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Navy Expeditionary Combat Command's Riverine Force: Patrolling the Gaps

"The Cold War strategy of warships battling in deep seas needs to be supplemented by a force that can secure harbors, ports and rivers. We need riverines to do just that."

– Rear Adm. Michael Tillotson, Commander, Navy Expeditionary Combat Command

Riverine Force Resurgence to Support Maritime Security Operations

- Riverine Group (RIVGRU) ONE and Riverine Squadron (RIVRON) ONE were both formally established May 25, 2006, under Navy Expeditionary Combat Command (NECC). With the subsequent stand up of squadrons TWO and THREE, the Navy brought together Sailors from diverse backgrounds to begin a transformation from blue water to brown water Sailors.
- That transformation also took the riverine force from a concept just two years ago, to a mission-capable combat force that has been contributing to the GWOT continuously since March 2007. The riverine squadrons' primary mission is to conduct maritime security operations (MSO) along rivers and other inland waterways and to deny the use of the maritime environment as a venue for attack, as a haven for insurgent activities or the illegal transportation of weapons, people or material.

Operational Successes

- Riverine squadrons have continually secured the Haditha Dam on Lake Qadisiyah, allowing the production of more than 45,000 megawatts of electrical power to 1.2 million Iraqis living in Al Anbar.
- RIVRON ONE uncovered its first weapons cache, including a SA-7 surface-to-air missile, within a week of arriving in theater. Since then, deployed squadrons have located more than 90 weapons caches.
- Riverine forces completed more than 800 combat missions with more than 200 shoreline sweeps supporting Coalition and Iraqi Security Forces.

Adaptive Force Packaging Innovation

- Today's riverine forces, like its predecessors the River Rats of Vietnam, have adapted tactics as they have gained experience. Riverine detachments completed more than 350 hours of airtime with small (Tier 1) Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs).
- RIVRON THREE deployed April 27 relieving RIVRON TWO which completed its almost eight month deployment on May 22.

Riverine Heritage

- The Navy's riverine heritage reaches back to the Revolutionary War, when American Sailors used small boats against the Royal Navy. Riverine warfare also was prevalent during the War of 1812 and the Civil War.
- The Navy's riverine force is part of the Navy Expeditionary Combat Command, a global force provider of adaptive force packages of expeditionary capabilities to joint warfighting commanders.

Key Messages

- Riverine forces are a combat force conducting MSO in areas where other maritime forces may not be able to operate.
- Riverine maintains control of rivers and waterways for military and civil purposes, denies their use to hostile forces and destroys waterborne hostile forces as necessary.
- Expeditionary Sailors—such as riverine forces—fill the gap between the Maritime and Land Component Commanders.

Facts & Figures

- Riverine Group ONE and Riverine Squadron ONE were officially established in May 2006.
- More than 700 Sailors are Riverines with 224 in each of the three squadrons and 67 at Group ONE.
- More than 800 combat missions and nearly 100 weapons caches have been found by riverine forces.
- Riverines have performed more than 350 hours of UAV operations providing ISR.