

ORIGINAL

USS NUECES (APB-40)
FPO SAN FRANCISCO 96601

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From: Commanding Officer, USS NUECES (APB-40)
To: Director of Naval History (OP-09B9), Washington Navy Yard,
Washington, D.C. 20390

Subj: Command History; submission of

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Encl: (1) USS NUECES (APB-40) Command History for 1969/1970

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

W.C. Stegall
W. C. STEGALL

Copy to:
CINCPACFLT
COMNAVFORV
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ORIGINAL

USS NUCCES (APB-40)

COMMAND HISTORY

1969/1970

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(1) Decommissioning Pamphlet USS NUCCES (APB-40)

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CHRONOLOGY

1969

- 1-31 January: Operated in Long Xuyen, Binh Thuy, Can Tho areas in support of Riverine operations with Mobile Riverine Group Bravo. Embarked are troops of 4/47th 2nd Brigade, 9th Infantry, Explosive Ordnance Disposal, and River Assault Squadron 15.
- 20 January: Ship was visited by Commander 21st Infantry, Vietnamese Army.
- 1-24 February: Operated in Long Xuyen, Binh Thuy, Can Tho areas in support of Riverine operations with MRC Bravo.
- 25 February: RIVRON 15 disembarked. Underway for Dong Tam to rejoin Mobile Riverine Group Alfa; anchored overnight near the Vam Nao crossover, junction of the Bassac and Mekong Rivers.
- 26 February: Arrived in Dong Tam. Chopped to CTG 117.1 (Group Alfa). Commenced nightly firing exercises against free fire zone, south bank, Mekong River as directed by CTF 117. Supporting Rivron 13, EOD Team 39, 4/47th Brigade, 9th Infantry.
- 26 Feb.-15 May: Operated in the Dong Tam, My Tho, Ben Tre area in support of Riverine operations.
- 1 March: Anchored near Dong Tam. Received mortar attack before dawn from unknown location. Slight material damage, no personnel casualties sustained.
- 2 March: Received another pre-dawn mortar attack despite tactical anchorage shift. NUECES responded by taking suspected enemy position under fire from 40MM mounts. Slight material damage, no personnel casualties sustained.
- 13 May: NUECES joined by River Assault Squadron 11.
- 15 May-10 Aug.: Operated in Dong Tam, My Tho, Ben Tre, and Lower Ham Luong areas in support of Riverine operations.
- 6 June: MRF received pre-dawn hostile fire from south bank, Mekong River. Ship responded with counterfire from forward 40MM mount as directed by CTF 117. Sighted two suspected enemy rocket rounds from 265 degrees T moving west to east in direction of Dong Tam, RVN. NUECES repeated counterfire from forward 40MM mount.

10 June: LCDR W. C. STEGALL, USN, relieved LCDR L. D. TURNER as Commanding Officer of USS NUECES (AFB-40).

19 June: USS COLLETON (APB-36) and USS SPHINX (ARL-24) departed the Mobile Riverine Force.

30 June: CDR MURPHY relieved CDR SOTTACK as Commander River Assault Squadron Thirteen. Ceremony took place flight deck of NUECES.

6 July: Underway with other units of MRF near Dong Tam for pass in review ceremony for Presidential Unit Citation festivities. COMNAVFORV-Admiral Elmo ZUMWALT, CTF 117-Captain Carvel BLAIR, and three major U.S. television networks observed the ceremony from the MRF flagship, USS BENEWAH (APB-35). The pass in review commemorated activity of the MRF during the enemy "TET" Offensive of 1968.

10 July: NUECES reported incoming rounds from south bank near Dong Tam. Took suspected enemy position under fire from 40MM mounts.

11 July: Set general quarters on two occasions as directed by CTF 117. Fired on suspected enemy positions, south bank, Mekong River near Dong Tam as directed by CTF 117.

16 July: Set general quarters as directed by CTF 117. Commenced firing both 40MM mounts at south bank, Mekong River near Dong Tam as directed by CTF 117. 760 rounds expended.

22 July: Major CROOK relieved Major TAYLOR as Battalion Commander 4/39th during ceremony on Helo Deck.

6 August: Held special Buddhist memorial service for SA Nguyen VAN CAN, VNN, on the Helo Deck. SA VAN CAN drowned during training exercises with RAS 13.

8 August: 3/39th disembarked.

10 August: Cast off last of 3 ammo pontoons. Underway for My Tho, RVN. Ship departed the Mobile Riverine Force. Chopped to CTF-76, COMPHIBFORSEVENTH FLT.

11 August: Anchored near My Tho. Object discovered fastened to anchor chain -- described as inner tube flotation device with orange colored secondary flotation device containing a metal box. A bamboo stick protruded from the secondary float. Arrangement bound with blue cord and fastened to anchor chain with same. CTF 117 notified, EOD dispatched to investigate, object broke free and sank. Suspected to be enemy mine (250-400 pounds) whose

command detonating wire was cut by Base Internal Defense boats minesweeping the area, and anchor chain collar. Underway for Nha Be, RVN.

11-19 August: Anchored near Nha Be, RVN, in support of PBR Div. 533.

20-21 August: Transit - anchored near Vung Tau, RVN.

22-26 August: Transit with USS MERCER (APB-39) to Subic Bay, P.I.

26-29 August: In port Subic Bay, P.I.

29 August: Underway with USS MERCER (APB-39) for Yokosuka, Japan.

5-19 September: With USS MERCER (APB-39) at U.S. Fleet Activities, Yokosuka, Japan, for two week RAV.

19 September: Departed Yokosuka, Japan, for Pearl Harbor, Hawaii.

24 September: Chop operational control to COMFIRSTFLT.

4 October: Arrived Pearl Harbor, Hawaii.

6 October: Offloaded all 40MM and small arms ammunition at West Lock.

7 October: Departed Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, for Long Beach, California.

17 October: Arrived Long Beach, California. Chop operational and administrative control to NISMF, San Diego. Commenced inactivation.

22 October: Received 500-600 persons from USS KEARSARGE (CVS-33) for berthing.

28 October: Underwent INSURV inspection. Conclusion: NUECES was considered fit for further service.

5 January: Secured general mess services.

16 January: NUECES personnel commenced berthing on the Long Beach Naval Station, Barracks 39.

13 February: USS KEARSARGE (CVS-33) inactivated and decommissioned. All KEARSARGE personnel berthed on NUECES departed.

17 February: NUECES entered drydock for completion of industrial work package.

4 March: NUECES departed drydock.

13 March: NUECES inactivated and decommissioned at Long Beach Naval Shipyard, Long Beach, California. Custody of NUECES passed to CO, NISMF, San Diego.

The USS NUECES (APB-40) was recommissioned on 3 May 1963 in the Puget Sound Naval Shipyard, Bremerton, Washington, with Lieutenant Commander Lewis D. TURNER as Commanding Officer.

NUECES' mission is to operate as an integral or if need be, as an independent support element to Riverine Operations in the Mekong Delta region of the Republic of Vietnam. NUECES is designed to provide berthing, messing, recreational, and extensive medical facilities for ships company and for embarked Army and Navy personnel.

Following extensive personnel training and material preparations early in 1968 NUECES, accompanied by USS MERCER (APB-39) departed San Diego, California, for Vietnam. On August 2, 1968, NUECES made her first penetration into the Mekong Delta and joined Group Alfa of the Mobile Riverine Force on the Bassac River near Can Tho. There she received her embarked Army and Navy troops and began operation with the Mobile Riverine Force.

From 2 August 1968 until 16 October, NUECES operated Group Alfa in the Ben Tre, My Tho, Dong Tam area. From 16 October until 25 February, 1969, NUECES operated in the Can Tho, Binh Thuy, Long Xuyen region with Mobile Riverine Group Bravo in support of RVN Marines. On 25 February NUECES resumed operations in Dong Tam with Group Alfa and remained in the Dong Tam, My Tho, Ben Tre area until her departure from the MRF in August, 1969.

On repeated occasions from March through August 1969 units of the Mobile Riverine Force reported incoming rounds of hostile fire from suspected enemy positions on the south bank of the Mekong River. On such occasions NUECES responded as directed by CTF 117 with return fire from one or both of her 40MM mounts. In addition NUECES provided nightly Harassment and Interdiction fire against the free fire zone on the south bank as directed by CTF 117.

On 10 June LCDR W. C. STEGALL, USN relieved LCDR Lewis D. TURNER as NUECES' Commanding Officer. During the summer months of 1969 NUECES underwent a large turnover of personnel. Persons completing in-country tours went on to other duty stations while new faces appeared to carry out NUECES' mission. In early July NUECES received news that she was to be redeployed from the Republic of Vietnam as part of President Nixon's proposed troop reduction scheduled for August, 1969.

NUECES participated in a special pass-in-review ceremony on 6 July near Dong Tam. NUECES and other elements of the MRF sailed past the flagship USS BENEWAH (APB-35) in recognition of the presidential unit citation earned by participants in MRF operations against the 1968 enemy "TET" offensive. The ceremony was observed from the BENEWAH by Admiral Elmo ZIMMALT, Commander Naval Forces Vietnam, by Captain Carvel BLAIR, CTF 117, and was covered by all three major American television networks.

On August 6, while anchored near Dong Tam, a Buddhist memorial service was held on NUECES' flight deck for SA Nguyen VAN CAN who drowned during training exercises with River Assault Squadron 13. The service was attended by members of SA VAN CAN's family, RAS 13 and affiliated Vietnamese trainees as well as by representatives of ship's company.

On 10 August, after making preparations for departure, NUECES bid adieu to the last of her three ammi pontoons as well as to the last of her embarked troops and hoisted her anchor for the final time as part of the Mobile Riverine Force. That night, while anchored near My Tho, despite normal anti-swimmer measures, an enemy swimmer apparently penetrated NUECES' defenses and fixed what was later estimated to be an explosive charge of from 250 to 400 pounds to the ship's port anchor chain. Fortunately the command detonating wire was presumably cut by BID boats sweeping the area for mines, and the anchor chain collar and the attempt was unsuccessful. EOD was dispatched from Dong Tam, and the charge was cut loose, but sank immediately to the river bottom before recovery could be made. NUECES continued her journey to Nha Be where she supported PBR crews from Division 533 for a week prior to departure for Vung Tau.

On 22 August, NUECES, accompanied by USS MERCER (APB-39) departed the Republic of Vietnam, her support mission successfully completed. From 26 to 29 August she was in-port Subic Bay, P.I. for more urgent repairs necessary for a trans Pacific crossing. On 29 August, NUECES departed Subic Bay for 2 week RAV repair period in Yokosuka, Japan, and for further preparation for a safe transit back to CONUS.

From 5 September until 19 September, NUECES was in Yokosuka where the shipyard force and ship's company proceeded to outfit NUECES for her trans-Pacific trip. After topping off with fuel, NUECES departed Yokosuka on 19 September, underway for Pearl Harbor, Hawaii.

NUECES arrived in Pearl Harbor, on 4 October 1969 and offloaded all 40MM and small arms ammunition two days later at the West Lock Facility. She departed Hawaii on 7 October and after another extremely smooth transit arrived in Long Beach, California and berthed in the Naval Shipyard and commenced inactivation under the cognizance of Naval Inactive Ship Maintenance Facility, San Diego.

On 28 October NUECES underwent an inspection by the INSURV board from San Diego, Despite a moderate number of discrepancies NUECES was deemed fit for further service and her impending inactivation was to be directed accordingly.

Operational systems were broken down, stores were offloaded, exterior surfaces were prepared and the marine green paint, once characteristic of the Mobile Riverine Force, was covered with haze gray.

On 22 October NUECES commenced berthing and messing some 500-600 officers and men from USS KEARSARGE (CVS-33). On 5 January 1970, NUECES' galley closed down and KEARSARGE and ship's company personnel utilized the messing facilities of the Naval Station galley. NUECES personnel began berthing in Barracks 39 on the Naval Station on 16 January in order to facilitate inactivation of berthing compartments. All compartments were finally made available for inactivation on 13 February when USS KEARSARGE (CVS-33) was inactivated and all her personnel departed.

On 17 February 1970, NUECES entered floating drydock AFDL-48 for completion of her industrial work package. On 4 March 1970, NUECES departed the drydock and preparations were made for her to be towed to San Diego. All spaces and systems were accepted by Inactive Ships Maintenance Facility San Diego and on 13 March 1970 NUECES was inactivated and decommissioned and placed in custody of NISMF, San Diego.