

USS SAINT PAUL CA 73



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From: Commanding Officer, USS SAINT PAUL (CA-73)

To: Chief of Naval Operations (OP-291SH)

Subj: Command History for 1968; forwarding of

Ref: (a) OPNAVINST 5750.12
(b) COMCRUDESPEC Regulations
(c) COMSEVENTHFLTINST 5750.1

Encl: (1) USS SAINT PAUL (CA-73) Command History for 1968

1. In accordance with references (a), (b), and (c), enclosure (1) is forwarded.

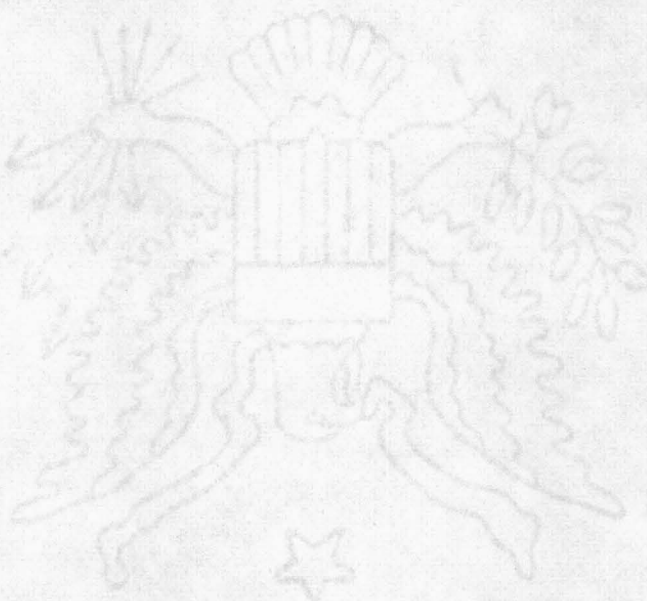
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USS SAINT PAUL (CA-73) COMMAND HISTORY FOR 1968

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1. Chronology of highlights

11 Jan	Awards ceremony on board.
13 Feb	Captain Ralph A. Hilson relieved Captain Harry F. Fischer as Commanding Officer of SAINT PAUL.
19-23 Feb	Shore bombardment requalification trials.
20 Mar	SAINT PAUL departed San Diego on third combat deployment to Vietnam.
24-26 Mar	Briefings by the Staff, Commander-in-Chief, U.S. PACIFIC Fleet, in Hawaii.
28 Mar	Arrived Subic Bay to take on ammunition and supplies.
12 April	On the gunline off North Vietnam.
17-27 April	Steamed south to Da Nang area to fire Naval gunfire support.
5 May	Departed Subic Bay after short upkeep period.
7-11 May	Arrived North Vietnam for Sea Dragon operations.
12 May-7 June	Departed Sea Dragon and headed south to DMZ.
1 June	Founding of Seafarers' Club.
5 June	Received congratulatory message from General Lam, Commander General of I Corps, Republic of Vietnam Army.
8-10 June	Arrived North Vietnam for Sea Dragon.
11 June	Departed Sea Dragon.
15-28 June	Arrived Yokosuka for R&R period.
2-31 July	Again off the DMZ, SAINT PAUL shelled enemy targets on call-fire missions on a round-the-clock basis.
31 July	Relieved by USS BOSTON.
2-18 Aug	Arrived Subic Bay for annual regunning period.

8 Aug	Captain Ralph A. Hilson presented the Legion of Merit.
9 Aug	Sixty Cub Scouts toured the ship.
16 Aug	Admiral Thomas H. Moorer, Chief of Naval Operations, visited the ship.
20 Aug	Arrived Hong Kong. Forced back out of harbor by approach of Typhoon Bess.
22-27 Aug	Back in Hong Kong harbor for R&R period.
24 Aug	SAINT PAUL hosted 65 Chinese boys and girls from local Catholic schools.
28 Aug	Arrived on gunline off the DMZ to fire Naval gunfire support.
11-16 Sept	Arrived Keelung, Taiwan, for R&R period.
16 Sept	Headed back to Tonkin Gulf.
29 Sept	After completion of conferences in harbor of Da Nang, SAINT PAUL headed back for the DMZ.
1 Oct	After holding turnover with USS NEW JERSEY (BB-62), SAINT PAUL departed the gunline enroute San Diego.
5-9 Oct	Arrived in Yokosuka for R&R period.
20 Oct	Arrived in San Diego.
25 Oct	Became flagship for Commander FIRST Fleet, Vice Admiral Bernard F. Roeder.
15-17 Nov	Visited San Francisco.
22 Nov	Awards ceremonies on board.
27 Nov	A precision dance group from Utah State University, the "Aggiettes," visited the ship.
2-9 Dec	Operation Beef Trust off San Clemente Island.
14 Dec	Christmas party for dependents of men deployed overseas hosted by SAINT PAUL.

23 Dec

Christmas party for SAINT PAUL's own dependents.

27 Dec

SAINT PAUL awarded the Navy Unit Commendation for exceptionally meritorious service during her last deployment off Vietnam. Captain Ralph A. Hilson received a Gold Star in lieu of a Second Legion of Merit at the same time.

2. Narrative. USS Saint Paul (CA-73), homeported in San Diego, California, began the year of 1968 under the command of Captain Harry F. Fischer, Jr., USN. On February 13 Captain Ralph A. Hilson, USN, relieved Captain Fischer as Commanding Officer of the Saint Paul.

The "Fighting Saint" served during 1968 as flagship for the following: Commander Cruiser-Destroyer Flotilla NINE, Rear Admiral John B. Davis, Jr.; Commander Cruiser-Destroyer Group, SEVENTH Fleet, Rear Admiral S.H. Moore; and Commander FIRST Fleet, Bernard F. Roeder.

Saint Paul began the year in port, berthed at the Naval Station, San Diego, as the flagship of Commander Cruiser-Destroyer Flotilla NINE.

On January 11, thirty-nine "fighting Saints" were awarded commendations and medals for meritorious service during the cruiser's Vietnam deployment of 1967. The ship's Commanding Officer, Captain Fischer, and its Executive Officer, Commander Norman L. Kaufman, both received Bronze Star Medals.

Following Saint Paul's period of refresher training, the ship held a formal change of command ceremony February 13 at pier 4 of the Naval Station, San Diego, during which Captain Ralph A. Hilson assumed command of Saint Paul.

From February 19 to 23, shore bombardment requalification trials were conducted off San Clemente Island in preparation for the heavy cruiser's approaching Vietnam deployment.

The "Fighting Saint" departed San Diego on March 20 for her third deployment to Vietnam and arrived on the gunline off North Vietnam on April 12, after a stop in Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, for briefings by the Staff, Commander-in-Chief, U.S. Pacific Fleet.

From April 12 to 16 Saint Paul fired upon targets in the area of Dong Hoi in the Southern Panhandle, then steamed south to the Da Nang area to fire Naval gunfire support from April 18 through 27.

Following a brief rest and upkeep period in Subic Bay, the ship was back on the gunline off North Vietnam. From May 8 to 12 Saint Paul played an important part in Sea Dragon operations, silencing North Vietnamese Army gun positions and sinking three 30-foot logistic craft, while damaging two 50-foot motorized tugs.

Leaving Sea Dragon on May 12, the "Fighting Saint" began blasting away at Vietnam's Demilitarized Zone in support of U.S. Marines ashore.

On June 1 twenty-seven crew members were initiated into the Seafarers' Club. The only requirement for membership -- 15 years of sea duty. Senior Seafarer was Chief Bosun Frank Alves, with almost 22 years at sea. The presentation of certificates took place on the ship's forecastle in Da Nang harbor. The membership in this unique organization totals 425 years of sea duty time. Among the members were Captain Hilson, Commanding Officer of Saint Paul, and Rear Admiral S.H. Moore, embarked in Saint Paul as Commander Cruiser Destroyer Group, SEVENTH Fleet.

Saint Paul continued firing on the DMZ until June 8, when she returned to North Vietnam for more Sea Dragon operations. On June

11 she was steaming for Yokosuka, Japan, for an upkeep and Rest and Relaxation period after having fired more than 26,591 rounds of five and eight inch ammunition. The number, achieved at the end of 49 days on the gunline, would later in the cruise be almost matched-- this time in only 29 days.


On June 5, a congratulatory message came from General Lam, Commander General of I Corps, Republic of Vietnam Army:

"Your true and accurate firing was a major factor in destroying the enemy. In one area in which Naval gunfire was employed, searching troops credited the Saint Paul with approximately 200 enemy killed. Please accept my thanks and congratulations for a job well done."

Saint Paul arrived in Yokosuka, Japan, on June 15 for a short upkeep and R&R period. While there Japanese orphans visited the ship for a party and tour. Saint Paul also challenged USS Mansfield in baseball and basketball games and a boxing smoker. After many hours of hard work and hard play, the sailors of the "Fighting Saint" headed back to Vietnam on June 28 and arrived off the DMZ on July 2.

While shelling enemy targets with call-fire and Harrassment and Interdiction missions on a round-the-clock basis for 29 days, Saint Paul fired in excess of 25,500 rounds, more than the ship had fired during her entire six-month cruise the year before.

On July 10 Saint Paul's guns were credited with five enemy killed in action and the destruction of enemy anti-aircraft sites, radar positions, and bunkers.



After 29 days at the DMZ, Saint Paul was relieved by the USS Boston (CA-69) on July 31 and headed for Subic Bay for her annual regunning period.

From August 2 to 18 Saint Paul underwent a regunning period in Subic Bay, receiving new barrels for her well-worn five and eight inch guns. During this period, Captain Ralph A. Hilson, Saint Paul's Commanding Officer, was presented the Legion of Merit for his duty as Current Operations Officer for the staff of Commander-in-Chief, U.S. Pacific Fleet, from July 14, 1966, to January 29, 1968.

While still in her regunning period, Saint Paul was visited by Admiral Thomas H. Moorer, Chief of Naval Operations. After a brief tour of the regunning project, Admiral Moorer told the crew over the ship's loudspeaker system: "I want to congratulate all of you for your outstanding Naval gunfire support."

Saint Paul left Subic Bay on August 18 and arrived two days later in Hong Kong, only to be forced out of the harbor that same day by Typhoon Bess, which was heading directly for Hong Kong. After two days of rolling around the South China Sea, the ship followed the storm back into the harbor and moored quietly for five days of sight-seeing and bargain hunting. Saint Paul was host to 65 Chinese boys and girls from local Catholic schools on a ship's tour August 24, and hosted ten more children the following day.

The "Fighting Saint" departed Hong Kong on August 27, laden with new suits and memories of a fine trip. The next day the ship settled back into her slot at Vietnam's DMZ and began pounding the

beach in support of U.S. Marines ashore. Saint Paul remained on the gunline until the first week in September.

On September 11 the heavy cruiser arrived in Keelung, Taiwan, for a five day R&R period. The crew spent their time sightseeing and looking for bargains. On September 16 the ship headed back to the Gulf of Tonkin.

After a replenishment of food and stores, and the completion of conferences in the harbor of Da Nang, on September 29 Saint Paul returned to the DMZ, with the battleship New Jersey (BB-62) not far behind. On October 1 Saint Paul departed the gunline, after holding turnover with New Jersey, who was soon firing her 16-inch guns at enemy targets.

During her seven month deployment, Saint Paul spent 102 days in combat operations. She fired a total of 64,055 rounds of Naval gunfire support for our troops ashore. During over 1,300 missions against enemy coastal defense sites, supply routes, and troop concentrations, the ship was credited with an estimated 380 enemy killed and 800 military structures and bunkers destroyed or damaged.

On October 5 the ship arrived in Yokosuka, Japan, for a four day R&R period. The "Fighting Saint" said goodbye to the Far East on October 9, when she began the 12-day journey across the Pacific, enroute for her home port of San Diego.

After a brief stop in Long Beach to offload ammunition, Saint Paul arrived in San Diego on October 20, after steaming more than

54,300 miles during the deployment. The "Fighting Saint" was welcomed home by thousands of friends, neighbors, and families cheering on the pier at the Naval Air Station, North Island. The Enlisted Men's Wives Club and San Diego's Lions Club were also on hand to make the reception a happy one.

Back in the United States again, the ship became the flagship for Vice Admiral Bernard F. Roeder, Commander First Fleet, on October 25. The ship paid a three day goodwill visit to San Francisco on November 14 to 17.

On November 22, eighty-two "Fighting Saints" were awarded medals and commendations for their parts in the heavy cruiser's successful deployment.

On November 27, a precision dance group from Utah State University, the Aggiettes, visited the ship. After performing their routine before the assembled crew, the young ladies received a tour and luncheon aboard ship.

Operating from his flagship, USS Saint Paul, Vice Admiral Bernard F. Roeder, Commander First Fleet, was in overall command of Operation Beef Trust, off San Clemente Island from December 2 to 9. Twenty-eight ships and 31 air squadrons took part in the exercises, designed to prepare participants for the conditions they will encounter in Southeast Asia.

During the Christmas season, Saint Paul, along with Commander Destroyer Division TWELVE, hosted a party for the dependents of men

deployed overseas during the holidays. A Christmas party for Saint Paul's own dependents was held on board December 23.

USS Saint Paul closed the year as it had begun it -- with an awards ceremony. On December 27 the heavy cruiser was awarded the Navy Unit Commendation for exceptionally meritorious service during her deployment off the coast of Vietnam. The presentation was made by Rear Admiral Sheldon H. Kinney, Commander Cruiser-Destroyer Flotilla ELEVEN. Accepting Navy Unit Commendation ribbons as representatives of the officers and crew of Saint Paul were Lieutenant Commander Fon C. McGinnis and Gunner's Mate Second Class Jay W. Helm. They were chosen as the officer and enlisted man with the longest service aboard the Saint Paul. Lieutenant Commander McGinnis had served aboard the ship for two years and six months, Gunner's Mate Helm for seven years and ten months.

During the same ceremony, Captain Ralph A. Hilson, Saint Paul's Commanding Officer, received a Gold Star in lieu of a Second Legion of Merit for exceptionally meritorious service during Saint Paul's combat deployment off Vietnam.