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From: Chief, Naval Advisory Group, Military Assistance Command, Vietnam
To: Commander, United States Military Assistance Command, Vietnam

Subj: Historical Review, Naval Advisory Group Activities, October 1965

Ref: (a) COMUSMACV Directive Number 870-1

Encl: (1) Historical Review, Naval Advisory Group Activities, October 1965

1. Enclosure (1) is forwarded to Commander, United States Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (Secretary Joint Staff), in accordance with reference (a).

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1. (S) Operation MARKET TIME

a. General. Market Time operations completed its third month under the command of RADM N. G. WARD, USN, CHNAVADVGRP, and Commander Coastal Surveillance Force (CTF 115). Figures received from Vietnamese Naval Headquarters indicate a trend toward an increased surveillance effort. During October 26,700 junks and 100,000 people were searched. This represents an increase of 2,600 junk searches and 7,200 personnel investigations over September. The Coastal Force maintained a daily average of 190 junks underway. Operating in groups of two or more, these junks conducted an average of 6.6 inspections per team per day. The Sea Force maintained a daily average of twelve ships on patrol, four less than September's average. The reduction is due to two factors; the permanent assignment of three LSJL/LSIL's to support operations (two in the delta and one in the Rung Sat Special Zone), and a revised method of reporting ships "on patrol".

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There is a strong possibility that the Vietnamese Navy reports do not accurately reflect the current situation in the same terms used by USN forces. The aboved-mentioned change in reporting "on patrol" was required when it was confirmed that the Vietnamese considered a ship on patrol if it was deployed from Saigon. American advisors on board sent numerous reports that ships would leave Saigon, only to anchor off shore a day later. Needless to say, such "patrols" were having little effectiveness. Other similar semantic differences are thought to exist in other Vietnamese reports now submitted. A study has been initiated by CTF 115 to precisely determine the differences in reporting phraseology which might affect the validity of VNN reports and reporting procedures.

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b. Assignment of Market Time Forces. A seadrome was established at Cam Ranh Bay from 11 October to 3 November. Operating from USS PINE ISLAND (AV 12) anchored in the bay, Patrol Squadrons 48 and 50 conducted flights in support of Market Time operations. Continuous coverage of the southern track was provided by these units. P-2s stationed at Tan Son Nhut and P-3s from Sangley Point shared the flight on the northern track on an every-other-day basis.

PCF 3 and 4 arrived at An Thoi on 30 October becoming the first SWIFT boats to join Market Time Forces. Less than thirty hours after their arrival the SWIFTs commenced operations with Coast Guard Cutters POINT COMFORT and POINT GARNET, taking an unknown number of Viet Cong under fire with their 81mm mortar. Minor problems preceded their arrival. Early in the month USS KRISHNA (ARL 38), the SWIFT's mother ship at An Thoi, reported she was filled almost to capacity and could accommodate the crews of only two boats. KRISHNA recommended that personnel for all subsequent units be temporarily housed in tent compounds ashore. Action is now being taken to fulfill the requirements of this recommendation. Deficiencies in the early production models of the boats and support shortages, made it prudent that all new units be routed to Subic Bay where logistic and repair facilities could quickly effect the necessary alterations. To insure timely arrival of the boats in Vietnam it was decided by CINCPAC to transport operationally ready units from Subic Bay directly to their operating bases, rather than via Saigon. This new plan partially compensates for the delay incurred by routing the boats to Subic Bay.

c. Incidents Involving Naval Units. Ambushes employing recoilless rifles claimed several river craft during October. River Assault Group 23 had one LCM sunk, and one Monitor and another LCM severely damaged by 57mm and 75mm

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recoilless rifle fire during operations in Kien Hoa province on 4 October. Then on 23 October, a vedette of RAG 23 received damage from recoilless rifles in Vinh Long province. RAGs 21 and 27 destroyed four 57mm recoilless rifles and five small anti-aircraft guns and captured assorted weapons on 3 October in Dinh Tuong province. If these events portend increasing use of recoilless weapons by the Viet Cong, an increasingly serious threat will be posed to future operations of the River Force.

2. (U) Operational Assistance:

a. LSM(H) and PsyWar Activities. The Vietnamese hospital ship, HQ 400, operated on the Mekong River from 14 to 27 October, visiting villages in five provinces. The PsyWar team embarked consisted of sixty-five persons; two doctors, three dentists, twenty corpsmen, and a team of musicians, actors, and singers. During this two week deployment 4,708 patients were given medical treatment, 173 persons received dental care, food and clothing were given to 1,400 needy, and over 250,000 magazines and pamphlets were distributed. The VNN Psywar team was cordially received at each visit and the citizens showed approval of the six American advisors. It was noted that the District Chiefs and Coastal Group Commanders met enroute had not always been informed of the proposed visits. Optimum potential of the visits was therefore not achieved because the ashore arrangements were not prepared or organized. The medical team, especially the dental section, reportedly lacked aggressiveness. Due to this lethargy, the facilities of HQ 400 often lay dormant and the only treatment centers in operation were the classification and aid stations set up on the beach.

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3. (S) Maintenance/Material Assistance.

a. Mine Detectors. Request for a ninety day loan of two portable mine detectors for use in Coast Guard Division 11 was made by N.V.A.DVGRP on 18 October. (See NAVADVGRP ltr 0450 dtd 18 Oct 1965). Unofficial use of mine detectors previous to this date had demonstrated that the time required to search a junk's cargo could be reduced, particularly in the large cargo junks. More sophisticated detectors are expected to be utilized in the future. They will be an aid, not a solution to the junk-searching task.

b. Skilled Mechanics. The loss of skilled civilian mechanics at the Nha Trang Coastal Repair Facility reportedly due to the higher wages offered by civilian contractors, reduced the number of motorized Command Junks and Motor Sailors in an operationally-ready status. Lack of rigorous preventive maintenance by the Coastal Groups and the adverse weather encountered during the month aggravated the repair problem. To combat this personnel situation, Nha Trang Repair Facility is working a seven-day week. Additionally, strong attempts are being made to have the men now attending the Vietnamese technical schools assigned to the Coastal Groups. It is expected that an influx of "A" school graduates will arrive in December.

c. Ships Transferred to VNN. Four RPCs and thirteen LCM-6s were transferred to the Vietnamese Navy in October. Modification to six of the LCMs began immediately and all units were expected to be operational within thirty days. COMUSMACV accepted CNO's proposal that PCE 852 be assigned to the Vietnamese Navy in place of MSF 240. The 852 is now being prepared in Philadelphia for a contemplated May 1966 transfer.

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4. (S) Planning.

a. Operational Roundup. A concept to permit investigation and search of entire junk concentrations was organized late in October. Informally known as "Operation Roundup", the plan calls for aircraft observation of junk groups to determine their exact location and extent. Once this is established, the regular patrol patterns of designated surface craft will be temporarily broken to permit selected units to proceed to stations seaward of the junk concentration. At the same time, Vietnamese Navy junks will position themselves between the concentration and the shore, ready to block any junks attempting to escape. All movements will be made under cover of darkness. At first light the seaward units will surround the junks and force them into pre-planned inspection areas. Message recommendations for these plans are to be received by CTF 115 prior to 10 November, and execution of several operations are expected to follow shortly thereafter.

b. Shift Ammunition Handling to Cat Lai. Because of the proximity of the ammunition anchorage at Nha Be to the fuel farm complex, CHN.V.DVGRP proposed to COMUSMACV that a channel for ocean-going ships be laid out from Nha Be to Cat Lai. The costs are considered minor for any dredging beyond a "clean-up" type should not be necessary. Proper scheduling could possibly accommodate all ammunition ships in the Saigon area, increasing the efficiency of handling and of more importance, eliminating the grave threat to the fuel tank farm. (N.V.DVGRP/USCG ltr 3171 ser: 2169 dtd 30 October).

c. Plan to Insure Sea Access to Saigon. A plan to remove damaged vessels from the sea channel of the Saigon River was forwarded to COMUSMACV on 20 October. Basic items of the plan required the VIIN Operations Center to keep a current plot of vessels in port or transiting the Saigon River. River Pilots

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on board the vessels will be required to check in at fixed locations during transit. If fired upon, they are to immediately inform the VNN and should the ship receive damage, tugs and/or helicopters with mooring gear would be dispatched. Once the damaged vessel was moored, forces would be assigned to protect it from further damage or pilferage. If stranded or sunk, provisions are made for divers to survey the vessel to determine the feasibility of salvage or demolition. Approval or request for further study of this proposal is awaited from COMUSMACV.

5. (S) Marine Advisory Unit Activition. The plan for force structure increases submitted during the month of September was disapproved, and a re-evaluation was ordered by COMUSMACV.

The original proposal provided for an increase of one Infantry Battalion using present battalion TO&E and complimentary increases in the Amphibious Support Battalion, primarily in the medical and communication areas. The total increase consisted of 1207 billets.

Following a meeting held 25 October, on for structure increases for calendar year 1966, COMUSMACV issued the following guide lines for the re-evaluation of VNNC strength increases: reduce the TO&E of the Marine Infantry Battalion to the approximate size of an airborne battalion, and utilize the spaces gained to form a sixth batalion with not more than two hundred additional spaces. Based on these guide lines the T/E of the infantry battalion was reduced by the elimination of the 57mm recoilless rifle sections in the rifle companies. Elimination of billets in the Amphibious Support Battalion, the Signal Company, and the Transport Company created 420 spaces to be utilized to form the sixth battalion.

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A new proposal was submitted as a recommendation to authorize a total increase of 625 personnel. This figure included 179 spaces for augmentation of the Amphibious Support Battalion. This 26 October proposal was accepted by COMUSMACV.

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HISTORICAL REVIEW, Naval Advisory Group Activities, October 1965

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OUTLINE OF OCTOBER 1965 HISTORICAL REVIEW

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