# rocket launching lct(r)s

In September of 1943 the "Special Support Group" was organized at Little Creek, Virginia, with Lt. Commander L.E. Hart, Jr. as C.O. This new unit was to man British-made, converted landing craft on a mission of close inshore gunfire support for landing operations.

During October, the group moved to Camp Bradford, Virginia, and reached a personnel list of 144 officers and 1,537 enlisted men. Later that month the group moved to Boston for continued training.

On December 15, the LCT(R) Group was organized as a part of the Special Support Group. Lt.(jg) L.W. Carr was appointed Group Commander. The task of organizing a new group of craft never before used by the U.S. Navy was begun. Officers in Charge were appointed and crews organized.

These LCTs were a conversion of the British Mark 3 LCT--length 196 feet, beam 36 feet. The standard power unit of two 500 h.p. Paxman-Ricardo diesel engines was retained, maximum speed 9 knots. Both screws turn to starboard. An extra deck was constructed over the tank space and on it was mounted either 972 or 1,044 five-inch rocket projectors.

In the original Admiralty design, because reconversion of the craft to LCTs was contemplated, the crews quarters, officer's quarters, and magazine were separated by canvas bulkheads. To make the craft more liveable, the canvas was replaced with either steel or wood in the U.S. manned craft by their own crews. Bunks and hot water heaters were also installed.

The craft were equipped with 970 radar, a British set which swept 360° in azimuth once a second. The maximum range of the set was 25 miles. Three and a half 7-mile range scales were also provided. The primary use of radar on the LCT(R)s was for ranging in firing rockets, though it was also a very valuable navigational aid. Each LCT(R) was also equipped with QH, a navagational aid, and a Brown Gyro Compass.

The rockets are fired electrically by a series of switches in the wheelhouse. Each switch fires either 39 or 42 rockets per salvo, depending on the total number mounted. One group of 36 projectors is wired so that 12 salvos of 3 rockets may be fired for ranging. All the projectors were mounted at a 45° angle to the waterline and pointed forward.

The target area was covered by pointing the ship's head at the target, determining the range by radar or ranging salvos, and firing the salvos with a predetermined time interval between them to gain the desired depth of pattern. The width of the pattern was 700 yards and could not be controlled. Depth for a complete broadside (of 24 salvos) could be varied from 300 to 1,000 yards or more, depending upon the desired concentration.

Each round consisted of three partitions: fuse, projectile, and propelling unit. A completely assembled H.E. round was 36.5 inches long and weighed 59 lbs., 7 lbs. of which was poured high explosive (TNT and amitol). The range of the H.E. round was 3,580 yards. Incendiary rockets, with a range of 3,900 yards, were provided for ranging. Smoke rockets were also used.

The LCT(R) had several deficiencies--extreme accuracy in navigation and a very steady course was necessary in the firing run. The rudders were very small and the rocket racks increased the free board and made the craft more subject to the wind. "Aiming the ship" was the only way to aim the rockets. The LCT(R) nonetheless, proved to be an effective and efficient weapon.

This article was excerpted from a 14-page war diary submitted by Ltn. L.W. Carr, USNR, in October 1944 and was copied from declassified files at the National Archives. A complete copy including the original 14 LCT(R)s and their officers can be obtained at the 2002 LCT reunion in New Orleans.