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DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY  
COMMANDING OFFICER  
USS BLUE RIDGE (LCC 19)  
FPO SAN FRANCISCO 96628-3300

IN REPLY REFER TO

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27 Feb 92

From: Commanding Officer, USS BLUE RIDGE (LCC 19)  
To: Director of Naval History (OP-09BH), Washington Navy Yard,  
Washington, DC 20374-0571

Subj: COMMAND HISTORY (OPNAVINST REPORT 5750-1)

Ref: (a) OPNAVINST 5750.12E

1. In accordance with reference (a), the following command history for the period of 1 January 1991 through 31 December 1991 is submitted:

a. Command Organization: Commanding Officer: Captain Joseph K. Henderson from 20 November 1989 to 22 November 1991; Captain Alan L. Heisig from 22 November 1991 to present.

b. Summary of Operations: USS BLUE RIDGE commenced 1991 pierside in Dubai, United Arab Emirates fulfilling duties as flag ship for embarked Commander SEVENTH Fleet/Commander United States Naval Forces Central Command, Vice Admiral Stanley R. Arthur, who coordinated all naval forces during Operation DESERT SHIELD under the direction of General Norman Schwarzkopf, U.S. Forces Central Command.

January 3rd, BLUE RIDGE got underway for Manama, Bahrain and arrived on the 4th. While inport, the Ambassador from New Zealand arrived Jan. 6th, Denmark's Minister of Defense on the 7th, and the Ambassador from Norway arrived January 10th.

In preparation for the shift from Operation DESERT SHIELD to Operation DESERT STORM, BLUE RIDGE departed Bahrain January 11th to provide Naval Command and Control while at sea. January 12th saw the arrival of all area group commanders as battle plans were finalized on board. DESERT STORM kicked off between 0100 and 0200, January 17th as the first missiles were launched against enemy targets. At 0310, January 17th, BLUE RIDGE went to General Quarters with weapons tight in anticipation of possible counter strikes. There were no counter strikes and threat levels appeared low, so BLUE RIDGE secured from General Quarters at 0641. During the war, BLUE RIDGE was tasked daily with receiving helicopters which carried personnel and dignitaries. There were numerous underway replenishments and frequent general quarters drills. Despite the long hours and increased work load, the crew performed flawlessly.

During flight quarters on February 7th, seven news correspondents from the NAVCENT press pool arrived on board and

conducted an interview with COMUSNAVCENT, Vice Admiral Arthur. On February 8th, BLUE RIDGE anchored overnight at Sitrah anchorage in Bahrain where the reporters left the ship. On the afternoon of 9 February, BLUE RIDGE departed her anchorage and proceeded to steam in the Persian Gulf. February 11th, the United States Ambassador to Bahrain and Bahrain's Minister of Defense arrived on board. A small oil slick of four square miles was spotted on February 12th. It was undetermined whether this was part of the massive oil spill the Iraqis deliberately pumped into the Gulf. On February 14th, ABC Newsman, Sam Donaldson, conducted an interview with Vice Admiral Arthur on the flag bridge. On February 17th, a congressional delegation made up of the United States Ambassador to Bahrain and Congressmen John Murtha (D-PA), Norman Dicks (D-WA), Bill Young (R-FL), and Bob Livingston (R-LA), visited the ship. A second delegation made up of Congressmen Sam Nunn (D-GA), John Warner (R-VA), Ted Stevens (R-AK), and Daniel Inouye (D-HI) visited the ship the following day, February 18th. Ironically, Operation DESERT STORM's land offensive began February 25th, as BLUE RIDGE's crew was enjoying a well deserved Navy tradition beer break after 45 days of continuous underway operations. Each crew member received two beers while enjoying a barbecue and entertainment provided by the SEVENTH Fleet rock band, Orient Express. After three days of ground attack, the Iraqis called for a cessation in the war on 28 February. Flight quarters continued to be a daily occurrence throughout the month and the crew's superior performance was proven again as all operations were conducted without a mishap. The Engineering Department was awarded two prestigious awards during the month of February; one for excellence in Damage Control and the other for excellence in Engineering. The Mobility "E" and Damage Control "DC" covered the competitive cycle from July 1989, through December 1990.

March 2nd, after 50 continuous days underway, BLUE RIDGE moored in Manama, Bahrain, where various dignitaries visited the ship all throughout the month. Two important visits highlighted this period. The first was the arrival, on March 23rd, of the President of the American Red Cross, the Honorable Elizabeth Dole. After a brief discussion with Vice Admiral Arthur, Mrs. Dole toured the galley and messdecks where she spoke with several crew members. The other noteworthy event occurred on March 25th, when BLUE RIDGE hosted all area task force commanders at a Maritime Interdiction Force (MIF) Conference. Representatives from the following countries were in attendance: Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Norway, Italy, France, Spain and the United Kingdom.

Memorial services were held on board March 18th, for Chief Warrant Officer John M. Paddock. CWO4 Paddock was assigned to the embarked aviation detachment. He passed away March 16th due to coronary arrest while ashore in Bahrain.

The ship proceeded underway March 26th, from Bahrain to Abu Dhabi, U.A.E., where she moored March 27th. A large re-enlistment ceremony was held on the main deck March 30th, by Vice Admiral Arthur. He administered the oath of enlistment to 12 BLUE RIDGE and 7th Fleet personnel. After the ceremony, refreshments were provided on the mess decks. All involved agreed that this was the most memorable re-enlistment ceremony in recent history.

April fool's day, the ship proceeded underway from Abu Dhabi, enroute to Manama, Bahrain, where she moored April 2nd. On April 13th, over 160 crew members were recognized for their superior performance during an awards ceremony. The ship's Commanding Officer, Captain Henderson, was awarded the Bronze Star. On April 21st, Vice Admiral Arthur briefed the U.S. Ambassador to Bahrain and a delegation of Congressmen concerning Operation Desert Storm. Later that day, the ship accepted the key to the city of Howell, Michigan. This key was sent in appreciation of BLUE RIDGE's efforts during the war. After a turnover with Rear Admiral Taylor to assume duties as COMUSNAVCENT, BLUE RIDGE departed Bahrain enroute to Singapore on the afternoon of the 24th.

On May 4th, while transiting the Strait of Malacca, BLUE RIDGE encountered a small boat dead-in-the-water. The boat's five occupants were signaling furiously for help. BLUE RIDGE immediately responded and found that the "JASUMULIA II" had been adrift for seven days without food and three days without any water. These men were brought aboard and provided food, water, and medical care. The men were turned over to the proper civilian authorities when the ship anchored briefly in Singapore to on load fuel and personnel May 5th. Later that day, BLUE RIDGE continued its journey, bound for Subic Bay, Philippines. After transiting the South China Sea, BLUE RIDGE arrived in Subic Bay, May 9th., where she performed a precision anchorage as one exercise in a navigation check ride being conducted. Upon successful completion of the precision anchorage the ship moored to Alava Pier. While inport Subic Bay, COMNAVSURFGRU WESTPAC, Rear Admiral Tobin, and his staff came aboard BLUE RIDGE and conducted a command inspection. The inspection went very well. Rear Admiral Tobin gave praise to BLUE RIDGE and the crew for an outstanding state of readiness in all areas. May 13th, BLUE RIDGE shifted colors, proceeded underway, and immediately moored to mooring buoy #19 as the second exercise for the navigation check ride. Total score for the whole evolution was 98%, BLUE RIDGE's highest score to date. BLUE RIDGE then proceeded to Hong Kong where she moored at HMS Tamar on May 15th. The crew thoroughly enjoyed themselves during five days of liberty in one of the more popular ports of WESTPAC. May 20th., BLUE RIDGE departed Hong Kong on the final track for home, Yokosuka, Japan. Spirits were high during the four day transit and no one even seemed to mind one more flight quarters on the morning of the

24th. The helicopter arrived with the Commander of the Japanese Defense Agency and Maritime Self-Defense Force in addition to members of the media. A slight drizzle couldn't dampen the enthusiasm of the largest crowd to ever greet BLUE RIDGE. The ship was decorated and the rails were manned as a cheer went up in unison as the first mooring lines went over to the pier. On a podium set up on the pier, Vice Admiral Arthur spoke on the need to fight aggression anywhere in the world and the ability of the Navy to project strength where it is needed.

One department that excelled during Operation DESERT SHIELD and STORM was the Communications Department. In a five month period the Communications Department was responsible for the rapid and reliable processing of over 400,000 messages. Additionally, they maintained over 90 percent reliability on over 70 tactical data, voice and teletype circuits during the height of hostilities. In every facet of communications support, the Communications Department set the standards for excellence in a period of extremely high tempo operations.

Upon arrival BLUE RIDGE immediately began a leave and up-keep period which lasted until June 17th, when Ship Repair Availability #19 commenced. Vice Admiral Arthur and his staff departed the ship on the 17th for the duration of SRA #19. The Morale, Welfare, and Recreation Committee threw a ships party June 29th, and 30th. The party was a smashing success with a vast majority of the crew and dependents in attendance.

New equipment continued to be installed on board and old systems updated as the SRA continued throughout the month of July.

In a photo taking event August 8th, which appeared in Navy Times, the Blue Supply "E" award was painted on the bridge wings. This was awarded for excellence and efficiency in the Supply Department, earned during the competitive cycle from July 1989 through December 1990.

September was filled with training and preparation for our sea trials and Interim Refresher Training (IRFT). Vice Admiral Arthur and his staff returned aboard 4 September. Several calls were made to the ship throughout the month of September, including: Naval Supply Depot, Yokosuka; Naval Forces, Japan; Ship Repair Facility, Yokosuka; Fleet Activities, Yokosuka and Submarine Force Western Pacific. Additional visits were made by Naval Forces, Korea; Naval Forces, Marianas; Defense Attache, China and Fleet Training Group, San Diego.

On 21 September, BLUE RIDGE hosted an inter-cultural picnic with the crew of the Japanese Defense Ship (JDS), Shirane, Flag Ship for the Japanese Maritime Self Defense Force, (JMSDF). This very successful event was filmed by Navy broadcasting, and

reported in the CFAY "Seahawk" newspaper.

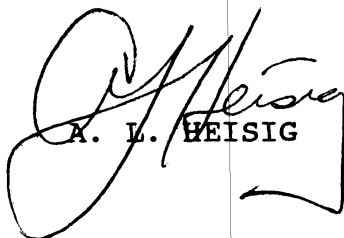
October began with both at sea and inport training as BLUE RIDGE finished up SRA #19. Sea trials were conducted from the 7th through the 9th. The sea trials were followed by a brief upkeep period in Yokosuka which lasted until the 22nd. September 23rd, BLUE RIDGE set sail for Buckner Bay, Japan, and immediately began drilling the crew at General Quarters, helo operations, crash and salvage drills, man overboard and gunnery exercises. The ship was swung on 26 October to conduct the annual magnetic compass checks. The 26th, found BLUE RIDGE briefly in and out of Buckner Bay, Japan, embarking CTF-76, CTF-79 and observers. The ship set sail enroute to Pohang, South Korea for the exercise Valiant Blitz '92. During the transit to Pohang, BLUE RIDGE had an underway replenishment with USS Saint Louis on the 29th. October 30th, BLUE RIDGE moored in Pohang, South Korea.

November was a busy month. On November 1st, BLUE RIDGE departed Pohang along with USS Saint Louis, USS Dubuque, USNS Ponchatoula and several units of the Republic of Korea Navy for exercise Valiant Blitz '92. The exercise was a great success with both Navy and Marine Corps units working closely with their Korean counterparts. During the exercise there were numerous flight quarters, general quarters and deck evolutions. BLUE RIDGE returned to Pohang on November 9th, remaining inport for only a few hours to off load personnel before getting underway for Chinhae, South Korea. The following day, November 10th, BLUE RIDGE arrived in Chinhae. After a few days of rest and liberty for the crew, BLUE RIDGE got underway for Buckner Bay, Japan, and the return trip to Yokosuka. On November 14th, BLUE RIDGE pulled into Buckner Bay, Japan, to off-load CTF-76, CTF-79 and observers. Prospective Commanding Officer, Captain A. L. Heisig greeted the ship and began his turnover with Captain J. K. Henderson. BLUE RIDGE departed later that afternoon enroute to Yokosuka, Japan. On the transit home, BLUE RIDGE conducted more General Quarters and gunnery exercises, returning to Yokosuka, on November 17th. On November 22nd, Captain A. L. Heisig relieved Captain J. K. Henderson of command of USS BLUE RIDGE. Vice Admiral Arthur was the guest speaker along with numerous commanders in attendance. Three days later, November 25th, BLUE RIDGE got underway for Subic Bay, Philippines, with Fleet Training Group Western Pacific embarked conducting IRFT. On the transit to Subic Bay, the 30th, was highlighted by sighting and offering assistance to a swamped R.P. outrigger. The assistance was declined as the swamped outrigger was already being assisted by R.P. outriggers "DARLING JOY", "HOB CAR", "KRYCTEL" and two others.

On December 1st, BLUE RIDGE moored at Alava pier in Subic Bay, R.P.. The crew had a much deserved days rest, then on the 2nd recommenced REFTRA. BLUE RIDGE was in and out of port for drills every day, with the exception of one overnighter on December 3rd,

until the evening of the 7th. After completing a superb REFTRA the crew had another days rest then got underway for Hong Kong on December 9th. BLUE RIDGE moored at HMS Tamar in Hong Kong on December 11th, and was immediately visited by Captain in Charge, Hong Kong; Naval Attache, Hong Kong and Army Attache, Hong Kong. Visits were also made on December 12th, by Defense Attache, France and 48th Gurkha Infantry Brigade.

December 16th, BLUE RIDGE was underway for Yokosuka, Japan. The transit was filled with underway drills and the ship returned to Yokosuka, Japan, on December 20th. The holiday stand down was immediately kicked off by a very successful Christmas party at the Club Alliance. BLUE RIDGE received the "Best Dressed Ship" Award by Commander Fleet Activities, Yokosuka, on December 27th. The remainder of the year was quietly spent preparing for SRF #21 and conducting shipboard and divisional training.

  
A. L. WEISIG