



**VEST POCKET DRYDOCK.** . . . A 100-ton floating drydock is now in operation at Cam Ranh Bay, making it possible to repair the hulls of Market Time Swift boats. (Official U.S. Navy Photograph)

## Snipers Fare Badly In Attempts on PBR's

December has been a month of almost daily encounters between the Navy's River Patrol Boat crews and the Viet Cong in the Mekong Delta. The Viet Cong definitely came out on the losing side!

One of the most vicious battles exploded the Sunday morning quiet Dec. 18 near Sa Dec as four PBR's based at that city were ambushed by a company-size VC force armed with at least 20 automatic weapons, two recoilless rifles and mortars.

The action was at a distance of not more than 30 yards and when the boat crews opened up with their .50 caliber and M-60 machine guns and M-79 grenade launchers they could see the enemy troops falling under their fire. After eight minutes of fierce fighting the enemy positions were silenced.

The PBR's suffered moderate material damage and it was one of the few encounters during the month in which personnel casualties were inflicted on the Navymen. Taking part in the action were boats 54, 65, 84 and 118, which were under the command of Lieutenant Charles T. Lalphy.

The overall lesson for the VC in the December fights with the PBR's might be summed up as "Don't mess with us!"

This is evidenced by the following examples:

On December 4 a PBR blocking force from Long Xuyen killed five Viet Cong when the enemy were reckless enough to open fire. One of those killed was foolhardy enough to charge the PBR's in a sampan, firing an automatic weapon. The others were killed when they opened fire from the riverbank.

The following day a My Tho-based PBR patrol, boats 121 and 124, challenged a sampan. One of the occupants opened fire with what was later discovered to be a Chinese communist carbine while his comrade furiously tried to paddle to safety. It didn't work. The sniper was shot as he abandoned ship and attempted to climb the riverbank and the paddler was captured.

On December 6th a Viet Cong sniper who sought to put a notch on his rifle stock joined the growing toll. He got off three ineffective rounds at PBR's 97 and 116 as they patrolled the Co Chien River before he was located near a hut and sent sprawling by counterfire.

The following day the enemy tried a new tactic on PBR's 82 and 86, also on the Co Chien River. A sampan attempted to lure the boats into an ambush of automatic weapons and recoilless rifles. It didn't work either. The PBR's obliterated the sampan and called in artillery fire that wiped out the shore position.

But there were still some reckless VC around. PBR's 105 and 96 took automatic weapons fire from a tree along the riverbank while patrolling the My Tho River Dec. 12. Machine gun fire knocked three of the enemy from their insecure perch.

PBR's 121 and 124 from My Tho again engaged the VC Dec. 19 at the mouth of the My Tho River when they were fired on by a sampan they had been nearing to investigate. At the same time, automatic weapons opened up on the PBR's from Loi Quan Island. The enemy fire was squelched with .50-caliber machine gunfire.

PBR 121 then fished three VC swimmers out of the water—two of whom yelled "Chieu Hai" (open arms) as he saw that capture was inevitable. PBR 124 meanwhile approached the now silent sampan, but, as she closed, two VC rose out of the sampan and hurled grenades. They were

(Continued on Page 2)

## 'Paving Way' for PBR's Earns the Bronze Star

CNFYN-PAO — U.S. Navy Lieutenant Hillary Martin Robinette, has been awarded the Bronze Star with Combat "V" for his psychological warfare work in preparing the way for U.S. Navy PBR operations in the Mekong Delta.

The official citation was presented by Rear Admiral Norvell G. Ward, Commander U.S. Naval Forces Vietnam.

Before the Navy could undertake full river patrols in South Vietnam's Mekong Delta, it was necessary for Lieutenant Robinette to inform friendly Vietnamese of the armed Navy River Patrol Boats (PBR's), which would attempt to stop river movement of Viet Cong men and supplies.

"These psychological operations in advance of River Patrol Force

combat patrols were absolutely essential to the success of these operations and the considerable success achieved is in a large degree directly due to the efforts of Lieutenant Robinette," the citation states.

The citation also points out that Lieutenant Robinette was required to plan and take part in numerous low-level loudspeaker and leaflet dropping missions over Viet Cong territory at altitudes that made the aircraft particularly vulnerable to enemy fire.

## Swifts Are Friend in Need

In a turn-of-the-tables situation, Navy Swift boats have been called on several times recently to provide gunfire support for aircraft being fired at by VC ground positions.

In the latest incident, December 18, the An Thoi-based PCF 91 devastated a VC position on the southern coast of Vietnam with twenty-two rounds of 81-millimeter fire. A camouflaged junk was completely destroyed by the barrage.

And two Air Force officers had

good reason to be thankful for the presence of the Swifts when their B-57 bomber was shot down off the coast of South Vietnam recently. They were picked up by PCF 67 less than twenty minutes after their plane crashed into the South China Sea.

# Dear G.I. . . .

The following letters were received by the Naval Support Activity from seventh and eighth grade students at the Emerson School in Phoenix, Ariz., in appreciation for the job we are doing in Vietnam.

If you wish to reply to these boys and girls, the addresses are included.

Dear G. I.

My name is Cindy Collins. I am an eighth grader at Emerson School in Phoenix, Arizona. My favorite things are old English sheep dogs (those really shaggy kind), horses and most any other kind of animals except snakes. I also like sports and knitting. I only knit in the summer time because I don't have any homework. The thing I like the very best is staying up late and sleeping late in the morning.

Mrs. Combs, my homeroom teacher, asked us to write letters to G.I.'s in Vietnam so that is exactly what I am doing. I think I would have done it any way. I know it gets pretty rough over there and it is always nice to hear something from home.

I can't think of any thing else to say except good by for now.

Yours truly,  
Cindy Collins  
2510 N. 9th St.  
Phoenix, Arizona 85006

Dear Brave Soldier,

I'm taking this brief moment to tell you how I feel about our fighting in Vietnam. I feel that protesting in the streets against our role in Vietnam is the same as trying to spread communism because that's exactly what we are doing if we let the communists take over South Vietnam.

Most of the time I, like many other people, take my freedom for granted but when I think of all the brave soldiers who are willing to risk their lives on foreign lands to keep us free, I begin to feel very grateful.

An admiring boy,  
Jose Sotelo  
1033 E. Roosevelt  
Phoenix, Arizona 85006

Dear G.I.

You don't know me but I would like to tell you.

My name is Patty Koenig. I live at 1014 N. 9th St., in Phoenix.

There are seven people in our family. I have gone to church this Sunday and our pastor said to do unto others as we would have others do to us. Thus I will write this letter to you.

Please write back.

Patty Koenig  
1014 N. 9th St.  
Phoenix, Arizona 85006

Dear G. I.

Our school class is having practice in writing letters and so we decided that some of you men were missing your home town and so we decided to write to you. I'm very glad that you fellows are there fighting and you're not there for the fun of it. I'm writing to one of you because I don't know anyone over there.

We started writing the letters last week, but we didn't get squared away and know what to say until today. I haven't been writing very long and I'm already running out of things to say. So I'll have to say good-by now and I hope all of you are having a good time.

Your friend,  
David Vasquez  
729 E. Granada  
Phoenix, Arizona 85006

Dear G. I.

This is a class project to write to G. I.'s in South Vietnam. I'm glad you are over there fighting for us. It must make you feel proud to help your country stay free. So come home soon and above all keep up the good work.

Sincerely,  
Becky Switzer  
1827 N. 11th St.  
Phoenix, Arizona 85006

Because of the limited space in the paper, we only have room for the names and addresses of three other students from whom letters were received. They are:

Doc Maddux	Steven Stromberg	Jimmy Stickler
1817 N. 7th St.	929 E. Coronado	2045 N. 8th St.
Phoenix, Arizona 85006	Phoenix, Arizona 85006	Phoenix, Arizona 85006

# The Jackstaff News

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Coming Soon in the JACKSTAFF NEWS

A gallant new chapter in the history of the United States Navy is being written on the rivers of Vietnam. The Navy's River Patrol Boats and their crews are the basis for the new strip. PBR Navyman Jim Scott will carry on in the splendid tradition of Don Winslow and Baz Luwys!

Jim Scott in RIVER PATROL

ARTIST: JAMES E. HUMMEL, AE2  
WRITER: HARRY D. HERRY, SMC

## Sniper Attempts on PBR's

(Continued from Page 1)

killed with machine gun fire and weapons with Communist Chinese markings were salvaged from the sampan.

One PBR crewman was wounded in this action.

At almost the same time that the My Tho-based PBR's were cleaning up on the VC's, the enemy attempted to mine the PBR pier at My Tho, but the water mine exploded 75 feet from the pier and caused no damage or casualties.

In other PBR action during the month, four PBR's from River Patrol Section 531 at My Tho went on a sampan-smashing spree Dec. 11, killing at least 15 VC and sinking 28 sampans.

The PBR's surprised an enemy force of 40 sampans in a canal off the My Tho River to begin the action. Four of the VC dead were cut down with machine gun fire when they ran from a hut on the bank firing automatic weapons. Two others were knocked out of trees.

Navy and later Army helicopters joined in the battle.

During the month the busy PBR sailors also found time to act as the "Navy's smallest gunfire support ships" in, defending Vietnamese Army outposts and neutralizing several enemy positions, went to the assistance of a merchant ship that was struck by ten rounds of .75-millimeter recoilless rifle fire as it proceeded up the channel to Saigon and, finally, acted as waterborne ambulances on a number of occasions for Vietnamese civilians and soldiers who had been wounded by VC booby traps or gunfire.

## Drums Along the Mekong

Not since the wars with the Indians on the American plains have Americans heard war drums at night. But the sound of drums is frequently heard today along the rivers of the Mekong Delta in Vietnam.

The Viet Cong use drums to relay warnings and messages between their units hidden in the tree-lined along the waterways. The VC are masters at improvising and they sometimes use bamboo logs for drums, giving the drumbeats an eerie, oriental sound.

The U.S. Navy's River Patrol Boat Section 313 (PBR), based on the Cho Chien river at Vinh Long, is quite familiar with the sound of the oriental war drums.

On a recent night patrol near Vinh Long in an island-laced section of the river known as Song Bang Tra, Petty Officer First Class Gary Emch, of Toledo, O., a PBR boat captain, described the sound of the drums as "eerie" as his boat drifted, engines still, along the heavily wooded island shore.

A few minutes earlier, Emch and his crew had cruised this section of the river a few hundred yards behind the other boat of their two-boat patrol unit. On the shore the VC had been waiting, dug in behind sand banks.

The shore came alive with tracers directed at the boats as the VC opened up with automatic weapons. Gunnery's Mate Ward Merrill, of Wisconsin, Ore., throttled the PBR's twin engines and sped clear of the area as the other crewmembers opened up at the shore position with .50 caliber machine guns and

grenade launchers. The fire from the shore subsided.

Now, as the boat drifted back through the area, all was quiet, except for the drums. The Viet Cong apparently had dispersed and moved to safer areas, signalling their comrades ahead with drumbeats. The VC have learned to respect the PBRs with their heavy and effective firepower and speed.

The rest of the 14-hour night patrol was lonely and quiet. The only damage was a single bullet hole in the bow of one of the fiberglass boats.

Asked to comment on the fire fight, Emch said, "Aw, that wasn't really a fight. That was only harassment fire. A routine thing."



**ORIENTAL GOODIE** . . . . . Lovely Mike Mayama of the NBC TV "Ray LaSalle" program was caught by the photographer as she was about to plunge into the Saigon River in hopes of being picked up by some PBR sailors.



# U.S. Navy Helicopters Make the

By Bill Rozier, JO2

**CNFVN-PAO—“Seawolfs”—U.S. Navy air crews flying deadly enemy to the Viet Cong attempting to move on the rivers and coasts. The Navy airmen, working from three detachments locate a unique job. Never before have Navy pilots flown helicopters as gun-**

The Seawolf's mission is to provide fire support and reconnaissance for U.S. Navy River Patrol Boats (PBRs).

The boats and helos are units of the Navy's Operation Game Warden, designed to prevent Viet Cong movement of men and supplies on the waterways of the Mekong Delta, and the Rung Sat Special Zone, 30 miles southeast of Saigon.

The helicopters assist the PBRs in firefights with enemy sampans and junks, or against VC ambushes from along the riverbanks.

Providing support for other friendly ground or waterborne units is another Seawolf mission. In addition, they are called on for rocket and strafing strikes, to rescue downed pilots or others in distress and to cover for medical evacuations.

Detachments 25, 27 and 29 of Helicopter Combat Support Squadron One (HC-1) make up the Seawolfs. Support Squadron One's home base is the Naval Auxiliary Air Station at Beaufort Field, Imperial Beach, California.

The detachments are stationed at northern, central and coastal Delta bases to obtain maximum Delta coverage.

The Seawolf crews, with only four months experience, have developed into expert combat support fliers with a

devil-may-care flair.

They fly at tree-top level dodging inches above the jungle growth to recon a Viet Cong bunker.

Once gunners, held only by safety belts, crawl outside the armchairs battling the wind to repair malfunctioning machine guns or rocket pods.

In the face of enemy fire the helos swoop down to ground-level over marsh or canal to seek out and destroy Viet Cong attackers.

Trained in tactics by Army pilots, the Navymen took over the armed helo mission four months ago.

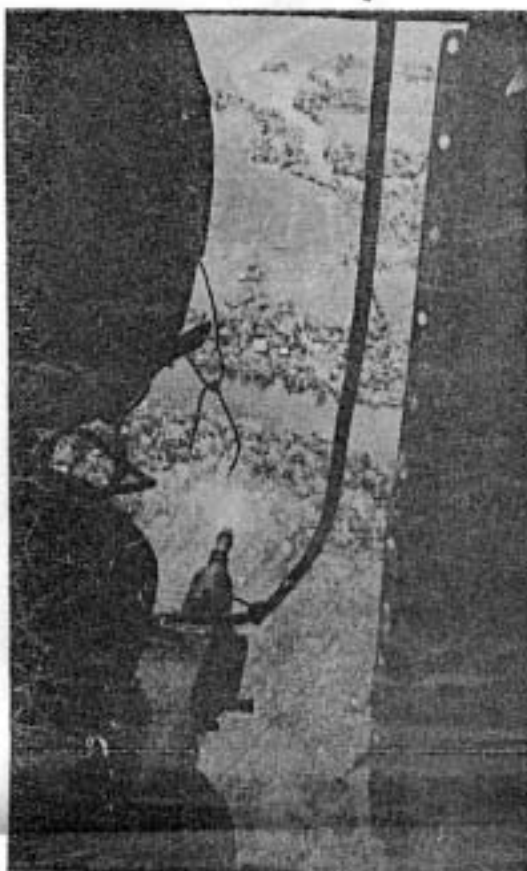
In a large operation recently, two helos from Detachment 25, based at Vinh Long, and one aircraft from Detachment 29, temporarily based at Cao Thau, sank 23 enemy sampans and destroyed 25 structures.

The helos, supporting the River Patrol Boats, Vietnamese Navy River Assault Group (RAG) boats and Vietnamese Army units, circled behind the large force of VC and took them by surprise.

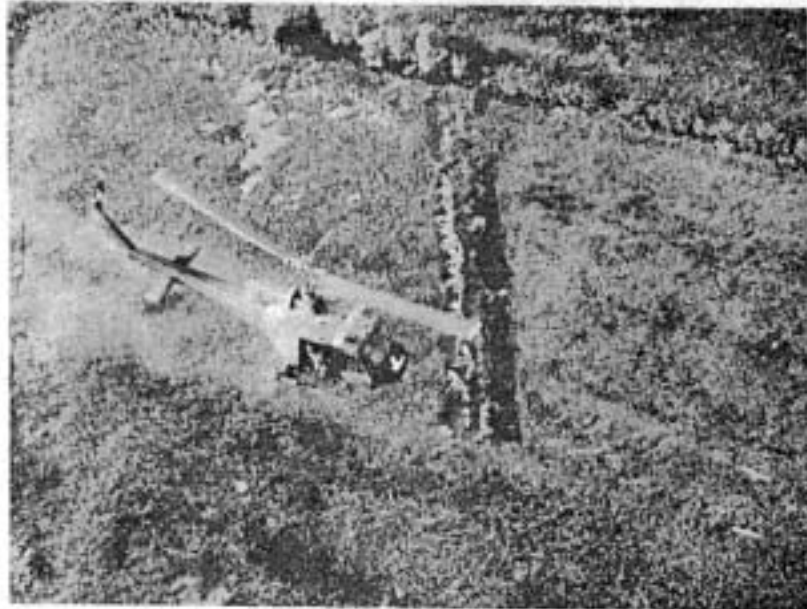
Flying low, the helos were so close to the targets that their own rocket blasts splattered mud on the windows. The terrible fire power of the planes' six machine guns swept away the enemy before them.

It's not all flying and fighting. The aircraft must be maintained.

Detachment 25, based at the Vinh Long Army helicopter center,



**LEAD POISONING . . . .** A Seawolf port door gunner sends a rain of lead into Viet Cong ambush positions in answer to enemy fire. The helos' carry six M-60 machine guns.



**ROCKETS AWAY . . . .** Making a low, fast pass a Seawolf fires two rockets (visible at lower right) at Viet Cong attempting to escape in sampans.

(All photos pages 4-5 Official U.S. Navy Photos by L.R. Robinson, PH1)



**SEAWOLF ON PROWL . . . .** On patrol on the Delta waterways to Navy River Patrol Boats required to help break up Viet Cong ambushes.

# Skies Unfriendly for the Viet Cong

4-B armed "Huey" helicopters—are a key element of Vietnam's Mekong Delta. In the Delta area, are a new group with a high combat.

gets top Army maintenance and supply support.

Lieutenant John Linquist of Keokuk, Iowa, assistant officer-in-charge of Detachment 25, is pleased with the service and assistance given by the Army.

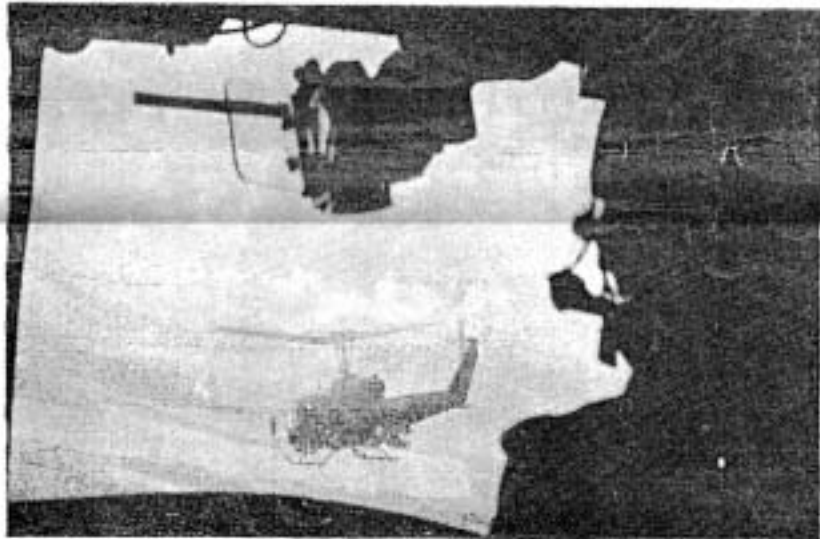
"The highest level of interservice cooperation has been attained here," he said.

The kind of impression the Navy-men are making at Vinh Long is revealed by one Army sergeant's remark, "In the short time they've been here, the Navy Seawolf's have earned our unequal respect."

How do the Seawolf's feel about being in Vietnam? "All of us are volunteers," Lieutenant Tom Conroy, of Waynesboro, Penn., a Seawolf pilot, said.

"We know we're doing a necessary job here and our morale is high."

Pictures at right show, top to bottom, Seawolf pilots briefing in preparation for a mission, a pilot's eye view of the lead helicopter from one of the wing ships, and pillars of smoke rising from a target area. Taking part in the briefing are (left to right) Ensign Jack Wilson; Lieutenant Commander Joe Howard, who is Officer-in-Charge of Seawolf Detachment 25; and Lieutenant John Linquist, Assistant Officer-in-Charge.



ase patrols the helos report movement of craft boats and their suspension is available when along the riverbanks.





**'MONSTER BOSS'** . . . Lt. Charles H. Billings was officer in tactical command of the three Patrol Air Cushion Vehicles that participated in Operation Quai Vat.



**TAKING THE OVERLAND ROUTE** . . . The versatile PACVs skim over land in search of the elusive VC who were too frightened by the strange craft to fight.



**STRATEGY HUDDLE** . . . Lt. Kenneth H. Luenser (second from left), Commanding Officer PACV Division 107, discusses the day's operations with the PACV commanders (left to right), Ltjg. Bill C. McCollum, Ltjg. Roy E. Arden and Ltjg. Kipston C. Kumber.

# MONSTERS PRO

By Lieutenant (jg) Bob Martin

**CNFVN—PAO**—Three mechanical "monsters" skimmed across the Plain of Reeds. In their trail, the high grass of the swampy terrain lay beaten down from the air blast which seemingly carried the machines effortlessly over the marsh.

"Quai Vat" (monsters), the Viet Cong screamed, paddling their sampans furiously away from the approaching giants. Some of the fleeing VC jumped into the water and tried to conceal themselves beneath the muddy surface—breathing through the hollow stems for which the Plain of Reeds is named.

When the roaring monsters moved in, many of the sneaky guerrillas threw their arms up in surrender. Others needed the spitting persuasion of .50-caliber machine gun fire directed into the water from the vehicle's back.

"Operation Quai Vat," pronounced KWY-VAT, began in mid-November when three United States Navy Patrol Air Cushion Vehicles (PACVs) left their base at Cat Lu on the Vietnamese coast 25 miles

southeast of Saigon. Their assignment would take them deep inland.

Moving on a cushion of air at speeds up to 65 miles per hour, the 19-foot-long craft can travel over water or any relatively flat surface. Combining speed, maneuverability and a zero draft, the British-inspired machines arrived in South Vietnam last May for "test and evaluation" as operational units of the Navy's Coastal Surveillance Force (Operation Market Time).

The journey from Cat Lu to Mec Hoa—a distance of 150 miles north-west—took the vehicles up the myriad of rivers and canals of the Mekong Delta.

Mec Hoa itself is situated 83 miles due west of Saigon. Arriving there on the afternoon of November 20, the PACVs prepared for a full-scale operation.

On the morning of November 21 Operation Quai Vat began in full; it was to be a joint effort, combining Vietnamese Civilian Irregular Defense Group (CIDG) troops with U.S. Army Special Forces advisors and Navy and Army light armed helicopters.

Among the tasks assigned to the PACVs was reconnaissance, search-and-rescue, medical evacuation and logistic support.

The Vietnamese-American team intended to catch the VC as they tried to escape from an area which long had been considered an enemy stronghold.

Fanning out from the base at Mec Hoa, the PACVs worked closely with the aerial gunships—the UH-1B "Huey" helicopters. Equipped with dual machine guns themselves, the "hovercraft" swept across the swampy fields looking for "black pajamas."

WL

Loaded from concealment beneath the reeds or pulled from their sampans, the captured "Victor Charlie" were loaded aboard the soaring monstrosities.

The day's operations completed, 22 enemy sampans had been damaged, numerous boats destroyed and various supplies, mostly rice, captured. The suspects were turned over to the province chief for questioning.

On November 22, the combined forces experienced their heaviest action. Encountering what one Navy helicopter pilot described as a "Metilla of enemy sampans," the PACVs and gunships successfully blocked the VC escape routes as CIDG/Special Forces troops were airlifted to comb the area.

The day's results showed 56 Viet Cong killed by all participating units.

On November 25, in an area some 16 miles south of Mac Hoa, the PACV Division commanding officer, Lieutenant Kenneth H. Lerner of San Diego, California, reported 10 enemy confirmed killed and six Viet Cong taken prisoner by his three craft.

At the end of the Operation Quoi Voi, Lieutenant Commander Charles H. Billings, also of San Diego, commanding officer of the PACVs in the operation, commented on his participation.

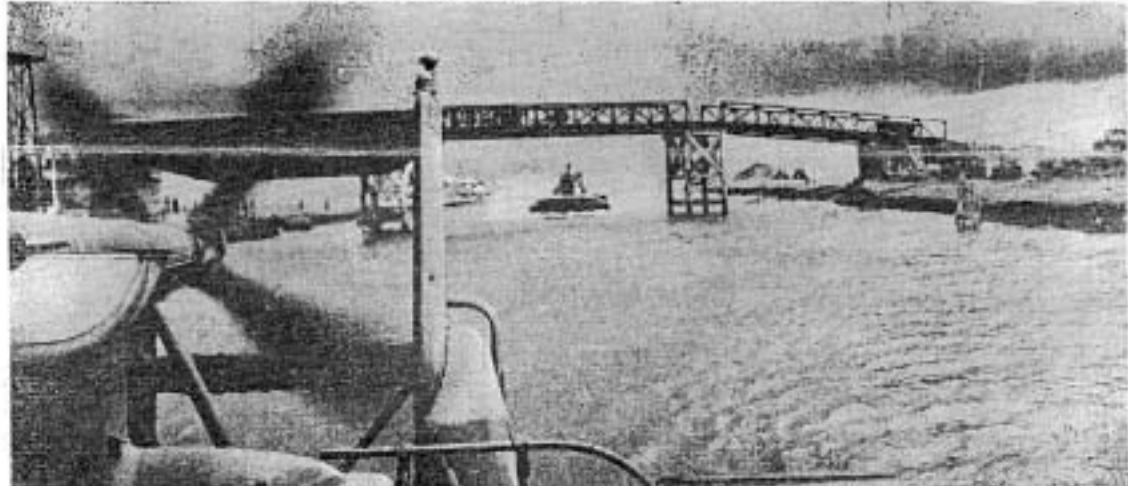
"For me personally, it was a fascinating experience directing the PACV operations in these rice paddies, although as a naval officer I couldn't help feeling a little funny about being 60 miles inland!"



IT'S A BOAT? IT'S A PLANE? . . . Actually it's some of both. It has no draft, because it is supported by a cushion of air created by a fan inside its body and forward propulsion is caused by a propeller.



ONE, TWO PUNCH . . . Searchlights in the sky and Patrol Air Cushion Vehicles on the land give the VC little chance of escape as the team searches a former VC stronghold near Mac Hoa.



HEADING HOME, MISSION ACCOMPLISHED . . . The Patrol Air Cushion Vehicles pass under the bridge at An Long bound for their home base at Cai Lo after completing their operations in the Plain of Reeds.

