

Preface

What is so incredible about the US Fleet is that it can stay somewhere forever and resupply by ships and never see land and never have to go to land, except for the supply ships resupplying. They have to have a base like Subic [Bay, Philippines] to get their supplies or else have other ships come out and resupply them. It is a dangerous operation but we do it. We learned the tricks. It is very hazardous. Fortunately, no one has ever been blown up or anything.

—Capt. Leon Grabowsky, USN (Retired), former commander, Service Squadron Five, remarking on the resupply of 7th Fleet ships in the Tonkin Gulf during the Vietnam War.¹

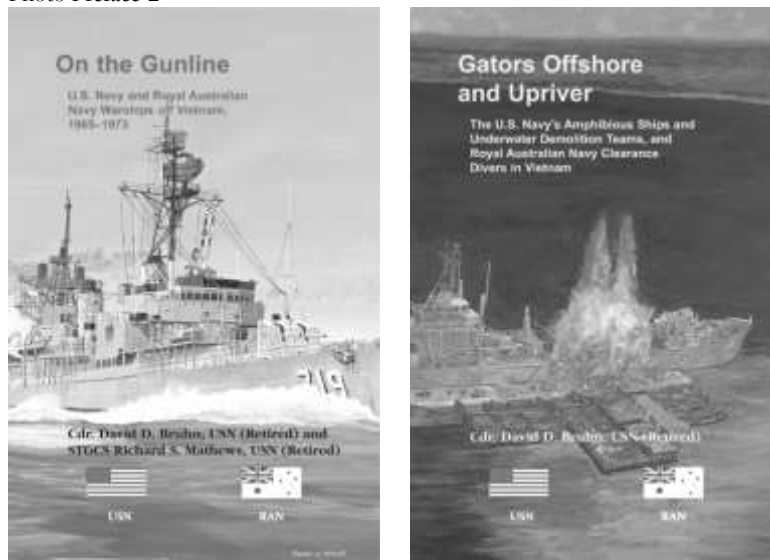
Photo Preface-1



Commander, Service Force U.S. Pacific Fleet plaque.
Naval History and Heritage Command photograph #NH 73860

Support for the Fleet is the final book in a trilogy devoted to the U.S. and Royal Australian Navy ships that served in Vietnam. The first two books, *On the Gunline* and *Gators Offshore and Upriver*, detail the activities of the gunfire support ships off Vietnam, and the amphibious ships that landed Marines along its coast. Some of the “gators,” primarily World War II vintage, shallow-draft tank landing ships, also plied dangerous inshore waters. Their duties including hauling supplies to far-flung bases and units in the Mekong Delta, and providing direct support for river patrol boats and “gunships” (assault helicopters).

Photo Preface-2



On the Gunline, and *Gators Offshore and Upriver* book covers; created by Heritage Books designer/editor Debbie Riley, based on paintings by maritime artist Richard DeRosset.

During the Vietnam War, 270 U.S. Navy and four Royal Australian Navy warships served at various times on the gunline. Within this armada were the battleship *New Jersey*, 10 cruisers, 212 destroyers, 50 destroyer escorts, and the inshore fire support ship *Carronade*. When necessary, naval guns poured out round after round, until their barrels overheated and turned red, exterior paint blistered, and rifled-barrel liners were worn smooth. Facing and often dueling with enemy artillery, these ships collectively earned over 500 combat action ribbons.

The 142 amphibious ships that served in Vietnam garnered over 160 combat action ribbons. Many of these were earned by tank landing ships running the rivers, exposed while doing so, to ambush by

recoilless-rifle, automatic-weapons, or rocket fire from the enemy hidden in jungle canopy or foliage along the banks.

THE U.S. NAVY'S SERVICE FORCE IN VIETNAM

The 135 Service Force ships to which this book is devoted, are identified in the next several pages by their general category, followed by specific function. Fleet replenishment ships made up over half of the Service Force ships that served in Vietnam, and the bulk of them were either oilers or ammunition ships, whose job it was to keep their customers steaming and shooting. Small numbers of stores ships, gasoline tankers, and multifunction ships (AOEs and AORs) comprised the rest.

FLEET REPLENISHMENT SHIPS (Seventy-two)

AE	Ammunition Ships - 24 <i>Butte</i> (AE-27), <i>Chara</i> (AE-31), <i>Diamond Head</i> (AE-19), <i>Firedrake</i> (AE-14), <i>Flint</i> (AE-32), <i>Great Sitkin</i> (AE-17), <i>Haleakala</i> (AE-25), <i>Kilauea</i> (AE-26), <i>Mauna Kea</i> (AE-22), <i>Mauna Loa</i> (AE-8), <i>Mazama</i> (AE-9), <i>Mount Baker</i> (AE 4), <i>Mount Hood</i> (AE 29), <i>Mount Katmai</i> (AE-16), <i>Nitro</i> (AE-23), <i>Paricutin</i> (AE-18), <i>Pyro</i> (AE-24), <i>Rainier</i> (AE-5), <i>Santa Barbara</i> (AE-28), <i>Shasta</i> (AE-6), <i>Suribachi</i> (AE-21), <i>Vesuvius</i> (AE-15), <i>Virgo</i> (AE-30), <i>Wrangell</i> (AE-12)
AF	Stores Ships - 8 <i>Aludra</i> (AF-55), <i>Bellatrix</i> (AF-62), <i>Graffias</i> (AF-29), <i>Pictor</i> (AF-54), <i>Procyon</i> (AF-61), <i>Regulus</i> (AF-57), <i>Vega</i> (AF-59), <i>Zelima</i> (AF-49)
AFS	Combat Stores Ships - 4 <i>Mars</i> (AFS-1), <i>Niagara Falls</i> (AFS-3), <i>San Jose</i> (AFS-7), <i>White Plains</i> (AFS-4)
AO	Fleet Oilers - 23 <i>Ashtabula</i> (AO-51), <i>Cacapon</i> (AO-52), <i>Caliente</i> (AO-53), <i>Chemung</i> (AO-30), <i>Chipola</i> (AO-63), <i>Cimarron</i> (AO-22), <i>Guadalupe</i> (AO-32), <i>Hassayampa</i> (AO-145), <i>Kawishimi</i> (AO-146), <i>Kennebec</i> (AO-36), <i>Manatee</i> (AO-58), <i>Marias</i> (AO-57), <i>Mattaponi</i> (AO-41), <i>Misphillion</i> (AO-105), <i>Navasota</i> (AO-106), <i>Neches</i> (AO-47), <i>Passumpsic</i> (AO-107), <i>Platte</i> (AO-24), <i>Ponchatoula</i> (AO-148), <i>Taluga</i> (AO-62), <i>Tappahannock</i> (AO-43), <i>Tolovana</i> (AO-64), <i>Waccamaw</i> (AO-109)
AOE	Fast Combat Support Ships - 2 <i>Camden</i> (AOE-2), <i>Sacramento</i> (AOE-1)
AOG	Gasoline Tankers - 6 <i>Elkhorn</i> (AOG-7), <i>Genesee</i> (AOG-8), <i>Kishwaukee</i> (AOG-9), <i>Noxubee</i> (AOG-56), <i>Patapsco</i> (AOG-1), <i>Tombigbee</i> (AOG-11)
AOR	Replenishment Oilers - 5 <i>Kansas City</i> (AOR-3), <i>Milwaukee</i> (AOR-2), <i>Savannah</i> (AOR-4), <i>Wabash</i> (AOR-5), <i>Wichita</i> (AOR-1)

The duty of fleet replenishment ships was arduous, repetitious, and potentially dangerous, owing to cargos of flammable fuels or explosives, and repeated operations in close quarters with other ships. Duty off Vietnam for Service Force ships newly arrived in the Western Pacific,

was typically preceded by “loading out” at Subic Bay, followed by the first of many “swings on the line” in a single deployment.

The expression “on the line” referred to duty in the combat zone. Ships were “off the line” when they left Vietnamese waters bound for Subic Bay or other ports for required maintenance, resupply, or crew liberty. Cruisers and destroyers enjoying a reprieve from duty “on the gunline,” or gators (amphibious ships) operating offshore or upriver, might be tasked with other Seventh Fleet duties, or enjoy visits to one or more exotic Far East liberty ports. A “swing on the line” or “line swing” was unique to Service Force ships. With their services always in great demand, their offline time was normally spent at Subic loading out before returning to Vietnam, then sailing to the war zone, delivering product, sailing back to Subic to replenish it, and repeat. A swing was a single period (tour of duty) on the line.

Upon arrival in South Vietnamese waters, replenishment ships called at ports along the coast as necessary to meet demands ashore, then refueled, rearmed, or re-provisioned fleet units in the Tonkin Gulf. The replenishment of combatants at sea, via underway replenishment (UnRep) alongside or vertical replenishment (VertRep) using ship-based helicopters, enabled the ships to operate for long periods at Yankee and Dixie Stations, on MARKET TIME patrols off the coast, and on the naval gunfire support line off South Vietnam.

Photo Preface-3



USS *Pictor* (AF-54), in the foreground, highlines cargo to the USS *Camden* (AOE-2), center, while the USS *Hassayampa* (AO-145) replenishes *Camden*'s liquid cargo, 1969. National Archives photograph #XFC-02171-2-69

Photo Preface-4



USS *Sacramento* (AOE-1) transfers fuel and ammunition through hoses and highlines to USS *Hancock* (CVA-19), while a CH-46 Sea Knight helicopter supports crated Mark 77 fire bombs (napalm) being transferred to the carrier, 9 August 1966. National Archives photograph #K-31344

YANKEE AND DIXIE STATIONS

Yankee Station was a point off Vietnam from which U.S. carrier aircraft flew strikes into North Vietnam. As shown on the map (next page), it was initially located at position 16°N, 110°E, off the coast of South Vietnam and south of the DMZ (nominally described as being at “the 17th parallel”) from 1964 to 1966. However, with a massive increase in air operations over North Vietnam in 1966 associated with Operation ROLLING THUNDER, the station was moved northwest to 17°30’N, 108°30’ E, about ninety miles off the North Vietnamese coast.²

Dixie Station was established on 15 May 1965 (at 11°N, 110°E) about eighty miles southeast of Cam Ranh Bay. In contrast to Yankee Station, from which bombing missions were flown against targets in the North, those originating from Dixie Station were in support of allied ground forces engaged in combat in South Vietnam. The strike aircraft were usually vectored to their targets by a forward-based air controller. Aircraft carriers continued to use Dixie Station in support of friendly forces until 3 August 1966, when sufficient land-based aircraft were available, and carriers were no longer needed in the area. Yankee Station remained in use until August 1973.³

Map Preface-1



Locations of Yankee and Dixie Stations during the Vietnam War

REPLENISHMENT PRACTICES

The way the Seventh Fleet staff had set it up we were bringing half the loads back to Subic instead of keeping them in the Tonkin Gulf; so I organized a system to change this to where we would have main storage ships in the Tonkin Gulf. These storage ships would keep all the assets from the ships that were going back—transfer the materials and keep them there. We needed special kinds of ships to do this.

When the ships went out there they started at the south and came up north where they were relieved of their assets in the Gulf. The assets were then transferred to these storage ships. It involved a hell of a lot of handling and the skippers didn't like it, but it was the most efficient way to do it. We saved billions of dollars, I think, because as soon as they were through with their circuit of the coast and unloaded once in Tonkin Gulf, they could head back to Subic to reload and be ready for the next run.

—Capt. Leon Grabowsky, USN (Retired), describing the transfer of remaining cargo aboard Seventh Fleet replenishment ships to Military Sea Transportation Service ships on station in the Tonkin Gulf, before departure of the former to Subic.⁴

We were utterly dependent upon the sea logistical line.

—Gen. William Westmoreland (commander, U.S. Military Assistance Command, Vietnam) in *Report on Operations in South Vietnam January 1964 – June 1968*.

The supply line that provided logistics support to military forces ashore in Vietnam stretched 7,000 miles across the Pacific from the West Coast of the United States. The trans-Pacific logistics operation was carried out by merchant ships of the Military Sea Transportation Service (MSTS); renamed the Military Sealift Command in 1970. The ammunition, POL (Petroleum, oil and lubricants), and food they carried were delivered to major ports on the South China Sea (Da Nang, Qui Nhon, and Cam Ranh), and to Saigon, forty-five miles inland up the Long Tau and Saigon Rivers. Other smaller ports were also later utilized, following adequate port development.⁵

Merchant ships also delivered to Subic Bay, where Seventh Fleet replenishment ships loaded out for the resupply of naval forces inland, via delivery to South Vietnamese ports, and the fleet units off the coast.

One important interface between the MSTS and Navy is alluded to in quoted material at the Preface head, and on the preceding page, in which Captain Grabowsky describes his experiences commanding Task Group 73.5 in the Tonkin Gulf. Responsibility for the twenty to thirty oilers, supply ships, and ammunition ships comprising it at any given time was rotated between commanders of service squadrons on the U.S. West Coast and Pearl Harbor and one of the staff officers from the staff of the Seventh Fleet. The use of MSTS ships as floating forward depots to support Seventh Fleet's ammunition requirements, required the transfer of remaining stocks aboard the AEs before the ammunition ships departed for Subic to reload. The transfer at sea of large quantities of ammunition to merchant ships was dangerous, but saved the Navy valuable time and money.⁶

Less dangerous than duty aboard a "floating ammunition dump" off Vietnam, but still disconcerting to some, was assignment to an oiler or tanker carrying hundreds of thousands of gallons of volatile fuel. Six relatively small, 310-foot gasoline tankers regularly went in harm's way to deliver fuel desperately needed by combat forces ashore.

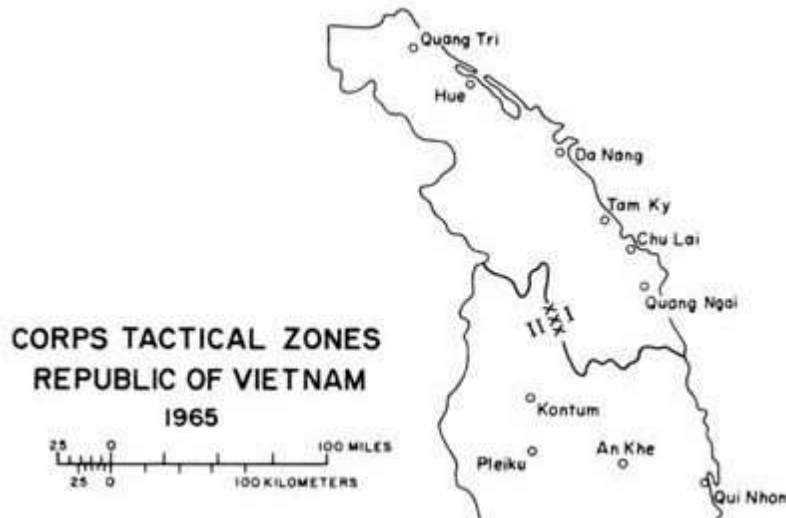
Photo Preface-5



USS *Elkhorn* (AOG-7) under way on 1 February 1968, and a ship's plaque from 1966. Naval History and Heritage Command photographs #NH 84951 and NH 75739-KN

Elkhorn, *Genesee*, *Kishwaukee*, *Noxubee*, *Patapsco*, and *Tombigbee* were units of Service Squadron Five, based in Hawaii. From March 1965 until late 1971, at least one AOG was constantly deployed in Vietnamese waters, during which their job was to deliver petroleum products to the outposts of I Corps. Bordering the Demilitarized Zone to the north, I Corps saw heavy fighting almost continuously from 1956 to 1975.⁷

Map Preface-2



Abbreviated map of South Vietnam, showing I-Corps, and part of II-Corps of the five total Corps Tactical Zones

Upon arrival off a shore station to deliver fuel, AOGs normally anchored 1,500 to 2,000 yards offshore, and connected hoses to the seaward terminus of a pipeline laid on the seafloor. During typhoon season, churned waters caused breaks in pipelines. Until repairs could be made, tankers had to move in very close to transfer fuel ashore. In an effort to destroy the lifeblood needed by allied patrol craft, vehicles, and aircraft to sustain combat operations, the North Vietnamese regularly took tank farms under fire with shore artillery. In such cases, any AOG present was also an attractive target.

A Marine logistics base located at the mouth of the Cua Viet River was the most dangerous stop for the gasoline tankers along their routes. Collocated with the Naval Support Activity, Da Nang, Cua Viet detachment, the base lay just five miles south of the Demilitarized Zone separating North and South Vietnam. In one of many such attacks, in April 1968, North Vietnamese Army artillery fire hit the base's fuel farm, destroying 40,000 gallons of petroleum. Its loss required immediate delivery of additional fuel by an AOG.

TUGS, SALVAGE, AND RESCUE SHIPS (Thirty-five)

The next largest category of Service Force ships was the fleet tugs, auxiliary tugs, salvage ships, and rescue vessels. Constant salvage work requirements in Vietnam began in the summer of 1965 and continued for several years.

Salvage Force Ships

- ARS Salvage Ships - 9
Bolster (ARS-38), *Conserver* (ARS-39), *Current* (ARS-22), *Deliver* (ARS-23),
Grapple (ARS-7), *Grasp* (ARS-24), *Opportune* (ARS-41), *Reclaimer* (ARS-42),
Safeguard (ARS-25)
- ASR Submarine Rescue Vessels - 4
Chanticleer (ASR-7), *Concal* (ASR-8), *Florikan* (ASR-9), *Greenlet* (ASR-10)
- ATA Auxiliary Ocean Tugs - 4
Mahopac (ATA-196), *Sunnadin* (ATA-197), *Tillamook* (ATA-192), *Wandank*
(ATA-204)
- ATF Fleet Tugs - 17
Abnaki (ATF-96), *Apache* (ATF-67), *Arikara* (ATF-98), *Chowanoc* (ATF-100),
Cocopa (ATF-101), *Hitchiti* (ATF-103), *Lipan* (ATF-85), *Mataco* (ATF-86),
Moctobi (ATF-105), *Molala* (ATF-106), *Munsee* (ATF 107), *Quapaw* (ATF-110),
Shakori (ATF-162), *Siox* (ATF-75), *Tawakoni* (ATF-114), *Tawasa* (ATF-92),
Ute (ATF-76)
- ANL Net Laying Ship - 1
Coboes (ANL-78)

The most unique member of the above group was the net layer *Coboes* (ANL-78), assigned to Harbor Clearance Unit One at Subic Bay in the Philippines. Established on 1 February 1966, HCU-One was based at Subic to allow salvage operations in both Vietnamese waters and throughout the Pacific.⁸

The 168-foot net laying ship had been commissioned on 23 March 1945 to protect US Navy ships and harbors. Decommissioned on 3 September 1947, she was laid up in the Pacific Reserve Fleet until brought out of “mothballs” in 1968 to serve as a harbor and river clearance craft. Modifications made to prepare her for this new role included increased bow lift capability, allowing her to handle beach gear, and installation of a divers’ air system.⁹

Photo Preface-6



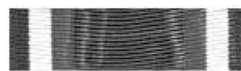
Net laying ship USS *Coboes* (ANL-78) underway on 6 May 1968, and ship's patch. National Archives photograph #USN 1132272

During duty in the combat zone between 3 July 1968 and 3 April 1972, *Coboes* was assigned to U.S. Naval Support Activity, Da Nang. She and her small ship's complement (4 officers and 45 men) were awarded the Meritorious Unit Commendation multiple times, and also a Navy Unit Commendation and Combat Action Ribbon. Justification for these awards may be found in Appendix A, which includes a reference to the incident associated with the Combat Action Ribbon:

While under heavy enemy artillery attack, *COHOES* made an extremely difficult but successful salvage of a patrol craft sunk in the Cua Viet Channel. *COHOES'* speedy clearance of the channel was of great assistance in the movement of vitally needed cargo. In addition, she successfully salvaged two barges and towed free a lighter which had run aground, all within an eight-day period.



Combat Action Ribbon (CR)



Navy Unit Commendation (NUC)



Meritorious Unit Commendation (MUC)

Unit Awards	Qualifying Period(s)
Meritorious Unit Commendations:	4 Jul-17 Aug 68, 26 Sep-20 Dec 68, 26 Jan-30 Apr 69, 11 Jun-31 Jul 69, 21 Aug-8 Oct 69, 7 Nov-18 Dec 69, 31 Jan-19 Mar 70, 29 Sep-15 Nov 70, 1 May 71-1 Apr 72
Navy Unit Commendation:	1 Jul 70-30 Jun 71
Combat Action Ribbon:	3 Aug 1968

It must be pointed out that qualifying periods for unit awards did not necessarily mean receipt of that number of awards. Some awards stood alone; in other cases, the awarding authority might sequentially add additionally qualifying periods to the same award. (Appendix B provides a comprehensive list of the Combat Action Ribbons, Navy Unit Commendations, and Meritorious Unit Commendations earned by the 135 Service Force ships.)

BOLSTER WITNESSES THE MOST COMBAT ACTION

Salvage ship *Bolster* shared something in common with *Coboes*, and gasoline tankers earning combat action ribbons—Cua Viet. As previously noted, the detachment at Cua Viet, from Naval Support Activity, Da Nang, was within range of North Vietnamese artillery and subject to frequent attacks. Eight miles up the Cua Viet River, from Cua Viet at its mouth, was another detachment at Dong Ha, which

served as one of the main supply points for forces operating in such places as Con Thien and Quang Tri. The North Vietnamese wanted to deny allied forces the fuel delivered to Cua Viet, and fuel and other combat materiel ferried by craft up the snaking river to Dong Ha.

In February 1968, following the Tet Offensive, begun by the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong prior to dawn on 30 January across South Vietnam, the Dong Ha/Cua Viet area received twenty-six separate rocket/artillery attacks during the month. Twenty-seven craft from Naval Supply Activity, Da Nang, were hit at these and other locations with varying degrees of damage as a result. *Bolster* came under enemy fire at Cua Viet on 7, 16, and 21 February 1968, earning three of her four combat action ribbons. She garnered a fourth on 4-5 May 1970.¹⁰

Photo Preface-7



Diver alongside the salvage ship *Bolster* (ARS-38) off the coast of Vietnam, July 1969; and *Bolster* under way in June 1974.

National Archives photographs #USN 1139404 and #DN-SC-86-00181

On each of these occasions, *Bolster* was at Cua Viet to conduct salvage operations on damaged craft, or repair POL lines or moorings used by tankers to transfer petroleum products ashore to storage facilities. Fortunately, there were no casualties and only one crewman injured while under fire. On 21 February, *Bolster* received rounds from the beach close aboard to port, during which CS3 (DV) James W. Mott Jr., USN, lacerated his right shin when he fell while seeking cover. Following medical treatment, the Commissaryman Third was returned to all duties except for diving.¹¹

Photo Preface-8



Bolster's dive boat towing a repaired four-inch fuel line into position. The line will rest on the sea floor for tanker transfer of fuel ashore. Off the coast of Vietnam, July 1965. National Archives photograph #USN 1139765

SERVICE FORCE, PACIFIC, ORGANIZATION

Photo Preface-9



Rear Adm. Edwin B. Hooper, USN, commander, Service Force Pacific (left); and (at right), Rear Adm. Norvell G. Ward, USN, commander, Service Group Three. USS *Tutuila* (ARG-4) 1967-1968 cruise book

Commander, Service Force, U.S. Pacific Fleet, coordinated the actions of the logistic ships and shore support facilities throughout the Pacific area, including supplying the Navy in Southeast Asia. Principal subordinate commands were Service Group One, based in San Diego for the Eastern Pacific; Service Squadron Five in Hawaii; and Service Group Three, at Sasebo, Japan, for the Western Pacific. Commander, Service Squadron Three had both administrative and operational roles, being “double-hatted” as commander, Task Force 73 (responsible for the Seventh Fleet’s logistic Support Force).¹²

The flexible and versatile task force could concentrate a great number of ships in Southeast Asia to provide units of the deployed fleet with ammunition, fuel, supplies, and repairs. In addition to the services discussed thus far, the task force also provided communications, towing, port services, postal and medical support, as well as the universally-desired movies that passed from ship to ship. Continuous support for the fleet enabled ships to operate for long periods at Yankee and Dixie stations, on Market Time patrol (to interdict the flow of arms, ammunition, and other war materiel into South Vietnam), and on the gunline off Vietnam.¹³

ATLANTIC FLEET SHIPS ALSO SENT TO VIETNAM

Demand for Service Force ships in Vietnam also resulted in some Atlantic Fleet units being deployed to the Western Pacific. Transit down the eastern seaboard of the United States and passage through the Caribbean and Panama Canal, preceded a long, and sometimes rough ocean crossing to Southeast Asia.

Photo Preface-10



Pacific crossing in 1972 aboard *Mount Baker*.
USS *Mount Baker* (AE-29) 1972 cruise book

REMAINING SERVICE FORCE SHIPS (Twenty-eight)

Smaller numbers of a variety of other type ships comprised the balance of the Service Force that served in Vietnam. Former sailors would likely expect this category to include repair ships, cargo and general stores ships, and perhaps a hospital ship or two. The activities of the other ships—major communications relay ships, survey ships, seaplane tenders, and particularly the technical research (intelligence-gathering) ships—were less visible, and thus lesser known, to the fleet.

Tenders and Repair Ships (nine)

AD Destroyer Tenders - 3
Isle Royale (AD-29), *Piedmont* (AD-17), *Samuel Gompers* (AD-37)

AR Repair Ships - 6
Ajax (AR-6), *Delta* (AR-9), *Hector* (AR-7), *Jason* (AR-8), *Klondike* (AR-22), *Markab* (AR-23)

Cargo Ships (four)

AKL Light Cargo Ships – 2
Brule (AKL-28), *Mark* (AKL-12)

AKS General Stores-Issue Ships - 2
Castor (AKS-1), *Pollux* (AKS-4)

Miscellaneous Ships (ten)

AGMR Major Communications Relay Ships – 2
Annapolis (AGMR-1), *Arlington* (AGMR-2)

AGS Survey Ships – 6
Maury (AGS-16), *Rehoboth* (AGS-50), *Serrano* (AGS-24), *Sheldrake* (AGS-19), *Tanner* (AGS-15), *Tombee* (AGS-28)

AGTR Technical Research Ships – 2
Jamestown (AGTR-3), *Oxford* (AGTR-1)

Aviation Support Ships (three)

AV Seaplane Tenders -3
Currituck (AV-7), *Pine Island* (AV-12), *Salisbury Sound* (AV-13)

Other Service Force Ships (two)

AH Hospital Ships - 2
Repose (AH-16), *Sanctuary* (AH-17)

A majority of the service ships that served in Vietnam were old. Used up by service in World War II and the Korean War, they'd been laid up in backwater Reserve Fleets, should the nation again require their services. The Vietnam War spurred such a need. Brought out of “mothballs” and pressed into high tempo operations, some “clapped out” vessels proved challenging to keep running. One such, apparently,

was the technical research ship USS *Jamestown* (AGTR-3), based on a poem describing duty aboard her. The first line makes reference to the aircraft carrier USS *Kitty Hawk* (CVA-63).

THE JIMMY-T

She hasn't the power of the Hawk named Kitty,
The oilers outrun her and she's not very pretty,
She's never been called a ruler of the sea,
But she's all we've got, she's the Jimmy-T

Her engines drink oil with unquenchable thirst,
She's got sick generators which have to be nursed,
Her paint is as thick as the bark on a tree.
But she's all we've got, she's the Jimmy-T

We curse and we cuss and we rant and we rave,
About chow, or pay, or how we all slave,
We'll work it all off on the beach with a spree,
Then stagger back home to the ole Jimmy-T.

—Author unknown; courtesy of Bob Harper,
former USS *Jamestown* crewmember (1968-1969)

SERVICE FORCE SHIPS IN HARM'S WAY

Despite such challenges for some of its members, the Service Force acquitted itself well providing support for the fleet, during which a dozen ships earned Combat Action Ribbons.

Survey Ships	
Name	Combat Action Ribbon Award Period(s)
<i>Maury</i> (AGS-16)	11 December 1965
<i>Serrano</i> (AGS-24)	3-4 March 1967
Stores Ship	
<i>Mars</i> (AFS-1)	17 September 1966
Light Cargo Ships	
<i>Brule</i> (AKL-28)	28 January 1967, 24 August 1968
<i>Mark</i> (AKL-12)	15 February 1967, 19 November 1969

Salvage Ships

<i>Bolster</i> (ARS-38)	7 February 1968, 16 February 1968
	21 February 1968, 4-5 May 1970
<i>Deliver</i> (ARS-23)	27-28 February 1968

Gasoline Tankers

<i>Genesee</i> (AOG-8)	22 April 1968
<i>Kishwaukee</i> (AOG-9)	21 February 1968
<i>Noxubee</i> (AOG-56)	28 October 1968, 9 September 1969
<i>Patapsco</i> (AOG-1)	16 February 1968, 27-28 February 1968

Net Laying Ship

<i>Coboes</i> (ANL-78)	3 August 1968
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RAN SUPPORT FOR THE VIETNAM WAR

As detailed in *On the Gunline*, and *Gators Offshore and Upriver*, the Royal Australian Navy deployed forces to Vietnam from 1965 to 1972, in support of the Allied war effort. Primary contributions included destroyers serving on the gunline off the coast, helicopters conducting combat missions in-country, clearance divers inspecting ships at Vung Tau for enemy-emplaced explosives, and a logistic support force of transport, supply, and escort ships.

Summary information about these forces follow, along with identification of merchant vessels which carried vital materiel to Vietnam. For the ships, and other RAN units awarded Battle Honours, the associated year(s) identify the span of their service.¹⁴

Gunline Destroyers

Ship	Battle Honours	Ship	Battle Honours
HMAS <i>Brisbane</i>	1969-71	HMAS <i>Perth</i>	1967-71
HMAS <i>Hobart</i>	1967-70	HMAS <i>Vendetta</i> *	1969-70

**Vendetta* also served as an escort during the war

Logistic Support

HMAS <i>Boonaroo</i>	1967	HMAS <i>Sydney</i>	1965-72
HMAS <i>Jeparit</i>	1969-72		

Helicopter Flight Vietnam

No. 723 Squadron	1967-71	No. 725 Squadron	1967
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Clearance Diving Teams

CDT 1	1966-71	CDT 3	1967-71
CDT 2	1967-71		

Escorts (No Battle Honours)

HMAS <i>Anzac</i>	HMAS <i>Melbourne</i>	HMAS <i>Swan</i>	HMAS <i>Yarra</i>
HMAS <i>Derwent</i>	HMAS <i>Parramatta</i>	HMAS <i>Torrens</i>	
HMAS <i>Duchess</i>	HMAS <i>Stuart</i>	HMAS <i>Vampire</i>	

Merchant Vessels (No Battle Honours)

<i>Brudenell White</i> AV 1354	<i>Harry Chauvel</i> AV 1353	<i>Vernon Sturdee</i> AV 1355
<i>Clive Steel</i> AV 1356	<i>John Monash</i> AS 3051	

Chapters 4-5 of this book describe the activities of the logistic support ships HMAS *Sydney*, HMAS *Boonaroo*, and HMAS *Jeparit*, and their contributions to the war effort. Chapter 15 describes two salvage operations carried out by Clearance Diving Team 3. During the RAN's involvement in the war, eight CDT 3 contingents deployed to Vietnam in succession, each comprised of one officer and five enlisted men. The two operations were under Lt. Michael T. E. Shotter, RAN (First Contingent) and Lt. Edward ("Jake") W. Linton, BEM RAN (Eighth Contingent).

IDENTIFICATION OF THE 135 SERVICE FORCE SHIPS

Before readers delve into the body of the book, an explanation of the number of ships it's devoted to, might be in order. Following its authorization by President Lyndon B. Johnson, the Vietnam Service medal was awarded from 4 July 1965 to 28 March 1973, and for the evacuation of Saigon from 29-30 April 1975. Prior to the establishment of this medal, ships and their crews were eligible for receipt of the Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal from 1 July 1958 through 3 July 1965. The 135 ships to which *Support for the Fleet* is devoted, all served one or more tours on the line between 4 July 1965 and 28 March 1973.

A handful of ships, which might rightly be considered Service Force vessels, are not included in the book because they were primarily a part of the "in-country" forces. These include the internal combustion engine repair ship *Tutuila* (ARG-4), and non-self-propelled barges and the tugs that moved them, assigned to the Mobile Riverine Force.

With this introduction to the book completed, it's time to stand out to sea with the men and women of the U.S. Navy's Service Force.