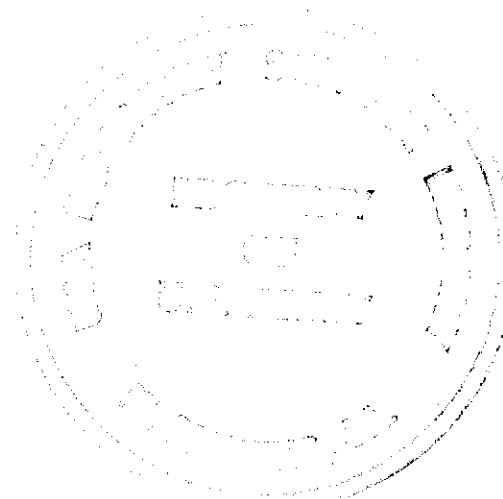


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THE MOBILE RIVERINE FORCE, MEKONG DELTA, REPUBLIC  
OF VIETNAM, 16 FEBRUARY 1967 - 10 JANUARY 1968.  
(PERSONAL EXPERIENCE OF A COMPANY COMMANDER AND  
ASSISTANT BRIGADE S2.)



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### INTRODUCTION

In the southern regions of Vietnam lies one of the major river delta areas of the world. The Mekong Delta, "the largest in southeast Asia, is a low, flat, and very fertile plain. It is poorly drained and crisscrossed by tributaries of the Mekong and Bassac Rivers and an intricate network of canals and smaller streams." (3:2) The bulk of the Vietnamese population and agricultural output is located within this Delta. This area with its large population, agricultural potential, and vast water complex is of strategic and tactical importance to both the Viet Cong and the free world forces. In the early 1960's as United States involvement in Vietnam grew, it became apparent to military planners that a riverine force was needed in the Mekong Delta. The planners realized that operations involving a riverine doctrine must be initiated. "Where navigable waterways exist, and roads do not, or when roads are interdicted and hostile forces use navigable waterways to supplement or replace road movement, a doctrine and strategy of interdiction and control of the waterways becomes decisive." (1:46) The planners felt that riverine operations in the Delta could and would control these essential lanes of communication and the land around them.

## THE HISTORY OF RIVERINE OPERATIONS

Riverine warfare is by no means a new type of military operation. The US Marine Corps conducted riverine operations as early as 1837 in the Florida Everglades. The US Army and Navy conducted riverine operations along the James and Mississippi Rivers during the Civil War. The Marines used this concept again in the Nicaraguan campaign in the 1920's. The British employed riverine operations along the Nile in 1898; the Japanese along the Yangtze from 1937 to 1945. More recently, the French Naval Assault Divisions (Dinassaults) fought the Viet Minh in the Tonkin and Mekong Delta areas from 1946 to 1954. The Dinassaults employed heavily armed and armored flotillas to conduct these operations. From 1954 until the advent of the Mobile Riverine Force, riverine operations in Vietnam were conducted by ARVN units and Navy River Assault Groups (RAGs).

### THE FORMATION OF THE MOBILE RIVERINE FORCE

On 1 September 1966 the Navy commissioned River Assault Flotilla One. This flotilla was to be the naval component of the Mobile Riverine Force. Simultaneously, the 9th Infantry Division was undergoing training at Fort Riley, Kansas, for deployment to Vietnam. The Army earmarked one brigade of the 9th Division as the Army component of the Mobile Riverine Force. The brigade, the 2nd Brigade, was organized in February, 1966, at Fort Riley, Kansas. The first inductees arrived in May and immediately

commenced training. The units of the Brigade completed training in December, 1966, and deployed in January, 1967, arriving at Camp Martin Cox (Bearcat), Vietnam, on 31 January 1967. Elements of the Brigade, one battalion, commenced riverine operations in the Rung Sat Special Zone during February, 1967. The Brigade during this period worked with advance elements of the Navy component. Elements of the 2nd Brigade and Navy River Assault Flotilla One had conducted continuous riverine operations since February, 1967, although the Mobile Riverine Force was officially launched on 2 June 1967.

Thus, the Mobile Riverine Force (MRF) was a combined Army-Navy strike force unique in its concept of operations. The primary combat unit of the MRF was the 2nd Brigade of the 9th Infantry Division. This unit was supported by the Navy's Task Force 117 and artillery batteries from the 9th Division.

#### NARRATION

The mission of the combat element, the 2nd Brigade, was typical of the mission assigned any infantry brigade. Riverine warfare differed from ground warfare chiefly in environment. The tactics employed in ground operations generally applied to the tactics used by the MRF although additional considerations, procedures, and organization were required when the combat unit used naval ships as a base from which to launch operations. Employment of forces in this manner was characterized by a rapid

landing, combat actions of short duration ashore, and a planned withdrawal. This type operation, similar in many respects to an amphibious raid, was launched from inland waterways and used for "search and clear" and "search and destroy" missions. Another type riverine operation not used by the MRF involved the launching and movement of troops ashore for sustained combat actions. These riverine operations, though much like amphibious operations, differed in that operations were conducted continuously from naval vessels and were launched normally from inland waterways.

#### THE COMMAND RELATIONSHIP

The command structure within the MRF was based on a close support relationship. This method provided control of the riverine operation by mutual cooperation and coordination with the Navy element providing close support to the Army element. Neither of the component commanders, an Army colonel or Navy captain, was designated as commander of the force. Army elements were under the control of the Army commander; Navy elements were under the control of the Naval commander. Problems that affected the entire Force were discussed and a joint decision reached. Each component had its own staff. Staff functions, like the command functions, depended on mutual cooperation and coordination. The Army and Navy staffs jointly prepared an operation plan and published an order although the flotilla commander published a naval support annex

specifying missions for naval elements. Both commanders, Army and Navy, signed the order. The method of command relationship employed by the MRF, while demonstrating that such a relationship can be effective, was dependent on the personality of each commander. In essence it worked because the commanders wanted it to work. Perhaps a better method of command relationship would be that of having a joint task force commander, preferably an Army commander, thereby providing unity of command.

### THE ORGANIZATION

Before discussing the organization of the MRF it must be pointed out that such organization depended essentially on mission, enemy, troops available, and terrain. Enemy forces within the Delta ranged from lightly armed guerrilla forces and political infrastructure to main force Viet Cong battalions. Terrain throughout the Delta was characterized by rice paddies which were inundated most of the year. Monsoon rains and tides had a great effect on this environment. The number of troops available in most cases was limited to those embarked on naval vessels although other troops were available at times. The Army mission, however, was the deciding factor which influenced the organization and strength of the Force. The Army mission included:

1. Planning operations in coordination with CTF 117.
2. Conducting operations.
3. Defending the Mobile Riverine Base.

4. Coordinating all supporting fires.

The Navy mission included:

1. Planning operations in coordination with the 2nd Brigade.
2. Providing close support to the Army.
3. Supporting defense of MRB within their capability.
4. Providing logistical support for the Force.

Based on the above factors, the task organization of the MRF was a balance of combat, combat support, and combat service support elements.

The Army forces afloat, two of the Brigade's infantry battalions, provided the waterborne combat force. This force was easily augmented by making Navy craft and helicopter support available to land based forces. The land based forces available consisted of ARVN units, Vietnamese Marine Corps units, and other US units. The battalions afloat were locally reorganized due to the unique mission of the force and limited number of berthing spaces aboard ship. The Reconnaissance and Surveillance Company (Echo Company) of each battalion was strengthened by personnel and equipment transferred from the headquarters and line companies of that battalion. This augmented the fire power of the R&S Companies and created two additional rifle platoons. This augmentation allowed the R&S Companies to defend the Mobile Riverine Base (a base consisting of troop ships, a supply ship, and a repair ship) and gave the base defense forces an indirect fire capability with the 81mm and 4.2 inch mortars. It also provided the necessary security for the artillery fire support base.



Combat support and combat service support furnished by the 9th Division consisted of two artillery batteries, normal engineer, medical, supply, and maintenance personnel plus an LCM-8 boat company.

Naval forces in the MRF were organized to give ground units an afloat base facility and furnish them combat support and combat service support. The two major naval units of the flotilla which provided this support were the river assault squadrons and the river support squadron.

The river assault squadrons, RAS9 and RAS11, were composed of troop carriers, command craft, gunboats, escort boats, and refuelers. These craft are shown and described in detail on inclosures 1 through 5. The river assault squadrons provided command and control facilities to embarked personnel, defended against ambush and water mines, and provided gunboats with direct and indirect fire weapons in addition to the transporting of troops and equipment. The assault squadron was further broken down into two river assault divisions (RAD). Each of these assault divisions was capable of providing the support mentioned above to an infantry battalion. Normally, one RAD supported each infantry battalion while the two remaining RADs were used for base security and MRF reserve. The commander of each river assault division, a Navy lieutenant, normally coordinated and worked closely with the infantry commander he supported during the mission.

The second major Navy support unit was the river support squadron. This squadron provided the base for

the Force and consisted of barracks ships, a supply ship, and a repair ship. The support squadron provided:

- "1. Billets for ground force and naval personnel.
2. Command and control facilities for the Force.
3. Maintenance facilities for naval and ground force units.
4. Logistical facilities and support for naval and ground force units.
5. Supporting means to defend the afloat base." (1:49)

The base provided by the support squadron was comparable to that of any land base. In addition to berthing areas, the base provided office, mess, postal, post exchange (ship's store), entertainment, medical, and religious facilities to embarked personnel. The barracks, supply, and repair ships are shown and described in inclosures 6 through 9.

The organization of the MRF was in essence a balance of Army and Navy forces, designed for a riverine environment. It was a balance of combat, combat support, and combat service support elements. The combat forces, provided by the 2nd Brigade and augmented as necessary by land based units, conducted the ground operations. Combat support and combat service support was provided by both Army and Navy elements and warrants further explanation.

#### COMBAT SUPPORT

Combat support within a riverine environment was essentially the same as that found in a normal ground

environment although the lack of dry land, wide dispersion of troops, and the limited ground mobility within the riverine environment demanded special considerations.

Fire support, always invaluable to combat units, became even more essential in a riverine environment. Wide dispersions of units and the limited mobility of foot troops often precluded mutual reinforcement. Within this environment fire support became extremely important. Fire support was provided to the MRF by artillery units, river assault divisions, tactical air, and Army aviation.

Artillery fire support provided the MRF consisted of two artillery batteries augmented when possible by other US and ARVN artillery units. The artillery batteries in support of the MRF were barge-mounted M-102 howitzers. This mounting of the howitzers was necessary due to the lack of dry land within the Delta and the lack of road networks to move the artillery if dry land were located. Also, although a 105mm howitzer and its prime mover could be transported on an ATC, river banks made it extremely difficult and at times impossible to off-load. The barge-mounted artillery solved these problems. Wherever the infantry went, the artillery went also. As its base was already set, it needed only to occupy a position a very short time prior to the landing of the troops. Security, always important to the fire support base, was facilitated by the barge-mounted artillery. Troops to secure the

base needed only to protect one side of the base as the other sides were bounded by water which was patrolled by Navy craft. Security troops were transported on the artillery barges and their prime mover, an LCM-8, or they rode the ATCs that patrolled the water areas around the base.

Artillery support was still limited to the 105mm howitzer unless heavier caliber artillery units could support from land bases. Also, artillery fires were less accurate initially due to lack of survey and meteorological data. It might be mentioned that the 4.2 inch mortars, used primarily for the Mobile Riverine Base defense, were barge mounted and were employed in the same manner. The barges allowed the artillery to carry a large supply of ammunition, which was normally replenished by aerial or waterborne delivery means. Observation and adjustment of artillery fires were accomplished by aerial observers due to the lack of commanding terrain.

River assault division fire support consisted of direct and indirect fire support. The division could deliver direct fire with 40mm guns, 20mm cannons, 50 caliber machine guns, 30 caliber machine guns, and M-79 grenade launchers. Indirect fire could be provided by the 81mm mortars, located on each monitor and ASPB. The river assault division used its fire for interdiction, harassing, reconnaissance by fire, or neutralization purposes. Each division was capable of firing an effective beach preparation prior to the disembarking of the

troops and augmenting the infantry weapons when necessary. The close coordination effected by the RAD and infantry commanders prior to the operation allowed each force to provide mutual support. The fire support provided by the river assault division was dependent upon available waterways and the tides. Only the indirect fires of the division could be employed as the ground troops moved inland. As the tide moved out the division was forced to move to a main channel until the water line rose again. Each RAD carried sufficient ammunition to sustain itself and to provide a limited resupply to ground units.

Close air support was provided to the ground forces of the MRF using the standard in-country procedures and principles. Preplanned and immediate air requests followed standard channels. Air strikes were normally controlled by forward air controllers. Close air support armament consisted of bombs, OBUs, vulcan guns, and napalm. The effect of napalm was severely limited by the wet environment and the OBUs, which had a high dud ratio, were of limited value. Targets were located by using grid coordinates although polar coordinates were as effective due to the open terrain, waterway intersections, and river bends. Friendly troop elements normally marked their positions by using smoke, flares, panels, and other methods.

Army aviation fire support was effective in the riverine environment. Helicopters, normally several light fire teams, were used to prep assault beaches, landing

zones, and cover the movement to or from the operation area. Aerial fire support also supplemented artillery and tac air when units were in contact. Aerial armament included machine guns, 40mm, and 2.75 rocket fire.

Aerial fire support was used to cover slick ships while they performed chemical missions. These included the employment of CS canisters and people-sniffer missions.

Engineer support was another supporting arm that proved vital to the accomplishment of the MRF mission. The engineer mission did not change, but the accomplishment of assigned tasks with little or no heavy equipment posed challenging problems. The engineer tasks of construction, destruction, reconnaissance, and planning at times became essential to the accomplishment of the infantry mission. The destruction of obstacles, bridges, and clearing of mines, particularly those in the streams and canals which are routes into the objective area, took on a new importance. Engineer reconnaissance missions of bridge clearance, load classification, waterway depth, and landing sites became extremely important. These unique assignments, added to the day-to-day construction of fortifications and bridges, and the destruction of mines, booby traps, tunnels, and caches, made the engineer support vital to the MRF.

Communications within the MRF, and riverine operations in general, required certain techniques not used in normal Army operations. Emphasis on command and control and the widespread areas of operation required special communication considerations.

At company level the equipment and procedures employed were essentially the same as used by other ground units. Constant maintenance and waterproofing of the light man-packed radios were required because of the difficult and inundated terrain. In addition to a thorough knowledge of the Army communications network, the riverine company commander had to know the naval networks and facilities available aboard the command and control boats of the river assault squadron. The two COBs in each river assault squadron were used as the battalion main, alternate, or forward command post. Normally it was employed as a forward CP, relaying information to the ground units from the main CP or relaying information to the main CP from the ground units. Each COB had HF (AM SSB), VHF (FM) voice, and UHF (AM) voice radios. The battalion commander also used command and control helicopters to control his battalion.

The afloat bases, the barracks ships which housed the brigade and battalion CPs, required special communication considerations. Sufficient equipment was necessary to provide communications for the Army and Navy commanders. This required augmentation of brigade and battalion signal sections. Also, a thorough knowledge by Army personnel of naval communication equipment, procedures, and networks, was essential. In addition, the widespread areas of operation encompassed by the MRF, required extensive signal planning and coordination with higher, lower, and

adjacent units, and with advisory teams, host country, and other free world forces. This planning included the locating of relay stations and area signal center platoons to provide adequate facilities to the Force.

To provide the necessary communications each APB, self-propelled barrack ship, had UHF (AM RATT) sets, HF (AM SSB) voice radios, UHF (AM) radios, VHF (FM) voice radios, and VHF (FM) RWI or retransmission radios.

### COMBAT SERVICE SUPPORT

Like combat support, combat service support, within the riverine environment adhered to standard procedures but with variations. The basic difference was the use of ships and other craft to provide logistical support. This employment of ships and other craft was necessitated by the limited number of primary highways and the lack of suitable land areas upon which to establish logistical installations. Supply, medical, and maintenance support in the MRF was oriented to support the afloat base and the operations launched from these bases.

The two LSTs of the river support squadron provided the necessary supply facilities for the Mobile Riverine Force. In addition to the normal resupply missions, one LST stored a portion of the afloat unit's basic load and a backup supply of dry cargo. The LST maintained a 30 day supply of class I and a 10 day supply of other classes. Every 7 days the second LST departed Vung Tau and proceeded to the MRB to replenish the ships of



the base. The Navy component managed the logistical support but the Army S-4 monitored the support provided. Provisions were available to resupply the MRB by LCU or helicopter if required.

Ground forces were supplied by ATC or helicopter during operations. The method of resupply depended on the position of the unit. Helicopters were used when maneuver elements were inland, and ATCs when the elements were near water. Each ATC deployed to the forward area with a three day supply of "C" rations and an assorted load of class V. Water was carried aboard the ATCs in metal water cans or plastic containers. Mogas and JP-4 were carried to the forward area aboard ATCs using 500 gallon collapsible tanks. This provided resupply of class III to organic Army equipment and supporting helicopter units. Plastic assault boats and Boston whalers were carried on the ATCs to resupply units with ammunition, rations, and water when waterways were too shallow for the ATCs to navigate.

#### MAINTENANCE

Preventive maintenance was of paramount importance within the MRF. The riverine environment, with its inundated areas, caused rapid deterioration of equipment. Organizational maintenance was performed after each operation on weapons, communication equipment, ammunition, outboard motors, compasses, and other equipment. Equipment not cleaned and lubricated after each operation was likely to be inoperative. Ammunition, including

M-16 rounds, had to be cleaned after each operation or it would malfunction. The organizational maintenance problems were compounded by the limited space available for troops to clean and maintain their equipment. Inspections had to be held in cramped quarters.

Direct maintenance support was provided by a forward support company of the 9th Division berthed aboard the river support squadron's repair ship. Its capability was limited to those items which could be repaired rapidly and without use of heavy equipment. Facilities were available to repair small arms, communication equipment, outboard motors, and generators. Items which could not be repaired aboard the repair ship were evacuated to the division base. Contact teams were available to repair equipment in the forward areas but this was normally limited to helicopter repair. Unservicable equipment was destroyed or evacuated.

#### MEDICAL

Medical considerations within the riverine environment were directed toward personal hygiene, dysentery, insect bites, fungus, and immersion foot, in addition to combat casualties. Malaria and cholera were potential threats. Infected insect bites, fungus, and immersion foot can, unless properly treated, reduce troop strengths to a low level. During one month of 1968, the 9th Infantry Division experienced over 2000 cases of foot diseases, resulting in a loss of over 6000 man hours.

Medical facilities aboard each APB within the MRB provided for the treatment of environmental casualties and operating facilities, although limited, for the treatment of combat casualties. These facilities were staffed by Army and Navy personnel. Medical treatment was limited by the small operating rooms and recuperation areas. Treatment of the severely injured was limited to that necessary to prepare the patient for further evacuation.

The Army commander was responsible for medical service when units were performing combat operations away from the MRB. Each battalion used an ATC or an ATC-H as its forward aid station. This aid station was normally staffed by the battalion doctor and medical aidmen. Casualties could be transported to the aid ATC by helicopter, plastic assault boats, or foot if the aid station were nearby. Treatment was limited to lifesaving procedures prior to the arrival of an aeromedical evacuation helicopter. Helicopters landed on the "baby aircraft carrier" normally positioned near the aid ATC (see inclosure 5). The "dust off" ship transported the patient to an APB, MASH, or evacuation hospital.

#### PLANNING

Offensive operations, normally "search and clear" and "search and destroy," were conducted by the MRF under varied terrain conditions and against enemy forces of different capabilities. Terrain, normally inundated,

was greatly affected by seasonal and tidal changes. Enemy forces ranged from hamlet and village guerrilla elements to main force Viet Cong battalions. The success of each operation depended on the ability of friendly forces to control and coordinate movement and firepower. Detailed planning was necessary.

Planning was based on the ground tactical plan and was developed using a reverse planning sequence. The ground plan was based on mission, enemy situation, troops available, terrain, time, and space. The ground tactical plan used by the MRF was normally designed to encircle the enemy. The tactical plan set forth the task organization, mission, and control measures. Control measures included boundaries, terrain objectives, and other standard control measures. Terrain measures were used although the enemy was the main objective. The scheme of maneuver was designed to take advantage of waterways, allowing the ground units to capitalize on the support of the naval craft.

The landing plan was based on the ground tactical plan. It was designed to disembark the maneuver elements in the most advantageous location for mission accomplishment. Considerations included the landing time and the method of landing to be used. If landing sites were limited, forces had to beach one by one or in small groups. Night landings achieved surprise but the restrictions on control and loss of naval direct supporting fires had to be considered.

The water movement plan was based on the landing plan. It was prepared by the Navy commander and staff in cooperation with Army planners. It included the composition of the waterborne force, serials, routes, security, formations, command and control measures, and counterambush measures. Normally, mine sweep and security craft preceded the main body to reconnoiter and clear the water route. The serials moved in column based on beach time and location.

The loading plan was based on the water movement plan. Naval craft and the ground elements to be transported aboard each craft were designated. The loading plan, by designating naval and ground units, allowed maximum coordination between commanders. Normally troops would form to board the ATCs 15 to 30 minutes prior to the specified loading time. This allowed the unit commander and the loading officer time to check men and equipment and pre-position units. The loading plan also allowed the positioning of heavy and bulky equipment aboard their carriers prior to the actual troop loading.

#### ANALYSIS AND CRITICISM

The Mobile Riverine Force was established to conduct riverine operations. The doctrine followed was that of interdiction and control of waterways and the surrounding land areas. To accomplish this riverine mission a Navy flotilla and an Army brigade were united. The riverine concept was not new, but it posed challenging problems

to the Army and Navy elements of the MRF. Like most new or unfamiliar concepts, the tactics, techniques, and equipment had to be tested, modified, and if necessary, discarded. At its inception the force was faced with a myriad of obstacles. Most of these obstacles were overcome through coordination, experience and understanding. Some of these problems were:

1. Shipboard life, with its limited space, was unfamiliar to Army personnel.
2. Troop needs were unfamiliar to naval personnel.
3. The riverine environment was unfamiliar to the Force, posing medical and maintenance problems.
4. No SOPs had been established to cut down problem areas.
5. The large areas of operation created challenges in the fields of planning, liaison, supply, communication, and intelligence.
6. Ground forces were not trained or organized to operate in a riverine environment.
7. Special equipment had to be developed to employ the Force effectively.
8. The command structure within the Force did not provide unity of command.

Workable solutions to these challenges were developed via training, coordination, experience, and mutual understanding.

Army personnel adjusted to shipboard life with training and experience. The confinement of shipboard life was eased by the periodic rotation of the battalions to the Brigade's base at Dong Tam. Troops were given passes in Vung Tau during "dry out" periods. Beer parties were held in Vung Tau and on the pontoons beside each ship. Movies were shown nightly for troop entertainment. Buildings were constructed on the pontoons to store bulky equipment. Cans were provided on the pontoons for ammunition.

Medical problems received special attention. Salves were provided to the combat troops for protection of their feet, and foot inspections were held after every operation. After each operation, troops were given a "dry out" period. The rotation of the battalions to the brigade base aided in the curtailment of foot disease.

Maintenance of equipment was stressed. During "dry out" periods, weapons, ammunition, radios, and motors were maintained. Weapons had to be dried, oiled, and inspected. Communication equipment had to be dried, repaired, and checked. Even ammunition had to be cleaned and lightly oiled.

The command structure, though not providing unity of command, worked effectively. The system worked because of the cooperative attitude of each commander. This cooperative attitude was reflected in the mutual assistance and close coordination of the staffs. Plans and orders were prepared by both staffs and co-signed by

the commanders. Both commanders went forward into the operational area. Standard operating procedures were developed and a MRF SOP was written. This SOP, signed by both commanders, alleviated many problem areas and was a useful guide to new personnel to the Force.

Brigade and battalion communication sections were augmented and Army operators trained to operate Navy equipment. Extensive planning and coordination were effected with higher, lower, and adjacent units, and with advisory teams, host country, and other FVMAF. Relay stations and area signal center platoons were located to provide adequate signal facilities for the Force.

A special intelligence team was established to provide combat intelligence to the MRF. This team satellited on US/ARVN facilities in the area of operation and passed intelligence information to the Force. The team processed detainees and captured material. In addition to its intelligence mission, the team provided liaison between the Force and host country units.

The Mobile Riverine Force has revitalized the riverine concept. It has developed techniques, organizations, and equipment that may be used in other trouble areas. It has demonstrated the ability of a force to operate within a riverine environment and gain control of waterways and their surrounding land areas.



## TRAINING IMPLICATIONS

The training implications derived from ground operations by MFR units were similar to those experienced by other units operating in the Republic of Vietnam. However, the challenges posed by riverine operations and the solutions developed provided unique training implications and merit attention.

1. Coordination between Army and Navy leaders should be effected prior to embarkation to spot possible trouble areas and to explain component needs.
2. Army personnel should receive training in Navy customs and procedures prior to embarkation.
3. Army personnel should receive training in loading naval craft prior to actual operations.
4. Training of units designated for a particular area should be conducted in surroundings similar to those that will actually be experienced.
5. Special emphasis should be placed on organizational maintenance.
6. Organizations often must be changed locally to accomplish the mission better.
7. Special equipment should be developed whenever the need arises. The development of artillery barges, AFC-Hs and medical aid boats are examples of such special equipment.
8. When liaison with distant units is essential, special teams and communication techniques must be

developed. A special intelligence team was established to provide liaison, communication, and intelligence collection between the MRF and US/ARVN units.

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CPT INF

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**ARMORED TROOP CARRIER(ATC)**

<u>CHARACTERISTICS</u>		<u>ARMAMENT</u>	
Length overall	56'	20mm	1
Beam	17' 6"	.50 caliber	2
Draft	3' 4"	.30 caliber	4
Engine (Diesel)	2	M-18 Grenade launcher	2
Crew	7	M-79 Grenade launcher	2
Speed (full load)	8 Kts.	Small arms	Various
		Side arms	Various

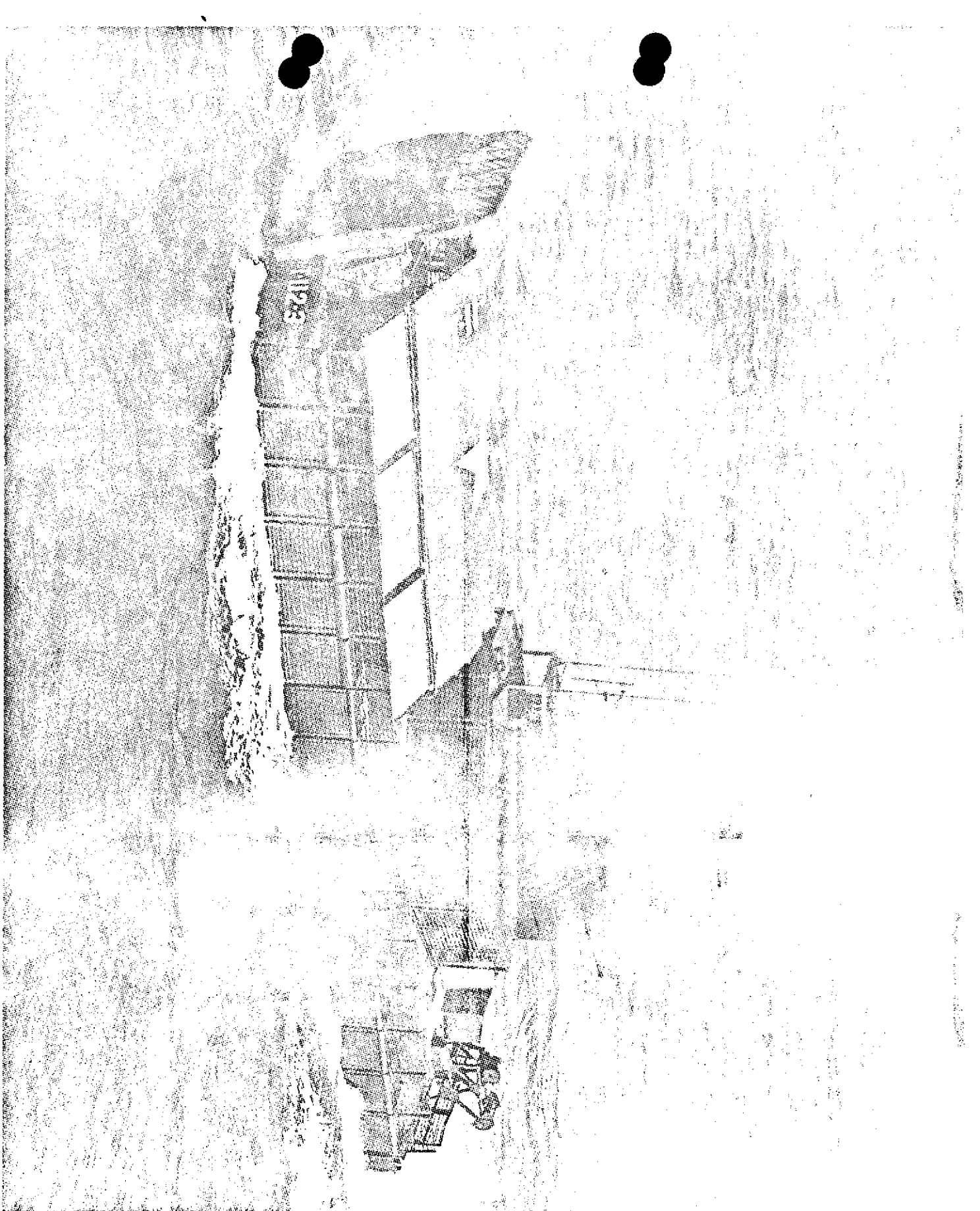
A miniature LST, the ATC's primary mission is transporting troops into combat areas. The ATC can transport one 105mm howitzer and prime mover, one M-113 APC (Armored Personnel Carrier), or forty personnel.

To execute its prime mission with maximum effectiveness and minimum risk, the basic boat, an LCM-6, has been considerably modified. It is armored and equipped with mine sweeping equipment.

Communications gear in each boat includes one field radio and two short-range radios with air control type headsets.

A crew of seven, boat captain, coxswain, engineer, radioman, two seamen and one fireman man the ATC.

Inclosure 1



**Inclosure 1**

## COMMAND AND COMMUNICATIONS BOAT (CCB)

### CHARACTERISTICS

### ARMAMENT

Length overall	60' 6"	40mm cannon	1
Beam	17' 6"	20mm cannon	1
Draft	3' 5"	.50 caliber	3
Engines, diesel	2	.30 caliber	2
Crew	11	M-18 Grenade launcher	2
Speed	8 Kts.	M-79 Grenade launcher	3
		Small arms	Various
		Side arms	Various

The Command and Communications Boat is a floating command post, whose primary mission is to provide command and communication facilities for the ground force commander and for the Boat Group Commander.

The CCB has sufficient armament to provide fire support when necessary.

To execute its primary mission the CCB carries a pack type field radio and nine permanently mounted short range radios. In addition to being able to control all of the assault boats, the CCB can call in air support when needed.

A crew of eleven mans the CCB.

Inclosure 2

**Inclosure 2**

## LOM MONITOR

### CHARACTERISTICS

### ARMAMENT

Length overall	60' 6"	40mm Cannon	1
Beam	17' 6"	20mm Cannon	1
Draft	3' 6"	81mm Mortar	1
Speed	8 Kts.	.50 caliber	2
Engines (Diesel)	2	.30 caliber	4
Crew	11	M-18 Grenade launcher	2
		Small Arms	Various
		Side Arms	Various

The "battleship" of the small craft fleet, the Monitor, is used as a heavy fire support ship. The Monitor has more fire power than any of the other small craft in the flotilla. Its primary mission involves fire support during water movement and ground operations.

The Monitor carries one portable and two short range radies, and the special side armor and awnings.

The cross-trained eleven man crew consists of a boat captain, coxswain, radioman, two gunners, an engineer and five seamen and firemen to serve as gunners assistants.

Inclosure 3





**Inclosure 3**

## ASSAULT SUPPORT PATROL BOAT (ASPB)

### CHARACTERISTICS

### ARMAMENT

Length overall	50' 1½"	20mm Cannon	1
Beam	13' 8½"	81mm Mortar	1
Engines (Diesel)	2	7.62 or 50-Caliber Machinegun	1-twin mount
Crew	5	MK-18 Grenade launcher	2
Speed	15 Kts.		

Known as the "destroyer" of the small craft fleet, the ASPB has as its initial task, the job of escort and protector of the slower ATC during the troop transport phase. It provides primary mine countermeasures for the River Assault Squadrons.

The ASPB is also used for blocking and interception in the waterways around the area of operations and for afloat base security, patrol, and escort.

A boat captain, radio operator, engineer and two non-rated men make up the crew of an ASPB. Each crew member is cross-trained to do any job on the boat.

Inclosure 4

1-286

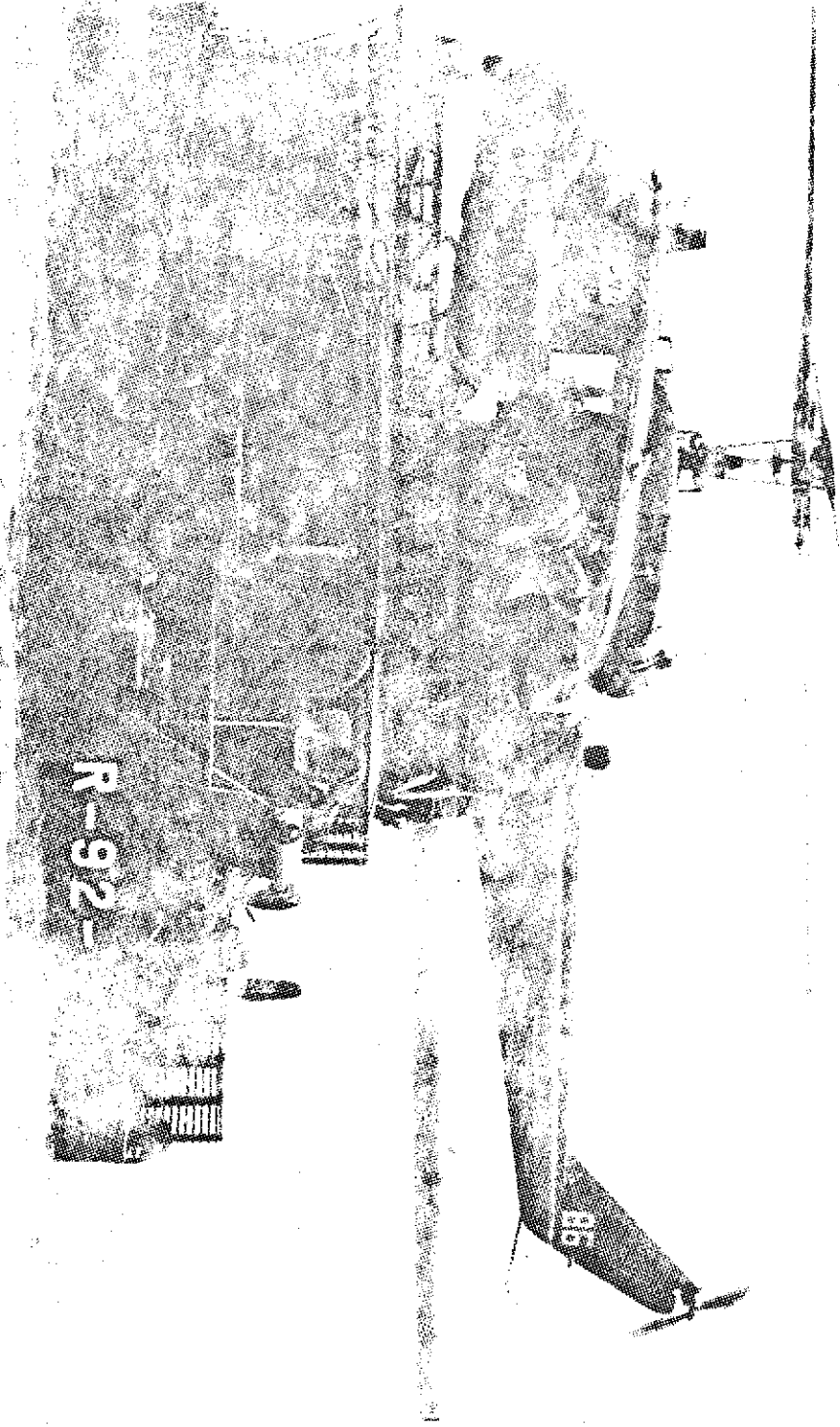
Inclosure 4

## ARMORED TROOP CARRIER - HELICOPTER

This "baby aircraft carrier," a converted ATC, was developed to provide evacuation of casualties from the area of operations. Its primary mission was that of an aid boat. It also served as a refueling depot for support helicopters.

The landing area is constructed from pipes and a 16 by 16 foot steel mat.

Inclosure 5



**Inclosure 5**

## SELF PROPELLED BARRACKS SHIP (APB)

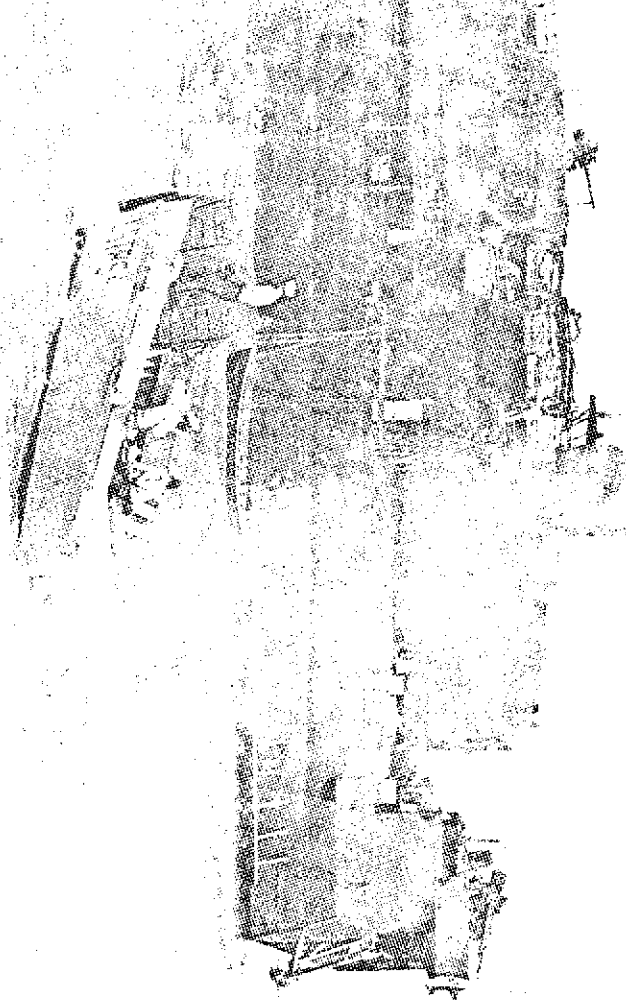
The USS Benewah and the USS Colleton, both APBs (self propelled auxillary barracks ships) have the distinction of being the only ones of their kind on active duty in the Navy.

These ships house over 1100 sailors, soldiers, and officers and serve as the center of operations in support of riverine assault operations.

In addition to their berthing, messing, and office spaces, these floating bases have a storage capacity for a 30 day supply of fresh, frozen, and dehydrated food. They maintain evaporators that produce up to 40,000 gallons of fresh water a day, and they provide a sixteen-bed sick bay complete with treatment and x-ray rooms. Also provided are a dental office, bacteriological laboratory, pharmacy, two-table operating room with a sterilizer and autoclave, laundry, library, tailor shop, and air conditioning. Both ships have a draft of 10 feet 10 inches and a top speed of 12 knots.

An APB is armed with two 3"/50 caliber guns, two 40mm quad-mounted antiaircraft batteries, eight .50 caliber Browning machine guns, ten .30 caliber machine guns and various small arms.

Inclosure 6



**Inclosure 6**

## APL-26

The APL-26 is a barracks barge that accomodates over 800 men of the Mobile Riverine Force. APLs, Auxiliary Personnel Lighters, have normally been used in the Navy as temporary homes for ships in overhaul or bases under construction. The APL-26 is the only craft of its kind currently in use in a combatant task force. Technically the APL-26 is not a commissioned vessel. She is carried in a special category as "in service".

Like the APBs, the APL-26's primary mission is to berth and to feed one infantry battalion and one river assault division. Unlike the APBs, APL-26 has no means of propulsion. She does, however, have two boilers for hot water and steam, two evaporators which can produce 24,000 gallons of potable water per day, 13 air conditioners, and two generators. Her facilities also include a minor surgery ward, a sick bay for 10 patients, and a four bed isolation ward.

Inclosure 7



USS ASKARI ARL-30  
LANDING CRAFT REPAIR SHIP

CHARACTERISTICS

Length overall	328 feet
Beam	50 feet
Draft	14 feet
Speed	10.6 knots
Engine (Diesel)	2
Complement	15 off. 232 enl.

USS Askari was built by the Chicago Bridge and Iron Works in Seneca, Illinois, in 1944 and was commissioned on 15 March 1945 as LST-1131. Soon afterward she was decommissioned and fitted out as a landing craft repair ship by the Merrill Steves Dry Dock and Repair Company in Jacksonville, Florida, and was recommissioned on 23 July 1945 as USS Askari (ARL-30).

On 21 March 1956 Askari was again decommissioned and remained in the reserve fleet until the fall of 1966 when she was recommissioned to provide for the repairs of the various boats assigned to River Assault Flotilla One.

Askari bears the name of a character in Asiatic mythology. In the Mohammedan mythology of Persia, Askari personifies "the soldier."

Inclosure 8



**Inclosure 8**

### SUPPORT LST (1156 CLASS)

The support LST remains at the Mobile Riverine Base to provide Army and Navy operating elements with bulk supplies. Using her bow ramps and an alongside pontoon, she breaks down pallet-size loads to fit any need. In addition to the logistic role, the support LST provides berthing for one River Assault Division, and various Army detachment units. She receives her supplies weekly from the resupply LST listed below.

Length overall	384 feet	Fuel capacity	274,436 gals.
Beam	55.5 feet	Full load cargo	1,580 tons
Draft	16.2 feet	Tank deck, sq. ft.	8,400
Engine, diesel	2	Helo landing pad	1
Complement	10 off. 147 enl.	Speed	9 kts.

### RESUPPLY LST (542 CLASS)

The resupply LST makes weekly runs from a major resupply point to the Mobile Riverine Base. <sup>ITS</sup> ~~It's~~ primary mission is to carry supplies to the ships of the MRB. In an average load, the 542-class LST carries over 250 different items.

Length overall	328 feet	Fuel capacity	274,436 gals.
Beam	50 feet	Full load cargo	1,580 tons
Draft	14 feet	Tank deck, sq. ft.	8,400
Engine, diesel	2	Helo landing pad	1
Complement	10 off. 147 enl.	Speed	9 kts.