



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY

USS DENVER (LPD-9)
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From: Commanding Officer, USS DENVER (LPD 9)
To: Director of Naval History (N09BH), Washington Navy Yard,
Washington D.C.

Subj: COMMAND HISTORY FOR USS DENVER (LPD 9) CY 2002

Ref: (a) OPNAVINST 5750.12G

Encl: (1) Command Composition and Organization
(2) Chronology
(3) Narrative
(4) Biography and Photo of Commanding Officer
(5) Biography of Executive Officer
(6) Welcome Aboard Pamphlet for Visitors
(7) 3 1/4" Disk

1. Per reference (a), the following is forwarded as the history of USS DENVER (LPD 9) for calendar year 2002.

2. USS DENVER (LPD 9) is the third United States Navy ship to bear the name of American pioneer James William DENVER and the capital of the state of Colorado. DENVER's primary mission is to provide an aviation and amphibious launch and recovery platform in support of amphibious assault operations. Secondary missions include providing logistical support for amphibious assault operations, humanitarian relief, and the training of helicopter pilots, Marines, special warfare personnel, reservists, and midshipmen.

3. The following major personnel changes occurred over the last year: The Commanding Officer, CAPT S. G. Squires was relieved by CAPT B. E. Johanson. The Executive Officer, LCDR M. D. Lechner was relieved by LCDR J. S. Davis. The Command Master Chief, CDCMC(SW) R. Paquian was relieved by CDCMC(SW/FMF) M. Surla. The Air Officer, LCDR E. Balaton was relieved by LCDR G. Ouellette. The Supply Officer, LT P. Armstrong, was relieved by LT J. Kochis. The Medical Officer, LT C. Craven was relieved by LT B. Propes. The First Lieutenant, LT J. Waddell was relieved by LT G. Gunlock.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "B. E. Johanson".

B. E. JOHANSON

Command Composition and Organization

Commanding Officer

Captain Johanson

Executive Officer

LCDR Davis

Command Master Chief

CDCMC(SW/FMF) M. Surla

Executive/Navigation Department

Chaplain

LT Owen

Navigator/Admin Officer

LTJG Cappio

Combat Cargo Officer

CW03 Ragsac

Medical Department

Medical

LT Propes

Dental

LT Fikes

Engineering Department

Chief Engineer

LT Smith

Main Propulsion Assistant

LTJG Davis

Damage Control Assistant

CW03 Guile

Aux Div

ENS Linder

P-1 Division

ENS Carnes

P-2 Division

ENS Storer

E Division

ENS Worl

R Division

LTJG Desha

Deck Department

First Lieutenant

LT Wadell

Ship's Bos'n

ENS Hastings

Deck Division

LTJG Atencio

3rd Division

LTJG Donovan

Operations Department

Operations Officer

LCDR Haydel

ADP Officer

ENS Wright

CIC Officer

LTJG

O'Brien

Comms

Officer

CW03 Beard

EMO

ENS

Hickenbottom

Training

LTJG

Valenzuela

Supply Department

Supply Officer

LT Kochis

Disbursing/Sales Officer

LTJG Mayled

Food Service Officer

LTJG Semilla

Air Department

Air Officer

LCDR Pfister

A/C Fuels Officer

LT Ouellette

Chronology Calendar Year 2002

January

01JAN-18 JAN INPT NAVSTA, SAN DIEGO-HOLIDAY STANDOWN
19 JAN U/W FAMILY DAY CRUISE
22JAN-31JAN U/W IART
24JAN UNREP W/ USNS GUADALUPE
30JAN UNREP W/ USNS TIPPECANOE

February

01FEB U/W IART
02FEB-20FEB MOORED NAVSTA, SAN DIEGO, PIER 6. PRE-DEPLOYMENT
PREP AND SIMA "A" AVAIL
20FEB-25FEB U/W FOR FARP
26FEB-28FEB MOORED NAVSTA, SAN DIEGO PIER 11

March

01MAR-04MAR MOORED NAVSTA, SAN DIEGO PIER 11
05MAR DEAD STICK MOVE TO NAVSTA, SAN DIEGO PIER 6
06MAR-10MAR MOORED NAVSTA, SAN DIEGO PIER 6
11MAR-22MAR U/W COMPTUEX
13MAR UNREP W/ USNS GUADALUPE
20MAR UNREP W/ USNS GUADALUPE
23MAR-27MAR MOORED NAVSTA, SAN DIEGO PIER 11
28MAR DEAD STICK MOVE TO NAVSTA, SAN DIEGO PIER 6
29MAR-31MAR MOORED NAVSTA, SAN DIEGO PIER 6

April

01APR-10APR U/W FLEETEX
05APR UNREP W/ USNS TIPPECANOE
11APR-28APR MOORED NAVSTA, SAN DIEGO PIER 6
17APR-26APR BOILER INSPECTION NR1 & NR 2 BOILERS
29APR-30APR U/W SOCCERT

May

01MAY-09MAY U/W SOCCERT
01MAY UNREP W/ USNS GUADALUPE
10MAY-31MAY MOORED NAVSTA, SAN DIEGO PIER 6
23MAY CHANGE OF COMMAND CEREMONY: CAPT STEVE G. SQUIRES
RELIEVED BY CAPT BRAD E. JOHANSON
23MAY-31MAY POM LEAVE PERIOD

June

01JUN-11JUN POM LEAVE PERIOD
12JUN U/W TO LAPLAYA PIER MOGAS ONLOAD
MOORED LA PLAYA PIER
U/W FM LA PLAYA PIER
UNREP W/ USNS GUADALUPE
13JUN MOORED NAVSTA, SAN DIEGO PIER 6, P/U FOR FAMILY DAY
CRUISE
U/W FOR FAMILY DAY CRUISE
13JUN-14JUN MOORED NAVSTA, SAN DIEGO PIER 6
15JUN U/W 2002 WESTPAC/ARABIAN GULF DEPLOYMENT
16JUN-20JUN TRANSIT ENR PEARL HARBOR, HI
21JUN-24JUN MOORED PEARL HARBOR, HI PIER H
24JUN UNREP W/ USNS TIPPECANOE
25JUN U/W FM PEARL HARBOR, HAWAII
26JUN-30JUN TRANSIT ENR 7th FLEET
29JUN CROSS INTERNATIONAL DATELINE

July

01JUL-18JUL TRANSIT ENR SINGAPORE
03JUL UNREP W/ USNS JOHN ERICSSON, VERTREP W/ USNS NIAGRA
FALLS
09JUL UNREP W/ USNS JOHN ERICSSON
18JUL UNREP W/ USNS PECOS
19JUL-22JUL MOORED CHANGI NAVASTA, SINGAPORE BERTH 6
23JUL U/W FM SINGAPORE
TRANSIT STRAIT OF MALACCA
24JUL-31JUL TRANSIT ENR 5TH FLEET
29JUL UNREP W/ USNS PECOS

August

01AUG-11AUG TRANSIT ENR AQABA, JORDAN
03AUG UNREP W/ USNS SUPPLY
04AUG AMPHIB OPS OFF DJIBOUTI
04AUG UNREP W/ FGS BERLIN
08AUG TRANSIT STRAIT BAB-EL MANDAB
09AUG PHOTOEX W/ RKG BRANDEBURG AND RSN VICTORIA
12AUG-20AUG MOORED AQABA, JORDAN FOR EXERCISE INFINITE
MOONLIGHT OFFLOAD 11TH MEU
21AUG-31AUG U/W FOR EXERCISE INFINITE SHADOW W/ ROYAL JORDANIAN
NAVY
23AUG UNREP W/ USNS WALTER S. DIEHL
31AUG UNREP W/ USNS SUPPLY

September

01SEP-07SEP MOORED AQABA, JORDAN 11TH MEU ONLOAD
05SEP KING OF JORDAN VISIT
08SEP-12SEP U/W FM AQABA, JORDAN ENR DJIBOUTI
11SEP 911 COMMEMORATIVE CEREMONY
13SEP REORGANIZATION FOR SPLIT ARG OPERATIONS, IVO DJIBOUTI
14SEP-18SEP TRANSIT ENR MANAMA, BAHRAIN
15SEP VERTREP W/ USNS SAN JOSE
16SEP PHOTOEX FOR DISNEYLAND
17SEP UNREP W/ JDS TOWADA
STRAIT OF HORMUZ TRANSIT
19SEP-22SEP MOORED MANAMA, BAHRAIN
23SEP U/W FM MANAMA, BAHRAIN ENR ASH SHUWAYKH, KUWAIT
24SEP-29SEP MOORED ASH SHUWAYKH, KUWAIT
11TH MEU OFFLOAD FOR EXERCISE EAGER MACE
30SEP U/W EXERCISE EAGER MACE

October

01OCT-11OCT U/W EXERCISE EAGER MACE
03OCT UNREP W/ HMCS BAYLEAF
08OCT 11TH MEU MARINE EVACUATION FM FAYLAKA ISLAND,
KUWAIT
09OCT VERTREP W/ USNS SAN JOSE
10OCT UNREP W/ USNS JOHN ERICSSON
12OCT-17OCT MOORED ASH SHUWAYKH, KUWAIT
11TH MEU ONLOAD
13OCT MID-CYCLE ASSESSMENT
18OCT-19OCT U/W FM ASH SHUWAYKH, KUWAIT ENR MANAMA, BAHRAIN
20OCT-23OCT MOORED MANAMA, BAHRAIN
24OCT-31OCT U/W FM MANAMA, BAHRAIN ENR 7TH FLEET
28OCT UNREP W/ JDS HAMANA
30OCT RDVS W/ USS BELLEAU WOOD ARG

November

01NOV-11NOV TRANSIT ENR DARWIN, AUSTRALIA
03NOV CROSSING THE LINE CEREMONY, SHELL BACK INITIATION
07NOV UNREP W/ USNS PECOS
12NOV-14NOV MOORED DARWIN, AUSTRALIA
EAST TIMOR SUPPLIES ONLOAD
15NOV-16NOV U/W FM DARWIN, AUSTRALIA ENR EAST TIMOR
17NOV-20NOV HUMANITARIAN OPERATIONS OFF EAST TIMOR
21NOV-24NOV ENR GARAPAN, SAIPAN
25NOV-27NOV MOORED GARAPAN, SAIPAN

28NOV-30NOV U/W FM GARAPAN, SAIPAN ENR HAWAII

December

01DEC-05DEC TRANSIT ENR PEARL HARBOR, HI
03DEC CROSS INTERNATIONAL DATE LINE
06DEC MOORED PEARL HARBOR, HAWAII FOR TIGER CRUISE
ONLOAD
07DEC PEARL HARBOR DAY COMMEMORATION
07DEC-12DEC U/W PEARL HARBOR, HI ENR CAMP PENDLETON
12DEC UNREP W/ USNS GUADALUPE
13DEC-14DEC OFFLOAD 11TH MEU (SOC) IVO CAMP PENDELTON
14DEC MINI-TIGER CRUISE ONLOAD
15DEC MOORED NAVSTA, SAN DIEGO PIER 6
DEPLOYMENT HOMECOMING
16DEC-31DEC HOLIDAY LEAVE AND POST DEPLOYMENT STANDOWN

USS DENVER COMMAND HISTORY NARRATIVE — CY 2002

USS DENVER began 2002 in the middle of holiday standown. The crew enjoyed some much-needed time off with their friends and loved ones. On January 19, DENVER followed up the relaxing holiday season with a Family Day and Denver Reunion Association Cruise. The crew of USS DENVER hosted friends, family, and former crewmembers of DENVER for an impressive display of amphibious and aviation operations as they learned all of DENVER's critical mission areas and how DENVER sailors make those missions happen. With the holidays behind them, the crew of DENVER moved into the critical part of the Intra-Deployment Training Cycle beginning with Intermediate Amphibious Readiness Training (IART). DENVER went underway from January 22 to February 1, rigorously drilling amphibious operations in preparation for its upcoming deployment. On January 24, DENVER conducted its first UNREP of the year with USNS GUADALUPE receiving 372,989 gallons of fuel. DENVER followed this UNREP with another highly successful fueling operation with USNS TIPPECANOE on January 30 during which DENVER received 339,164 gallons of fuel.

February began with the crew returning from a highly successful IART. DENVER immediately moved into aggressive maintenance availability headed up by the Ship's Intermediate Maintenance Activity (SIMA). With combat readiness as an absolute priority, the crew worked hard in concert with SIMA to promote material condition of the ship. By the end of the month, it was time to go back to sea again, and DENVER got underway for an essential evaluation period in the training cycle: Underway Demonstration (U/D). From February 20 to February 25, DENVER drilled numerous engineering evolutions and casualty control scenarios. The Engineering Department performed marvelously and Afloat Training Group inspectors passed DENVER with flying colors. Upon returning from U/D, DENVER spent the rest of the month in port in order to begin its massive bridge reconfiguration project.

The ship spent the first portion of March in port while contractors completely redesigned the Bridge. The focus of this project was better command and control through a more streamlined organization. DENVER returned to sea March 11 to begin the next important milestone in its Intra-Deployment Training Cycle, COMPTUEX. Working with a variety of other units, DENVER's crew proved it had the professionalism and seamanship in order to operate successfully in a multi-ship, tactical environment. On March 13 and March 20, the ship completed a pair of highly professional UNREPs with USNS GUADALUPE, receiving 120,399 gallons and 252,869 gallons of fuel respectively. DENVER returned from COMPTUEX on March 22. The ship continued this accelerated operational tempo with a crucial Anti-Terrorism/Force Protection Exercise March 27-28. Over the two-day period, exercise facilitators from Amphibious Group Three saturated DENVER's crew with a variety of challenging threat scenarios. DENVER again proved up to the challenge and impressed ISIC inspectors with its flexibility in the face of adversity.

DENVER immediately continued the training cycle in April, getting underway April 1-April 12 for FLEETEX. Over the twelve-day period the crew conducted welldeck and boat deck operations around the clock. Working together as a team, they demonstrated proficiency in several mission areas simultaneously. On April 5, DENVER conducted UNREP with USNS TIPPECANOE, receiving 119,096 gallons of fuel. DENVER also completed two other

important inspections after returning to port, a 3-M Certification Board April 15-17 and a Boiler Inspection April 17-26. By the end of the month, it was time for DENVER to go out to sea for SOCCERT, the last major underway period of the training cycle. This underway period was absolutely essential for the qualification of the 11th Marine Expeditionary Unit as Special Operations Capable. Getting underway April 29, DENVER and its Marine Corps teammate stood ready to face this final challenge.

The month of May opened with DENVER underway for SOCCERT. For two weeks, the Navy-Marine Corps team onboard DENVER worked hand-and-hand through a variety of operational challenges in different mission areas. Ultimately SOCCERT, was an immense success for DENVER and the 11th MEU, and by the end of the exercise, DENVER's Navy-Marine Corps team stood ready to deploy in support of Operations Enduring Freedom. On May 1, DENVER conducted UNREP with USNS GUADALUPE, taking on 171,163 gallons of fuel. Having completed the Intra-Deployment Training Cycle at the end of SOCCERT on May 10, DENVER moved into a POM period in preparation for its deployment. On May 23, Captain B. E. Johanson relieved Captain S. G. Squires as Commanding Officer. Following the Change of Command, the POM period continued through the end of the month.

June began with half of DENVER's crew on leave for POM. With deployment right around the corner, DENVER sailors had the opportunity to spend some quality time with family and loved ones prior to the six-month separation. The crew returned on June 10, ready to get back to business-making final preparations for WESTPAC. The ship moved to La Playa Pier on June 12 in order to onload MOGAS for deployment. Later that day DENVER conducted UNREP with USNS GUADALUPE, receiving 181,100 gallons of fuel. DENVER pulled in briefly the following morning to embark friends and family for a Dependent's Day Cruise as a last opportunity for loved ones to see that their sailors were prepared to join the fight in Enduring Freedom. The morning of June 15, following a year and a half of preparation, DENVER stood on the brink of its Western Pacific/Arabian Gulf Deployment as a component of the USS BELLEAU WOOD Amphibious Ready Group, along with USS MOUNT VERNON, under Commander Amphibious Squadron Five with the 11th Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable) and Marine Service Support Group Eleven embarked. After a motivating speech from the Commandant of the Marine Corps, General James L. Jones, USS DENVER departed en route to Hawaii. The ship reached Pearl Harbor on June 21 and spent the next four days loading the last important stores and supplies before departing June 25 en route to Seventh Fleet. On June 29, DENVER crossed the international Dateline, thus skipping the day June 30.

July opened with DENVER in transit across the Eastern Pacific Ocean. On July 3, the ship simultaneously conducted an UNREP with USNS JOHN ERICSSON in which it took 199,671 gallons of fuel and a VERTREP with USNS NIAGRA FALLS. The following day, the Marines and sailors of DENVER celebrated Independence Day with a series of gun shoots and a pyrotechnics display. On July 9, the ship conducted another successful UNREP with ERICSSON, receiving 208,536 gallons of fuel. The ship continued to operate in the Seventh Fleet Area of Responsibility for the first half of July while awaiting approval for a port visit. On July 18, DENVER conducted an UNREP with USNS PECOS, taking on 260,783 gallons of fuel. After several schedule changes, DENVER pulled into Changi Naval Base in Singapore on July 19 for some much-needed liberty after the long transit across the Pacific. The ship spent four

days in port, departing Singapore on July 23. That same day, the ship transited through the Strait of Malacca en route to the Fifth Fleet Area of Responsibility. While in transit, DENVER conducted UNREP with PECOS on July 29, receiving 199,671 gallons of fuel.

In August, DENVER continued its transit across the Indian Ocean en route to its first in-theater tasking. On August 3, the ship completed an UNREP with USNS SUPPLY, receiving 182,290 gallons of fuel. DENVER then arrived off the coast of Djibouti where the Navy-Marine Corps team conducted a series of amphibious operations in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. Departing the area on August 6, DENVER and MOUNT VERNON conducted UNREP with the German oiler, FGS BERLIN on August 7, receiving 58,626 gallons of fuel while BELLEAU WOOD remained on station off the horn of Africa. DENVER and MOUNT VERNON later met up with two surface escorts, the German frigate, FGS BRANDENBURG and Spanish frigate, SPS VICTORIA who remained in company with DENVER and MOUNT VERNON throughout their transit of the Bab el Mandeb Strait. The cooperation demonstrated by the United States and its coalition allies during these joint operations clearly indicated the international community's commitment to the war on terrorism. DENVER arrived in Aqaba, Jordan on August 12 to begin the offload of the 11th MEU for a major bilateral exercise with the Royal Jordanian Army called Operation Infinite Moonlight. After completing the offload on August 20, DENVER got underway for the naval portion of Infinite Moonlight, Operation Infinite Shadow. Working closely with the Royal Jordanian Navy, DENVER conducted a series of complex evolutions and trained on joint military tactics. While underway for the exercise, DENVER conducted a successful UNREP with USNS WALTER S. DIEHL on August 23, receiving 288,229 gallons of fuel. The opportunity for military joint operability during Infinite Shadow bolstered regional security and developed new bonds of friendship between the United States and Jordan. Before returning to Aqaba to reload the 11th MEU, DENVER completed an UNREP with SUPPLY on August 31, taking on 175,028 gallons of fuel.

DENVER returned to Aqaba on September 1 and began reloading the 11th MEU in preparation for the split-ARG's next tasking. On September 5, the King of Jordan, His Majesty King Abdullah, made an official visit to DENVER during which he spoke very highly of the DENVER and its crew. The ship departed Aqaba on September 8 and headed back down the Red Sea to rendezvous with BELLEAU WOOD off the coast of Djibouti. DENVER took time out on September 11 to commemorate the year anniversary of the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center. Sailors and Marines both remembered the innocent lives that were lost that day and recommitted themselves to the cause of the global war on terrorism. DENVER arrived off the horn of Africa on September 13 in order to begin a massive reorganization of MEU assets between the three ships. Upon completion of this complex evolution, DENVER and MOUNT VERNON once again detached from BELLEAU WOOD and headed for Manama, Bahrain for a Fifth Fleet port visit. On September 15, DENVER conducted VERTREP with USNS SAN JOSE, and on September 17, UNREP with the Japanese oiler, JDS TOWADA. Once again, the spirit of international cooperation could be felt between the United States and her ally, Japan as TOWADA provided 333,358 gallons of fuel at no charge. DENVER arrived in Manama September 19, and the crew enjoyed four days of liberty inport. The ship got underway again on September 23 en route to Ash Shuwaykh, Kuwait for the split-ARG's next major tasking. Arriving September 24, DENVER spent the next 6 days offloading the Marines for a major bilateral exercise, Eager Mace. Once offloaded the Marines proceeded inland to training sites

with the Kuwaiti Army, while the ship got underway for the naval portion of Eager Mace on the September 30.

DENVER began the month of October underway for Exercise Eager Mace. Working closely with Kuwaiti Naval Boats, the ship drilled division maneuvers and small boat defense tactics. These exercises were immensely successful, contributing to U.S.-Kuwaiti joint interoperability, bolstering regional security, and teaching both sides important lessons in naval force protection tactics. DENVER refueled with the HMCS BAYLEAF on October 3, receiving 253,420 gallons of fuel. This Canadian oiler marked the fifth coalition country with which DENVER had worked with in the Fifth Fleet AOR. On October 8, unknown assailants fired upon 11th MEU Marines while they were conducting urban warfare exercises on Faylaka Island. One Marine was killed and another wounded, and DENVER quickly responded to the crisis. Sending an armed escort to the beach, DENVER sailors evacuated several hundred Marines in an incredibly well orchestrated and rapid rescue operation. The conduct of both the green and blue side during this event truly was a testament to the Honor, Courage, and Commitment imbedded in every sailor and Marine. After completion of the evacuation, DENVER departed the area in order to re-provision and refuel. On October 9, DENVER conducted a VERTREP with SAN JOSE and the following day, an UNREP with ERICSSON, receiving 152,080 gallons of fuel. DENVER returned to Ash Shuwaykh heavily armed and guarded by picket boats on October 12 in order to pick up the rest of the Marines and their equipment. DENVER remained inport until October 18 then departed Ash Shuwaykh en route to Manama. The ship arrived in Manama on October 20 and spent four days of liberty inport before departing the Fifth Fleet AOR. DENVER got underway from Manama on October 24 and began the trip back home after a highly successful deployment to the Arabian Gulf. The ship refueled once more prior to chopping to Seventh Fleet with JDS Hamana on October 28, receiving 263,136 gallons of fuel. After conducting rendezvous with BELLEAU WOOD on October 30, the entire ARG outchopped from Fifth Fleet on November 1.

Transiting across the Indian Ocean in the beginning of November, the crew looked forward to some great port visits along the way back to San Diego. DENVER took time out on November 3 to participate in the time-honored Crossing the Line Ceremony in which Slimy Polliwogs became Trusty Shellbacks. On November 7, the ship had an UNREP with PECOS, taking on a total of 285,635 gallons of fuel. Finally, DENVER arrived in Darwin, Australia for some great liberty in the Land Down Under. After enjoying 4 days inport, DENVER departed for its next tasking in East Timor. From November 17 to November 20, the BELLEAU WOOD ARG remained off the coast of the island nation while Marines brought humanitarian aid and supplies ashore. This humanitarian operation brought much-needed assistance to East Timor and helped foster strong relations and friendship between our two countries. After completing the operation, DENVER began heading toward their next port call in Garapan, Saipan. The ship arrived November 25 and stayed inport until November 28. When DENVER departed Saipan, the crew knew that they were finally headed home to San Diego.

December opened with the ship in transit across the Eastern Pacific Ocean. En route to Pearl Harbor, Hawaii to pick Tigers for a Tiger Cruise, crewmembers could not wait to be reunited with their loved ones. DENVER again crossed the international dateline on December 3 and got to enjoy a second December 3 the next day. The ship finally reached Pearl Harbor on

December 6 and left the following day after embarking the Tigers and loading the last group of supplies for the transit home. Leaving Pearl Harbor on Pearl Harbor Day was a particularly special event for the crew as they manned the rails out of port in honor of their shipmates who perished that day 61 years ago. DENVER crewmembers were great hosts for the Tigers during the transit back to San Diego. Tigers participated in a number of shipboard activities such as a shipboard miniature golf tournament, enjoyed steel beach picnics and flight deck movies, and most of all, learned what it was like to be a sailor out to sea for an extended period of time. On December 12, DENVER met up with GUADALUPE for its last refueling prior to returning, receiving 91,740 gallons of fuel. On November 13, DENVER finally arrived home off the coast of Southern California. The began the massive offload of the 11th MEU while at the same time unloading more friends and loved ones for a Mini-Tiger Cruise on the trip back to San Diego. After six months of duty out to sea and a historic deployment, the crew of DENVER returned to a pier full of supporters and well-wishers on December 15. The feeling was sublime as friends and families were reunited and sailors and Marines alike returned home from a long and challenging voyage. After this joyful homecoming, the crew of the DENVER closed out the rest of 2002 on holiday standown.

2002 was a banner year for USS DENVER and its crew. From completing a challenging work-up cycle during an uncertain and constantly changing geopolitical situation to accomplishing her mission in full on deployment to the Western Pacific/Arabian Gulf, the crew rose to every challenge which it was faced and performed with the utmost Honor, Courage, and Commitment. The deployment was highlighted by the four-and-a-half months of split-ARG operations completed by DENVER. During this period DENVER embarked 1,171 personnel (300 more than the standard loadout), 7 Marine helicopters (5 CH-46 and 2 UH-1), a fully manned SESS, an LCU plus 15 AAV's and the extra vehicles, and equipment and ordnance to complete two major bilateral exercises. The ship covered over 33,000 miles on deployment and spent 9 of the 12 months of 2002 out to sea. DENVER's name has become synonymous with combat readiness and the finest professional seamanship that the United States Navy has to offer. After the great successes of 2002, the crew of USS DENVER now looks forward to the challenges the future will hold. There is no doubt that they will meet these challenges and come out "a mile high, a mile ahead."