienced by the newest division. Division 103 completed training and area indoctrination during the early weeks of the month, and commenced patrols. The division strength was increased with the arrival of PCF 31 and PCF 32 in Cat Lo on 7 March. Soon after activation they were playing an important role in the Soirap River patrols, and later were integrated into Operation JACK STAY. During JACK STAY they maintained four boats on patrol at all times in spite of battle damage and personnel casualties. The crews responded well under fire, establishing a good precedent for future operations.

The lessons learned from the sinking of PCF 4 last month saw application during March. The Viet Cong, hoping for additional success, continued to employ probable booby traps against the SWIFTS. Five apparent booby traps were reported in area nine, as well as two unsuccessful minings in the Long Tao River. With the increasing tempo of SWIFT operations, a continuing increase in the use of mines and booby traps is anticipated.

Communications problems continue to plague the PCF. Replacement URC/58 sets are not yet available, with a 19-month delay time forecast for delivery. This necessitates the boat to boat transfer of operative sets in the event of casualties. PRC 125 sets are not

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yet available, forcing the use of PKC 25 and PKC 10 for interim FM communications.

* * * * *

During March, Coast Guard WPBs of the Coastal Surveillance Force experienced their highest level of action since becoming part of the MARKET TIME patrols. WPBs participated in the Soirap River blockade patrols, and operations JACK STAY, BROWN BEAR II, and SOUTH WIND. As with the PCFs, the WPBs of Division 13 operating in the Rung Sat waters saw most of the action.

Using their fifty caliber machine guns to good advantage, Coast Guard units accounted for forty-one Viet Cong killed, wounded or captured, in addition to the capture of weapons, ammunition and supplies. Their eighty-one millimeter mortars fired six gunfire support missions, all but one by Division 11 in the Gulf of Thailand. The cutters mortared Viet Cong troop concentrations, camps and staging areas, and fired several missions in support of ground operations. The WPBs of Division 13 used to good advantage their surface search capability and fire power in searching out and destroying armed Viet Cong junks.

Repair facilities emerged as a problem during the month. Although most minor repairs can be accomplished at the local repair facilities at Da Nang, Cat Lo, and aboard USS KRISHNA, those involving drydocking impose a problem. The only presently available in-country drydocks, those at Saigon Naval Shipyard, are backlogged with repairs to Vietnamese Navy ships. With Vietnamese Navy

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cooperation it has been possible to schedule the needed repairs, but only with some interruption of the Vietnamese repair schedule. More adequate arrangements are required for both emergency and routine repairs.

A one hundred ton floating drydock has been towed to Da Nang, and additional floating drydocks are scheduled for Cam Ranh Bay and Nha Be. The possibility of leasing one of two private drydocks in the Saigon area as an interim emergency repair facility is under consideration. In addition to accommodating U.S. boats, it could be used to relieve some of the backlog at the Navy Shipyard. Providing security at the proposed location at present appears the major problem. Another possibility under study is utilization of out of country facilities in Thailand. Facilities are also available in Subic Bay, but transit time is a limiting factor.

* * * * *

Continuing their aerial surveillance of coastal traffic, MARLT TIME aircraft this month flew a total of 732 hours. Fifteen additional hours went into special flights, one in support of an incident and the other on supply runs to Cam Ranh Bay. In addition, forty-two "Gold Dust" drops were made, supplying MARLT TIME ships with newspapers and magazines.

SP2H aircraft from Tan Son Nhut airfield at Saigon, SP3A from NAS Sangley Point, and SP5H from the seadrome at Cam Ranh Bay provided continuous aerial surveillance. Red Track flights cover the area south of Vung Tau, and Blue Track flights the northern

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areas. USS SALLISBURY (AGOS-26) provided the seadrome at Cam Ranh Bay during March.

Additional aerial surveillance was provided by Army Mohawk aircraft carrying Side-looking Airborne Radar (SLAR). This radar is highly useful in detecting moving surface targets, providing instant interpretation. SLAR flights over coastal regions are now being conducted, with Coastal Surveillance Centers relaying information from the aircraft to MARKO-T TBM units on patrol.

* * * * *

Although the Long Tao River has long been used as the main ship channel to Saigon, recent events have emphasized the dangers inherent in depending solely on this waterway for wartime shipping. At its best it is a narrow channel, winding through an area highly advantageous to an enemy seeking to disrupt shipping. This has led to the consideration of an alternate channel.

Nine miles to the west of the Long Tao River entrance, the Soirap River starts its way to Nha Be. Its channel is four miles shorter than the Long Tao, and, in almost all sections, wider. It follows a course almost directly north with only two bends. One of these is in a relatively secure area. The other provides the only good location for Viet Cong harassment, yet this could be controlled more easily than the many bends of the Long Tao. The Soirap at mean high water will be able to accommodate vessels with draft of 29 feet.

During March the Lighthouse Division of the Vietnamese Directorate of Navigation established the first series of buoys on

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the Soirap River. Buoy one, the entrance buoy, is lighted. It is followed by a series of five unlighted buoys, extending as far north as the Vaico river. Additional buoys and beacons are proposed as far north as Nha Hu.

During March the initial steps were taken in production of bilingual, English-Vietnamese, navigational charts. The first such chart, bordered by Vung Tau on the north and the Cua Dai River on the south, was produced from Vietnamese survey data. Future charts will be simplified by elimination of the arbitrary Vietnamese meter grid, retaining only the UTM and geographic grids.

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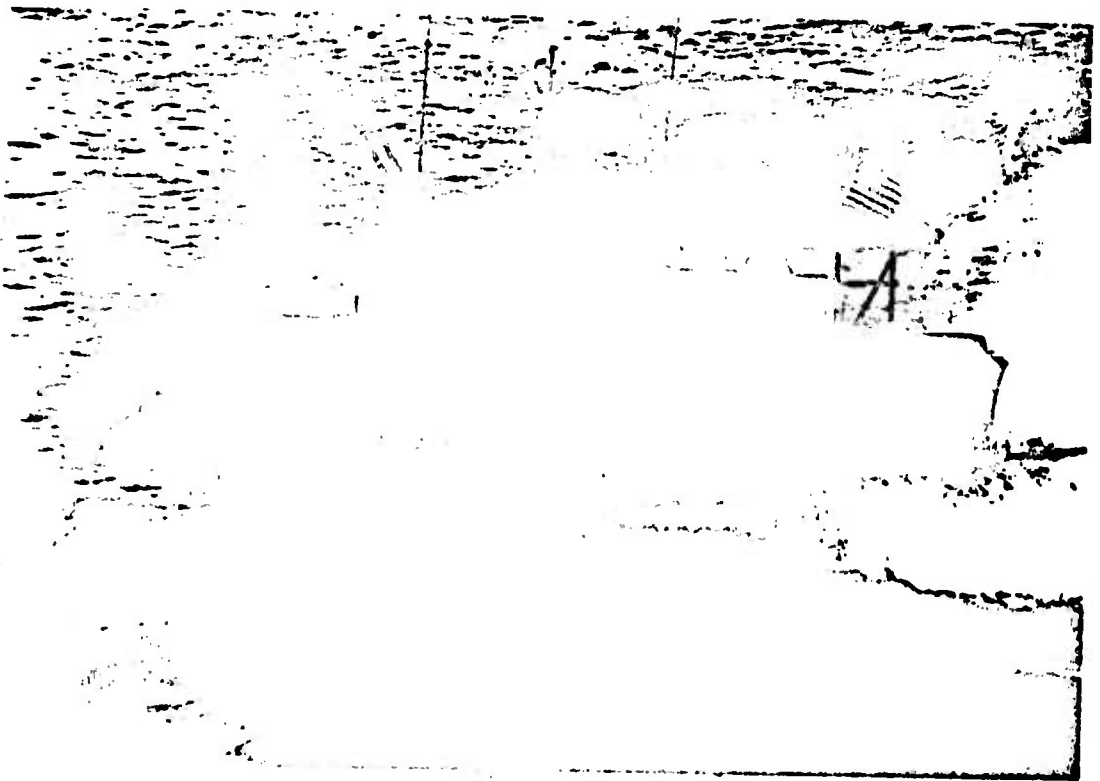
RIVER PATROL FORCE

Assigned the mission of preventing Viet Cong movement, infiltration, and resupply on the waterways of the Mekong Delta, the Delta estuaries and in the Rung Sat Special Zone, Operation GAME WARDEN progressed with the arrival of its first new patrol units. The first eleven PRBs arrived in country 21 March. Utilising USS HAMIL GROVE (ISP 2) as an interim Inshore Support Ship, and the partially completed facilities at Cat Lo, the boats underwent shakedown cruises.

Simultaneous crew training and area indoctrination were conducted in the waterways adjacent to Vung Tau. It is expected that this first increment will be operational in early April. Nine additional PRBs arrived in country 30 March. However, four of these boats were damaged during shipment, one beyond in-country repair.

Numerous boat alterations are under consideration and experimentation. Among these are several being effected by crews in country: armor is being modified on the twin fifty caliber mount to improve gunner visibility; ammunition feed mechanism difficulties are being rectified; and towing bridles are being fabricated for emergency use in case of grounding.

River Squadron Five was established on 15 March, assuming administrative control over the newly arriving GAME WARDEN units. COMBIVRON FIVE has been assigned the home port of San Diego.



PBU



Army UH-1B helicopter pilots scheduled to participate in CASE WARREN received their initial indoctrination in shipboard launch and landing procedures. Day and night operations were practiced from USS HULL GROVE prior to JACK STAY. On 25 March a detachment of UH-1B moved aboard HULL GROVE. The following day they started participation in JACK STAY, rendering important support during the operations.

* * * * *

The arrival of the four boats of MSB detachment Alfa from Da Nang marked the entry of United States units into river mine-sweeping operations. The boats arrived in Vung Tau on 10 March and proceeded to Nha Be to commence training. Three units conducted their first operations in support of JACK STAY starting on 26 March, and have continued two daily sweeps of the Long Tao river. With the MSB units sweeping their moored gear, and the Vietnamese Navy MMS units streaming bottom drags, a more complete coverage of the ship channel is possible. The fourth MSB is being used in tests on an experimental mine hunting sonar.

The MSBs are operating from the temporary facilities at Nha Be. Crews are housed in tents and fuel is stored in plastic bladders. Permanent facilities are under construction.

* * * * *

Austere, interim CASE WARREN base facilities have been completed at Nha Be, while, in addition, the partially completed permanent base at Cat Lo is being utilized. Several constraints

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must be overcome to permit punctual completion of interim facilities at other bases.

Land has been acquired on four of the eight permanent base sites. Three of the remaining four have received local approval and are awaiting final approval. Only at Vinh Long has the desired acquisition been completely rejected, necessitating investigation and procurement of an alternate site. Six of the eight permanent sites will require dredge fill. The dredge has arrived in country and Nha Be will receive first priority.

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NAVAL ADVISORY GROUP

A slow but continuing progress in Vietnamese Navy operations and effectiveness was evident during March.

Events indicated increasing aggressiveness in Vietnamese Navy sea patrol units. PGM 613 provided two encouraging examples during the month. On 15 March, while on a routine patrol in the Third Coastal Zone, a Viet Cong junk surrendered to the PGM. Seven Viet Cong gave themselves up, bringing with them five Russian rifles and ammunition. On 23 March PGM 613 and Coastal Group 36, both with advisors embarked, staged a joint ambush. Three Viet Cong junks were brought under fire close to the shore. The junks managed to beach, and casualties were unknown.

However, critical areas continue to exist, particularly those of maintenance and of personnel. Overall ship maintenance during the month was not considered satisfactory on Fleet Command ships. However there was a decided improvement in procedures and directives promulgated by the Fleet Command Material Officer. It is felt that with continued advisory effort directed at shipboard maintenance and training, overall material condition should improve.

As in the past, leadership during March was generally regarded as unsatisfactory. The performance of a number of commanding officers was outstanding, but many continued to perform in an unsatisfactory manner. A similar problem continued to exist at the junior officer and NCO level. Many are very good, but the

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majority show little or no desire to become good leaders.

During March the rotation of many U.S. officers left some ships without advisors and many coastal groups with an insufficient number. Loss of experienced personnel in the forthcoming months will continue. This situation tends to break the continuity of the advisory effort. Newly arriving advisory personnel on occasion do not have the opportunity to learn from their predecessor's experience, as in some cases new advisors are assigned after their predecessors have departed.

* * * * *

Incidents involving the Coastal Groups and their advisors were numerous during March. Several of these portray an increased aggressiveness, and others excellent cooperation between the Coastal Groups and MARKET TIME units.

On 13 March, Coastal Group 37 spotted four junks offloading at a beach near the mouth of the Bai Lai River. The water in that location was too shallow to permit the two YABUTAS of CG 37 to approach to investigate, and a small landing party was put ashore upstream. As the landing party approached the junks they received hostile fire and were forced to pull back. The junks from CG 37 maintained fire to attempt to prevent the offloading of the beached junks. As the tide came in one of the junks managed to escape around a bend in the coast. Then, at high tide, the Coastal Group units were able to move in to investigate. The remaining junks

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had been unloaded of all significant cargo. Two of the junks were towed back to the base.

On 21 March, and again on 23 March, Coastal Group 30 units on patrol came under heavy shore fire. In both incidents US3 IMPLICIT, on patrol in the same area, was called by Coastal Group 30 advisors to render support. With advisors on the Coastal Group junks serving as spotters, IMPLICIT suppressed the enemy fire with her fifty caliber machine guns and forty millimeter gun. In the first incident secondary explosions were observed in the vicinity of the enemy positions. In addition, after the first incident, IMPLICIT treated two wounded Vietnamese junkmen. Close liaison between Coastal Group 30 advisors and the IMPLICIT resulted in the arrival of assistance and the favorable results achieved.

Security of remote Coastal Group bases still is considered marginal. Two incidents during March accentuated this situation. On the morning of 23 March, Coastal Group 14 came under mortar attack at 0100. The attack continued intermittently for three hours, when the Viet Cong, estimated at two companies, began an intensified mortar and automatic weapons attack. No final rush on the base was attempted.

Coastal Group 15 was sabotaged from within on 26 March. Five booby trap grenades were employed, four placed across the door to the commanding officer's and advisor's houses, and the fifth in the path of the roving sentry. The commanding officer

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was fatally wounded. The advisors were not at the base at the time. The grenades had been supplied by a deserter from Coastal Group 11 and a female Viet Cong cadre, and were placed by three junkmen from CG 15.

Dangers inherent in close inshore junk patrols were tragically emphasized this month. On 25 March, on a routine patrol, Coastal Group 16 units came under heavy automatic weapons fire about two hundred yards from the shore. During the ensuing engagement the embarked advisor was fatally wounded by a heavy caliber bullet.

Personnel and maintenance problems continued to plague the Coastal Force. The manning level of the Coastal Groups remained below allowance during March. The need for trained engineers continued to be critical. Some improvement was noted, but more trained people are needed.

The new policy of assigning more experienced commanding officers to the coastal groups led to a marked improvement in leadership during the month. Over fifty percent of the commanding officers are now regarded by their advisors as capable officers.

Motor/sail junks continue to impose a serious maintenance constraint on repair facility personnel. Many hulls are in a bad state of deterioration, and engine malfunctions are becoming more and more frequent. Survey of approximately fifty percent of these boats has been recommended. This would provide an engine pool for replacement parts. The continued addition of new YAGUTAs will take up the slack.

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River Assault Groups participated in fifteen small scale, combined sweep operations during the month. They continued to demonstrate a high capability for this type of operation.

Such an operation was successfully conducted by RAG 23 on 13 March in Binh Dinh province. Participating units included eight boats of RAG 23, Vietnamese Navy L33L 227, two Regional Force platoons and two Popular Force platoons. The troops were embarked during the early morning hours and transported to the scene of the operation, the Cu Lao area of Vung Lich sub-sector. Late in the morning the troops were put ashore to start a four hour sweep of the area. This phase resulted in five Viet Cong killed and three weapons captured, with no friendly casualties. The RAG units provided a blocking force. Three platoons were again embarked in the boats, the fourth left behind to set an ambush. Late in the afternoon the ambush yielded results and the rest of the forces returned to assist the ambush team. Eleven Viet Cong were killed and four weapons captured. Again there were no friendly casualties. L33L 227 was brought in for support when the force came under shore fire while returning to debark the troops. The entire operation was planned and executed by the commanding officer of RAG 23.

In comparison to the large scale search and destroy operations, these small scale sweeps have several advantages. They can be quickly planned and executed thereby preventing security leaks and giving almost immediate reaction to intelligence data (in this particular sector there is good intelligence). The RAG groups also have the capability to lift troops to the scene with relatively

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good speed and secrecy, then support them.

The limiting factor in this type of operation is availability of troops. The MAC commander must rely on district or province headquarters for assignment of troops. The Vietnamese Navy has proposed integration of troops into the MACs to alleviate this situation, but to date, Vietnamese authorities have not seen fit to grant them this capability.

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Task Force Alpha, composed of the Second and Third Vietnamese Marine Battalions, with their advisors, and elements of the Amphibious Support Battalion, saw extensive action in March. During most of the month they were under the operational control of the ARVN 22 Infantry Division in Binh Dinh Province. Contact with the enemy was made on numerous occasions.

On 8 March, Task Force Alpha was attacked by an estimated Viet Cong Battalion, resulting in thirty enemy killed and seventeen weapons and a quantity of ammunition captured. Reports indicated that additional enemy bodies had been carried away. Three friendly troops were killed in action.

The remainder of the month was spent in search and destroy operations, some of these in combination with ARVN units. On 23 March the most significant contact was made when Task Force Alpha engaged a North Vietnamese company. During the engagement ten Vietnamese Marines were killed. One North Vietnamese first lieutenant was confirmed killed.

On 19 March a 105 millimeter missile burst accidentally killed two

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Vietnamese Marines and the U.S. Marine Artillery Battalion advisor.

The first and fourth Vietnamese Marine Battalions, constituting Task Force Bravo, were assigned to the Capital Military Region during the first three weeks of March. Here they conducted two search and destroy operations. On 22 March they relieved Task Force Alpha in Binh Dinh Province.

The fifth battalion remained under the control of the CMR until 7 March. Following relief by the first battalion on 8 March, they boarded two LSTs for an operation in the Rung Sat Special Zone. Search and clear operations were conducted until 10 March with no enemy contact. On 23 March a search and destroy operation was conducted in the Vinh Loc sector of the CMR, with no contact. The remainder of the month was spent in static security in the CMR.

* * * * *

The Vietnamese Navy Psychological Warfare Bureau and their advisors, working in conjunction with Vietnamese Navy units and advisors in the field, continued their civic action activities during March. Over eighty-four tons of civic action materials were received from CARE, USAID, and Catholic Relief Organization for further distribution to Coastal Surveillance Centers and advisors in the field. Final distribution was by MARKET TIME units and Vietnamese Navy units. Magazines and posters were also provided for distribution.

On 1 March a combined Medical/PsyWar Team proceeded to Tuy Hoa and Song Cau to administer to refugees and Coastal Group 24

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personnel and dependents. Two days were spent at each location. Approximately 1,000 people received medical treatment during the four day period. In addition, work on the refugee village community toilet and school was continued, and a second village well neared completion. During a four day follow-up visit on 15 March, an additional 1,100 people were treated, and one and one quarter tons of welfare material were distributed.

The PSYWAR Bureau also worked in support of Rung Sat Special Zone operations. On 8 March a PSYWAR mobile team broadcasted the new security and curfew regulations on the Long Tao River from boats of RAG 22. They also conducted an airdrop of leaflets promulgating the new regulations. Simultaneous with the initial landings in the Rung Sat Special Zone on 26 March, the VNM PSYWAR Bureau coordinated aerial broadcasts into the Zone. They also provided 120,000 Safe Conduct Passes during the operation.

Other events saw eight tons of welfare material distributed to employees of the Eastern Repair Facility and their families and six successful cleftlip operations performed. The Vietnamese Navy hospital ship remained in overhaul due to a flooded engine room, however a mission is being planned for the ship starting in mid-April.

Coastal Group 36, on 13 March, conducted a joint PSYWAR operation with the district chief and Popular Forces in the area. Coordination was assisted by U.S. Army and Navy advisors. Entertainment was provided and PsyWar materials were distributed. A new speaker system was utilized to broadcast messages to Lao Cua Lee

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Island, a Viet Cong stronghold in the Banac River.

Two days later, on 15 March, seven Chieu Hoi Raiders from the island turned themselves in to Coastal Group 36. They brought with them three Russian rifles and 130 rounds of ammunition. Among the Raiders were two Viet Cong platoon leaders, one secretary, and four guerillas. On 22 March four additional Raiders turned themselves in. This is the second such incident at Coastal Group 36, the first occurring in February, and serves to illustrate the value of the intensive, continuing Psywar effort by the Coastal Force personnel and advisors at that base.

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ENCLOSURE (1)

The following is a compilation of Viet Cong equipment and facilities captured or destroyed during Operation JACK STAY.

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1. Sixty-six individual weapons, 60,000 rounds small arms ammunition.
2. One ammunition factory including: forty-five bunkers, 1,000 pounds of land and water mines, one fifty-five gallon drum of kerosene, 30mm mortar shells, eight structures, detonating devices, tools and miscellaneous equipment, 300 pounds of gunpowder.
3. One mine factory complex including: forty reinforced bunkers, one aid station with medical documents and clothing, 200 water mines, thirteen acetylene tanks, numerous structures and class rooms.
4. One hospital complex including: twenty-five elevated buildings interconnected with log walkways, numerous drugs and medical supplies.
5. Quantities of rice and fresh water.

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