

VAL-4  
History  
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BINH THUY - Republic of Vietnam - The constantly changing nature of the Vietnam war has resulted in a corresponding change in naval tactics. From the traditionally large offensive offshore armada, the Navy in the Mekong Delta has reverted to the mainly defensive interdiction tactics of pleasure craft sized River Patrol Boats (PBR's); in place of the massive amphibious assault, the Navy now uses coordinated small unit operations in the interior. Perhaps the greatest change, however, has been in Naval Aviation where the carrier based strike concept has given way to the in-country fire teams of Light Attack Squadron FOUR (VAL-4).

Consisting of two plane formations, the light attack fire teams of VAL-4 provide air cover and visual reconnaissance for the PBR "Brown Water Navy". The OV-10A Bronco of VAL-4 is the only propeller driven attack aircraft in the Navy's inventory, and it successfully fills the performance gap between jets and helicopters. Powerful enough to deliver heavy ordnance loads, the Bronco has the endurance to stay on station 3 hours, and yet is so versatile that it can perform low level reconnaissance. A minimum maintenance requirement is another Bronco plus, allowing the fire teams to operate from forward air bases if necessary.

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Armed with 5 inch and 2.75 inch rockets, 20mm cannon, and 7.62mm machine guns, the VAL-4 fire teams patrol III and IV Corps areas. Operating from two Delta Bases, Binh Thuy and Vung Tau, the Broncos have placed air strikes from Tay Ninh in the North to Cau Mau in the South, from Chau Doc in the West to Vung Tau in the East. Scheduled patrols and round-the-clock standby alert crews enable the Broncos to be on station anywhere in the Mekong Delta area in a matter of minutes.

Commissioned in January of 1969 with 36 officers, 110 enlisted personnel, and 14 aircraft, VAL-4 arrived in-country the following March. After a short but intensive training period, VAL-4 commenced all weather, 24 hour a day combat operations in mid-April.

The men of VAL-4 are justifiably proud of their aircraft, their accomplishments, and the new dimensions they have given to counter-insurgency operations. From April to October the Broncos had accounted for 383 KBA (killed by air), 636 structures destroyed and another 398 damaged, 181 sampans destroyed, and 117 bunkers destroyed. Their effectiveness has earned the praise of all the units with which they have worked, but perhaps the greatest praise came from the PBR sailor who said; "It sure makes a man feel secure to hear those Broncos overhead."

Public Affairs Office  
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VAL-4

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BINH THUY, Republic of Vietnam - After a year of operating out of banded spaces, the "Black Ponies" of Light Attack Squadron FOUR, (VAL-4) are preparing to move into a new "corral".

The new facilities, being completed by Seabees on Vietnamese Air Force Base Binh Thuy, will include two maintenance hangars, a banded operations center, and nine revetments for VAL-4's OV-10A aircraft.

For over a year the "Black Ponies" have utilized temporary spaces and supply facilities. With the new hangars, however, maintenance man hours will be reduced, and with the built in fuel pit and ammo revetment, refueling and rearming will be greatly facilitated.

In the fourteen months VAL-4 has been operational in-country, the "Black Ponies" callsign has become a by-word for troops in need of close air support. A standard day for VAL-4 includes nine regularly scheduled patrols designed to give maximum coverage to the III & IV Corps Tactical Zones, as well as any scramble launches that may be required.

It is the scramble capability that has made the Black Ponies such a vital asset in the Delta interdiction effort. Able to take-off within 10 minutes after receiving a call for help, the OV-10A's are fast enough to reach any target in the Delta area in less than 30 minutes, yet versatile

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enough to stay on station over two hours. Their combined load of heavy and light rockets, and machine guns enables them to take on any targets from reinforced bunkers to camouflaged sampans, and since all ordnance is forward firing, they are capable of working extremely close to friendly troops.

In order to take the fight to "Charlie", top notch aircraft maintenance is required. The new facilities should provide that maintenance, allowing the "Black Ponies" to improve the close air support for which they are already so justly famed.