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CONFIDENTIAL

HMAS SYDNEY,
at Sea.

6th January, 1968

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THE FLAG OFFICER COMMANDING,
H.M. AUSTRALIAN FLEET.

H.M.A.S. SYDNEY - REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS - DECEMBER, 1967

Sir,

1. I have the honour to report the proceedings of Her Majesty's Australian Ship under my command, for the month of December, 1967. (All time local as indicated). The ship remained berthed at the Fitting Out Wharf, Garden Island, from the beginning of the month until Monday 11th.
2. I inspected HMAS ANZAC at sea on Friday 1st. The results of the annual Inspection of ANZAC have been forwarded separately.
3. Due to the ship's programme a children's party for Ship's Company families was held in the ship on Sunday 3rd. If the fervour with which "Father Christmas" was welcomed and the rapidity with which the food cleared the cafeteria tables gave any indication, then the children had a most enjoyable afternoon.
4. At 1315K on Tuesday 5th, you Sir, informally walked through the ship. Your signal on completion of the walkround was appreciated by the Ship's Company.
5. To prepare for Operation Awkward a diving demonstration was given to the Ship's Company on the following day. Divers from RUSHCUTTER presented the demonstration and a lecture was also given concerning physical security of the ship.
6. The embarkation of Army cargo and vehicles was commenced during the forenoon on Thursday 7th. Loading continued throughout the day and was completed on the following afternoon.
7. Operation Awkward was exercised at the berth during the evening of Thursday 7th. Attack divers were provided by HMAS RUSHCUTTER. When called for, prompt assistance was also provided by H.M.A. Ships MELBOURNE and HOBART.
8. The final two LCM 6's were accepted from the Army on Friday 8th. LCM devit and equipment trials had been progressed during the ship's period in harbour. All modifications to the lower blocks were completed and the falls removed.
9. The ship cast off from Fitting Out Wharf at 1430K on Monday 11th and SYDNEY proceeded for Adelaide. After clearing the heads Action Stations were exercised. This was followed by a close range AA firing. Details of all exercises carried out during the month are listed in Appendix C.
10. The four Wessex Mk 31a's of 817 Squadron were embarked at 1800K as the ship steamed southwards, east of Jervis Bay. The squadron helicopters had been despatched to HMAS ALBATROSS while cargo was being embarked at Garden Island.

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11. The ashes of the late Naval Dockyard Police Constable PEARCE were scattered at sea in position 38 41 South 142 18 East at 0900 Wednesday 13th.
12. The Fleet Communications Officer LCDR R.M. BAIRD, accompanied the ship to Adelaide and during the period lectured the Ship's Company on Security. The passage to Adelaide was uneventful, the ship arriving off the Fairway beacon as scheduled. Because of the late arrival off the harbour of S.S. IBERIA, however, SYDNEY was delayed from entering harbour until 1100IK. SYDNEY finally berthed port side to No. 4 berth Outer harbour at 1131IK. The loading of 3 RAR unit stores, cargo and vehicles began immediately and by 1700IK all cargo was secured for sea. 138 vehicles and 680 tons total stores constituted the cargo for the voyage.
13. The 3rd battalion RAR, consisting of 515 personnel, was embarked at 0800IK on Saturday 16th. Army personnel were permitted to return to the wharf to farewell relatives and friends, once their kits had been stowed. SYDNEY cast off from No. 4 berth at 1130IK and, when clear from the harbour approaches, course was set for Cape Leeuwin. 3 RAR attended Emergency stations and leaving ship stations during the evening.
14. At 1755IK at the entrance to St. Vincents Gulf a fishing vessel was passed in which two men could be seen waving their arms in the manner used to attract attention. The ship was stopped and the Zodiac slipped to investigate. Once it had been established that the fishermen were waving farewell to the battalion, the Zodiac was hoisted and the ship continued the passage to Fremantle. The heavy swell experienced as the ship entered the waters of the Great Australian Bight caused seasickness amongst the troops, but in a very short period the majority became accustomed to the ship's motion.
15. SYDNEY entered Fremantle Harbour at 0840H on Wednesday 20th and, on completion of turning with the assistance of two tugs the ship berthed starboard side to No.8 berth North Quay. Refuelling began immediately the ship had completed securing.
16. Several hours leave were given to West Australian natives including personnel from 3 RAR. There were no absentees on sailing.
17. At 1500H the ship cast off and proceeded for Vung Tau.
18. A memorial service for the late Prime Minister, the Right Honorable Harold HOLT M.P., was held in the hangar on Friday 22nd.
19. Christmas Island was passed at sunset on the following day and the ship entered into the rain squall area associated with the Inter tropical convergence zone.
20. One Wessex helicopter was launched at 0644H on Sunday 24th to scout ahead and transfer the ship's chaplains to HMAS YARRA for morning prayers. The transfer took place at 0715 and 45 minutes later YARRA rendezvoused with SYDNEY. The padres returned to the ship by light jackstay transfer during the scheduled replenishment of YARRA later in the forenoon.
21. With HMAS YARRA in company, SYDNEY transitted Sunda Strait at noon and Gaspar Strait during the late evening.
22. Although away from their homes for Christmas, the

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23. YARRA was again replenished during the forenoon Tuesday 26th and at 1700H the Task Group closed up at Defence stations. The approach to Vung Tau was made without incident and at 0702H on Wednesday 27th, SYDNEY anchored in her assigned berth off Pte Ganh Rai.

24. Disembarkation of cargo and troops began at 0810H and was completed at 1330H. As on previous occasions CHINOOK helicopters uplifted the Battalion to the forward base and lighters secured alongside were loaded with palletised cargo and vehicles. The major addition to the unloading operation on this occasion was the use of a CH-54A 'Sky Crane' which lifted 28 five ton general service vehicles direct from the flight deck and transported them to the shore. Later the Sky Crane was employed unloading the lighters inshore. Ship's LCM's were used to tranship 25 IKARA cases to our American L.S.D. for onward passage to Subic Bay.

25. The ship was delayed in sailing from Vung Tau by the falls of No. 6 LCM davits jumping from the sheaves. This was caused by bad handling of the LCM. My message DTG 300845Z refers. Despite personnel changes and a reduced work up, all hands worked well to achieve the unloading operation in such a short time.

26. A total of 132 aircraft movements were recorded during the unloading and departure screen operations. The 66 sorties were as follows:-

<u>TYPE</u>	<u>NUMBER</u>	<u>DUTY</u>
CHINOOK	18	Land army personnel
SKY CRANE	28	Land 5 ton vehicles
IROQUOIS	15	Communications/personnel transfers
WESSEX	5	Departure screen.

27. As no back loading was required SYDNEY weighed anchor and proceeded from Vung Tau at 1450H. HMAS YARRA and two helicopters were assigned for departure screen duties prior to sailing. As the task group approached the sea limits of the Market Time area the ships reverted to normal cruising watches.

28. The passage to the replenishment rendezvous in the Singapore area was uneventful. Opportunity was taken to exercise Officer of the Watch manoeuvres on two occasions and also to exercise the command team in RAS approaches.

29. R.F.A. OLNA was met at 0630H on Friday 29th. The rendezvous had been advanced two hours at the request of OLNA so that she could achieve more suitable berthing conditions at Singapore Naval Base. The replenishment began immediately and on completion at 0905H, 1492 tons F.F.O. had been received. YARRA also refuelled from OLNA.

30. The Task Group remained in the Singapore area until 1415H. At my invitation the Chief of Staff to the Commander, Far East Fleet, Rear Admiral Ian McLAUGHLIN D.S.C., joined the ship by helicopter from HMS ALBION and lunched with me.

31. The return transit through Gaspar Strait took place during the morning of Saturday 30th and later that evening the ship passed through Sunda Strait. HMAS YARRA was detached to proceed to Singapore at 1630H.

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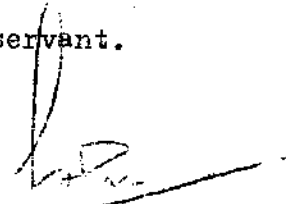
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32. At the close of the month the ship was passing to the east of Christmas Island on route for Fremantle.
33. In general all machinery and equipment, including electrical components, has performed satisfactorily throughout the month. There are no major items to report.
34. Prior to departing on the voyage to South Vietnam, 227 Junior Recruits and Ordinary Seamen were posted from the ship. The remaining 87 Junior sailors have been employed in complement billets. As the ship is operating in the primary role formal instruction of the junior sailors has been at a minimum, consisting of "on the job" instruction and dog watch lecture periods when operational commitments permit.
35. The health of the Ship's Company has remained satisfactory and despite the ship's absence from Australia during the Christmas period morale has remained good.
36. The Welfare Committee has met during the month.

I have the honour to be,

Sir,

Your obedient servant.


(E.J. Peel)
CAPTAIN

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APPENDIX "A" - STEAMING FIGURES

- (a) Distance steamed during the month - 6,959.5 miles
 (b) Hours underway during the month - 430 hrs 33 mins
 (c) Total distance steamed since recommissioning- 150,299.0 miles
 (d) Total hours underway since recommissioning - 10,239 hrs 11 mins
 (e) Occasions of exceeding economical speed - -

<u>DATE</u>	<u>TIME</u>	<u>AV. SPEED</u>	<u>FUEL USED/HR</u>	<u>DIST/TON FUEL</u>	<u>REASON</u>
11	3 hrs	19.5	9.7	2.01	To R/V 817 Squadron.
20	8 hrs	19.0	8.25	2.3	ROVER ONE
21	24 hrs	19.0	8.21	2.314	" "
22	24 hrs	18.2	7.25	2.51	" "
23	24 hrs	17.2	7.33	2.346	" "
24	24 hrs	18.2	7.54	2.41	" "
25	24 hrs	18.0	8.17	2.2	" "
29	9 hrs	19.0	9.0	2.1	" "
30	24 hrs	19.0	9.17	2.07	" "
31	24 hrs	19.0	9.0	2.1	" "

APPENDIX "B" - SHIP MOVEMENTS

<u>DATE</u>	<u>TIME</u>	<u>MOVEMENT</u>
11	1430	Cast off and proceeded for Adelaide.
14	1131	Berthed No.4 Outer Harbour Adelaide.
16	1125	Cast off and proceeded for Fremantle.
20	0945	Berthed No.8 Fremantle Harbour.
	1500	Cast off and proceeded for Vung Tau.
27	0702	Anchored Baie de Ganh Rai, Vung Tau.
	1450	Sailed from Vung Tau for Singapore Area.
29	0630	Rondezvoused R.F.A. OLNA, Singapore Area.
	1415	Proceeded for Fremantle.