



VIETNAM

NEPTUNE BOAT PATROL, 1968-1969

BROWN WATER SP

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The above graphic-image is incredible because it shows how vulnerable we were, especially since I was on LARCs a few times and V.C. could have easily placed a limpet mine on the side. We did have sappers hit some ships while Mike Daoust (*RIP Mike Daoust, 2002*) and I were there in 68/69, but the ships were at the South end of the peninsula, not up where we were by Myca Village, the Naval facility across from Myca where Jim got in his shooting, or near our runways.

Mike was good at everything and could handle an M16 like it was an extension of his arms and hands. He was incredibly accurate with a grenade launcher and soon worked his way to a position as grenadier on a boat that patrolled the waters of Cam Ranh Bay AB. While working the Neptune boats, Mike was commended numerous times for capturing suspected Viet Cong after he had sunk their sampans... all during the night which was so dark you couldn't see your own hands.

Mike was really good at football in the sand and making sure there was enough beer for everyone. He was a great friend to everyone in our unit, and when it came time to relax, he played a mean 'air guitar.'

As things go in wars, we lost friends. We also said goodbye to our brothers as they left to return to what we called the World, knowing that we would probably never see each other again. Mike left Vietnam in January, 1969, and goodbyes were tough, but you got through it because it happened almost every day. Brian and I lost touch with Mike. In fact, none of us had contact with each other until 1997 when Mike made it possible through his dream of the Vietnam Security Police Association.

In 1969, amphibious *skycops* aboard the LARC [Steve consider adding a comment about the good security LARCs did, such as 'deterred sappers, sunk sampans, took in to custody suspicious persons, etc].

Cruising up an enclave with banyon forests on both sides made us feel very vulnerable. There were mangroves in the area as well as reeds, making it quite difficult to see everything. If there was some distinct suspicion about VC in the mangroves, illumination rounds were sent up in an effort to help the crew on the Neptune boats see into the swamp/grove. The XM148 grenade launcher was the weapon of choice from the crew in those areas providing a QRT or observation post was not

behind or near the area. The thing that worried me the most was being backlit by the illumination mortar rounds just as you depicted. Sometimes it was literally so dark you couldn't see your hand in front of your eyes. We also could launch our own flares into suspect areas. Now and then, sampans were sunk by us, and Vietnamese taken in to custody.

Pop flares, and M16 rounds were fired in warning. A sampan was sunk at a distance with a grenade from the XM148 mounted under an M16. Both SP crew members had XM148's and a lot of ammo that was both issued (pop flares, grenades and scrounged (.223). Those Vietnamese captured had already jumped into the water, were not wounded, and did not have weapons or explosives at the time of their capture. Our M16 fire caused them to surrender. We did not have the ability to dive into the area for evidence, so their claim was that they were just *poor fishermen* who drifted into the area after curfew. The QC took them after capture and docking at Myca. Don't know what happened after that. If they had been captured by the *Koreans*, they would have used "other" means of interrogation.

The inland water where we patrolled in the LARCs was actually brown or greenish brown as in *brown-water Navy*, not a pristine blue. The South China Sea was pristine but only from March/April to September. The water in other months from October to February was consistently murky due to churning waves from heavy tides and monsoons. We did not patrol in the South China Sea or "blue-water Navy" area as that was handled by Navy *Swift Boats* using call-signs like *Halo Shampoo*.



The water was not too deep where we were, although Cam Ranh Bay AB is the largest deep water port in Asia (China Sea side at South end of Peninsula). There were sandbars throughout the bay area. I remember being in water then driving up onto a sandbar during low tide and jumping off to take cover under the LARC because of mortar illumination tubes coming down all around us during a poorly planned show of force over the bay area.

We would cruise up the coast from and around Cam Ranh Bay AB, and often in to jungle like mangrove forests. If there was some distinct suspicion about VC in the mangroves, illumination rounds were sent up in an effort to help the crew on the Neptune boats see into the swamp/grove. The XM148 grenade launcher was the weapon of choice from the crew in those areas providing a QRT or observation post was not behind or near the area. The thing that worried me the most was being backlit by the illumination mortar rounds just as you depicted.

The boats we used in 68/69 had wheels on the bottom, were painted battleship gray, and called L.A.R.C. s or Light Amphibious Reconnaissance Craft. The LARC could be driven on land or beach and immediately

into the water and were piloted by Army personnel in 68/69.

The LARCs were larger than the *Boston Whaler* with a larger crew that had at least two or three SPs with SP radios, two Army personnel who were pilot and co-pilot RTO with Army radios that were both installed in the cabin and portable (PRC-25), and at least one QC who has his own communications.

Myca Village had a monastery that had legitimate priests, but was also suspected of harboring VC for years. We had several sweeps and Spooky missions in the area between the monastery and the Naval Facility while I was there in 68/69, the last one occurring the night before I left and was visiting friends at the Naval Facility where Jim was in his shooting. Directly across from the monastery and Myca Village was an Army aviation unit at Don Ba Tin as well as several areas for the ROK White Horse Regiment HQ, US Army 5th Special Forces Jump School for ARVN personnel, the Tactical Operations Center for the Army on that side of the bay, as well as other support units.



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