

U. S. S. PLATTE (AO-24)
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From: Commanding Officer
To: Chief of Naval Operations (OP-09B9)

Subj: USS PLATTE History of 1966

Ref: (a) OPNAV INST 5750.12

Encl: (1) Chronology of Events
(2) Basic Narrative
(3) Conclusions
(4) Seven Documentary Annexes

1. In accordance with reference (a), enclosures (1) through (4) constitute the history of this command for the calendar year 1966 and are forwarded herewith.


Wm. L. ADAMS

Copy to:
CINCPACFLT

CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS IN 1966

- 5 February: Departed Long Beach, California for deployment to Western Pacific and Southeast Asia.
- 22 February: Changed to operational control of Commander, U. S. Seventh Fleet.
- 1 March: Arrived at U. S. Naval Station, Subic Bay, Republic of the Philippines.
- 11 March: Commander, U. S. Seventh Fleet, came aboard by transfer chair and manila high-line for informal visit.
- 9 April: Captain William L. Adams relieved Captain Walter J. Millar as Commanding Officer at sea.
- 17 April: Arrived in Kaoshiung to load fuel and for informal visit.
- 30 May: Arrived in Hong Kong for informal visit and rest and recreation for crew.
- 28 July: Crossed equator at Longitude 106° 19' E and crew was duly initiated into the Solemn Mysteries of the Ancient Order of the Deep.
- 13 August: Arrived in Hong Kong for informal visit and rest and recreation for crew.
- 19 September: Departed Yokosuka, Japan, for return to U. S.
- 22 September: Changed to operational control of Commander, U. S. First Fleet.
- 2 October: Arrived in Long Beach, California, for leave and upkeep period.
- 7 December: Arrived at Todd Shipyard, San Pedro, California for overhaul.

Enclosure (1)

Basic Narrative

Command Organization and Relations

USS PLATTE was commanded by Captain Walter J. Millar, United States Naval Reserve, from 8 January 1965 until his relief by Captain Adams in April of 1966. On 9 April 1966 veteran aviator Captain William L. Adams, United States Navy, assumed command of PLATTE and served in her through the remainder of the year.

PLATTE's homeport is San Pedro, California. Her administrative commander wears two hats as Commander Service Group ONE and Commander, Service Squadron ONE, and his headquarters are in San Diego. Commander, Service Forces Pacific, is PLATTE's type commander and is headquartered in Pearl Harbor, Hawaii.

As a fleet oiler, PLATTE is built for and assigned the continuing mission of transporting and transferring to Navy ships at sea Navy Special Fuel Oil (known in the fleet as NSFO or "black oil"), JP-5 aviation jet fuel (a close equivalent to high grade diesel fuel), and high octane aviation gasoline. PLATTE also carries supplies of bottled gases and drums of lubricating oil and automotive gasoline which may be drawn upon by units of the fleet as they come alongside for refueling. While operating in the Western Pacific PLATTE is also assigned the task of carrying freight, mail and personnel to ships operating on stations removed from the land-based supporting facilities.

Operations

After completing shipyard repairs and sea trials in January, PLATTE loaded her tanks in San Pedro, California, and on 5 February departed from Long Beach for the Western Pacific.

On 8 February while enroute to Hawaii the eight ships of Destroyer Squadron (DESRON) 12 came alongside to port and starboard and topped off their tanks with NSFO. On Friday afternoon, 11 February, PLATTE entered the long channel into Pearl Harbor to tie up at Pier KILO. The following Monday morning she slipped out to sea bound for another rendezvous with DESRON 12 on her way to the Philippines.

PLATTE reported to the operational control of Commander U. S. SEVENTH Fleet on 22 February, and two days later replenished DESRON 12, less the DYESS (DD-880). Upon completion PLATTE turned her head west by southwest toward the northern tip of Luzon. Landfall was made on the evening of 27 February, and the ship tied up the next day at the fuel pier at U. S. Naval Station, Subic Bay, Republic of the Philippines. On February 29, after her tanks were full, PLATTE was ready to fulfill her commitments to the operating forces in and near Vietnamese waters.

On March 11 PLATTE left port and met OKLAHOMA CITY (CLG-5), a light guided missile cruiser and the flagship of the SEVENTH Fleet. While alongside, Admiral H. Hyland, Commander, U. S. SEVENTH Fleet rode the transfer chair via the manila high-line, making PLATTE's first personnel transfer at sea while operating with the SEVENTH Fleet in 1966. Upon completion of Admiral Hyland's informal visit, PLATTE headed due west for about a day and then came to a northwesterly course past Triton Island, a seldom-seen pile of sand sticking some ten feet out of the South China Sea.

Arriving at YANKEE station, south of the Chinese Communist Island of Hainan and the Tonkin Gulf, PLATTE shifted a large part of her load to SACRAMENTO (AOE-1) for consolidation on 13 March. During the course of the evolution, while YORKTOWN (CVS-10) was being fueled to port and SACRAMENTO to starboard, SACRAMENTO was fueling the escorting destroyers to her starboard, thus putting four ships abreast at twelve knots.

Having been pumped nearly dry by the two heavies, PLATTE retraced her route to Subic for reloading on 16 March. On 23 March PLATTE again arrived near YANKEE station to replenish the carrier group, this time ENTERPRISE (CVAN-65) and her two destroyers. A change in roles found PLATTE consolidating from her sister ship CHEMUNG (AO-30). And, this time, PLATTE continued in toward the coast of Viet-Nam to transit the Market-Time areas. These coastal surveillance and gunfire support areas constituted the longest days for PLATTE, for the first minesweeper usually came alongside before sunrise, and the last destroyer escort or cruiser often did not pull away until well after midnight.

By the time PLATTE had finally exhausted her fuel, thirty-seven ships had been replenished during the five consecutive days ending 28 March.

Captain Adams reported aboard 31 March when PLATTE returned to Subic Bay, and nine days later relieved Captain Millar at sea south of DIXIE station, east of the southern tip of Viet-Nam and the Mekong Delta.

The ninth of April, Saturday, was a busy day as six ships came alongside, one at a time, for fuel, mail, supplies and movies. For the relieving ceremony the crew was mustered at 1550. The two Captains read their orders at 1555, and at 1600, as the new commanding officer headed toward the bridge, the word was passed to "Set the Replenishment Detail". The next morning Captain Millar transferred to KITTY HAWK (CVA-63) by helicopter.

At the end of six days on station and twenty-three ships alongside, PLATTE turned north with salt water in her tanks for ballast. On 17 April she carefully crept into the confined waters of Kaoshiung Harbor, Taiwan.

Leaving Kaoshiung on 24 April, PLATTE passed through YANKEE station again on 27 April and finished replenishing another twenty-three ships, including the various picket and search and rescue ships in the Tonkin Gulf.

The routine was unbroken until 20 May when, while evading Typhoon IRMA enroute to Subic Bay, PLATTE found herself in an unusual replenishment evolution with CHIPOLA (AO-63) and CHEMUNG (AO-30). Having been kept at sea by IRMA, CHIPOLA had had no opportunity to load fuel. And her scheduled commitments at YANKEE station precluded waiting for the weather to improve so that she could go into port. Since PLATTE and CHEMUNG each had partial loads of fuel to offer, and in answer to CHIPOLA's need, PLATTE went alongside to her port side and CHEMUNG went alongside to starboard. After steaming the three large oilers abreast at twelve knots for more than three hours, CHIPOLA turned toward Viet-Nam, her tanks full and her schedule intact.

PLATTE's next trip found her enroute to Hong Kong from YANKEE station and delayed for two days by Typhoon JUDY. But she steamed up the East Lama channel early Monday morning, 30 May. On Friday, 3 June, PLATTE took leave of Hong Kong. Arriving in Subic after a swing through the Tonkin Gulf and Market Time areas, PLATTE was notified that the crew had been awarded the second award for meritorious conduct ashore by the Servicemen's Guides Association of Hong Kong.

PLATTE's special project in Hong Kong is a young Chinese girl named Gigi Wong. Refugees from Communist China, Gigi and her family have been subjects of PLATTE's concern and support since 1960. In June of 1966, \$500.00 US was presented on behalf of the crew to Chaplain Frank H. KNIGHT, Jr., for Gigi's schooling, medical, and personal needs. Gigi came aboard PLATTE with her father and personally thanked every member of the crew she could find. Reverend KNIGHT advised PLATTE that the money donated would be sufficient to help Gigi for almost four years.

As a participant in OPERATION SCHOOLHOUSE during 1966 for the second consecutive year, PLATTE again donated sufficient funds for a year's tuition each to two young Filipino high school students. Both Rodolfo C. ALBIENIO, 13, of la Paz and Rodolfo L. EVANGELISTA, Jr., 15, of Camiling are reported to be performing above the average in their classes.

On the seventh trip out to and through station and on the morning of 17 July, PLATTE anchored for her only time in Vietnamese waters. Two ships, SUMNER COUNTY (LST-1148) and CAVALIER (APA-37), sent boats to the outer harbor at Danang where PLATTE awaited to deliver fleet freight and mail. Within two hours, PLATTE was again underway, steaming to meet commitments for three more days before returning to Subic Bay.

A variation of the usual schedule found PLATTE bound for equatorial waters near Singapore for a replenishment of FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT (CVA-42). Leaving Subic Bay almost a day early PLATTE chose to steam a dog-leg course to the equator where, on Thursday, 28 July she crossed zero degrees latitude. Suitable ceremony permitted almost three hundred men and officers, to be initiated into the "Solemn Mysteries of the Ancient Order of the Deep".

Friday found the crew nearly recovered from their arduous transformation from lowly pollywogs to esteemed shellbacks as FDR came alongside for her first replenishment since leaving the Atlantic.

The next five days run through DIXIE station and the southern Market Time areas completed PLATTE's tour of duty in Southeast Asia.

After five days in Hong Kong in the middle of August, PLATTE transited the Taiwan Straits and, while evading Typhoon ALICE, sailed around the southern end of Okinawa enroute to Japan for upkeep and yard repairs. Rounding Oshima island in the pre-dawn darkness of 25 August, PLATTE entered Tokyo Bay and tied up at berth 2 in Yokosuka, Japan. Again, PLATTE received the welcome word that the Servicemen's Guides Association of Hong Kong had deemed the crew's conduct worthy of the third award for meritorious conduct ashore.

On 7 September, PLATTE got underway to refuel CORAL SEA (CVA-43) and three destroyers, leaving behind all of her starboard side fuel hoses for CORAL SEA to use. CORAL SEA required the hose to load fuel over the end of her drydock from the yard oilers. Thus the replenishment of the CORAL SEA group on 8 September was accomplished entirely to PLATTE's port side.

Friday, 9 September was the last of 256 underway replenishments by PLATTE in 1966. LOFBERG (DD-759) was alongside seven times that year, but by being the last of a cruise for PLATTE, she deserves mention here.

PLATTE steamed out of Tokyo Bay Monday morning, 19 September, and, taking departure from Nojima Saki light which marks the entrance to Japan's largest port complex, came around to 076 degrees true on the first course of her three great circle legs home.

The reality and promise of being homeward bound was heightened by the change of operational control to Commander, U. S. FIRST Fleet on Thursday, 22 September. The crew enjoyed two Saturdays in a row as well as two days dated 24 September when PLATTE crossed the 180th meridian and sailed from east to west longitude.

On the 239th day after leaving, PLATTE eased into Long Beach Harbor and tied up at 1000 on Sunday morning, 2 October, starboard side to pier seven across from HAVEN (AH-12).

After a leave and upkeep period of thirty days, and after a multitude of conferences, inspections, delays and postponements, PLATTE shifted from Long Beach, to San Pedro where, on Wednesday, 7 December, she commenced her regular overhaul in Todd Shipyard, and where she remained for the remainder of 1966.

CONCLUSIONS

Commencing with PLATTE's departure from Long Beach 5 February, the shipfitters and electricians installed air conditioning units in each of the four crew's berthing compartments and in each of the officer's staterooms. As a result, on-the-job performance and morale went up and stayed up. Though a man might be on watch and working his replenishment station for twenty hours a day, he always had, and he knew that he had, a clean, cool bed for his rest. The consensus of the crew was that bunk time in 1966 was worth more than twice as much as in 1965.

At the same time, PLATTE's on-line encryption and decryption radio-teletype system became fully operational. Thus ship-to-ship exchanges of information in a matter of minutes instead of hours became standard procedure and greatly enhanced the ship's capability and flexibility in responding to the needs of the SEVENTH Fleet. Short notice changes in rendezvous, rigging, order of ships alongside and items to be supplied became the rule rather than the exception. As a result PLATTE was able to meet her commitments more accurately and better prepared. By the end of the cruise, the command had sent 970 encrypted messages, more than four times as many as in the previous deployment.

During her 1966 deployment to Southeast Asia PLATTE established a policy of replenishing all minesweepers to her port side. This policy permitted a smoother, more consistent, refueling operation, and after the first time alongside for the minesweepers, resulted in more rapid rigging and unrigging times. In the case of the ocean-going minesweepers (MSO's), PLATTE rigged a light duty manila highline at her station four to transfer freight and mail to the MSO's forward station concurrent with the refueling, cutting time alongside by almost a half.

To replenish the 256 ships alongside in the Western Pacific in 1966, PLATTE steamed more than 48,000 miles, pumped more than 34,000,000 gallons of fuel, and transferred over 500,000 pounds of freight, mail, medical supplies, personnel, food and ammunition. The crew took liberty in Hong Kong, Subic Bay, Kaoshiung, and Yokosuka.

Enclosure (3)