



US NAVY 

RIVERINE TRAINING

AT CAMP ROBERTS

1969 - 1970

In preparation for deployment to Vietnam, where they would be teamed with Army infantry, helicopters and artillery units to form the combined River Assault Forces, members of the US Navy were brought to Camp Roberts for live-fire training. Their main training site was a series of three 50-ton trailers that simulated the decks of gun boats. These trailers were set on a hillside with targets of old vehicles, refrigerators, or various camouflage effects situated at various distances. In theory, the canyon was a river, and each foreign object on the "opposite shore" could house a sniper or an entire enemy battery. There was a permanent team of 16 Navy Gunner's Mates to maintain the equipment and train the incoming recruits. Sailors to be trained would be brought from the Naval Inshore Operations Center after their basic training at Mare Island, near Vallejo, California. They received one week of firing and field training here, followed by an additional week of training on Whidbey Island or Coronado Island.

Upon arrival in Vietnam, the Navy trainees would be assigned to both the heavily armored monitors and troop carriers to support the assault operations, as well as the PBRs (Patrol Boat, Riverine), 52-ft. fiberglass boats used to patrol and guard the rivers and canals. The river assault craft were heavily modified LCMs (Landing Craft Medium) configured as monitors and armed with a 40mm cannon, a 20mm cannon, two .50 Cal. machine guns, a .81 mm mortar, and 40mm grenade launchers. Troop carriers were armed with a 20mm cannon and two .50 Cal. machine guns. Additionally there were specially-designed ASPBs (mine sweepers) armed with a 20mm cannon and twin .50 Cal. machine guns. The PBR was the other type of watercraft that they would operate when sent to Vietnam. It was a low-draft, water-jet powered, fiberglass high-speed river-borne craft used for basic river patrol, river traffic searches and special forces insertion in order to disrupt enemy river highways from supplies and ammunition. It was usually armed with twin .50 cal machine guns mounted in a forward bow turret and 7.62mm machine guns mounted on pintle mounts amidships and aft.



Camp Roberts trainees went directly to combat with the Mobile Riverine Force in the Mekong Delta.

