



COMMANDER RIVER ASSAULT FLOTILLA ONE
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From: Commander River Assault Flotilla ONE
To: Commander U.S. Naval Forces, Vietnam

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

Ref: (a) COMNAVFORVINST 5750.1A

Encl: (1) Command History for ~~April~~ ^{May} 1967

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

W. C. WELLS

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COMRIVFLOT ONE/COMRIVSUPPRON SEVEN

COMMAND HISTORY - MAY 1967

On 2 May, the USS COLLETON (APB-36) arrived at Vung Tau. On 5-7 May RIVRON 11 Staff RIVDIV 112 and units of the 4/47th Infantry, embarked in the COLLETON.

With arrival of COLLETON, a minor odyssey in naval annals came to pass. BENEWAH and COLLETON departed Norfolk, Va. USA, and sailed halfway around the world - each with a sustained speed of between ten and eleven knots - each with an untried crew and an untested ship - each proceeding to an uncertain future about which they had little knowledge. Suffice to say many dire predictions were made concerning their lonely passage. Happy to say BENEWAH arrived ready for whatever lies ahead some six days ahead of the most optimistic predicted arrival - COLLETON likewise ready arrived some ten days ahead.

The advent of the Southwest Monsoon has resulted in rapid deterioration of Vung Tau harbor water surface conditions in late afternoon. On the several nights riverine assault craft were sortied from alongside ships to proceed to sheltered anchorage at Cat Lo. USS SNOHOMISH COUNTY (LST-1126) arrived Vung Tau on 1 May and will perform duties as first MRF resupply ship.

The need for an administrative detachment staff ashore, both as a personnel processing center and to provide much needed storage space has become increasingly apparent. The entire personnel section of the Flotilla will be moved ashore at Dong Tam, RVN. This will free much needed office space aboard BENEWAH, and permit the setting up of a central personnel processing area for the handling of all personnel. It has been requested that four quonset huts be made available to be used as office space and as a stowage area for personal gear which cannot be stowed aboard BENEWAH or COLLETON. All receipts and transfers of personnel will be effected at this location, and it will function as a funneling point for R&R departures of personnel assigned to CTF-117 units.

The Naval Research and Development Unit, Viet Nam provided COMRIVFLOT ONE with 5 experimental buoyant flak jackets for evaluation. A buoyancy test was performed by one of the RIVFLOT ONE officers on 12 May. He was dressed in full combat gear including the field shoes. The buoyant qualities were excellent. Afloat ten minutes in the water, he could not pull himself under the water with the jacket on. A test of the regular flak vest and the CO2 type life jacket was also conducted. Sufficient positive buoyancy for a fair swimmer was obtained by the discharge of one CO cartridge. With two cartridges even the poorest of swimmers should have little difficulty remaining afloat. The five buoyant flak jackets have been turned over to a boat crew for evaluation. After a period of operation, they will be interviewed and their comments on the suitability of the jacket will be forwarded to Chief, Naval Research and Development, Vietnam.

Enclosure (1)

During May, River Assault Flotilla ONE was visited by camera teams from NBC and CBS. Both networks covered the concept and general operations of the Flotilla at Vung Tau and their support of the embarked Army units. Both networks also went out on ATC's and were put ashore in the Rung Sat Special Zone on a large operation with the Army. NBC came back to cover the return of the troops to the Mobile Riverine Base and also interviewed CTF-117. SECNAV Guest Artist Larry Zabel spent four days with TF-117, two of which he spent aboard an ATC on patrol. Raymond Burr and an NBC camera team visited RIVRON NINE units at Dong Tam and filmed an operation for use on an NBC Vietnam special.

Concern over the YRBM-17 to perform effectively still exists. During the 10 May conference at NAVFORV it was determined that it would not be possible for YRBM-17 to overhaul the engines of all boats cycling through Dong Tam for overhaul. This resulted in the decision to preposition additional engines at Dong Tam, have the YRBM-17 conduct engine changes and move the replaced engines to ASKARI for overhaul. COMNAVFORV will attempt to augment the capabilities of YRBM-17 in order to support the mission assigned.

After about four months of constant operations our boat crews ran into their first real test on 15 May in a multi-battalion operation west of Dong Tam--both performed in the highest traditions of the U. S. Navy. The morale of our crews is as high as can be imagined. Details were submitted to COMNAVFORV by CTF 117, 211300Z May 67.

On 20 May, COMRIVFLOT ONE gave ADM U.S.G. SHARP, USN, CINCPAC, an update briefing on the Riverine Assault Force at COMNAVFORV Headquarters. Topics covered were present status of arrival in-country of ships and craft, future plans and highlights of several recent operations.

A test of the feasibility of employing a 4.2 inch mortar aboard an ATC was conducted by the heavy weapons platoon of the 3/47th Infantry Battalion and was supervised by the Fire Support Coordinator of the 3/47th. During the test, the ATC was beached with steadying lines out to port and starboard from the stern to the beach. The ramp was down and the awning removed. As a base for the mortar, four rows of sandbags were placed forward in the well deck of the ATC with backing support to hold the sandbags in position. The mortar was centered on the sandbags and secured by the use of additional sandbags. Twenty rounds were fired conducting three call fire missions. During the fire-for-effort phase, maximum dispersion of shot was plus 25 minus 25 meters. No structural deformation of the ATC was noted. The results of the test were considered to be excellent.

Plastic turrent covers on LCM conversions do not stand up to the tropical heat. The covers become concave and thus of reduced value as grenade trap protection. A wire stiffening is being developed to provide a "quick fix" but future covers should be made from stronger plastic or wire reinforcement.

Combat operations on 15 May adequately demonstrated the effectiveness of the bar armor - XAR30 plate combination against the 57MM recoilless rifle HEAT round. Although there was damage to the armor itself, there was only one case of penetration--believed to be a projectile larger than 57MM--causing four casualties.

Reports on 19 May indicate the VC are now using an 82MM recoilless rifle HEAT round. This penetrated the ballistic armor on one shot, causing a small fire in an ammunition locker within the armor shield. It has been proposed that styrofoam or polyurethane blocks, if placed behind the bar armor, may reduce the jet formation on the HEAT round and also absorb some of the fragments produced by the shell. Experiments are being conducted with Navy standard shaped charges to determine the effectiveness of a plastic block over the XAR30 armor. Preliminary tests look very good.

As of 31 May, all Riverine Assault Craft have arrived in country except two CCB's due to arrive on the USS OAK HILL on 6 June. Two Monitors due to arrive on the HAWAIIAN RETAILER on 12 June and two Monitors are due to arrive on the MANKETO VICTORY on 2 June.

Enclosure (1)