



USCGC *Point Welcome*⁽¹⁾: **Target of Opportunity**

by

William R. Wells, II

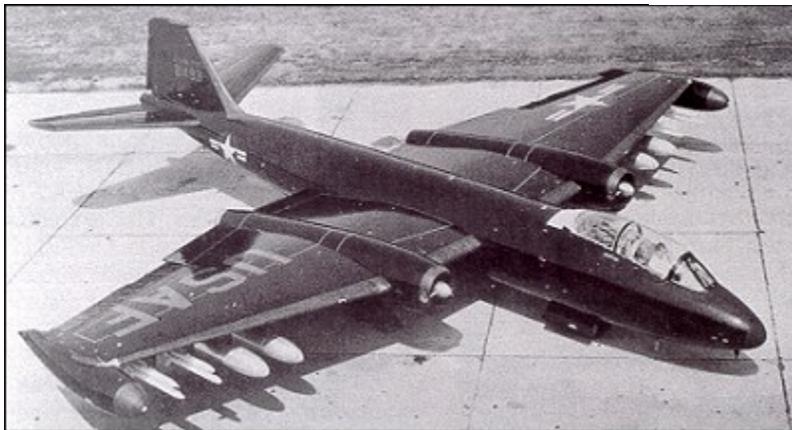
"Friendly Fire, isn't" has become an old saw and one used to disguise a multitude of human failings. Now called incidents, they were, and are, the direct result of the growth of weapons technology and human inability or willingness to control them. All martial conflicts are evolutionary processes where coordination and cooperation evolve from the result of disaster. The August 11, 1966, "Friendly Fire" expended on the United States Coast Guard Cutter *Point Welcome* (WPB 82329) was one evolutionary link that forced a small measure operational union during the Vietnam War.

About 0330, with sunrise just two hours away, the *Point Welcome* lay to in Market Time Patrol Area 1A1 three-quarters of a mile south of the 17th parallel.⁽²⁾ The officer of the deck., Ltjg. Ross Bell, USCG, and helmsman, GM2 Mark D. McKenney, watched aircraft illuminate contacts outside the Cua Tung(mouth of Ben Hai River). BM1 Billy R. Russell observed these same contacts on radar *above* the 17th Parallel during the previous watch. The morning was clear and although nothing appeared unusual Bell decided to start both Cummins V12 engines and move farther south. Moving at a slow five knots, he resumed patrolling 1A1's thirteen miles of coastline; however, within minutes aircraft began illuminating the *Point Welcome*.⁽³⁾ Bell sent McKenney to awaken Ltjg David C. Brostrom, USCG, the commanding officer, but before

Brostrom arose the first firing run hit the cutter seriously wounding Bell. In later testimony Bell said he saw no identification signals from the aircraft, "The next thing we knew there was illumination directly overhead and a firing run was made." Bell attempted to turn on the WPB's navigation lights and retrieve the Very's Pistol but a second firing run "wiped out the bridge

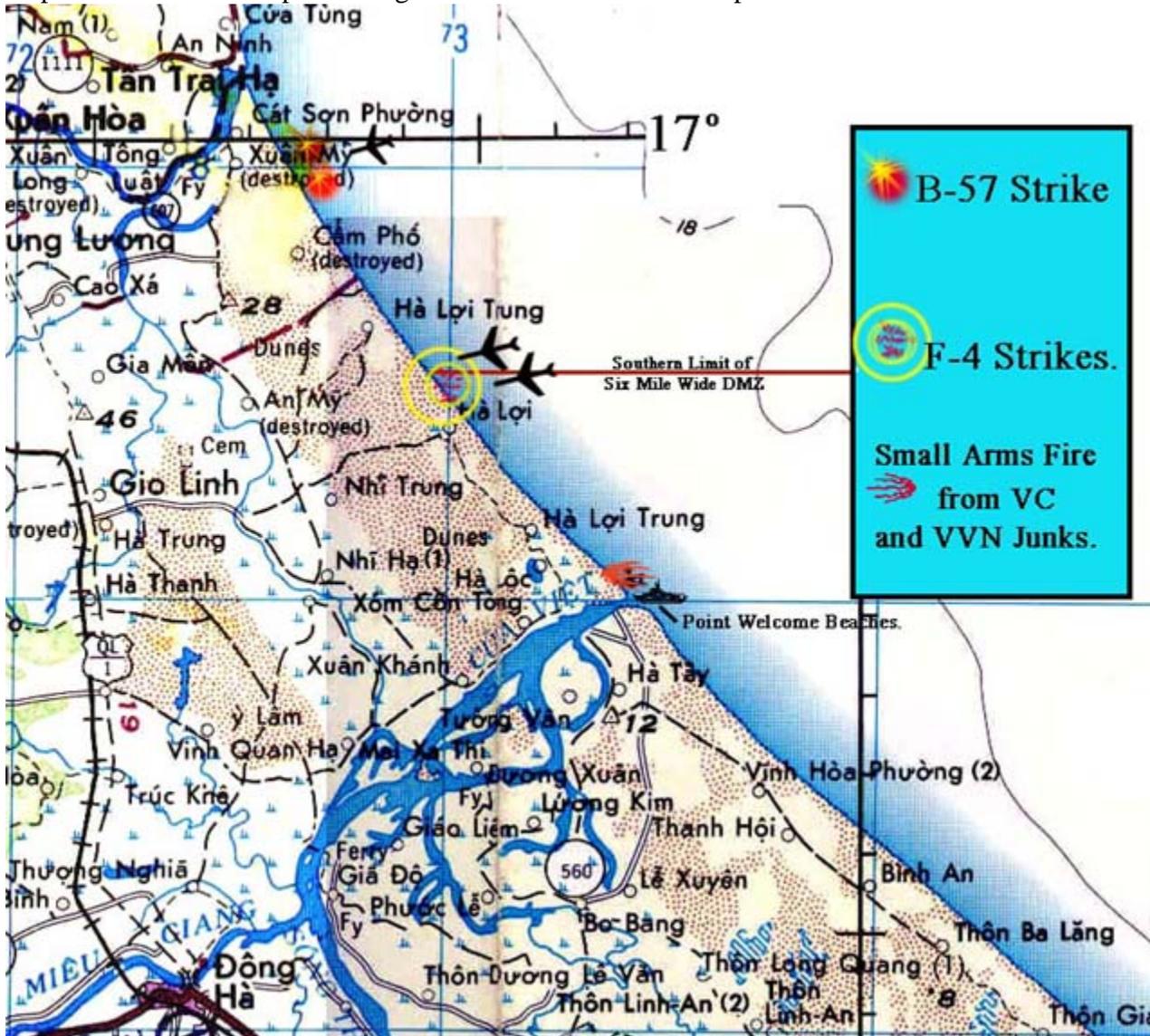
completely." **Yellow Bird 18**, a B-57 from the 8th Bombardment Squadron made these attacks following a Sky Spot mission

where it dropped its bombs, presumably, on the Cua Tung. Target. Target designation came from Blind Bat 02, a C-130 from the U. S. Air Force 21st Troop Carrier Squadron, from whom Yellow Bird 18 asked earlier if it had any gun targets.



Blind Bat reported negatively until alerted by **Spud 13**, an OV-1 Mohawk, with Side Looking Radar (SLAR) from the U. S. Army's 131st Aviation Company. Spud 13, and its relief Spud 14, notified Blind Bat of a large target that ran south at increased speed from the 17th Parallel. Both Mohawks had "painted" three to five targets at the Cua Tung River and possibly mistook the

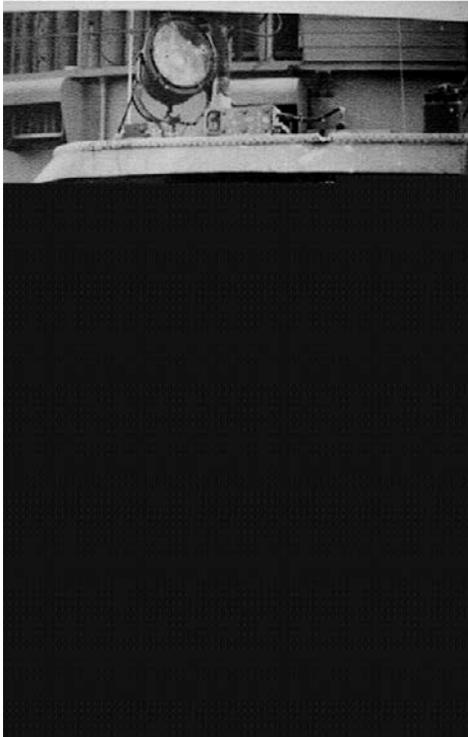
Point Welcome as one of the group. Spud 14 later testified that it was technically, but not practically possible, that while making turns he could have lost the target and picked another. However, interpretation of the "paint" either in the air or on the ground was not a definite science and errors were common. After Spud 13 reported, *Blind Bat* illuminated the WPB. At 0340 *Yellow Bird 18* made the first "tail attack" at 0340 firing 800 rounds of 20mm ammunition that "left him [the boat] burning." Following *Yellow Bird's* second attack the WPB's engines were opened to maximum speed of eighteen knots that *Blind Bat's* pilot later estimated to be 30-35



knots. Bell made one transmission to the Coastal Surveillance Center(CSC) at Da Nang, "Article[call sign], this is Article India, I am under fire from Vietnamese aircraft." CSC coolly replied, "Article India, this Article, roger, out." He then pushed the engine controls to maximum speed. At 0350, in the adjacent patrol area (1C) the *Point Caution*, offered help and received "This is India, affirmative. I have taken hits and request assistance" but even at maximum speed did not sight the *Point Welcome* until 0435.

Boatswain's Mate Chief Richard H. Patterson, up for the 0400-0800 watch, was half way up the bridge ladder when the first strike exploded the five-gallon gasoline cans on the stern. The force knocked him off the ladder and he momentarily lost consciousness. Reviving, and still not knowing aircraft had attacked the boat, went aft and organized a fire party. From the berthing area, Fireman Apprentice Houston J. Davidson thought he heard a rocket hitting the boat. Once on deck, Davidson attempted to retrieve the cans of firefighting foam but was unable because of wounds received in Yellow Bird 18's second pass. Later Yellow Bird noted the boat's bridge was the target for the second run.⁽⁴⁾ Chief Engineman William H. Wolf was the engineer on the mid-watch and heard the rounds hit on deck. Similarly BM1 Russell, ET2 Virgil G. Williams, CS2 Donald L. Austin came on deck to either assist with the fire or the wounded. From the second pass Brostrom was dead on the signal deck and EN2 Jerry Phillips dead on the main deck. The other wounded were McKenney, Ltjg Do Viet Vien, VNN, and Timothy J. Page, civilian photographer, but all received varying degrees of shrapnel wounds.

Out of ammunition Yellow Bird 18 climbed to 10,000 feet and observed the boat "steadily taking evasive action," but "wasn't going in any particular direction." This movement was remarkable considering helm control had been shot away and Patterson maintained steerage with the engine controls



Holes on port side show how 20mm rounds passed through the bridge wounding Lieutenant Bell.



Aft and forward views of 20mm and cluster bomb damage.



Electrical system

At 0350, command fell to Patterson and knowing Market Time recognition codes and he tried and failed to find the Very's Pistol in the wreckage. In addition, the gun runs cut the power conduits to all the radios and navigation light circuits.

The WPB remained operational and Blind Bat 02 called for another strike. A flight of two F4C Phantoms (**Coyote 91 and 92**), U. S. Air Force, 480th Tactical Fighter Squadron, 35th Fighter Wing (that had been in Vietnam since April) was finishing the Ambrose route in the Tally Ho sector.⁽⁵⁾ In position for the attack, Coyote 91 carried two MK 81 [250-pound] GP bombs and Coyote 92 two "cans" of cluster bomb units [CBU-



2A]. Coyote 91 estimated that the "ship" was between two and two and one half miles south of the Cua Tung and "South of the DMZ river [Cua Tung]." However it was "still North of the DMZ" this position gave the target greater legitimacy under the Tally Ho rules of engagement. The pilots considered the entire width of the zone hostile territory. Coyote 91 waited at 10,000 feet while Coyote 92 prepared at 3,000 for a CBU attack. Evidently Coyote 92 had some doubts about the target's origin and made a recognition pass at fifteen hundred feet blinking his navigation lights--the only one to do so. He received no reply not knowing the WPB had lost all signal capability. Coyote 91 also questioned Blind Bat 02 about their position now within South Vietnamese waters. Blind Bat 02 acknowledged the position and claimed he had followed the ship from farther north therefore "hit him." The WPBs southeasterly direction was Patterson's decision while trying to "run for the dark" and knowing he could not out run nor continue evading the aircraft; decided to beach the WPB at the Cua Viet and get support from Xray Alpha (South Vietnamese Junk Force base). Coyote 92 made his first CBU attack from stern to bow missing by five hundred feet but his second may have exploded two or three bomblets on the port stern.

Flight leader, Coyote 91, made three bomb runs west to east. His first missed by 150 feet, the second was dry, the third missed by "fifty feet off the starboard side." The misses were from Patterson's evasions.

Later noting that he timed the runs and hearing them begin the run in, he backed the engines full then went full ahead as the aircraft went away. By the time of the last bomb attack the boat was about 2½ miles north of the Cua Viet. However, before Coyote 91 left the boat appeared to stop within 250 feet of the Cua Viet. The attacks stopped about 0415 when Waterboy told Blind Bat that the boat was friendly.



Possibly the last photo of Ltjg Browtrom in Vietnam before he was killed.

Following Yellow Bird's strafing runs, Patterson ordered all personnel below decks for protection and first aid for the wounds. As the WPB moved south, Patterson was not aware the engines were losing power from a loss of forced draft air, only that the boat seemed to begin to "settle" from its high position at flank speed. He thought the boat was sinking from a bomb hit but did not know that Yellow Bird's second attack shot away the force draft blowers to the two diesel engines.



Thinking the boat about to sink and reaching the Cua Viet, Patterson ordered the crew to abandon ship with the seriously wounded placed in both life rafts. McKenney remarked the crew was "very calm about the whole thing" and despite the 1988 comments of Tim Page there was no panic.⁽⁶⁾ The only panic as witnessed by CS2 Austin and BMC Patterson was that of Page crawling around the deck looking for his Rolex Watch.⁽⁷⁾

As the crew entered the water as *Blind Bat* continued to illuminate the area that had now turned into a rescue scene. Led by the Chief Petty Officers, the crew moved toward the river mouth in two groups. Wolf's group was about two hundred yards away when it began receiving small arms fire. The other group was already under mortar, .50 caliber, and other small arms fire from one of Xray Alpha's junks. This firing from the north but the crew also received small arms fire from the south presumably from the Viet Cong (VC). Because of the incoming fire, Wolf decided to head seaward or back to the

WPB and retrieved by the *Point Caution*.

Caution's commanding officer, Ltjg. James D. Boyce, USCG, picked up five of the survivors at 0455 and called for a MEDEVAC. While en route to the scene, the *Point Caution* was illuminated by *Blind Bat*. *Blind Bat* wanted to learn if the flares "washed out" the cutter's navigation lights--they did not. However, the flares did wash out the aircraft lights from a sea-level. Boyce sent three men to the *Point Welcome* for a damage assessment and although they found a small fire, however, all machinery was functional and running. By 0510 they extinguished the fire and within the hour Xray Alpha's junks transferred the wounded to the hospital at Phu Bai. Also on scene were the cutters *Point Lomas*, *Point Orient*, and PCF-15, and the USS *Haverfield* sent to the scene to provide "big gun support" in case it was an attack by North Vietnamese aircraft.

Patterson, Wolf, Russell, and O'Conner navigated the *Point Welcome* back to Da Nang arriving at 1615, August 11, 1966, just twelve hours after the last attack. This was not the last incident of this type to occur in the same general location. On August 16, PCF-19 received three rocket hits sinking the boat and killing five, the cutter *Point Dume* and PCF-12 were attacked by an

unidentified aircraft, and both the USS *Boston* and HMAS *Hobart* were attacked with loss of life in the same general area.⁽⁸⁾ The combined effect was to make it abundantly clear that the current rules of engagement, or at least interservice coordination, were not sufficient.

MACV [Military Assistance Command, Vietnam] convened an official inquiry, headed by Colonel Samuel L. Reid, USA, and what the board discovered, field personnel would describe in two straightforward words. The board uncovered wide inconsistencies in interpretation and communication between the various agencies and their rules of engagement. Indicative of the period, the board found the investigation was not a unified effort. A 7th Air Force panel conducted a parallel investigation and oddly it did not submit, and oddly, nor was it asked to provide it.⁽⁹⁾

The board first questioned the *Point Welcome* crew on the key points about their knowledge of recognition and challenge codes and the WPB's position. Although unstated, the initial insinuation was the WPB crew was somehow at fault. However, Patterson, Russell, and McKenney verified that the Navy supplied each WPB with challenge codes each month. The codes alternated daily and covered three areas, US naval vessels and aircraft, South Vietnamese Navy, and the Vietnamese Junk Force. The codes consisted of a two-letter challenge and reply code except the Junk Force that used numerals. Not totally satisfied with the answers the board closely questioned Chief Patterson, the remaining senior qualified officer of the deck. Asked if he were aware of any other type of recognition codes used by anyone other than Market Time forces. Patterson's impression was that the codes, given by CTF 115[Market Time], applied to all US aircraft, ships, and land units. However, he quipped "We didn't have any recognition [signals] for VC[Viet Cong]." He added the WPBs used their navigation lights for emergencies. Patterson, as the others, verified the WPB was at Patrol Area 1A1's northern edge, but well south of the 17th Parallel. As to previous illumination by aircraft, Patterson said these occurred in the same general area by a helicopter but after firing two red flares the aircraft left. Each Coast Guardsman understood the basic emergency identification signal was the two red flares.

The path of investigation became more difficult as the board turned to the *Point Welcome's* administrative commander LCDR Howard I. Istock, USCG, Commander, U. S. Coast Guard Squadron One, Division 12. In function and by design, the cutters assigned to Operation Market Time had two commanders. While on patrol they followed the operational control of CTG 115.1 but off patrol they were under the administrative control of the Coast Guard. Illustrating this separation, and often adversarial relationship between CTF 115.1 and his task unit commanders, was Istock's 1 August 1966 War Diary entry. He protested that CTF 115.1's deletion of CGDIV12 and the PCF commander as information addressees on all "spotreps and other messages." This meant that each task unit commander had to wait for the patrol debriefs for any information.

Commodore Istock did not hesitate in corroborating the three separate challenge and recognition systems. He added the WPBs had radio communications with Market Time patrol aircraft over the 277.8 mcs frequency. His tone sobered as he related his knowledge of previous illuminations and other friendly fire incidents. He made strongly worded weekly reports to CTG 115.1 of these incidents and warned without some coordination meetings some serious event would occur. He presented to the board weekly report extracts to CTF 115.1 for July 1966. For 3-9 July,

"Challenge and reply systems to date are ineffective and not being used. There is a question as to when systems are to be used, and between whom." The week of 10-16, an Air Force spotter plane resorted to dropping a message asking a WPB to come up on 44.5 mcs. For the previous nine months the spotter tried to reach the WPB's by radio but did not know the WPBs guarded 46.5mcs. Istock told CTF 115.1 that "more coordination between Market Time and other efforts [agencies/services] in I Corps is necessary." The week of 17-23 July showed no improvement. "Again" the challenge Istock reported, "the challenge and reply procedures are poor." The *Point Lomas* thinking it uncovered an infiltrating steel hull trawler illuminated the surfaced submarine USS *Perch* following the submarine's refusal to answer. *Point Welcome* received six to ten shore artillery rounds as well as machine gun fire from PCF-13. In closing Istock gave a warning, "Lack of liaison in these matters will lead to eventual disaster. Too many near misses have already occurred."

Commander Joseph D. Nolan, USN, Commander CTG 115.1. defended the Navy's position. When asked about Istock's reports, Nolan acknowledged receipt and forwarding to III MAF or I Corps, however, he had no requirement to inform CTF 115. He had no recollection of the number of illumination incidents. He did not investigate or ask the individual boat commanders how they made their estimations. He dismissed the complaints after finding it difficult to "judge the seriousness" or "How they were illuminated or how they use their estimations" of the incidents. Later, Captain Clifford L. Stewart, USN, CTF 115, confirmed he saw no such reports. Nolan, who assumed command in May when CTF 115 decentralized operational control of Market Time areas, also found recognition of the cutters confusing; for the length of the investigation he called the WPBs "WPVs." Ironically changes to the recognition codes were available but classified "Top Secret." CTF 115.1 not having top secret facilities read them at III MAF, acknowledged the changes and apparently did not share this information with his task units.

Apart from internal, organizational difficulties, Nolan revealed a further breakdown in interservice coordination. When asked what standard procedures were in place for CTF 115.1 to talk with the various aircraft control agencies; he testified there was nothing. Listing an almost confusing array of acronyms, he assumed that when CSC made reports to III MAF COC or I Corps TOC *they* passed the information to I Corps DASC. Nolan assumed since III MAF and I Corps TOC had copies of the CTF 115 OpOrder it was their responsibility to make the other agencies aware of the presence of the Market Time boats and their recognition codes.

The dilatory telephone system at Da Nang enhanced assumption and misinformation in 1966. Despite the growing number of organizations working in the same area there were few direct lines between them. The primary means were the three separate telephone switching systems that included (1) Roadrunner, a VN manned manual switchboards was the primary exchange, (2) Parchment used by III MAF and I CORPS, and (3) the Monkey Mountain Exchange connected the Air Force's Panama [station] and Panama Control.

On the morning of August 11, the CSC [Coastal Surveillance Center] watch officer used Roadrunner switching through Monkey Mountain to contact Panama Control but only after Nolan who had a direct connection from his billet in Da Nang notified them. Panama acknowledged they already knew of the aircraft in the area. The CSC watch officer informed the

board that neither he, nor any other watch officer, had instructions for anything other than administrative functions. Following the incident someone taped a note to the watch officer's deck to call Panama Control first for any aircraft incidents. Magnifying the control problems of CSC was the physical separation of the CSC watch officer from his assistant on board the repair barge



YR 71. The assistants had, often dubious, radio communications with WPB and SWIFT units, while the CSC watch officer was 500 yards away and had no direct contact with the boats he was supposed to manage.

Air Force also divided command and control. The Control and Reporting Center, 620th TCS Detachment [Panama Control], duty officer testified that Nolan's telephone call was the he heard of the incident. However, he had

overheard communications between Yellow Bird 18, Blind Bat 02, and Waterboy that they were attacking some unidentified vessel. He recalled Blind Bat 02 speaking of "a nice juicy target." At Nolan's alert, Panama told Blind Bat 02 "to get off what they were doing." However, Panama Control was only a relay point. Earlier a control technician recalled relaying a request from Waterboy [Dong Ha] to I Corps TACC for Blind Bat to leave its area of coverage and continue the strike.

Although no one claimed responsibility for authorizing the strike, the authority fell on Blind Bat 02. Blind Bat 02 claimed making "a few passes for identification" and understood the use of his beacon and navigation lights as signals as he flew over. The watercraft was supposed to respond by turning on its deck or navigation lights, or displaying "parallel lights approximately amidships maybe slightly forward or a red rotating beacon or a red flare fired from the stern." . The F4 pilots expected to see a "series of green lights in a horseshoe or "U" shape on the bow of the boat" or some sort of flare. The pilots held no consensus of what they expected other than the red flare. This flare would have been the best



choice because Blind Bat admitted that because of his perceived fear of being shot down he did not descend below than 4500 feet. He claimed the target mounted .50 caliber or 37mm guns and the Air Force claimed that downings from these gun types came below 4500 feet. Blind Bat

stayed at or above 4500 feet nor did he turn on his lights. Evidently Blind Bat was also unlighted during previous identification passes. Nevertheless, he considered Yellow Bird orbiting at 6000 feet with lights and aero beacon flashing as sufficient signals. On his second mission, the board never asked Blind Bats' mission controller how he identified the guns but missed the 3-foot high English call letters painted on top of the bridge or the decidedly American style 14-foot long boat on deck. Under the board's questioning Blind Bat admitted "I don't know whether he saw our signals [Yellow Bird's] or not."

The version told to 7th Air Force investigators had Blind Bat picking up a "large target" after notification from Spud. Blind Bat on a northerly heading dropped four flares and found the boat. It dropped two flares in a second pass, one aerial and one surface, and then one flare every two and half minutes in the third. Since the Point Welcome did not respond to the flare passes Blind Bat called in the strike.⁽¹⁰⁾

Blind Bat misinterpreted the rules of engagement set by the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The rules allowed strikes on a "Hostile Vessel" if it was military and in RVN or Thai internal or territorial seas. In addition it had to be engaged in "attacking or acting in a manner which indicates within reasonable certainty an intent to attack US/friendly forces or installations, including the unauthorized landing of troops or material on friendly territory," laying mines, or "engaged in direct support of attacks against RVN or Thailand."⁽¹¹⁾ The absence of "reasonable certainty" and hostile fire did not influence Blind Bat 02 to take closer looks nor did he try to inform any of the surface units.

Testimony also revealed physical identification problems. These pilots and crews had briefings of Navy boat types but not the WPBs that had been patrolling area for over a year. The half-light caused by the flares made identification more troublesome for Yellow Bird 18s pilot. He initial impression of the WPB was of "the classic silhouette of the Chinese Junk, that is the high stern and the big sail," another pilot described it as a "PT class boat." However, descriptions may have been some moot points. All the aviators testified that they had never heard of Operation Market Time nor were they aware they shared seaward patrol areas with the Navy. This lack of recognition and operational knowledge melded with an incorrect briefing at Dong Ha that there were no friendly craft in the area built a mind set that effected what people saw from a mile above in a dark sky.

The 7thAF took a defensive position. Colonel I. B. Jack Donalson, USAF, commander of Task Force Tiger Hound\Tally Ho, said Blind Bat 02 was the "airborne battlefield command and control" controller [ABCCC] and had fragmentation [FRAG] orders to supplement daily orders and could authorize striking fleeting targets or targets of opportunity. Donalson was responsible for NVN operations and was unsure of the rules for actions in SVN. Following August 11, he ordered that no attacks on watercraft inside the DMZ unless it attacks the aircraft, engaged in supporting enemy troops, or has originated in NVN.

The 7thAF Operations Officer testified Blind Bat was not an ABCCC for night flights but more of a mission or traffic controller. He outlined the Air Force's awareness of the many versions of rules of engagement used for Rolling Thunder\Tally Ho\Barrell Roll\Steel Tiger but, as Director of Strike Plans, he had not heard of Market Time operations in the DMZ area. He could not say

the whole 7thAF did not know about it but was not aware of any attempts to coordinating actions in common patrol areas. The 7thAF investigating officer, Colonel Carl E. Taylor, USAF, concluded "this incident was caused in large part by an overlap in areas of responsibility in TALLY HO and Market Time."⁽¹²⁾ Both were correct. Coordination between 7thAF and NAVFORV was practically nonexistent. They assigned only one naval officer to the 7thAF with the primary function as liaison for Tally Ho making it the only operation that had Navy/Air Force cooperation. The Commander In Chief, Pacific [CINCPAC], underscored this in an understatement, "this incident is an apparent lack of tactical coordination between operational commanders."⁽¹³⁾ The 7thAF investigation also concluded the Point Welcome did not know the "correct MAROPS challenge/response for air to surface" and given "two means of identifying themselves to aircraft" by turning on running lights or by voice communications "the vessel did neither" then again the Air Force had no procedures to challenge Market Time vessels.⁽¹⁴⁾

CTF 115 and his staff were just as unsure of the rules of engagement in the DMZ and just as unfamiliar with Air Force operations orders. Created in April 1966, CTF 115 was unaware there was an overlap of operations in the DMZ. COMNAVFORV later discovered that some Tally Ho and COMUSMACV rules of engagement orders were available but since COMNAVFORV, CTF 115, and CTG 115.1 were not on distribution they did not receive them. Captain Stewart, the last witness, recommended, in hindsight, a "common set of rules or a common set of identification signals" and the formation of a group to study the problem. These were essentially the same recommendations of Commodore Istock.

They made changes. MACV Chief of Staff, Major General W. B. Rosson, USA, ordered a review of all orders, instructions, and mission directives to provide coordination and interchange of information to develop training programs that emphasize recognition and identification of friendly and hostile watercraft. The investigating board also found no one person, or organization, at fault but a system that showed no signs of concerted effort that combined with misinformation and misperception to cause the strike. Strike orders for watercraft in SVN were now cleared through the Coastal Surveillance Groups. The WPB crews also learned. They replaced procedures and the call letters on the top of the bridge with a white star. The reaction and performance of the *Point Welcome* crew displayed what could be expected from men with professional and high quality character and training. These qualities continued throughout the war making the Coast Guardsmen the most professional among the coastal warfare groups in Vietnam.

The *Point Welcome* incident probably saved lives in the long years ahead. As seen, the the series of non-lethal incidents did not force coordination between the various services. However, the loss of lives forced awareness for cooperation of effort. "Friendly Fire, isn't" remains and will probably continue into the future but if preventable by seemingly simple administrative functions then the deaths of Ltjg Brostrom and EN2 Phillips were not in vain.



Memorial service held aboard the *Point Welcome*.

Note: This article in an edited form appeared in *Naval History*, May-June 1998.

Notes

1. The details of this account are derived from the official Report of Board of Investigation, Point Welcome Incident (U) ordered by USMACV 13 August 1966. [Declassified 13 May 1988]. "Point Welcome File," U. S. Coast Guard Historian's Office, Coast Guard Headquarters, Washington, DC. Testimony was given in the investigation from 15 August to 23 August 1966. Unless otherwise noted all material in this piece is contained in this report.

2. The limits of Patrol Area were from RVN coast at 17/00 N, to 17/00N, 107-23E; thence to 16-50N, 107-23E; thence to a point on the RVN coast at 16-50N.

3. The "B" Class 82-foot WPB carried 1500 gallons of diesel fuel and conservation was the general rule on patrol. The average speed on patrol, with one engine on line, was about 2½ kph at 250 shaft turns.

4. 7th Air Force Tan Son Nhut Message 111149Z Aug 66, pg. 2, para. 11. This report indicates Yellow Bird made three strafing runs, but testimony shows only two.

5. Ironically the Point Welcome's logo was the cartoon character "Wiley Coyote."

6. Tim Page, *Page After Page*, (Atheneum, New York, 1989): 126-131. The account by Page is singularly inaccurate in context and detail despite the claim of being an eyewitness. Page for some unknown reason defames the personal actions of various members of the Point Welcome crew. To point out a few of Page's inaccuracies, he describes the Point Welcome as "a military version of a shrimp boat," "Its mascot, painted on the flying bridge side, was the cartoon road runner doing "beep beep," he also claimed the "F-4 US Air Force Phantom was skimming the waves at sonic speed, its 20-mm Vulcan guns pouring 6000 rounds per minute towards us." As seen, this model F4 was not equipped with 20mm guns. He also incorrectly places the aircraft attack order and the ordnance they used. He notes that Ltjg. Brostom was decapitated in one attack as well as claiming everyone on deck was wounded in the second pass. He noted that the third pass left the cutter "dead in the water." Probably the most ludicrous statements he made was his attempt to take photos in the dark. He then claims he had a "swabbie" full in his lens who had "truncated arms" from an exploding fire extinguisher. Adding more insult to his fictional account he noted the "chief bosun and another man scrambled up the forward ladder to douse the fire on the forward deck . . . They were blown back on top of us moments later. One more dead, one armless." The only part that had any truth to his account was that his Rolex watch was lost in the action. Mr. Page has refused invitations to apologize to the crew that worked so diligently to save his life.

7. BMC Patterson later found Page's Rolex watch and returned it to him. Thomas J. Cutler, *Brown Water, Black Berets: Coastal And Riverine Warfare in Vietnam*. (Naval Institute Press, Annapolis, MD): 114-115. Cutler

mentions the Point Welcome incident but unfortunately he uses Tim Page's inaccurate and unconfirmed portrayal of the incident.

9. The report has not been located. However, a synopsis was recorded in Project CHECO Report, Operation Tally Ho, 21 Nov '66, pp 29-32. Air Force Historical Research Agency, Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama.

10. Ibid, 30.

11. Rules of Engagement - Southeast Asia (U), JCSM-118-65, 19 February 1965. [Declassified June 21, 1988, NARA]. This change in the rules of engagement removed the restriction against pursuit into Communist China.

12. CHECO Report, 21 Nov 66, p. 31.

13. "PT. Welcome Incident," CINCPAC 120322Z Aug 66.

14. CHECO Report, 21 Nov 66, p. 31.

12. CHECO Report, 21 Nov 66, p. 31.

13. "PT. Welcome Incident," CINCPAC 120322Z Aug 66.

14. CHECO Report, 21 Nov 66, p. 31.