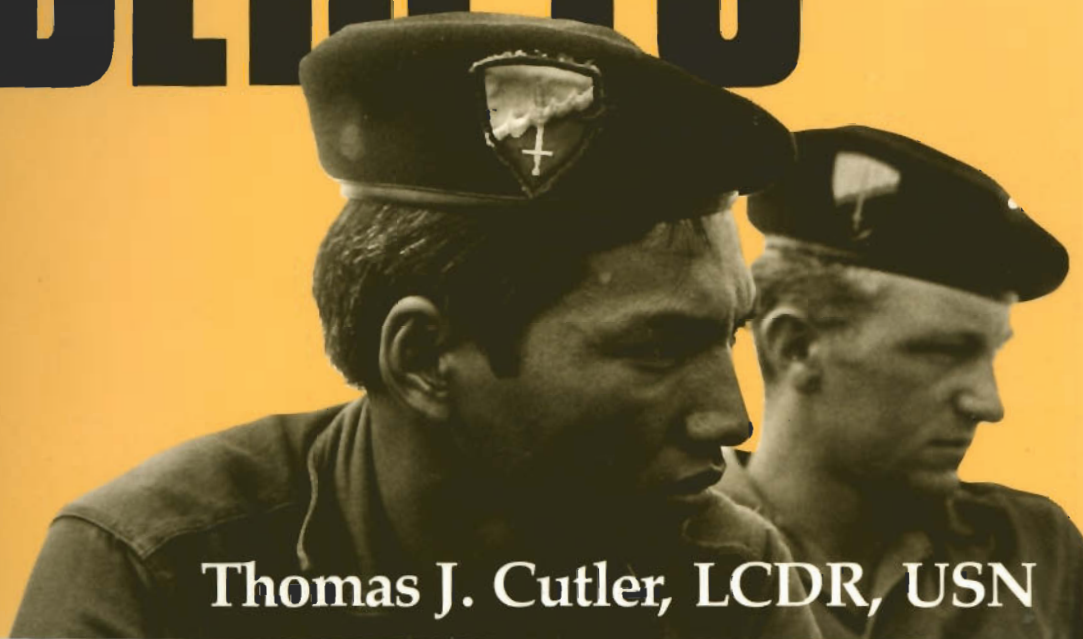


BROWN WATER, BLACK BERETS



Thomas J. Cutler, LCDR, USN

Cutler

BROWN WATER, BLACK BERETS

Coastal and Riverine Warfare in Vietnam

BROWN WATER, BLACK BERETS

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—Wilbur E. Garrett, editor, *National Geographic Magazine*
former Navy photojournalist

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THOMAS J. CUTLER, a lieutenant commander in the U.S. Navy, teaches history at the Naval Academy. He also serves as an associate editor of the U.S. Naval Institute's *Proceedings* magazine. He has published several articles and writes a monthly "Books of Interest" column for *Proceedings*.

Cutler served in Vietnam from January to December of 1972. As an in-country naval advisor to South Vietnamese forces, he participated in numerous river and harbor patrols, coastal surveillance operations, and Vietnamization projects in many regions of the country. Cutler also served on the staff of the chief of the U.S. Naval Advisory Group in Saigon. He earned the Navy Commendation and Achievement Medals, a Combat Action Ribbon, and campaign, service, and unit awards.

Cutler enlisted in the Navy at the age of seventeen and attained the rank of gunner's mate second class. He received a commission in 1969 upon completion of a B.A. degree from Towson State University in Maryland. After twelve years at sea, he was appointed to the academy faculty in 1981, first in the Seamanship and Navigation Department and then in the History Department.

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BROWN WATER, BLACK BERETS

Despite a recent deluge of books on the Vietnam War, one significant aspect of America's involvement—the U.S. Navy's brown-water force—has received little attention and remains virtually unknown to the general public. Often using converted pleasure boats and aging landing craft to patrol the narrow rivers and shallow coastal waters of South Vietnam, the men of this unorthodox navy played a vital role in the war effort.

Their dramatic story of war deserves to be told, and Tom Cutler is uniquely qualified for the job. He is both a historian, who now teaches at the Naval Academy, and a naval officer, who served as an in-country advisor to the South Vietnamese Navy. His training as a historian allows him to describe objectively the scope of the Navy's operations and evaluate their effectiveness. His combat duty in Vietnam enables him to add a striking human dimension to the story. Throughout this book he draws on his own experiences and those of a network of veterans who wore the black beret while serving with the in-country naval forces.

Cutler takes a sympathetic yet rational approach to his subject. He puts the reader in the midst of battle to convey the terror and confusion of nocturnal firefights on jungle-lined canals. He goes into the camps to let the reader witness the rigors of life in the tropics and the sudden perils of guerrilla warfare. Along with these compelling scenes, Cutler provides a detailed account of the development and operation of the Navy's brown-water fleet right up to the Vietnamization programs in effect during the U.S. troop withdrawal from Southeast Asia.

A deft blending of official records with eyewitness descriptions, *Brown Water, Black Berets* makes an invaluable contribution to those seeking a full understanding of U.S. naval involvement in the Vietnam War.

BROWN WATER, BLACK BERETS

**Coastal and Riverine Warfare
in Vietnam**

**Thomas J. Cutler
Lieutenant Commander, U.S. Navy**

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