



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY
USS OGDEN (LPD 5)
FPO AP 96674-1708

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From: Commanding Officer, USS OGDEN (LPD 5)
To: Director of Naval History (N09BH)

Subj: COMMAND HISTORY FOR CALENDAR YEAR 1997

Ref: (a) OPNAVINST 5750.12F

Encl: (1) Command Composition and Organization
(2) Chronology
(3) Narrative
(4) Commanding Officer's Biography
(5) Welcome Aboard Pamphlet

1. In accordance with reference (a), enclosures (1) through (6) are submitted.

[Signature]
R. K. MCNEES

Copy to:
COMPHIBGRU THREE

Command Composition and Organization

Mission: This "Austin-class" amphibious transport dock is an "all-purpose" ship which employs the "balanced load" concept. OGDEN is capable of carrying troops, cargo and tanks. In addition it operates troop and cargo-carrying helicopters to project assault forces inland in support of the beachhead from the helicopter landing platform. It has the capability to simultaneously launch amphibious assaults by sea and air. The LPD combines the functions of four different classes of ships; the dock landing ship (LSD), the tank landing ship (LST), the attack transport (LPA), and the attack cargo ship (LKA).

Immediate Senior Command: Commander, Amphibious Group THREE

Homeport: San Diego, California

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Commanding Officer: CDR R. L. Ford, USN

Executive Officer: LCDR T. L. Hart, USN

Chief Engineer: LT [REDACTED], USN

Operations Officer: LT [REDACTED], USNR

First Lieutenant: LCDR [REDACTED], USN

Aviation Officer: LCDR [REDACTED], USN (1JAN97 - 4JUN97)
LT [REDACTED], USN (4JUN97 - Present)

Supply Officer: LT [REDACTED]

Navigator: LT [REDACTED], USN

Chronology

9 January - 14 January 1997:	COMPUTEX 96-20 TRUE
15 January 1997:	Anchored at Camp Pendelton
16 January - 24 January 1997:	FLEETEX 97-11M
25 January - 9 February 1997:	Upkeep, San Diego
10 February - 20 February 1997:	JTFX 97-1
21 February - 14 March 1997:	Pre-deployment Stand Down
19 March - 20 March 1997:	Sea Trials
20 March 1997:	Dependents Day Cruise
24 March 1997:	Depart for WESTPAC 97
31 March 1997:	In port Pearl Harbor, Hawaii
1 April - 17 April 1997:	MLTSL: Hong Kong
10 April 1997:	Outchop 5th Flt/Inchop 7th Flt
18 April - 21 April 1997:	Port Visit: Hong Kong
21 April - 24 April 1997:	MLTSL: Singapore
25 April - 28 April 1997:	Port Visit: Singapore
28 April 1997:	XSIT to Port Kelang
29 April - 1 May 1997:	Port Visit: Penang Malaysia
2 May - 5 May	XSIT to ARG RDVU
6 May - 7 May 1997:	XSIT to 5th Flt Chop Line
8 May 1997:	Chop 5th Flt
9 May - 18 May 1997:	Transit to Aqaba
19 May - 4 June 1997:	In port Aqaba, Jordan

20 May - 18 June 1997:	Infinite Moonlight
8 June 1997:	Refuel at Port Suez
9 June - 19 June 1997:	In port Aqaba, Jordan
20 June - 22 June 1997:	XSIT to Eritrea
23 June - 25 June 1997:	In port Massawa, Eritrea
26 June - 2 July 1997:	XSIT to Gulf (Jebel Ali, UAE)
3 July - 10 July 1997:	Upkeep Jebel Ali
11 July - 18 July 1997:	Exercise Red Reef
24 July - 4 August 1997:	Exercise Iron Magic (UAE)
7 August - 9 August 1997:	Mid Cycle Assessment (MCA)
11 August 1997:	Outchop 5th Flt/Inchop 7th Flt
19 August - 22 August 1997:	Port Visit: Surabaya
30 August - 3 September 1997:	In port Cairnes, Australia
9 September 1997:	Chop 3rd Flt
15 September - 16 September 1997:	In port Pearl Harbor, Hawaii
23 September 1997:	Anchored Camp Pendelton
23 September 1997:	Off-load Marines
24 September 1997:	Return Home Port San Diego
24 September - 24 October 1997:	Post Deployment Stand Down
27 October - 31 October 1997:	Ammo Off-load (Seal Beach)
3 November - 7 November 1997:	INSURV
9 December 1997	UMI
13 December - 31 December 1997:	Holiday Leave and Upkeep

Narrative

January 1 found USS OGDEN at pier 6, Naval Station San Diego, California, in the midst of a well deserved Christmas stand down. The ship was in the operational phase of work-ups for her 1997 deployment to the Middle East. OGDEN got underway on the 9th of January for COMPUTEX 96-20 with the USS BOXER, USS FORT FISHER, and USS CHANDLER. The Amphibious Ready Group would be carrying out amphibious landings and boat raids off the coast of Southern California and San Clemente Island, while evading an opposing force of surface, air, and submarine units.

While operating off Camp Pendleton, USS OGDEN responded to a distress call from a 40 foot sail boat. The crew had lost control in the 30 knot winds and 8 foot seas and had let their sheets go and were being driven towards the shore. The OGDEN launched two Combat Rubber Raiding Craft and the ship's Motor Whale Boat with experienced sailing crews to aid the vessel. The sailing vessel EVENING STAR was boarded, the sails taken down, and the boat pointed back out to sea only a few miles off the coast. The Del Mar Harbor Patrol responded shortly after and took the boat in tow. OGDEN's quick response and help in securing the tow most likely saved the boat from going aground in the heavy surf.

After successfully completing COMPUTEX, OGDEN stayed at sea for FLEETEX 97-11, from 16 to 24 January. USS BOXER Amphibious Ready Group worked with the USS CONSTELLATION Carrier Battle Group during this exercise, which also saw OGDEN conduct amphibious landings and small boat raids. Because of vigilant look-outs and quick and decisive action by the bridge team, OGDEN was the only ship in the ARG not declared sunk by opposing submarines. OGDEN also played a key role in identifying and marking opposing force ships.

After a brief, final upkeep period, OGDEN got underway for it's last pre-deployment exercise, JTFEX 97-1, on 10 February. OGDEN and the BOXER ARG once again exercised with the CONSTELLATION Battle Group in preparation for operations in the Arabian Gulf. OGDEN again demonstrated her professionalism working close to the shore as the Primary Control Ship and Amphibious Assault Vehicle launch and recovery platform, a role she would play throughout the deployment.

OGDEN's success in the training and operational phases of her work-up enabled her to take a full pre-deployment stand down from 21 February to 14 March. The crew came back rested and ready for action. The ship put to sea for sea trials on the 19th of March, and conducted a family cruise on the 20th. The family

day cruise included leap frogs with USS FORT FISHER, fly-bys with LCACs and Harriers, and helicopter operations with CH-46s, CH-53Es, UH-1s, and AH-1 Cobras. The weather was beautiful and everyone enjoyed the opportunity to show their family what they do for a living.

USS OGDEN departed San Diego the morning of 24 March. There was a large turn-out of Navy and Marine Corps families to see their loved ones off. USS OGDEN, USS BOXER, and USS FORT FISHER left together for Hawaii. The ARG arrived in Hawaii on 30 March for 2 days of combat skills training for the embarked 15th Marine Expeditionary Unit and a quick stop for fuel and last minute supplies for the ships. OGDEN once again displayed exceptional seamanship while operating within 600 yards of reefs while landing and recovering the Amphibious Assault Vehicles, and launching the LCU. The heavy seas and high winds off of Bellows beach were a challenge to the exercise. While recovering the second of OGDEN's two embarked rhibs, two of the occupants fell overboard. The ship quickly came about and stood off while a CH-46 recovered the boat crewmen. The RHIB was damaged during the evolution, so a late night run into Pearl Harbor to swap out the damaged RHIB was required. The navigation and sea and anchor teams stayed up throughout the night to ensure the safe navigation of the channel and OGDEN quickly rejoined the ARG.

Throughout the first half of April, OGDEN and the ARG made the long transit from Hawaii to Hong Kong. The BOXER ARG was the last to visit Hong Kong before it reverted to Chinese control. During the ship's stay, from 18 to 21 April, the crew enjoyed it's liberty and those who had visited before detected little change in the atmosphere.

On the 21st of April, OGDEN detached from it's mooring buoy and departed Hong Kong for Singapore. The ARG arrived in Sembawang Shipyard in Singapore on the 25th of April. The ships stayed inport until the 28th to accomplish last minute repairs. The ARG held a sports contest at the base and OGDEN won the tennis portion and placed highly in many others. Singapore was not all work, and the sailors and marines got to visit the zoo, the water slides, and explore the historic town.

After leaving Singapore, the ARG split and OGDEN and FORT FISHER visited Penang, Malaysia, while BOXER and the PHIBRON 7 staff went to Phuket, Thailand. OGDEN was inport from the 29th of April until 01 May. The lush jungle and rugged terrain made for a beautiful golf course where OGDEN held the first of it's WESTPAC golf tournaments. Over 80 crew members participated.

OGDEN and FORT FISHER left Malaysia on the 2nd of May, and rendezvoused with the BOXER on the 5th to start the long transit to Aqaba, Jordan. OGDEN transited the straits of Tiran and entered the gulf of Aqaba on the 19th of May. The ARG stayed in Jordan until the 19th of June to conduct Operation Infinite Moonlight. While in Jordan, the crew was able to visit the ancient city of Petra, which was featured in the latest Indiana Jones movie, The Last Crusade. The crew also visited Amman and the Dead Sea. The port of Aqaba offered great scuba diving and snorkeling, along with many local restaurants and interesting shopping. The ship's band, "The Dirty Laundry Band," played two packed engagements at the Aqua Marina Hotel. The wardrooms were invited to the home of General Hussein, Jordan's Defense Minister, for dinner. The month went by quickly as OGDEN moved between the pier and various anchorages to accommodate merchant ships. OGDEN did leave Aqaba from 07 to 09 June to refuel in Port Suez, Egypt.

After Aqaba, the ARG transited back down the Red Sea to the new country of Eritrea. OGDEN was the only one of the three ships to go ashore in the city of Massawa. Eritrea won it's independence from Ethiopia after a vicious 35 year civil war. OGDEN put together a robust community relations project that delivered 48 cases of English language text books, 40 cases of humanitarian aid, and cleaned, painted, and re-roofed the town library. OGDEN also played soccer against the local military team, toured the battle field, supplied medical and dental treatment, and put on a reception for local government officials on the flight deck. The crew enjoyed themselves in the restaurants and clubs, and the local government was extremely impressed with the work accomplished.

The ARG left Eritrea on the 26th of June and transited the Straits of Hormuz on the 2nd of July. The ships pulled into Jebel Ali, United Arab Emirates on the 3rd. While in Jebel Ali, OGDEN held it's second golf tournament at the Dubai Country Club, home of the Dubai Classic. The ship's band also played at the Mariners Club for the 4th of July. The ARG departed Jebel Ali on the 11th of July for Exercise Red Reef with Saudi Arabia. OGDEN once again operated near the beach as Primary Control ship and launched the LCU and AAVs in support of the bilateral exercise. After the successful completion of Red Reef, OGDEN stayed underway and transited south to the United Arab Emirates for Exercise Iron Magic. The ARG transited the Straits of Hormuz on the 5th of August. OGDEN passed it's Mid Cycle Assessment on the 7th to the 9th of August.

OGDEN started her journey home after the successful MCA. She and the FORT FISHER stopped in Surabaya, Indonesia from 19 to 22 August. After almost two months underway in the heat of the Arabian Gulf and Indian Ocean, the crew was glad to get to tropical Indonesia. All hands enjoyed the food and recreational activities offered ashore. They also had excellent golf courses. OGDEN held the third of it's golf tournaments in Surabaya.

OGDEN got underway from Indonesian the 22nd of August for the transit to Cairns, Australia. The ship passed through the Great Barrier Reef before getting to the resort town of Cairns. The scuba diving and golf were outstanding. Many traveled to the outback and the Andara Lava Fields as well as the rain forest. The locals were very friendly and the crew enjoyed it's visit from the 30th of August to the 3rd of September. The ship held it's final golf tournament of WESTPAC 1997 in Cairns.

OGDEN stopped briefly in Hawaii on the 15th and 16th of September to pick up the Tigers for the Tiger Cruise. The ARG put on a spectacular demonstration for the family members and friends who made the trip. Harriers bombed and Cobras strafed and rocketed a flare dropped close aboard to port. The SEALs performed fast rope landings on the flight deck, and everyone got to shoot the 25mm and .50caliber machine guns. The Tigers had participants from all the American conflicts since and including World War II. A retired OGDEN sailor from the Vietnam days embarked for the cruise and showed off his cruise books from that era.

OGDEN returned to San Diego on the 24th of September to beautiful weather and a large crowd of family and friends. Everyone was glad to be home after the extremely successful deployment. The ship went into a stand down until the 24th of October.

After coming back from stand down, OGDEN transited north to Seal Beach to off-load it's munitions from the 27th to the 31st of October. OGDEN returned home to face INSURV on the 3rd of November. Valiently battling engineering material problems the ship succwssfully passed INSURV and completed its underway material inspection.

OGDEN had it's children's Christmas party on board on 13 December 1997. The ship supplied Santa, gifts, food, and entertainment for over 140 of it's crew's children. The ship had it's grand Holiday Party on the 16th of December at the Windham Emerald Plaza, with approximately 250 crewmembers and family enjoying an evening of fine food, dancing and festivities. After the Christmas party, the ship went into it's holiday stand down.

USS OGDEN received Excellence awards for every category for it's accomplishments in 1996. The pride and professionalism only increased throughout 1997. The ship met every commitment and performed in a highly professional manner no matter what the task, operation, or exercise. The success of the ship brought on even higher retention numbers than the previous year. Crew members re-enlisted at such exotic locations like the "high place" at Petra, the signature holes on each of the golf courses, and the Arizona Memorial. OGDEN's motto of "Flexible Response" was tested and proven correct.