



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY  
U. S. S. MOBILE (LKA-115)

FLEET POST OFFICE  
SAN FRANCISCO 96601

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REGISTERED AIR MAIL

(Unclassified upon removal of enclosures)

6 JUN 1973

From: Commanding Officer, USS MOBILE (LKA-115)  
To: Director of Naval History (OP-09B9), Washington Navy Yard,  
Washington, D. C., 20390

Subj: Command History, USS MOBILE (LKA-115); 1972

Ref: (a) OPNAVINST 5720.12B

Encl: (1) Colombo press release and related information  
(2) Deployment extension messages  
(3) Hostile fire message  
(4) Release from Gulf of Tonkin messages  
(5) Supply "E" award  
(6) News stories  
(7) Family grams

1. In accordance with reference (a), the history of USS MOBILE (LKA-115) for the period of 1 January 1972 through 31 December 1972 is submitted.

a. Basic History

(1) Command Organization

(a) Commanding Officer remained Captain Edwin J. BURKE, USN, [REDACTED] /1100, for the entire period.

(b) Missions and functions remain unchanged.

(c) USS MOBILE continued as a unit of Amphibious Squadron FIVE throughout the year.

(d) Homeport remained at San Diego, California.

CLASSIFIED BY: USS MOBILE (LKA-115)  
SUBJECT TO GENERAL DECLASSIFICATION  
SCHEDULE OF EXECUTIVE ORDER 11652  
AUTOMATICALLY DOWNGRADED AT TWO-YEAR INTERVALS  
DECLASSIFIED ON 31 MAY 1979

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[1972]

(2) Chronological Summary of Operations

01 - 04 January - Inport Sasebo, Japan in company with other units of TG 76.5 (Amphibious Ready Group "B").

05 - 12 January - Transported various Marine units from White Beach, Okinawa, to Numazu, Japan, at Suruga Wan, and returned other units to White Beach.

12 January - Loaded several units of construction equipment at White Beach for transportation and presentation to the Government of Sri Lanka (then Ceylon) under the Military Assistance Program.

12 - 25 January - Enroute independently to Colombo, Sri Lanka, with brief stops at Subic Bay, Republic of the Philippines, on 15 - 16 January, and Singapore, Republic of Singapore, on 20 - 21 January.

25 - 29 January - Inport Colombo for port visit. Presented MAP equipment at onboard ceremony 26 January.

02 February - Crossed Equator southeast of Singapore at longitude 105° 19.2' East with appropriate ceremonies.

03 - 05 February - Inport Singapore for port visit.

23 - 29 February - Transported various Marine units to Numazu, Japan, and returned others to White Beach, Okinawa.

29 February - 07 March - Rejoined TG 76.5 (ARG "B") at White Beach and commenced providing various training services for Marine units.

09 - 19 March - Inport Subic Bay with other units of TG 76.5 for upkeep.

17 March - Republic of Philippines Congressional Committee for National Defense toured the Ship.

23 - 30 March - Inport Hong Kong, British Crown Colony, for port visit.

30 March - Departed Hong Kong with TG 76.5 units. Rendezvoused with TG 76.4 (ARG "A") on 01 April and then detached for White Beach with other TG 76.5 units.

05 April - Inport White Beach to exchange several Marine vehicles.

06 April - Diverted to the Gulf of Tonkin while enroute to Subic Bay with TG 76.5.

08 April - 25 May - Underway in the Gulf of Tonkin as a unit of TF 76 (ARG's "A" and "B" combined with other amphibious ships in the western Pacific) in support of Republic of Vietnamese operations countering the major North Vietnamese offensive then in progress.

28 - 29 May - Offloaded embarked Marines at White Beach and proceeded enroute to Sasebo with other units of TG 76.5.

30 May - 05 June - Inport Sasebo for port visit and upkeep.

07 - 09 June - Transported Marine units from Numazu to White Beach in company with USS CAYUGA.

09 - 11 June - Loaded various Marine and Naval Construction Battalion units for transportation to Sattahip, Thailand.

17 - 19 June - Inport Sattahip, Thailand with USS CAYUGA. Offloaded embarked troops and cargo.

22 - 23 June - Inport Subic Bay loading various troops and equipment in preparation for Gulf of Tonkin operations.

25 June - 14 July - Underway in the Gulf of Tonkin as a unit of TG 76.4 (ARG "A") in support of Republic of Vietnam counter-offensive operations. Received and returned enemy gunfire on 27 June while engaged in operations.

14 July - Released from operations in the Gulf of Tonkin. Proceeded independently in order to complete the remainder of the current operational schedule.

18 July - Offloaded all embarked troops and equipment at White Beach.

20 - 21 July - Loaded retrograde equipment at Subic Bay for transfer to Port Hueneme, California.

25 July - Loaded retrograde equipment at Apra Harbor, Guam, for transportation to Port Hueneme, California.

27 July - Changed operational control to Commander, U. S. First Fleet.

08 August - 16 October - Inport San Diego.

18 October - Offloaded retrograde equipment at Port Hueneme.

19 - 27 October - Inport Oakland, California, for port visit and training at U. S. Naval Station Treasure Island facilities.

29 October - Refueled and replenished USS THOR (ARC 4) at sea northeast of Hawaii while enroute to San Diego.

01 - 20 November - Inport San Diego.

20 - 21 November - Inport Seal Beach to offload ammunition.

21 November - 31 December - Inport San Diego.

26 December - Commenced Restricted Availability.

b. Basic Narrative

1972 began with MOBILE inport in Sasebo, Japan, undergoing an upkeep period and port visit. In company with USS DENVER and USS TUSCALOOSA as TG 76.4 (ARG B). On 03 January, over 250 motorcycles were loaded aboard for further transfer to Subic Bay. These vehicles had been purchased through the Navy Exchange in Sasebo by crewmen of the USS ENTERPRISE.

On the morning of 04 January, MOBILE and USS DENVER sailed for White Beach, Buckner Bay, Okinawa. Both ships arrived on the morning of 05 January, but not without incident.

During the initial approach to Buckner Bay on the morning of 05 January, MOBILE suffered a man overboard casualty. The man was quickly rescued through the use of the ship's ready lifeboat and she then continued to her berth at White Beach.

USS TUSCALOOSA joined her sister amphibs later on 05 January and the three ships loaded various U. S. Marine Corps units stationed on Okinawa. The loading was completed on 06 January and the three ships departed White Beach bound for Numazu, Japan on that same day. The transit to Numazu was completed on 09 January when all ships anchored in Suruga Wan.

Working throughout the day and evening, the ships exchanged their Marine passengers and cargo for other Marine units awaiting transportation to Okinawa. The vessels departed early on the morning of 10 January, arriving at White Beach on 12 January. At this time MOBILE offloaded her passengers and Marine cargo and immediately loaded six pieces of heavy construction equipment to be transferred to the government of Sri Lanka (then Ceylon) under the Military Assistance Program (MAP). The equipment

loaded consisted of one Mack truck cab, one low bed trailer and four skip loaders. With the completion of this loadout on the afternoon of 12 January, MOBILE was detached from TG 76.5 and departed for Colombo, the capital of Sri Lanka, to deliver her cargo.

During the transit to Colombo, MOBILE made brief port visits at both Subic Bay in the Philippines and Singapore. Arriving at Subic Bay on 15 January, she offloaded her cargo of motorcycles which had been on board since 03 January. With that offload completed, MOBILE departed Subic Bay on 16 January to continue her transit.

On 20 January, she arrived at Singapore, where she remained at anchor overnight. The next morning, 21 January, MOBILE departed Singapore, transitted the Strait of Malacca, and entered the Indian Ocean. MOBILE continued across the Indian Ocean and entered Colombo harbor on the morning of 25 January.

The four day port visit in Colombo was spent in many different endeavors. For the crew it meant a visit to a port not normally visited by Navy vessels and for the officers it provided a taste of diplomatic functions and life. The MAP equipment was transferred to the government of Sri Lanka during a formal ceremony onboard on 26 January. Mr. Peter J. Peterson, Charge and Affairs of the U. S. Embassy, presented the equipment on behalf of the U. S. Government. Mr. Maitripala Senanayake, leader of the House, accepted for the Government of Sri Lanka. Continuous tours of the ship were provided to the citizens of Colombo and elsewhere throughout the remainder of the visit.

MOBILE departed Colombo on the morning of 29 January and retraced her track across the Indian Ocean. On 02 February, following another transit of the Strait of Malacca, the "pollywogs" onboard were initiated into the realm of Neptune Rex. On that date, MOBILE crossed the Equator southeast of Singapore and anchored there on 03 February, where the crew enjoyed a 2 day port visit before proceeding for Subic Bay.

While in transit to the U. S. Naval Base at Subic Bay, MOBILE rendezvoused with USS TRIPOLI, USS DULUTH, USS ANCHORAGE and USS SCHENECTADY TG 76.4 (ARG "A") on 07 February and affected the transfer of several personnel by helicopter. A vertrep was also conducted with USS WHITE PLAINS on that date. After the completion of the vertrep, MOBILE was detached to continue her transit. On 09 February an air gunnery exercise was held before entering Subic Bay. The period from 09 to 19 February was spent in upkeep.

On 19 February, MOBILE departed Subic Bay bound for White Beach. She arrived there on 21 February and commenced loading Marine units for transfer to Numazu. The loadout was completed on 22 February and MOBILE departed on 23 February and commenced the offload of her passengers at that

time. Following this offload, MOBILE returned to White Beach. She arrived there on 29 February and rejoined TG 76.5 (ARG "B"), USS DENVER and USS TUSCALOOSA, after seven weeks of detached assignments.

From 29 February to 06 March MOBILE, along with the other ships in ARG "B", provided training services for Marine units stationed on Okinawa while in port at White Beach. On 06 March, the three ships loaded Marine units and on 07 March departed for Subic Bay.

09 March saw MOBILE, USS DENVER and USS TUSCALOOSA conduct an amphibious landing at the lower Marine Amphibious Unit (MAU) camp at Subic Bay. The completion of that landing was followed by a general offload of Marine equipment after berthing at the pier. An upkeep period followed until 19 March.

On 17 March, seven members of the Republic of the Philippines Committee on National Defense were hosted to an informal luncheon in the wardroom and a tour of the ship.

By 19 March, MOBILE, along with the two other ships in company, had reloaded her Marine passengers and cargo. On this date the ships departed for Hong Kong, British Crown Colony. Prior to leaving Subic Bay, however, two amphibious landings were held in the Zambales Operating Area on 20 and 21 March. The ships arrived in Hong Kong on 23 March for a seven day port visit.

The visit to Hong Kong was to have been the last major event of these ships' deployment in the western Pacific, but this was not to be. Because of events in the Republic of Vietnam, all ships were underway from Hong Kong on 30 March with orders to proceed into the South China Sea. The ships rendezvoused with ARG "A" and two Service Force units to conduct an underway replenishment on 1 April. Following the replenishment, MOBILE, USS DENVER and USS TUSCALOOSA were again detached to proceed to White Beach. The three ships arrived there on 05 April. MOBILE transferred several Marine vehicles at this time. The three ships then departed Okinawa the same day bound for Subic Bay. However, during the transit, they were diverted to the Gulf of Tonkin with orders to join the units of Amphibious Squadron FIVE and other amphibious shipping then on station off the DMZ. This change in orders occurred on 06 April. The ships reached the Gulf of Tonkin on 08 April and immediately joined the ships there in formation as units of TF 76 under the Command of Commander, Amphibious Forces, U. S. Seventh Fleet.

The period from 08 April to 25 May was one of continuous steaming in the waters of the Gulf of Tonkin. MOBILE, as well as her sister amphibious ships, was involved in two operations in support of South Vietnamese ashore. Song Thanh 5-72 and 6-72 were both designed to insert forces into enemy held territory. The support provided by MOBILE involved providing ready SAR boats and a ready helo deck in the event of a downed or damaged helicopter. In the second operation on 24 May, MOBILE's salvage boat provided support to an LVT assault on enemy held territory by Vietnamese Marines. During the assault, MOBILE's boat came under hostile fire. No casualties occurred but the boat crew earned the

Combat Action Ribbon.

On 28 April, ships of Amphibious Squadron SEVEN arrived in the Gulf of Tonkin and joined the ships of PHIBRON 5 already on station. The arrival of these ships was to have signaled our return to CONUS but due to the increased enemy activity both PHIBRONs remained on station in the Gulf of Tonkin.

The previous day another event of significance took place aboard. On that date, a USMC helicopter made the 1000th landing of MOBILE's flight deck. This helo, an UH-1, was attached to HML 367, MAG 36, 1st MAW and was embarked onboard USS DENVER. The crew included 1LT I. J. NIEMCYZK, 1LT J. K. COVEY and SGT D. R. KOLLMON, all USMC.

On 25 May, MOBILE, along with DENVER and CAYUGA, was detached from the forces in the Gulf of Tonkin and departed for White Beach. MOBILE left her four LCM-6's with USS ANCHORAGE to provide additional landing craft support for operations in the Gulf of Tonkin. The three ships arrived on 28 May and offloaded Marines and cargo. For MOBILE, the arrival at White Beach marked the end of fifty-three days consecutive days of underway time. On 29 May at the completion of their offloads, MOBILE, USS DENVER and USS CAYUGA departed for Sasebo.

The arrival in Sasebo occurred on 30 May and marked the beginning of a six day upkeep period for these ships. At the end of this period, 5 June, MOBILE and USS CAYUGA departed Sasebo bound for Numazu. They arrived there and loaded Marine units on 7 June. At the completion of this loadout, both vessels departed for White Beach, arriving there on 9 June. Two days were spent at White Beach offloading Marines and then loading various Marine and Amphibious Construction Battalion units and equipment for transfer to Sattahip, Thailand. On the completion of this loadout on 11 June, MOBILE and USS CAYUGA departed for Sattahip.

Both vessels arrived at Sattahip on 17 June and offloaded their cargos and troops. On 19 June, MOBILE departed one day ahead of schedule for Subic Bay with ten officers and five crewmen still ashore in Thailand.

MOBILE proceeded to Subic Bay, arriving there on 22 June. There she received the troops that had previously been embarked in USS ANCHORAGE as well as her four LCM-6's. On 23 June, USS CAYUGA entered Subic Bay and transferred MOBILE's missing officers and crewmen to her. MOBILE then departed for the Gulf of Tonkin as a unit of Task Group 76.4 (ARG "A").

MOBILE joined the amphibious forces on station in the Gulf of Tonkin for the second time on 25 June. Again this was a period of continuous steaming, but MOBILE was allowed to get into the forefront early. On 26 June, she took part in a rehearsal of an amphibious feint which was to occur the following day.

On 27 June, MOBILE, USS BLUE RIDGE, USS SCHENECTADY and USS POINT DEFIANCE were operating near the North Vietnamese Island of Hon Cio (Tiger Island) in the Gulf of Tonkin while involved in an amphibious demonstration. At this time, MOBILE and the other ships began receiving enemy fire from batteries on Tiger Island. All vessels except USS DEFIANCE returned fire with unknown results. No friendly casualties resulted from the engagement. MOBILE's crew earned the Combat Action Ribbon for this action, which marked the first enemy engagement by a Charleston class LKA.

During this period in the Gulf of Tonkin, MOBILE again acted in support of operations by Republic of Vietnam armed forces to insert troops behind enemy lines. This operation (Lam Son 72) continued from 29 June to 14 July. During this period MOBILE developed leaks in several boiler superheater tubes. In order to continue meeting her commitments, the services of welders from SRF, Subic Bay, who were handling similar problems on other ships then in the Gulf were provided. Through the assistance of these workmen, MOBILE was able to continue to meet all requirements without having to visit a repair activity for the accomplishment of the work.

On 14 July, MOBILE received very welcome news. She was to be detached from the forces in the Gulf on that day, and better yet, she was to proceed to San Diego as her schedule would allow. MOBILE departed the Gulf of Tonkin that afternoon.

After her relief on 14 July, MOBILE resumed the schedule that would have been in effect after the Hong Kong visit in March. From the Gulf of Tonkin, she transited to White Beach, arriving there on 18 July. Her embarked troops and equipment were offloaded quickly and she sailed for Subic Bay the same day. MOBILE arrived in Subic Bay early in the evening of 20 July. 21 July was a day spent in loading retrograde equipment for transfer to Port Hueneme, California. This loading was completed by early afternoon and MOBILE departed for Apra Harbor, Guam, M.I. the same day.

MOBILE arrived at Apra Harbor on 25 July. The onload of more retrograde (also destined for Port Hueneme) commenced immediately. On completion that afternoon, MOBILE departed for CONUS, more specifically Port Hueneme, via a great circle route.

27 July was the date that MOBILE changed to the operational command of Commander, U.S. FIRST Fleet. On 29 July, she crossed the International Date Line on her eastward transit.

News that was welcomed by the entire crew was received on 31 July. On that date, MOBILE was authorized to proceed directly to her homeport, bypassing her scheduled stop at Port Hueneme.

Two days later, it was discovered that a crewman was missing. After numerous thorough searches of the entire ship, MOBILE reversed course on 2 August in order to search for her missing crewman. Even with the aid of aircraft from Barbers Point, Hawaii, the search proved useless. Late in the afternoon of 3 August the search was halted and MOBILE again reversed her track, this time to the east.

MOBILE arrived in her homeport during the morning of 8 August after an absence of ten months, one week and one day, approximately three months longer than expected. Her long deployment saw many accomplishments, but the most notable was that not one case of missing ship's movement occurred. The period 8 August to 16 October was spent at various berths in San Diego at the U.S. Naval Station. MOBILE enjoyed a standard thirty day stand down from operational commitments until 7 September, but then got to work preparing for a scheduled regular overhaul. MOBILE was underway for a portion of 2 October while providing photographic services, but she only cleared San Diego harbor and returned. On that date a team of Navy photographers used MOBILE crewmen as subjects for a series of PMS training films then in production.

This long inport period was not without its low points. Two events of an unscheduled nature did cause much excitement aboard. A collision with USS BLUE RIDGE on 23 August while making a dead plant berth shift caused slight damage to both ships. An electrical fire caused by a short circuit in shore power cables aboard caused a great deal of damage to the crews' mess decks in the early morning hours of 12 September.

On 2 October, MOBILE was authorized by Commander, Amphibious Squadron FIVE to display the Blue "E" for Supply Department excellence until 1 July 1973.

The morning of 16 October saw MOBILE underway for a transit to Port Hueneme and San Francisco, California. On this date, she suffered a third man overboard casualty at the mouth of San Diego harbor. The man was successfully recovered. Before proceeding to Port Hueneme, MOBILE spent the latter portion of 16 October steaming in the southern California operating area. 17 October saw MOBILE off the Silver Strand at San Diego to conduct her first amphibious training since her release from the Gulf of Tonkin on 14 July. Following this exercise, she proceeded to Port Hueneme, arriving the next day. The offload of retrograde equipment took only part of that day. With the completion of offload operations, MOBILE got underway for San Francisco.

During this transit nine men were embarked and conducted a habitability survey of engineering department spaces while underway and one lieutenant commander in the Naval Reserve who was undertaking his annual active duty training.

MOBILE entered San Francisco Bay on 19 October and was berthed at the Naval Supply Center, Oakland, California. While inport San Francisco, many crewmen and officers received instruction in firefighting and damage control techniques at U.S. Naval Station, Treasure Island. MOBILE got underway on 27 October and proceeded to a rendezvous with

USS THOR (ARC-4). The rendezvous was effected on 29 October and THOR was refueled using a close in rig. After refueling, personnel and supplies were transferred by boat. On the completion of this action, MOBILE returned to San Diego, arriving on 1 November.

Less than one week later MOBILE was again underway in the southern California operating areas. On 6 November an underway material inspection by the San Diego Sub Board of Inspection and Survey was conducted. Maneuvering trials, gunnery exercises and anchoring drills were conducted. The early evening saw her back at her berth at the Naval Station. The inport phase of the INSURV Inspection continued until 10 November.

On 16 November, MOBILE became the host for a contingent of U.S. Naval Sea Cadets from Phoenix, Arizona. Fourteen cadets and three adult leaders embarked that afternoon for a weekend of practical factors training onboard. These cadets were berthed in the troop berthing compartment and spent the entire next day in various deck department functions. On 18 November, the cadets departed for their homes in Arizona.

MOBILE was at sea for the last time in 1972 on 20 and 21 November. She got underway on the morning of 20 November bound for Naval Weapons Station, Seal Beach, California. The purpose of this voyage was to effect the offloading of ammunition prior to entering the scheduled yard period. MOBILE arrived at Seal Beach that afternoon and the crew began the offload immediately. On its completion the next day, MOBILE got underway for San Diego, arriving there early in the same evening.

The transit to Seal Beach also gave MOBILE the chance to show the Navy to another interested group. Ten members of the Optimist's Club and Chamber of Commerce of Riverside, California, made both the trip to the Weapons Station and the return.

On 14 December, MOBILE was again used as a subject for Navy photographers. On this date, a series of photographs of various engineering department jobs were taken.

On 26 December, MOBILE entered into a special restricted availability period in lieu of a regular overhaul. This yard period was scheduled to take place entirely in her homeport. The primary contractor for this work was Campbell Industries of San Diego.



R. L. MOSER  
Acting

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