

U.S.S. MONTICELLO (LSD-35)

FLEET POST OFFICE

SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA

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Ser: 05

14 FEB 1968

From: Commanding Officer, USS MONTICELLO (LSD-35)

To: Chief of Naval Operations (OP-09B9)

Subj: OPNAV Report 5750-1; submission of

Ref: (a) OPNAVINST 5750.12

- Encl:
- (1) USS MONTICELLO (LSD-35) Command History, 1967
  - (2) USS MONTICELLO (LSD-35) Amphibious Ready Group Turn-Over Letter ser 027 of 5 Sep 1967
  - (3) USS MONTICELLO (LSD-35) Officers Directory of 1 Jan 1968
  - (4) USS MONTICELLO (LSD-35) Enlisted On-Board Roster of 1 Jan 1968
  - (5) USS MONTICELLO (LSD-35) Welcome Aboard Pamphlet
  - (6) COMPHIBRON NINE 170515Z FEB 67
  - (7) COMUSMACV 021232Z APR 67
  - (8) CTF 76 140610Z MAY 67
  - (9) CTF 76 020923Z OCT 67
  - (10) COMPHIBPAC 150145Z OCT 67
  - (11) SECNAV 181730Z JAN 68
  - (12) COMPHIBPAC 190231Z JAN 68

1. Enclosures (1) through (12) are submitted in accordance with reference (a).

  
R. F. STANTON

Copy to:  
CINCPACFLT  
COMPHIBPAC  
COMPHIBRON NINE

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BRIEF CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS DURING 1967

- 3-13 January - Conducted Amphibious Refresher Training off Silver Strand and Del Mar, California.
- 13 January - 1 February - Inport San Diego, California, preparing for deployment to Western Pacific.
- 1 February - 15 October - Deployed to Western Pacific. Operated as a unit of Amphibious Ready Group BRAVO (TG 76.5).
- 20 March - 2 April - Acted as PCS for Operation Beacon Hill I, Quang Tri, Republic of Vietnam.
- 20 March - Captain Robert F. STANTON, USN, relieved Captain Vincent F. KELLEY, USN, as Commanding Officer, USS MONTICELLO (LSI-35).
- 15-17 March - Acted as SCS for Exercise Operation Hilltop VII, Chin Wan, Okinawa.
- 22 April - 12 May - Acted as PCS for Operation Beacon Star, Quang Tri, Republic of Vietnam.
- 15-27 May - Acted as SCS for Operation Belt Tight, Quang Tri, Republic of Vietnam.
- 18 June - 2 July - Acted as SCS for Operation Beacon Torch, Quang Tri, Republic of Vietnam.
- 3-17 July - Acted as SCS for Operation Beaver Track, Quang Tri, Republic of Vietnam.
- 20-26 July - Acted as SCS for Operation Bear Chain, Quang Tri, Republic of Vietnam.
- 1-3 August - Acted as SCS for Operation Kangaroo Kick, an amphibious feint off Hue, Republic of Vietnam.

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27 August - 6 September - Acted as PCS for Operation Belt Drive off  
Quang Tri, Republic of Vietnam

7 September - USS MONTICELLO (LSD-35) was relieved on station in Danang,  
Republic of Vietnam by USS TORTUGA (LSD-26) and  
USS WINDHAM COUNTY (LST-1170).

13-18 September - Inport, Hong Kong, B.C.C.

23-29 September - Inport, Yokosuka, Japan.

15 October - Arrived in San Diego, California after eight and one-half month  
deployment in Western Pacific.

27 November - 6 December - Acted as PCS for Exercise Operation Blue Lotus  
off Southern California coast.

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NARRATIVE HISTORY OF USS MONTICELLO  
1 JANUARY - 31 DECEMBER 1967

I. Command Organization and Relations

Captain V. F. KELLEY, USN commanded the USS MONTICELLO (LSI-35) from the beginning of the year until 20 March when he was relieved by Captain R. F. STANTON, USN, on station off the Cua Viet River, Quang Tri Province, Republic of Vietnam. Captain STANTON served in this capacity throughout the remainder of the year.

MONTICELLO falls under the administrative control of Commander Amphibious Squadron NINE, and while in the Western Pacific came under the operational control of Commander, U. S. Seventh Fleet, and operated as a unit of Amphibious Force, Seventh Fleet (TF 76) and Amphibious Ready Group BRAVO (TG 76.5). MONTICELLO is homeported in San Diego, California, with home yard at U. S. Naval Shipyard, Long Beach, California.

The ship's basic mission is to provide transportation, amphibious mobility, and logistic support to embarked Marine detachments. The ship has the capacity of transporting 301 troop officers and men, and has large well-deck, mezzanine deck, and super deck areas to transport trucks, jeeps, amphibious tracked vehicles, and landing craft, and has a helo deck to provide vertical mobility.

During the year, several Marine and Naval organizations were attached to MONTICELLO. During operations from 15 March to 1 April, units of Marine Battalion Landing Team 1/4 were embarked. On 4 April, men and equipment of BLT 3/4 were loaded for transportation to Okinawa. In Okinawa, elements of BLT 2/3 were loaded aboard, and throughout the remainder of the cruise this fine combat unit steamed and operated with Amphibious Ready Group BRAVO.

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Beachmaster Unit One, WESTPAC Detachment, comprised of 27 men and two officers, was attached to MONTICELLO during her tenure in ARG BRAVO. One detachment of UDT 11 personnel was permanently attached to the ARG, and was carried by MONTICELLO from 22 August to 6 September. Throughout the cruise MONTICELLO carried boats and boat crews of Assault Craft Division 11.

## II. Ship's Operations

The year began with USS MONTICELLO at U. S. Naval Station, San Diego, conducting routine upkeep while the crew enjoyed the holiday leave period. On 3 January the ship got underway for Coronado Roads to commence Amphibious Operational Training, for which MONTICELLO received a grade of EXCELLENT from the Amphibious Operational Training Unit.

From 13 January through 31 January, the ship was in port in San Diego, finishing up last-minute details in preparation for deployment. On 1 February the MONTICELLO departed San Diego to begin her seventh deployment to the Western Pacific since commissioning in 1957. MONTICELLO sailed for Hawaii in company with USS PRINCETON (LPH-5), USS OGDEN (LPD-5), and USS SEMINOLE (AKA-104). PRINCETON carried a unit of Naval Reserve officers acting in training as a Convoy Commodore and staff. The transit to Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, was marked by frequent drills and maneuvers, as well as by several gunnery exercises utilizing radio-controlled target drones carried on and launched from this ship.

On 9 February the MONTICELLO entered Pearl Harbor for a two-day inport period prior to proceeding to WestPac. On 11 February, again in company with PRINCETON, OGDEN, and SEMINOLE, the MONTICELLO departed Hawaii enroute to Danang, Republic of Viet Nam. At 142235Z February this ship crossed the International Date Line into the Domain of the Golden Dragon. On 17 February

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a party of 20 officers and men from MONTICELLO were helo-lifted to the PRINCETON to assist Commander, Amphibious Squadron NINE in conducting the PRINCETON's annual Operational Readiness Inspection. The next day, 18 February, MONTICELLO chopped to the Operational guidance and control of Commander, SEVENTH FLEET.

27 February saw MONTICELLO entering Danang Harbor to deliver equipment and supplies picked up in San Diego and Hawaii. From 1-3 March MONTICELLO steamed to Subic Bay, Republic of the Philippines, and spent the next two weeks inport there, loading equipment and supplies for the forthcoming operations. On 8 March MONTICELLO relieved USS THOMASTON (LSD-28) as a member of ARG BRAVO and came under the operational control of CTG 76.5. At this time ARG BRAVO was commanded by CAPT R. L. COCHRAN, COMPHIBRON SEVEN, and consisted of USS PRINCETON (LPH-5), USS MONTICELLO (LSD-35), & USS OGDEN (LPD-5). On 15 March RADM F. B. GILKESON, COMNAVBASUBIC, and RADM J. T. BURKE, COMPHIBFORSEVENTHFLT, officially visited the ship. Elements of BLT 1/4 also embarked aboard MONTICELLO on this day, for transportation to Viet Nam.

16-18 March the MONTICELLO was enroute to the RVN coast, on 20 March commenced her first combat operation of the year, as Primary Control Ship of Operation Beacon Hill I, on the Quang Tri coast just north of Cau Viet River. This day was also marked by change of command, CAPT R. F. STANTON, USN relieving CAPT V. F. KELLEY, USN, thus becoming the ship's eleventh commanding officer. COMPHIBFORSEVENTHFLT (CTF 76) again visited the ship and conveyed his congratulations and appreciation to the officers and crew for their contributions to the operation's success.

Operation Beacon Hill I was launched to disrupt and destroy certain large units of North Vietnamese Army infiltrators which had concentrated in

the area just south of the DMZ. It was during this operation that the bloody battle for Hills 881 and 861 were fought, and the NVA were disentranced from vital positions overlooking the Khe Sanh airstrip.

On completion of the operation on 6 April, MONTICELLO left the combat zone for Buckner Bay, Okinawa. She arrived 11 April, and spent three days loading men and equipment of BLT 2/3.

During the Okinawa visit, MONTICELLO participated in Exercise Operation Hilltop VII, intended to train ships and Marines in amphibious combat operation procedures. A new concept in amphibious warfare was tested during these exercises, that of having the Primary Control Ship remain underway while launching LVTs and controlling their progress down the boat lane to the beach. This proved to be difficult, but was successfully executed and was used in several subsequent operations in RVN.<sup>1</sup>

On 17 April MONTICELLO and other ships of TG 76.5 departed Okinawa for the RVN coast, arriving off Hue on 20 April. This same day, at 0200H, while steaming in lifeguard station during replenishment of USS OGDEN (LPD-5) by USS NAVASOTA (AO-106), BT3 Fredrick Bornemann, 698 43 84, USN, of the OGDEN, was accidentally knocked overboard. In spite of limited visibility, and due to the quick response of MONTICELLO's OOD, CIC and rescue boat crew, the man was safely recovered in less than twenty minutes.

22 April marked D-Day for Operation Beacon Star. Two waves of LVTs were landed at the Cua Viet, and additional troops were landed in scheduled helicopter waves. On-call waves consisting of landing craft with artillery, tanks, and ONTOS were landed at the Dong Ha Bridge Ramp. The purpose of this operation was to search for and destroy elements of NVA insurgents known to be operating in the area.

1. See Encl (1) of Encl (2), pp. 2-3

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During the twenty days spent in support of Operation Beacon Star, MONTICELLO found time to conduct many needed drills. On completion of the operation, MONTICELLO backloaded elements of BLT 2/3 and prepared for the next, Operation Belt Tight.

D-Day for Operation Belt Tight was 15 May. The ARG delivered a heliborne assault force into the Dong Ha area, backed up by an administrative off-load by landing craft of selected serials via the Dong Ha Bridge Ramp. This operation marked the first use of the underway-control method in an actual combat mission. OGDEN served as PCS during this and the next four operations. On 20 May, TOM GREEN COUNTY (LST-1159) joined the ARG. On completion of the off-load, the ARG sailed again for Subic Bay, arriving 29 May.

The period of 29 May to 8 June was spent conducting much needed maintenance, while the crew enjoyed their second visit to the Philippines after seventy-four days of operating on the line. During this inport period USS PRINCETON (LPH-5) was relieved by USS TRIPOLI (LPH-10) as flagship of ARG BRAVO and command of TG 76.5 was assumed by CAPT J. L. LOWENTROUT, USN, COMPHIBRON NINE. On 8 June the ARG again departed for the RVN coast, and accomplished the backload of BLT 2/3 at Hue on 11-12 June.

Operation Beacon Torch commenced 18 June, with the ARG landing two scheduled waves of LVTs and one on-call wave of landing craft with tank platoon over the beach four miles south of Danang. Other troops and artillery were landed by helicopter. This, again, was a search-and-destroy operation, intended to catch the NVA units in an unprepared state.

On 2 July Operation Beacon Torch terminated, and the next day marked the commencement of Operation Beaver Track, which involved only heliborne troops and artillery. Selected serials consisting of 90 percent of BLT 2/3's vehicles and virtually all the palletized cargo was administratively off-loaded



by landing craft at the Dong Ha Bridge Ramp. MONTICELLO steamed in support of this operation until it ended 17 July. On 6 July USS ST. PAUL (CA-73) received shore battery fire while acting as Gunfire Support Ship for the ARG. The shore fire came from Cap Lay, above the DMZ. ST. PAUL was not hit, but several rounds landed near MONTICELLO: as near as 800 yards. ST. PAUL fired counter-battery, and the shore fire ceased.

On 8 July USS TERRELL COUNTY (LST-1177) relieved USS TOM GREEN COUNTY (LST-1159) as a member of the ARG BRAVO.

Only three days after the termination of Operation Beaver Track, ARG BRAVO was called on again to deliver an assault force on the Quang Tri coast. On 20 July Operation Bear Chain began, with two scheduled waves of LVTs and one scheduled wave of landing craft with tanks being landed in the surface ship to shore movement, and additional troops and artillery transported to the beach by helicopter.

During this operation, on 25 July, USS MORTON (DD-948) received shore battery fire from Cap Lay while conducting gunfire support 10,000 yards from MONTICELLO. No ship sustained damage, and counter-battery effectively silenced the shore guns.

On completion of Operation Bear Chain on 26 July, MONTICELLO was treated to three days of beach parties at China Beach, Danang, hosted by the Marines of BLT 2/3.

Operation Kangaroo Kick commenced 1 August with an assault force of troops and artillery delivered by helicopters to the coastal area north of Hue. At H-Hour two waves of LVTs were employed in an amphibious feint intended to distract and confuse the enemy. The waves turned away 600 yards from the beach. Post-H-Hour action included the administrative off-load of selected serials over the Col Co causeway and Hue Bridge Ramp. On completion of the backloading, ARG BRAVO headed once more for the Philippines, arriving

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in Subic Bay 6 August.

The ARG sailed for Viet Nam on 18 August with USS PAUL REVERE (APA-248) who had relieved USS OGDEN (LPD-5) as a member of the Ready Group during the inport period. On arrival off Hue the ARG backloaded BLT 2/3 and spent the next six days awaiting the next operation. During this time, on 21 August, Captain V. F. KELLEY, USN, ex-Commanding Officer of MONTICELLO then assigned to COMUSMACV staff, visited the ship.

27 August was D-Day for MONTICELLO's eighth and final combat action of the year, Operation Belt Drive, which consisted of two waves of LVTs and several waves of heliborne troops landed across the beach midway between Hue and the DMZ. MONTICELLO acted as Primary Control Ship for this operation, using for her first time the method of underway boat control pioneered and used so successfully by ARG BRAVO.

During the six days following, while steaming in support of the Marines ashore, MONTICELLO assisted the embarked UDT 11 detachment in conducting beach surveys and surf observations in preparation for future operations in the area. Also during this time the crew of the 1500th helicopter to land on MONTICELLO's deck was treated to a specially prepared cake and a brief ceremony commemorating the incident. This also marked the 600th helo-landing of the cruise, and RADM F. W. VANNOY, COMPHIBFORSEVENTHFLT (CTF 76) visited 31 August to commend the ship on the event.

On 6 September MONTICELLO entered Danang Harbor for the last time in the cruise, and was cheered by the welcome sight of USS TORTUGA (LSD-26) and USS WINDHAM COUNTY (LSD-1170), there to relieve her. The next two days were spent turning over equipment and information to TORTUGA and WINDHAM COUNTY, and MONTICELLO steamed for Subic Bay late 7 September. After a brief twenty-four hours spent in the Philippines, the MONTICELLO was once again underway; this time her destination was Hong Kong, B. C. C., for a pleasant

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five days of rest and recreation in the shopping center of the Orient.

After Hong Kong, MONTICELLO stopped at Yokosuka, Japan, for five days, and on 29 September began her long journey home.

Thirty-six hours out from Yokosuka the ship was forced to turn back to return an emergency medical case, LT W. P. HARKER, Engineering Officer, for immediate treatment. Underway again from Yokosuka, MONTICELLO chopped to Commander, FIRST FLEET on 5 October, and recrossed the International Date Line at 062156Z October.

MONTICELLO spent only twenty-four hours in Hawaii before departing 10 October on the last leg of her voyage. 15 October marked the happy day of homecoming for the crew and the welcoming crowd of relatives and friends.

The next thirty days were spent in leave and upkeep at U. S. Naval Station, San Diego, which ended 16 November. 20-22 November independent ship's exercises were conducted, preparing for the forthcoming Exercise Operation Blue Lotus.

From 27 November to 6 December MONTICELLO participated in Operation Blue Lotus, acting as Primary Control Ship for amphibious landings on the Silver Strand and at Camp Pendleton, California. One unusual aspect of this operation was that MONTICELLO carried a total of 48 LVTs in the well for the landing.

The remainder of December was spent inport in San Diego, with the crew enjoying leave during the holiday season while routine maintenance and upkeep were conducted on the ship.

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During 1967 MONTICELLO was exceptionally busy; she participated in eight combat operations and two exercise operations. For performance in four of the combat operations she was awarded the Meritorious Unit Commendation. The ship anchored 65 times, ballasted 389 times, and landed 630 helicopters. She replenished with fuel or stores 33 times, of which three were heliborne-stores transfers and 12 were conducted during darkness.

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