Ropeyarn Sunday â€œSea Storiesâ€• and Open Trackbacks

Description

Sea stories? You want â€œsea stories?â€•

Once upon a midwatch clearâ€¦.(to be continued later today). The topic? VERY large formations doing â€œTIC TACs.â€•

In the meantime, link your best, current, or currently best posts!

There we were, the leadership of the ship massed on the bridge, late in the evening, on a clear (on the surface), but moonless night. A Carrier Battle Group (CVBG) comprised of us and escorts and the USS SARATOGA (CV-60), if memory serves me well, had â€œjoined upâ€• with the Standing Naval Forces, Atlantic (STANAVFORLANT), consisting of several frigates and destroyers from the Continent, and one of our ships so assigned as her deployment) and their supporting oiler, in this cycle, courtesy of the Royal Navy.

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For what ever reason, the British Admiral of STANAVFORLANT was in tactical command of us all and had ordered us into a large circular formation, of three concentric circular ranges. We, being a Fat Ship (USS MILWAUKEE (AOR-2)), in company with one carrier and at least one other oiler (the Brit) were assigned a â€œpointâ€• station (a fixed bearing and range from the guide ship of the formation) and were on our way through traffic to get there.

Shortly before arriving on station, the, as we called it back the, PRITAC (primary tactical) radio crackled to life and a very long coded signal was clearly sounded out in all its phonetic glory from ATP-1, a standard signal book used by we and our allied nations. I canâ€™t tell you what it was, but it had a change of station component, followed by the alteration of the axis of the formation, followed by a course change. The signal was passed as a â€œdelayed executiveâ€• type, meaning a separate command would be sent to execute the directions at a future time.

As Officer of the Deck (OOD), I diligently plotted the new changes on a Maneuvering Board, calculated our course and speed to the new station assignment and showed it to the CO. He concurred and I briefed my Junior Officer of the Deck (who was conning the ship, too) on what to do when the signal was executed.

I recall we arrived in our station on that moonless night, nestled among the combatants, who would patrol the seas to keep us and the CV safe from enemy attacks, and we reported â€œAlfa Stationâ€• smartly as we ordered speed reduced to match the guideâ€™s speed. Within moments, PRITAC came to life once more and, spewing forth a fairly long string or letters and numbers, followed by â€œStandby, EXECUTE!â€•

The JOOD clearly announced the the Helmsman and Lee Helmsman the rudder and engine orders for us to slip, ever so relatively to our new station, with a new axis on the formation (I think it was almost a 180 degree axis change to match the reversal of the formationâ€™s course. And the 40,000 tons of

steel and people and liquid cargo commenced to swing crisply (well, as best we could imitate a destroyer with less HP per ton). Now consider this â€œMâ€• with new â€œAâ€• in both the forward speed and the rudder standard (15 degrees) input, while traveling about 15 kts. As we smiled in the dim red glow of the low level illumination of the bridge equipment, several of us, the CO and XO and OPS, as well as I on the bridge wing, noted the relative movement of the running lights of the other ships of the formation would indicate they were not in a bold course change to the right, they were more like, well, to put it plainly essentially still headed the same direction they had been going before the long, butâ€¦you guessed it, not wholly ordered signal.

A new voice was heard over PRITAC, with a distinctly English (the Queenâ€™s not American), sending a new communication and, but the â€œcall upâ€• portion of the message, only addressed to our call sign. The â€œweâ€™re real Surface Warfare expertsâ€• aura fading. No, evaporated, as the words sunk in â€œ(MILWAUKEE), Your movements are not understood.â€• Being the practiced crisis management experts we are resulted in the almost instantaneously blurted out comment by several of us â€œKEEP THE RUDDER ON!â€• We then realized of the extensive signal sent, only a portion of it was directed to be carried out, and there were other portions yet to be executed. Those parts are pretty obvious.

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The speed increase and right standard remained on, as we cut a 360 degree wake into the black water, before resuming the station we were not supposed to have left yet. The CO said to keep the speed on, but to report â€œAlfa Stationâ€• to the Officer in Tactical Command (OTC), we did and after â€œRoger,â€• the remaining portions of the long signal, to include the new course change, so all we had do was put the rudder back on and head for our new station.

At least it was a dark and windy nightâ€¦.

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