

15 February 1981

From: Commanding Officer, USS PONCE (LPD-15)

To: Director of Naval History (OP-09B9)

Subj: Command History (Report Symbol 5750-1)

Ref: (a) OPNAVINST 5750.12B

Encl: (1) USS PONCE (LPD-15) Command History 1980

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

C. G. FELKINS

U S S P O N C E ( L P D 1 5 )  
C O M M A N D H I S T O R Y 1 9 8 0

## 1. Command Organization

### A. Commanding Officer

1. Captain Charles G. FELKINS, USN,

17 May 1979 to Present

### B. Amphibious Squadron Assignments

1. Amphibious Squadron

2. Amphibious Squadron

## II. Chronological Summary of Operations for 1980

The PONCE began the year pierside, Norfolk Naval Station, with many of her crew on holiday leave. The first operation of the year began on 14 January thru 18 January when the PONCE underwent amphibious training operations in the Virginia Beach area. The PONCE was again underway 21 January for a workup to Anorack Express, a NATO exercise. Marines were embarked in Morehead City, North Carolina on 22 January to participate in rehearsal landings on Onslow Beach, North Carolina. The PONCE returned to Morehead City on 1 February and to Norfolk on 2 February.

Anorack Express, cold weather operations in Northern Europe, began for PONCE on 15 February when she departed for Morehead City to embark 36 Marine Amphibious Units. PONCE acted as primary control ship for the amphibious landing.

PONCE arrived in Portsmouth, England from 1-4 March for a port visit and fuel.

After a rehearsal landing at Surnaldalsora, Norway, on 8-9 March, PONCE rendezved with the Royal Navy amphibious force on 11 March. D-Day for the exercise came on 14 March with the surface landing over Gjovik Beach in Malangan Fjord. The last of the Marine Units were unloaded 23 March, and the PONCE departed for port visits in Edinburg, Scotland and Plymouth, England. The PONCE, after completing the off-load of Marines in Morehead City, returned to Norfolk, pier 5 berth 6, on 17 April.

Soon after her return to Norfolk, the PONCE received word of a "show the flag" visit to New York City. Arriving 9 May, the PONCE was greeted by a gala reception. New York lived up to its reputation as a Navy town by providing tickets to Broadway shows, sporting events, and lines of visitors anxious to view a Navy vessel. The visit was capped by a spot on ABC-TV's "Good Morning, America" program featuring the ship and several of her officers and crew.

Five days after the PONCE's return to Norfolk, the ship was instructed to conduct Humanitarian Search and Rescue operations in the straits of Florida to aid Cuban refugees. Three weeks of constant patrolling through the Florida straits resulted in the rescue of 640 exhausted, but very grateful, Cubans. The ship was awarded the Humanitarian Service Medal for her part in the operation.

The ship's return to Norfolk brought about a period of reunion with families and friends, and a much needed maintenance period for the ship. It also brought about a period of preparations for "Teamwork '80, another NATO exercise in Norway.

PONCE this time led a column of several amphibious ships into a narrow, twisting fjord for a night assault.

The PONCE's return to Norfolk on election day ended the ship's cruises for the year. Various short underway periods throughout the year gave the PONCE the opportunity to exercise her different missions.

Besides serving on several occasions as a wet=well training platform for the boat school in Little Creek, the ship also conducted Mine Countermeasure qualifications using Helo-towed sleds from the Naval Air Station, Norfolk.