



# **The Brown Water Navy in the Mekong Delta COIN in the Littorals and Inland Waters**

*Lieutenant Commander Richard Sessoms*

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In 1964 the Viet Cong was firmly entrenched in the Mekong Delta region. Using fear and terror tactics, the insurgency gained control of the population creating a safe haven for the movement to thrive and expand. The United States and the Government of South Vietnam recognized the infiltration problem in the Mekong Delta but their military organizations were either unable or incapable to deal with the problem. The geography of the region made it impossible for a U.S. Army or Marine Corps division to operate effectively and the South Vietnamese Army and Navy lacked the training and equipment to operate successfully. In response to these obstacles, Secretary of Defense, Robert McNamara, commissioned the U.S. Navy to develop a fighting force capable of operating in the delta and ridding the region of the Viet Cong influence. The Navy used for main Operations: MARKET TIME, GAME WARDEN,—The Mobile Riverine Force, and SEALORDS to achieve these goals. In four short years the Brown Water Sailors experienced marked success with Viet Cong influence minimized and resupply efforts rerouted to the tortuous Ho Chi Minh Trail. However, by the end of 1968 American resolve to fight a war in South Vietnam had deteriorated and the Government needed a way out. President Nixon's Vietnamization program provided the exit for American forces and in turn mitigated the Brown Water Navy's successes of the previous four years.

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