A Journey into History â€“ Part IV

Description

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Part IX

Please pardon the skipped month, but if you have read the other three parts, Iâ€™m now going to just shift to the events of 20 years ago. Iâ€™ll work on â€œLife Between the Catapults, or What I Did on My Indian Ocean Cruiseâ€• will come later.

When you last read about the SARATOGA/CCDG-8 Battle Group, we had received orders to head for the Suez Canal. That we did. It was still Janaury, and we made our way into the Red Sea and to Port Suez in full EMCOM at top speed that conditions allowed.

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We made the 24 hour long northern transit and headed for the Ionian Sea (the central part of the Mediterranean Ocean, to join with the CORAL SEA/CCG-2 Battle Group. With the join up, Admiral David Jerimiah (COMCRUDESGRU 8) was named Commander, Battle Force Zulu. With this entery into the Med, the meetings aboard SARATOGA (CV-60) between Adm Jerimiah and Admiral Frank Kelso, COMSIXTHFLT, began as well.

Muammar Khadaffi had once more proclaimed his claim to the Gulf of Sidra as Libyan territorial waters (first made in 1973), and told the world he would defend his territory. Thus began what we called â€œOVLâ€• (pronounced â€œovalâ€•) for â€œOperations in the Vicinity of Libya.â€•

I canâ€™t recall all the dates associated with the Ops in late January, but off we went, two CVBGs worth of assets, to challenge the claims of Khadaffi to the rights to navigate in international waters. It was more than just to drive about in the water, waving the flag, but also to carry the message that President Reagan was ready to muster significant military capability to counter state supported terrorism. In December, 1985, Libyan supported terrorists had bombed discos in Germany, killing several people, to include US service personnel.

This series of operations gave me the opportunity to see the effects of moving large forces around, and the intricacies involved. I was afforded a special seat to this â€œplay,â€• with my squadron, DESRON 32, being assigned as the Battle Force ASW Commander. When we moved aboard the SARATOGA per CINCPACFLT doctrine (The ASW Commander for the battle group will be embarked on the CV) the previous December, we were berthed with Adm Jerimiahâ€™s staff (I roomed with the Intelligence Officer) and we ate in the Admiralâ€™s Mess. The good side of this was we generally knew most of what was going on from these close arrangements, but the bad side was the CCDG-8 Ops Boss tended to look at us as augmetees to his staff. There were a few discussions over who could task who, but things worked out for the best.

My assignment was the Combat Systems Material Officer, so I had to keep the handle on logistics for the ASW ships, and I regularly interacted with the CCDG-8 logistics guys, so I got a glimpse into the â€œbig pictureâ€• regulalry.

On top of all these things, the USS AMERICA Battle Group was also dispatched from stateside to make the Battle Force Zulu a three CV formation. That hadnâ€™t happened since the Vietnam Conflictâ€¦.

Things got raelly busy, and for the first time for me and many others, the â€œbad guysâ€• were not the â€œorangeâ€• forces, and there were no umpires, nor back door copies of the enemyâ€™s schedule of eventsâ€¦.More on that in the coming posts on this topic.

Side note: The most favored movie for the Admiral (and therefore his staff as well) was â€œZuluâ€•, starring Michael Caine.

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