



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY
USS PONCE (LPD-15)
FPO NEW YORK 09501

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From: Commanding Officer, USS PONCE (LPD 15)
To: Director of Naval History (OP 09B9)

Subj: Command History (Report Symbol 5750-1)

Ref: (a) OPNAVINST 5750.12B

Encl: (1) USS PONCE (LPD 15) Command History 1977

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


R. G. MURPHY

1. Command Organization

a. Commanding Officer: Captain James R. ALLINGHAM, 16 September 1976 to 12 January 1978.

b. Amphibious Squadron assignment: Amphibious Squadron FOUR.

2. Chronological Summary of Operations for 1977

With the ringing in of the new year, 1977, the United States Ship PONCE (LPD 15) was located at Pier Two, Naval Operations Base, Norfolk, Virginia, with half the crew enjoying holiday leave and the other half involved in an intensive upkeep period, readying the ship for an impending deployment to the Caribbean.

On January 13th, PONCE set sail to Morehead City, North Carolina as part of the Amphibious Task Group for CARIBEX 1-77, arrived at Moorehead City on the 14th and embarked elements of BLT 2/8. PONCE was underway again on the 15th of January and proceeded to anchorage off Onslow Beach, North Carolina, to conduct and rehearse Amphibious operations. With a minus thirty-seven degree wind chill factor on weather decks, PONCE weighed anchor on January 17th and steered a course for Vieques, Puerto Rico. PONCE cut her way through a thick rising sea smoke as she continued her journey south, past Miami, Florida that was buried beneath several inches of snow. Upon arrival off the coast of Puerto Rico on the 22nd of January, PONCE went to anchorage and conducted amphibious operations until the afternoon of the 25th when she weighed anchor and set sail for her namesake city.

On the morning of January 26th the "Proud Lion" arrived at Ponce, Puerto Rico with a welcoming crowd of six hundred well wishers looking on. During the following four days, the residents of Ponce, Puerto Rico, opened their city to the officers and men of USS PONCE and her embarked Marines from BLT 2/8. The Marines set up a static display on the flight deck and the PONCE conducted general visiting. In excess of twelve thousand residents of Ponce, Puerto Rico visited their ship and a good time was had by all.

On January 30, PONCE once again left port for the Vieques anchorage and arrived on the 1st of February to put her Marines ashore. As time permitted there were cookouts on the flight deck, swim call, fishing, skeet shooting, and sailing on PONCE's Sun Fish sail boats. From 3 until 11 February, PONCE participated in competitive exercises, and completing all arrived back at her anchorage on the 12th. On the 13th PONCE weighed anchor and sailed into San Juan, Puerto Rico on the 14th of February and moored at Pier Eleven Gulf Lines terminal.

After several days of liberty the PONCE left San Juan on February 17, for Morehead City, North Carolina and arrived there after an uneventful transit on the 21st to off load her Marine Detachment and proceed to Naval Operations Base, Norfolk, Virginia where she arrived on February 22.

On March 1, PONCE shifted berths to the quay wall at the Naval Amphibious Base, Little Creek, Virginia and was moored there until she returned to NOB for refueling on the first of April.

On April 4, PONCE set sail for the Charleston, South Carolina Operations area to help conduct mine warfare operations. Operations were completed on the 7th of April and she returned to NOB the next day, mooring at pier three on 8 April.

On 20 and 21 April PONCE was anchored in the Lynnhaven Anchorage to provide services for the Amphibious School before returning to NOB on 21 April.

On 9 May, PONCE set sail once again for Morehead City, North Carolina as part of the Amphibious Task Group on Solid Shield 77. PONCE arrived at Morehead City 10 May, and embarked elements of BLT 2/8 and left port on the 11th for Joint Evacuation Exercises off the coast of Savanna, Georgia. After the completion of exercises PONCE steamed to anchorage off Onslow Beach, North Carolina, arriving there on 15 May. Amphibious operations were conducted, and on the 19th of May she steamed toward NOB, Norfolk, Virginia and moored at Pier 7 late in the afternoon of the 20th.

On 5 July PONCE sailed to Ammo anchorage off Chesapeake, Virginia to off load excess fuel and ammo for the impending yard period. On the afternoon of 7 July, PONCE moored at quay wall Naval Amphibious Base, Little Creek, Virginia until she departed for Chester, Pa. on the 19th of July.

On 20 July PONCE arrived at Pier 1 Sun Shipbuilding and Drydock Company, in Chester, Pennsylvania, by the 22nd the ship's personnel and offices were moved aboard APL 45 and the PONCE became an industrial area. Two old School buses were acquired from a salvage yard and repaired and painted by the ship's company for trips to Norfolk, Virginia during the weekend. The "Blue Gooses" are also used to take liberty parties into Philadelphia and a large number of ship's personnel to fire fighting school.

On the 2nd of September the PONCE was moved dead plant into floating drydock to continue repairs and was refloated again on the 29th of September. During this docking period a crew was sent to Little Creek, Virginia to procure a LCM-8 boat to eliminate the one mile walk to drydock and replace it with a five minute boat ride. The LCM-8 was piloted up the Chesapeake Bay safely to Chester, Pa. by a hardy crew under Ensign Francis Devereux, USN.

On the 18th of December the "Sea and Anchor Detail" was once again set to move PONCE to floating drydock. As the closing seconds of the year approach "The Proud Lion" quietly rests upon her blocks, braving a cold rainy night.