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COMMANDER RIVER ASSAULT FLOTILLA ONE
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Present

From: Commander River Assault Flotilla ONE
To: Commander U.S. Naval Forces, Vietnam

Subj: Command History for December 1967 (NAVFORV 5750-1); forwarding of

Ref: (a) COMNAVFORVIRST 5750.1A

Encl: (1) Command History for December 1967

1. Enclosure (1) is forwarded in accordance with the provisions of reference (a).

R. S. Salzer
R. S. SALZER

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COMRIVFLOT ONE/COMRIVSUPPRON SEVEN

COMMAND HISTORY - DECEMBER 1967

CAPT Robert S. SALZER relieved CAPT Wade C. WELLS of COMRIVFLOT ONE/COMRIVSUPPRON SEVEN/CTF-117 on 2 December aboard USS BENEWAH (APB-35). General WESTMORELAND presented CAPT WELLS with the Distinguished Service Medal for his services in organizing and leading the MRF. In addition, Brigadier General THANH, ARVN 7th Infantry Division Commander, presented CAPT WELLS with the Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry with Palm for his participation as Commander Task Force 117 during Operation CORONADO II from 29 July to 4 August 1967.

Phased Operation Coronado IX continued during the reporting period, with one operation conducted in Western Dinh Tuong and Eastern Kien Phong Provinces during the period 4-6 December.

Movement from Dong Tam to the objective area commenced during the night of 3 December when the barge-mounted artillery, accompanied by elements of RAD 92, got underway for the Fire Support Patrol Base (FSPB) 30 N.M. up river. The artillery was followed by RAD 112/5th Infantry Battalion VNMIC, RAD 111/3-47th Infantry Battalion and RAD 91/4-47th Infantry Battalion, consecutively.

RAD 112 fought its way through one B-40/RPG-7 ambush and landed the VN Marine Battalion under fire at 040800 on the upper Rach Ruong on the flank of the enemy and began a day-long fight with the 502 Local Force Battalion and local guerillas. This action again highlighted the tenacity, professional competence and aggressiveness of the elite VNMIC battalion. The VN Marines accounted for the majority of the day's kill and took the heaviest losses themselves. RAD-112 supported the ground maneuver from the waterway while taking several RR/B-40/AW hits throughout the day and night.

RAD-111 was also taken under fire enroute to 3-47th Infantry Battalion beaches on the Rach Ruong. The troops were successfully placed ashore and the River Assault Craft continued to provide close support to the battalion throughout the action. Two USN personnel were killed and 68 were wounded during this action.

As a deception measure, the MRB delayed relocation until the boats were in the area of operation. At 040630H, the MRB got underway from Dong Tam escorted by ASPB's. Use of the ASPB's reduced the transit time considerably. H&I fires were conducted by the MRF ships during the first phase of the transit. Upon arrival in the objective area, DEFCON II was set and maintained to counter the increased threat to the MRB in this area.

During the afternoon of 5 December, RAD 112 backloaded the 5th VNMIC Battalion and returned to Dong Tam to allow the Battalion to reorganize and obtain replacements for the KIA/WIA losses.

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RAD 111 and 91 continued to support the infantry in the objective area during 5 and 6 December. Units were backloaded commencing PM 5 December and completed in the afternoon of 6 December.

The MRF relocated to the vicinity of the junction of the Song Tien Giang and Co Chien Rivers AM 6 December without incident.

This highly successful operation rendered yet another VC haven area unsafe for the enemy and added substantially to GVN/US presence in the Delta. Enemy KIA, WIA and captured weapons and material were as follows:

VC KIA (BC)	266
VC WIA	1
VC PW	8
DETAINÉES	108 (Incl PW)

VC WEAPONS CAPTURED

3 B-40 Rockets	11 Russian Rifles
2 BAR	1 Revolver
7 AK-47	5 Colt K-54's
15 M-1 Carbines	1 Colt BA-38
2 M-1 rifles	1 Handmade Pistol
1 Thompson SMG	1 English Sniper Rifle w/scope
3 Chicom Carbines	1 .45 Cal Pistol
1 U.S. Carbine	1 M-60 M.G.
16 Claymore Mines	182 Grenades
15 Land Mines	5 AP Mines

VC MATERIAL CAPTURED AND INSTALLATIONS DESTROYED

1 PRC-10 Radio	8 B-40 Rounds
72 U.S. Magazines	10 U.S. Maps
35 Lbs. Documents	10 Lbs. Dental Equipment
5000 Rounds SA Ammo	Small amount of clothing
5000 lbs rice	2 Small Medical Caches
161 Bunkers	6 Command Structures
126 Sampans	

PACVs of COSDIV 17 arrived Vung Tau on 4 December and flew to Dong Tam the same day without incident. Delta orientation and shakedown training was commenced 8 December at Dong Tam.

Subsequent phased Coronado IX operations were not as lucrative in terms of enemy KIA as the 4-6 December period. However, continuing combat pressure and area denial was maintained by conducting riverine strike operations during the periods 9-11 and 14-16 December in the Cam Son Secret Zone, Cai Be and Giao Duc Districts and the 470 Base Area.

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A new tactic, developed by CTF 117, was employed on 14 December. Faced with the problem of penetrating the Rach Ba Rai, the scene of murderous ambushes and tenacious VC resistance in the past, a heavily armored riverine force was tasked to precede the embarked infantry up the stream. This force, composed of 2 Monitors, 2 ASPB, and 2 ATC with APC Flamethrowers embarked, preceded the 5th Inf Bn, WMC and the remainder of RAD 112 up the stream. Their mission was to attempt to provoke an attack from the shores. RAD 112 and the VN Marines were then to beach just south of any valid contact made by the armored force and exploit the situation. Although the enemy chose to avoid contact on the 14th, the employment of a Riverine Armored Reconnaissance Element, or "RARE", in this manner is felt to be tactically sound and will be utilized again in the future.

The VC continued to avoid any major contact with the MRF during air mobile and riverine operations in the Cam Son Secret Zone on the 14th and in the 470 Base Area on the 15th and 16th. The MRF relocated again to the junction of the Song Tien Giang and the Co Chien on the morning of the 14th and operations were conducted from that base. Contact during the period was light and sporadic.

Four ASPBs from RAD 91 supported night reconnaissance activity on 12-13 December. Selected 2nd Brigade Army personnel, together with U.S. advisors and VN irregulars conducted a series of insertions in the vicinity of Con Cat and Con Qui Islands. The operation was considered a success by the advisors who expressed pleasure with the performance of the Army personnel.

The use of a smoke screen as an MRB defensive measure was evaluated on 15 December while the MRB was anchored in the vicinity of Vinh Long. The test was conducted utilizing smoke pots on waterborne defensive patrol craft. On signal, the three boats on the northern side of the MRB activated their smoke pots and continued on their normal patrol pattern. Within approximately 45 seconds, the MRB was sufficiently obscured to inhibit a successful attack. Duration of the smoke cover was 10-12 minutes, utilizing only one smoke pot per boat. During conduct of this test, the wind was blowing toward the MRB resulting in partial exposure of the ships nearest the north bank. This situation could be rectified by moving the smoke-generating boats to a perimeter farther out from the MRB. The ideal smoke delivering vehicle appears to be the ASPB due to its ability to cover a larger area in a shorter time frame. While it would be best if the screen drifted toward the enemy, the evaluation conducted 15 December showed that it is still an effective masking device even under relatively adverse conditions.

Following relocation from the junction of the Song Tien Giang and the Song Co Chien to Dong Tam on the 17th, TF 117 units commenced movement ashore and to the remaining ships. The Ammi pontoons were moved to Dong Tam and to the APL-26 and the WESTCHESTER CTY. RAS 11 Staff and the Flotilla Staff moved ashore. RAD 111 moved to the WESTCHESTER CTY. RAD 91 remained in the APL and was joined by RAD 92. CTF 117 shifted his pennant to the WESTCHESTER CTY at 191200H and staff ashore at headquarters 2nd Brigade, 9th Infantry Division.

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The V.C. welcomed TF 117 units ashore by mounting a mortar attack against Dong Tam Base the evening of 18 December. 16 rounds of 82mm mortar were fired into the NW section of the base. There were no casualties.

COLLETON (APB-36) departed Dong Tam at 181030H for Subic Bay via Vung Tau for RAV. BENEWAH (APB-35) was underway for Vung Tau at 191000H arriving at 191700H for RAV.

Phased Coronado IX operation continued with one operation conducted in Cai Lay District, Northern Dinh Tuong Province during the period 20-22 December. Movement from Dong Tam to the objective area commenced during the night of 19 December when elements of RAD 111 lifted two companies of 3/47th to night ambush sites on the Kinh Xan north of Dong Tam. RAD's 91, 111, and 112 provided lift, backlift and support to the 3/60th Inf Bn, the 4/47 Inf Bn and the 5th Inf Bn VMC. In A.M. of 21 Dec, the lead minesweeping boat, A-111-4 was mined while transiting the Xarg Canal. Personnel casualties were 3 WIA and 1 KIA. The boat hull was dished in but not holed and returned to the MRB under her own power. During the period the VC avoided any major contact with the MRF; therefore, the infantry was backloaded on the 22nd and returned to Dong Tam.

Two infantry battalions supported by RAD's 91 and 92, moved to separate AO's AM 24 December to implement the Christmas Truce operations. RAD-91 lifted 3-60th Inf Bn to beaches on the Kinh Giao Hoa, then established waterborne blocks in the area. The enemy responded with small arms fire on two occasions during the day. Fires were returned by Army and Navy units with unknown results. Blocking positions were established in the afternoon and maintained for the remainder of the truce period (to 251800H). 333 sampans were searched with no detainees; however 26 VC were observed on the afternoon of the 25th preparing fortifications on the west bank of the Kinh Giao Hoa. The enemy fired at RAD 91 units but withdrew when assault craft and infantry responded. 3-60 Inf Bn backloaded AM 26 December and returned to Dong Tam.

RAD 92 lifted 3-47 Inf Bn to beaches on the Kinh Song My Tho in the Ap Bac area NW of Dong Tam. Waterborne blocks were established to complement the maneuver and blocking positions ashore. This was a major crossing site last year during the truce. However, no enemy activity was noted during the period of the 1967 truce. Extraction was completed at 240759H and units returned to Dong Tam.

During the Christmas truce, ten ASPB's from RAD 112 were committed in conjunction with PBR's from TU-116.3:1 for interdiction of VC resupply routes between Kinh Hoa and Dinh Tuong Provinces. Although results of the patrols were negative, plans continued for further evaluation of PBR/ASPB teams.

Another ASPB mining attempt occurred on 26 December when a command detonated mine was exploded approximately abeam of A-111-1. No casualties were inflicted and only light damage was caused to the boat.

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A riverine strike operation was mounted on the morning of 28 December which continued to the end of the month. Operations were focused on the Cam Son/Ban Long area and included water and air interdiction and saturation patrolling in Ham Long, Cai Bay, Cai Lay, and Long Dinh Districts. Operations during this period were characterized by sporadic harrasing small arms fire and no significant contact.

In their first operational employment on 29 December, two PACV's of TG 117.4 inserted infantry squads into the operation area. Although the troops were successfully lifted to their destination, both PACV's experienced mechanical and/or electrical difficulties which resulted in one of the vehicles being air lifted back to Dong Tam by a "Flying Crane" helicopter.

At 0800 on 29 December, CDR .H. HAMEL III relieved LCDR C.L. HOROWITZ as COMRIVRON NINE. The ceremony was conducted in the AO on board CCB C-91-1 because of requirements of operations in progress.

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