



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY

USS DENVER (LPD-9)

FPO SAN FRANCISCO 96601

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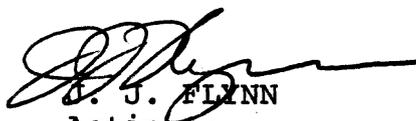
From: Commanding Officer, USS DENVER (LPD-9)
To: Director of Naval History (OP-09B9), Washington Navy
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Ref: (a) OPNAVINST 5750.12 (Series)

Encl: (1) 1972 Command History of USS DENVER (LPD-9)

1. In accordance with reference (a), enclosure (1) is
submitted.


J. J. FLYNN
Acting

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COMPHIBRON FIVE



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COMMAND HISTORY
USS DENVER (LPD-9)
1972

The Amphibious Assault Ship USS DENVER (LPD-9) began the 1972 Calendar year moored starboard side to Pier Number Six, India Basin, in Sasebo, Japan. DENVER, a member of Amphibious Squadron FIVE, homeported in San Diego, California, was in a deployed status and attached to the United States SEVENTH Fleet. At 0855 on 4 January, DENVER got underway to transit to Buckner Bay, Okinawa in company with the USS MOBILE (LKA-115). The transit was routine with the exception of one incident where DENVER manned her motor whaleboat and called away Flight Quarters when the MOBILE had a man overboard. The man was recovered by MOBILE. DENVER moored starboard side to New Navy Pier, White Beach, Buckner Bay, Okinawa, at 1325 on 5 January, remaining in port only long enough to offload four CH-46 and load three CH-53 helicopters. After completing fueling, offloading CH-46 Detachment and loading CH-53's, DENVER continued on her way independently, getting underway for Subic Bay, Republic of the Philippines at 1814 on the same day. An intensive schedule of drills and exercises that had been set up for the transit was interrupted when, at 0810 on 7 January, the Japanese merchant cargo vessel HITAKA MARU was sighted at latitude 17 degrees 43 minutes north, longitude 120 degrees 01.5 minutes east. The HITAKA MARU was flying the International Distress Call Sign "NC" and the DENVER commenced maneuvering closer to investigate. In heavy seas, the DENVER stood by to assist as the HITAKA MARU signalled that she was enroute to Lingayan Gulf with a cargo of logs when she developed a heavy list. After jettisoning her cargo, the merchant was able to continue on her own and the DENVER resumed her transit. DENVER arrived in Subic Bay on 7 January, mooring port side to Alava Wharf Pier, Berths 1 and 2 at 0030. DENVER fueled and received stores through the remainder of the day. At 0815 on 8 January, DENVER got underway independently for Buckner Bay, Okinawa. DENVER arrived in Okinawa on 10 January, mooring starboard side to U. S. Navy Pier, Buckner Bay, White Beach, Okinawa, at 1503, to offload the 331st Marine Amphibious Element. The ship was underway again the next day at 0758, bound for Numazu, Japan. DENVER completed the transit on 13 January, and remained in Numazu only long enough to embark BLT 1/4 for transfer to Okinawa. She did not moor or anchor, but rather ballasted down and launched landing craft. DENVER then stood out of port and transited to Buckner Bay. Various exercises and drills were conducted in transit, including General Quarters, Gunnery Exercises, and various Damage Control Exercises. DENVER stood into Buckner Bay on 15 January. She ballasted down off Pier "Bravo" for launching and recovery of landing craft and to offload BLT 1/4. When the well deck operations were completed, DENVER stood out of the harbor and transited to Subic Bay. While en-

route, an awards ceremony and Captain's Personnel Inspection was conducted at 0745 on 17 January.

DENVER arrived in Subic Bay on 17 January and moored Starboard side to berths 3 and 4 at Marine Terminal Pier, U. S. Naval Supply Center, Subic Bay at 1313. After completion of loading, DENVER shifted berths once more, this time mooring starboard side to Berths A-2 and A-3, Alava Wharf, at 1616 on 18 January. After replenishing her supplies and granting the crew some well-earned liberty, DENVER got underway independently for Danang, Republic of Viet Nam on 22 January at 0800. Gunnery Exercises and General Quarters were conducted that same morning.

DENVER entered the War Zone on 23 January at 1703. DENVER arrived in Danang on 24 January and moored starboard side to U. S. Army Pier (South) at 0828. After loading cargo, DENVER got underway for Cam Ranh Bay, Republic of Viet Nam the same day at 1244. DENVER arrived in Cam Ranh Bay on 25 January, anchored for approximately four hours to load cargo, and then got underway for Vung Tau, Republic of Viet Nam at 1324. While enroute, DENVER conducted underway replenishment, receiving fuel from the USS ASHTABULA (AO-52). DENVER anchored in Vung Tau at 0805 on 25 January. At 2120, her cargo loading mission complete, DENVER departed Viet Nam to begin a transit to Subic Bay.

DENVER arrived in Subic Bay at 0745 on 29 January and remained moored to Leyte Pier, Cubi Point, until 1717 on 30 January, when she got underway for Apra Harbor, Guam. She arrived in Guam on 3 February at 1757 and moored starboard side to Berth S-4, Apra Harbor. DENVER was underway for Subic Bay at 0759 on 5 February. DENVER stood into Subic Bay on the evening of 8-9 February, conducted well deck operations to load landing craft, and got underway for Vung Tau. DENVER anchored in Anchorage B-12 in Vung Tau on 10 February at 2142. After conducting well deck operations to offload landing craft, DENVER got underway that same evening at 2231 to return to Subic Bay. DENVER arrived on 12 February, mooring starboard side to POL Pier, Subic Bay at 2101. She remained there until 1236 on 13 February when she shifted berths to Anchorage E-19.

At 0848 on 14 February, DENVER was underway once more. This time her destination was Keelung, Taiwan. She arrived on 16 February at 1107, making fast to Buoy #8, Keelung Harbor. While in Taiwan, the DENVER received a visit on 18 February from six flag officers of the Nationalist Chinese Navy. On 21 February at 0920, DENVER got underway for Buckner Bay. After a transit marked by poor visibility, DENVER arrived on 22 February at 0738 and let go her port anchor in Anchorage Alfa Victor, Buckner Bay, Okinawa. Later that day the ship was able to moor to Pier Bravo. On the afternoon of 22 February, the Commanding General of the 3rd Marine Division visited the DENVER. Elements of Battalion Landing Team 3/9 were embarked for transport to Numazu, Japan. At 0701 on 23 February, DENVER got underway for Numazu with a

stop in the vicinity of Chin Wan, Okinawa to load tanks. At 1116 on 23 February, DENVER rendezvoused with USS MOBILE (LKA-115) and USS TUSCALOOSA (LST-1187) in formation with CO, DENVER as OTC and CTG 76.5. After conducting various exercises, the Task Group transited to Numazu without incident. TUSCALOOSA was detached from the formation at 0400 on 25 February to proceed independently. DENVER anchored off Numazu Training Area at 0820 on 25 February offloaded BLT 3/9 and loaded BLT 2/9 using landing craft. DENVER was underway again the same day at 2110, bound for Buckner Bay with the MOBILE accompanying her. DENVER anchored in Anchorage Alfa Victor on the morning of 28 February and later shifted to starboard side to New Navy Pier, Buckner Bay, at 1436. On 2, 3, and 4 March DENVER conducted high speed LVT launches and provided training services for various Marine units in the vicinity of Buckner Bay. After loading BLT 1/9, DENVER got underway for Subic Bay at 1740 on 6 March. Transiting in formation with the MOBILE and TUSCALOOSA, the formation conducted helicopter operations and formation "leapfrog" drills while enroute. After conducting amphibious landing exercises, DENVER moored port side to Pier Alava Seven and Eight at 1600 on 10 March.

DENVER remained in Subic Bay for ten days for upkeep. During this period she was in a "cold iron" status and the crew was able to take leave. After conducting local amphibious operations with MOBILE and TUSCALOOSA and embarked units, DENVER got underway for Hong Kong with the formation on 21 March at 1258. Upon arrival, DENVER moored to Buoy #2 at 0953 on 23 March.

DENVER stayed in Hong Kong until 30 March. At 1015 that date she got underway for Buckner Bay in formation with MOBILE and TUSCALOOSA. The OTC was DENVER's Commanding Officer. The formation replenished from the USS ASHTABULA on 1 April off the coast of Viet Nam. On 3 April DENVER in company with MOBILE and TUSCALOOSA departed Viet Nam waters for Okinawa to pick up replacement equipment and personnel for BLT 1/9. DENVER moored starboard side to Pier Bravo, Buckner Bay, at 0807 on 5 April. After taking on fuel and welcoming some new replacements, the DENVER got underway at 1425 on the same day for operations as an element of Amphibious Ready Group Bravo with DENVER's CO, Robert E. Bodamer, as CTG 76.5. DENVER received stores underway from the USS VEGA (AF-59) at 1330 on 9 April. After completing underway and vertical replenishment, DENVER joined Task Group 76.4, USS BLUE RIDGE, and USS WESTCHESTER COUNTY in Special Operations off the coast of the Republic of Viet Nam. During this period, DENVER participated in myriad formation maneuvers, aircraft exercises, and underway replenishment. At 1209 on 18 April, DENVER was detached to proceed independently to assume duties as a combat search and rescue helicopter platform for Task Force 77. It was not long before her services were needed. At 0958 on 21 April, one of the "Big Mother" helicopters operating off DENVER recovered two downed Air Force pilots and returned them to the ship. DENVER refueled from the ASHTABULA on 28 April. On 1 May DENVER's helicopters responded to a distress signal and recovered LT Michael G. Surdyk of VA-94 safely. Counting two pilots who were on 23 April and delivered to USS

STERRETT (DLG-31), The DENVER was instrumental in the recovery of five downed pilots while on SAR Station.

DENVER was relieved of her SAR duties on 25 May 1972 and departed for Buckner Bay in company with USS MOBILE (LKA-115), USS CAYUGA (LST-1186), and USS TUSCALOOSA (LST-1187). DENVER moored starboard side to East Navy Pier, Buckner Bay, Okinawa at 1830 on 28 May to offload BLT 1/9. At 0801 on 29 May 1972, the DENVER departed Okinawa in company with MOBILE and CAYUGA for Sasebo, Japan. At 0910 on 30 May, DENVER moored starboard side to Berth India-Six in Sasebo. The DENVER commenced a two week upkeep period, making much-needed repairs and granting the crew liberty and some annual leave. DENVER got underway for Buckner Bay on 15 June at 1100. At 1150 on 16 June, DENVER anchored in Anchorage Alfa Victor at Buckner Bay, Okinawa. DENVER was underway the same at 1753, steaming independently for Subic Bay. While in Okinawa, HMA-369, a Marine helicopter squadron of AH-1J "Cobra" gunships, was embarked. DENVER arrived in Subic Bay on 18 June, mooring starboard side to Nabasan Wharf at 1715. While in Subic Bay, DENVER loaded ammunition for the Cobras and received onboard 161 men for transport to ships and units which were in the Gulf of Tonkin. DENVER got underway on the evening of 18 June at 2257 and entered the combat zone on 20 June. After completing the transfer of personnel, DENVER continued to the vicinity of Hon La off the coast of North Viet Nam, arriving on 22 June.

From 22 June until 26 July DENVER conducted the extremely successful and revolutionary "MARHUK" operations. The purpose of these operations was to interdict North Vietnamese small craft which attempted to break the United States' blockade of North Vietnam's harbors. The Cobra gunships enjoyed remarkable success in their efforts to restrict the North Vietnamese attempt to re-supply by sea. The DENVER also proved that the flag-configured LPD can handle a variety of new and different missions capably.

DENVER left the war zone on 26 July to return to Subic Bay, arriving on 28 July at 1242, and mooring port side to Berths 7 and 8 Alava Wharf. After debarking HMA-369 and being relieved of her SEVENTH Fleet duties by the USS CLEVELAND (LPD-7), DENVER left Subic Bay at 0821 on 2 August to begin her transit back to the United States. DENVER stopped in Pearl Harbor enroute to CONUS, mooring starboard side to Berth B-12 at 0952 on 12 August. DENVER stayed in Pearl Harbor only long enough to take on fuel, be inspected by customs and agriculture officials, and offload cargo that was embarked in Subic Bay. At 1837 the same day, DENVER got underway for her homeport of San Diego. After an uneventful transit, DENVER moored port side to Pier 3, Berth 6 (South) in San Diego at 1006 on 18 August.

Upon her return, DENVER entered a post-deployment stand-down period. On 1 September at 1531, the USS MOUNT VERNON moored outboard of the DENVER. On 5 September the MOUNT VERNON

got underway at 0758 and the USS MOBILE took her place the same day, mooring outboard the DENVER at 1126. MOBILE had a fire onboard in the early morning hours of 11 September and DENVER called away her Rescue and Assistance Team to assist. After the fire was extinguished, DENVER provided berthing and messing for some of the crew members of the MOBILE who had been displaced by the fire.

After the stand-down leave period was completed DENVER entered upkeep, remaining in San Diego at the Naval Station. On 4 October, DENVER shifted berths to North Island Naval Air Station, mooring starboard side to Berth Oscar Papa. DENVER was the scene of the Change of Command ceremony for Commander Amphibious Operations Support Command, Pacific on 6 October. Rear Admiral Arthur W. Price assumed command, relieving Rear Admiral John B. Davis.

DENVER next got underway at 1224 on 10 October to transit to the vicinity of Hunter-Liggett Military Reservation in order to participate in PHIBLEX 5-72. During this operation, which lasted until 27 October, DENVER was the flagship of Rear Admiral Price, Chief Observer of the exercise. While DENVER served mainly as a platform for observer's helicopters, she also participated intimately in the exercise. The operation, which was a test of the Shipboard Mobile Logistics System, concluded successfully on 27 October when the DENVER returned to San Diego and the Admiral disembarked. DENVER moored at 1330 at Berth 61N6, Pier Six, U. S. Naval Station, San Diego.

At 1255 on 31 October, DENVER got underway for a short "turn around" trip to Seal Beach for the purpose of off-loading ammunition in preparation for regular shipyard overhaul. At 0736 on 1 November, DENVER moored starboard side to the Ammunition Pier, Seal Beach, California. After completing the off-load, DENVER was underway at 1225. DENVER returned to San Diego the same day, mooring starboard side to Pier Six, Berth 61, at the Naval Station, at 1855. DENVER was in an upkeep status until 6 November. From 6-8 November, the Board of Inspection and Survey conducted the regular INSURV inspection onboard DENVER. After the INSURV inspection was completed, DENVER remained in San Diego in an upkeep status. On 1 December, Rear Admiral Arthur W. Price came aboard DENVER to act as Presenting Officer in an Awards Ceremony for DENVER personnel. DENVER remained at the Naval Station, San Diego, to usher in the New Year.