

1993

## Riverine: A Brown Water Sailor in the Delta, 1967

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### Recommended Citation

Watters, James E. and Sheppard, Donald (1993) "Riverine: A Brown Water Sailor in the Delta, 1967," *Naval War College Review*: Vol. 46 : No. 2 , Article 17.

Available at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review/vol46/iss2/17>

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Whether or not this event really happened, and whether or not it just appears up-front to grab reader interest, the incident opens doors into big agendas in national security affairs. While the United States has fore-sworn assassination of tyrants as a matter of foreign policy, conflict once initiated opens the door to legitimate high-tech "bozo busting" that the world may applaud morally because it looks like a shortcut to peace. But "bozo busters" are available to perhaps thirty-five nations. What happens when, say, the government of Iraq, Libya, North Korea, or Cuba, or a breakaway group in a crumbling nation-state buys one and defines the occupant of the White House, or of Number 10 Downing Street, as a "bozo"? International relations might return to an era when Trojan horses were in season, when Asian and European monarchs eliminated their foreign rivals by planting assassins within their diplomatic units at the enemy king's court. Might war-weary cultures demand a return to the practice of Pacific islanders, as portrayed by anthropologist Ruth Benedict, where one warrior paddled seaward in a canoe to become the token victim? Or to the Roman Empire's policy of sending a general to fall upon his own sword in the opponent's capital as a token of capitulation? The idea of specifically targeting leaders, even stripped of its high-tech glamour and factors of moral hubris, invites careful thinking by national security leaders; *Triumph Without Victory* does well to open the topic for discussion.

This is the volume of choice for those who seek a critical, objective, and balanced view of this war.

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Sheppard, Donald. *Riverine: A Brown Water Sailor in the Delta, 1967*. Novato, Calif.: Presidio Press, 1992. 326pp. \$22.95

Commander Don Sheppard has presented an engaging and, for this reviewer, evocative account of riverine warfare in the Mekong Delta just prior to the North Vietnamese Tet offensive of 1968. Sheppard grips his reader with alternate feelings of frustration, bravado, and tragedy that maintain the story's intensity from beginning to end.

However engaging Sheppard's story is, categorizing the genre is a more difficult task. The initial impression, that of a good sea story, is underscored by Sheppard's reluctance to identify those "characters" of questionable dedication or integrity he encountered during his year-long command of River Division 51. Yet dismissing this work as simply a good yarn would be a mistake, for like Mark Baker's *Nam*, Sheppard's experiences and observations constitute a valuable historical record for this most enigmatic of American wars. Traditional historical practice might regret the lack of documentation or the absence of an index, but modern oral history does provide strengths that easily

