

U. S. S. PLATTE (AO-24)
C/O FLEET POST OFFICE
SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA

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OPNAV REPORT 5750-1

From: Commanding Officer, USS PLATTE (AO-24)
To: Chief of Naval Operations (OP-09B9)

Subj: USS PLATTE History of 1968

Ref: (a) OPNAV INST 5750.12A

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

1. In accordance with reference (a), enclosures (1) through (3) constitute the history of this command for the calendar year 1968 and are forwarded herewith.


William W. MCKENZIE, Jr.

Copy to:
CINCPACFLT

CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS IN 1968

- 1 January: Continued informal visit in Keelung, Taiwan for rest and recreation.
- 15 January: Arrived Hong Kong, B. C. C. for informal visit and rest recreation.
- 24 January: Enroute Sea of Japan to replenish the USS ENTERPRISE (CVA(N)-65) and Task Group, which are stationed off North Korea during the first stages of the USS PUEBLO (AGER-2) crisis.
- 31 January: Arrived Sasebo, Japan for upkeep period before return to CONUS.
- 5 February: Departed Sasebo, Japan for return to CONUS.
- 11 February: Changed to operational control of Commander, U. S. First Fleet.
- 16 February: Arrived Pearl Harbor, Hawaii for short visit before return to CONUS.
- 25 February: Arrived Long Beach, California, PLATTE's homeport, after a nine month deployment.
- 2 April: Arrived Bethlehem Steel Shipyard, San Pedro, California, for restricted availability upkeep.
- 14 June: Departed Bethlehem Steel Shipyard.
- 28 June: Captain William W. MCKENZIE, Jr., relieved Captain Harold F. SNOWDEN.
- 13 July: Arrived in San Diego, California for commencement of Refresher Training.
- 23 August: Departed Long Beach for deployment to Western Pacific.
- 5 September: Changed to operational control of Commander, U. S. Seventh Fleet and assigned to Commander, Task Group 73.5 to provide logistics to U. S. Forces off Vietnam.
- 12 September: Arrived at U. S. Naval Station, Subic Bay, Republic of the Philippines.
- 31 December: Upkeep in Subic Bay, Republic of the Philippines.

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BASIC NARRATIVE

Command Organization and Relations

USS PLATTE was commanded by Captain Harold F. SNOWDEN until relieved by Captain William W. MCKENZIE, Jr., on 28 June 1968 at Long Beach Naval Station. Captain MCKENZIE commanded PLATTE throughout the remainder of the year. PLATTE's homeport is Long Beach, California. Her Administrative Commander in U. S. First Fleet is Commander, Service Group ONE, also having the position of Commander, Service Squadron ONE, whose headquarters are in San Diego. Commander, Service Force Pacific, is PLATTE's type commander and is headquartered in Pearl Harbor, Hawaii.

As a Fleet Oiler, PLATTE was built for and is 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 while alongside for refueling. While operating in the Western Pacific PLATTE is also assigned to the task of carrying freight, ammunition, mail and personnel to ships operating on stations removed from landbased supporting facilities.

Operations

PLATTE started 1968 visiting Keelung, Taiwan, enjoying a short break from WESTPAC operations in Vietnam.

Having already served 5½ months in the U. S. Seventh Fleet, PLATTE was scheduled for only one more line trip to Vietnam which commenced on 3 January. A typical line trip commenced from Subic Bay, Republic of the Philippines, with a full load of fuel enroute to the southern tip of Vietnam. A swing through "Market Time" was composed of about 4-5 days steaming up the coast of South Vietnam refueling minesweepers, Coast Guard Cutters and gunfire support ships. PLATTE then steamed into the Gulf of Tonkin for 2-3 days to replenish the various units located there. These services were normally followed by consolidation of fuel to a larger oiler and back to Subic Bay to commence the whole cycle again. PLATTE averaged about 35 ships alongside during each line trip.

On 15 January PLATTE arrived in Hong Kong, B. C. C. for 5 days of rest and relaxation.

Returning to Subic, PLATTE readied herself for her long voyage home. On 24 January, with the outbreak of the Pueblo crisis, PLATTE raced to the Sea of Japan to become the first oiler on station. PLATTE replenished USS ENTERPRISE (CVA(N)-65) and her task group of destroyers while on station. Following four tense days of operating in the freezing dead of winter, PLATTE moored at Sasebo, Japan on 31 January. After a short 5-day upkeep period in Sasebo, PLATTE departed for Long Beach, California, via Pearl Harbor, Hawaii,

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arriving home on 25 February 1968. March was spent in leave and upkeep status at Long Beach Naval Station.

On 2 April 1968, PLATTE moved into Bethlehem Steel Shipyard for a ten week restricted availability period. Departing the shipyard on 14 June, PLATTE underwent independent steaming exercises in the Long Beach area.

On 28 June 1968, Captain William W. MCKENZIE, Jr., relieved Captain Harold F. SNOWDEN as Commanding Officer at a change of command ceremony on board PLATTE at Long Beach.

On 8 July, PLATTE got underway for a week of independent steaming exercises prior to two weeks refresher training in the Southern California operating area commencing 13 July 1968.

On 23 August PLATTE deployed to the Western Pacific. PLATTE reported to the operational control of Commander, U. S. Seventh Fleet on 5 September 1968 and was assigned to Commander, Task Group 73.5 for the remainder of the year.

On 12 September 1968 PLATTE arrived at U. S. Naval Station, Subic Bay, Republic of the Philippines for a quick load of fuel and provisions before commencing her first line trip on 15 September. PLATTE made seven such line trips to Vietnam from 15 September until the end of 1968.

PLATTE was scheduled for R&R in Hong Kong, B. C. C. on 24 November. While in transit to Hong Kong she became the primary surface unit for a Search and Rescue mission for a downed B-52 crewman for five days, lasting from 23 November to 27 November in the South China Sea. PLATTE was re-scheduled for a Hong Kong visit in January 1969.

On 30 September 1968, upon the decommissioning of the USS CIMARRON (AO-22), PLATTE received the honor of becoming the "Oldest Ship in the U. S. Navy" in active service. From this moment on, PLATTE was to be known as the "Fleet's First Lady".

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