

WAR IN THE SHALLOWS



U.S. NAVY COASTAL AND
RIVERINE WARFARE IN VIETNAM
1965-1968



JOHN DARRELL SHERWOOD

WAR IN THE SHALLOWS U.S. NAVY COASTAL AND RIVERINE WARFARE IN VIETNAM, 1965-1968

At the height of the U.S. Navy's involvement in the Vietnam War, the Navy's coastal and riverine forces included more than 30,000 Sailors and over 350 patrol vessels ranging in size from riverboats to destroyers. These forces developed the most extensive maritime blockade in modern naval history and fought pitched battles against Viet Cong units in the Mekong Delta and elsewhere. *War in the Shallows* explores the operations of the Navy's three inshore task forces from 1965 to 1968. It also delves into other themes such as basing, technology, tactics, and command and control. Finally, using oral history interviews, it reconstructs deckplate life in South Vietnam, focusing in particular on combat waged by ordinary Sailors. Vietnam was the bloodiest war in recent naval history and *War in the Shallows* strives above all else to provide insight into the men who fought it and honor their service and sacrifice.

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John Darrell Sherwood

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PREFACE



More than 174,000 sailors served in South Vietnam between 1960 and 1972.¹ At the height of the U.S. Navy's involvement in South Vietnam, the Navy's coastal and riverine forces included more than 30,000 sailors and over 350 patrol vessels ranging in size from riverboats to destroyers.² Naval Forces Vietnam, the Navy's major South Vietnam command, also operated minesweepers, floating barracks and maintenance ships, a fleet of maritime patrol aircraft, and helicopter gunships. Shore facilities included one of the largest and finest ports in the world, Cam Ranh Bay, as well as many smaller bases spread out along the 1,200-mile coastline of South Vietnam and its major rivers.

Besides being large and resources-intensive, the Navy's war in South Vietnam was a stark departure from the oceanic or "blue water" operations that characterized much of the U.S. Navy's 20th-century history. The capital ships of the "brown water" (riverine) and "green water" (coastal) navy were not battleships, ballistic missile submarines, or aircraft carriers but small boats, many of which were converted World War II-era landing craft or modified commercial craft. Vietnam was a decidedly low-tech, manpower intensive operation—an anathema to a navy focused on fleet operations and cutting edge technology. The story of how the U.S. Navy shifted gears during the Vietnam War, constructed three inshore task forces from scratch, and adapted to a form of warfare not experienced since the Civil War is the subject of this work.

While many books have been written about the U.S. Army and U.S. Marine Corps in Vietnam, the Navy has received less attention. What little has been written consists mainly of memoirs written by veterans. The best general account of this chapter of the Navy's history is Thomas Cutler's *Brown Water, Black Berets: Coastal and Riverine Warfare in Vietnam* (1988). Cutler, a veteran of the River Patrol Force, wrote an imminently readable account based mainly on interviews with sailors from the period. The book is a fine piece of work on the subject, but the history was not meant to be a definitive one. Commander Richard L. Schreadley served as a historian with the Naval Forces Vietnam staff in 1969 and later wrote an overview of the Navy's involvement in the war, entitled *From the Rivers to the Sea: The U.S. Navy in Vietnam* (1992) with several chapters devoted to coastal and riverine operations. Based mainly on his personal files from his tour in Vietnam, the book suffers from a lack of documentation on many operations covered and is journalistic in its style. It is also too broad brush of a treatment, covering the entire

naval enterprise in Vietnam (including Seventh Fleet operations and amphibious readiness), to offer extensive insight on riverine and coastal warfare.

The Naval History Division and the Naval Historical Center, predecessor organizations to the Naval History and Heritage Command, published two official histories of the Navy during the Vietnam War: Edwin Bickford Hooper, Dean C. Allard, and Oscar P. Fitzgerald, *The United States Navy and the Vietnam Conflict*, vol.1, *Setting the Stage to 1959* (1976); and Edward J. Marolda and Oscar P. Fitzgerald, vol. 2, *From Military Assistance to Combat, 1959–1965* (1986). Although much more comprehensive and better documented than the Schreadley book, these volumes only cover the period through 1965. U.S. Navy in-country operations, which began in 1965 with Operation Market Time, receive brief treatment in volume 2.

Edward J. Marolda, the former senior historian at the Naval History and Heritage Command, wrote an illustrated history of the Navy in Vietnam titled *By Sea, Air, and Land: An Illustrated History of the U.S. Navy and the War in Southeast Asia* (1994) that includes many pictures of the Navy in South Vietnam and short textual descriptions of major operations. R. Blake Dunnivant's, *Brown Water Warfare: The U.S. Navy in Riverine Warfare and the Emergence of a Tactical Doctrine, 1775–1970* (2003) traces the Navy's involvement in brown water operations from the American Revolution through 1970, but it devotes only a single chapter to Vietnam. Alex Larzelere's *The Coast Guard at War, Vietnam, 1965–1975* (1997) and Paul Scotti's *Coast Guard Action in Vietnam: Stories of Those Who Served* (2000) collectively offer a comprehensive account of the Coast Guard in South Vietnam, but U.S. Navy operations are covered tangentially and only in so far as they related to Coast Guard missions.

In short, no scholarly work focusing solely on U.S. Navy coastal and riverine warfare in Vietnam from 1965 to 1968 exists. Relying heavily on recently declassified documents held by the Naval History and Heritage Command, this book represents the first comprehensive scholarly attempt to piece together the operational history of the U.S. Navy in South Vietnam from the first coastal patrols in 1965 through the 1968 Tet Offensive. The U.S. Navy invested many resources to the in-country war: in addition to vast amounts of equipment purchased and expended, the three shallow-water task forces lost 457 sailors during the war, and many others were wounded.³ This book seeks to understand what kind of return the U.S. Navy received for this investment and sacrifice. How did the Navy's coastal and riverine force affect the overall allied effort in Vietnam? How did the Navy's operational tactics evolve over the period? How did the Navy quickly develop an inshore capability and adapt to the unpredicted combat situation in Vietnam? Was Vietnam a triumph for naval arms or a travesty or something in the middle? In the 2004 presidential campaign, Senator John Kerry made much of his experiences in Swift boats in Vietnam, but did these small boats and others like them have a measurable impact on the struggle? These are some of the central questions this book addresses.

The impact of the Vietnam War on the Navy's sailors is another important theme of this book. Who were the men who fought in the shallows and how did they differ from traditional sailors with the Seventh Fleet and other blue water units? Was there something unique about

the culture of the brown and green water Navy? Did these forces represent an elite force as many memoirists have implied?⁴ To help answer these questions, more than 125 veterans were interviewed. Whenever possible, their stories are woven into the narrative to expose the human side of the Navy in South Vietnam. Material from these interviews also serves to drive the narrative, making it accessible to readers more accustomed to biography than traditional operational history based solely on documents. After-action reports, usually written in the driest language by staff officers removed from the action, only offer one picture of a battle—a picture often factually accurate but lacking *Sturm und Drang* (storm and stress). These reports do not reveal the thoughts of a sailor fighting for his life on a lightly armed small boat or the fabric of his daily life on patrol or at his base, ashore or afloat. Oral histories, when used in combination with documents, provide a necessary tool for reconstructing the world of the shallow water sailor. They offer a glimpse of the humanity behind the hardware rarely seen in message traffic or action reports. To ensure authenticity the spelling and punctuation in the original quotations have been maintained, and the treatment of measurements remain true to their sources.

If the Navy's World War II historical narrative was dominated by admirals such as Chester Nimitz, William Halsey, and Raymond Spruance, the Vietnam narrative consists of many smaller tales told by junior officers and petty officers. In Vietnam, lower ranking personnel played a larger role in combat decision making than ever before in U.S. Navy history. In both the River Patrol Force and the Mobile Riverine Force (MRF), petty officers often commanded the major fighting unit of conflict—the small boat. Even in the Coastal Surveillance Force, only one junior officer typically rode on a Swift boat, which meant that ordinary sailors performed many significant jobs held by officers on larger vessels. By delving into the social backgrounds of enlisted boat captains and their crews, this book strives to highlight the fact that these ordinary men possessed “agency,” or the capacity to act independently and control events.

Junior officers (those below the rank of lieutenant commander, O-4) also receive extensive attention in this volume. These men played a vital role in the conflict, commanding not only small boats but also larger formations, including river patrol sections and river assault divisions. Most volunteered for duty in Vietnam despite warnings that such assignments might not be career-enhancing. In the 1960s there was no clear-cut career path for a small boat officer. Promotion boards, for the most part, did not believe that service on small boats in Vietnam better prepared officers for larger surface commands than did traditional division assignments on oceangoing ships. Most junior officers volunteered for assignment in South Vietnam out of a sense of adventure and for the opportunity for independent command responsibility at a young age. Many were reservists who received their commissions from Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) programs on college campuses or the Navy's Officer Candidate School in Newport, Rhode Island, and expected to serve in the Navy for a short period of time before returning to civilian life. Living, working, and fighting in close proximity with sailors on small boats allowed them to form close bonds with enlisted men—bonding experienced much less often by junior officers on ships where there was much more physical and psychological distance between officers and enlisted men.

As a group, the young lieutenants and enlisted boat captains of the inshore task forces in South Vietnam were the face of the United States Navy as far as the local populace was concerned. Their interactions with civilians during boat searches, civic actions missions, and at shore bases often proved critical in America's attempts to "win the hearts and minds" of the people of the Mekong Delta, the Rung Sat swamp, and the coastal areas of South Vietnam. Finally, these men possessed command autonomy found in few other places in the U.S. Navy. Once they left their bases, these junior officers and petty officers faced a myriad of life or death decisions with regard to small unit tactics, about the use of force, and even about how to react to sea states, tides, and weather. It was not a job for the faint of heart, and while not every boat captain lived up to the challenge, the vast majority succeeded admirably. The willingness of American officers and petty officers to sail into harm's way on the smallest of craft and aggressively prosecute their mission in a highly professional manner often stunned the enemy and led to some surprising victories.

The naval war in South Vietnam consisted of many small unit actions punctuated by only a small number of larger operations. In this war, a "major" operation would be a trawler intercept by the Coastal Surveillance Force or an amphibious operation by the Mobile Riverine Force involving more than one battalion of Army troops. With the exception of the Tet Offensive, there were no actions comparable to even mid-sized World War II operations. Nevertheless, *War in the Shallows* makes an effort to cover in detail most of the large U.S. Navy operations that occurred during the 1965 to 1968 period. For smaller actions this book delves only into battles or incidents that illuminate key trends and themes. Several sections of chapters 2 and 6 cover special topics that do not fit neatly into the general narrative but still relate to the major themes of book: inshore warfare and the unique experiences of sailors fighting in South Vietnam.

War in the Shallows begins with an analysis of the naval situation in South Vietnam from 1950 to 1965—the so-called advisory period. This contextual section seeks to explain why the Vietnam Navy (VNN) failed to effectively stem the flow of supplies from North Vietnam to South Vietnam and why the U.S. Navy by 1965 felt compelled to directly intervene in the conflict to solve the seaborne infiltration problem. The book makes a special effort to analyze the nature of the Navy's advisory role, the plight of Navy advisors, and why they were unable to build up the VNN fast enough to meet the growing Communist threat. The acquisition of new ships was only one aspect of the VNN's challenges. Other problems were structural and related to its youthful and inexperienced officer corps, a lack of well-trained noncommissioned officers, the poor morale of its enlisted force, inadequate training and maintenance facilities, the politicization of the South Vietnamese armed forces, and budgetary woes. Even if more U.S. advisors had been able to speak to their counterparts in Vietnamese, it is doubtful that they could have helped this fledgling service overcome its obstacles in the early 1960s.

The book then turns to the first large-scale U.S. Navy coastal interdiction campaign in Vietnam—Operation Market Time. The American role in seaborne interdiction off the coast of South Vietnam began with a handful of larger surface combatants acting in a surveil-

lance-only role and expanded into a multilayered blockade comprising a task force (TF 115) of 5,000 personnel and 126 craft from two services—the U.S. Navy and its partner, the U.S. Coast Guard. The U.S. Navy's war in South Vietnam is often thought of as primarily a brown water war in the rivers, but the coastal interdiction effort, in many respects, was more significant. It was far more successful as an interdiction program than the riverine war and also the longest, most sustained U.S. Navy operation in the waters of South Vietnam. Market Time had a rapid impact on the Communist supply effort, making it exceedingly difficult for North Vietnam to employ the large trawlers and oceangoing junks to resupply its forces in South Vietnam. The operation depended on both small surface units, such as the Navy's iconic Swift boat and the Coast Guard's 82-foot cutters, and a sophisticated network of land, sea, and air radars linked to surface units via a sophisticated command and control system. As the Cuban missile crisis had demonstrated in 1962, the blockade was one of the Navy's strongest suits, and the Vietnam effort was no exception. Operation Market Time proved so successful that by 1967 some of its assets began to be used for other purposes such as naval gunfire support, civic action, and even patrolling larger rivers. Although the operation never had the resources to stop small wooden-hulled boats such as junks and sampans from breaking the blockade, it virtually eliminated infiltration by larger, steel-hulled ships.

Like Market Time before it, Operation Game Warden developed largely in response to the deficiencies of the Vietnam Navy. The River Patrol Force (Task Force 116) began as a river patrol on the Long Tau River, the busy shipping channel running from Saigon to the South China Sea, and soon expanded to include the entire Mekong Delta. At its height in 1968, TF 116 contained five divisions, each with 20 PBRs (patrol boats, river), spread out across the vast Mekong Delta, the Rung Sat swamp, and in I Corps on the Cua Viet and Perfume rivers. Some of the PBRs operated from dry land bases and others from floating bases such landing ship tanks (LSTs) and landing ship docks (LSDs). The River Patrol Force began as a constabulary tasked mainly with searching water traffic for contraband and checking papers of civilians traveling on the rivers but quickly evolved into a mobile strike force intent upon attacking Viet Cong (VC) positions and disrupting river crossings. As an interdiction operation, Game Warden had only a limited effect in halting the spread of enemy supplies on the waterways of the Mekong Delta, but as a direct action force, it succeeded in frustrating numerous Viet Cong river crossings, disrupting large-scale enemy troop movements, and securing the major rivers in the delta for commerce. The River Patrol force also proved invaluable as a roving cavalry for the allies during the 1968 Tet Offensive, providing several beleaguered outposts in the delta with valuable gunfire support, especially during the early days of the offensive.

The Mobile Riverine Force (Task Force 117) was an amphibious riverine strike force designed to operate with the U.S. Army's 9th Infantry Division to search out and destroy large formations of the Viet Cong operating in the Mekong Delta. In 1968 at its height, it consisted of over 1,600 sailors organized into four squadrons, with each squadron further divided into two river assault divisions. Each division contained up to 40 converted landing craft ranging

from heavily armed monitors and armored troop carriers to minesweepers and command and control boats. After explaining the concept of the MRF and its bases and technology, *War in the Shallows* examines major assault operations from early 1967 to the Tet Offensive in January 1968. In several of these engagements, large elements of Viet Cong were successfully located and engaged but often at a hefty price in terms of casualties. Although the MRF's armored riverine craft could withstand most small-caliber rifle and machine-gun fire, they were much more vulnerable to antitank rockets employed by the Viet Cong in considerable numbers during the late 1960s. What did not prove vulnerable were the strong bonds that developed between the Army and Navy personnel assigned to this unique fighting force. Through shared danger and hardships, the Army and Navy elements of the MRF overcame command and control challenges, cultural differences, and other challenges to become a close-knit and lethal fighting force.

On 31 January 1968, the Viet Cong units attacked nearly every major city and town in the Mekong Delta. At the time of the attacks, the Mobile Riverine Force and the River Patrol Force were among the few combat units in the area prepared to respond. Tet showcased the mobility, firepower, and shock effect of brown water forces in a way no earlier battle had done. How these riverine forces assisted in blunting the offensive and recapturing the Mekong Delta is the final story told in this book. It represents one of the Navy's finest hours, but one never before fully analyzed. In particular, this section closely examines the battles for the most significant cities and towns in the delta, including My Tho, Ben Tre, Vinh Long, and Can Tho, and in so doing explains how the ability of the Navy to bring firepower and ground troops to besieged towns throughout the delta quite literally saved this area during the Tet Offensive.

Tet represents the end of this book for several reasons. First, it stands out as the high-water mark of the Navy's coastal and riverine war in Southeast Asia. The Navy's in-country strength peaked in September 1968 at 38,083 men. By the end of 1970, that number had dropped to 16,757. After Tet, the Navy accelerated the process of turning over its responsibilities and equipment to the Vietnam Navy. By June 1969 the Mobile Riverine Force ceased to exist, and much of the equipment and patrol sectors of the other task forces had been turned over to the Vietnamese. In September 1970, the Vietnamese navy took charge of the inner barrier and assumed control of Task Force 115's remaining Swift boats and *Point*-class cutters. In December 1970, the River Patrol Force was disestablished, and its 293 PBRs turned over to the VNN.⁵ After Tet, the Navy also shifted its strategic emphasis from the coasts and the lower and middle Mekong Delta to areas near the Cambodian border. This new strategy, known as SEALORDS (Southeast Asia Lake, Ocean, River, and Delta Strategy), involved fusing elements from all three task forces to create new infiltration barriers. The SEALORDS campaign and Vietnamization are certainly important chapters in the Navy's history in Vietnam, but they are too large in scope to cover effectively in this volume and deserve separate book-length treatments.

War in the Shallows is both an operational and a social history of the Navy's three riverine and coastal task forces during the 1965–1968 “American” phase of the Vietnam War. Because this story is intimately tied to the history of the Vietnam Navy and the Naval Advisory Group's

efforts to create an effective indigenous naval force, the VNN and the U.S. Navy advisors who worked with it receive some attention in this book, as do the coastguardsmen who participated in Operation Market Time. SEAL and light helicopter support for riverine operations are examined in sections of chapters 1 and 3, respectfully. Naval Support Activity operations are addressed sporadically throughout the book in terms of basing and logistics for the coastal and riverine navy. A few Navy units that operated extensively in South Vietnam are absent from this volume. They include but are not limited to Seabees, Navy medical personnel, Sea Dragon naval gunfire support, and amphibious operations along the coast of South Vietnam in support of the Marines in I Corps. These units performed invaluable work for the Navy, but this volume's primary focus is on the operations of the Navy's three inshore task forces in Vietnam

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Central goals of the Naval History and Heritage Command (NHHC) are to advance knowledge of the U.S. Navy through historical research and writing and to serve as the Navy's institutional memory. This book never could have achieved these ends without the support of so many members of the command. I am very privileged to work for NHHC and, by extension, the U.S. Navy. With that said, the conclusions and interpretations in this book are mine alone and do not necessarily reflect the views of the U.S. Navy, the Department of Defense, or any other agency of the federal government.

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Federal historians, librarians, and archivists are a close-knit community always willing to help colleagues in other agencies. I am fortunate indeed to be a member of this fraternity. Nate Patch, a military records specialist at the National Archives, helped me on numerous occasions to track down documents and photographs related to the project. Thomas Lauria of the Air Force Historical Research Agency (AFHRA) scanned and emailed me valuable material related to the *Point Welcome* and PCF-19 incidents. Steven Paget and Lieutenant Colonel Jens Robertson, USAF, of AFHRA also helped me reconstruct these fratricide incidents using the Thor database, the Air Force’s project to document every bomb it has deployed since World War I. John Carland of the State Department History Office and the author of the official Army Vietnam history *Stemming the Tide, May 1965 to October 1966 Combat Operations*, answered numerous research questions. Clarence R. “Dick” Anderegg, the director of the Air Force History Support Office and a Vietnam veteran who flew 170 combat missions during the war, fielded a variety of Air Force history-related questions. The Coast Guard History Office opened its doors on multiple occasions to my interns and me and assisted me with my research. My thanks go out to the director of that office, Robert Browning, and his staff: Chris Havern and Scott Price. James Willbanks of the Army Command and Staff College participated in a useful panel on the Tet Offensive with me at the U.S. Naval Academy, and this book has benefited from his scholarship on Tet, 1968. Eric Villard of the U.S. Army Center of Military History (CMH) allowed me to copy his working files on the operations of the U.S. Army 9th Infantry Division in the Mobile Riverine Force, including after-action reports and oral histories with key Army personnel from the unit. On a day-to-day level, Mark Reardon, also of CMH, was never too busy to answer numerous reference questions on the Army in Vietnam. Finally, this book has been greatly informed by CMH’s vast scholarship on the Vietnam War, which is often cited and provided important contextual knowledge.

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From the project’s inception, I strove to include stories from Navy and Coast Guard veterans. Tracking down an individual sailor who served on a particular boat during a specific

action for an interview could be a daunting task. Unlike officers, who occasionally can be located through such organizations as the Navy League, the Military Officers Association, and the Naval Academy Alumni Association, former enlisted sailors often “drop off the grid” after leaving the Navy. Fortunately for this project, several reunion associations and unit web pages proved instrumental in finding these unsung heroes. They include Albert Moore of the Mobile Riverine Association; Raul Herrera of Coastal Squadron 1; Paul Scotti, the author of *Coast Guard Action in Vietnam*; James Steffes, the author of *Swift Boat Down*; and Fred McDavitt of the Gamewardens Association. Chief Steffes shared his book files with me on the sinking of PCF-19 and read an excerpt from the book about the incident. Lieutenant McDavitt read numerous excerpts and answered a barrage of questions about riverine warfare in Vietnam throughout the project. He has been an important “sounding board” for me on Game Warden issues. Master Chief Signalman Roderick Davis, a former boat captain with River Section 532, and Gunner’s Mate (Guns) 3rd Class Paul Cagle served a similar function with the enlisted force. Captain Do Kiem, a former Vietnam Navy officer and the author of *Counterpart: A South Vietnamese Naval Officer’s War*, answered questions throughout the project on the Vietnam Navy. Other veterans who have shared personal files or photographs or helped me track down other veterans include Alexander Balian, Max Branscomb, Edward Bergin, David Butler, Richard Cragg, Robert Fuscaldo, John Green, Arthur Ismay, Charles Lloyd, Charles Mosher, Edwin “Larry” Oswald, Frank Spatt, Stephen Sumrall, Stephen Ulmer, Ray Verhasselt, and James “Larry” Weatherall. As the project lengthened, I appreciated the words of encouragement these veterans and others provided me in person, over the phone, and by email.

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The American veterans who shared their stories with me are the cornerstone of this book and represent a living link to the Navy’s past. I cannot thank them enough for their interviews, which often dredged up painful memories. The names of veterans who participated in interviews are mentioned in the bibliography, footnotes, and text. Approximately one third of the interviews I conducted are not cited in the book, mainly because the actions discussed did not make it into the final narrative. Their stories, nevertheless, provided me with valuable background and context on the war and naval operations. All interviews will become part of the Navy’s growing oral history collection.

Editors transform manuscripts into books, and NHHHC has been fortunate to possess five of the best in the federal government: Debra Barker, Andrea Connell, Caitlin Conway, Sandy Doyle, and Wendy Sauvageot. All have been involved with this project on a variety of levels. Ms. Doyle, the book's main editor, worked hard to streamline and develop certain sections. This book benefited greatly from her many years of experience editing books on the history of the Vietnam War. Ms. Debra Barker did a masterful job with the final editing and production phases of the book.

One could not ask for a better community of scholars than that found in the NHHHC histories branch. Branch members during this project included Regina Akers, Jeffrey Barlow, Charles Brodine, Dennis Conrad, Robert Cressman, Justin "Lance" Eldridge, Mark Evans, Tim Frank, Christine Hughes, Kevin Hurst, Karl Rubis, Michael Rouland, and Chris Warren. The support and assistance of all these individuals at various points in the project have been invaluable. So too has been the support of various interns who have worked for me over the years, including Patricia Boh, Mark Keller, Thibaut Bousquet, Kristen Krammer, Sophie Stewart, and Katherine Balch.

Gary Weir, the head of the Contemporary History Branch from 1996 to 2006, originally encouraged me to write on this subject and has supported the project for its duration. His vision of a branch dedicated to analytical history and primary source research has guided all of my writings since I joined the branch in 1997. Other branch and deputy branch chiefs who have supported the project include Michael Crawford, Kristina Giannotta, Tim Francis, Randy Papadopoulos, and Robert Schneller. Division and deputy division heads include Greg Martin, Commander Robert Moss, and Sharon Baker. NHHHC deputy directors and chiefs of staff include Commander Jeffrey Barta, Captain Wando Biskaduros, Captain Jeffrey Gaffney, James Kuhn, and Captain Michael McDaniel. All of these managers have lent a helping hand at crucial points during the project and secured valuable resources for the endeavor.

A driving force behind NHHHC's efforts to document and write the history of the Navy in Vietnam is Edward Marolda, who served as the NHHHC senior historian, the acting director, and a government contractor. The author of seven published books on the Navy in Vietnam, he stands out as a leading authority on the subject, and his advice and support throughout the project and the access he gave me to his personal files have been invaluable. Dr. Marolda also reviewed the finished manuscript and offered suggestions designed to improve the work even further—nearly every one of which was followed.

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Finally, thank you to those who fought for the U.S. Navy, its sister services, and allies in the shallows of Vietnam. This is your story and your book. Your service and sacrifice will never be forgotten. I am honored to tell your story and analyze the impact you made on the war.