

U.S.S. KEARSARGE CVS-33  
C/O FLEET POST OFFICE  
SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA

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CVS33/5750  
17:RHK:tcc  
Ser 094

21 MAY 1969

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From: Commanding Officer, USS KEARSARGE (CVS-33)  
To: Commander Naval Air Forces, U.S. Pacific Fleet

Subj: OPNAV Report 5750; submission of

Ref: (a) OPNAVINST 5750.12

Encl: (1) KEARSARGE Report 5750.1

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

L. M. NEARMAN

*R. H. Kaeding*  
R. H. KAEDING  
By direction

1968

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OPNAV Report 5750-1

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U.S.S. KEARSARGE (CVS-33)  
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SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA  
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COMMAND HISTORY OF U.S.S. KEARSARGE: 1968

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COMMAND HISTORY OF U.S.S. KEARSARGE: 1968

The USS KEARSARGE (CVS-33) is a 41,000-ton, anti-submarine warfare aircraft carrier, homeported in Long Beach, California. KEARSARGE was commissioned on March 2, 1946, and has a long proud history. Annex (a) to this document is an outline of the ship's history from commissioning to the present.

January of 1968 began with KEARSARGE moored at Sasebo, Japan. Having taken her ease and celebrated the New Years holidays with as much style as possible, she was underway on the 3rd of January enroute to Yankee Station for the third time.

During the first quarter of calendar year 1968, the KEARSARGE was finishing her last few months of the 1967-68 West Pac cruise. She completed the third Yankee Station period and steamed for Hong Kong. The Hong Kong merchants and KEARSARGE sailors did a brisk business while dark clouds formed on the international horizon.

The USS PUEBLO was hijacked by the North Koreans and this was to delay the return of the KEARSARGE to the U. S. by one month.

The PUEBLO incident did not immediately affect her operating schedule, but by the time she reached Subic Bay on January 28, her extension in West Pac was confirmed. On the 31st of January, KEARSARGE sailed for the last time in 1968 to Yankee Station.

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KEARSARGE Yankee Station operations consisted of four essential tasks in addition to its primary ASW role. In effect, KEARSARGE wore two hats while on Yankee Station. She was the flagship for the ASW group of the SEVENTH fleet, designated TG 70.4, and she was also the flagship for the Surface, Subsurface, Surveillance Co-ordinator (SSSC) designated TG 77.9. Guarding for message traffic to both task group designations, KEARSARGE performed SSSC functions, played a prominent role in the Sea Dragon operations, was the Yankee Team Mail Carrier, and provided Search and Rescue (SAR) and logistic helo services.

SSSC was the central task performed by KEARSARGE when she was on station in the Gulf of Tonkin and later when she was in the Sea of Japan. Yankee Station and SOJ operations consisted of five launches daily, two six hour, two five and three-fourths hour, and one five and a half-hour flights. When DD inflight refueling was available the helicopters were also able to conform to this cycle.<sup>1</sup>

Around the clock SSSC coverage of the area was provided, generally using an E-1B aircraft and two or three S-2E aircraft with occasional use of an SH-3A aircraft for high interest photography. The E-1B was assigned a search area which was oriented slightly Northwest of the center of the Gulf to provide radar coverage of the North Vietnamese coast, the North passage between Hainan and the China mainland, and the Haiphong harbor complex. When on the Southern leg of its search, the E-1B provided radar coverage for the remainder of the SSSC area.<sup>2</sup> Surveillance consisted of rigging and photographing all

1. P 111-6 USS KEARSARGE CVS-33 67-68 West Pac Cruise Report  
2. P X1-7 ibid

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transiting merchant ships and maintaining an up-to-date plot of all surface and subsurface contacts.

The reporting procedures outlined in COMFIRSTFLT TACNOTE 8-66 (REVISED 15 November 1967) were utilized. All initial and amplifying surface contact reports from the S-2E's were made to the E-1B and in turn relayed to the ship. Reports were made using locating or serial numbers, and skunk designations. The type, name, registry, position, course, and speed of these contacts were relayed in the amplifying reports. All skunks were designated by the SSSC Commander and were reported with range and bearing from a geographical point. After acceptance of this method of reporting and its facility, the grid system of reporting was seldom used. An hourly surface summary was given to the SSSC Commander by the E-1B, which included updated skunk positions, friendly surface unit positions, and aircraft "operations normal" reports.<sup>3</sup>

Most of the ships sighted in the Tonkin Gulf were Soviet Bloc merchant ships or fishing boats. Soviet Bloc ships and those of free world countries were engaged in North Vietnam trade. Vessels belonging to Italy, Greece, Cyprus, Malta, and Great Britain were sighted. Fishing boats varied in number at times from one or two to several hundred. Size ranged from small sampans to steel hulled trawlers. The trawlers were generally found in pairs. Fishing boats in the northern part of the Gulf of Tonkin were mostly Chinese Communist with a few Chinese Nationalists.

As was previously mentioned during Yankee Station periods, recognition emphasis was on rigging merchant ships. Recognition took on added importance upon arrival in the Sea of Japan because of the number and varieties of USSR naval craft sighted. During this operation, the below listed naval vessels

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were observed:<sup>4</sup>

- a. SVERDLOV Class light cruiser, Pendant number 824
- b. KRUPNYI Class DDG, Pendant number 981
- c. KASHIN Class DLG, Pendant number 580
- d. Modified KOTLIN Class, Pendant number 424
- e. RIGA Class DE, Pendant number 800 and 840
- f. PAMIR Class Tug (AGI) PELENG and GIDROGRAF
- g. UDA Class AO VISHERA
- h. KONDA Class AO KONDA
- i. T-58 Class ASR (AGI) GIDROLOG
- j. DNEPR Class Trawler (AGI) PROTRAKTOR

The closeness of Vladivostok resulted in the sighting of an average of two Russian merchant ships per day. Non-Soviet-Bloc sightings averaged four per day.<sup>5</sup> A total of 43 Intelligence Reports were submitted during Sea of Japan operations.<sup>6</sup>

Surveillance by Russian Naval ships and Soviet SIGINT Trawlers were conducted at all times. The GIDROLOG joined the KEARSARGE when the YORKTOWN left station. The GIDROLOG stayed with us until relieved by the Soviet DNEPR Class Trawler, PROTRAKTOR on 5 March 1968. The PROTRAKTOR stayed with us for the remainder of the time on station.<sup>7</sup>

A second major task in which KEARSARGE played a prominent role, was the Sea Dragon operation. This operation was primarily designed to assist in preventing the flow of war materials by land and sea from North Vietnam into the

4. P X1-7 USS KEARSARGE CVS-33 67-68 West Pac Cruise Report
5. P 8 USS KEARSARGE CVS-33 67-68 West Pac Cruise Report Intelligence
6. P 9 ibid
7. P 8 ibid

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DMZ and South Vietnam. The Sea Dragon area itself was defined as the waters between 17.00 N and 20.00 N. Four ships and two aircraft generally covered the area. The primary mission was the interdiction and destruction of waterborne logistic craft (WBLG), whether afloat or beached. This very important activity was carried out by the ships of Sea Dragon force and the aircraft of CTF 77. The fire from these units was directed toward the destruction of selected North Vietnamese military installations, lines of communications (LOC), and the visual surveillance and radar facilities of the Sea Dragon area.

Onboard KEARSARGE, the CVSG-53 Air Intelligence Officer and Squadron AIO's prepared a daily Sea Dragon handout to be carried by each aircraft launched that day. This enabled any airborne aircraft to be diverted to Operation Sea Dragon if one of the primary Sea Dragon aircraft were not available. An up-to-date chart of the area with the daily targets marked was available for study in each ready room. This previously mentioned chart also portrayed the AAA and Coastal Defense activities and strength in the area. The chart, which utilized colored pins to depict the AAA and the Coastal Defense sites was kept current by the ship's AIO office. It was also used as an aid during the pre-launch tactical brief. Each aircraft also carried a master chart and individual smaller charts of the entire Sea Dragon area for use in the aircraft. Upon arriving in the Sea Dragon area, the two aircraft utilized a check-in procedure outlined in a secret AIO packet carried in the aircraft. They had been previously briefed by the AIO, or through the airborne swap with the aircraft coming off station, which ships were hot and any unusual activity in the area. In this case, the Sea Dragon charts, as mentioned before, would be used to give the ship an accurate position so that they would be taken under fire.

Probably the most limiting factor to Sea Dragon Operations was the

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weather. During rain and periods of low visibility, as was the case most of the time at night, the Sea Dragon aircraft were limited to radar search. This presented many opportunities to the enemy. During these low visibility periods the radar was both the prime tactical sensor and an invaluable navigation aid.

The Mighty Kay's third major task, especially important to the twenty to thirty ships on station, was her performance as Yankee Team Mail Carrier.<sup>8</sup> Mail was normally received daily from Subic Bay by COD and delivered to the ships the following day by helo or high-line. During the third Yankee Station period, KEARSARGE delivered 27,504 pounds of mail and carried 434 passengers and 283 pieces of cargo. During the fourth Yankee Station period, the figures read 604 passengers, 433 pieces of cargo and 62,477 pounds of mail. For the Sea of Japan period it was 335 passengers, 194 pieces of cargo and 40,352 pounds of mail.

A fourth major task performed by KEARSARGE while on Yankee Station and in the Sea of Japan was to provide SAR and Utility helos. The embarked helicopter squadron HS-6 was responsible for a major portion of the Navy's Tonkin Gulf SAR commitment. Normally, a Big Mother (SAR helo) would depart KEARSARGE about one-half hour before sunrise and proceed to the Piraz ship; there it would land and remain on alert throughout the daylight hours, returning to KEARSARGE about 1900 each evening. Occasionally additional SAR helos were sent to the north or south SAR stations when UH-2's had to return to the CVA for maintenance.<sup>9</sup>

8. P 1-1 USS KEARSARGE CVS-33 67-68 West Pac Cruise Report  
9. P 1 USS KEARSARGE CVS-33 67-68 West Pac Cruise Report Intelligence

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In January, KEARSARGE HS-6 pilots made four separate rescues. On January 10 it was Lieutenant Richard T. Fleming and Lieutenant (junior grade) Thomas L. Hart; January 11, Lieutenant Commander Denis R. Weichman, and on January 14 Lieutenant Rodney F. Harrington was hoisted out of the drink. All four people plucked from the sea were Navy pilots.

Utility helo runs were conducted in accordance with CTF 77 OPORD 320-68. A route schedule was determined during the mid-watch and then up-dated constantly during the day as requirements were generated or deleted.

Of course, even though busy with other tasks, KEARSARGE was careful to keep her ASW tools well sharpened and in fine shape. During the four periods that the task group was on Yankee Station, all ASW Group Five destroyers and sixteen other TF 77 destroyers received significant amounts of single ship, dual ship, and coordinated ASW training. Air group proficiency was maintained by scheduling specific periods of submarine time each day for fixed winged aircraft and helicopters. Additional aircraft were provided for coordinated ASW exercises, ASAC training and transit exercises.

When the CVS was present and a submarine was assigned to Yankee Station, an ASW training program was carried out. VS aircrew training was conducted during specifically assigned periods. In addition, both VS and HS aircraft provided services and obtained training during coordinated exercises.

In order for the Mighty Kay to perform all of the tasks discussed above, she had to have the support of every department on the ship. All the departments worked in close harmony to give her that support.

On January 1, 1968, the Engineering Department was faced with the problem of replacing wiring destroyed by fire late in December. In two weeks, approximately 175 cables were replaced with 2,000 man-hours expended.

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The first significant event of 1968 affecting the Supply Department was the extension of the deployment which created logistical problems. Most of the problems associated with general supplies, provisions, ship's store stock, special clothing for cold weather operations, and currency were readily overcome with the fine cooperation of Commander Task Force Seventy-Three, Commander Fleet Activities Sasebo, and the USS MARS (ARS-1). Commander Fleet Air Western Pacific also provided fine aid by backstopping assistance requests for critical aeronautical supplies (including sonobuoys).

The major problems, however, developed in shortages of critical electronic, engineering, and aeronautical spares. CASREPS and NOR's G item listings grew daily as old equipments of aeronautical night-time components failed and supply lead times increased after KEARSARGE left the Tonkin Gulf/Subic Bay area. The biggest problems were caused by the uncertainty of schedules and the short reaction times given prior to leaving one operating area for another or for CONUS. The stocking levels of bulky items presented questions. Diverting critical in-transit items from one delivery point to another was not generally effective, and preplanning was extremely limited. The efficient UNREP and VERTREP operations by the USS MARS each moved 120 to 150 tons in about two hours. This period was the most trying of the year for the Supply Department.

In order for KEARSARGE to carry out her mission as explained in the foregoing material on Tonkin Gulf/SOJ operations, she had to rely heavily on the cooperation and conscientious performance of the Air Department.

On Yankee Station in the Tonkin Gulf the Air Department performed routinely in around-the-clock air operations. Shortly after entering the

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War Zone on January 6, the detachment of half-dozen armored and camouflaged H-3 helicopters used for SAR and utility flights arrived, adding to the already crowded conditions on the hangar and flight decks. The good weather enjoyed in the Gulf in 1967 became a pleasant memory as driving, stinging rains accompanied many of the activities on the flight deck. Despite deteriorating weather, there was no slackening of the frenetic pace of Yankee Station air operations during January and February.

Another Sasebo visit in late February found the Air Department playing host to the HS-4 helicopters of the YORKTOWN as key personnel met with KEARSARGE counterparts to discuss differences between Yankee Station and Sea of Japan operations. On the first of March, as YORKTOWN continued south to assume Yankee Station duty, KEARSARGE steamed through the Shimonoseki Straits, picked up its Russian "escort", and headed for the frigid waters of the Sea of Japan. As temperatures hovered near the freezing mark the smart flight deck uniform included thermal underwear, parkas, face masks and heavy gloves. To help ward off the bone numbing cold, the Supply Department set up a hot soup kitchen in the Maintenance Control Center just off the flight deck. This had the dual effect of raising both body temperature and morale. On 22 March sustained flight operations were terminated as KEARSARGE recovered its aircraft and headed once again for Sasebo and then home.

But to get home, the Weapons Department had to keep on manning the underway replenishment stations they had manned almost daily in the Tonkin Gulf. Steaming for CONUS, the following number of ships replenished with KEARSARGE: 11 AO's, two AD's, one AK, one AE and 16 DD's. Condition III Watches were set while on station and gunnery personnel manned two ready gun mounts and one fire control director.

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The Dental Department was also busy during the deployment. The new dental equipment for the Bureau of Medicine and Surgery's Five Year Modernization Program was high-lined to KEARSARGE on 10 December 1967 from a destroyer. While aboard deck of the destroyer, some of the equipment got wet from salt water. This was to cause some problems later on after the equipment was installed during the yard period.

The Communications Department averaged 7,400 messages per month, finishing the cruise with a total of 68,000 messages handled. These were broken down as follows:

- 26% - Operational
- 22% - Support of OPS
- 9% - OPREPS/UPKEEP
- 30% - Logistics
- 12% - Administrative
- 1% - Personal/Special Attention

The communicators had a handsome reliability with an average of: 91% - send, 96.8% - receive.

These averages, although good, are lower than the earlier months of the cruise due to the long periods of extended outage from the defective gear at NPO/NCS, Philippines. The fact that Philippines had no alternate equipment available attested to the communications saturation in S. E. Asia.

In addition to aggressively supporting military operations in the Western Pacific, KEARSARGE found the opportunity to lend a hand in several people-to-people programs and community relations projects. During the inport period in Hong Kong, 21-27 January, 1968, approximately 30 children of the Spiritual Light School visited KEARSARGE and were given a guided tour of the ship and served refreshments. The same day, the KEARSARGE basketball team played a team of the Chinese YMCA at Southern Playground Area in Hong Kong. Approximately 300 residents attended the game.

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Later, while in port Subic Bay, R.P., on January, 10 men participated in a working party from KEARSARGE to assist with terracing and general work at the model farm of the Cabalon Community church group. A check for \$400 was presented by the Commanding Officer, USS KEARSARGE to the educational project "Operation School House" at Subic Bay on behalf of KEARSARGE, to provide a full year high school education to each of five Filipino students. This also took place during the 28-31 January inport period.

On 28 February 1968, 15 KEARSARGE men participated in a working party to build a fence and provide general repairs at Hilltop Orphanage, Sasebo, Japan.

After a brief visit to Sasebo in late March, KEARSARGE returned to CONUS and the Long Beach Naval Shipyard. She was put into Drydock No. 1 on May 23 and remained there until August 5. After the drydock period, in between training exercises, she managed to squeeze in her social and community responsibilities.

On October 22, while in port, Long Beach, KEARSARGE hosted the Southern California Chapter of the Military Chaplains Association. Thirty active duty and reserve chaplains, representing every branch of the service, toured the ship and were briefed by the executive officer.

On 14 December KEARSARGE hosted a most successful Christmas party for the children of KEARSARGE and ASW Group One personnel, plus the children of deployed HORNET and ASW Group Five personnel. Five hundred and seventy-six children received presents and enjoyed Santa Claus, a clown magician, the COMCRUDESPEC band, cartoons, television and movie star Robert Middleton, and refreshments, all provided on the hangar deck. A video tape of the party

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featuring interviews with their families was filmed and forwarded to the crew of HORNET.

Sunday evening December 21, hangar bay #2 was the setting for a beautiful Christmas Candlelight program. Featured were the Compton Civic Youth Orchestra, the Hoover Junior High School Brass Choir, the Protestant Choir, Naval Station, Long Beach and the Coventry Players, a local dramatic group. A gathering of four hundred KEARSARGE personnel and friends enjoyed the program which had been planned and directed by Chaplain Lilly.

During the second and third quarters of calendar year 1968, KEARSARGE was in Long Beach Naval Shipyard undergoing cyclic overhaul.

The regularly scheduled overhaul began on 17 April, and between 23 May and August 5, the ship rested on blocks in Drydock No. 1. The engineering department was in charge of the overhaul and all job requests and work orders went through that department. Engineering kept track of the progress being made on each job by a system of charts, maintained in Ready Room #4. In addition, a weekly report of progress was made to the Captain on each Thursday during overhaul.

During the overhaul, the following ten ShipAlts were completed:

1. CVS 506 Mods FAS Stations
2. CVS X081 install ASCAC
3. CVS 465 Nose Gear Launch
4. CVS 538 MK 46 Torpedo Mods
5. CVS 1492 JP5 Sys. Sep. Trans/Serv. Cap
6. CVS 1150 Installation KY8 Equipment
7. CVS 561 Catapult Protective Guards
8. CVS 289 Improved Antenna System
9. CVS 596 MK 24 Flare Locker
10. C/A 3757 MK 1A Computer

Simultaneously, the Dental Department implemented the Bureau of Medicine and Surgery's Five Year Modernization Program.<sup>10</sup> Through this

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program all old dental equipment was replaced with new facilities. The equipment had been received at sea by high-line from a destroyer as mentioned previously.

Routine dental work was continued in the Dental Dept. onboard KEARSARGE when she went into drydock on 23 May 1968. On 3 June replacement of the dental equipment started. Ritter Modular dental units, Mid-West Quiet Air high speed and Mid-West trutorc handpieces, as well as new Ritter Vega adjustable chairs were installed. At that time all dental procedures stopped onboard KEARSARGE and its dental officers began seeing ship's dental patients at the Long Beach Naval Dental Clinic. On 2 September 1968, the Dental Department onboard was back in operation. For about a month numerous small problems occurred to make smooth operations impossible. Due to the salt water corrosion of various units, a great number of parts had to be repaired or replaced. However, by November the department was working smoothly.

Unlike the Dental Department, the Medical Department had no major configuration changes during the overhaul. The Physical Examination center was relocated on the starboard side of the ward in the vicinity of the audiogram booth. This enabled the corpsman in charge to do audiograms, eye tests (using the newly approved Armed Forces Vision Tester), and other preliminary procedures in one area. It also permitted keeping all the examinees in one area, the corpsmen-patient lounge. The sick bay spaces offices were painted and tiled by the Hospital Corpsmen.

The Air Department had laid the groundwork for the overhaul period long before arrival in Long Beach. Almost 200 departmental work requests had been processed and spaces were chipped during the two week transit from West Pac.

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Shipyard liaison personnel were among the first visitors aboard to discuss final job lists and schedules. Nearly two days were spent at sea as the V-4 Division flushed the Aviation Gasoline System with salt water before it could be purged with steam by the shipyard. Machinery dismantling began immediately and work began on the flight deck as the surface was stripped and thousands of linear feet of fir planking arrived to replace the old and rotting wood.

The cacophony of chipping hammers and grinders became a way of life as the dust and grit permeated every corner of the ship. Both catapults, four arresting gear engines, plus the barricade engine, PLAT system and the Fresnel lens were completely overhauled. The Number 5 arresting gear engine was removed, lessening the chances of an aircraft rolling out into the port catwalk. The starboard catapult was equipped with Nose Tow launch Gear, enabling KEARSARGE to catapult C-2 and E-2 type aircraft. The aviation fuel system was overhauled as filters, pumps, motors and pipes were reworked or replaced. Twelve forward black oil tanks were converted to JP-5 tanks, increasing the jet fuel capacity to over 450,000 gallons. KEARSARGE can now refuel distillate burning destroyers without unduly depleting its supply of JP-5 for the jet helicopters. All aviation gasoline and JP-5 tanks were cleaned and treated with DEVRAN, lessening the possibility of tank corrosion and fuel contamination. Even as planking was replaced on the flight deck, completed sections were receiving a coating of polyurethane which would eventually extend to all the wooden areas. Loose aluminum clad panels were refastened and the entire deck was then coated with non-skid, stained and the markings painted. Meanwhile, on the hangar deck, a huge sand blaster

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was preparing hangar bay three and 2,000 square feet of hangar bay two for nonskidding by the V-3 Division.

In July Commander J.L. Van Kleeck reported aboard to take over the Air Department from Commander A. E. Geist who moved into the Operations Officer slot. The Air Department also bade farewell to the V-6 Division on 1 July when Lt. Commander G.R. Persons took his division and established the Aircraft Intermediate Maintenance Department.

As the end of September approached, the reassembling of components and reinstallation of machinery neared completion. All that remained now was touch-up painting to be done and the final catapult tests. Every day for nearly two weeks the 15,000 and 30,000 pound "dead loads" were catapulted by V-2 Division into the Long Beach harbor. Once retrieved, they were hoisted back onto the flight deck, still dripping wet, and launched again. Finally the inspectors were satisfied, the cats were pronounced ready, the overhaul was complete and the Air Department was ready for sea.

Preparations for yard overhaul also started in the Weapons Department as KEARSARGE was returning to the States. The following major conversions and modifications were effected during the yard period:

1. Gun Mounts 51 and 52 were removed and replaced.
2. MK 56 Fire Control directors 33 and 34 were removed and replaced.
3. Overhaul of "W" Division spaces in preparation for the MK 46 torpedo program took place during this period. Certification of the program was expected by early 1969. The auto-fuel shop in "W" Division was revamped.
4. Fueling Station #1 and #5 were modified and equipped with double hose rigs. Modifications were also made to stations #1A and #5 which enabled them to pump JP-5 for the first time.

Almost immediately following KEARSARGE's return to CONUS the Supply Department was involved in preparation for the yard overhaul. The General

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Stores Division conducted a supply overhaul beginning in April through the SOAP Team (Supply Overhaul Assistance Program) at the Naval Supply Center, Long Beach. During this time excess repair parts were off-loaded and all deficiencies were ordered.

The Aviation Stores division began in July to make necessary adjustments to their records due to COG migration and SMIC (Special Material Identification Code) conversions. Re-outfitting also began during this yard period upon receipt of the new AVCAL (Aviation Consolidated Allowance List).

Late in August both General Stores and Aviation Stores, in conjunction with the Data Processing Division, commenced to convert manual supply accounting records to the U1500 computer system with the assistance of the FAGPAC (Fleet Assistance Group Pacific) team. Actual implementation of the mechanization began in early October, shortly after the completion of the yard overhaul. From the outset the new system proved to be efficient and reliable, recording valuable logistics data not previously available. The computer system also began processing aviation IFAR's (Individual Flight Activity Reports) recording individual crew member flights hours initially for the C-1A, later to be developed to encompass each squadron.

Throughout the overhaul the crew's mess was in operation. Yard projects, such as the installation of laundry equipment and air conditioners, necessitated work to be done in or adjacent to food service areas creating a constant problem in maintaining desirable levels of cleanliness. As a result, the cockroach population increased significantly. This situation required the implementation of a rigid medical spraying program upon our departure from the yards. The constant attention to the problem by the food service division

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and the medical department improved the situation quickly.

Disbursing functions continued smoothly throughout the yard overhaul. The office was relocated to the Navy Finance Office, Long Beach, from May until September so that accurate work could be continued daily in the absence of yard work interference.

Midway through the yard period, new laundry washers and dryers were installed to replace original equipment. Also new to the Sales Division was the modernization of the barbershops.

The overhaul ended on 7 October 1968 with a total cost of \$7,536,578. During the remainder of the year, KEARSARGE was underway a total of 42 days conducting Refresher Training, Type Training, Carrier Qualifications, and various other drills.

The Air Department used the one short week of type training in October to sharpen skills for Refresher Training. With many new and inexperienced men in the crew, and the old hands rusty after the yard period, walk-through drills were conducted until each man knew exactly what was expected of him. KEARSARGE's own C-1A transport aircraft provided the training required for the department in launching, recovering, handling and fueling as three ship's aviators made their carrier qualification landings. In late October and early November the frenzied pace of Refresher Training proved the value of the earlier training. Hundreds of drills were conducted with the emphasis on aircraft crash and fire drills. Barricade, nose tow launch gear and MOVLAS rigs, flight deck repair and fuel station fire drills were held daily. Cold, wet, and with hoses charged, the Air Department responded with enthusiasm that sparked even the experience-hardened FLETRAGRU observers. The efforts were not in vain. The Air Department achieved the only OUTSTANDING awarded for

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the final Battle Problem which culminated the Refresher Training. Hard on the heels of REFTRA was the Administrative Inspection in mid-November. Despite the accelerated tempo of training prior to the inspection, Air Department administrative preparation paid off. This was reflected in the departmental grade of HIGH EXCELLENT. November and December saw KEARSARGE close out the year with carrier qualification periods and Hunter Killer ASW Exercises. The December CARQUAL period was marred when a VA-125 A-4 Skyhawk struck the ramp on a night landing. The aircraft engaged a wire and slid to a halt as fire fighting crews converged on the unfortunate jet. No fire ensued and the pilot was unharmed but the aircraft sustained substantial damage. Each successive operating period showed evidence of improvements in proficiency and crew coordination as the Air Department set its sights on 1969 and the impending West Pac deployment.

A new department was created on the KEARSARGE on a trial basis from 1 April 1968 to 1 April 1969. Authorization for the new department was by message from CINCPACFLT to COMNAVAIRPAC delegating the authority to pick one CVS and one CVA in which to set up a separate Damage Control Department.

No specific direction on the organization of such a department was given at the outset. The CVA appointee, the USS BONHOMME RICHARD, pointed out that Navy Regs. still held the Engineering Officer responsible and made recommendations to AIRPAC to relieve the Engineering Officer of some of these responsibilities and give them to the new Damage Control Officer. Certain divisions of responsibility were agreed upon for the interim.

Formerly, all damage control was under the Engineering Officer's cognizance. The Damage Control Assistant was responsible for all damage control

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work and had working for him both A Division (Auxiliaries) and R Division (Repair). After the new department was formed, the DCO relinquished responsibility for A Division to the newly formed billet of Repair Officer and R Division was split giving all damage controlmen to the new Damage Control Department and leaving all the repairmen for the Repair Officer. The men referred to here as repairmen are the men who worked in the carpenter shop, the metal-smith shop, and the pipe shop. The people who worked in the Damage Control Shop were shifted to the new Damage Control Division.

The new department now has four officers and 26 enlisted men. It is comprised of the Damage Control Officer, the Damage Control Assistant, the DC Division Officer, and the Maintenance and Material Officer who takes care of Damage Control equipment only. The 26 men in the division represent no increase in manning level over what it was under the former DC organization.

Some problems were encountered in setting up the new department. The organization got off the ground approximately 1 July 1968. It did not move into its new office, hard to find space, until 1 October 1968. The timing was inopportune for this ship to be experimenting with a new department of such a nature because she had just gone into the yards for a complete overhaul. The Chief Engineer and the DCO were overburdened with overhaul responsibilities. The DCO was forced to delegate all repair liaison work. Therefore, a new billet was formed, that of Repair Officer, and the DCO turned over all repair and alteration functions and stepped into the Damage Control Officer position.

Despite the poor start and the poor conditions under which to examine the feasibility of such a new department, the DCO is enthused about its

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workability. An improvement has been noted in maintenance of damage control equipment. The new department has been granted a separate OPTAR which has enabled them to bring their equipment up to standard. Damage control personnel have been able to pay more attention to damage control equipment and to increase its effectiveness. The establishment of a DC training team has improved ship-wide damage control training.

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