



U. S. S. VANCE (DER 387)
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OPNAV Report 5750-1

From: Commanding Officer, USS VANCE (DER 387)

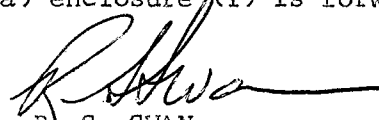
To: Chief of Naval Operations (OP-09B9)

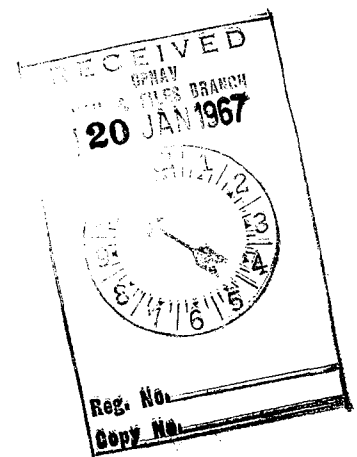
Subj: Command History; submission of

Ref: (a) OPNAVINST 5750.12

Encl: (1) History of USS VANCE

1. In accordance with reference (a) enclosure (1) is forwarded.


R. S. SWAN



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HISTORY OF U.S.S. VANCE (DER 387)

1. The USS VANCE was named in honor of LTJG Joseph William VANCE, Jr., USNR, who was born 4 December 1918 at Memphis, Tennessee. He enlisted on 26 July 1940 as apprentice seaman and served in the USS ARKANSAS in August and September of the same year. On 21 November 1940 he was appointed Midshipman in the Naval Reserve, attended U.S. Naval Reserve Midshipman's School, Prairie State, New York, N.Y., and was commissioned Ensign on 28 February 1941. He was promoted to LTJG on 15 June 1942. It was while LTJG VANCE was on liaison duty with the British Navy that he died at his battle station as a result of injuries received in action and went down with HMAS CANBERRA off Savo Island. His wife, Mrs. J. W. VANCE, sponsored the ship at its launching.
2. USS VANCE was built as a Destroyer Escort by the Brown Shipbuilding Company, Houston, Texas and was first commissioned on 1 November 1943 by Captain C. D. REDGREVO, USN. The ship's first Commanding Officer was LCDR E. A. ANDERSON, USCG, and after her shakedown she became flagship of Escort Squadron 45, a group of DEs manned by Coast Guard personnel.
3. During World War II, USS VANCE was engaged in escorting trans-Atlantic convoys. With two exceptions her work was routine. On 14 May 1944, off Oran, Algeria, she participated in the sinking of a German submarine which had succeeded in torpedoing but not sinking, two merchant ships of VANCE's convoy. A year later, on 11 May 1945, when VANCE was escorting a convoy off the Azores, a light was sighted in the convoy. VANCE approached at full speed, illuminated the target with search lights, and after a few convincing orders in German over the bullhorn, the surfaced U-873 surrendered. A prize crew from the VANCE headed by LT, C. J. SCHMIDT, USCGR, boarded the U-boat, which was escorted back to Portsmouth, N. H. .

ENCLOSURE (1)

4. VANCE was placed in mothballs with the inactive fleet at Green Cove Springs, Florida in November 1945, and brought to Mare Island Naval Shipyard for conversion to a DER in November of 1955. The conversion was an extensive one, involving the addition of much new electronics equipment. Improved air and surface-search radar, a height-finding set, and extensive communications equipment made up the new main battery of the ship. Complete facilities for the operational control of interceptor aircraft were also included. Ordnance was modernized with up-to-date additions and modifications. Loss of living space resulting from increased equipment installations required the enclosing of the entire main deck amidships section to provide necessary berthing and messing spaces. An extensive program of habitability improvements made VANCE one of the most "livable" ships in the fleet. Recommissioning ceremonies took place on 5 October 1956 with her new Commanding Officer, LCDR Albert M. BROUNER, USN reporting the ship as "ready for duty". Following a period of intensive shakedown training the ship proceeded, in March 1957, from San Diego to her new home port of Seattle, Washington, where she reported for duty with Escort Squadron SEVEN.

5. Between March of 1957 and June of 1958, VANCE completed 12 patrols on various stations of the Radar Early Warning System in the North Pacific. On 1 June 1958, the home port of VANCE was changed from Seattle, Washington to Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. There, she began operating with the ships of Escort Squadron SEVEN.

6. VANCE carried out her duties on the DEW line until May of 1960 when the Squadron was dissolved and she was reassigned as a member of Excort Squadron 5. On several occasions she took under surveillance Russian Trawlers equipped as electronics intelligence vessels.

7. VANCE received orders in 1961 to report to CTF 43 to act as Ocean Station Vessel in OPERATION DEEPFREEZE '62. In August she departed Pearl Harbor bound for Dunedin, New Zealand. VANCE's duties were to serve as a NAVAID/SAR ship and communications relay station for A/C flying vital supplies from New Zealand to Antarctica. For her NAVAID accuracy and her ability to maintain communications under the most adverse circumstances she received repeated commendations. The New Year 1962 saw VANCE continue her duties as the "Loneliest Ship in the Navy" on OPERATION DEEPFREEZE. On 5 March VANCE set sail via the Port Chalmers Channel for home as an estimated 5,000 people lined the channel to say goodbye.
8. VANCE returned to Pearl Harbor on 6 April 1962. She returned to NAVAID/SAR duties off the Aleutian Islands.
9. Early 1965 found a fading need for the DER. The "Barrier" duty was coming to an end and a stepped-up schedule for decommissioning DERs was at hand. But in February, when the United States committed itself to the war in Vietnam, the Navy found a new purpose for the DER. The DER was given the duty of coastal surveillance and anti-infiltration patrol in the coastal waters of Vietnam.
10. On 25 March 1965, VANCE departed Pearl Harbor for Subic Bay, Philippines, in company with USS BRISTER (DER 327) and USS FORSTER (DER 334) under the tactical command of Commanding Officer, USS VANCE (DER 387) as CTG 52.8. On 31 March 1965 VANCE came under the operational control of Commander Seventh Fleet.
11. VANCE was the first DER to take a Market Time station, reporting for duty to CTU 71.1.1 on 1 April 1965. Enroute to station she rescued Captain Leland D. HOLCOMB, USAF, who ejected from his F-100 Super Sabre after an in-flight fire developed while on a ferry mission from Danang, Vietnam to Clark

AFB, P.I. Captain HOLCOMB returned to Vietnam where he completed 85 combat missions over North Vietnam before returning home with his squadron.

12. From 11 April to 24 April 1965, VANCE operated as part of TU 71.1.1. It was during this patrol she set up the Tonkin Gulf EC121K/DER barrier and acted as control coordination station between the aircraft and CTU 71.1.1 in USS J. W. THOMASON (DD-760). Her station was generally north of the 17th parallel in waters challenged by Communist North Vietnam.

13. From 15 May to 4 June 1965, VANCE operated in TU 71.1.8 as a surface surveillance unit in the Gulf of Thailand near the South Vietnam-Cambodian border. Several firsts were recorded on this patrol; the first of many pleasant associations with MSOs; the first Vietnamese Navy Liaison Officer; the first boarding of a junk under the new rules of visit and search. VANCE visited Hong Kong in late June for five days before returning to Market Time (the code name of the coastal surveillance operations). VANCE was awarded the "Meritorious Conduct Ashore Award" for her outstanding liberty record during the visit.

14. From 30 June to 4 August 1965, a period of 35 days, VANCE operated as a member of Task Units 71.1.6, 71.1.8, 115.1.6 and 115.1.7. This patrol may have been the longest continuous at-sea period (39 days port-to-port in the ship's history.) The period witnessed the assumption of the operational control of Market Time by the Chief of the Naval Advisory Group, Military Assistance Command, Vietnam, thus tying VANCE even closer to the Vietnamese war effort. VANCE visited Bangkok, Thailand after this patrol from 6-10 August 1965. Social visits were exchanged with units of the Royal Thai Navy, the Argentine Republic Frigate, LIBERTAD, and a Royal (British) Transportation Corps LCT, while present in Bangkok with VANCE.

15. From 12 August to 2 September 1965, VANCE operated as CTU 115.1.5 and CTU 115.1.4 continuing her surveillance mission off central Vietnam. She was in the vicinity of the Battle of Chu-Lai in mid-August. During her four patrols, VANCE had 1538 radar contacts, sighted visually 1001, and investigated 185.

16. On 2 September 1965, VANCE departed Market Time for Subic Bay, P.I. and then for Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. She arrived in Pearl Harbor on 18 September 1965 after having spent 178 days away from her homeport. (92 days on Market Time stations, 44 days in port (Subic Bay, P.I., Hong Kong, B.C.C., and Bangkok, Thailand) and 42 days in transit.)

17. 18 September - 28 December 1965, VANCE spent 99% of this time in Pearl Harbor for repairs, leave, rest and relaxation. On 22 December 1965 LCDR R. W. WRIGHT, USN was relieved by LCDR M. A. ARNHEITER, USN as Commanding Officer, USS VANCE.

18. On 28 December 1965, the first Market Time/Pearl Harbor rotation came to an end as VANCE, FORSTER, BRISTER and FALGOUT sailed for their second WESTPAC deployment. A seven day upkeep in Guam enroute enabled the ship's company to visit the memorials and relics from the World War II actions in the Marianas, and to see why Guam is such an important base for U.S. Pacific air and naval forces.

19. Back on Market Time station in mid-January 1966, VANCE participated in support of Operation Masher, an amphibious assault to clear northern Binh Dinh Province of the VC who had made the area their home since 1954. The ship then migrated to the Gulf of Thailand and had its first close relationship with Navy PCF's and Coast Guard WPB's controlling and acting as a logistics support ship for these small craft. In return, members of VANCE's

crew were invited to make one day patrols in them in a cross-pollination program that developed mutual respect and confidence.

20. After a four day stop in Bangkok, the ship returned to the southern patrol. Despite an average of 30 boardings daily, no contraband was discovered, although several humanitarian incidents occurred. In addition to treating wounds and minor illnesses and dispensing aspirin and bandages, VANCE rescued six men in a boat who had been adrift for several weeks.

21. Manila was the next port of call, and a nine day visit was greatly enjoyed by all hands. The ship had an availability alongside USS MARKAB (AR-23) that was the most outstanding in memory. On 31 March, CDR D. F. MILLIGAN, USN, Commander Escort Squadron SEVEN, temporarily took command of the ship. VANCE shortly thereafter moved to Subic to enable the Commodore to remain closer to his work.

22. On 11 April, LCDR R. S. SWAN, USN, assumed command, and got the ship underway that night for her third patrol, this time off Cap de Ca Mau, the southernmost tip of Vietnam. Her job there was to monitor all the ocean shipping entering or leaving Vietnamese waters. This patrol, which included a survey of traffic patterns in the South China Sea, was followed by a trip to Hong Kong in May.

23. Returning to the area off Binh Dinh, VANCE found the PCF's were now in force along the east coast, too. Her job was consequently less involved with junk traffic than with sea-going shipping. However, one day while investigating a trawler near Tam Quan, she got close enough to engage in a fire fight against automatic weapons on the beach. Her skin was holed for the first known time in this action, but no one was hurt. The snipers were either killed or driven out by landslides caused by 3 inch fire.

24. More interestingly, the ship and a PCF under her control combined to rescue 56 men, women and children after their boat had swamped near Qui Nhon. For several hours, VANCE men fed and cleaned babies, made old women as comfortable as possible, gave away blankets, towels, and food, and generally experienced an empathy with the Vietnamese people never before possible.

25. A 2 day ORI in Subic in June was followed by a return to station, this time along the 17th Parallel. An operational visit to Danang added that town's name to Qui Nhon, Vung Tau, Nha Trang, An Thoi, Song Ong Doc, Poulo Obi and Poulo Gambir, on the list of Vietnamese communities visited. Relieved by HAVERFIELD in late July, VANCE started home, but her services were still needed and she was turned around in the San Bernardino Straits.

26. Back off Ca Mau the tenth Market Time patrol was celebrated. Certificates and awards were made to those who had participated in all of them. The Degaussing Ship USS SURFBIRD relieved her on 6 August and VANCE headed for home in company with FORSTER, having been away from her home port for 233 days, and having been underway 84% of the time in WESTPAC.

27. Arriving on 20 August a sweeping turnover of the ship's company took place. On 27 December 1966, it was "Aloha" to Pearl again, and with FORSTER, VANCE set out again for her third WESTPAC deployment.

28. Commanding Officers and periods served.

LCDR E. A. ANDERSON, USCG	11 November 1943 - UNKNOWN
LCDR A. M. BROUNER, USN	5 October 1956 - 7 January 1958
LCDR R. T. DANIEL, USN	7 January 1958 - 14 February 1959
LCDR P. D. JOHNSTON, USN	14 February 1959 - 16 April 1960
LCDR H. C. PENNY, USN	16 April 1960 - 18 December 1961

Commanding Officers continued.

LCDR H. J. BEYER, USN	18 December 1961 - 7 September 1963
LCDR R. W. WRIGHT, USN	7 September 1963 - 22 December 1965
LCDR M. A. ARNHEITER	22 December 1965 - 31 March 1966
CDR D. F. MILLIGAN	31 March 1966 - 11 April 1966
LCDR R. S. SWAN	11 April 1966 - Present

29. Principal ship movements and engagements.

Escort duty, ATLANTIC	1943 - 1945
Participated in sinking of German submarine off Oran, Algeria	14 May 1944
Captured German U-873 off the Azores and returned her to Portsmouth, N.H.	11 May 1945
Ordered to PACIFIC Theater	After VE Day
Towed to Mare Island Naval Shpyard	November 1945
Assigned to Seattle, Washington home port	March 1957
Radar patrol duty off Puget Sound	March 1957 - May 1958
Home port changed to Pearl Harbor, Haw.	1 June 1958
DEW LINE Patrol Duty	June 1958 - August 1961
Assigned to OPERATION DEEP-FREEZE 1962	August 1961 - March 1962
DEW LINE Patrol Duty	15 May 1962 - 16 May 1964
Port visit to YOKOSUKA, JAPAN	August 1964
DEW LINE Patrol duty	September 1964-February 1965
Market Time Operations WESTPAC	March 1965 - September 1965 January 1966 - August 1966 December 1966 - Present

30. Special Awards and outstanding events of the VANCE.

American Campaign Medal	Date unknown
European, African, Middle Eastern Campaign	Date unknown
Victory Medal WW II	Date unknown

Special awards and outstanding events continued.

Captured German U-873	11 May 1945
First ship to sail on the Mid-Ocean Picket	1 July 1958
National Defense Medal	31 December 1950
Antarctic Service Medal	May 1962
First DER on Market Time Operations	11 April 1965
"Meritorious Conduct Ashore Award" Hong Kong	28 June 1965
CNO Excellence in Surface Observations Award	July 1965
Vietnam Service Medal	3 July 1965 - Present
Republic of Vietnam Campaign Medal	1960 - Present
Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal	July 1965
CRUDESPEC Excellence Award for Engineering in her Class	17 August 1965