



COMMANDER RIVER ASSAULT FLOTILLA ONE  
FPO SAN FRANCISCO 96201

5-8110  
**CONFIDENTIAL**

CRF-1/N1:hd  
5213  
Ser 0151

*Sum*  
*117*  
*September*

**10 OCT 1967**

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

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

Ref: (a) COMNAVFORVINST 5750.1A

Encl: (1) Command History for September 1967

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

*W C Wells*

W. C. WELLS

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COMRIVFLOT ONE/COMRIVSUPPRON SEVEN

COMMAND HISTORY - SEPTEMBER 1967

On 5 September the duties of the four River Assault Divisions were shifted as follows:

RAD 91 from support of 3/47 Infantry Battalion to general support (resupply, minesweeping, medical clearing station and miscellaneous tasks).

RAD 92 from Base Defense to support of 3/47 Infantry Battalion

RAD 111 from general support to support of 3/60 Infantry Battalion

RAD 112 from support of 3/60 Infantry Battalion to Mobile Riverine Base Defense

In order to provide appropriate support and effective coordination of operations, personnel was relocated as follows:

RAD 91 from APL-26 to USS WHITFIELD COUNTY (LST-1169)

RAD 92 from USS BENEWAH (APB-35) to APL-26

RAD 111 from USS WHITFIELD COUNTY (LST-1169) to USS COLLETON (APB-36)

RAD 112 from USS COLLETON (APB-36) to USS BENEWAH (APB-35).

RAS 9 Staff remains in APL-26 and RAS 11 Staff in COLLETON.

Mobile Riverine Force operations on 2 and 3 September were conducted in Can Giouc District of Long An Province, designed principally to provide this area with a reasonable degree of security in order to permit the local populace to participate in the National Elections. In accomplishing this mission the MRF did not take detainees nor disturb the local population in any manner unless subjected to hostile action by an identified individual or individuals. Use of supporting fires was held to an absolute minimum consistent with the requirement to ensure the safety and security of U.S. Forces.

On 1 September a two-man EOD detachment was furnished to C Company 84th Engineer Battalion to assist in the demolition of a sunken concrete float and underwater pilings at the Cau Noi Ferry site in the Vam Co. River (XS 787568). The Cau Noi Ferry, connecting the Go Cong and Long An portions of National Highway 5, had not been able to transport vehicles for the past several months due to the sunken float. Since it was considered economically unfeasible to raise the float, it was destroyed by the TF 117 EOD Team in order to install a new float. The new float was moved into place with EOD assistance on 3 September, thus opening Highway 5 to vehicular traffic between Go Cong and Long An Provinces. The restoration of this ferry site to full operation is considered to be a significant contribution to the Revolutionary Development Program.

On 5 September at 0015H a convoy of approximately 30 junks with escorts passed close aboard the Mobile Riverine Base at the junction of the Soi Rap/Vam Co Rivers. CTF-117 had received no advance word of this convoy. COMNAVFORV later indicated that this convoy was returning from Bac Lieu, and that its itinerary was indefinite due to such variables as tide, speed of convoy, and opposition, if any. Timely information is frequently difficult to obtain due to the lack of a U.S. advisor on the escorting RAG boats.

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ENCLOSURE (1)

On 9 September a short ceremony was held on the DeLong Pier alongside the USS BENEWAH where appropriate goodbyes were said to the 8 ATC crews being relieved this month. The entire roster of boat crews were present to bid "adieu". COMRIVFLOT ONE awarded a Purple Heart to one boat crew member for wounds recently received and personally thanked each man for his services.

During the period 7-9 September, the Mobile Riverine Force conducted riverine assault and search and destroy operations (CORONADO IV) in the southwestern Mhon Trach and southwestern Long Thanh districts of Bion Hoa Province. This operation was highlighted by the capture of the largest weapons and supply caches discovered to date by the MRF. The caches included:

- 94 CHICOM carbines
  - 1 Springfield rifle
  - 1 Russian rifle
  - 3 Machine guns
  - 3 Spare machine gun barrels
  - 1 Sub-machine gun
- 56,150 Rounds small arms ammo
  - 4 Rounds 75mm howitzer (CHICOM)
  - 46 Rounds 75mm howitzer (U.S.)
- 165 Grenades
  - 95 Pounds explosives
  - 30 Rounds 60mm mortar
  - 12 CHICOM booby traps
  - 1 Claymore mine
- 5200 Pounds rice
  - 1 Ton salt
  - 45 Black uniforms
  - 100 Pounds flour
  - 45 Pair shoes
  - Unspecified amount opium
- 850 Pounds assorted medical supplies
- 60 Pounds documents
- 2 Radios
- 1 Sewing machine

Evaluation of results of riverine assault operations (CORONADO V) conducted in the Cam Son Area of Dinh Tuong Province during the period 15-16 September revealed the following noteworthy items:

(1) During the operation river assault craft came under the heaviest fire they have experienced to date. Task Group 117.2 was ambushed along a two and one-half kilometer stretch of the Rach Ba Rai with 57mm recoilless rifle, RPG-2 and RPG-7 AT grenades, automatic weapons and small arms fire. In all, eighteen river assault craft received battle damage. Despite the heavy volume of fire and a large number of hits, not a single boat was placed out of action. This performance provides convincing evidence of the rugged construction of the boats.

(2) TG 117.2 was ambushed from well prepared positions on the east bank of Rach Ba Rai. The task group, which was reconning by fire at the time the ambush was sprung, fought its way past the entrenched VC and landed an infantry battalion in the northern part of the area of operations. In so doing, they successfully inserted a block which prevented VC exfiltration from the area.

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(3) The riverine assault force once again proved its ability to stand and slug it out with the enemy even when he is located in well prepared ambush positions. At the same time the significant number of casualties emphasizes the urgent requirement for armor which will successfully defeat the B-40 and B-50 rocket.

(4) CTF 117 was assigned a helo (H-23) for tactical coordination of water maneuver during the operation. The capability to coordinate operations from the air proved invaluable in alerting task group commanders of imminent danger to their craft, the location of friendly forces and in providing a communications relay. Without this asset the effectiveness of the Riverine Assault Force would have been substantially reduced. It is imperative that CTF-117 be assigned a helo for use during combat operations.

(5) The requirement for advanced reconnaissance in heavily fortified VC Secret Zones was clearly demonstrated during this operation. In order to provide adequate preparatory fires, it is highly desirable that the extent of bunkering and other fortifications and their locations be determined in advance. In areas of thick vegetation and overhanging nipa palms this information cannot be obtained from aerial photography.

On 15 September, the Force suffered 3 KIA and 77 MIA in the intense close range fire fight with the VC. Thirty-five personnel were helo MEDEVACED to hospitals ashore. If it had not been for our ASPB crews who are aboard waiting on their boats, we would have been seriously undermanned with the prospect of having to lay up much-needed boats for lack of trained replacements. This again points up the need for an attrition pool of personnel, trained and ready to replace casualties. As a minimum this pool should consist of 4 ATC, 1 CCB, 1 Monitor and 2 ASPB crews. Experience may eventually indicate that the pool should be larger. In the months to come it is expected that the MRF will be working areas of the Delta which have thus far been virgin territory and completely dominated by the VC. This may well mean continued and regular need for casualty replacements.

The 4/47th Infantry Battalion rotated aboard the MRB from Dong Tam and the 3/47th Infantry Battalion went ashore at Dong Tam 17 September. A joint two-day "refresher training" program was conducted 17-18 September for members of the 4/47th Infantry Battalion. The training was coordinated and conducted by Commander River Assault Squadron NINE in coordination with CO, 4/47th Infantry Battalion. The following areas were included:

- (1) Background and Composition of the Mobile Riverine Force.
- (2) Types of River Assault Craft.
- (3) Concept of Operations.
- (4) Water Safety.
- (5) Shipboard Orientation.
- (6) Boat Regulations
- (7) Tour of CCB, Monitor, ATC and ATC(H).

On 20 September 1967, the first shipment of two ASPB's arrived in Vung Tau

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aboard the SS OHIO. The U.S. Army Transportation Battalion, Vung Tau/Delta (Provisional) off loaded the boats in the early evening with the Army BD crane which relocated from Saigon for off loading the ASPB and associated equipment. Due to difficulties with the crane, and the need to remove trucks and trailers from a hatch, the boat kits were not off loaded until the afternoon of 22 September. Since the eight pallets containing the boat kits were broken down by the shipper for stowage, the complete boat kits were not delivered at Vung Tau. Three boxes not listed on the shipping papers accompanying the ASPB were not delivered, due to their being stowed under three hundred tons of cargo destined for Saigon. This situation was only discovered after calling MSTs Saigon and checking the manifest due to missing items for ordnance outfitting.

During Operation Coronado V (27-28 September) in the Giong Trom District of Kien Hoa Province, TF 117 units once again contacted the enemy in prepared positions, resulting in 3 USN KIA, 6 USN WIA. This encounter was strikingly similar to the VC attack on TF 117 craft on the Pach Ba Rai 15 September, in that the lead ATC minesweepers were once again the first to be hit. The steadily mounting total of TF 117 casualties resulting from the use of ATCs as minesweepers is cause for grave concern to this command. It is becoming increasingly and painfully apparent that the ATC must be replaced as a minesweeper by the higher speed ASPB. To date only two ASPBs have joined TF 117. The use of these ASPBs for combat operations has been delayed due to some portions of the outfitting kits being mixed with general cargo in the hold of the merchant ship which transported them to Vung Tau and the apparent loss of two pallets of the outfitting kits by being offloaded at Tacoma and failure to reload. Present delivery schedules indicate that it will be some time before sufficient ASPBs are in-country to permit the ATC to be released completely from its stop-gap role as minesweeper. As the Mobile Riverine Force penetrates ever deeper into VC held territory, the requirement for ASPBs will become even more critical.

The first combat employment of the two newly-acquired ASPB's occurred during Operation Coronado V (30 September - 1 October) in the Mo Cay and Huong My Districts of Kien Hoa Province. Due to the high speed of the ASPB's, they were able to act as minesweepers for TU 117.2.1 during transit to the area of operations and then return to minesweep for TU 117.1.2 transit of the Song Ben Tre. Additionally, the two ASPB's were integrated successfully into the patrol scheme within the small streams in the area of operations. The use of the ASPB's as minesweepers during Coronado V resulted in a more rapid SOA of the movement groups than has been in the case when ATC were used as minesweepers. This increased speed of the movement groups to the AO further enhances the possibility of successful surprise troop landings. As more ASPB's become operational within the Mobile Riverine Force, a more detailed analysis of their capabilities and limitations will be forthcoming.

The second shipment of ASPB's arrived on the SS AMERICAN HAWK on 30 September. RIVFLOT ONE representatives were dispatched to coordinate offloading and insure all outfitting material with the ASPB's. Although the SS AMERICAN HAWK was reported to be a self-sustaining carrier...she was not able to offload the ASPB's at Vung Tau. Crane service could not be provided at Vung Tau and therefore the ASPB's could not be offloaded until the SS AMERICAN HAWK proceeded to Saigon on 3 October. This delay, and the time required to tow ASPB's to Cat Lo from Saigon, further delayed outfitting and availability of these much needed boats for combat use. To date the offloading of ASPB's, in-country, has been totally unsatisfactory.

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