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DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY

USS CURTS (FFG 38)  
FPO AP 96662-1493

DECLASSIFIED

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From: Commanding Officer, USS CURTS (FFG 38)

To: Director of Naval History (N09BH)

Subj: 1997 COMMAND HISTORY FOR USS CURTS (FFG 38)

Ref: (a) OPNAVINST 5750.12F

- Encl:
- (1) Command Composition and Organization
  - (2) Chronology(C)
  - (3) Narrative(C)
  - (4) Biography of ADM M. E. Curts
  - (5) Biography of CDR M. S. Frick
  - (6) Biography of CDR M. S. Welch
  - (7) PAO Article -- USS CURTS Visits Sendai, Japan
  - (8) PAO Article -- Signalmen Communicate to Aussies During Replenishment At Sea
  - (9) PAO Article -- Three New Enlisted Surface Warfare Specialists Aboard USS CURTS
  - (10) PAO Article -- USS CURTS Hosts Reception in Melbourne, Australia
  - (11) PAO Article -- USS CURTS Flies High During Sea Eagle
  - (12) PAO Article -- CURTS Bids Japan Sayonara and San Diego Hello
  - (13) PAO Article -- Chief Damage Controlman Roy Retires Onboard USS CURTS
  - (14) Battle Efficiency/Command Excellence Award Input
  - (15) Welcome Aboard Program
  - (16) Change of Command Program
  - (17) Retirement Ceremony for DCC [REDACTED] Program
  - (18) Retirement Ceremony for PC1 [REDACTED] Program
  - (19) Photographs of USS CURTS

1. In accordance with reference (a), enclosures (1) through (19) are hereby submitted as the 1997 Command History for USS CURTS (FFG 38).

*M. S. Welch*

M. S. Welch

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**COMMAND COMPOSITION AND ORGANIZATION**

1. Command Mission. USS CURTS (FFG 38) is a guided missile frigate of the Oliver Hazard Perry Class. With current upgrades, the ship is capable of battle group support in undersea warfare (USW), air warfare (AW), and surface warfare (SUW). To aid in her mission, she carries two SH-60B Anti-Submarine Helicopters, the SQS-56 Sonar/ SQR-19 Towed Array and MK 46 ship launched torpedoes. To protect against air and surface threats, CURTS is armed with the Standard Surface-to-Air Missile (SM-1) and the Otto-Melara 76 mm gun. For close-in defense, CURTS carries the Vulcan Phalanx 20 mm Close-In Weapons System (CIWS).

2. Organizational Structure. CURTS began 1997 as a member of the Forward Deployed Naval Force in Yokosuka, Japan, and conducted operations in support of Commander, U.S. Seventh Fleet. Commander, Destroyer Squadron FIFTEEN was the immediate superior in the chain of command. In July, CURTS shifted homeport from Yokosuka, Japan to San Diego, California. In doing so, CURTS came under the jurisdiction of Commander, U.S. Third Fleet. The immediate superior in the chain of command became Commander, Destroyer Squadron ONE. In 1997, CURTS reported to the following operational commanders during the dates listed:

01 JAN 97 - 01 MAR 97	TG 075.2
02 MAR 97 - 09 JUN 97	TG 070.1
10 JUN 97 - 14 JUL 97	TG 075.2
15 JUL 97 - 31 DEC 97	TG 015.0.8

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CHRONOLOGY 1997

01 JAN HOLIDAY LEAVE CONTINUES  
12 JAN HOLIDAY LEAVE ENDS  
13 JAN TYPE TRAINING  
14 JAN TYPE TRAINING  
15 JAN DEPART YOKOSUKA, ENR SENDAI, JAPAN  
16 JAN ARR SENDAI  
19 JAN DEPART SENDAI, ENR YOKOSUKA  
20 JAN ARR YOKOSUKA  
25 JAN CHANGE OF HOMEPORT FAIR  
31 JAN SLAMEX 97-08  
3 FEB LINK 11 QUICK LOOK  
4 FEB LINK 11 LONG LOOK  
15 FEB DEPART YOKOSUKA ON SOUTHERN SWING 97 DEPLOYMENT,  
ENROUTE SASEBO, EMBARK HSL-51 (HELLFIRE 04 AND  
HELLFIRE 10)  
17 FEB ARR SASEBO  
18 FEB DEPART SASEBO, COMMENCE SHAREM 120A WITH USS FIFE,  
USS CURTIS WILBUR, JDS AMIGIRI, JDS YUUGIRI, USS TUNNY,  
JDS HAYASHIO, HSL 51 DET FOUR, SWDG, AND ENS SHIIBASHI,  
JMSDF  
24 FEB FINEX SHAREM 120A, DEBARK SWDG, ENS SHIIBASHI  
26 FEB ENR GUAM FOR MISSILEX  
01 MAR MISSILEX, CIWS PACFIRE, ARR GUAM  
02 MAR FIESTA FESTIVAL, GENERAL VISITATION, 677 PEOPLE IN 4 HRS  
03 MAR PRESCHOOL VISIT, VISIT BY GUAM MAYOR, U/W ENR  
AUSTRALIAN GREAT BARRIER REEF FOR EXERCISE TANDEM  
THRUST 97  
06 MAR CROSSED THE EQUATOR AT 151-42.2E  
10 MAR COMMENCED EXERCISE TANDEM THRUST 97  
22 MAR FINEX EXERCISE TANDEM THRUST 97, ENR GLADSTONE,  
AUSTRALIA  
23 MAR ARR GLADSTONE, AUSTRALIA  
25 MAR U/W ENR SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA  
26 MAR ARR SYDNEY  
27 MAR FTSCPAC TECH REPS ARRIVE TO CONDUCT REPAIRS  
01 APR U/W ENR MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA  
03 APR ARR MELBOURNE  
04 APR HOSTED RECEPTION FOR AUSTRALIAN/AMERICAN ASSOC.  
ONBOARD WITH 234 PEOPLE IN ATTENDANCE

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07 APR U/W ENR FREMANTLE, AUSTRALIA  
09 APR 76MM AND CIWS PACFIRE  
11 APR SLAMEX 97-12, EMATT EXERCISE  
12 APR ARR FREMANTLE  
16 APR U/W ENR BALI, INDONESIA  
21 APR ARR BALI  
24 APR U/W ENR SURABAYA, INDONESIA  
25 APR ARR SURABAYA  
29 APR U/W ENR SINGAPORE  
30 APR 76MM, CIWS PACFIRE  
01 MAY ARR SINGAPORE, SLAMEX 97-13  
05 MAY U/W ENR SATTAHIP, THAILAND  
07 MAY ARR SATTAHIP, PRE-EXERCISE RECEPTION WITH ROYAL THAI  
NAVY, 451 PEOPLE IN ATTENDANCE  
08 MAY U/W IN GULF OF THAILAND FOR EXERCISE SEA EAGLE 97  
12 MAY FINEX SEA EAGLE, HOTWASHUP, ANCHOR OFF PHATTAYA  
BEACH, THAILAND  
17 MAY U/W IN GULF OF THAILAND FOR EXERCISE COBRA GOLD 97  
20 MAY FINEX COBRA GOLD, ENR HONG KONG WITH ROYAL  
AUSTRALIAN NAVY  
28 MAY ARR HONG KONG (PIERSIDE KOWLOON) WITH INDEPENDENCE  
TASK GROUP  
01 JUN U/W ENR YOKOSUKA, JAPAN WITH ROYAL AUSTRALIAN NAVY  
AND INDEPENDENCE TASK GROUP  
02 JUN VBSS TRAINING WITH USNS GUADALUPE, RETRIEVED 2  
REXTORPS DROPPED BY HS-14 FROM USS INDEPENDENCE  
(CV 62)  
05 JUN COMMENCED ASWEX 97-5JA WITH JMSDF  
09 JUN FINEX ASWEX 97-5JA  
10 JUN ARR YOKOSUKA, DEBARK HSL-51, HELLFIRE 04 AND  
HELLFIRE 10  
11 JUN COMMENCE STANDDOWN PRIOR TO CHANGE OF HOMEPORT  
30 JUN AMMO OFFLOAD  
08 JUL U/W TO ANCHORAGE FOR AMMO TRANSFER, RETURN TO  
PIER 12  
09 JUL CURTS HOSTED PICNIC TO INTRODUCE THE OFFICERS AND  
CREW OF USS JOHN S. MCCAIN TO THE OFFICERS AND CREW  
OF JDS TACHIKAZE  
11 JUL DEPART YOKOSUKA, JAPAN ENR SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA VIA  
PEARL HARBOR, HAWAII  
21 JUL ARR PEARL HARBOR, EMBARK 32 TIGERS  
23 JUL U/W TO SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA  
29 JUL ARR SAN DIEGO  
01 AUG DCC (S/ W) [REDACTED] RETIREMENT  
04 AUG U/W TO SEAL BEACH, CALIFORNIA FOR AMMO OFFLOAD

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05 AUG AMMO OFFLOAD, U/W TO SAN DIEGO  
07 AUG COMMENCE UPKEEP PERIOD, DEFUEL DFM  
08 AUG DEFUEL JP5  
11 AUG DSRA 8 BEGINS  
12 AUG PC1 (S/W) [REDACTED] RETIREMENT  
13 AUG AT MIDNIGHT COMMENCE DEADSTICKING USS CURTS TO  
DRYDOCK AFDM 14 STEADFAST  
15 SEP PUGET SOUND NAVAL SHIPYARD WORKER KILLED WHILE  
WORKING ON BOAT DAVIT  
03 OCT CHANGE OF COMMAND, CDR MARK S. WELCH RELIEVED CDR  
MICHAEL S. FRICK AS COMMANDING OFFICER OF USS CURTS  
24 OCT AFTER INITIAL DELAYS, CURTS UNDOCKED FROM STEADFAST  
(AFDM 14) AND MOVED TO PIER 13, COMPLETEING A 12 HOUR  
EVOLUTION  
03 NOV LOA COMMENCES  
05 NOV SATISFACTORY COMPLETION OF LOA  
10 NOV FAST CRUISE  
12 NOV U/W FOR SEA TRIALS, RETURN TO PIER 13  
13 NOV PRT  
14 NOV PRT, END DSRA 8  
17 NOV U/W ENR SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA WHILE CONDUCTING  
OPERATIONAL CHECKS ON ALL EQUIPMENT  
21 NOV ARR SAN FRANCISCO  
24 NOV U/W ENR SAN DIEGO  
25 NOV ARR SAN DIEGO, PIER 5  
27 NOV CELEBRATED THANKSGIVING ON THE MESS DECKS  
01 DEC U/W FOR SEAL BEACH, VIA POINT LOMA FUEL PIER  
02 DEC ARR SEAL BEACH FOR AMMO ONLOAD, U/W FOR SOCAL  
OPAREA UPON COMPLETION OF AMMO ONLOAD  
05 DEC ARR SAN DIEGO PIER 5  
08 DEC COMMENCED LATR FOR SUPPLY DEPARTMENT  
12 DEC LATR ENDED  
15 DEC CART II COMMENCED  
19 DEC CART II ENDED; COMMENCE HOLIDAY LEAVE PERIOD

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Narrative 1997

a. January.

(1) CURTS was the first ship in six years to visit Sendai, Japan. In a space of three days, CURTS hosted over 1600 people as her crew gave tours of the ship.

b. February.

(1) CURTS departed Yokosuka on Southern Swing 97 Deployment. The first stop was for a brief pre-exercise conference in Sasebo, Japan. After the conference, CURTS participated in SHAREM-120A with USS FIFE, USS CURTIS WILBUR, JDS AMAGIRI, JDS YUUGIRI, USS TUNNY, JDS HAYASHIO, HSL 51 DET FOUR.

c. March.

(1) On the first of the month, CURTS arrived in Guam. During her brief two-day stop, CURTS sailors enjoyed Guamanian hospitality at a local festival hosted by the mayor.

(2) Operation Tandem Thrust 97, a joint training exercise between all branches of the United States and Australian militaries, occurred in the vicinity of the Great Barrier Reef. CURTS operated as both the opposing force and as a friendly carrier escort at varying times during the operation. Tropical Cyclone Justin forced numerous readjustments to the schedule, but the exercise still underlined the importance of continued interoperability between nations.

(3) At the conclusion of the exercise, CURTS pulled into the small port of Gladstone, Queensland. CURTS also visited Sydney, New South Wales.

d. April.

(1) CURTS' next stop was Melbourne, New South Wales. While inport Melbourne, CURTS hosted a reception sponsored by Toohey's for the Australian-American Association. It was a smashing success.

(2) After transiting the Great Australian Bight, CURTS visited the port of Fremantle, Western Australia.

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(3) CURTS next port of call was the resort island of Bali, Indonesia.

(4) To balance out the fun of Bali, CURTS pulled into Surabaya, Indonesia for the purpose of having some minor shipwork done.

e. May.

(1) After a two day transit from Surabaya, CURTS arrived in the fine city of Singapore.

(2) CURTS stayed in Singapore for four days, then left for Sattahip, Thailand. While inport Sattahip, CURTS hosted a pre-exercise reception for the Royal Thai Navy in preparation for Operation Sea Eagle. The RTN Commodore, COMDESRON FIFTEEN, and the wardrooms of RTS PHUTATPHA CHULALOUCK, RTS RATTANAKOSIN, and USS FIFE.

(3) The next five days consisted of a high operation tempo as the ships conducted gunnery, maneuvering, and radio exercises. Once again, the importance of interoperability was highlighted.

(4) At the conclusion of the exercise, CURTS anchored off Pattaya Beach, Thailand for five well deserved days of rest and relaxation. Also present at anchorage were USS INDEPENDENCE, USS FIFE, USS CURTIS WILBUR, and USS HONOLULU.

(5) With five days of liberty under their belts, the officers and crew of CURTS weighed anchor and prepared for Operation Cobra Gold 97, held in the Gulf of Thailand. During this exercise, CURTS took on the role of Opposing Forces Commander and directed the efforts of two Thai fast patrol boats in addition to her own helicopter detachment. Each day CURTS hid in radio and radar silence. Each night she ran with either deceptive lighting or no lights at all. As OPFOR, CURTS managed to simulate destroying the high value units of both the carrier battle group and the amphibious ready group in addition to some of their escorts. CURTS demonstrated the lethality of a small vessel with a highly trained crew even in the face of a larger, better outfitted foe.

(6) Upon completion of the exercise, CURTS rejoined the carrier task group enroute to Hong Kong. Enroute to Hong Kong, CURTS participated in joint training with the Royal Australian Navy. While the rest of the group anchored out in the bay, CURTS had the fortune of going pierside in Kowloon, thus saving the crew from long boat rides to and from liberty. The INDEPENDENCE task group had the honor of being the last U.S. battle group to be in Hong Kong before its return to China.

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f. June.

(1) On her way back to Yokosuka, Japan, CURTS participated in one last exercise with the Japanese Maritime Self Defense Force. In a fitting circle of events, CURTS began and ended her deployment with an Under Sea Warfare exercise in conjunction with the Japanese, the latter one ASWEX 97-5JA.

(2) After a fast-paced, port-hopping four months, CURTS' crew looked forward to spending the next thirty days in a stand down with family and friends.

g. July.

(1) USS JOHN S. McCAIN relieved CURTS at the tip of the spear. At the conclusion of the thirty day stand down, CURTS bid Japan "Sayonara" and left for San Diego via Pearl Harbor.

(2) In Pearl Harbor, CURTS embarked 32 friends and family members of the officers and crew for the Tiger Cruise. For the next six days, as CURTS made her way to San Diego, the tigers had the opportunity to experience almost every aspect of ship life.

(3) On 29 JULY 1997, CURTS arrived in her new homeport of San Diego.

h. August.

(1) In preparation for her first DSRA in six years, CURTS went to Seal Beach and off-loaded all her ammunition. At midnight on 12 August 1997, CURTS deadsticked into dry dock, STEADFAST (AFDM 14) with the assistance of two tugs.

(2) On 01 August 1997, DCC (SW) [REDACTED] retired after 22 years of loyal service.

(3) On 12 August 1997, PC1 [REDACTED] [REDACTED] retired after 20 years of loyal service.

i. September.

(1) On 15 September 1997, a Puget Sound Naval Shipyard worker suffered severe head injuries while working on the boat davit. He died in the hospital about eight hours later.

j. October.

(1) On 03 October 1997, CDR Mark S. Welch relieved CDR Michael S. Frick as commanding officer of USS CURTS.

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(2) CURTS left dry dock, STEADFAST AFDM-14, on 24 OCT 97 and moved to pier 13. During DSRA 8, CURTS received the Plastics At Sea compactor modification in addition to PRC on the DC deck. Also, her hull was chosen to evaluate the effectiveness of two different types of paint below the waterline.

k. November

(1) Fast Cruise on 10 November 97 followed by Sea Trials on the 12th.

(2) On 17 November 97, CURTS got underway for San Francisco, California, and arrived on 21 November 97. After a three day visit, CURTS got underway for her return trip to San Diego, California.

l. December

(1) CURTS departed her homeport enroute to Seal Beach, California on 01 December 97 for ammunition onload and arrived in Seal Beach on 02 December 97. She departed for local oparea drills that same day upon completion of onload.

(2) CURTS arrived back in San Diego, California on 05 December 97.

(3) Supply Department underwent Logistics Training Review assessment the week of 08 December 97.

(4) CURTS Christmas Party held on 12 December 97 at Town and Country Hotel.

(5) CART II held for CURTS the week of 15 December 97.

(6) Holiday stand-down commenced on 19 December 97 until 05 January 98.

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**ADMIRAL MAURICE E. CURTS  
UNITED STATES NAVY**

USS CURTS (FFG 38) is named for the late Admiral Maurice E. Curts, United States Navy (1898-1976), former Commander-in-Chief, U.S. Pacific Fleet and heroic cruiser commander of World War II.

After graduating from the United States Naval Academy in June 1919, Admiral Curts reported aboard USS CHESTER for service as a Midshipman. He subsequently served at sea in destroyers of the Atlantic Fleet and in the aircraft carrier USS SARATOGA, and ashore at the Naval Operating Base, Hampton Roads, Virginia and in the Bureau of Engineering, Navy Department.

Admiral Curts studied the emerging technology of radio at the Naval Postgraduate School in Annapolis, Maryland and Harvard University between 1926 and 1928. These studies led to his assignment as Officer-in-Charge, Radio and Sound, Naval Research Laboratory in 1936, where he received a commendation from the Secretary of the Navy for his contributions to the development of the experimental "radar".

At the outbreak of World War II, Admiral Curts was the Communications Officer for the staff of Commander-in-Chief, U.S. Pacific Fleet. He was awarded the Bronze Star Medal for his successful and innovative organization of joint communications during the first months of the war.

Admiral Curts won the Navy Cross and Silver Star Medal for extraordinary heroism while commanding the cruiser USS COLUMBIA during the Leyte Gulf landing, the Battle of Surigao Strait, the Lingayen Gulf landing and the liberation of Borneo. During the initial Lingayen Gulf landing, he continued to lead his cruiser in action despite severe damage inflicted by two suicide planes which had left 100 of his men dead or wounded.

As Chief of Staff and Aide to Commander, FIRST Carrier Task Force, Pacific Fleet, Admiral Curts was present at the formal surrender of the Japanese on board the battleship USS MISSOURI in Tokyo Bay on 2 September 1945. Tours as Commander of Cruiser Division Twenty, Task Force One Hundred, and South Atlantic Force followed.

Admiral Curts served as Deputy Commander-in-Chief, U.S. Pacific Fleet from 1955 until 1958. On 13 January 1958, President Dwight D. Eisenhower appointed Admiral Curts Commander-in-Chief, U.S. Pacific Fleet. Admiral Curts served in that capacity until 1 February 1958. One month later, he assumed duty as Commander, Western Sea Frontier, serving in that capacity until his retirement on 1 April 1960. Admiral Curts passed away on 16 February 1976.

Encl (4)