

ORISKANY ^{OPERATIONS} CHRONOLOGY OF US ORISKANY'S SEVENTH
~~PACIFIC EAST DEPLOYMENT~~
~~April to December 1965~~

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ORISKANY departed San Diego April 5th, ^{1965,} enroute for Pearl Harbor. In Hawaii the Big "O" underwent Operational Readiness Inspection to determine its readiness for overseas deployment. Steaming from Pearl Harbor on April 20th, ORISKANY proceeded to the fleet support base at Subic Bay in the Philippines for a brief visit.

From Subic Bay the ship joined other Seventh Fleet units making up Task Force 77 in the South China Sea. On May 8th ORISKANY aircraft flew their first combat sorties in the Viet Nam conflict, firing their first shots in anger since the Korean War.

The first sea period proved indicative of the vigorous pace ORISKANY would maintain throughout the deployment. Air operations began before dawn and continued far into the night. Frequently ORISKANY's air wing flew more than 130 sorties a day, delivering more than 100 tons of ordnance a day on communist targets. This rigorous work load was accomplished under the adverse conditions of extreme tropical heat night and day. There was a shortage of fresh water and other comfort commodities as extra heavy operational demands were assigned the ship. The work day was 15 hours or more, seven days a week. At-sea periods were 40 consecutive days or more. Despite this, the Big "O" never failed to meet a single day's combat commitment.

In late July ORISKANY steamed to Yokosuka, Japan for an 11-day recreation visit, the longest in-port period of the deployment. Despite the accumulated weariness of 45 continuous days at sea, ORISKANYMEN found time to observe the ship's tradition of hosting children from the Oriskany Home, an orphanage under the care of Catholic Salesian nuns in Kusanagi, Japan. ORISKANYMEN donated the funds with which the Home was built in 1952 and still continue their support.

Orphans and nuns from the Home spent a day aboard and received individual presents and a \$1,200 donation from the ship's crew.

CHRONOLOGY - - 2 - 2 - 2

After the all-too-few days of respite in Japan, ORISKANY was once again in the thick of the air war over Viet Nam.

Not content with flying ordnance off the ship at a record rate, the crew captured the Pacific Fleet "underway ordnance replenishment" record. Underway replenishment is the tricky operation of receiving ordnance, food, fuel and other supplies from support ships while underway at sea. ORISKANY's record for safe, speedy "unrep" was set alongside the ammunition ship USS PYRO when ordnance was brought aboard at the extraordinary rate of 196 tons per hour. A record number of unreps - 214 - were conducted during the deployment.

During the fall months ORISKANY continued pounding communist forces in Viet Nam, interrupting business for two well-earned, but brief, visits to Hong Kong. On November 25th the ship flew its 12,000th combat sortie since May 8th, a record never before achieved by any carrier in a single combat deployment, including World War II and Korea. The total number of arrested landings made from April to November - 14,800- is also a record.

Pilots and aircrewmembers of ORISKANY's Carrier Air Wing 16 have been awarded 3 Silver Star Medals, 28 Distinguished Flying Cross Medals, 30 Navy Commendation Medals, 3 Purple Heart Medals and 401 Air Medals. In addition, approval is pending on nominations for 1 Navy Cross Medal, 2 Silver Star Medals, 28 Distinguished Flying Crosses, 90 Navy Commendation Medals, 4 Purple Heart Medals and 528 Air Medals.

Nearly every pilot in the Air Wing earned the distinguished title of "Centurion" for completing more than 100 carrier landings. A total of 59 pilots earned the even more exclusive distinction of becoming "Combat Centurions" - flying more than 100 combat missions. During the deployment 13 pilots were lost in action in the Viet Nam Theater.

ORISKANY was relieved on station in the South China Sea on November 26th and proceeded for a two day stop-over at Subic Bay. Steaming from Subic on November 30th, the Big "O" headed for Pearl Harbor and San Diego, finishing the most successful deployment in carrier aviation history.

CHRONOLOGY - - 3 - 3 - 3

ORISKANY was deployed nine months, including six-and-a-half months of combat engagement in Viet Nam waters. The ship steamed more than 100,000 miles and delivered 8,473 tons of ordnance on communist targets in Viet Nam.

USS ORISKANY (CVA-34)

1965 FAR EAST DEPLOYMENT

STATISTICAL BOX SCORE

TOTAL COMBAT SORTIES - 12,070

ORDNANCE DROPPED - 8,473 tons

20mm AMMUNITION EXPENDED - 513,000 rounds

COMBAT CENTURIONS (Pilots with more than 100 missions) - 59

DAYS DEPLOYED - 256

DAYS AT SEA - 210

MILES STEAMED - More than 100,000

TOTAL UNREPS FROM 5 APRIL to 26 NOVEMBER - 214

TONS OF ORDNANCE AND AMMUNITION UNREPPED - 9,445 tons

TONS OF STORES UNREPPED - 1,730 tons

GALLONS BLACK OIL CONSUMED - 17,000,000

GALLONS AVIATION FUEL CONSUMED - 13,000,000

AWARDS

	<u>AWARDED</u>	<u>PENDING APPROVAL</u>
NAVY CROSS MEDAL		1
SILVER STAR MEDAL	3	2
DISTINGUISHED FLYING CROSS	28	28
NAVY COMMENDATION MEDAL	30	90
PURPLE HEART MEDAL	3	4
AIR MEDALS	401	528

TRIBUTES TO ORISKANY

When ORISKANY was relieved on station in the South China Sea these congratulatory messages were received -

From General W. C. Westmoreland
Commander Military Assistance Command, Viet Nam

"The proud record of achievements by the USS ORISKANY during its recently completed tour of operations is highly commendable. On this occasion of your departure from station, I extend my heartiest congratulations to you, to the valiant aircrews and to all the ship's company and attached personnel who worked so diligently in support of your operations. The ORISKANY truly has made an outstanding contribution in this conflict, serving in the finest Navy tradition."

Commander U. S. Seventh Fleet

"Oriskany departure from the front lines is viewed with reluctance, tempered with the knowledge that your reunion with your families is hard-earned and well deserved. Your shipmates who do not return represent a price that free men will pay to retain their freedom, and we and our posterity can do no less than remember them with continuing gratitude. It must be a source of great pride to you, as it is to me, to realize that the United States Navy is the finest the world has ever seen and that ORISKANY has demonstrated her right to a place in the foremost ranks of that Navy. Well done and Godspeed."

Commander Carrier Division NINE

"Every man in ORISKANY and Carrier Air Wing 16 can be proud of the magnificent performance of your outstanding fighting team during the past seven months of operations in the South China Sea. You have responded in the finest fashion to the many challenges the enemy has thrown to you. You have cheerfully and capably carried out all the tasks levied upon you by higher commands and have fully earned the right to be called the old reliables."

"I look back with pleasure and satisfaction upon the many close personal and professional relationships that developed between my staff and the ship and air wing while ORISKANY was my flagship. We share your regret that not all your shipmates are returning with you."

"Our wishes to you for a pleasant voyage home and a joyous return to your families are from the heart. Well done and Godspeed."

Commander Yankee Team Search and Rescue Control Unit

"As close to the scene observer wish to express admiration on part of this air-surface team for high professionalism and airmanship of ORISKANY air group."

"Our particular esteem for the (Skyraider) aircraft crews with whom we worked so closely on a daily basis and during fast-breaking SAR incidents. The cool heads, fearless and rapid actions of these pilots despite the stresses and strains of enemy fire and arduous hours of flying made a most favorable impression here."

"Although your coming respite well earned, you will be missed."