

## Request for Information from Vietnam Era Seaplane Veterans

Operation Market Time was the U.S. Navy's effort to stop troops and supplies from flowing by sea from North Vietnam to South Vietnam during the Vietnam War. From 1964 to 1967, the Navy's four SP-5B *Marlin* seaplane squadrons, VP-40, VP-47, VP-48 and VP-50, rotated continuous operational support flying around the clock missions over the South China Sea and from seaplane tenders based at Cam Ranh Bay, Da Nang and Con Son Islands, Republic of South Vietnam. Now, nearly fifty years later many of these former flight crews and support personnel assigned to the missions are being denied VA disability claims for Vietnam service.

There are an increasing number of Vietnam era seaplane veterans with serious medical conditions filing claims with the VA for disabilities related to exposure to Agent Orange. Each of the three seaplane tenders that operated with the squadrons in Vietnam, *USS Pine Island*, *USS Salisbury Sound* and *USS Currituck*, are on the VA approved presumptive list for exposure to Agent Orange, but many of the seaplane squadron personnel assigned to work with or aboard the ships are being asked to provide incontrovertible proof of ship board assignments or "boots on the ground" to support medical claims for Vietnam service connected disability - proof that may or may not have existed at the time of service or made a permanent part of personnel files. In addition, the VA has demonstrated an inconsistent policy across states in defining acceptable proof when awarding or denying claims.

Each of the four seaplane squadrons administered their tender assignments differently during the years they operated in Vietnam. Additionally, documentation such as deployment orders, temporary assigned duty (TAD) for flight crews or ground personnel to the tender and enlisted flight records were not retained by the squadron or made a permanent part of an individual's service file. If anything, the service file lists only the deployment itself. Few people kept copies of squadron documentation from that era and much of what is needed now to support a claim for VA benefits cannot be replaced. Here is where we need your help.

If we could obtain examples of the different types of documentation issued to officer and enlisted personnel for each squadron and deployment, we just may find an acceptable segue to helping veterans prove their association with the seaplane tenders and or boots on the ground in Vietnam. Of particular importance are copies of squadron deployment orders for years 1964, 1965, 1966 and 1967 (including front, back and attachments), as well as any other squadron issued documentation that may apply to tender assignments for flight crews or support personnel. If Liberty Cards or shore passes were issued by the tender(s) while in Vietnam, examples of those would also be helpful. Once a database of all available documentation and information is established, it can be shared with other individuals in support of their claims.

Should you have any squadron documentation for VP-40, 47, 48, or 50 from the Vietnam era that you feel would help our cause please contact Bruce Barth ([bbarth1@austin.rr.com](mailto:bbarth1@austin.rr.com)). All that is needed right now is a quality Xerox copy (front & back) or a .jpg or .PDF file. If you do not have the ability to copy the documents let me know and I will make arrangements to make copies for you.

This is a collective effort on behalf of all four Navy seaplane squadrons that served in Vietnam between 1964 and 1967. We need to make this happen for those who need our help now and to benefit others in the future. I will be happy to answer any questions.

Thank you in advance for your participation.

Bruce Barth  
VP-40 1965-1967