

U.S.S. MONTICELLO (LSD-35)  
APO SAN FRANCISCO 96601

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

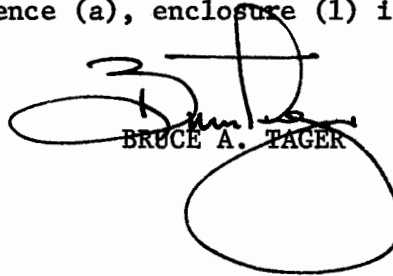
To: Director of Naval History

Subj: Command History for 1972; submission of

Ref: (a) OPNAVINST 5750.12B

Encl: (1) MONTICELLO History 1972

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

  
BRUCE A. TAGER

Copy to:  
CINCPACFLT  
COMPHIBPAC  
COMPHIBRON THREE

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PART ONE

CHRONOLOGY 1972

1-12 JAN Inport San Diego, Holiday leave period.

12-13 JAN Proceeded to Seal Beach, California for ammo offload.

14 JAN - 6 JUN Inport San Diego in preparation for and accomplishment of regular overhaul.

18-21 JAN INSURV Inspection

1-3 FEB COMPHIBPAC 3-M Inspection

16 FEB CHINFO Film Team Aboard to film MONTICELLO sailors for Navy's 200th Anniversary.

8 MAR Commenced regular overhaul by National Steel and Shipbuilding Company under SUPSHIP ELEVEN.

29 MAR Observed ship's 15th anniversary with special dinner and cake cutting on the mess decks. Officers' party that evening at Admiral KIDD Club.

31 MAR Observed one minute of silence for POW/MIA's.

1 APR - 15 MAY Evaluated 5-hour watch routine. Overwhelmingly disliked.

5 APR Entered dry dock number 1 San Diego.

10 APR Moved crew ashore to barracks. Secured on board messing.

12 APR Executive Officer, Commander E. B. FARLEY, relieved by Lieutenant Commander D. E. ALEXANDER.

12 MAY Undock

31 MAY Certified for burning ND fuels. Lighted off boilers for first time on ND fuel.

7 JUN Dock trials

8 JUN Crew moved back aboard.

9 JUN Sea trials. Commenced messing aboard.

11 JUN End regular overhaul. Held open house for contractor employees and families, ship's crew and families.

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12 JUN Underway for points north.  
13 JUN Loaded ammo at Seal Beach.  
14 JUN Underway  
15 JUN Offloaded San Diego cargo at Port Hueneme.  
15-17 JUN Underway for San Francisco.  
17-25 JUN Inport at the carrier pier, Alameda, for one week fire-fighting schools. 186 attended.  
26 JUN Underway for Long Beach. ISE.  
26 JUN Conducted burial at sea of PRL VAN VALKENBURG, USN.  
28 JUN Overnight at Long Beach.  
29 JUN Underway. Conducted antenna radiation pattern analysis.  
29-30 JUN Enroute San Diego.  
30 JUN - 9 JUL Inport San Diego.  
3-28 JUL Refresher training  
7 JUL COMPHIBPAC, VADM JOHNSON and staff tour ship.  
10 JUL - 28 JUL Underway daily from anchorage to conduct refresher training.  
13 JUL Recovered downed aircraft (Navy E1B), offloaded at North Island.  
29 JUL - 6 AUG Inport San Diego.  
7-18 AUG Underway and at anchor off Coronado, California for amphibious refresher training.  
19-20 AUG Inport San Diego.  
21-24 AUG Underway in SOCAL OPAREA to participate in PHIBLEX 4-72.  
25 AUG - 20 SEP Prior overseas movement (POM) upkeep period. Loaded out material and embarked attached Navy elements for WESTPAC deployment.  
11 SEP COMPHIBPAC 3-M Inspection. 79.25%  
11-12 SEP Annual boiler inspection - SAT

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21 SEP Underway for WESTPAC in company with USS SAN BERNARDINO (LST-1189) as CTU 16.8.6.

27-29 SEP Inport Pearl Harbor.

30 SEP - 10 OCT Enroute Okinawa.

6 OCT Changed operational control from FIRST Fleet to SEVENTH Fleet.

11 OCT At anchor Kin Wan, Okinawa, to embark elements of Battalion Landing Team (BLT) 3/4.

12 OCT Shifted to BRAVO pier, Buckner Bay, Okinawa.

12-15 OCT Completed onload.

14 OCT Became element of TG 76.4. Assigned to Amphibious Ready Group (ARG) ALFA.

16-19 OCT Enroute Subic Bay, R. P. with TG 76.4.

20-22 OCT Inport Subic Bay.

23-24 OCT Conducted ZAMEX 9-72 in Subic Bay. Assigned duty as PCS.

25-29 OCT Enroute Gulf of Tonkin.

29 OCT Relieved ARG BRAVO and began 'on line' operations.

29 OCT - 11 NOV ARG operations

2 NOV Visit by COMPHIBPAC, Vice Admiral SALZER, and COMPHIBFOR-SEVENTHFLT, Rear Admiral TOOLE.

10 NOV Celebrated USMC birthday with special cake and cake cutting ceremony on the mess decks.

12-13 NOV Detached from ARG operations. Enroute with USS OGDEN (LPD-5) to Kaohsiung, Taiwan.

14-18 NOV Port visit Kaohsiung.

16 NOV 35 Chinese Marine Corps (CMC) field grade officers attended Marine Corps demonstration on board by embarked units.

17 NOV Selected MONTICELLO officers and CPO's reviewed drill team and observed hand combat demonstration at CMC Headquarters, Tsoying, Taiwan.

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18-19 NOV Underway with USS OGDEN enroute Subic Bay, R. P.

20 NOV - 4 DEC Upkeep Subic Bay.

23 NOV Special Thanksgiving Day dinner and services. Hosted 140 USMC personnel of Battalion 3/3 aboard.

4-6 DEC Underway for local operations, independent steaming exercises (ISE), and graded shiphandling competition.

7-8 DEC Inport Subic Bay.

8-9 DEC Underway for Gulf of Tonkin to conduct special operations (SPECOPS).

10-19 DEC SPECOPS

17 DEC Embarked UDT destroyed derelict marker buoy.

20-21 DEC Enroute Hong Kong, BCC. Joined USS NEW ORLEANS (LPH-11) for transit upon leaving combat zone.

21-26 DEC Port visit Hong Kong for Christmas holidays.

27-28 DEC Enroute Subic Bay with TG 76.4.

29-31 DEC Upkeep Subic Bay.

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LANDING SHIP DOCK (LSD) 35

MONTICELLO HISTORY 1972

Commanded by: Commander Bruce A. TAGER, USN

Homeported in San Diego, California. Assigned to Amphibious Squadron THREE of the Amphibious Force, U. S. Pacific Fleet.

Mission: To transport and land troops and their equipment and supplies by means of landing craft, amphibian vehicles, and helicopters.

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PART TWO

NARRATIVE OF EVENTS

On 1 January 1972, MONTICELLO was resting in her homeport from a fast three-month cruise to the Indian Ocean, concluded just two weeks before. Because of the upcoming regular overhaul (ROH) and the extensive preparations this required, the only underway period in the next five months was to be a 12 to 14 January trip to Seal Beach, California to offload ammunition. The Board of Inspection and Survey (INSURV) followed thereafter with its periodic checkup lasting from 18 to 21 January. The Board was helpful in emphasizing and substantiating planned work items for the coming overhaul and found MONTICELLO in satisfactory condition, fit for sea.

February led off with a three-day 3-M inspection given by COMPHIBPAC. Simultaneously, scheduled boiler, ordnance, and electronic inspections were administered to validate job planning requirements for the 8 February pre-overhaul conference.

To help document the feeling of contemporary Navy life in the 200th anniversary year, a special team of reporters and photographers from the Chief of Information (CHINFO), Navy Department spent the anniversary day, 16 February, aboard MONTICELLO. This team interviewed the officers and men regarding the challenges, traditions, and benefits of today's Navy in light of the historic precepts of the past two hundred years. The documentary produced was then broadcast nationwide some months later.

The Amphibious Force, Pacific Fleet Anniversary was celebrated by a number of balls and dances hosted on 25 February by COMPHIBPAC for the sailors, chiefs, and officers of the Force. The MONTICELLO team responded at all levels to the invitation to have fun, and a healthy contingent was represented at all levels.

The most significant overhaul of the ship's history began on 8 March and lasted until 12 June. Every area received a dramatic face-lifting. The main engineering plant was converted from burning Navy Standard Fuel Oil, a crude oil product, to the new Navy Distillate (ND), a refined, less viscous fuel which burns much cleaner and greatly reduces boiler maintenance. Conversion to this lighter fuel, although requiring costly piping and machinery modifications, enabled the ship to now accept a variety of distillate fuels thereby increasing versatility and, in the long run, cost effectiveness.

Major ship alterations were accomplished to enlarge the helicopter platform to accommodate up through the CH-46 (Sea Knight) helicopter. No servicing or refueling capabilities were added. In conjunction with the landing platform, a sizeable communications package was installed to upgrade the command and control capabilities of the ship. Essentially, new secure voice transceivers were added along with a helicopter control station.

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Major habitability improvements were not programmed into the 1972 ROH. Realizing the impact of this deficient area on morale and performance, the command vigorously pursued additional funding to bring the ship up to fleet habitability standards. Through diligent effort, money was obtained, and a massive program was quickly put into effect. All four of the crew's heads were completely redone to provide roomier partitions, modern wash basins, and improved showers. A new overhead was installed and a new porcelain deck was laid. The result was much more sanitary and attractive head facilities.

The two troop heads were refurbished by ship's force personnel. Facilities for embarked units would now be comfortable, adequate, and sanitary.

Throughout the crew's berthing spaces, the older system of moveable racks and undersized, pigeon-hole type lockers were replaced by the new "Northampton" style fixed bunks. These bunks each had their own ample stowage area immediately underneath. The deceptively large size of these bunks made it difficult to believe that, as a fact, there was much more roominess throughout the berthing spaces than ever before.

On the mess decks, the galley equipment was completely replaced by new ovens and steam kettles. A new, more efficient serving line and a salad bar were installed. Modern tables and chairs provided a real restaurant atmosphere. For the ecologists, a garbage compactor was installed which greatly reduced the quantity of pollutant materials to be thrown over the side. In Navy terms, MONTICELLO was soon to be known as a "feeder."

Throughout the Chief Petty Officers' quarters and in officers' country new rugs, paneling and false overheads, all of approved fire retardant materials, gave these areas a much needed face-lifting. The ship's laundry, always a weak spot throughout the Navy, was completely overhauled, receiving new washer/extractors and dryers. It could now keep pace with the demands of over 500 crew and embarked personnel.

The hectic period during the accomplishment of these modifications required the berthing and messing of the crew ashore from 10 April to 12 June. The move back aboard and the enjoyment of the first meal on 12 June amidst attractive, functional, and comfortable environs, heralded a dramatic new era of MONTICELLO history, both in spirit and performance. On 7 July, COMPHIBPAC (Vice Admiral JOHNSON) and senior staff members inspected the new look of the ship and were visibly impressed.

Throughout the difficult overhaul period, several other noteworthy events took place. On 29 March, the 15th anniversary of the ship's commissioning was celebrated on the mess decks by a special birthday dinner attended by many family members and friends of the crew. Days later, noisy shipyard activity was interrupted by one minute of complete silence on 31 March in recognition of those prisoners of war and those missing in action from the Vietnam conflict. The Squadron Chaplain then led a brief prayer for these men over the general announcing system.

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Chosen to evaluate a new five-hour watch routine designed to provide crew members with more off-duty time, MONTICELLO began on 1 April a six-week test of five-hour quarterdeck watches. At the end of the evaluation period, few of the ship's company were found in favor of the new system.

On 12 April Lieutenant Commander Dale E. ALEXANDER, reporting from the COMPHIBPAC Staff, relieved Commander Edward B. FARLEY as Executive Officer. Commander FARLEY had orders to the Training Department, Amphibious Operational Support Activity, U. S. Pacific Fleet, Coronado, California.

Preparations for an intensive refresher training period followed immediately upon the 11 June close-out of the ROH. Throughout the preceding months, individual schooling had been emphasized to provide basic shipboard knowledge and selected technical skills. This, however, was not enough. The one brief opportunity between overhaul and formal refresher training had to be seized and utilized to mold the officers and men into a single effective team. To accomplish this, the ship would head North to San Francisco where unit training facilities were available at Treasure Island. MONTICELLO got underway on 12 June, loaded ammunition all day on the 13th at Seal Beach, and proceeded the next morning towards San Francisco, making a brief stop at Port Hueneme to offload boats brought from San Diego for a local Sea Scout Troop. On 17 June, MONTICELLO tied up at the carrier piers, Alameda Naval Air Station, to begin a serious one-week period of team training in damage control and fire fighting at Treasure Island. With schooling as complete as possible (186 attendees), MONTICELLO headed South for San Diego on 26 June.

Shortly after getting underway, a solemn At Sea Burial Service was conducted for First Class Parachute Rigger Anthony Eugene VAN VALKENBURG, USN. At 1400 with a salute from the Honor Guard, the remains were committed to the Deep. No family members were in attendance.

Every moment of the transit home was effectively utilized to accomplish independent steaming exercises, an antenna radiation analysis, and a test firing of the guns. Arriving in San Diego on the 30th, the crew had only the brief respite of the Fourth of July weekend before refresher training (REFTRA) formally began. On 5 July a severe "Training Readiness Evaluation" was administered by Commander Fleet Training Group, San Diego (COMFLTRAGRU). This activity would be responsible for the complete training of the ship as an operating unit in all phases of seamanship, weaponry, and engineering. For those who have exercised with the Navy's operating forces, the mere mention of the word 'REFTRA' recalls vivid impressions of daily underway drills, night anchorages, and evening preparations for the next day's evolutions. Beginning with the 10 July underway phase and lasting until the final battle problem on the 28th, MONTICELLO toiled toward the goal of excellence. The final grade was worth the effort. Finishing with a score of GOOD, including several marks of "excellent," MONTICELLO achieved one of the best grades of any recent amphibious ship. The team spirit and professionalism necessary to attain such a score was further demonstrated by an incident occurring during this period.

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On Thursday, 13 July during the early afloat phase of Refresher Training in the Southern California Operation Area, MONTICELLO was directed by the Fleet Air Control and Surveillance Facility, San Diego to assist in the recovery of an E1B Navy aircraft which had ditched 23 miles west of San Diego. Steaming at maximum speed, MONTICELLO arrived within the hour joining the USS O'CALLAHAN (DE-1051) and USS FREDERICK (LST-1184). At 1430 O'CALLAHAN had made a boat recovery of the two aircraft crew members. MONTICELLO swimmers fastened handling lines on the tail and fuselage. Time became a factor as the aircraft, still essentially intact, began to lose buoyancy. An attempt was made to hoist the 14 ton aircraft aboard MONTICELLO's flight deck using her 50 ton cranes, but due to 10 foot sea swells a bridle could not be attached. MONTICELLO quickly ballasted to a depth of 8 feet, sufficient to allow the still floating aircraft to be pulled into the well deck. With excellent seamanship the aircraft was maneuvered aboard intact. MONTICELLO then set course for the carrier pier, North Island Naval Air Station, Coronado, California, arriving at approximately 2200 that evening. This successful operation, the first unaided shipboard recovery of a downed aircraft, prevented the possible compromise of installed equipments and publications. An analysis was also able to be made by flight safety engineers to determine the cause of the aircraft failure. A piece of the aircraft fuselage bearing the squadron emblem is proudly displayed in the crew's lounge.

Having demonstrated herself as a first-line ship of the sea, MONTICELLO still had to undergo specialty training as an amphibious support ship, performing those functions peculiar to her assigned mission. Under the guidance of Commander, Amphibious Operations Support Command, U. S. Pacific Fleet (COMPHIBOPSUPPAC), MONTICELLO spent the next two weeks (7 to 18 August) off the Coronado coastline conducting Amphibious Refresher Training. On 18 August it was all over and MONTICELLO had achieved another excellent score. Proper boat control, beaching and salvage operations, ballasting, repair, and communication procedures had been relearned with perfection. The weekend, 19 and 20 August, was spent in port.

All the training had been completed. To evaluate the effectiveness of this training, MONTICELLO participated in PHIBLEX 4-72, a large scale, multi-ship amphibious landing exercise conducted off the Southern California coast commencing on 21 August. Assigned as Advance Force Element Commander, Area Defense Element Commander, and SSSC (Surface-Subsurface Surveillance Control) Coordinator within the Amphibious Operations Area, MONTICELLO played a key role. Area defense was 100% effective in preventing aggressor patrol gunboats (PG's) from penetrating the area perimeter, and four intercepts of attacking forces were made by the ship-controlled defense elements.

The weather deteriorated, damaging several beached causeway sections and finally calling a halt to the exercise on 24 August. On this day, MONTICELLO took the damaged causeway sections into her well deck, repaired them, and transported them back to San Diego. Unloading promptly, she set course for Long Beach to make yet another commitment, arriving that evening. The speed required to accomplish all this in a day's time confirmed MONTICELLO's reputation as the fastest amphibious ship in the fleet. This was a fitting final touch to a most successful training period.

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A special sonar frame was loaded on board in Long Beach for delivery to Pearl Harbor during the September transit to WESTPAC. MONTICELLO returned to San Diego on 25 August to begin a scheduled month long Preparation for Overseas Movement (POM) upkeep and standdown period. Maximum leave was granted during this time and last-minute preparations were made. A mobile dental van was brought pierside from 11 to 15 September, and medical and legal checkups were encouraged to ensure that the crew would be as healthy and problem free as possible for the forthcoming deployment.

Since the foregoing intensive training period precluded the scheduling of needed inspections, COMPHIBPAC conducted both a 3-M review and the Annual Boiler Inspection on 11 and 12 September. A grade of 79.25 was assigned to 3-M, and the boilers, evaluated on a SAT/UNSAT basis, passed the first inspection in many years. On 15 September Vice Admiral SALZER, who had recently relieved Vice Admiral JOHNSON as COMPHIBPAC, made an informal visit on board to conduct relaxed discussions with the officers, chief petty officers, and first class petty officers.

20 September was loadout day. Support materials were brought aboard and personnel from the following units were embarked:

| <u>DESIGNATOR</u>                                  | <u>OFFICERS</u> | <u>MEN</u> |
|--|-----------------|------------|
| Assault Craft Unit ONE (ACU-1)                     | 1               | 24         |
| U.D.T. TWELVE (UDT-12)                             | 2               | 15         |
| Beachmaster Unit ONE (BMU-1)                       | 2               | 32         |
| Tactical Air Control Squadron THIRTEEN (TACRON-13) | <u>1</u>        | <u>28</u>  |
| TOTAL:   | 14              | 99         |

With the exception of TACRON-13, detachments from these units remained essentially unchanged in their basic on board composition throughout the deployment.

MONTICELLO was ordered to get underway on 21 September for the seven-month Western Pacific Deployment in company with USS SAN BERNARDINO (LST-1189). As Commander Task Unit 16.8.6, MONTICELLO developed an operation order for the transit and exercised control of the two ship formation, conducting maximum training enroute. A three-day stopover in Pearl Harbor from 27 to 29 September was made to offload the sonar frame and to refuel. Upon crossing the 160th meridian (E) on 6 October, MONTICELLO became a part of the SEVENTH Fleet. Shortly after arrival in Okinawa on 13 October, about 125 officers and men comprising elements of the Battalion Landing Team, Third Battalion, Fourth Marines (BLT 3/4) were embarked. Also in Okinawa, MONTICELLO and SAN BERNARDINO were joined by three other ships to form the Amphibious Ready Group (ARG) ALFA. These five ships, under the control of the Squadron Commander (COMPHIBRON THREE) relieved the existing ARG ALFA,

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and thereby became the new Task Group (TG) 76.4. During this period, TACRON-13 was transferred to the USS NEW ORLEANS, flagship of the Task Group. With the BLT turnover complete, the task group got underway from Okinawa on 16 October for Subic Bay, Republic of the Philippines, to conduct a practice landing and to undergo a brief upkeep period. The Subic Bay in-port period from 20 thru 22 October passed quickly in a frenzy of activity. The amphibious landing, ZAMEX 9-72, was conducted at anchor in the bay with MONTICELLO as primary control ship (PCS) for the ship to shore movement. This exercise went smoothly, and on 25 October TG 76.4 was enroute to the Gulf of Tonkin for the first on-line operations of the deployment. This operating period, lasting from 29 October to 11 November, allowed all of the task group ships to get the feel of working together by daily exercises in tactical maneuvering and shiphandling evolutions. Valuable experience was gained by the young officers and crew; many new Officers of the Deck (Fleet) were qualified during these two weeks. Aside from the Sunday afternoon cookouts, which had become a favorite underway event, and the occasional boxing and wrestling smokers, the only other significant event was the helicopter visit by COMPHIBPAC, Vice Admiral SALZER, and the Commander Amphibious Force, U. S. SEVENTH Fleet, Rear Admiral TOOLE. Both Admirals were calling upon each of the squadron units, and both were favorably impressed with MONTICELLO during their 2 November visit.

On 12 November the task group left the Gulf of Tonkin area arriving in Taiwan two days later. The USS OGDEN (LPD-5) and MONTICELLO made Kaohsiung while the other units continued northward to Keelung, the port of the capital city, Taipei. The purpose of this visit was the informational exchange of operational techniques and capabilities between the Chinese Nationalist Marine Corps and MONTICELLO's embarked units. On 14 and 17 November, the UDT personnel demonstrated beach reconnaissance at the Chinese Naval Base. On board MONTICELLO 16 October, thirty-five Chinese field grade officers attended a series of lectures and displays describing amphibious warfare. In return for the courtesies shown, the Chinese Marines on 17 November presented a review of their excellent Drill Team and a demonstration of hand-to-hand combat methods at their Marine Corps Base at nearby Tsoying. Several ship's officers and chief petty officers were privileged to witness these activities.

Shortly after getting underway on 18 November, MONTICELLO and OGDEN joined the other TG 76.4 units and proceeded to Subic Bay for an upkeep period which lasted from 20 November until 8 December. A good deal of repair work was accomplished. Morale was kept high by providing organized activities for the crew, the focal point of which was a most successful ship's party. Intra-ship softball became a popular sport several times weekly, and basketball challenges from other ships were always met with enthusiasm, and sometimes successfully. Thanksgiving Day dinner on board was a special treat for 140 Marines of BLT 3/4 who were then living ashore in their base camp. Opportunity was also provided from 4 thru 6 December for the squadron to conduct competitive shiphandling exercises and a gunnery shoot in the adjacent coastal waters. MONTICELLO, doing well in shiphandling, excelled in gunnery.

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MONTICELLO was then assigned to independent special operations in the Gulf of Tonkin. Loading out with special materials on 7 and 8 December, the ship made the two-day transit to arrive on station 10 December. These operations were to last for the next nine days. During this time, MONTICELLO displayed her versatility by repairing a teletype machine for the USNS TALUGA while refueling alongside, and also rewound a vital motor for the USS REEVES (DLG-24). The embarked UDT personnel proved a valuable asset on 17 December when a large derelict channel marker buoy was discovered in nearby waters. Dispatched by boat, the UDT swimmers attached an explosive charge to the buoy and retired to safety. The resultant blast moments later completely destroyed the buoy.

On 19 December with the conclusion of the special operations, MONTICELLO departed the Gulf of Tonkin to arrive in Hong Kong 21 December for a six-day Christmas visit. Encouraged by CNO policy, a number of wives joined their husbands in Hong Kong, and several men were able to fly stateside for the holidays. Underway refreshed on the 27th, the ship arrived in Subic Bay on 29 December to begin an upkeep period which would close out the year.

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