THE DAYBOOK

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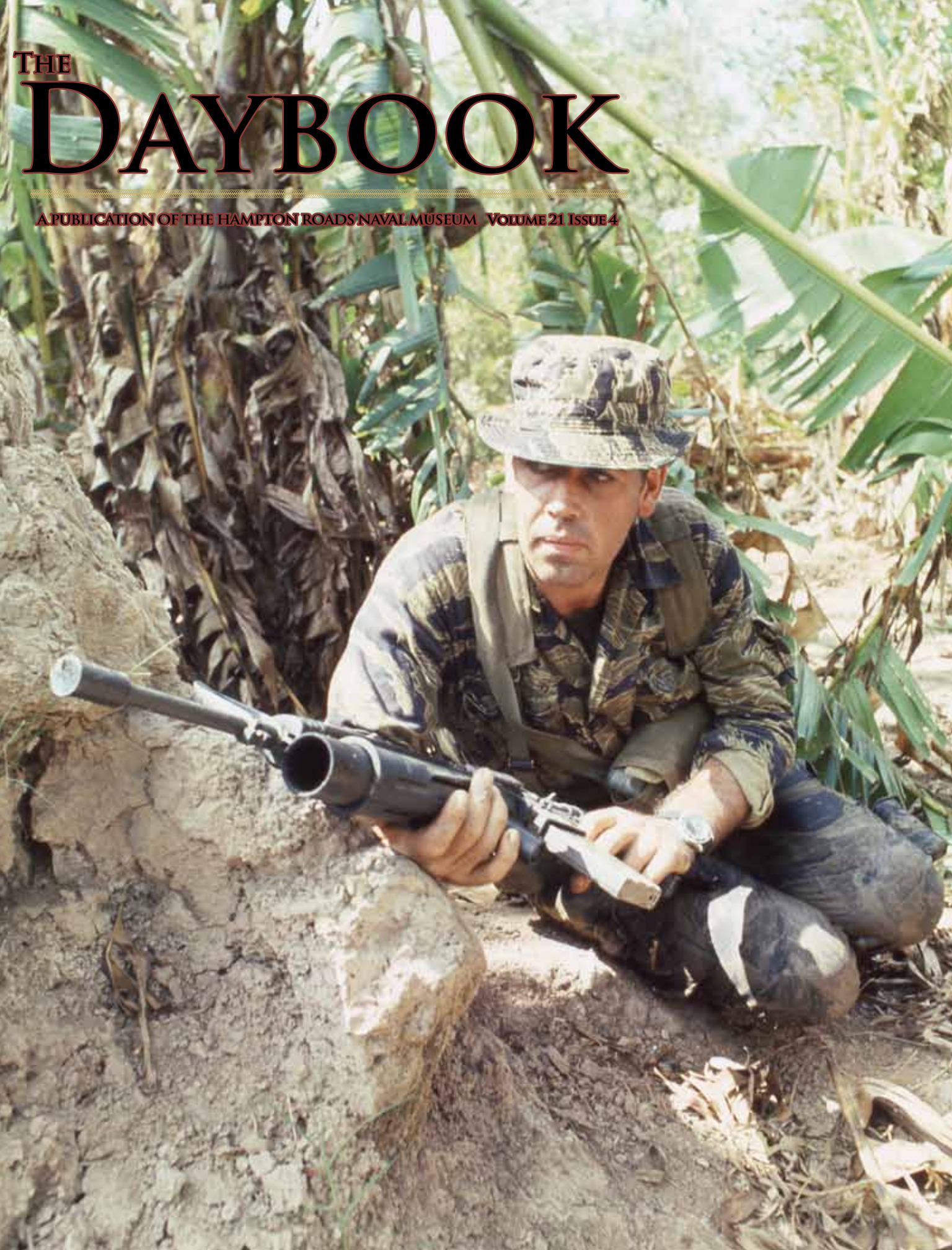

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COVER: **At the ready with his M-16 equipped with the XM148 grenade launcher, a Navy Sea-Air-Land (SEAL) team member stands outpost guard while other members of his unit set up demolition charges to destroy Viet Cong bunkers on Tan Dinh Island in the Mekong Delta during Operation Bold Dragon III, March 26, 1968. (*Photographer's Mate 1st Class L.R. Robinson/ National Archives and Records Administration*)**

THE DAYBOOK

The HRNM reports to the Naval History and Heritage Command, Museums Operation Division (www.history.navy.mil). The museum is dedicated to the study of naval history in the Hampton Roads region. HRNM is accredited by the American Alliance of Museums.

The Daybook's purpose is to educate and inform readers on historical topics and museum-related events. It is written by staff and volunteers.

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The Daybook is published quarterly. To subscribe, contact the Hampton Roads Naval Historical Foundation at (757) 445-9932 or visit http://www.hrnhf.org.

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Petty Officer 1st Class Sam Fournier, a member of SEAL Team One, still wears his grease paint as he keeps a sharp lookout from a Navy landing craft which picked up other SEAL team members following an operation along the Bassac River in November 1967. (*National Archives and Records Administration*)

FEATURES

DEPARTMENTS

From Brown Water to Black Ops

The Hampton Roads Naval Museum is proud to announce the upcoming exhibition *The Ten Thousand-Day War at Sea: The U.S. Navy in Vietnam, 1950-1975*. Comprising half of our permanent gallery, the exhibition will immerse visitors in the immense role played by the United States Navy in the Vietnam War. Using the U.S. Navy's rich historical collections, multi-media presentations, and interactive components, the exhibit will encourage family learning, thoughtful discourse, and recognition of the war's naval activities.

The current issue, focusing on the naval intelligence and special operations, is the fourth of five *Daybook* issues concentrating on the Navy in Vietnam. The featured articles are edited treatments of the recently published nine-volume series: *The U.S. Navy and the Vietnam War*. We thank the Naval History and Heritage Command and the Naval Historical Foundation for their permission and assistance.

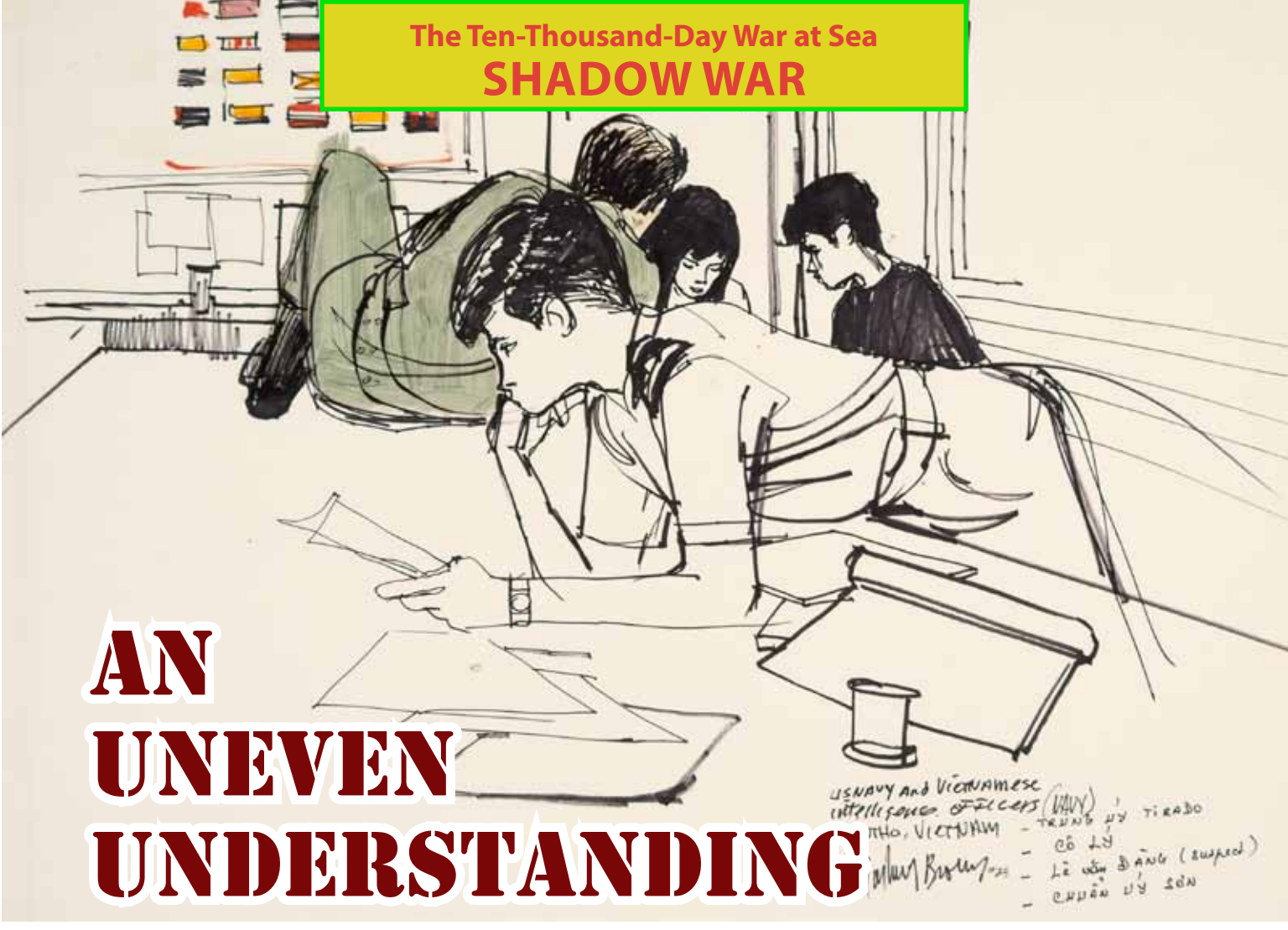
Virtually all military actions in Vietnam depended on accurate and timely intelligence. During the war, naval intelligence personnel provided information that enabled successful Navy operations, influenced tactical victories, and saved the lives of Americans and their allies. The Navy benefited from and coordinated efforts with other military branches, the Central Intelligence Agency, the Defense Intelligence Agency, and the National Security Agency. The Office of Naval Intelligence established the Fleet Intelligence Center Pacific Facility in the Philippines to analyze and disseminate much of this information to naval forces in Vietnam.

From the air, sea, and land, Sailors collected information about North Vietnamese and Viet Cong plans and capabilities. Their missions were dangerous and often deadly. Though certainly not without failures, naval intelligence hindered seaborne supply from North to South Vietnam, identified targets for attack aircraft, and helped riverine forces keep control of the vital Mekong Delta. The articles within shed light on the Navy's efforts to discover seaborne supply routes, hinder enemy traffic on the Ho Chi Minh Trail, and identify deadly surface-to-air missile sites.

HRNM Director John Pentangelo.

This issue also includes excerpts from the museum's oral history interview with Vietnam veteran Rick Woolard. Woolard, a Navy SEAL, deployed to Vietnam twice between 1968 and 1970. His interview provides a personal account of special operations against the Viet Cong. We wish to thank all of our Vietnam veterans who served in the United States Navy. If you or someone you know wants to participate in the Vietnam oral history program, please call 757-322-3108 for more information.

The exhibit will open in 2019. Until then, Happy Reading!



AN UNEVEN UNDERSTANDING

By Richard Mobley and Edward J. Marolda

USN and Vietnamese Navy Intelligence, Can Tho by Marbury H. Brown. (*Courtesy of the Navy Art Collection*)

The U.S. Navy's intelligence establishment routinely provided good intelligence support to naval operating forces and saved American lives throughout the Vietnam War. Naval intelligence enabled the aircraft of Task Force 77 to operate effectively in the hotly contested skies of North Vietnam and over the heavily defended Ho Chi Minh Trail in Laos. Timely intelligence helped the ocean patrol forces of Operation Market Time negate the enemy's seaborne infiltration of war materials into South Vietnam. Intelligence support significantly aided the Navy's riverine units in their operations to deny the enemy control of the Mekong Delta. Finally, naval intelligence organizations in the United States, in the Western Pacific, and in South Vietnam provided vital information on the movement of Communist forces afloat and ashore and the importation of war materials into North Vietnam and Cambodia from the Soviet Union, the People's Republic of China, and other nations.

Through much of the Vietnam War, the national intelligence community had an uneven understanding of the other side. The Washington-based agencies developed a good appraisal of the North Vietnamese order of battle, support from the other Communist nations, and various enemy operational and tactical methods. On the other hand, as Richard Helms, former Director of Central Intelligence, has observed, Washington failed to acquire solid intelligence on the enemy's decision-making process at the Hanoi level. No U.S. agents penetrated the leadership circle around Ho Chi Minh. The intelligence organizations, including those in theater, provided inconclusive evidence of the success or failure

This Communist propaganda leaflet proclaims "Long Life to President Ho." (*Courtesy of the Navy Art Collection*)

of U.S. attempts to interdict the Ho Chi Minh Trail and the enemy's capabilities and intentions prior to the Tet Offensive of 1968.

To capture the broad scope of multiple naval intelligence efforts, this study discusses the work of commands focused primarily on the collection or analysis of intelligence, whether or not they had the word "intelligence" in their names. The Naval Security Group (NSG), Naval Investigative Service (NIS), and Direct Support Units (DSU), for example, made huge intelligence contributions to the war effort. These and other organizations gathered different types of intelligence, for instance signals intelligence that included communications intelligence (COMINT) and electronic intelligence (ELINT), human intelligence (HUMINT), and imagery intelligence from satellites and aircraft.

Officer and enlisted personnel engaged in intelligence collection often did their dangerous but vital work in direct contact with the enemy. The naval aircrews of reconnaissance aircraft flying their missions over Southeast Asia suffered high casualty rates. For example, the highly secretive Aerial Observation Squadron (VO) 67 lost 20 air crewmen killed during only two months of sensor emplacement missions over North Vietnam and Laos. Combat took the lives of SEAL commandos and Naval Intelligence Liaison Officers (NILOs), whose primary duties entailed gathering intelligence on North Vietnamese and Viet Cong combat units and strongholds and the movement of supplies in the Mekong Delta.

INTERPRETATION OF THE THREAT TO SOUTHEAST ASIA

In 1959 the U.S. national security establishment concluded that the People's Republic of China and the Democratic Republic of Vietnam had finally decided to achieve their foreign policy goals through violence and armed struggle. Mao Zedong publicly pledged China's support to Communist insurgent movements in Indonesia, Malaya, and Indochina, including Laos and South Vietnam. The Office of Naval Intelligence feared that "further development of the Chinese Communist hard line could lead to new emphasis on the development of indigenous Communist guerrilla capabilities in various parts of Southeast Asia, and possibly even to limited war adventures" by Beijing. That May, Ho Chi Minh, Le Duan, and the other leaders of North Vietnam opted for armed struggle to destroy the noncommunist government of South Vietnam headed by President Ngo Dinh Diem. North Vietnam began construction of what later became known as the Ho Chi Minh Trail from North Vietnam, through southern Laos, and into Cambodia and South Vietnam. Communist training "cadres"—fighters steeped in guerrilla warfare—and military supplies began flowing down the trail. In 1960 Communists in South Vietnam, under Hanoi's guidance, created the National Liberation Front to fight the government of the Republic of Vietnam.

To secure the Ho Chi Minh Trail, in 1959 North Vietnam and China began providing significant military assistance and advice to an indigenous Laotian

Communist movement, the Pathet Lao. From 1959 to 1962 Pathet Lao guerrillas supported by North Vietnamese regular units battled the forces of the Royal Laotian Government. American leaders became especially concerned that a Communist victory in Laos would increase the threat to Thailand, Cambodia, and South Vietnam.

With the possibility of future U.S. amphibious, mine, and coastal patrol operations along the Vietnamese coast, Admiral Harry D. Felt, Commander in Chief, Pacific (CINCPAC), ordered a study of South Vietnam's beaches. In January 1962, high-speed transport *Cook* (APD 130) conducted a survey of beaches from the northern provinces of the country near the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) to Vung Tao southeast of Saigon. Underwater demolition team (UDT) "frogmen" went ashore and gathered information on beach gradients, tides, and underwater obstacles. In early 1963, Marines from *Weiss* (APD 135) investigated other potential landing sites along the coast but this mission did not go unnoticed by the Viet Cong. Guerrillas sniped at the men when they went ashore near Danang and later near Vinh Chau in the Mekong Delta.

In 1962 Seventh Fleet reconnaissance planes completed the mapping of South Vietnam and other areas in Indochina. Meanwhile, the Navy upgraded its photo production center at Naval Air Station (NAS) Cubi Point to a "Special Fleet Lab," and Heavy Photographic Squadron 61 (VAP-61) kept two photo interpretation teams in readiness for emergency Seventh Fleet requests. The Navy continued upgrading facilities at Cubi in 1964 by building a full-fledged photo interpretation center—Fleet Intelligence Center Pacific Facility (FICPACFAC). Throughout the war, FICPACFAC would directly support the Seventh Fleet with detailed readouts of enemy installations, defenses, and lines of communication and rapid readouts of fleet photography of suspect infiltration vessels, among other products.

The Question of Seaborne Infiltration

By Richard Mobley and Edward J. Marolda

Ensign Peter L. Caldwell stands guard in a motor whaleboat as Vietnamese wait while their junk is searched by crewmen of the radar picket ship USS *Forster* (DER 334) of the coast of South Vietnam on April 15, 1966. (Chief Journalist Bob Moeser/ *National Archives and Records Administration*)

One of the most hotly contested issues of the Vietnam War was the extent of North Vietnam's use of the sea to transport arms, ammunition, and military supplies to Viet Cong units along the coast of South Vietnam. Early in the conflict, the South Vietnamese established a Coastal Force, often referred to as the "Junk Force" for its primary patrol vessel. Paramilitary sailors clad in black pajama-like uniforms and operating from junks all along the coast checked the identity papers of fishermen and other boatmen. During 1962 and 1963 the Coastal Force captured more than 300 enemy sampans and other vessels, and even though most were engaged in intracoastal movement, they discovered only a few boats that had begun their journeys in North Vietnam or Cambodia.

Admiral Felt doubted that there was significant seaborne infiltration from North Vietnam but decided to order a one-time patrol effort to affirm or deny its existence. Of more importance to him was to give the VNN an opportunity for training with the Seventh Fleet. In December 1961 U.S. and South Vietnamese units inaugurated surface and air patrols from the 17th parallel eastward to the Paracel Islands in the South China Sea. U.S. and South Vietnamese naval forces mounted a similar effort in the Gulf of Thailand to evaluate any infiltration from Cambodia. The two navies did not discover significant infiltration in either of the operational areas so the admiral discontinued the anti-infiltration patrols off South Vietnam on August 1, 1962. Captain Drachnik later observed that "I was convinced in my mind . . . that during those years there was no effective infiltration by sea . . . and Mr. [Secretary of Defense Robert S.] McNamara told me later when I was on his staff in the Pentagon that he too was convinced."

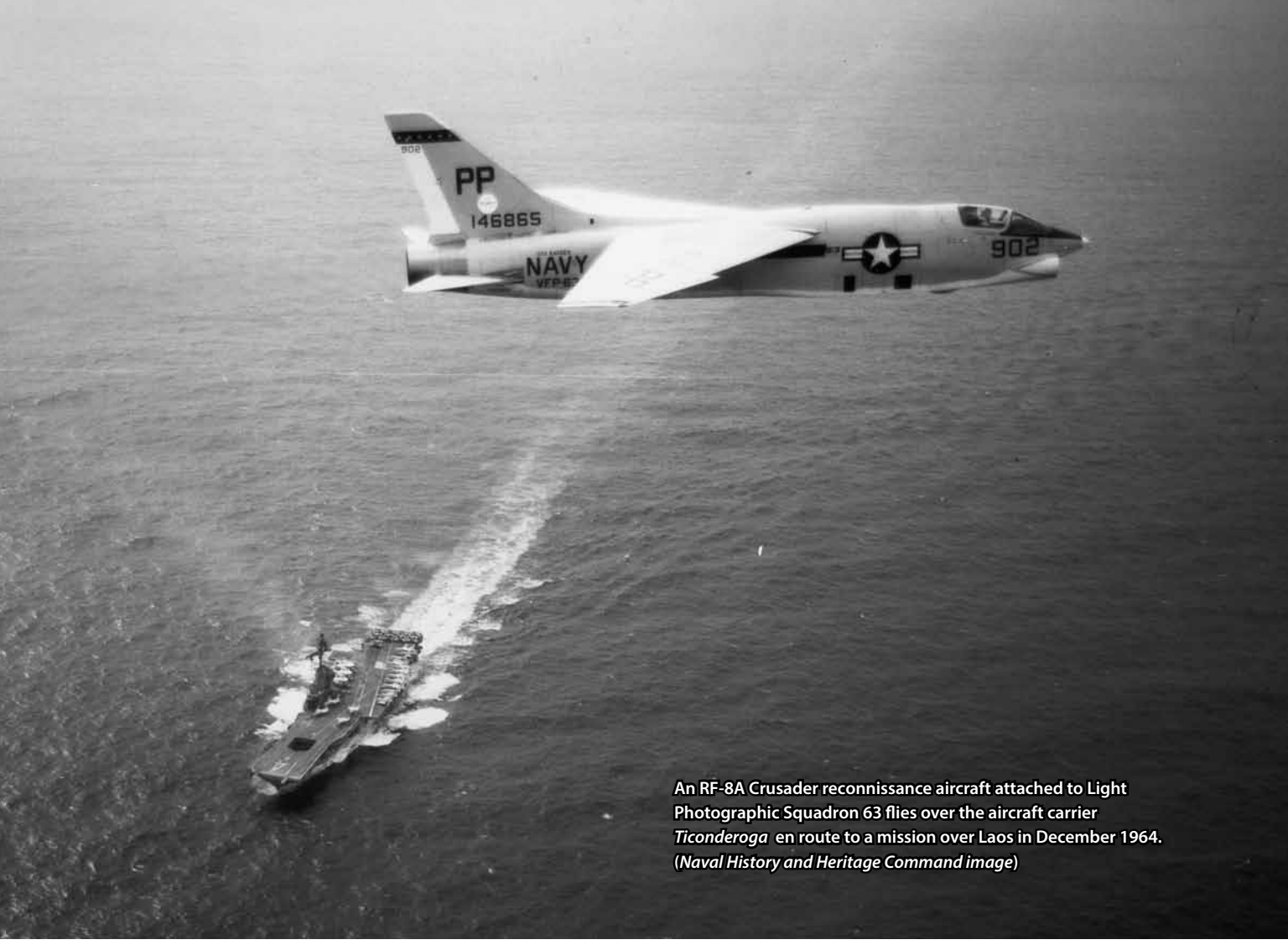
Ironically, and coincidentally, in 1963 North Vietnam launched a major seaborne infiltration effort with 50-

Upper Left: A North Vietnamese trawler, photographed from an Operation Market Time patrol plane on June 20, 1966. **Below:** Coast Guard Cutter *Point League* stands off in the foreground as the 100-foot steel-hulled trawler burns in the background near the village of Ba Dong later that day. Salvage crews removed an estimated 250 tons of contraband from the ship. (***Naval History and Heritage Command images***)

to 100-ton vessels. North Vietnamese trawlers of the 125th Sea Transportation Unit made eight trips to South Vietnamese waters in 1963. The steel-hulled vessels transported tons of arms and ammunition to Viet Cong forces in the Mekong Delta and central South Vietnam. Sometimes these vessels flew the flag of the People's Republic of China to conceal their origin. Typically, the trawlers sailed to points off South Vietnam beyond the patrol sectors of the VNN and on moonless nights quickly dashed to the beach to offload their cargoes. In other cases, the trawlers offloaded their cargoes to waiting sampans and smaller vessels. U.S. intelligence agencies, including the Office of Naval Intelligence, later determined that the maritime infiltration of war materials by these ships increased sixfold from 1963 to 1964. But the Coastal Force did not discover any of the infiltrating ships during that period. To determine the source and extent of the enemy's transport of fighting men and war materials into the Mekong Delta, in January 1964 Admiral Felt dispatched a nine-man Navy team to Saigon. After visits with naval advisors and other naval personnel in-country, Captain Philip H. Bucklew's group issued their findings, thereafter labeled the "Bucklew Report." The report concluded that the Ho Chi Minh Trail was North Vietnam's primary conduit for infiltration of men and supplies into the delta.

INTELLIGENCE GATHERING IN LAOS

In the wake of South Vietnamese President Ngo Dinh Diem's assassination by officers of his armed forces on November 1, 1963, Hanoi accelerated the movement of men and materials into South Vietnam via the Ho Chi Minh Trail. To secure that corridor North Vietnamese



An RF-8A Crusader reconnissance aircraft attached to Light Photographic Squadron 63 flies over the aircraft carrier *Ticonderoga* en route to a mission over Laos in December 1964. (*Naval History and Heritage Command image*)

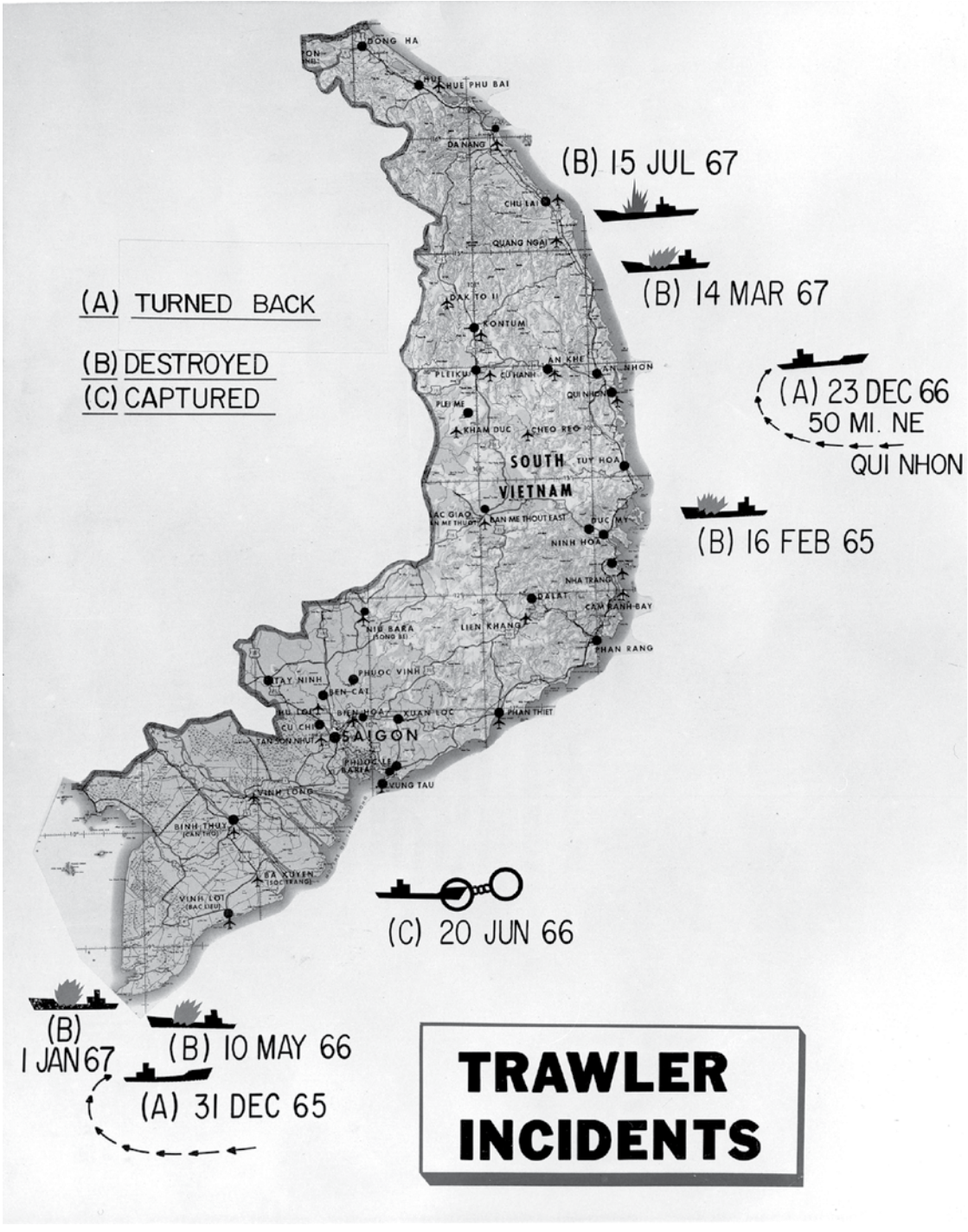
leaders ordered attacks on troops of the Royal Laotian Government. Alarmed by this development in Laos, supposedly neutralized by international agreement at Geneva in 1962, Laotian Prime Minister Souvanna Phouma authorized the United States in May 1964 to conduct low-level aerial reconnaissance to gather intelligence on the North Vietnamese presence in his country. Washington readily agreed to this request because President Johnson and Secretary of Defense McNamara wanted one more means to pressure Hanoi to cease its support of the southern insurgency.

From a military standpoint, Washington needed accurate intelligence on both Pathet Lao and North Vietnamese capabilities and activities in the Plain of Jars in central and eastern Laos and the Ho Chi Minh Trail in the southern "panhandle." Acting swiftly, Admiral Felt ordered the start of joint Navy-Air Force Operation Yankee Team on May 18. The carrier *Kitty Hawk* (CVA 63) and her task group immediately deployed to the soon-to-be famous Yankee Station at 16 degrees north/110 degrees east in the Gulf of Tonkin. Within days, Navy and Marine RF-8A Crusader and RA-3B Skywarrior reconnaissance planes began executing missions over Laos. Naval leaders considered the larger and slower Skywarrior the best plane for missions above 10,000 feet and the smaller and faster Crusader for low-level runs. A pair of EA-3Bs of Fleet Air Reconnaissance Squadron 1 (VQ-1) based in Japan complemented the Yankee Team effort with electronic intelligence collection.

On the 21st, two days after Air Force units inaugurated the operation, a pair of Chance-Vought RF-8A aerial reconnaissance planes of Light Photographic Squadron 63 (VFP-63) launched from *Kitty Hawk* for the first Navy mission. Gunfire from the ground put bullet holes in one plane and set it on fire but the naval aviator managed to nurse his Crusader safely back to *Kitty Hawk*. This mission demonstrated what would become clear throughout the Vietnam War: that gathering naval

intelligence was hazardous work. The enemy drove home that truism on June 6. That day, a North Vietnamese antiaircraft unit operating in eastern Laos shot down the RF-8A of Lieutenant Charles F. Klusmann. The naval aviator had the dubious distinction of being the first naval aviator shot down in the long war in Southeast Asia. Pathet Lao guerrillas quickly captured Klusmann and force-marched him to a rudimentary jungle prison camp. After almost three months in harsh captivity, the daring pilot escaped through the jungle and reached friendly lines. Following the shoot-down of another naval aviator soon after Klusmann's loss, Secretary of Defense McNamara reduced the risk to Navy and Air Force aerial reconnaissance forces by ordering them to fly beyond the range of enemy antiaircraft guns in the most heavily defended areas of Laos. This action reduced the loss of men and planes thereafter but significantly limited the worth of the intelligence acquired. Nonetheless, the 198 aerial photographic missions completed by Navy aircraft (approximately half of all photographic missions) during the Yankee Team program convinced Washington that the Ho Chi Minh Trail was North Vietnam's major supply line to South Vietnam.

This map depicts a number of trawlers that were intercepted by Coastal Force/ Task Force 115 units. (*Naval History and Heritage Command image*)



Preparations for War in Southeast Asia

A U.S. Navy Photographic Intelligenceman aligns consecutive panoramic photographs to assemble a mosaic of a target area. (*National Archives and Records Administration*)

Communist attacks on the destroyer USS *Maddox* (DD 731) in the Gulf of Tonkin in August 1964 and the killing of American service personnel in South Vietnam later in the year and in early 1965 convinced American military leaders that the outbreak of war was imminent. It was apparent that rather than buckling under U.S. military pressure, Hanoi had decided to take the offensive. CINCPAC noted in March 1965 a "shift of communist tactics" intended to "bring about the disengagement of the U.S. in South Vietnam." In a prescient statement, Admiral Sharp concluded that the North Vietnamese felt that "if they can kill Americans, harass U.S. personnel, and destroy U.S. facilities the American people will, in time, become so tired of the war that we will abandon our efforts there."

Chief of Naval Operations Admiral David L. McDonald called on naval intelligence for an "honest, hard NON-EQUIVOCAL assessment" of enemy intentions." Rear Admiral Rufus L. Taylor, the Director of Naval Intelligence, responded with an appraisal that suggested China was emboldened by the political disarray in South Vietnam and weak U.S. counteractions to Communist attacks. The underlying assumption of Taylor's report was that China rather than North Vietnam was the prime motivator for bellicose actions in Southeast Asia. Taylor considered the Chinese determined to help the Vietnamese and Laotian Communists secure a victory over the United States and its allies. The admiral pointed to the recent buildup of military forces in southern China and the delivery of war materials to Hanoi as a clear sign of Chinese intentions. The Navy's top intelligence officer took the opportunity to make his own pitch for robust U.S. action, observing that "if we think it is important to us, as I do, to keep Southeast Asia out of Chinese Communist hands, we must commit ourselves to extensive hostilities in that area."

Impossible to see by the pilots who led the reconnaissance mission from the carrier *Enterprise* (CVAN 65), these ten North Vietnamese surface-to-air missile emplacements were found by skilled photo interpreters. (*Naval History and Heritage Command image*)

A year's experience with the Yankee Team aerial reconnaissance program in Laos had enabled the Navy's intelligence establishment to hone its procedures for collecting, processing, and disseminating tactical intelligence even before the onset of the Rolling Thunder bombing campaign against North Vietnam in the spring of 1965. Seventh Fleet Commander Vice Admiral Johnson, however, realized that his carrier and surface forces needed even more precise information on potential targets and enemy air defenses ashore, the area's geography and hydrography, and the operating environment.

The Fleet Intelligence Center Pacific (FICPAC) in Hawaii, employing 270 personnel by 1967, stepped up to provide the aviation and surface ship combat units with updated maps, charts, targeting aids, pilot escape and evasion guides, and computerized orders of battle. The center also interpreted aerial reconnaissance imagery and produced an average of 27,000 photo prints each month in support of photo intelligence reports. The Naval Weather Center on Guam produced updated information on the climatological and weather characteristics in the Gulf of Tonkin. By the start of the Rolling Thunder bombing campaign in March 1965, naval intelligence had provided relevant and updated materials to the fighting squadrons and warships deployed off North Vietnam.

On the negative side, technology was such in the 1960s that it might take days for couriers to deliver raw photographic and audio information from the field, process it (including translating the communications intercepts from Vietnamese to English), interpret it, and send the finished product to the combat commands. On too many occasions, the intelligence product arrived too late for its optimum combat use. Excessive compartmentalization by the intelligence agencies of highly classified and sensitive information also sometimes prevented the combat commands from receiving a comprehensive picture of the enemy situation.

Much of the information on enemy defenses and weather in the operational area that would be provided to the Navy's intelligence analysis centers during the war came via the NSA, one of whose primary objectives was to "extend the eyes of American air surveillance." The agency's signals intelligence programs "revealed information about Vietnamese tracking of hostile and friendly aircraft over Laos, North Vietnam and the Gulf of Tonkin, SAM [surface-to-air missile] order-of-battle details, bomb damage reports, airfield status, and other data." NSA cryptologists gathered information on the weather over North Vietnam from intercepts and passed it on to naval intelligence and hence the fleet. The agency's reports, called "Songbirds," relayed information on the location of downed fliers and attempts by the enemy to capture them. The Navy, however, generally found that the intercepts could not be translated fast enough for a timely response by the fleet's search and rescue forces.

The Short, Dangerous Life of the Ghost Squadron

Disappointed with the Rolling Thunder results, Secretary of Defense McNamara concluded in 1967 that a barrier of acoustic and seismic sensors emplaced in the critical passes from North Vietnam into Laos and along the Ho Chi Minh Trail could seriously disrupt North Vietnamese infiltration into South Vietnam. With the Air Force temporarily lacking a number of relevant aircraft for the mission, McNamara directed the Navy to make an initial effort with its Lockheed SP-2E Neptune patrol planes. Accordingly, in February 1967 the Navy established Observation Squadron 67 (VO-67).

The Navy assembled, trained, and equipped the 300-man unit from scratch to meet a November 1967 operational deadline. The service tried to compensate for the lack of training and familiarization time by assigning many senior people to the squadron, including a captain, 11 commanders, five lieutenant commanders, and 23 chief petty officers. The men worked hard learning techniques for precisely dropping sensors with World War II-era Norden bombsites. The first modified SP-2Es, redesignated OP-2Es, arrived on schedule at Nakhon Phanom Air Base in Thailand. VO-67, in time nicknamed the "Ghost Squadron" for its super-secret mission, went into combat soon afterward.

On a typical mission, the nine-man crew flying an OP-2E dropped one to three strings of seismic detection devices (ADSIDs) or acoustic listening devices (acoubuoys; related to sonobuoys used against submarines). The acoubuoys were normally deployed at 500 feet. With the use of the bombsites, the Neptunes released their ADSIDs initially at 2,500 feet and later at a safer 5,000 feet. Once emplaced and active, the sensors related the relevant information to the Air Force base at Nakhon Phanom where it was stored on a computer and interpreted. The command in Thailand then used the analysis to direct air strikes against detected North Vietnamese vehicles and troops. Air Force forward air control planes, F-4 Phantom fighters, and A-1 Skyraider attack planes supported the VO-67 Neptunes on their missions.

The nature of VO-67's mission placed the men and their planes in great jeopardy. The OP-2Es routinely flew at low altitudes in poor weather over mountainous and

LEFT: Sensors dropped first by Navy OP-2E Neptunes and later by Air Force F-4 Phantoms and other aircraft on display at the National Museum of the U.S. Air Force. **ABOVE:** A Neptune from Observation Squadron 67 somewhere in Southeast Asia, showing its distinctive color scheme and sensor modifications. (*National Museum of the U.S. Air Force/ VO-67.org*)

jungle terrain thick with North Vietnamese antiaircraft guns. On January 11, 1968, soon after the start of operations in Laos, the squadron lost its executive officer, Commander Delbert A. Olson and the other eight men of his crew. Their Neptune probably slammed into a cliff on an acoubuoy-dropping mission in bad weather.

On February 17, the enemy shot down an OP-2E dropping sensors at 500 feet; the nine-man crew died in the crash. Little more than a week later, North Vietnamese ground fire knocked another Neptune out of the sky. The pilot, Commander Paul Milius, ordered his seven crewmen to bail out before he left the plane; they survived, but he did not. The Navy later named Arleigh Burke-class destroyer *Milius* after the brave officer. During this period, antiaircraft fire damaged another four OP-2Es.

The Navy held a conference on February 18 to determine how to reduce the vulnerability of the Neptunes. Thereafter, squadron leaders directed that planes make only single passes over a target to reduce their exposure to enemy guns, identify alternative target areas, fly at higher altitudes, and avoid operating in especially bad weather. In March the Navy installed Loran [navigation] Assist Devices on the planes enabling the squadron to operate in high-threat areas in greater safety. With Air Force units then coming online, the Navy disestablished VO-67 in July 1968.

Although Observation Squadron 67 operated for only two months and suffered the loss of 20 crewmen killed in action and three OP-2E patrol planes, its exploits earned it a Presidential Unit Citation. The sensors emplaced by the unit helped target enemy forces converging on the Marine outpost at Khe Sanh and surging down the Ho Chi Minh Trail during the Tet Offensive of 1968. Warned by the emplaced sensors, Air Force, Navy, and Marine attack squadrons dropped more than one hundred thousand tons of bombs that decimated North Vietnamese infantry units moving south. In this way, VO-67 helped save the lives of many American and South Vietnamese soldiers and marines.

Navy Tactical Reconnaissance

An RF-8G Crusader from Light Photographic Squadron 63 (VFP-63) detachment Golf, based aboard attack aircraft carrier USS *Oriskany* (CVA 34), rolls in for a photo run over South Vietnam on July, 20, 1966. (*Naval History and Heritage Command*)

By Richard Mobley and Edward J. Marolda

Along with the aircraft carriers, cruisers, and destroyers that deployed to the Gulf of Tonkin and the South China Sea in late 1964 and early 1965 were detachments from Seventh Fleet's specialized aerial reconnaissance squadrons. Units flying RF-8 Crusaders, RA-3B Skywarriors, and RA-5C Vigilantes photographed potential targets. Once those sites received the attention of the attack squadrons, the reconnaissance planes photographed the results, called "bomb damage assessments (BDA)."

Flying over targets that had recently been struck and whose air defense forces were fully alerted was risky business. To get the clearest, most detailed pictures, the reconnaissance pilots had to fly a steady, unflinching course over the target even in the face of heavy antiaircraft and surface-to-air missile fire. Despite this caution, aircrews and planes of the photo reconnaissance squadrons suffered high casualties. During the war the enemy shot down 12 RA-5Cs and 20 RF-8s, a significant loss in the relatively small aerial reconnaissance community. The enemy killed seven RF-8 pilots and captured another five, while U.S. search and rescue units plucked eight men from the sea or the jungle.

RF-8A and, later in the war, RF-8G Crusaders from Light Photographic Squadron 63 (VFP-63), nicknamed "Fightin Photo," were the mainstays of the carrier-based tactical reconnaissance force. RF-8As employed stationary cameras with 3-inch, 6-inch, and 12-inch lenses but upgraded RF-8Gs introduced panoramic cameras that swept from horizon to horizon. Both camera types worked well; former Crusader pilot Lieutenant (j.g.) Jay Miller related that the cameras rarely failed him. The best cameras, planes, and pilots, however, could not guarantee successful exploitation of the intelligence they captured. Rolling Thunder's overly restrictive rules of engagement required that combat aircraft could not strike a SAM battery, for instance, until the Joint Chiefs of Staff in Washington authorized the mission, which, along with the Navy's need to recover the reconnaissance aircraft, process the film, interpret the imagery, and launch a reaction strike, could take hours if not days. Following the advice of their Soviet advisors, the North Vietnamese frequently moved their SA-2 surface-to-air missile battalions, which often negated U.S. reconnaissance efforts.

At NAS Agana, Guam, in January 1965, a RA-3B Skywarrior from Heavy Photographic Squadron 61 (VAP-61) displays the incredible versality in the photographic film formats, cameras, and lenses it is able to carry. (*National Archives and Records Administration*)

U.S. intelligence agencies devoted enormous resources to collection efforts not only with regard to North Vietnam but also the Ho Chi Minh Trail. Complementing Navy and Air Force aerial reconnaissance and Army special forces ground surveillance operations, the NSA monitored North Vietnamese troop and supply infiltration activity on the trail. In late 1964 NSA reported the first major movement of troops on the trail when it identified the 325th Division of the North Vietnamese Army heading for South Vietnam. In October 1967 agency personnel intercepted the voice network used by way stations on the trail, opening what came to be known as the "Vinh Window." This coup enabled NSA to document which enemy units were on the trail, their probable destinations in South Vietnam, and their arrival times. Unfortunately, the intelligence gathered from this source did not provide information that was timely or that identified terrain features, routes, or kilometer posts that would have facilitated precise targeting information for air attacks on truck parks, way stations, or troop concentrations. The commanders of the Navy's carrier force appreciated all the intelligence they could get with regard to infiltration on the trail but, according to an NSA report, naval leaders "made it known that they were 'very unhappy' with the lack of support and targeting data."

RA-3B Skywarriors operated by Heavy Photographic Squadron 61 (VAP-61, supported by the Atlantic Fleet's VAP-62) flew two-thirds of their missions at high altitudes during daylight hours. VAP-61 carried out the other third at night, when the planes employed low-level runs and their specialized infrared cameras to document enemy vehicular traffic on the trail. Each year of the war, RA-3Bs completed almost a thousand combat missions. VAP-61 also conducted oblique photography of the North Vietnamese coast from the DMZ to the 20th parallel in support of Task Force 77's Sea Dragon naval bombardment operation. The reconnaissance unit was especially adept at identifying river crossings or "choke points" where enemy vehicles often bunched up and offered the carrier forces lucrative targets.

RA-5C Vigilantes proved to be the Navy's most technologically advanced tactical reconnaissance aircraft

An RA-5C is lined up on the starboard forward catapault of a *Kitty Hawk*-class carrier. (*National Archives and Records Administration*)

during the war. Like the Crusaders and Skywarriors, Vigilantes carried out intelligence collection flights along likely enemy logistics routes and poststrike BDA. The planes recorded imagery (black and white and color) with their KS-69 panoramic infrared cameras and side-looking radars, and electronic emissions with their Passive Electronic Countermeasures (PECM) system. The infrared cameras, even though they took hours to warm up before a mission, proved able to differentiate between natural vegetation and vegetation used to camouflage trucks, way stations, and pontoon bridges. The cameras, with 18-inch lenses, also provided horizon-to-horizon coverage. Nighttime and foul weather did little to impede a Vigilante's photographic work.

One of the keys to the accurate and timely exploitation of camera footage and taped electronic intelligence data captured by the RA-5Cs was the Integrated Operational Intelligence Center (IOIC). The Navy established computer-enhanced IOICs on the large-deck carriers off Vietnam. In less than ten minutes, IOICs could produce photographic prints and readouts of vast amounts of information that significantly improved the bombing effectiveness of Task Force 77's carrier planes.

Other aviation detachments operating from the carriers and from shore bases focused on the collection of signals intelligence. Fleet Air Reconnaissance Squadron 1 (VQ-1), the Navy's largest aviation unit, handled the vital responsibility for collecting signals intelligence from North Vietnamese air defense radars. Based at Atsugi Naval Air Station, Japan, VQ-1 deployed detachments to the carriers and shore bases in Southeast Asia throughout the war and also retained responsibility for monitoring Soviet, Chinese, and North Korean emissions. Naval Security Group communications technicians complemented the squadron's naval personnel. During the war the Navy reinforced the unit's initial 13 EA-3B Skywarriors and EC-121M Warning Stars, the latter converted from Lockheed Super Constellation passenger planes, with more than 30 EA-3Bs, EKA-3Bs, and E-1Bs, some from the Rota, Spain-based VQ-2. The unit focused its efforts on the Tonkin Delta of North Vietnam, the DMZ, and the Ho Chi Minh Trail.

The primary mission of the airborne intelligence squadrons was to provide U.S. combat units with almost immediate warnings, and VQ aircrews cumulatively issued thousands of near real-time warnings of threats

posed by North Vietnamese SAMs, MiGs, and antiaircraft artillery. Captain Sidney Wood, an intelligence officer with VQ-1 throughout Operation Rolling Thunder, later observed that he and his VQ-1 EC-121 crewmen flew their tedious 10- to 12-hour-long missions in the gulf within sight of North Vietnam seven days a week. Wood related how crews on the EC-121s, with "six to eight ELINT positions and a like number of COMINT positions correlated intelligence [on enemy SAM, MiG, and antiaircraft threats] in near real time and [provided] it to the U.S. aircraft over the beach."

As related by William B. Leppert, a former VQ-1 petty officer who flew 38 missions off Vietnam, the plane also embarked Russian, Chinese, and Vietnamese linguists and personnel to operate the KW-7 crypto equipment and a teletype, which enabled the plane to send messages to the fleet below. Speed was essential, so the VQ-1 crew sent their warning messages in clear, unencrypted voice with reference to a previously established and daily-changing code word for a reference point ashore. As soon as the plane landed, the crew prepared comprehensive, all source Electronic Warfare Operational Reports for use with the next day's strikes.

From 1965 to 1969 NSA deployed to the Western Pacific signals intelligence ships *Oxford* (AGTR-1) and *Jamestown* (AGTR-3), one of which operated in the South China Sea at all times. The agency took this move in response to Admiral Sharp's fear for the vulnerability of the SIGINT stations in South Vietnam and to reinforce the overall collection effort. Manning these ships were more than 300 Sailors and other personnel, 130 of whom operated from 85 individual work stations (compared to four or five on a destroyer) to gather strategic-level information from North Vietnamese and Cambodian communications systems on military, internal security, and naval forces. NSA often used the ships as "firemen," positioning them in areas poorly covered by the shore-based sites. The Navy valued the intelligence gathered from these ships but wished more of it could have been related to the fleet's tactical needs.

Radar operators monitor their consoles aboard their P-3 Orion. (*National Archives and Records Administration*)

Through a Sailor's eyes:

"WHEN I GOT SHOT THE FIRST TIME..."

A Navy SEAL's Baptism of Fire in Vietnam

By Laura Orr

As part of the Hampton Roads Naval Museum's Vietnam commemoration, staff members have conducted oral history interviews with Navy veterans who served in Vietnam. These interviews will help to shape an exhibit scheduled to open in 2019. In this issue of The Daybook, HRNM staff would like to share portions of an interview conducted in August 2017 with Rick Woolard, a Navy SEAL who deployed twice to Vietnam. Woolard's first deployment was from June 1968 to January 1969, and his second lasted from October 1969 to April 1970. In this excerpt from the interview, Woolard discusses his operations as a Navy SEAL, the first time his platoon—3rd platoon, SEAL Team Two—made contact with the enemy, and the first time he was wounded.

Question: Describe to me your operations as a Navy SEAL in Vietnam.

Answer: Our ops were basically very short, going in the afternoon or after dark, and coming out in the morning, either by helicopter, by boat, by walking, or a combination of the three. We just kind of blundered around out there until we made contact (or didn't), and then came home. I'd say we probably made contact maybe 10-20% of the time. It was usually on our terms–it was usually an ambush-type situation. I ran our platoon. The way our platoon was set up, in those days there were fourteen men in a platoon. There were two officers, a chief, and a leading petty officer, depending on availability. The officers were myself and a guy named John Brewton, Bubba Brewton. We divided ourselves into two squads; I took Alpha squad and he took Bravo squad. It took us a while to get this set up because we had to get several weeks' worth of targets in our minds. Once we got rolling, Bubba would go out with Bravo squad one night, I'd go out the next night. Every night there was a SEAL squad out there someplace on the rivers, looking for the VC or the NVA. So that's how we went through our time there. There was almost always an officer on the SEAL patrols. Just about all of our patrols were led by either myself or Brewton. In this tour, I led something like 60 or 80 patrols. But in my two tours, I probably led something like 100 or 120 patrols out there.

Question: Do you remember the first time you made contact with the enemy? What was that like?

Answer: Oh yeah. The first time we made contact was definitely memorable. This would have been in July [1968], and there was a squad of North Vietnamese or Viet Cong regulars—I've forgotten which. They had 122 mm rockets—these are big rockets, long range. They're not particularly accurate—they're just sort of an area target…. They would fire them into Saigon. It was a frightening thing. We knew these guys were out there and we were definitely looking for them, but we didn't know where they were. We knew kind of where they had to be in order to reach downtown Saigon, but we didn't know exactly where they were setting up. As soon as they fired their rockets, they'd paddle away and take all their stuff with them, so you didn't know exactly where they set up or where they were. Anyway, there was one particular night when we were patrolling out of the

***SEALS on Ambush*, oil on canvas by Marbury H. Brown, 1967. (*Courtesy of the Navy Art Collection*)**

Rung Sat, closer to Saigon in the river that winds up into Saigon. We knew from doing map analysis and flying over and doing visual reconnaissance from helicopters that we had at our disposal, that we thought we had some likely places where we'd have a good chance of making contact, if not with a rocket squad, then with somebody else. So we decided the best way to insert would be to go in by river patrol boat—not our own boats, but the regular PBRs that patrol this part of the river all the time. Instead of having them stop and us get off—in the middle of the night you can hear the sound of boats coming in to shore, and then the engine noise, backing out and continuing is unmistakable—what we did was have the river patrol boats go up the river, hug the bank, and we just jumped off with our lifejackets inflated and swam the 20 meters or so to the beach. The boats just sounded like they were continuing. So we did that.

The procedure when you get on shore is that everyone lies down, gets themselves settled in, adjusts their gear, gets the water out of their weapons and whatnot—because your guns got wet—so we're just lying there on this embankment, looking inland. I turned around and looked behind me, and there was a sampan with five or six guys in it, coming right up where our boats had just gone not ten minutes before. They didn't see us, and at this point I couldn't communicate with anybody. We were maybe five or six feet apart. If I said anything, it would've alerted these guys, so I just rolled over and took a shot. I was expecting it to be on full automatic—I was expecting my M-16 to unleash this devastating fusillade that would just wipe out the boat, but I only had it on semi-automatic, so I only fired one shot, which sounded like a pop gun. Fortunately, the guys next to me saw what was happening, they opened up, and that turned out to be the rocket squad. That was our first hit.

Question: Please tell me what happened the first time you got shot.

Answer: When I got shot the first time, we had decided we'd go to a no go area. Actually, Bubba [John Brewton] did. Bubba was always the bold one. I wanted to go where I figured we were having success. Bubba always wanted to strike out into new territories—this time into an administrative area of the Rung Sat. It was basically a US no-go zone. Every time the boats or helicopters went there, they got shot up. Guys were getting killed up there all the time. It was a VC stronghold. So Bubba's thought was—and we talked about it—we could probably get up in there with our boat, the LSSC [Light SEAL Support Craft], because we had this little slick boat. It only drew about 18"—I mean, you could go anyplace in this thing, and it was quiet, so we loved this little boat.

Bubba planned the op but I was with him because I wanted to go on the op as well. If we could come in from the water, we could probably surprise them, and we'd probably get a hit up there. So we went up there and got in the boat, and it was nasty to navigate. We knew exactly where we wanted to go, but finding our way there was tough to do even though we had radar and we had the map. At a certain point I ended up getting out of the boat and went ahead 25-50 yards or so, just to see if we were still in mangrove swamp or whether there was high ground nearby. I found high ground, so I went back and got the guys and said, "Hey, this is where we want to be." We went up there and we were on a large grassy plain with some trees and a little village off to the left. There was a well-traveled path going right past us, so we ambushed a guy going along on a bike. It was the middle of the night, so we knew he must be VC. When we ambushed the guy on the bike, we got his documents—yeah, he was a VC courier. At this point I was in charge of the patrol. I trusted Bubba, but I was the senior man—I outranked him by about six months. So I was the senior officer, and I said, "Let's set up here." When we shot this guy, we heard some hubbub in the village, and we thought, "Well, they're probably going to come look for him here." So we set up a really nice ambush right across this trail, and we set Claymores [mines] out. Sure enough, after about half an hour, we saw about eight or ten guys patrolling toward us down this path.

When they got close to the mines, I said, "Claymore." The guys squeezed the clacker to set it off. It was about 2 or 3 in the morning by this time and the dew had come down. Somehow, the Claymore didn't go off. The enemy heard the clacking of the Claymore and turned and opened up on us. At this stage I'm on all fours with my rifle in one hand, looking at them, telling the M60 guys to open up, which they did. We shot a couple, who fell where we shot them, and others ran off. I remember getting up onto my knees—or onto one knee—and I felt myself get shot. It felt like someone hit me with a hot hammer right in my leg. The bullets must have come right toward me, and I was lucky I didn't get killed. I got up high enough and I saw a guy clearly running away from me. I shot him between the shoulder blades at least three times, because I always loaded the first three rounds of my magazine with tracers, so I could see where they were going. I saw the tracers go right through this guy. He just kept running. I couldn't believe it. It was really disappointing. To make a long story short, we kind of cleaned up, called in an air strike on this village where these guys had come from because we figured there was a larger force there. I couldn't walk very well at that stage—I probably could've made it back, but they called in a helicopter to pick us up. They were shooting at us when we left, and we were shooting at them when we left, too. So that was the first time I got shot.

I SAW THE TRACERS GO RIGHT THROUGH THIS GUY. HE JUST KEPT RUNNING.

Laura Orr *is director of education for the Hampton Roads Naval Museum*

Naval Intelligence and the Fight for South Vietnam

A SEAL prepares for another mssion. (*National Archives and Records Administration*)

Vital to allied success in securing the Mekong Delta and South Vietnam's waterways was accurate and timely intelligence. Gathering that intelligence began in the field, where naval combat forces came face-to-face with the enemy. Each day of the war, coastal and river patrol, Mobile Riverine Force (MRF), and naval aviation units dispatched operational reports to U.S. Naval Forces Vietnam headquarters in Saigon that included intelligence information. These commands also depended heavily on actionable intelligence to carry out their duties.

The Navy's Sea-Air-Land (SEAL) commandos not only used tactical intelligence with devastating effect on their Communist foes but also gathered information that was vital to the operation of the combat commands they supported. Despite their Hollywood image, SEALs in Vietnam did not set out to engage in heavy combat with North Vietnamese and Viet Cong troops, even though that occurred often enough, but rather to collect intelligence on the location, resources, movement, and leadership of enemy forces. Few other allied organizations surpassed the SEALs in capturing or killing key enemy leaders, retrieving battle plans and political documents, and gathering human intelligence.

SEALs in the Mekong Delta used different tactics to carry out their intelligence-gathering duties. Sometimes,

A Viet Cong guerrilla crouches in a bunker with an SKS rifle, 1968. (*Specialist Dennis J. Kurpuis. U.S. Army Photograph/ National Archives and Records Administration*)

A SEAL guards a Viet Cong prisoner after a raid. (*Naval History and Heritage Command image*)

small SEAL teams followed up on reports locating VC camps deep in the jungle to surprise and snatch their human prey. At other times, the SEALs set up ambushes with South Vietnamese special forces, knowing that some enemy troops would survive the ensuing firefight and provide useful information. For instance, in the early weeks of the Tet Offensive of 1968, a 60-man South Vietnamese Provincial Reconnaissance Unit (PRU) led by a SEAL officer killed 20 Viet Cong soldiers but captured another 23. Shortly afterward, SEALs detained an enemy guerrilla who enabled the unit to ambush and kill his battalion's deputy commander, a company commander, three other officers, and a reporter from Hanoi apparently seeking news at the front. The successful operation foiled a planned attack on Binh Thuy, headquarters of the Navy's River Patrol Force. In another operation that year, SEALs exploited the information from a VC defector to identify more than 100 Communists who had infiltrated U.S. combat units and agencies around the town of My Tho.

In the Phoenix Program, SEALs often teamed up with PRUs to capture or kill members of the Viet Cong Infrastructure (VCI), identified as enemy military leaders, political operatives, intelligence agents, tax collectors, and other key personnel. Exploiting information from prisoners, former enemy soldiers, and villagers, SEALs and South Vietnamese military, police, and internal security forces registered significant success in the counterinsurgency struggle. Phoenix, a responsibility of the CIA's William Colby, was responsible for the capture of almost 30,000 members of the VCI. Another 17,000 former antagonists accepted an amnesty offered by the South Vietnamese government. In addition, the Phoenix forces killed more than 20,000 Communists who fought to resist capture. Hanoi later admitted that the Phoenix Program seriously threatened the cohesion of their insurgency effort. Unfortunately for the allies, sometimes harsh and abusive interrogation practices, extrajudicial killings, and general disinterest in the program by the South Vietnamese government mitigated much of that success.

One of the most dramatic operations of the war was an attempt to capture several key Communist leaders located on an island near Nha Trang on the central coast. It was hoped that interrogation of these men would lead to the unmasking of an entire network of agents that had infiltrated the city. On the dark and moonless night of March 14, 1969, Lieutenant (j.g.) Joseph "Bob" Kerrey and a squad of SEALs disembarked from a small craft, soundlessly scaled a 350-foot cliff hand-over-hand, and approached the VC camp barefoot to lessen the noise.

Despite the SEALs' best efforts, however, an enemy sentry saw them and raised the alarm. Although badly wounded by a grenade and in pain, Kerrey continued to lead the operation until almost collapsing from blood loss. His men killed seven enemy soldiers and captured others. The intelligence gathered from that mission was significant and included documents that listed Communist agents working in the city. For his heroic leadership under fire, Kerrey was awarded the Medal of Honor, the first of only three SEALs so recognized during the war. Kerrey demonstrated his qualities of leadership many years later as a Democratic Governor and Senator from Nebraska and contender for the presidency of the United States.

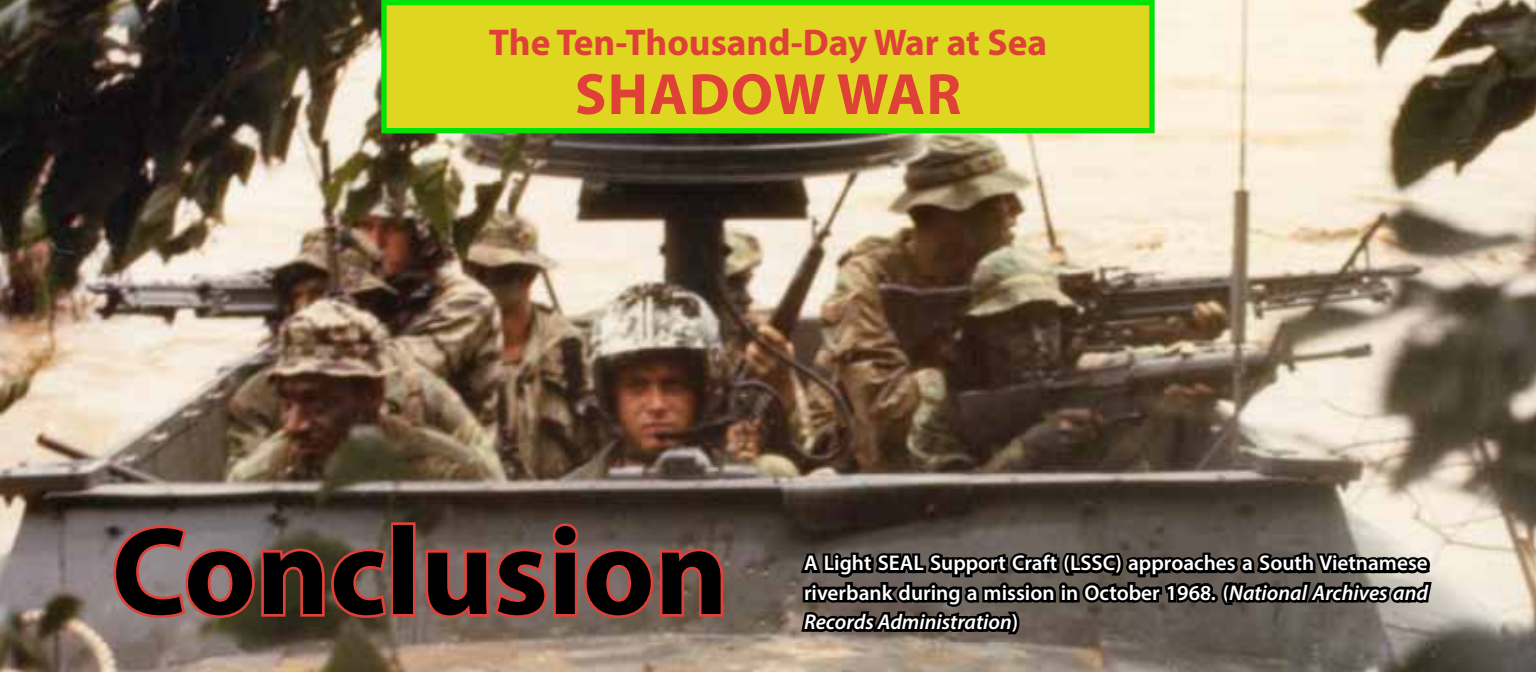
The Navy awarded SEAL Team One and SEAL Team Two, both of which dispatched platoons to Vietnam throughout the war, a total of five Presidential Unit

An enemy mine, cut loose by a Navy minesweeper in the Long Tau River, is being disarmed by Navy Petty Officer Joel Johnson of Lansing, Michigan, and Ensign Gary Barton of South Carolina. (*Naval History and Heritage Command image*)

citations. The naval warriors killed or captured 4,000 enemy leaders and troops. More importantly but less quantifiably, SEALs saved hundreds of American and South Vietnamese lives by alerting allied commands to enemy movements, concentrations, and attack plans. The accomplishment did not come cheaply. A total of 48 members of the Navy's special warfare community made the ultimate sacrifice.

The Navy and Marine Corps would have been hard-pressed to carry out one of their most important responsibilities in Vietnam—major amphibious assaults and smaller raids—without intelligence collection by other naval special warfare units, specifically, the underwater demolition teams. Much like their elders in World War II and the Korean War, the UDT frogmen paddled ashore in rubber boats or swam to the beach in the dead of night and in all kinds of weather to gather precise information on the tides, beach gradients, underwater hazards, and enemy defenses before fleet leaders gave the traditional command to "land the landing force." Often the frogmen deployed ashore from *Perch* (APSS 313), *Tunny* (APSS 282), or *Grayback* (LPSS 574), submarines that were specially configured to support naval special warfare. UDT 11 and UDT 12 frogmen carried out their dangerous mission in Starlite, Jackstay, Dagger Thrust, Blue Marlin, and scores of other amphibious operations during the war. The naval service awarded both units Navy Unit Commendations for their combat actions and their surveillance of hundreds of miles of South Vietnam's beaches, harbors, and rivers.

The naval intelligence community both in Vietnam and the United States focused much attention on one aspect of warfare particularly relevant to naval forces operating in South Vietnam's waterways—mines. These included acoustic-magnetic influence mines using Soviet-designed firing mechanisms and mines command-detonated from shore. Viet Cong swimmers emplaced limpet mines on the hull of aircraft ferry USNS *Card* that sank the ship at the dock in Saigon in May 1964. Other enemy mines exploded against merchant ship SS *Baton Rouge Victory* as she transited the river between Saigon and the sea in August 1966 and *Westchester County* (LST 1167) in November 1968. The latter action killed or wounded 52 soldiers and Sailors. Mines sank scores of other U.S. and South Vietnamese combat craft as well. NAVFORV counted more than 100 incidents involving mines in 1968 alone. The intelligence staffs in Saigon, Pearl Harbor, and Washington accomplished numerous studies of the problem and their advice helped the operating forces devise tactical solutions to negate the enemy's mine campaign. Indeed, despite the enemy's best efforts, mines never denied allied forces' use of the rivers, canals, harbors, and coastal waters of South Vietnam.



Conclusion

A Light SEAL Support Craft (LSSC) approaches a South Vietnamese riverbank during a mission in October 1968. (*National Archives and Records Administration*)

In the Vietnam War the U.S. naval intelligence establishment accomplished its primary mission of arming Navy operational forces with information that, for the most part, improved their battle performance, understanding of the enemy, and prospects for survival in combat.

From the start of major combat operations in 1964 and 1965, the carrier and shore-based intelligence-gathering squadrons presented the National Command Authority with a reasonably accurate picture of North Vietnam's air and coastal defense forces, activities in central and southern Laos, military assistance from the Sino-Soviet bloc, and the buildup of ground forces in southern China. The communications and signals intercept personnel operating at bases in the Philippines and South Vietnam and on the ships and aircraft of the Seventh Fleet provided the destroyer *Maddox* with timely warning of an impending attack by North Vietnamese naval forces on August 2, 1964. Less praiseworthy, NSG and its parent National Security Agency erred in telling President Johnson that the enemy navy had attacked *Maddox* and *Turner Joy* on the night of August 4.

The naval intelligence units in support of the Rolling Thunder bombing campaign kept Washington informed of the steady buildup of increasingly effective and deadly North Vietnamese MiGs, surface-to-air missile batteries, high-altitude antiaircraft artillery, and sophisticated air defense radars. Naval intelligence also routinely helped the carrier and naval bombardment forces avoid the most dangerous defensive concentrations in North Vietnam and Laos. The RF-8s, RA-3Bs, RA-5Cs, EA-3Bs, EC-121Ms, and other intelligence-gathering aircraft employed infrared and wide-angle cameras, night vision devices, radars, electronic intercept, and other advanced equipment to great effect. The OP-2E Neptune proved unequal to the critical task given VO-67, but the squadron's personnel more than compensated for that with their courage and dedication to the mission. Given the technology of the time, the product of the intelligence centers in Hawaii and the Philippines and the IOICs on board Seventh Fleet carriers got to the operators in reasonable time for them to act on it.

From 1965 to 1968 Navy attack squadrons, along with Air Force bombing units, destroyed most of North Vietnam's rail and highway bridges, fuel storage facilities, and thermal power plants, and decimated the enemy's truck fleet on the Ho Chi Minh Trail. Despite this deluge of fire from the air and from the sea, Rolling Thunder failed to compel Hanoi to end the war or stop the flow of troops and supplies into South Vietnam. While the Navy and the Air Force cannot be absolved of responsibility, that failure resulted primarily from a faulty analysis by President Johnson and Secretary of Defense McNamara of North Vietnam's will and capability to resist American military power. U.S. air and naval power proved more effective in defeating the enemy's Easter Offensive of 1972 and with the Linebacker operations compelling Hanoi to agree to terms ending the war.

A flawed U.S. national strategy influenced the failure to defeat North Vietnam's seaborne infiltration of war materials into South Vietnam. Between 1965 and 1972 the U.S. Navy, the U.S. Coast Guard, and the Vietnam

Navy mounted the Market Time coastal patrol that, with few exceptions, severely limited, and at times completely stopped, enemy trawlers from delivering their cargoes of weapons and ammunition to North Vietnamese and Viet Cong troops. Naval intelligence figured prominently in this successful operation. But President Johnson's unwillingness to challenge the false "neutrality" of Prince Sihanouk's Cambodia simply allowed the enemy to skirt the allied patrol and offload war materials at Sihanoukville for subsequent movement into the Mekong Delta. The military intelligence organizations in Hawaii and Saigon, including NAVFORV's intelligence staff, correctly identified Sihanoukville's importance to the enemy but failed to develop a case strong enough to convince the doubters at CIA, DIA, and the State Department in Washington.

Naval intelligence support for the war effort in South Vietnam from 1965 to 1968 helped enable the River Patrol Force and the Mobile Riverine Force to secure the country's major waterways, defeat the enemy's main force units in the Mekong Delta, and carry out Navy-Marine amphibious operations on the coast. SEAL and UDT units, headquarters intelligence staffs, and individual naval intelligence liaison officers sometimes made mistakes in the collection of tactical intelligence. Over time, however, these Sailors, who frequently fought face-to-face with the enemy, became especially skilled at their work. The intelligence community's provision of accurate and timely intelligence made possible Vice Admiral Elmo Zumwalt's audacious and energetically executed Sealords campaign that strengthened the South Vietnamese government's presence in the Mekong Delta for the remainder of the war. The enemy's success infiltrating the allied commands and the lax American attitude toward communications security tempered the generally positive in-country intelligence effort.

Key to the operational and tactical successes of naval forces in the Vietnam War were the intelligence-gathering Sailors who served in the reconnaissance planes and warships, headquarters staffs, and the Pacific intelligence centers and the SEALs, UDT frogmen, and Naval Intelligence Liaison Officers (NILOs) who operated in the hot, wet, insect-infested, and war-torn Mekong Delta. Thousands within the Navy's intelligence community answered the call in Vietnam when it counted and served their country with courage, dedication, and professional skill.

About the Authors

Richard A. Mobley *retired as a commander in the Navy in 2001 and has since worked as a military intelligence analyst for the government. During his career as a naval intelligence officer, he worked closely with many of the organizations discussed in this book. He participated in the evacuation of Saigon in 1975 while serving in the intelligence center aboard* Enterprise *(CVAN-65). Subsequent Pacific tours included Chief of the Analysis Section in the Fleet Ocean Surveillance Information Facility WESTPAC in Kami Seya, Japan, in the mid-1980s, and Chief of Indications and Warning, U.S. Forces, Korea, in the mid-1990s. Mobley has written* Flash Point North Korea: The Pueblo and EC-121 Crises *(Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2003) and over a dozen professional articles dealing with intelligence, crisis decision making, and military history in the Middle East and Korea. He is a graduate of the National War College, Georgetown University (MA, History), and University of California, Davis (BA, Political Science).*

Edward J. Marolda *has served as the Acting Director of Naval History and the Chief of the Histories and Archives Division of the Naval Historical Center, designated in December 2008 as the Naval History and Heritage Command. He holds degrees in history from Pennsylvania Military College (BA), Georgetown University (MA), and George Washington University (PhD). He is the author of a number of works, including* Naval Air War: The Rolling Thunder Campaign *(Naval History and Heritage Command, 2009), from which the material within this issue of* The Daybook *was drawn, and was used by permission.*

BACK COVER: Landing from a River Division 91 Assault Support Patrol Boat (ASPB) on the Rach Thom Rach Mo Cay canal system in Kien Hoa Province 50 miles southwest of Saigon on January 25, 1968. They raided a Vietcong base, destroying an estimated 40 to 50 bunkers and numerous camp structures, including a propaganda center and two tax collection stations, and detained 51 Vietcong suspects. The SEAL leaping from the bow carries a shotgun; the next two SEALs have M-16 rifles; the SEAL by tire fender has a Stoner 63A1 machine gun with drum magazine; and the SEAL at right has an M-16 rifle with a 30-round magazine and an XM148 grenade launcher mounted under the barrel. The ASPB has a pair of Honeywell Mark 18 40mm grenade launchers mounted on deck in front of the superstructure and two 20mm cannon in turrets. Note the variety of uniforms, some in camouflage patterns. (*Journalist 1st Class Tom Walton/ Naval History and Heritage Command Image*)

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