

USS NEW ORLEANS (LPH-11)  
Fleet Post Office  
San Francisco 96601

USS New Orleans  
1923  
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15 MAR 1974 161

From: Commanding Officer, USS NEW ORLEANS (LPH-11)  
To: Chief of Naval Operations (OP-05D2)  
Subj: Command History (OPNAV REPORT 5750-1); submission of  
Ref: (a) OPNAVINST 5750.12B  
(b) CINCPACFLTINST 5750.2C  
Encl: (1) Officer's Roster of 31 Dec 1973  
(2) Biography of CAPT R. E. NEIGER, USN  
(3) USS NEW ORLEANS (LPH-11) SKYLAB III Post Mission Report  
(4) List of Personnel Receiving Awards for 1972-73 WESTPAC Deployment

1. In compliance with references (a) and (b), the ship's history of USS NEW ORLEANS (LPH-11) for the period 1 January 1973 to 31 December 1973 is submitted.

2. Command History

a. Chronology of Highlights, 1973

<u>Date</u>	<u>Event</u>
1 JAN	Moored U. S. Naval Station Subic Bay, Republic of the Philippines.
7 JAN	Underway for Gulf of Tonkin holding area.
9 JAN	On Station, GOT holding area.
18 JAN	Departed Gulf of Tonkin for Singapore.
21 JAN	Crossed the Equator.
22 JAN	Anchored in Singapore Harbor.
26 JAN	Departed Singapore Harbor for Subic Bay, Republic of the Philippines.
27 JAN	NEW ORLEANS designated Primary Recovery Ship for Skylab III.

29 JAN Arrived Subic Bay, moored pierside, debarked Surgical Team 19.

1 FEB Embarked HM-12, debarked BLT 3/4 and COMPHIB-  
RON 3. CTF 78, RADM Brian MCCAULEY, USN,  
broke his flag in New Orleans.

2 FEB Embarked CTG 78.1 and CTF 78 Staff. Debarked  
TACRON 13, Det A. Shifted to anchorage in  
Subic Bay.

4 FEB NEW ORLEANS Rescue and Assistance Team  
assisted USS TOLOVANA (AO-72) in combating  
serious fire while at anchor in Subic Bay.

5 FEB COMSEVENTHFLT visited NEW ORLEANS.

6-9 FEB Conducted MINEX in Subic Bay.

10 FEB Shifted to pierside berth, Subic Bay. CTF  
78 hauled down his flag, Staff remained  
onboard.

14 FEB Shifted to anchorage in Subic Bay.

15 FEB Shifted to pierside berth, Subic Bay embarked  
Surgical Team 12.

20 FEB Shifted to anchorage, Subic Bay.

21 FEB Underway for Haiphong Roadstead, N. V. N.

23 FEB CTF 78 broke his flag in NEW ORLEANS. Transited  
swept channel and anchored in Haiphong  
Roadstead 15 miles from land. Commenced  
Operation End Sweep.

26 FEB COMSEVENTHFLT visited NEW ORLEANS. Underway  
for night UNREP with USNS TALUGA.

27 FEB Anchored in Haiphong Roadstead.

28 FEB Underway for Gulf of Tonkin, emergency sortie.

3 MAR UNREP with USS CALIENTE (AO-53).

4 MAR Anchored in Haiphong Roadstead. Underway for  
night VERTREP with USS SAN JOSE (AFS-7).

5 MAR Anchored in Haiphong Roadstead.

7 MAR COMPHIBFORSEVENTHFLT visited NEW ORLEANS.

13 MAR Underway for night VERTREP/UNREP with USS NIAGARA FALLS (AFS-3) and USS MARIAS (AO-57). Anchored in Haiphong Roadstead.

17 MAR Provided standby assistance for serious fire in USS ENHANCE (MSO-437).

18 MAR Launched a SAR mission to assist in MEDEVAC of crew members of a downed HMM 463 CH-53 in Haiphong Harbor.

23 MAR Underway for night UNREP with USS PONCHATOULA (AO-148).

24 MAR Anchored in Haiphong Roadstead.

26 MAR Underway for night VERTREP with USS WHITE PLAINS (AFS-4).

27 MAR Anchored in Haiphong Roadstead. CG, 1st Marine Air Wing visited NEW ORLEANS.

2 APR SAR Helos participated in recovery of crewmembers of a downed HM 12 CH-53 in Haiphong Harbor. Underway for night UNREP with USS TOLOVANA (AO-64).

3 APR Anchored in Haiphong Roadstead.

4 APR Conducted VERTREP with USS SAN JOSE (AFS-7) while at anchor.

7 APR Shifted anchorage to vicinity of Grand Norway Island, Haiphong Roadstead.

12 APR Underway to conduct night UNREP with USS TOLOVANA (AO-64).

17 APR Underway for Gulf of Tonkin, emergency sortie.

18 APR CTF 78 shifted his flag to USS VANCOUVER (LPD-2). Enroute Subic Bay, Republic of the Philippines.

20 APR Arrived Subic Bay, moored pierside. Commenced turnover with USS TRIPOLI (LPH-10). Debarked HM 12 and HMM 165.

21 APR Debarked all remaining units except Surgical Team 12.

25 APR Debarked Surgical Team 12.  
26 APR Shifted to anchorage Subic Bay.  
27 APR Underway for Pearl Harbor, Hawaii.  
3 MAY CHOPPED TO COMTHIRDFLT.  
5 MAY Crossed the International Date Line.  
7 MAY Arrived Pearl Harbor, Hawaii.  
8 MAY Underway for San Diego, California.  
13 MAY Arrived San Diego, California.  
22 MAY COMPHIBRON THREE broke his pennant in NEW ORLEANS.  
13 JUN Commenced Readiness Improvement Program.  
18 JUL Skylab III Primary Recovery Ship (PRS conference held onboard NEW ORLEANS.  
8 AUG COMPHIBRON THREE hauled down his pennant.  
10 AUG Completed Readiness Improvement Program.  
11 AUG Underway for At-Sea Trials for Skylab III.  
13 AUG Arrived San Diego, California to complete preparations for Skylab III.  
16-17 AUG Embarked HC-1 Det 4, UDT 11, PHIBPAC Band, NASA representatives, and Press and TV personnel.  
18 AUG Chopped to CTF 130. Underway for Pearl Harbor, Hawaii.  
25 AUG Arrived Pearl Harbor, loaded Space Mobile Laboratories (SML's)  
27 AUG Underway for local operating areas.  
29 AUG Arrived Pearl Harbor, Hawaii.  
1 SEP Underway for local operating areas.  
3 SEP Arrived Pearl Harbor, Hawaii.  
6 SEP Underway for local operating areas.

8 SEP Arrived Pearl Harbor, Hawaii.

10 SEP Underway for local operating areas.

11 SEP RADM PADDOCK, CTF 130 visited NEW ORLEANS to observe simulated Skylab III Command Module Recovery.

12 SEP Arrived Pearl Harbor, Hawaii.

14 SEP Underway for Skylab III recovery enroute San Diego, California.

25 SEP Recovered Skylab III Crew and Command Module.

26 SEP Arrived San Diego, California. Debarked HC-1 Det 4, UDT 11, PHIBPAC Band. Outchopped from CTF 130.

27 SEP Skylab III Astronauts departed. Debarked NASA representatives and Press and TV personnel. Offloaded SML's.

29 SEP Commenced removal of Gun Mounts 32 and 34 and Installation of Basic Point Defense Missile System

3 NOV NEW ORLEANS designated Primary Recovery Ship for Skylab IV.

14 NOV Skylab IV PRS conference held onboard NEW ORLEANS.

26 NOV Underway for local operating areas to conduct abbreviated Refresher Training Period.

30 NOV Arrived San Diego, California.

14 DEC Captain R. E. NEIGER, USN relieved Captain R. W. CARIUS, USN as Commanding Officer, USS NEW ORLEANS.

16 DEC Completed installation of Basic Point Defense Missile System (BPDMS).

17 DEC Underway for local operating areas to conduct Ship's Qualification Assistance Team Missile Firings of BPDMS.

19 DEC Arrived San Diego, California to complete Preparations for Skylab IV.

b. Command Organization and Relationships

(1) Captain Robert W. CARIUS, USN was relieved by Captain Ralph E. NEIGER, USN as Commanding Officer of USS NEW ORLEANS on 14 December 1973. Captain NEIGER's biography is forwarded as enclosure (2).

(2) The homeport of USS NEW ORLEANS was San Diego, California.

(3) The mission of the ship is to conduct and support amphibious operations using the vertical envelopment technique. To accomplish this mission the ship embarks and supports an amphibious squadron staff, a marine battalion landing team, a marine amphibious unit staff, a marine helicopter squadron, a navy tactical air control detachment, and a navy surgical team. The ship's secondary mission is to act as a medical evacuation ship. The mission of the ship was further extended helicopter mine sweeping operations, and as the Prime Recovery Ship for Skylab III.

(4) The complement as of 31 December 1973 was 47 officers and 530 enlisted, see enclosure (1).

c. Operations and Activities

(1) On 7 January 1973 NEW ORLEANS departed Subic Bay, R.P.I. as the flagship of Amphibious Ready Group ALFA, and headed for the Gulf of Tonkin Holding Area. COMPHIBRON THREE was embarked as Commander ARG ALFA, with BLT 3/4, 31st Marine Amphibious Unit and Surgical Team 6 onboard. On 10 January, the 16,000th accident free landing aboard NEW ORLEANS was logged MAJ. R. B. Rogers, USMC, HMM-165, with ABH3 L. A. Boding as LSE. NEW ORLEANS departed the Gulf of Tonkin and enroute to Singapore, crossing the equator on 21 January with appropriate ceremonies. NEW ORLEANS anchored in Singapore Harbor from 22 to 26 January, her visit cut short by the necessity of returning to Subic Bay to prepare for Operation End Sweep. NEW ORLEANS spent the last days of January in Subic Bay preparing to offload ARG "A" and embark the Mine Sweeping Units. During the month of January NEW ORLEANS steamed 4,866 miles and conducted 560 day and 204 night landings.

(2) The first weeks of February were spent in Subic Bay debarking the ARG "A", loading Mine Sweeping helicopters from HM-12, and conducting several mine sweeping exercises in Subic Bay. On 19 February, the Aircraft Intermediate Maintenance Department accepted the ship's replacement VH-46D helicopter, CAJUN IV, and transferred CAJUN III to Atsugi for rework. NEW ORLEANS arrived at the Haiphong Roadstead on 23 February and began eight weeks of intensive and demanding round-the-clock

operations in support of End Sweep operations. The ship steamed 1,181 miles and landed 169 aircraft during the month of February.

(3) The entire month of March was spent conducting continuous operations in the Haiphong area, which included a high tempo of flight operations, night UNREPS and VERTREPS, Rescue and Assistance Missions, and SAR Missions. On 2 March, the 17,000 accident free landing was made aboard NEW ORLEANS by Captain R. S. Balara, USMC, HMM-165, with ABH3 T. C. Young as LSE. On 30 March, the 18,000 accident free landing was made by the ship's helicopter, CAJUN IV, piloted by LCDR R. A. Wildman, USN, with ABH1 A. C. Neil as LSE. During the month of March, NEW ORLEANS steamed 993 miles and conducted 1,189 day and 9 night landings.

(4) The month of April marked the end of Operation End Sweep for NEW ORLEANS with CTF-78 hauling down his flag on 18 April. Upon arrival in Subic Bay the turnover with USS TRIPOLI and debarkation of HM-12, HMM-165, and Surgical Team 12 was accomplished smoothly and quickly. The month ended with NEW ORLEANS underway for Pearl Harbor and the crew loading forward to their arrival in San Diego. NEW ORLEANS conducted 583 landings and steamed 2,430 miles during the month of April.

(5) On 3 May NEW ORLEANS chopped to COMTHIRDFLT, and on 5 May the ship crossed the International Dateline. After a one day stop at Pearl Harbor NEW ORLEANS returned to her home port of San Diego on 13 May, after an absence of 300 days. On 21 May COMPHIBORN THREE broke his pennant in NEW ORLEANS. The ship steamed a total of 5,734 miles in the month of May.

(6) June and July were spent implementing the Readiness Improvement Program (READIMP) in NEW ORLEANS. READIMP was established by CINCPACFLT to upgrade the state of individual and unit training utilizing shorebased and shipboard facilities, improve material readiness through reduced tempo of operations and increased opportunities for ship's force and assisted maintenance, emphasize leadership at all levels, and concentrate on established standards of good order, discipline, grooming and smartness. The crew was also making preparations for the Skylab III Mission. Skylab III is covered in complete detail in enclosure (3) and will be noted only briefly in this narrative.

(7) The first part of August was filled with completing five weeks of Skylab preparations in just two and one-half weeks because of late breaking schedule changes. At-Sea trials were conducted the weekend before departure for Skylab, READIMP was completed, and COMPHIBRON THREE hauled down his pennant. NEW

ORLEANS chopped to CTF 130 and sailed for Pearl Harbor on 18 August to begin the at-sea training necessary for the successful recovery of the Skylab III astronauts. The ship steamed 2,910 miles in August and conducted 444 landings.

(8) On 10 September, the 19,000th accident free landing aboard NEW ORLEANS was logged by LCDR E. Powell, USN, HC-1 with ABH3 S. J. Caulkins as LSE. After 15 Simulated Exercise Recovery Drills (SIMEX'S). NEW ORLEANS briefly held the center-stage on national TV when the Skylab III Astronauts were successfully recovered on the afternoon of 25 September. NEW ORLEANS returned to San Diego where the astronauts departed for NASA Headquarters, Houston. New Orleans steamed 4,330 miles in September and conducted 184 landings.

(9) October was spent in San Diego with the removal of 3"/50 gun mounts 32 and 34 and their replacement with two Basic Point Defense Missile System (BPDMS) Launchers and associated fire control equipment. Preparations were continued for a Refresher Training period scheduled for November.

(10) On 3 November NEW ORLEANS was designated as the Prime Recovery Ship for Skylab IV, and was scheduled to deploy during the first week of January 1974 for the mission. Refresher Training was rescheduled as a one week assist visit and this was accomplished during the last week of November with the crew's efforts focused on Refresher Training, the BPDMS installation, Skylab IV and the upcoming change of command. NEW ORLEANS steamed 733 miles in November, and conducted 76 night and 34 day landings.

(11) On 14 December Captain R. E. NEIGER, USN relieved Captain R. W. CARIUS, USN as Commanding Officer, USS NEW ORLEANS. Upon completion of the BPDMS installation NEW ORLEANS successfully completed the SQUAT missile firings and returned to San Diego to complete preparation for Skylab IV and give the crew a well deserved Christmas Holiday leave period. NEW ORLEANS steamed 484 miles in December. Her cumulative through December amounts to 19,209 consecutive accident free landings, including 16,625 day landings and 2,584 night landings.

d. Awards and Commendations

(1) The list of awards and commendations presented to USS NEW ORLEANS personnel during 1973 is included as enclosure (4).

  
R. E. NEIGER

Copy to:  
DIRHAVHIST (OP-09B9)  
CINCPACFLT  
COMPHIBPAC (less encl)  
COMPHIBRON ONE (less encl)

ROSTER OF OFFICERS AS OF 31 DECEMBER 1973:

CAPT Ralph Eugene NEIGER, USN, [REDACTED] /1310  
CDR Joseph Michael PURTELL, USN, [REDACTED] /1310  
CDR Donald Calhoun EDMUNDS, USN, [REDACTED] /1310  
CDR Orville WRIGHT Jr., USN, [REDACTED] /1310  
LCDR Robert Earl TRENT, CHC, USN, [REDACTED] /4100  
LCDR David DILLEY, USN, [REDACTED] /1110  
MAJ Donnie C. EVANS, USMC, [REDACTED] /7560  
LCDR Albert MRAZIK, USN, [REDACTED] /1110  
LCDR Kevin Thomas RYAN, USN, [REDACTED] /1110  
LCDR Robert Alan WILDMAN, USN, [REDACTED] /1310  
LCDR Fred J. BICE, SUPPC, USN, [REDACTED] /3100  
LCDR Clifford Bartenhagen SCHMIDT, USN, [REDACTED] /1310  
LCDR David SOKOL, USN, [REDACTED] /1810  
LCDR Peter Klaus BOWDEN, USN, [REDACTED] /1110  
LT Phillip Dean CULLEN, USN, [REDACTED] /1310  
LT Michael Alan Nye WHITTEMORE, USN, [REDACTED] /1110  
LT Peter Anthony BARNETT, USN, [REDACTED] /1110  
LT George Frederick MORRIS, USN, [REDACTED] /1110  
LT Michael Alden ELLIS, USN, [REDACTED] /1520  
LT Richard C. BOYD, MC, USNR, [REDACTED] /2105  
LT Russell Edward HAAG, DC, USNR, [REDACTED] /2205  
LTJG Robert Winsby PECK, SUPPC, USN, [REDACTED] /3100  
LTJG Edward Michael GUMKOWSKI, USN, [REDACTED] /1110  
1LT John F. BOULDRY, USMC, [REDACTED] /2502  
LTJG Thomas Patrick SMITH, SUPPC, USN, [REDACTED] /3100  
LTJG Edward Cabot HALL, USNR, [REDACTED] /1105  
LTJG Donald Lee STOKES, USNR, [REDACTED] /1105  
LTJG Richard Ray KINDBERG, USN, [REDACTED] /1100  
LTJG John August HOLM, II, USN, [REDACTED] /1100  
LTJG Thomas Albert OLIVER, USN, [REDACTED] /1100  
LTJG Sidney BURTON, Jr., SUPPC, USNR, [REDACTED] /3105  
LTJG Wilson VOSS, USN, [REDACTED] /1100  
ENS David Justin ROSS, USN, [REDACTED] /1100  
ENS Richard David MCNAMARA, USNR, [REDACTED] /1105  
ENS Donald Lee CAPRON, SUPPC, USN, [REDACTED] /3100  
ENS Richard Stafford KAISER, SUPPC, USN, [REDACTED] /3100  
ENS Stanley "R" LEVENTHAL, USNR, [REDACTED] /1105  
ENS Thomas Alan WINTERSTEIN, USNR, [REDACTED] /1105  
ENS Robinson "D" WONG, USNR, [REDACTED] /1405  
CWO3 Anastacio Lazaro VILLANUEVA, USN, [REDACTED] /7982  
CWO3 Robert Loyd VEATCH, USN, [REDACTED] /7742  
CWO3 John Allison BLACKIE, USN, [REDACTED] /7142  
CWO2 Jack David CREECH, USN, [REDACTED] /7412  
CWO2 Kenneth Henry WELSH, USN, [REDACTED] /7822  
CWO2 Leland Wayne CARPENTER, USN, [REDACTED] /7572  
CWO2 Ronald Anees NASHIF, USN, [REDACTED] /7662  
WO-1 Roland Heinz JAEH, USN, [REDACTED] /7602

Enclosure (1)

## CAPTAIN'S BIOGRAPHY

Captain Ralph E. NEIGER was born in Sacramento, California on 4 January 1928. He has attended Sacramento College and the University of California at Berkeley where he graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree in Business Administration. In 1961 Captain NEIGER was accepted to the United States Naval Post-graduate School and received a Masters degree in Management. He completed the College of Naval Warfare course at the Naval War College in June 1971.

Captain NEIGER entered the Navy in December 1945 in the V-5 program and following college training was appointed a Midshipman in May 1948 when he entered flight training at Pensacola, Florida. He was designated a Naval Aviator in September 1949, and assigned to Attack Squadron 115. In May 1950 he was commissioned Ensign, USN. Captain NEIGER served with VA-115 on the USS PHILIPPINE SEA from July 1950 to March 1951, in the Korean conflict. He attended LSO school and later served in that capacity aboard the USS ESSEX in the Korean War Zone. Other assignments included duty with the Bureau of Naval Weapons Resident Representative, Special Projects Office, Aerojet General Corporation, Heavy Attack Squadron EIGHT in 1960-1961, V-6 officer aboard USS RANGER, and as flight instructor with ATU-301 at Cabaniss Field, Corpus Christi, Texas. Captain NEIGER served as Executive Officer and Commanding Officer of Heavy Attack Squadron EIGHT in 1965-1966, completed a tour as Operations Officer and Executive Officer of USS HANCOCK (CVA-19) in September 1970, and Commanding Officer of USS OGDEN (LPD-5) in October 1973.

Captain NEIGER's decorations include the Distinguished Flying Cross, the Bronze Star Medal (1 star), the Air Medal (Numeral 10 and 4 gold stars), Navy Commendation Medal with Combat "V", Navy Unit Commendation (2 stars), Navy Occupation Service Medal, Vietnam Air Gallantry Medal, China Service Medal, Korean Presidential Unit Citation, Korean Service Medal (1 silver and 1 bronze star), National Defense Service Medal (1 bronze star), United Nations Service Medal, Republic of Vietnam Campaign Medal, Vietnam Service Medal (3 bronze stars), Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal (Korea). Captain NEIGER is married to the former Anne Briscoe Alger of Los Angeles, California.

Enclosure (2)