

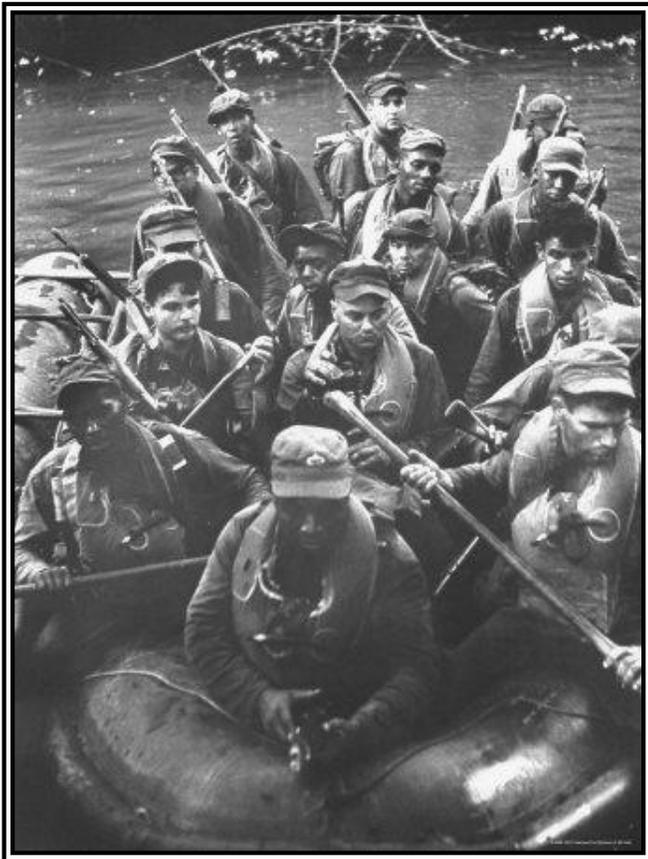
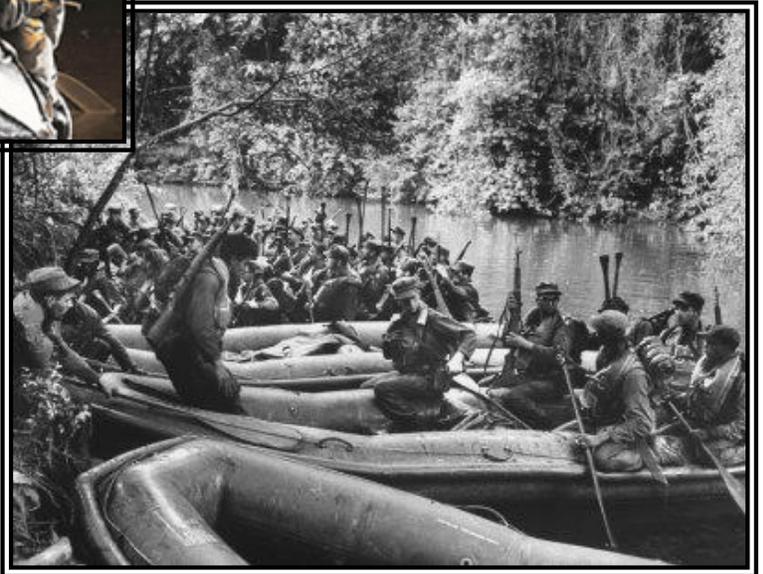
# Inflatable Boats ~ Viet Nam

During the Vietnam War, besides pontoons for crossing rivers, rubber combat craft in various forms were used by American military forces mainly for small unit operations by American Rangers, Special Forces and Navy Seals. These small craft could be deployed from submarines, warships and even dropped from helicopters. They had small outboard engines but could also be paddled when stealth was required.

Originally called the Landing Craft Rubber this inflatable rubber boat became known by the more common term - IBS (Inflatable Boat Small). The IBS traced back to the days of the Navy Combat Demolition Units and Underwater Demolition Teams of WW2 and Korea. The IBS had a pointed bow that, over time, became blunter. Over the decades the IBS was in use, its overall length of 16 feet, 8-foot beam, nil draft, and 396-pound weight remained fairly constant. Speed was roughly 4.5 knots with the outboard and 55 yards per minute with eight experienced men paddling. The IBS was the workhorse of NCDU/JDT/SEAL units until it was replaced by the Zodiac series of inflatable boats.



Color Photos: Courtesy of U.S. Army; Black & White Photos: Credit Carl Mydans



The Navy purchased its Patrol Air Cushion Vehicles (PACV) from the British Hovercraft Company, they were propelled by gas turbine engines. The PACV was fast and could cross all manner of terrain and water but it was loud. No way could you sneak up on anyone. PACVs carried twin .50s above the pilothouse and M60 machine guns on either side. The SK-5 hovercraft was extensively used in Vietnam for patrol and interdiction missions in the Mekong Delta. The US Army models represented an important advance in the use of Hovercrafts in war, its "skirts" were seccionadas, allowing better access for repair. It could load a Jeep equipped with a cannon.

Top: U.S. Navy PAVC 02 Tf-116 1966 British Hovercraft (39' x 24' speed 55 knots); Bottom: U.S. Army PAVC; {Photos Courtesy of Department of Navy and Department of Army}

