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Naval Advisory Group Activities
Historical Review
December 1965

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There were reports
of surface and air
surveillance, ^{and}minings,
Market Intelligence Unit patrolled,
Search and rescue
operation as well as
leaflet dropping for
psychological warfare
was carried out.
Advisory activities planned
military schooling
for officers.

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Historical Review, Naval Advisory Group Activities, December 1965

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1. (C) General.

December was marked by a decrease in the number of units searched at sea. With the exception of An Thoi on Phu Quoc Island, there were fewer Viet Cong actions against USN and VNN installations. Interdiction of small boat coastal traffic increased. In most cases the intercepted boat evaded to the beach when pursued, and fought from concealed positions ashore. Task Force 116, GAME WARDEN, was established on 18 December. Its mission is to assist the Government of Vietnam in denying the enemy use of the major rivers of the Delta and Rung Sat Special Zone.

2. (C) Surface Surveillance. Data received from Vietnamese Naval Headquarters reported 13,900 junks searched, and 55,000 people investigated during December. Although these figures compare unfavorably to November's (20,100 junks searched and 64,000 people investigated) they probably present a more accurate picture of the coastal surveillance effort.

Until December, Vietnamese reports permitted liberal interpretations of such terms as "on patrol" and "investigation". For example, some Vietnamese commanding officers would consider junks "investigated" after making a cursory sweep of a concentration to observe that all the junks appeared to be fishing. A meeting between CHNAVADVGRP and CNO Vietnamese Navy in November resolved existing differences in the definitions. The subsequent decrease in the December reports can be partially attributed to the more literal meaning now given these terms. However, two other factors must be considered in accounting for December's decrease. First, the Northeast

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Monsoon curtailed junk activity to approximately 65 percent of the November level. As there were fewer detections, there were fewer opportunities to board and search. Whether each search opportunity was prosecuted is the second factor. It is suspected that the Sea Force officers, suffering from a lingering malaise for being passed over for promotion in November, did not make use of each available opportunity. It is impossible to estimate the extent, if any, this discontent contributed to December's lessened effort.

3. (C) Air Surveillance. P-5's operating from USS PINE ISLAND at Cam Ranh Bay provided continuous coverage of the RED (southern) route from 1 to 12 December. P-3's operating from Sangley Point, and P-2's stationed at Tan Son Nhut flew the BLUE (northern) route on an every other day basis during this period. On 12 December the P-5's departed Cam Ranh for Subic Bay, where they were scheduled for upkeep and repair. The P-3's then began to fly the BLUE route, and the P-2's commenced a six day series of junk count flights. Data obtained from the junk counts substantiated the supposition that few junks were putting to sea while the effects of the Northeast Monsoon were felt along the northern coast. Upon completion of the junk count flights on 17 December, the P-2's began regular surveillance flights on the RED route.

4. (C) Incidents During December.

a. Suspect Junk. The U.S. Navy Liaison Officer at Hong Kong reported early in December that an 80-ton fishing junk, LI HING 2, departed the Chinese mainland bound for South Vietnam. Its cargo reportedly contained bogus U.S. currency and bonds. Information received later indicated that the junk might attempt to visit Con Son Island between 10 and 12 December. MARKET TIME units were alerted and special P-2 flights were scheduled. USS IMPLICIT

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was assigned barrier patrol northeast of Con Son Island, VNN FCE-09 patrolled in the vicinity of the island, and VNN LSIL 328 patrolled the RVN coast and river mouths. VNN customs officials, accompanied by a USAID advisor flew to Con Son on 12 December and conducted a thorough search of the ports, but found no trace of the suspicious junk.

b. V.C. Sympathizer Reports No Knowledge of Sea Infiltration. On 30 December, units from Coastal Group 32 apprehended three V.C. and one V.C. sympathizer. Interrogation revealed that they had a good knowledge of the V.C. organization in the area of Phuoc Hai. Of particular interest was the fact that they professed no knowledge of sea infiltration. One captive stated that a large sampan containing weapons for his squad did come from a northerly direction. He did not know the port of origin, but felt it was in-country redistribution as the vessel was not a sea going type.

c. Minings. Minings activity in the rivers increased early in the month. An unsuccessful V.C. attempt to mine the Danish merchant ship KINA as it transited the Long Tau River on 2 December re-emphasized the need to conduct effective and frequent sweeps of the main river channel. At present, the Vietnamese Navy has the entire responsibility to conduct effective mine counter-measures. A team composed of two MLMS's escorted by interceptor vedettes proceed up-river from Can Gio each day at 0800. Another team departs Nha Be at approximately the same time to sweep down river. Each team sweeps one side of the channel. The lead MLMS normally streams a serrated grapnel, (a French designed grapnel drag) and the second MLMS streams a heavy chain drag with bar cutters. Fragments of electrical wire similar to the type used on captured mines have occasionally been retrieved.

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With an upsurge in attempted minings, immediate steps were taken to improve mine countermeasures. On 11 December the VNN began a daily mid-channel sweep with "C" type gear. NAVAD/GRP redoubled its efforts to hasten evaluation reports of anti-swimmer nets being tested in the U.S. Additionally, inquiries were initiated to determine the feasibility of using hand held sonars to detect swimmers approaching a ship, and of using existing sonars to detect floating mines.

i. (C) Deployment of MARKET TIME Units.

a. Six PCF's arrived in-country on 24 December. They were assigned to Ban Thoi, and brought the total force of PCF Division 101 to eight boats. The new SWIFTs underwent a two week training program in the Gulf of Thailand before commencing a regular patrol schedule.

b. VNN Headquarters directed four junks from Coastal Group 12, four from Coastal Group 16, and two from Coastal Group 14, to patrol the inland waters (rivers and lagoons) in the Thau Tien, Quang Nam and Quang Ngai sectors. These junks will therefore not be available for patrols in the coastal waters. Overall effect on coastal surveillance is considered negligible because the change is effective only during the period of the Northeast Monsoon. Three Regional Force boat companies are scheduled to assume this mission in April.

c. On 4 December the four LCPLs based at Nha Be began regularly scheduled night patrols on the Soi Rap river. Until this date, the nightly patrols were conducted on a random basis, as not all the LCPLs were in operational status.

d. On 21 December, SECDEF directed that one of four FGMs planned for delivery to South Vietnam in January 1966 be diverted to Thailand. The ship is to be manned by Thais, and eventually used in MARKET TIME operations.

Diversion of the ship at this time was an indication of U.S. concern for Thailand.

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e. The WPBs in Coastal Area 1 were recalled twice due to the rough seas caused by the Northeast Monsoon. From 1100 on 17 December until 1330 on 20 December, all ships except the WPB in Area 1B1 and the DER in Area 1A returned to Danang to wait for seas to abate. The same recall was issued on 30 December and remained in effect until 1300 the following day. Although effective coverage of the patrol area decreased when these units returned to port, movement of any other craft in the area was correspondingly decreased by the rough seas.

6. (C) SAR Operations in December.

a. IMPALA. At approximately 0520 on 19 December, the Panamanian merchant ship IMPALA went aground two miles south of Cape Varella. At 0700 USS SACRAMENTO discovered a swamped lifoat with seven survivors and one dead man on board. Among the survivors was the First Mate, who reported that all twenty-nine men of the crew had cleared the ship with life jackets, but were swept to sea by the strong current. SACRAMENTO assumed duties as On-Scene Commander and commenced searching for possible survivors. At 1030 USS HENDERSON, USS FIREDRAKE, USS GALLANT, and USS MAURY were directed to close SACRAMENTO and assist in the search. P-3 aircraft and two helos were already on the scene. By 1600 on 20 December, twelve bodies had been recovered. SACRAMENTO and FIREDRAKE were detached to proceed to prior commitments and MAURY assumed duties as On-Scene Commander. Searching continued until nightfall, when GALLANT and HENDERSON were detached, as probability of sighting more survivors or bodies was considered minimal. MAURY remained in the area until 211300, but found no additional survivors.

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b. VIGILANTE CRASHES. An RA5C based aboard USS ENTERPRISE (CVA(N)-65) crashed in the Gulf of Thailand at approximately 1700 on 15 December. The crew had ejected and were recovered. USCG PT YOUNG and PCE-5 intercepted radio traffic concerning the incident, and proceeded to the area to provide security and to attempt to locate the wreckage for possible recovery. Three days of searching proved unsuccessful, and on 18 December USS WHIPPOORWILL was directed to join in the effort. Local fishermen designated the location of the crash, and these areas were searched and dragged extensively but only flotsam of the aircraft was recovered. Searching was terminated on 19 December as all efforts had proved unsuccessful.

c. L-19 Makes Emergency Landing. At approximately 1800 on 15 December a. U.S. Army L-19 attached to the 41st Signal Battalion made an emergency landing in the surf near Qui Nhon. A FAC from 22nd Infantry Division in an airborne L-19 reported the downed aircraft received small arms fire from the beach, and that it appeared that about ten people were attempting to pull the aircraft onto the beach. Occupants of the plane were not observed. USS FINCH intercepted a request for gunfire support and proceeded to the area. As FINCH and two units from Junk Division 21 approached the beach to investigate, they received automatic weapons fire. FINCH answered with 15 rounds of 3" and 50 caliber machine gun fire, and the V.C. weapons ceased. The search for possible survivors continued until 2230, when it was canceled because of darkness. On 16 December, ground forces conducted a search of the area, and FINCH stood by to lend NGFS. Final reports were not received at this command, but it is believed that no survivors were found.

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(C) Formation of CTF 116. Task Force 116, GAME WARDEN, was established on 8 December 1965. Its mission is to assist the Government of South Vietnam in denying the enemy use of the major rivers of the Delta and Rung Sat Special Zone. RADM N. G. WARD, USN, COMNAVADVGRP and CTF 115, was assigned additional duty as CTF 116.

The task force will initially consist of 100 specially designed river patrol boats (PBR), 20 LCPLs, an LSD, an LST, and eight UH-1B helicopters. U.S. Navy personnel will man the ships and patrol craft; the U.S. Army will provide and man the helicopters. VNN liaison personnel will be assigned to the LCPLs and the PBRs. Four LCPLs are presently in-country, and it is expected that all twenty will arrive by mid-May 1966. Construction on the PBRs has begun in CONUS, and a training program for the crews is being conducted at NAVPHIBASE Coronado. The first PBRs are expected to arrive in-country in March 1966, and will be based at Cat Lo. The full force of 100 boats is expected to arrive in South Vietnam by June 1966.

The LSD and LST are planned to serve as operational bases for 30 PBRs that will patrol the river mouths of the Delta. Both units are presently undergoing conversion to comply with the requirements of the PBRs, and to serve as landing platforms for the UH-1Bs. The LSD is scheduled to arrive 8 March 1966 and the LST on 23 March 1966. Four specially outfitted LSTs are scheduled to eventually replace the LSD and LST. During December contracts were awarded in CONUS to effect their outfitting and it is tentatively planned that they will arrive in South Vietnam in September 1966.

Throughout the month work continued on CTF 116's OP-ORDER. Personnel and logistics requirements were developed and submitted to CNO for approval.

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8. (C) Reorganization of VNN Commands. In December, VNN Headquarters submitted a plan to JCS which would abolish the positions of Sea Force, River Force and Coastal Force Commands. Six new commands were proposed; four Coastal Zone Commanders with operational control over Vietnamese naval units assigned to their zones, and two River Area Commanders in III and IV Corps. The River Area Commanders would exercise operational control over craft assigned to the rivers and inland waters in each Corps. The various base facilities would come under the cognizance of the respective area or zone commander. Fleet Command at VNN Headquarters would assign the naval units to the various commanders. In effect, Fleet Command would be an administrative headquarters, and operational command would be delegated to commanders in the Naval Zones.

9. (C) Operational Assistance. During December approximately 15 tons of welfare material, 250,000 leaflets, and 1,600 magazines and posters were delivered to Coastal Bases, Sea Force ships, and River Assault Groups for American and Vietnamese personnel to distribute in psywar operations.

The VNN PSYWAR Bureau reported two harelip operations were successfully completed during the month. One was performed on a two year old boy whose father is assigned to Coastal Group 30. The other operation was performed on a 10 year old girl from Dia An, near Coastal Group 36, whose harelip condition was noted by the Coastal Group Advisor. The first harelip case which was beyond present in-country capabilities to remedy occurred late in the month. A seriously handicapped 10 year old boy from Bai Giang was brought to Saigon for an operation, but thorough examination revealed the need for extensive bone grafting. The lack of a dental prosthodontist in Vietnam dictated that surgery not be attempted at this time. This case will be reviewed when the facilities of the USS REPOSE are available.

The VNN hospital ship LSM 400 delivered food and clothing to VNN personnel in Nha Trang. These personnel will distribute the welfare material to 2,500 refugees on Hon Chau Island.

10. (C) Marine Advisory Unit Activities.

a. Except for two actions, the month of December was marked by a complete lack of contact with Viet Cong forces despite aggressive search operations by all units of the Vietnamese Marine Corps. On 22 December 1965, the 3rd VINMC Battalion, while on an operation in Quang Ngai Province under the control of the 2nd ARVN Division, was engaged in a brief, violent action. The Viet Cong were deployed in prepared positions in an "L" configuration, with the long axis of the "L" parallel to the direction of the attack of the VINMC units. The base of the "L" was dug in on high ground to the front of the battalion. The Viet Cong initiated the action by engaging the lead elements of the battalion with heavy small arms and automatic weapons fire. Shortly thereafter, the rear company of the battalion was engaged. Within minutes, the entire battalion was committed to the action. Although caught in the open and fully engaged in the flank, the battalion commander adroitly maneuvered his command and extricated it from an untenable tactical position, then launched an aggressive bayonet assault on the Viet Cong forces occupying the high ground to his front. By carrying the high ground, the battalion reversed the tactical situation and turned the enemy flank. The Viet Cong broke contact immediately. The significance of this operation lies in the precision of maneuver, discipline and aggressiveness displayed by the battalion against an enemy tactic that has extracted heavy casualties to Vietnamese forces over the years. . . .

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b. Operations of VNMC forces deployed to the operational control of Capital Military Region during the period were characterized by a marked increase in the number of search and clear operations. From 17 December until the end of the period, two VNMC battalions were deployed to CRM. Each participated in several offensive operations, ranging in size from two company to multi-battalion. The increase aggressiveness in use of the offensive by the VNMC elements and the CMR commander and staff are encouraging signs of an improvement in both confidence and morale of RVNAF.

c. A Military Assistance Program Schools Training plan extending through Fiscal Year 1972 was completed in December. This plan, encompassing both in-country and foreign training for officer and enlisted provides the first comprehensive and logical method of producing both qualitatively and quantitatively trained personnel resources in the history of the VNMC. It was the product of intensive advisory effort, achieved in conjunction with the Commandant and general staff of the VNMC. It provides for the long term acquisition of a trained cadre of officers and enlisted men to form an expanded and increasingly professional military organization.

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