

1966

CVA34/5750  
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Ser: 008

9 MAY 1967

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ASSTANT REPORT (Unclassified upon removal of enclosure)

From: Commanding Officer, USS ORISKANY (CVA 34)  
To: Chief of Naval Operations (OP-0545G).

Subj: OPNAV Report 5750-1; submission of

Ref: (a) OPNAVINST 5750.12

Encl: (1) OPNAV Report 5750-1, 1966 Command History w/annexes (A-G)

1. The enclosed report covers the activities of USS ORISKANY from 1 January to 31 December 1966 and is submitted in accordance with reference (a).

2. This report is submitted in two parts. Part One is the basic section consisting of three sub-sections; I. Basic Narrative, II. Chronology, and III. Lessons Learned, Conclusions and Recommendations. Part Two is the Documentary Annexes consisting of:

(A) 1966 WESTPAC Cruise Report and Supplements

(B) Air Intelligence Cruise Report for 1966

(C) CW-16 1966 Cruise Report

TO OP-09092  
20 SEP 67

(D) 1966 Public Affairs Office Releases

(E) 1966 WESTPAC Cruise Daily Statistical Summaries (OPREP-5'S) - TO OP-09092

(F) Roster of Officers - 1 December 1966

(G) Cruise Book for 1966

E. D. HOLDER

Copy to:  
OP-09B9  
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COMNAVAIRPAC

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PART ONE

- I. Basic Narrative
- II. Chronology of Important Events in 1966
- III. Lessons Learned, Conclusions, and Recommendations

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I

BASIC NARRATIVE

1. Command Organization and Relations.

a. Captain B. J. CONNOLLY III was relieved by Captain J. H. IARROBINO as Commanding Officer on 11 March 1966, aboard ORISKANY at NAS North Island, California.

b. CVW-16 was assigned to ORISKANY for the 1966 WESTPAC Cruise. CVW-16 embarked aboard ORISKANY from 24 March to 24 April 1966 and again from 18 May to 16 November 1966.

c. COMCARDIV SEVEN, RADM D. C. RICHARDSON, embarked aboard ORISKANY in Yokosuka, Japan on 20 June 1966 and disembarked on 1 August 1966. COMCARDIV NINE, RADM W. L. CURTIS, was embarked aboard ORISKANY from 4 October to 30 October 1966.

d. ORISKANY's home port was changed from San Diego to Alameda on 21 November 1966.

2. Operations.

a. After a period of restricted availability at NAS North Island from 3 January until 28 February 1966, ORISKANY conducted Refresher Training with the Fleet Training Group, San Diego.

b. SECNAV cruises were conducted on 23 March to 27 March 1966 and 24 April to 29 April 1966, with many dignitaries aboard.

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c. ORISKANY's Operational Readiness Evaluation and STRIKEK (code name Gray Ghost) were conducted off the coast of Southern California during 15-22 April 1966. These exercises were well conducted and realistically orientated toward Special Operations in WESTPAC.

d. A Dependents Day cruise was conducted for ORISKANY dependents and selected guests during the daylight hours on 30 April 1966. Tours of the ship, departmental displays arranged on the hanger deck, and an air show by CVW-16 Aircraft entertained and educated embarked guests.

e. ORISKANY departed San Diego on 26 May enroute to her second WESTPAC cruise involving Special Operations off the coast of Viet Nam. ORISKANY arrived at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, on 1 June for an Operational Readiness Inspection which was conducted by COMFAIRHAWAII. ORISKANY departed Hawaii on 5 June 1966, chopped to Seventh Fleet and assumed CTG 77.6 on 12 June and arrived at Yokosuka, Japan on 14 June 1966. ORISKANY departed Yokosuka on 20 June and proceeded south to Subic Bay, Philippine Islands. Checkertail Exercises (attempted penetration of TAIWANESE Air Defense) were conducted enroute. ORISKANY departed Subic Bay on 27 June and arrived off the coast of South Vietnam on 30 June 1966, to commence her first on-the-line period.

f. The Chronology of Important Events presents the details of ORISKANY's five months on Special Operations in the Viet Nam Theater.

g. While enroute to Hong Kong on 16 September 1966, ORISKANY answered the distress call of the SS August Moon (British registry) which was aground on the Pratas Island reef. Three helicopters from the KLE

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were launched at first light to assist the stricken ship. High seas in the wake of Typhoon Elsie continually struck the August Moon and necessitated removal of the entire 44 man crew by helo to the Pratas island Air Station or the ORISKANY. Additional remarks concerning these rescue operations are contained in the ORISKANY Cruise Report, the Air Intelligence Cruise Report, and the enclosed 25 September 1966 press release.

h. At 0728 local, 26 October 1966, fire started in a magazine on the main deck, starboard side. All hands responded to the emergency and engaged in the fire fighting and rescue operations until the fire was brought under control at 1035 local. Smoke and heat from the fire resulted in the deaths of 44 officers and men. Fire damage put an end to combat operations and caused an early return to California, where more complete repairs could be made. Enroute, the ship stopped in Subic Bay and underwent emergency repairs between 28 October and 2 November.

i. On 6 November, ORISKANY and accompanying escorts conducted memorial services for the officers and men that died in the 26 October fire. In this impressive, time honored ceremony, the body of LCDR OMAR RAY FORD, USN was committed to the deep.

j. ORISKANY returned to San Diego on 16 November 1966.

k. ORISKANY entered Hunters Point, San Francisco Naval Shipyard on 23 November 1966, to undergo a period of restricted availability for extensive maintenance and fire damage repair.

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3. Special Topics. Discussions on special topics such as Operational Statistics, Summary of Intelligence Operations, Communications, Medical and Dental Activities, Records, Visits, etc, are contained in the appropriate sections of the attached annexes.

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II

CHRONOLOGY OF IMPORTANT EVENTS IN 1966

1. 3 January - 28 February - ORISKANY underwent minor overhaul and Restricted Availability (RAV), under the supervision of INDMAN San Diego at NAS North Island.
2. 11 February - The Navy Unit Commendation was awarded for achievements during the 1965 WESTPAC Cruise.
3. 1-4 March - Underway with Fleet Training Group for refresher training.
4. 7-10 March - Underway with Fleet Training Group for refresher training.
5. 11 March - Change of Command Ceremony was held on the flight deck, with Captain J. H. IAROBINO relieving Captain B. J. CONNOLLY III.
6. 18-20 March - A SECNAV Cruise was held, with various prominent civilians attending a three day orientation.
7. 24 March - 1 April - Underway off the California Coast for air operations and underway training, with Attack Carrier Air Wing SIXTEEN deployed aboard ORISKANY for the first time in 1966.
8. 4-12 April - Underway for air operations and the Weapons Training Exercise (WEPTRAEX).
9. 15-22 April - The First Fleet Strike Exercise (STRIKEX), and Operational Readiness Evaluation (ORE), code name Gray Ghost, were conducted.
10. 24 April - Air Wing SIXTEEN departed ORISKANY for Lemoore NAS.
11. 25-28 April - Four days of carrier qualifications for various west coast squadrons were conducted.

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12. 26-29 April - The second SECRNAV Cruise was conducted.
13. 30 April - The annual Dependant's Day Cruise was held for families and friends, with an air show presented by Air Wing SIXTEEN as the highlight.
14. 19 May - Air Wing SIXTEEN returned to ORISKANY to make final preparations for the WESTPAC deployment.
15. 26 May - ORISKANY, with CVW-16 aboard, departed San Diego on her eighth WESTPAC deployment and second to the Viet Nam Special Operations (SPECOPS) theater.
16. 1-5 June - The Operational Readiness Inspection (ORI) was conducted near Hawaii.
17. 6 June - Pearl Harbor was left behind, as the ship sailed for Japan.
18. 12 June - Operational Commander was changed from Commander First Fleet to Commander Seventh Fleet.
19. 14-20 June - Inport Yokosuka, Japan, for rest, relaxation, and final preparations for Special Operations.
20. 15 June - Nuns and children from the "Oriskany Home", a Catholic run orphanage for Japanese children financed by the men of ORISKANY, were treated to a tour of the ship. The children presented a musical show, and the Home was presented a check for \$1,000 by Captain IARROBINO.
21. 21-25 June - While enroute to Subic Bay, Philippine Islands, exercise penetrations of the Taiwanese Air Defense (exercise code name CHECKER-TAIL) were flown.

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22. 26 June - Inport Subic Bay, Republic of the Philippines.
23. 27-30 June - Enroute Dixie Station.
24. 30 June - Special Operations (SPECOPS) on Dixie Station began.
25. 8 July - ORISKANY moved north to YANKEE Station, continuing her first on-the-line period.
26. 13-14 July - The Honorable Paul H. Nitze, Secretary of the Navy, visited ORISKANY.
27. 16-17 July - Vice Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral Horatio M. Rivero, paid ORISKANY a visit.
28. 16 July - LTJG Adams, of VF-162, was shot down and rescued in North Viet Nam, thus becoming the first pilot in the war to be shot down and rescued twice. During ORISKANY's 1965 cruise, LTJG Adams was the first jet pilot to survive after being shot down by an enemy surface-to-air missile.
29. 30 July - 3 August - Inport Subic Bay, Republic of the Philippines, for upkeep, rest, and relaxation.
30. 4 August - 8 September - YANKEE Station Special Operations continued.
31. 11-14 August - Noted television and radio personality, Arthur Godfrey visited ORISKANY as part of "Operation Handshake".
32. 18 August - Noted war correspondent Robert Sheerod visited ORISKANY to obtain material for a feature story for LIFE Magazine.
33. 19 August - Retired Generals Sanagi and Masumoto of Japan, visited ORISKANY on a fact-finding tour.
34. 6 September - ORISKANY set an ammunition underway replenishment record of 435.5 short tons per hour with USS MT. KATMAI (AE 16).

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35. 9-14 September - Inport Subic Bay, Republic of the Philippines, for upkeep, rest, and recreation.
36. 15 September - ORISKANY conducted Crossdeck Operations with British carrier, H.M.S. VICTORIOUS, while enroute to Hong Kong.
37. 16 September - ORISKANY helos rescued 44 crew members from the British freighter, SS AUGUST MOON, aground on Pratas Reef, 175 miles southeast of Hong Kong.
38. 17-22 September - Inport Hong Kong.
39. 23 September - 26 October - Special Operations were conducted on YANKEE Station.
40. 1 October - LTJG James R. Walsh of HC-1 Detachment G made the 6,000th helicopter landing on ORISKANY.
41. 9 October - Commander Richard M. Bellinger of Fighter Squadron 162 shot down an enemy MIG in air combat. Three months earlier, CDR Bellinger had been forced to eject after having been attacked by enemy MIGs. CDR Bellinger received the Silver Star Medal from the Secretary of Defense, Robert S. MacNamara.
42. 12 October - A group of high ranking officials, headed by Secretary of Defense, Robert S. MacNamara, visited the ship as part of their tour of Southeast Asia. Also present were: Arthur Sylvester, Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs; General Earle G. Wheeler, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff; Admiral U. S. G. Sharp, Commander-in-Chief, Pacific.

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43. 21 October - Movie and television personality, John Gavin, visited the ship.
44. October 26th - Fire ravaged ORISKANY, taking the lives of 44 officers and enlisted men. Broad coverage was given by all major news media.
45. 28 October - 2 November - Inport Subic Bay, Republic of the Philippines.
46. 3-15 November - ORISKANY departed Subic Bay, in transit to CONUS.
47. 6 November - 125 Miles east northeast of Iwo Jima, memorial services for ORISKANY's 44 departed shipmates were held, and the body of LCDR Omar R. Ford was committed to the deep.
48. 8 November - Commander First Fleet became ORISKANY's Operational Commander.
49. 16 November - ORISKANY entered San Diego, and disembarked Air Wing 16 after a 5½ month deployment to WESTPAC.
50. 21 November - ORISKANY departed San Diego for San Francisco Bay Naval Shipyard, Hunters Point.
51. 22 November - Arrived San Francisco, California
52. 23 November - 31 December - Undergoing Restricted Availability (RAV) at San Francisco Bay Naval Shipyard, Hunters Point. COMNAVAIREPAC became ORISKANY's Operational Commander.

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III

LESSONS LEARNED, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Lessons learned, conclusions, and recommendations of a general nature have been included herein; more detailed discussions are contained in the annexes.

2. Lessons Learned.

a. Although it has been generally recognized that the concept of level readiness for pilots is very difficult to maintain under combat conditions, the same understanding has not been applied to enlisted personnel. Turnover rates for enlisted are still high, and the effect on maintenance is apparent. Frequently, key personnel are detached prior to the arrival of a qualified relief. Often replacement personnel have little or no experience in their technical speciality and in many instances insufficient number of personnel in critical rates/ratings are assigned. While there appears to be no ready solution to this problem in the near future, a solution is necessary if the pace of present operations is to be sustained.

b. Wood planking is not completely satisfactory during large scale CVA flight operations in the tropics. The Yokosuka and Subic installations of flight deck plank sealant failed to adhere properly. During rain storms, water ran down between boards, diluted the latex underlay, and flooded many O2 level compartments in Bravo section of the ship.

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c. Mail continued to be a problem. ORISKANY served as "Yankee Team" and "Market Time" mail carrier during most of the time on station and served as a terminal post office for both incoming and outgoing mail for approximately 25 ships. The 27C Class carrier does not have adequate storage for the tremendous amount of mail received for this large number of ships.

d. Exchange with other CVA's via CROSSTELL was the most valuable source of weather information. However, this system broke down several times due to communication problems.

### 3. Conclusions and Recommendations.

a. The Positive Identification Radar Advisory Zone (PIRAZ) concept has proven to be a definite asset on Yankee Station. However, a single source of information for IFF code assignments is not available, and it is sometimes difficult to determine the proper IFF codes for special flights. It is recommended that this information be consolidated and promulgated by a single source.

b. The use of an incinerator for destruction of classified matter aboard an aircraft carrier presents a serious problem. Incinerator usage was restricted by flight operations, fueling, ordnance handling, and when used created a serious dirt problem. It is recommended that a mechanical shredder, or mulcher/masticator, for processing the equivalent of 100 to 300 burn bags per day be provided on all CVA's.

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c. Charts which cover the water off Viet Nam are becoming increasingly cluttered with reported reefs, pinnacles, and shoals labeled "PA" and "PD". From time to time COMSEVENTHFLT has had several of these areas checked with negative results. It is recommended that a survey vessel be assigned to investigate every reef, pinnacle, and shoal area reported to exist in the waters adjacent to Vietnam, and definitely prove or disprove their presence.

d. The AN/SMQ-6 Weather Mapping Satellite proved to be very valuable. its early installation on all CVA's is recommended.

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**PART TWO**

**DOCUMENTARY ANNEXES**

- (A) 1966 WESTPAC Cruise Report and Supplements.
- (B) Air Intelligence Cruise Report for 1966.
- (C) CVW-16 1966 Cruise Report.
- (D) 1966 Public Affairs Office Releases.
- (E) 1966 WESTPAC Cruise Daily Statistical Summaries; OPREP-5'S.
- (F) Roster of Officers - 1 December 1966.
- (G) Cruise Book for 1966.

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1966 WESTPAC CRUISE REPORT SUPPLEMENTS

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ANNEX (A)

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ENCLOSURE (1)  
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1966 AWARDS AND CITATIONS

	<u>APPROVED</u>	<u>REQUESTED*</u>
Silver Star	3	4
Legion of Merit	2	3
Distinguished Flying Cross	39	47
Navy and Marine Corps Medal	19	16
Bronze Star	6	7
Air Medal	554	690
Navy Commendation Medal	154	160
Purple Heart	4	11
Secretary of the Navy Commendation for Achievement	38	35
CINCPACFLT Letters of Commendation	57	90
Seventh Fleet Letters of Commendation	64	45

The ORISKANY and AIRWING 16 were awarded the Navy Unit Commendation for Achievements during the 1966 WESTPAC Cruise.

\*Includes those not approved and those not yet acted upon.

ANNEX A

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STATUS OF CVM-16 PERSONNEL DOWNED IN 1966

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SOUTHERN EAST ASIA OPERATIONS

<u>DATE</u>	<u>UNIT</u>	<u>RANK/RATE</u>	<u>FILE NO.</u>	<u>OFFICIAL STAT</u>
12 Jul 66	VF-162	LTJG ADAMS, Robert F.	677068	Recovered
14 Jul 66	VF-162	CDR BELLINGER, Richard M.	513408	Recovered
19 Jul 66	VF-162	LTJG DENNISON, Terry A.	625395	POW
23 Jul 66	VA-163	CDR FOSTER, Wynn F.	522092	Recovered
28 Jul 66	VA-163	ENS MCSWAIN, George P., Jr.	697713	POW
7 Aug 66	VA-152	LT FRIER, Charles L.	659036	KIA
11 Aug 66	VF-111	LTJG BALISTERS, Cody A.	678187	Recovered
13 Aug 66	VF-111	LCDR LEVY, Norman S.	602901	Recovered
18 Aug 66	VF-162	LCDR VERICH, Denetrio A.	582583	Recovered
28 Aug 66	VA-152	CDR SMITH, Gordon H.	296773	Recovered
31 Aug 66	VFP-63	LCDR TUCKER, Thomas A.	588508	Recovered
5 Sep 66	VF-111	CAPT ABBOTT, Wilfred K., USAF	3081739	MIA
6 Oct 66	VF-162	LT LEACH, Richard D.	622759	Recovered
12 Oct 66	VA-164	LT ELKINS, Frank C.	658100	MIA
14 Oct 66	VA-152	ENS THOMAS, Darwin J.	697881	MIA
22 Aug 66	VF-111	LTJG MEADOWS, Harding J., III	673934	Recovered
25 Aug 66	VA-164	LTJG BULLARD, William H.	677085	KIA
25 Aug 66	VA-152	LTJG BEENE, James A.	674264	Recovered
27 Aug 66	VA-164	ENS WOOD, Barry T.	694675	Recovered
27 Aug 66	VA-163	LTJG SCHROEDER, John F.	677275	Recovered
5 Oct 66	VA-152	LTJG BEENE, James A.	674264	MIA
8 Oct 66	VA-152	LTJG FELDHAUS, John A.	632728	MIA
23 Oct 66	VA-163	CDR CALDWELL, Roud H.	508130	Recovered

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AIR DEPARTMENT

1. ORISKANY underwent a RAV period for the first two months of 1966 during which the catapults received considerable attention. A two stage opening chamber catapult (service change 232) was installed and tested. This change enabled launching of heavy weight A4 Aircraft with a lower wind requirement. Much improvement was gained in operating capabilities in Southeast Asia Operations with this change.
2. Prior to deployment, a total of 5,086 catapult shots were logged with no significant failures, and a total of 3,972 aircraft were recovered. No significant problems occurred before ORISKANY left CONUS.

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## COMMUNICATIONS DEPARTMENT

1. From January to April, CRISKANY Communications Guard was maintained by the Communications Center at NAS North Island. CRISKANY communications spaces and equipment underwent extensive modification during this period.
2. CRISKANY commenced maintaining her own guard in April and carried out normal operations in EASTPAC. Considerable difficulty was experienced with facilities on board which were to plague CRISKANY until well into the deployment to WESTPAC. CR Division's personnel were brought up to strength during this period including augmenting personnel. CS Division's personnel were below allowance throughout the entire deployment.
3. During May 1966, transiting to WESTPAC, CRISKANY's communications were terminated with Honolulu, Japan, and eventually San Miguel in the Republic of the Philippines.
4. From June 1966 to November 1966, commencing with operations in support of the Vietnam conflict, the communications traffic volume reached a crescendo which did not abate until departure from WESTPAC. Halfway through the deployment period equipment difficulties were resolved and traffic handling was accomplished in a normal fashion.
5. During November 1966 and December 1966 CRISKANY's Communications Guard was assumed by shore stations upon return to EASTPAC. All teletype and cryptosystem equipments were removed for extensive overhaul during the extensive repair period which commenced on 22 November 1966.

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## ENGINEERING DEPARTMENT

### 1. Restricted Availability

a. ORISKANY was assigned a Restricted Availability from 3 January to 28 February with Industrial Management, San Diego. The Post Deployment RAV Program is effective and is to be considered highly beneficial.

b. The following major alterations were performed:

- (1) November Communications
- (2) Gun Pod Stowage
- (3) Multiple Bomb Rack Stowage
- (4) Two Digit Telephone System
- (5) Installed Intermediate Level Maint Shops
- (6) ADP Installation

### 2. Underway Training Period

a. From 1 March - 10 March ORISKANY underwent Refresher Training with the Fleet Training Group.

b. During the latter phase of the RAV, ORISKANY was given a training readiness evaluation and was found to be only marginally ready to proceed with interim refresher training. As a result it was impossible for ORISKANY to derive maximum benefits from the training given at sea. Insufficient time was allowed to prepare for Refresher Training as considerable contractor work was in progress during our short ready for sea period. It is recommended that underway training be delayed until the ship has completed the RFS period and has ample opportunity to shake herself down by scheduled ISK.

c. During the period 24 March - 29 April the Engineering Department was able to meet all commitments while ORISKANY was involved in CARQUALS and other operations.

### 3. Post Deployment RAV.

a. On 22 November ORISKANY began a restricted availability at Hunters Point Division, San Francisco Bay Naval Shipyard. ORISKANY was assigned to Hunters Point because of the major repairs to the fire damaged area.

b. Major alterations expected to be accomplished during this RAV are as follows:

- (1) Probe Fueling.
- (2) Provide sliding padeyes.
- (3) Installation of spot air conditioners in living quarters.
- (4) Flight Deck coaming.
- (5) Air Conditioning for steam catapult control rooms.
- (6) Magazine sprinkling system in bomb assembly area.
- (7) Relocate PLAT camera.
- (8) Install enrup-clad hickory plywood parallel to catapult.
- (9) Replace AN/ULQ-6 with AN/ULQ-6B
- (10) Install AN/SIA-10 Blenker-Video Mixer Group.
- (11) Install early warning ECM receiver.
- (12) Install AN/SLR-12 ECM Receiving Set.
- (13) Install AN/SPA-63 ECK kit.
- (14) Install SAT COM AN/SSC-3 terminal.

c. As of 31 December all approved repair work and alterations are on schedule.