

OFFICER IN CHARGE
RIVER SECTION FIVE FOUR FOUR
PPO SAN FRANCISCO 96601

1 July 1968

FIVE FOUR FOUR FAMILY GRAM

Dear

As Officer in Charge of PBR Section 544, I would like to take this opportunity to relate to you the activities of our section since our activation on 1 May 1968. At this time we had not received any boats. Our first three boats arrived on 4 May, and it was not until 17 May that the final seven arrived.

When new boats arrive in-country there is considerable work to be done before they are ready for patrol. This work and the subsequent sea and weapons trials take from 4 to 6 days. Therefore it was not until 9 May that the first three boats made their first regular patrol. This patrol was along the Soi Rap River (Song Soi Rap) which is the western boundary of the Hung Sat Special Zone.

The Soi Rap is a very wide considerably shallow river, and although wider (up to 1½ miles) and less winding than the Long Tau, it is not suitable for use as the shipping channel because of its shallow depth. The eastern and western banks of this river are a study in contrast. The eastern bank lies in the RSSZ and is defoliated by regularly scheduled chemical - spraying aircraft, and the western bank lies in Lang An Province, a fertile green farm area. Except for abandoned rice paddies the area on the western side is a jungle maze of thick tropical growth which offers considerable cover and concealment to the many VC who take full advantage of this, and use the area for a staging point for attacks on Saigon. With the exception of a few controlled villages the area is a 24 hour restricted zone. All the local population has been relocated, and any persons in the area are considered VC.

The eastern bank, on the other hand is barren and defoliated, except four villages on its 25 mile length from the B to the South China Sea.

On 17 May our final seven boats arrived and after five days of trials and preparation regular operations commenced on 22 May. The section operates four two-boat patrols daily consisting of 2 day and 2 night twelve hour patrols. The ninth and tenth boats fit into the schedule in a manner such that each man has two day patrols then two night patrols.

On 1 June our section was shifted from the Soi Rap to the Long Tau River. This River, as was mentioned in our first letter, is