

OPERATION SILVER MACE II

April 11 -12, 1969

Deadly Day on the Duoung Keo







LCDR PAUL YOST, USCG

(Officer in Tactical Command, Operation Silver Mace II)

- In Country less than a month. Never in combat. “...it was my first big operation.”[\[1\]](#)
- Lt (jg) Bill Shumadine, Swift Boat Skipper: “We knew we had a rookie in command.”[\[2\]](#)
- [\[1\]](#) Paul Yost, September 6, 2001 interview by Paul Stillwell, U.S. Naval Institute.
- [\[2\]](#) Wade Sanders interview with William Schmadine.

CAPT. ROY L. HOFFMANN

Commander Task Force 115 – Market Time

- “Hoffmann was more willing to risk his men and boats with, perhaps, less forethought than the others.” [\[1\]](#)
- “Hoffmann was an officer with an aggressive, micro-managing style, and referred to the Cau Mau as ‘Indian Country.’”

[\[1\]](#) “The Reminiscences of Admiral Elmo R. Zumwalt, Jr. (ret), 2003, U.S. Naval Institute.

YOST

“...I got a message from Hoffmann saying he was going to come out on the Westchester County to observe...so, I said, ‘Boss, let me lead the operation into the Cau Mau and you run the Combat Information Center on the Ship.”



Admiral Roy Hoffmann

Captain Roy “Latch” Hoffmann (center), Kerrey’s swaggering commanding officer in Cam Ranh Bay, was all-Navy and no-nonsense. He carried his own M-16 into the field, along with a silver-handled revolver. “I damn well expect action,” he intoned. If no enemy were captured or killed, he said: “You’d hear from me.” Kerrey said he was out of *Apocalypse Now*. “He was the classic body-count guy,” he said.

APRIL 11TH

THE RACH VANA
SWIFT BOATS AGROUND





APRIL 12TH

RACH DUONG KEO

YOST

- “I thought, I’ve got helicopters on my shoulder. They can’t be more than three or four minutes out.”[\[1\]](#)
- [\[1\]](#) Paul Yost, “Hard Day on the Bo De”
- Naval Institute Proceedings, October 2004







YOST

- “I was screaming for the helicopters to come in and make the strike. I call got a call from the ship, ‘The helicopters are being launched at this time.’ I said, ‘What do you mean being launched at this time? They’re supposed to be overhead.’ About 20 or 30 minutes later, I had helicopters.”

[1]



[1] Paul Yost, “Hard Day on the Bo De” Naval Institute Proceedings, October 2004

YOST

“ABOUT 20 OR 30 MINUTES LATER, I HAD HELICOPTERS. WHEN THEY ARRIVED ON SCENE, THEY ASKED ME, ‘WHAT DO YOU WANT ME TO DO?’

I SAID, ‘YOU CAN DUST OFF. YOU CAN PICK UP SOME OF THE DEAD AND WOUNDED.’

THEY SAID, ‘WE DON’T DO THAT. WHERE DO YOU WANT THE AMMUNITION?’

I SAID, ‘PUT IT IN THE BUNKER AREA.’

WELL, THEY PUT THEIR AMMUNITION IN THE BUNKER, BUT I DON’T THINK ANYONE WAS THERE.”



BM2 LANGHOFFER

PCF-43

“By the time the Seawolves arrived, the firefight was over and all enemy fire had been suppressed. The dead, the wounded and the survivors of the ambush had been loaded onto other Swift Boats and we were well upriver...when the Gunships arrived. The firefight was over.”

CAPTAIN JERRY WAGES

Commander Rung Sat Special Zone

- **“I knew Admiral Yost well enough to form the opinion that he is one of the finest military officers I’ve ever known.”**
- **“It is basic Riverine Warfare 101 to conduct a an arms prep of the planned troop insertion point with Seawolves. Seawolves on the LST were only a 15 minute flight away, but Hoffmann would not release them. It is amazing to me that the request for gunship support by the on scene commander, Yost, would be denied. I now have a better feel for Admiral Zumwalt’s comments concerning Roy Hoffmann’s leadership traits and the resulting low morale among his Swift boat skippers.”**

YOST

- **“It was a...successful operation if sinking dugouts and sampans and burning farms and breaking water jugs and killing chickens and chasing the peasants are a measure of success.”**
- **“We walked into it and me without the helicopters that I wanted overhead. There were several decisions which resulted in an ambush. Hoffmann had a responsibility to tell me that he was countermanding my order to launch the gunships. I needed to know that...there was something really wrong with that.”[\[1\]](#)**

[\[1\]](#) Paul Yost, September 6, 2001 interview by Paul Stillwell, U.S. Naval Institute.

SKIPPER RICH MC CANN

- “Hoffmann said that we had a great victory in the Duong Keo. I could not believe my ears. He was calling one VC KIA and we with 9 KIA and 31 wounded a great victory. I said to him, ‘I would not call that a victory.’ Hoffmann told me I had an attitude problem and I better shape up.”[\[1\]](#)

- [\[1\]](#) Wade Sanders interview of Richard McCann.

THE DEAD

US

- LT(JG) DON DROZ
- CHIEF HOSPITAL CORPSMAN ROBERT WORTHINGTON
- QM3 HALLOWAY
- 6 UNIDENTIFIED VIETNAMESE MARINES

THEM

- 1 ENEMY COMBATANT

AFTERMATH

9 DEAD, 31 WOUNDED

1 BOAT DESTROYED, 3 BOATS DISABLED: ALL HIT

- Hoffmann: Silver Star
- Shumadine: Silver Star
- Barker: Silver Star
- Various medals for others

QUESTIONS

- Who was really in command?
- Green OTC to lead a large, complex, and dangerous mission.
- Abandonment of established tactics.
- Disregard of the advice of seasoned combat veterans.
- Hoffmann's unilateral cancellation of the Seawolves without notice.
- The status of the firefight when Hoffmann and the gunships arrived on scene.
- The outcome if Seawolves had been deployed as ordered, scouting the banks for enemy presence, especially in view of the defoliated condition of the river banks.
- The basis for Hoffmann's Silver Star.





INTERVIEWS and SOURCES

- Rank at time of Incident:
 - LCDR (Admiral) Paul Yost, USCG
 - Lt(jg) Rich McCann, PCF-21
 - Lt(jg) Charles Mohn, PCF-103
 - Ens. Stephen Carroll, PCF-23
 - Lt(jg) William Shumadine, PCF-5
 - Lt(jg) Elliott Barker, PCF-23
 - Lt(jg) Peter Upton, EOD, UDT
 - BM2 Wayne Langhoffer, Gunner
 - EN2 William Zaladonis, Gunner
 - QM3 Charles Bridgewater, Helmsman
- 06 SEP 2001: Interview of Admiral Paul Yost (USCG – ret), U.S. Naval Institute.
- “Swift Boats: Hard Day on the Bo De,” Admiral Paul Yost, October 2004 Proceedings Magazine.
- Reminiscences of Admiral Elmo R. Zumwalt, Jr. U.S. Naval Institute, 2003).
- “Death of the 43”: Peter Upton, Steve Waterman (<http://www.swiftboats.net/stories/pcf43hoffman.htm>)
- 12 APR 69 Statement of Admiral Paul Yost.
- After Action Report: CAPT Roy L. Hoffmann.
- 22 FEB 08 Interview with Captain Jerry Wages (ret).

