

USS STERETT (DLG-31)

FPO SAN FRANCISCO 96601

DLG31/DRS:jds

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From: Commanding Officer, USS STERETT (DLG-31)  
To: Director of Naval History (OP-09B9), Washington Navy  
Yard, Washington, D. C. 20390

Subj: Command History for 1968; submission of

Ref: (a) OPNAVINST 5750.12A

Encl: (1) Command History of USS STERETT (DLG-31) for period  
1 January 1968 to 31 December 1968

1. In accordance with reference (a), enclosure (1) is submitted.

*Claude L. Tyler*  
CLAUDE L. TYLER

Copy to:  
CINCPACFLT (w/encl)  
COMCRUDESPAC (w/encl)

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COMMAND HISTORY

of

USS STERETT (DLG 31)

from

1 JANUARY 1968 to 31 DECEMBER 1968

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CHRONOLOGY

- 8 JAN 68 Arrived at Puget Sound Naval Shipyard, Bremerton, Washington and commenced post shakedown availability (PSA).
- 29 MAR 68 Completed post shakedown availability at Puget Sound Naval Shipyard, Bremerton, Washington. Enroute to rendezvous off Cape Flattery with USS CAMDEN (AOE 2) to conduct technical and operational evaluations of Fast Automatic Shuttle Transfer (FAST) in conjunction with Chief of Naval Operations Project C/S 39
- 3 APR 68 Completed FAST exercises with USS CAMDEN (AOE 2). Returned to homeport of Long Beach, California.
- 23 APR 68 Departed Long Beach, California enroute to Southern California OP Areas to participate in FLEETEX 2-68 (EXERCISE BEAGLE LEASH) including terrier missile shoot. COMDESRON 3 embarked.
- 1 MAY 68 FLEETEX 2-68 (EXERCISE BEAGLE LEASH) completed. Returned to Long Beach, California.
- 7 MAY 68 Commenced Nuclear Weapons Acceptance Inspection (NWAI) of Terrier and ASROC Weapons.
- 8 MAY 68 Completed Nuclear Weapons Acceptance Inspection (NWAI). STERETT certified nuclear capable.
- 20 MAY 68 Departed Long Beach, California enroute Southern California OP areas to participate in COMTUEX 8-68. COMDESRON 3 embarked.
- 24 MAY 68 COMTUEX 8-68 completed. Returned to Long Beach, California
- 19 JUN 68 Departed Long Beach, California in company with USS MACKENZIE (DD 836) enroute to Yokosuka, Japan via Pearl Harbor, Hawaii and Midway Island. COMDESRON 3 embarked.
- 5 JUL 68 Arrived Yokosuka, Japan. Homeport officially changed to Yokosuka, Japan this date. Commenced preparations for first line period in Tonkin Gulf
- 31 JUL 68 Assumed Positive Identification Radar Advisory Zone (PIRAZ) duties. COMDESRON 3 embarked assumed duties as SAR Commander.
- 5 AUG 68 Relieved of PIRAZ duties. Assumed duties as South SAR and Strike Support Ship (SSS).
- 25 AUG 68 Conducted successful SAR effort. Pilot recovered and returned to parent carrier. See Annex B.
- 30 AUG 68 Conducted Successful SAR effort. Pilot recovered and returned to parent carrier. See Annex C.

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- 4 SEP 68 Relieved of duties as South SAR and SSS. Enroute to Yokosuka, Japan.
- 28 SEP 68 Conducted terrier missile firing at Buckner Bay, Okinawa. Enroute to Gulf of Tonkin.
- 7 OCT 68 Assumed PIRAZ duties. COMDESRON 3 shifted Flag to USS MAHAN (DLG 11) and assumed duties as SAR Commander.
- 19 OCT 68 Relieved of PIRAZ duties. Assumed duties as South SAR and SSS. COMDESRON 3 embarked.
- 29 OCT 68 Relieved of South SAR and SSS. Enroute to Hong Kong, British Crown Colony.
- 14 NOV 68 Assumed duties as South SAR and SSS. COMDESRON 3 assumed duties as SAR Commander.
- 29 NOV 68 Change of Command ceremonies. Captain C. L. TYLER relieved Captain E. A. CHRISTOFFERSON, Jr.
- 10 DEC 68 Relieved as South SAR and SSS. Enroute to Yokosuka, Japan for the holidays.

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COMMAND ORGANIZATION AND RELATIONS

COMMANDING OFFICERS

CAPT E. A. CHRISTOFFERSON, JR., USN            8 April 1967 - 29 November 1968  
CAPT C. L. TYLER, USN                            29 November 1968 -

As a unit of DESRON 31 in DESRON 3, STERETT was homeported in Long Beach, California until 19 June 1968. On that date STERETT departed Long Beach in company with USS GOERGE K. MACKENZIE (DD 836) enroute to the new homeport of Yokosuka, Japan where DESRON 3 would relieve DESRON 9 as the homeported squadron.

STERETT's mission is to operate offensively, independently, or with strike, anti-submarine, or amphibious forces against submarine, air and surface threats. In particular, in support of operations in the Tonkin Gulf, STERETT is prepared to and called upon to perform the following designed and contingent tasks:

1. Destroy aircraft at medium range, either alone or as part of a coordinated AAW system.
2. Destroy ship's at close and medium ranges
3. Control aircraft.
4. Provide accommodations for a unit commander and staff.
5. Perform search and rescue.
6. Collect hydrographic and oceanographic data.
7. Collect surveillance data as required.
8. Provide helicopter inflight refueling and on-deck support of coordinated helicopter operations.

The personnel complement of STERETT as of 31 December 1968 was as follows: Officers: 24 Enlisted: 365. Refer to Annex A for a muster roll and a roster of officers.

OPERATIONS OR ACTIVITIES

After completion of post shakedown availability at Puget Sound Naval Shipyard and the evaluations involved with CNO project C/S 39, STERETT returned to her homeport of Long Beach, California and began preparations for overseas movement. These preparations included numerous inspections and extensive off-ship training and schooling. On 23 April STERETT departed Long Beach enroute to the Southern California OP areas to participate in FLEETEX 2-68 (EXERCISE BEAGLE LEASH). The mission of EXERCISE BEAGLE LEASH was to train units in anti-air, electronic, surface, anti-submarine warfare and air strike support. Amphibious exercises were also included. Three terrier missile firings were conducted by STERETT on the Pacific Missile Range in conjunction with EXERCISE BEAGLE LEASH.

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The ship returned to Long Beach and continued preparations for overseas movement. On 7 May 1968 the Nuclear Weapons Acceptance Inspection (Nwai) was conducted on the handling of Terrier and ASROC Weapons. STERETT successfully passed the inspection and was certified Nuclear capable.

STERETT departed Long Beach on 20 May 1968 for a five day anti-submarine exercise in the Southern California OP Areas. COMTUEX 8-68 was concluded on 24 May 1968. STERETT returned to Long Beach and commenced final preparations for overseas movement. Mission of the COMTUEX 8-68 was to train participating units in all phases of anti-submarine warfare, including single unit and group tactics.

On 19 June 1968, STERETT departed Long Beach, California enroute to Yokosuka, Japan, where as a unit of DESRON 3, she would be homeported. The movement, via Pearl Harbor, Hawaii and Midway Island, was made in company with USS GEORGE K. MACKENZIE (DD 836). The ships arrived in Yokosuka on 5 July and commenced preparations for first line period to Tonkin Gulf.

In addition to her normal missions of anti-air, anti-surface, and anti-sub surface warfare, STERETT would be employed as either PIRAZ, SAR, or SAR and SSS.

As PIRAZ, which stands for Positive Identification Radar Advisory Zone, the ship was responsible for maintaining positive identification of all Navy, Marine, and Air Force aircraft operating in a defined area of the Tonkin Gulf. As SAR, (Search and Rescue), the ship was called upon to respond to emergencies in which the aviators were forced to abandon their aircraft. To aid in these efforts STERETT embarked a UH-2A SAR-configured helicopter detachment prior to each line period. In addition, on a daily basis, a SH3-A SAR helicopter was sent from one of the aircraft carriers to remain aboard STERETT in an alert status. As SSS, which stands for Strike Support Ship, the ship was responsible for advisory control of all air strikes over land. This close flight following enabled sections of aircraft to be informed of the tactical air picture, any secondary or targets of opportunity, and required navigational aids.

STERETT, with COMDESRON 3 embarked, departed Yokosuka, Japan on 19 July 1968 enroute to the Tonkin Gulf via Subic Bay, R.P. and Danang, South Vietnam. Arrived at Danang, South Vietnam on 30 July 1968 for briefings and departed for local OP areas to participate in anti-PT Boat exercises. On 31 July 1968 STERETT relieved USS HORNE (DLG 30) as PIRAZ unit. USS RICH (DD 820) was assigned shotgun duties. COMDESRON 3 assumed duties as TF77 SAR Commander. On 5 August 1968, STERETT was relieved of duties as PIRAZ by USS WAINWRIGHT (DLG 28) and proceeded to South SAR station relieving USS ENGLAND of SAR duties and USS LONG BEACH (CLG(N)-9) of duties as Strike Support Ship (SSS). USS FECHTLER (DD 870) was assigned as shotgun. At 0705 on 25 August 1968, an A-7 aircraft, CHARGER 614, was hit by ground fire over North Vietnam near 18-38.5N, 105-48.5E. This area is near Vinh, North Vietnam. The pilot succeeded in reaching the coast before ejecting and landing in the water about 60 yards from the beach. SAR alert was ordered with STERETT's UH-2A, CLEMENTINE 2, piloted by Lieutenant T. A. MELECOSKY and with co-pilot LTJG P. D. CULLEN, dispatched to the scene. Though subjected to intense ground fire during the approach and rescue, the UH-2A crew was able to effect the recovery of the

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downed aviator, LT James LEE, and return him to STERETT for medical examination and then to his parent carrier. The pilot's report is enclosed in Annex B.

At 1730 on 30 August 1968, An A-4 aircraft, was shot down over North Vietnam near 18-45N, 105-20E. This area is approximately 22 miles northwest of Vinh. The pilot, LCDR Harvey EIKEL, landed in a bamboo grove at the foot of a ridge. SAR alert was ordered and an SH3A BIG MOTHER 74, piloted by LTJG J. E. WIAINT and co-piloted by LTJG P. D. JANUARY was launched for the recovery. Despite heavy AAA fire at all points over land and intense small arms fire on scene, the recovery was effected. The rescued pilot was examined aboard STERETT and then returned to his parent carrier. Refer to Annex C for further information concerning the rescue. The ship was relieved of duties as South SAR and SSS on 4 September 1968 by USS HORNE (DLG 30) and proceeded to its homeport of Yokosuka, Japan arriving there on 10 September 1968.

The brief inport period was utilized to prepare for the next line period. STERETT, in company with USS PROVIDENCE (CLG 6), departed Yokosuka on 26 September 1968. Enroute to the Tonkin Gulf via Subic Bay, R.P. and Danang, South Vietnam, one terrier missile exercise firing was conducted at Buckner Bay, Okinawa on 28 September. On 7 October, STERETT arrived at PIRAZ station and relieved USS HORNE (DLG 30). USS FECHTLER (DD 870) was assigned as shotgun. COMDESRON 3 shifted his pennant to USS MAHAN (DLG 11) and assumed duties as SAR Commander. On 19 October 1968, midway through the line period, STERETT was relieved of PIRAZ duties by USS WAINWRIGHT (DLG 28) and proceeded to South SAR station relieving USS MAHAN (DLG 11) of SAR duties and USS LONG BEACH (CLG(N)-9) of duties as Strike Support Ship. COMDESRON 3 shifted his pennant to STERETT, USS FECHTLER (DD 870) was assigned as shotgun. STERETT was relieved of duties on 29 October 1968 by USS HORNE (DLG 30) and then proceeded to the British Crown Colony of Hong Kong for a seven day visit.

STERETT departed Hong Kong on 8 November 1968 enroute to the Tonkin Gulf via Subic Bay, R.P., after a brief stop in Subic Bay to load missiles and ammunition, STERETT departed for South SAR station. Upon arrival at the station on 14 November 1968, STERETT relieved USS HORNE of SAR and SSS duties. USS HUGH D. PURVIS (DD 709) was assigned duties as shotgun, and COMDESRON 3 assumed duties as SAR Commander. Change of command ceremonies were held aboard STERETT on 29 November 1968 at which Captain Edward A. CHRISTOFFERSON, Jr., USN, was relieved by Captain Claude L. TYLER, USN. Following ceremonies Captain CHRISTOFFERSON departed for duty with Naval Ordnance Systems Command. STERETT was, in turn, relieved of SAR and SSS by USS FOX (DLG 33) on 10 December and proceeded to her homeport of Yokosuka, Japan for the holidays and to prepare for the next line period.

#### SPECIAL TOPICS

The following statistics are enumerated in support of operations or activities:

Torpedo exercise rounds expended	1
ASROC exercise rounds expended	1

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Terrier exercise rounds expended	4
5"/54 Caliber rounds expended	249
3"/38 Caliber rounds expended	289
Underway replenishments	32
Helo landings	384

Refer to Annex D for the Commanding Officer's Narrative concerning the performance of the Weapons systems including the Terrier/ASROC launching system, the fire control radars, guns and associated equipment. Refer to Annex E for narrative concerning the performance of AN/SQS-26(BX) Sonar.

Five significant modifications to the ship were accomplished during the port shakedown availability at Puget Sound Naval Shipyard, Bremerton, Washington. First, the Drone Antisubmarine Helicopter (DASH) capability was removed. This included the removal of the control console on the flight deck, and all miscellaneous equipment and wiring in the hangar. Second, STERETT received the probe fueling capability. Third, the ship received the new prototype FAST (Missile Transfer) system for the DLG 26 Class which included a FAST receiver, deck handling gear, and a forward VERTREP station. This system is designed to transfer either missiles or stores. Fourth, STERETT received additional communications equipment which required extensive modifications to the Radio Central area. Thirteen SRC-20's and three URC-32's were installed. Finally, the ship received the Beacon Video Processing (BVP) capability which enables automatic tracking of friendly aircraft. The installation included the Navy CP-789 (UNIVAC 1218) computer and various interface components.

In connection with the FAST modification, STERETT and USS CAMDEN (AOE 2) conducted technical and operational evaluations of FAST as a part of CNO Project C/S 39. These concurrent evaluations were under the direction of COMOPTEVFOR and aided by San Francisco Bay Naval Shipyard. For complete details refer to Annex F for the technical evaluation and to Annex G for the operational evaluation report. Final evaluation reports of CNO Project C/S 39 may be consulted for further information.

STERETT was awarded the Anti-submarine Warfare "A" and the Engineering "E" by COMCRUDESAC for fiscal year 1968 efficiency competition.

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