



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY

USS PONCE (LPD-15)  
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From: Commanding Officer, USS PONCE (LPD-15)  
To: Director of Naval History, Washington, DC 20374-0571

Subj: 1988 Command History

Ref: (a) OPNAVINST 5750.12D

Encl: (1) Command Composition and Organization  
(2) Chronology  
(3) Narrative  
(4) Supporting Documents

1. In accordance with reference (a), enclosures (1) through (4) are submitted.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Alan B. Moser", is written over a horizontal line.

Alan B. Moser

## COMMAND COMPOSITION AND ORGANIZATION

USS PONCE (LPD-15), is commanded by Captain Alan B. Moser, United States Navy, and is homeported in Norfolk, Virginia. PONCE'S immediate unit commander is Captain Thomas S. Treanor, Commander Amphibious Squadron Twelve.

PONCE'S mission as an amphibious transport dock is to embark United States Marine Corps and Navy support elements and by both water and airborne means, conduct amphibious landings to obtain beachheads, prosecute further operations ashore or deny areas or facilities to the enemy.

PONCE'S crew consists of 28 officers (including one U.S. Marine Combat Cargo Officer), 20 chief petty officers (including one U.S. Marine Combat Cargo Assistant Gysgt) and 365 enlisted personnel with a multitude of skills to execute the multi-mission role of a major amphibious ship.

88

CHRONOLOGY

01 JAN - 08 JAN Holiday leave/upkeep Norfolk, Va

08 JAN - 31 JAN IMAV/Upkeep Norfolk, Va

01 FEB - 03 FEB Vacapes Engineering and Combat Systems Assessments

04 FEB - 25 FEB POM Norfolk, Va

26 FEB - 27 FEB Ammo onload explosive anchorage berth Whiskey

27 FEB - 28 FEB Upkeep Norfolk, Va

29 FEB Deploy MARG 1-88

01 MAR Morehead City, NC  
Troop, cargo and equipment onload

01 MAR - 11 MAR Translant  
Chop to CINCUSNAVEUR  
Opcon CTG 61.9

12 MAR - 14 MAR Rota, Sp Turnover

16 MAR - 21 MAR Sierra Del Retin, Sp PHIBLEX

25 MAR - 04 APR Benidorm, Sp PVST  
Change of Command: Captain Alan B. Moser relieves  
Captain Doyle J. Borchers

07 APR - 12 APR Pian De Spille, It PHIBLEX

15 APR - 17 APR Livorno, It PVST

19 APR - 25 APR Naples, It PVST

28 APR San Raphael, Fr Administrative Off-load of  
selected USMC Units for training ashore

29 APR - 06 MAY Capo Teulada, Sa NATO Exercise Dragon Hammer 88

09 MAY San Raphael, Fr Administrative Off-load of USMC  
Units for training ashore

10 MAY - 29 MAY Marseille, Fr PVST  
MEDTRAMID I

30 MAY San Raphael, Fr Backload

02 JUN - 03 JUN Tunis, Tu Joint training and PVST

04 JUN - 09 JUN Cap Serrat, Tu PHIBLEX

12 JUN - 18 JUN Capo Teulada, Sa TARTARUGA PHIBLEX 88

20 JUN - 29 JUN Augusta Bay, Si  
Becces, NVG Flight Ops, RRC Ops  
MEDTRAMID II

01 JUL - 02 JUL Salerno, It PVST

03 JUL Campo Longo, It Administrative off load of  
selected USMC for training ashore.

04 JUL - 08 JUL Salerno, It PVST

09 JUL Campo Longo, It Backload

12 JUL - 15 JUL Cartagena, Sp PVST/FOREXTRAMID 1988 (UNITED  
KINGDOM) 3M Inspection

22 JUL - 08 AUG Haifa, Is PVST  
MEDTRAMID III

16 AUG - 17 AUG Rota, Sp Turnover with MARG 2-88

18 AUG - 27 AUG Translant  
Chop to CINCLANTFLT Opcon CTU 22.1.2 Out Chop OPPE

28 AUG Morehead City, NC Off-load

29 AUG - 03 OCT Leave/upkeep Little Creek, Va  
Opcon CTU 040.4.6

04 OCT - 07 OCT Chesbay Anchorage LA-7 DLQ'S and MCM Ops with  
HM-12

08 OCT - 11 OCT Upkeep Norfolk, Va

12 OCT - 13 OCT Vacapes Oparea  
DLQ'S HM-12, HC-2, HAL-4

14 OCT - 31 OCT Upkeep Norfolk, Va

01 NOV - 04 NOV Vacapes Oparea  
DLQ'S HC-2, HC-6, HC-8 Causeway Ops with ACU-2

07 NOV - 11 NOV Nassau, Ba PVST

14 NOV - 16 NOV      Onslow Bay, NC  
Rigid Raiding Craft Ops Marine Units

17 NOV                Chesbay Anchorage LA-8  
Wet Well Ops ACU-2

17 NOV - 11 DEC      Upkeep Norfolk, Va  
IMAV USS Vulcan

12 DEC - 15 DEC      Chesbay Anchorage LA-7  
DLQ'S NAS Oceana, HC-2

16 DEC - 31 DEC      Holiday leave/upkeep Norfolk, Va

## NARRATIVE

The USS PONCE (LPD-15) is the newest and last of a class of amphibious transport docks used by today's Navy. Her sustained excellence in both operational and administrative taskings has earned the "Proud Lion" the reputation as "The Best LPD in the Atlantic".

The arrival of January 1988 found PONCE pierside at the Norfolk Naval Base with a large percentage of the ships crew enjoying holiday leave.

February brought an increase in the already upbeat tempo of the ship as she prepared to deploy to the Mediterranean Sea as a unit of Mediterranean Amphibious Readiness Group 1-88. On 29 February PONCE departed Norfolk, Virginia enroute Morehead City, North Carolina.

The first day of March saw the safe and successful onload of United States Marine Corps elements of the 26 Marine Expeditionary Unit and the first onload of the USMC Rigid Raider Craft. PONCE departed that same day for the Mediterranean with the other units of MARG 1-88. On 2 March PONCE conducted a refueling-at-sea with USS Paul and several alongside approaches with the USS Dewey.

On 12 March PONCE and other MARG 1-88 elements arrived in Rota, Spain to begin in-chop and turnover with elements of MARG 4-87. Saint Patrick's Day PONCE arrived at Sierra Del Retin, Spain to take part in the first of five amphibious exercises conducted during the deployment. During this exercise and all subsequent exercises, PONCE served as the primary control ship. Her performance as primary control ship during the deployment was the primary factor leading to selection as the "Top Operator" for the deployment. After successfully completing operations at Sierra Del Retin, PONCE departed in company with the MARG to transit the Straits of Gibraltar and conduct a port visit in Benidorm, Spain. The arrival in Benidorm on 25 March marked the first time many PONCE sailors had experienced liberty in Europe and all hands enjoyed their stay. On 30 March Captain Alan B. Moser relieved Captain Doyle J. Borchers II as Commanding Officer, USS PONCE (LPD-15). The change of command ceremony was held on the flight deck and many local officials of Benidorm were in attendance.

April found PONCE still in Spain but, on April 5th she departed Benidorm after eleven fun-filled days and rejoined the MARG. That same day she completed an underway replenishment with USS MISSISSINEWA (USNS T-AO 144) and on April 6th she conducted an unrep with USS MT BAKER (AE-26), transited the Straits of Bonafacio between the islands of Corsica, France and Sardinia, Italy and headed for her second exercise. The MARG began their second amphibious exercise at Pian De Spille, Italy on April 7th. CTF 61 hosted a Captain's Gig and Motor Whale Boat race on board PONCE on Sunday April 10th. Though the PONCE gig finished at the middle of the pack in the first race, won by CTF 61's gig, the MWB won its race with a late surge over the other participants at the finish line. PONCE, along with Hermitage and Harlan County,

arrived in Livorno, Italy for a port visit on April 14th. On the 18th PONCE sortied and the following day all MARG units pulled into Naples, Italy in preparation for Operation "Dragon Hammer", a major NATO exercise. PONCE departed Naples on April 26th and anchored at St. Raphael, France to off-load 26 MEU elements for training ashore at Camp De Canjuers, France on April 28th. On the final day of April PONCE rejoined elements of Task Force 503 for Operation "Dragon Hammer" at Capo Tuelada, Sardinia.

PONCE completed her 30,000th consecutive safe helicopter landing on May 1st. Piloting the UH-1N helicopter was the ships' Air Boss, Lt [REDACTED]. May 4th PONCE received notice that she was the recipient of the Battle "E" Award for the competitive cycle 1 Oct 87-31 Mar 88. On 6 May PONCE and Iwo Jima hosted a Congressional delegation who observed amphibious operations from Iwo Jima's flight deck and PONCE's well deck. PONCE departed Capo Tuelada on 7 May for Marseilles, France, pausing on the 8th to off-load 26 MEU elements at St. Raphael, France. During May 10th PONCE and Hermitage arrived in Marseilles for a much needed Restricted Availability upkeep and eagerly anticipated liberty time. PONCE pulled out of Marseilles on 30 May and again headed for St. Raphael, France where she backloaded her 26 MEU assets and headed south with the MARG for Tunis, Tunisia.

The second of June began with PONCE in Tunis, Tunisia for a port visit. From June 4th through the 10th, PONCE was off the coast of Tunisia at Cap Serrat for her fourth amphibious exercise. PONCE departed Tunisia and sailed north conducting an unrep with USS SAN DIEGO (AFS-6) and a refueling with USS WACCAMAW (USNS T-AO 109). Mid June was spent off the coast of Capo Tuelada in support of exercise Tartaruga, the fifth and final amphibious exercise of the deployment. With Tartaruga completed, PONCE sortied for Augusta Bay, Sicily arriving the 20th. Iwo Jima and PONCE spent odd-numbered days underway in order to conduct BECCES, Night Vision Goggles flight operations, and Rigid Raider Craft launches/recoveries. PONCE departed Augusta Bay 29 June and arrived in Salerno, Italy for a port visit on July 1st.

PONCE celebrated the 4th of July by getting underway for Persano, Italy where she off-loaded her U.S. Marine Corps elements for training ashore at Campo Longo, Italy and then returned to Salerno. During 9 July PONCE backloaded her Marines at Persano and sailed for Cartagena, Spain arriving July 12th. On the 13th and 14th of July, PONCE was examined and successfully passed a 3M inspection then left Cartagena on 15 July to rendezvous with the MARG for the transit across the Mediterranean to Haifa, Israel for a port visit and equipment washdown.

PONCE arrived in hot and sunny Haifa on the 22nd and immediately began off-loading her Marine assets. While in Haifa, PONCE crew members enjoyed excellent liberty and the MARG Marines completed their first ever washdown in Israel.

PONCE departed Israel 9 August for the long trip back home. Soon after departing Haifa, PONCE received notification that she was

the recipient of the CNO Surface Ship Safety Award for the competitive cycle Oct 86-Mar 88 for the small/medium amphibious ship category. On August 12th and 14th PONCE completed her final two of fifteen underway replenishments of the deployment. Pausing the 16th and 17th in Rota, Spain PONCE completed turnover with MARG 2-88. With a successful turnover behind her, PONCE left the Mediterranean and completed a successful out chop OPPE.

PONCE off-loaded her Marines on 28 August at Morehead City, N.C. and embarked male friends and family members for a "Tiger Cruise" from Morehead City to Little Creek.

On 29 August PONCE sailed up Thimble Shores Channel and pulled into the Naval Amphibious Base at Little Creek, Virginia for a much anticipated reunion with wives, girlfriends, family and friends, thus ending the deployment.

The month of September held PONCE inport while crew members enjoyed a standown to spend time with their families.

During October PONCE got underway briefly to conduct mine warfare flight operations with HM-12 off the Virginia coast and acted as a platform for training assault boats in wet well operations from Little Creek Assault Craft units.

In November PONCE again got underway to conduct training off the Virginia coast then set sail for sunny Nassau, Bahamas. There PONCE crew members enjoyed some of their best liberty since the Med as the ship spent the entire 2nd week of November in Nassau. She returned to Norfolk on 17 November and remained there through the end of the month. PONCE spent December inport Norfolk with the exception of one week underway for training ending on 16 December, when PONCE ended the year as it had began, on holiday leave.



## SYMBOLISM IN PONCE'S INSIGNIA

USS PONCE's emblem is comprised of four major elements:

- 1) A Rampant Lion (Coat of Arms of Juan PONCE de Leon) signifying the high spiritedness of the Navy - Marine Corps team that will serve her.
- 2) A Trident, emblematic of U.S. Naval power and supremacy.
- 3) Commissioning Pennants, visual symbol of U.S. Navy ships in commission.
- 4) The Royal Purple Lion, which is the Coat of Arms of Juan PONCE de Leon Spanish explorer, discoverer of Florida and first Governor of Puerto Rico, is a continuing reminder of our bond with the people of our namesake city, Ponce, Puerto Rico.