



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY
USS PONCE (LPD-15)
FPO NEW YORK 09582

31 August 1982

From: Commanding Officer, USS PONCE (LPD 15), FPO New York 09582
To: Naval Historical Center, Washington Navy Yard, Washington, D.C. 20374

Subj: Annual Command History; request for

Ref: (a) Your NHC/SH, Ser 2266 of 13 August 1982
Encl: (1) Copy of 1981 Command History of USS PONCE (LPD 15)

1. In response to reference (a), enclosure (1) is submitted.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "P.S. Golden".

P.S. GOLDEN
By direction

USS PONCE (LPD 15) COMMAND HISTORY - 1981

USS PONCE (LPD 15) began the year moored to the pier at Naval Station, Norfolk, Va., having returned from a North Atlantic cruise just prior to the holidays.

On 1 February 1981, she got underway for a month-long cruise to the Gulf of Mexico to conduct USMCR training in Tampa, Fla.; Gulfport, Miss.; Galveston, Texas; and Mayport, Fla. There was much press coverage and local interest shown in each of these ports, as the Navy is not often seen operating in the Gulf.

Upon the return to Norfolk on 3 March, PONCE entered an IMAV in preparation for a deployment to the Mediterranean. During the next few months, the ship conducted a workup in the Virginia Capes operating area, making a port call in Newport, R.I., and off the coast of North Carolina,

On 18 April, Captain C.G. Felkins was relieved as Commanding Officer by Captain D.P. March. Captain Felkins became CO of the Fleet Training Group in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. Captain March, an aviator, had come from the USS John F. KENNEDY where he had been Air Group Commander.

On 3 June PONCE got underway for the Med, picking up its Marine complement in Morehead City, N.C. Due to the Lebanese civil war, still very much in the news as PONCE arrived in Rota, the ship made a six-hour turn around in the Spanish port and headed for Naples to await further orders. PONCE remained in Naples until after the 4th of July while the situation in Beirut stabilized.

On 10 July, while at sea, PONCE celebrated its 10th anniversary as a commissioned vessel. The ceremony was highlighted by a smoker on the flight deck and a cake cutting ceremony attended by VADM Rowden, COMSIXTHFLT and CAPT E.W. Foote, COMPHIBRON SIX

While in the Med PONCE also marked the following milestones and celebrations:

- Invasion of southern France by allied forces in WW II (15 August)
- 18,000th safe aircraft landing (8 Oct)
- 15th anniversary of the ship's keel laying (16 Oct)

While in the Med PONCE operated in Piane di Spille, Italy, with Italian troops; in Portugal with local forces; and in Turkey with various NATO forces as part of exercise "Display Determination '81". PONCE also had port visits during the six-month deployment in Lisbon; Rota; Naples; San Remo, Italy; Messina, Sicily; Saint Raphael, France; and Palma de Majorca.

Following the turnover with the relieving MARG in Souda Bay, Crete, PONCE was ready to head home. As PONCE and its accompanying ships left Crete, word was received that President Sadat of Egypt had been assassinated. PONCE was delayed for a week acting as a verticle onboard delivery vessel (VOD) off the coast of Egypt for the Sixth Fleet during the days immediately following.

On 11 November PONCE returned to Norfolk to happy dependents, where she remained through the end of the year. Throughout the year, PONCE was under the immediate control of COMPHIBRON SIX.