Swift Boats Are A’Coming’ To Fill Naval Demand In Viet Nam Conflict

By LANNY THOMAS
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A critical war worsens in Viet Nam, the
whine of saws digging into aluminum
continues daily at the Se-
wart Seacraft Corporation near
Berkswil.

Here, large sleek swift boats
are on the production line and
will be used to patrol the rough
coastline of South Viet Nam.
The Navy calls the project "Op-
eration Market Time."

Naval officials andSwart to-
day released information about
a $13.5 million contract Swart has
with the Navy to build a to-
tal of 104 of these seacraft for
patrol purposes.

In a recent press conference
here, it was learned that Swart
had been constructing these
all-aluminum Swift boats PCF
(Patrol Craft Fast) since last
summer.Already, some are in
use in the water off Viet Nam
and Swart is under contract to
fill the entire order by Au-
 gust.

J.W. Tolivar, a government
spokesman for Capt. H.A. Get-
ders who is the supervisor of
shipbuilding for the Eighth Na-
val District in New Orleans,
said the Navy had received 36 of
the boats called for in the first
of three contracts. The second
contract called for 38 boats, of
which also have been deliv-
ered.

$100,000 BOAT
Swart’s latest contract with
the Navy requires 59 boats
which are now under construc-
tion. Each vessel is valued at
approximately $100,000.

The Swift boat was designed
about eight years ago for trans-
portation for oil industries op-
 erating on the Gulf Coast. Be-
cause of its size, speed and ma-

naverability, and its proven
success on the Gulf Coast, the
Navy selected the design for use
in Viet Nam. The Louisiana coast
is much like the coastline of South
Viet Nam.

The boat also was chosen be-
cause of its ability to navigate
shallow waters near the shore
and has been proven to take a
beating, according to R.J. Hidal-
go, vice president of Swart.
The Swift boat can operate suc-
scessfully in only three feet of wa-
ter.

The craft is 30 feet long, 14
feet wide, 7 feet tall, and has a
capacity of 12 passengers. Its
crew consists of one pilot and
one gunner.

The boat also is equipped with
eight .50-caliber machine guns
and two light machine guns.

They are in fighting shape when
they arrive overseas," Hidalgo
said.

Because of the boat’s stability
and maneuverability, it was cho-
sen by the Navy for Viet Nam op-
eration," it is believed that it will
be ideal for the situation that
now prevails in Viet Nam, Tol-
ivar said. The Swift boat can
carry more than 25 knots through
the water and is designed for a de-
monstration ride on the boats
following the press conference
at the Swart plant and pilots of
the craft demonstrated the
depth and maneuverability of the
boat in addition to the quick take-off.
The boats can handle waves up to
an area their size.

The boat is powered by two
General Motors V12 diesel en-
 gines, which are easily maintai-
ned.

Swift Boats

(Continued from Page 1)

wart Plant for New Orleans
where they are shipped to South
Viet Nam. In addition to radia-
tion and radar, Swart also makes
the guns that are loaded with am-
munition and firing once the craft
reaches its destination.

The boats are armed with two
craft type .50-caliber machine
 guns carried in a gun tub mount-
ed on top of the forward wheel-
house. In addition, a 50-caliber
machine gun is carried atop a
breach-loading 81 mm mortar,
both of which are mounted on
the after deck.

Before the boats leave the
plant, officials of naval ordi-
nance in New Orleans make a
final check and okay the weapons.

THREE CREWS

According to Tolivar, the Na-
 vy plans to maintain three alter-
 nating crews for each boat in
order to keep them at sea as
long as is possible. A crew con-
sists of one American officer and
five enlisted men, with one Viet-
namite as the naval man aboard.
Who will interrogate the crewmen
which are stopped for in-
spection.

The cabins of the Swifts are
designed for six persons sleep-
ing for six persons. It also has
facilities for preparing small a-
mounts of food.

Swift, who trains most of its
crew officers in the United States,
trained the Swifts at the Swart
building in the United States that is
building seacraft for this type.
It is due to be delivered to the
Navy in the months ahead.

The original contract was con-
ducted at the Stephens Institute in New
Jersey.

All work on the Swift program
is supervised by Swift’s engineers
in Berkswil, under the direction of
Mr. Swart.

Seacraft is opening its
plant Friday for a tour and inspec-
tion by the public and the state’s
government officials.

The public will be given a
chance to see the construction
of Swifts that eventually will be
sent to Viet Nam.

INSPECTING THE ARMAMENT — During a tour of the Swart Seacraft yard in Ber-
kwik last week, members of the press and
other officials observed the weapons mount-
ed on Swift boats being built for the Navy to
use in Viet Nam. The armament here is a 50
caliber machine gun mounted atop a 81 mm
mortar. Looking at the weapon, from left to
right, are Chester C. Boudinot, sheriff of St.
F. John Parish; Roland J. Hidalgo, sales man-
ger of Swart; and Ed Walthall, a newspaper
from Franklin. (Advertiser Staff Photo)