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January 24, 1966

SAIGON--The United States and South Vietnamese Navies have established a formidable "defensive blockade" around the 1200-mile shoreline of South Vietnam in an attempt to counter Communist infiltration by sea.

Operating under the code name of "Operation Market/time," the outer rim of this "defensive blockade" includes more than a half dozen of the ^{DER}~~DER~~ radar picket escort destroyers "filled with very exotic radar", which up until seven months ago had been used as the seaward extension of the American DEW-Line stretching from the Aleutian Islands to Midway Island. These ships were phased out of the Dew-Line responsibilities in June last year and then transferred to operate off the South Vietnamese coast.

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The size and magnitude of the United States and South Vietnamese Naval personell and responsibilities are scheduled to mushroom even more dramatically during the first six months of 1966. Military movements and build-ups are classified until they are completed.

[Reliable Naval sources believe the "defensive blockade" has been effective enough to prevent Communist sea infiltration of men and weapons. Earlier, during ^{PAST} ~~past~~ months, these officers were debating whether the Naval activities were actually effective, or whether the Communist sea forces had been able to sneak invisibly through the blockade lines.

As of now, the elaborate Naval blockade consists of an outer ring of seaborne security ^{TEN} miles from the South Vietnamese coast, an inner security ring of South Vietnamese Navy, ^{COASTAL JUNKS} ~~MADE OF~~ ^{URNISHED} ~~BASKET MATERIAL~~ United States Navy and Coast Guard operating near the coast and a 24-hour-a-day airborne ^{SP2H NEPTUNE} patrols of ~~seaplanes~~ which are packed full of highly sensitive electronic gear for the detection of metallic hardware, OR Wooden Hull JUNKS.

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"To date we have found little evidence of ~~in~~ infiltration attempts since Operation Market Time was instituted," Rear Admiral Norvell G. Ward explained. "Operation Market Time was initiated March 24, 1965. Rear Admiral Ward "wears two hats" as chief of the United States Navy Advisory Group, assisting the Vietnamese Navy, and as Commander Coastal Surveillance Force, which are the American components ~~in~~ enforcing the defensive blockade around South Vietnam.

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"I don't say there have been no attempts (of Communist sea infiltration) or that we have discovered all the attempts," the Rear Admiral continued. "But we are approaching a point where we can say that if they are attempting it, we should detect it."

The chief American Naval officer in Vietnam said that in some cases ships of Operation Market Time had apparently thwarted infiltration attempts.

Early this year, a foreign fishing trawler of 150 tons capacity, approached the South Vietnamese coast. When the allied ships began "tracking" it, the trawler "turned around, went back to sea and disappeared into Chinese Communist waters," the Naval officer explained. The trawler flew no foreign flag, but a Chinese Nationalist flag was painted on the side of the bridge. Naval authorities discounted that the flag and ship actually represented that country.

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"One of our most difficult jobs is to try to separate fact from fiction," Rear Admiral Ward explained. "In the past several months¹ we've been trying to determine the number of Vietnamese junks at sea. Several years ago 54,000 junks had been licensed licensed by the Vietnamese government--but then we have to guess at how many additional junks were at sea in a certain day. We are just beginning to a certain degree to ascertain these facts so we can base our operations on these factors. We really don't know what makes fishermen go to sea on one day and stay in port the next day. There's a ²~~type~~ distinct variation in the type of fishing junks with no apparent reason for it. This is the intangible thing we're working with. In the next ~~several~~ months we will acquire the ~~statistical~~ ^{NECESSARY} statistical data necessary

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The Rear Admiral explained that the build-up of U. S. Naval forces--planned eight months ago--is still evolving.

"It's taking almost a year to get all the resources in the area," he explained. "It will take us several more months in time. We can't wave that ^{wand} ~~mag~~ magic wand and have the forces on the scene. In some cases, we didn't have the proper type of craft for close in-shore patrolling--and they are still on the production line. This is what has taken time."

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ALUMINUM-Hulled, 82-foot

~~Recently~~ U. S. Coast Guard cutters have been placed under the operational command of the U. S. Navy for saturation sea patrolling ~~at~~ at the 17th parallel bordering North Vietnam and in the ~~SEA~~ ^{DUIF} of Thailand ~~in~~ in an attempt to counter possible sea infiltration from ~~Cambodia~~ ² Cambodia. The cutters arrived in Vietnam waters ~~in~~ ² last July wearing the standard coat of white paint, which was quickly changed to steel grey, "because they could be spotted too easily in the moonlight with their white color," according to one Naval officer.

The sending of the U. S. Coast Guard to Vietnam brought some ~~pro~~ ² protests from American Congressmen, who believed that ~~they~~ ² their departure would weaken the Coast Guard capabilities within the United States.