



Rec. 0 4/16/92
DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY

USS PONCE (LPD - 15)
FPO AE 09582 - 1717

5750

Ser LPD 15 / PAC 124
7APR92

From: Commanding Officer, USS PONCE (LPD 15)
To: Director of Naval History, Washington, DC 20347-0571

Subj: 1991 COMMAND HISTORY

Ref: (a) OPNAVINST 5750.12E

Encl: (1) Command Composition and Organization
(2) Chronology
(3) Narrative

1. In accordance with reference (a), enclosures (1) through (3) are submitted.

C.P. Vion
C.P. VION

Command Composition and Organization

USS Ponce (LPD 15) is commanded by Captain Charles P. Vion, United States Navy, and is homeported in Norfolk, Virginia. USS Ponce's immediate unit commander is Captain Harold R. Tickle, Commander Amphibious Squadron Twelve.

Ponce's mission as an amphibious transport dock is to embark United States Marine Corps and Navy support elements and, by both water and airborne means, conduct amphibious landings to obtain beachheads, prosecute further operations ashore or deny areas or facilities to the enemy.

Ponce's crew consists of 32 officers (including one U.S. Marine Corps Combat Cargo Officer); 28 Chief Petty Officers; and 372 enlisted personnel with a multitude of skills to execute the multi-mission role of a major amphibious ship.

ENCL (1)

Chronology 1991

01JAN - 06JAN Holiday leave and upkeep Norfolk, VA

07JAN - 13JAN Safety standdown Norfolk, VA

08JAN - 09JAN Pre-Combat Systems Assist visit by CFR 12

10JAN Fast cruise

14JAN - 18JAN Underway in VACAPS Operation area/Lynnhaven
 Anchorage for amphibious training

19JAN - 29JAN Norfolk, VA

22JAN - 25JAN NAVSEA Elevator/Conveyor Assist Industrial Hygiene
 Survey/Diesel Inspection

30JAN Underway for Lynnhaven anchorage and Combat Systems
 Assessment. Scientists-At-Sea program support.

31JAN - 11FEB Norfolk, VA

04FEB - 05FEB Supply Management Inspection. Ponce scores
 "Outstanding" in all seven areas.

12FEB - 15FEB Underway for Engineering Material Assessment Team
 evaluation in VACAPS operating area.

16FEB - 11MAR Norfolk, VA

19FEB - 11MAR IMAV with SIMA Norfolk. 25mm chain guns installed.

19FEB - 22MAR Training Support for SEAL Team Two.

12MAR - 22MAR Type Commanders Amphibious Training Onslow Bay, N.C.

22MAR - 01APR Norfolk, VA

02APR - 03APR Amphibious Training Support, Chesapeake Bay.

04APR - 16APR Norfolk, VA

08APR - 09APR Aviation Assist visit

09APR - 10APR Troop habitability inspection

ENCL (2)

16APR - 17APR Ammunition on-load Golf anchorage
18APR Norfolk, VA
19APR - 11MAY Blue/Green water workups
26APR - 04MAY Special Operations Capablity Exercise/amphibious
training Onslow Bay, N.C.
12MAY - 19JUN Preparation for Overseas Movement/leave period,
Norfolk, VA
20JUN Underway from Norfolk, VA as an element of MARG 2-91
21JUN - 23JUN Morehead City, N.C.. Embark elements of MEU 26.
#1 Boiler found to have leaks in generating tubes.
24JUN - 3JUL Underway from Morehead City, N.C.. Boiler repairs
complete. Enroute independently to the
Mediterranean.
4JUL Rota, Spain. Refueling. INCHOP SIXTH Fleet
5JUL - 9JUL Enroute to Iskendren, Turkey
6JUL Rescue at sea. 11:30 am COMPHIBRON Four tasked Ponce
to commence a high speed diversion from track in
order to intercept the USNS Cape Hudson and transfer
a severely injured merchant seaman. Due to Cape
Hudson's fouled flight deck, Ponce performed a small
boat transfer of the injured man. Once onboard,
Ponce executed a high speed transit toward
Sigonella, Sicily to receive a CH-53E which then
transported the man to a nearby hospital.
10JUL Ponce's 20th Birthday. Anchored off the coast of
Iskendren, Turkey for MARG turnover.

ENCL (2)

11JUL Transfer of SH-3H from HS-15 Red Lion Detachemnt on
USS Yorktown (CG-48) to Ponce for engine and
transmission repair.

12JUL - 17JUL Enroute Haifa, Israel

18JUL - 6AUG Haifa, Israel. RAV period

29JUL Captain Charles P. Vion relieves Captain Stanley W.
Bryant as the 14th Commanding Officer of the USS
Ponce.

7AUG - 12AUG Underway from Haifa, Israel. Enroute Tunisia

13AUG - 17AUG Anchored Birzerte, Tunisia for Tunisian PHIBLEX

18AUG Commenced backload by LCAC's. First in Ponce's
history. Underway from Tunisia.

19AUG - 20AUG Enroute Six Fours Les Plagues, France. Conducted
Engineering Material Assessment Team evaluation
enroute.

4SEPT - 6SEPT Anchored Six Fours Les Plagues, France.

7SEPT - 9SEPT Underway from Six Fours Les Plagues, France, enroute
to Marseille, France.

10SEPT-25SEPT Moored Marseille, France outboard USS Shenandoah
(AD-44) for Tender Maintenance Repair Availability.
Offload USMC for training at Camp De Canjuers,
France.

16SEPT USS PONCE hosts Commander Naval Surface Forces
Atlantic Fleet, VADM J.P. Reasons.

17SEPT USS PONCE hosts Commander In Chief U.S. Naval
Forces Europe, ADM J.T. Howe.

ENCL (2)

26SEPT Backload USMC. Underway from Marseille, France.

27SEPT-30SEPT Enroute Antalya, Turkey

1OCT Arrive Antalya, Turkey for Display Determination '91
Pre-exercise meetings.

2OCT-14OCT Display Determination '91.

5OCT Suda Bay, Crete for CH-46 fly off in support of real
world tasking; Operation Silver Pine.

9OCT Candarli Bay, Turkey for Display Determination '91
rehearsal assault. Transit Swept Channel, Operation
"Damsil Fair".

10OCT Saros Bay, Turkey. Final Display Determination '91
Amphibious Assault. Ponce Primary Control Ship for
entire landing.

15OCT Underway from Saros Bay, enroute Thessaloniki,
Greece.

16OCT-20OCT Arrive and Mediterranean Moor Thessaloniki, Greece.

21OCT-23OCT Underway from Thessaloniki, Greece. Commence
planning and preparatation for "Operation
Hammerlock".

24OCT-30OCT "Operation Hammerlock" USS Wasp (LHD-1) ARG Sea-
Control Exercise.

31OCT-6NOV Arrive Palma, Spain.

7NOV Underway from Palma, Spain. Enroute Almeria, Spain.

8NOV-17NOV Almeria, Offload USMC for Exercise Betacom '91

18NOV-19NOV Underway from Almeria, Spain. Enroute Cartegena,
Spain.

ENCL (2)

20NOV-1DEC Arrive Cartagena, Spain. Conduct RAV period.

2DEC Underway from Cartagena, Spain. Enroute Rota, Spain.

3DEC-DEC Arrive Rota, Spain. Agricultural Washdown
/Inspection. Visit by VADM W.A. Owens, Commander
Sixth Fleet.

6DEC-17DEC Underway from Rota, Spain. Outchop SIXTH FLEET.

16DEC-20DEC Conduct Propulsion Monitoring Team evaluation.

18DEC Arrive Morehead City, North Carolina. Offload USMC.

19DEC-20DEC Enroute Norfolk, Virginia. Tiger Cruise '91.

20DEC Arrive/Homecoming Norfolk, Virginia

21DEC-31DEC Post Deployment/Holiday Leave and upkeep Norfolk,
Virginia.

NARRATIVE

U.S.S. Ponce (LPD-15) is the newest and last of a class of amphibious transport dock ships operating in today's Navy. Her continuous service to the fleet has earned the "Proud Lion" the reputation as "The Best LPD in the Atlantic."

The arrival of January 1991 found PONCE pierside at Norfolk Naval Base with a large percentage of the ship's crew enjoying holiday leave and the ship undergoing a Repair Availability with SIMA, Norfolk. On January 14 PONCE was underway to Lynnhaven anchorage for Amphibious Training Support. PONCE spent the remainder of January in Norfolk undergoing routine maintenance and upkeep.

Underway January 30-31 for a Combat System Assessment Inspection and Scientist-At-Sea Support, Ponce returned to Norfolk and began preparations for her upcoming Supply Management Inspection.

The SMI held February 4-5 was a complete success for the "Proud Lion". Ponce scored "Outstanding" in all areas of the exam.

By mid-February, the "Proud Lion" was underway again in VACAPS for Engineering Material Assessment Team evaluation. Ponce returned to Norfolk February 15 and remained there until March 11 undergoing a Restricted Maintenance Availability Period with SIMA Norfolk. During this time, Ponce added two 25mm Chain guns to her battery.

On March 12, Ponce began Type Commander Amphibious Training at Onslow Bay, North Carolina. The ten day period offered the crew a

chance to sharpen their skills and prepare for the upcoming Mediterranean Deployment.

Several inspections awaited the "Proud Lion" upon her return to Norfolk, among which were an Aviation Assist Visit and a Troop Habitability Inspection.

After safely and successfully completing an ammunition load-out at Golf Anchorage from April 16-17, Ponce got underway April 19 For Blue/Green water work ups. USMC personnel from Marine Expeditionary Unit 26 were embarked aboard Ponce in Morehead City, North Carolina on April 22. The elements of MARG 2-91, USS WASP (LHD 1), USS EL PASO (LKA 113), USS SUMTER (LST 1181) and USS Ponce (LPD 15) conducted several amphibious exercises in the Onslow Beach, North Carolina area, culminating in MARG 2-91 achieving the Special Operations Capability (SOC) Certification.

Ponce returned to Norfolk May 11 and began a preparation for overseas movement / leave period.

On June 20, Ponce departed Norfolk, Virginia enroute to Morehead City, North Carolina to embark elements of USMC 26 MEU (SOC). While enroute, #1 boiler was found to have leaks in the generating tube bank. Repairs were completed while inport Morehead City and Ponce was underway June 24 for an independent transit to the Mediterranean Sea.

Following a brief stop in Rota, Spain for refueling on July 4, Ponce passed through the Straights of Gibraltar and into the Mediterranean on July 5. At 11:30 local on July 6, Comphibron Four tasked Ponce to commence a high speed diversion from track in

order to intercept the USNS Cape Hudson and transfer a severely injured merchant seaman. Due to Cape Hudson's fouled flight deck, Ponce performed a small boat transfer of the injured man. Once the seaman was safely on board, Ponce began a high speed transit toward Sigonella, Sicily to receive a CH-53E which later transferred the patient to a nearby hospital.

On July 8, Ponce rejoined the rest of MARG 2-91 and spent her 20TH Birthday, June 10, anchored off the coast of Iskendren, Turkey for MARG turnover. Ponce spent the remainder of July in port Haifa, Israel.

While in Haifa, the crew of the "Proud Lion" stayed busy. During the RAV period there, Ponce completed 73 jobs, off-loaded 12 RRC's for maintenance, supported USMC/USN Special Warfare forces during Exercise Noble Shirley and had a liberty-incident free port visit.

On July 29, Captain Charles P. Vion relieved Captain Stanley W. Bryant as Ponce's fourteenth Commanding Officer.

August saw Ponce underway again conducting amphibious training during the Tunisian Phiblex from August 13-19. During this exercise, Ponce performed superbly as advance force Commander and Secondary control ship, in addition to supporting USMC/Tunisian bilateral training exercises and SEAL/EOD sneak attack swimmer exercises. The backload on August 18 was the first backload performed by Landing Craft Air Cushion in Ponce's history.

From Tunisia, it was off to Benidorm, Spain for some well deserved liberty. While anchored off the coast of Benidorm from

August 21-26, Ponce sailors supported Navy League and Comrel activities ashore and had another incident free port visit. In addition, Ponce hosted a luncheon aboard for local dignitaries and a local TV/Newspaper Media session in support of positive Sixth Fleet relations with the city of Benidorm and Spain.

Ponce departed Benidorm on August 26 and sailed toward Six Fours Les Plagues, France. While enroute, the "Proud Lion" conducted an EMAT and scored outstanding on all evolutions.

On September 4, Ponce arrived at Six Fours Les Plagues, France. This small French town hosted Ponce in grand style with several grand affairs including a luncheon hosted by the mayor for 200 sailors and marines. Ponce held a return calls luncheon onboard for many local dignitaries. In addition, Ponce also held a Wreath Laying ceremony at a memorial for U.S. Airmen downed during WWII.

Following a USMC off-load at San Raphael, France on September 9, it was off to Marseille, France. While inport in Marseille, Ponce was moored outboard of USS SHENANDOAH (AD 44) for a Tender Repair Availability (TAV). During the TAV period with Shenandoah, Ponce completed 208 jobs in addition to supporting bilateral training with USMC and French Commandos at Camp De Canjuers. The "Proud Lion" also hosted luncheons onboard while in Marseille for both Commander Naval Surface Forces Atlantic, VADM J.P. Reasons and Commander U.S. Naval Forces Europe, ADM J.T. Howe. Both men toured the ship and gave briefs to the Ponce crew.

On September 26, Ponce got underway from Marseille and sailed

toward Antalya, Turkey for "Display Determination '91" pre-exercise meetings. From October 2-14, Ponce, along with the other MARG 2-91 Units participated in operation "Display Determination '91." From October 3-5, Ponce transited to Suda Bay, Crete a for CH-46 fly off, in response to Real-World tasking in support of Operation "Silver Pine" in which Ponce air assets were utilized to support Sixth Fleet operations. On October 8, the "Proud Lion" rejoined the other MARG 2-91 units for the remainder of Display Determination '91. Throughout the entire exercise, Ponce's performance was outstanding. From serving as Sneak Attack Defense Coordinator and Primary Control Ship for the entire exercise, to conducting successful Mine Lead Through Operations (Operation Damsel Fair) and employing Organic Opdec in a successful simulated Brown on Blue attack on USS Forestall (CV 59), the Proud Lion excelled in all mission areas. As Sneak Attack Defense Commander, Ponce successfully coordinated ATF and MIUW assets in defense of the AFT at anchor. During both the rehearsal landing at Candari Bay and the final assault at Saros Bay, Ponce's performance as Primary Control Ship (PCS) was outstanding. As PCS, Ponce directed successful night/dawn ship-to-shore movements of AAV's, LCAC's and cargo and successfully coordinated amphibious landings in accordance with PCS intention messages, safely and on time.

On October 16, Ponce Med-Moored in Thessaloniki, Greece for some well deserved liberty. This port visit also served to help reestablish US/Greek relations and was, again, free from any liberty incidents.

ENCL (3)

October 21 saw Ponce underway again, this time in support of Operation "Hammerlock", a sea control exercise in which MARG 2-91 effectively carried out duties normally assigned to a Carrier battle group. During Hammerlock, Ponce's air department sustained continuous Alert 5 and Alert 15 readiness status in support of flight operations.

On October 31, Ponce arrived in Palma, Spain and once again enjoyed an incident free port visit supporting Navy League and Comrel functions ashore.

The "Proud Lion" was underway again on November 7 and arrived in Almeria, Spain on November 8. While in Almeria, Ponce kept busy supporting USMC/Spanish bilateral training in Exercise Betacom '91. In addition to providing food and logistic support for the 700 troops ashore, Ponce's LCU conducted a complete off-load of all MARG units and her sailors and marines once again had an incident free port visit.

On November 18, Ponce was underway, enroute to Cartagena, Spain. Ponce arrived in Cartagena on November 20, and began a twelve day repair availability period. In addition to completing 60 jobs during the RAV, the "Proud Lion" also supported the Sixth Fleet Service Center's Thanksgiving Day celebration as the crew enjoyed the holiday inport. Once again, Ponce recorded no liberty incidents while in Cartagena.

On December 2, Ponce got underway from Cartagena, transited the Straights of Gibraltar and arrived in Rota, Spain on December 3 for a final Agricultural Inspection and vehicle washdown. While in

Rota, VADM W.A. Owens, Commander Sixth Fleet toured Ponce and gave a short brief to the crew.

Ponce departed Rota on December 6 and outchopped SIXTH FLEET. December 12, MARG 2-91 and MARG 3-91 conducted a Blue Water PASEX/turnover. Ponce continued her Atlantic crossing, conducting successful Propulsion Monitoring Team trials in the vicinity of Bermuda from December 16-20. The Proud Lion arrived in Morehead City, North Carolina on December 19.

Upon completion of the USMC Off-load at Morehead City, Ponce embarked family and friends for an overnight "Tiger Cruise" to Norfolk, Virginia.

On December 20, Ponce sailed up Thimble Shoals Channel and pulled into Norfolk Naval Base for a much anticipated reunion with wives, girlfriends, family and friends, thus ending an eventful and highly successful deployment.

The remainder of December was spent inport Norfolk for holiday /post deployment leave and upkeep.