

NAVAL COMMUNICATIONS BULLETIN

PKO/GPS
R/D
R/G
Pages 12-13
Class attached
to members

REP
RMS
RDS
ETS



"GRAY GHOST OF THE VIETNAM COAST"

After Three Years On The Line:

'GRAY GHOST OF VIETNAM COAST' CHECKS IN FOR REST AND OVERHAUL

By Lieutenant junior grade F.H. Ewing, USNR

In late August, 1968, USS ANNAPOLIS (AGMR-1) finished her eighteenth Patrol on the line in Vietnam and headed for a much deserved overhaul period in Yokosuka, Japan.

The overhaul is the first since ANNAPOLIS was converted in 1962 from the decommissioned escort aircraft carrier, USS GILBERT ISLANDS (CVE-107), to its present status as Major Communications Relay Number One. Since September 1965, ANNAPOLIS has operated off the Vietnam coast, bringing Naval Communications to SEVENTH Fleet naval units afloat with speed and reliability, and providing a voice for command when and where needed.

The beginning of the overhaul period ended the first phase of ANNAPOLIS' history as a vital link in modern U.S. Navy communications. Early in 1969, she will start her second phase with a return to the line after



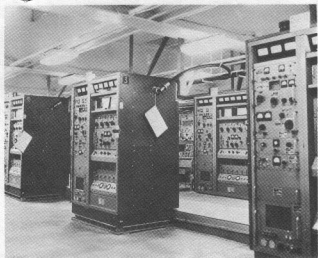
Antennas have replaced a once vital and busy World War II flight deck.

the yard overhaul in Yokosuka, where the engineering plant will be updated and overhauled.

With specially designed antenna systems constructed on her flight deck, the latest in complex communications spaces, capacious fuel tanks, and, what is most important, her smoothly functioning and well-trained crew of 750, ANNAPOLIS is capable of operating for protracted periods of time in remote corners of the world's oceans, augmenting existing shore communication facilities, and temporarily extending essential Naval Communication services in areas where they might have been lost or where they may never have existed.

Until August 1967, ANNAPOLIS operated in the waters off the coast of South Vietnam, providing support to the surveillance units in the "Market Time" areas with a local area broadcast, ship to shore entry point, and support. In August 1967, with the arrival of USS ARLINGTON (AGMR-2) and the commissioning of U.S. Naval Communication Station Cam Ranh Bay, RVN, operations were changed, and ANNAPOLIS moved to a position near the entrance to the Gulf of Tonkin, where her support emphasized improving communications services to the Amphibious Ready Groups, the Carrier Strike Groups, and the ships involved in the gunfire support and surveillance operation "Sea Dragon." With the activation of NAVCOMMSTA Cam Ranh Bay the local area broadcast responsibilities were shifted from ANNAPOLIS to this new station.

In the Gulf of Tonkin, ANNAPOLIS has provided full period terminations for several of the major units engaged in strike operations relaying their traffic into the Naval Communications System through U.S. Naval Communication Stations Philippines and Guam. Other services provided earlier have been continued, and the transmitters freed from use on the local area broadcast have been utilized to retransmit the multi-channel broadcast originating in the Philippines.



Located in the largest compartment on the ANNAPOLIS, the transmitters make her "voice of the sea" heard all through South-east Asia.

A second change in operating schedules resulted from the arrival on station of the second AGMR, permitting shortened on-station periods and the continuous services of an AGMR. Patrol periods have stabilized at approximately 30 days on station and two to three weeks in port for each ship. Previously, ANNAPOLIS was required to be at sea for as long as 57 days at a time, and when she left station, her essential services were no longer available. With the upcoming overhaul period, ARLINGTON will be called upon to use her talents in the extended patrols similar to those ANNAPOLIS made before ARLINGTON's arrival.



Captain William J. Wacker has described his men as the highest technically trained men in the Navy.

With ANNAPOLIS' wealth of talent, excellent repair facilities, and the "can do" spirit of her crew, she has provided technical assistance to ships approximately 200 times while in port and at sea. ANNAPOLIS' technical assistance is a "people type" thing, involving the transfer of qualified technicians for on the spot trouble-shooting.

A recent example of this occurred from 13-21 May 1968, after USS BLANDY (DD-943) sustained a complete failure of its ability to copy the multichannel broadcast. ANNAPOLIS sent two petty officers and two chiefs to BLANDY to trouble-shoot her broadcast system and correct it. In thanks for ANNAPOLIS' help in resuming her broadcast copying capabilities, BLANDY gave ANNAPOLIS the shell casing of the 3,000th round she had fired against the North Vietnam forces.

Since ANNAPOLIS' appearance on station off the coast of Vietnam, she has handled more than a million and a half messages, steamed over 150,000 nautical miles, and averaged 250 to 270 days at sea per year.



The VLF transmitter room awaits equipment. Until gear arrives, it makes a fine basketball court.

Life aboard ANNAPOLIS is not all work and no play, however. While at sea, many recreational activities have been made available for the crew's enjoyment during off duty hours. Basketball and volleyball leagues are organized and played in the VLF room and on the elevator. Bingo is played two nights a week. Movies are shown nightly and Saturday and Sunday afternoons. Cookouts are held on the antenna deck with music provided by the ship's band, the "Salty Dawgs", who

Continued on next page

also lead the ship in jam sessions. Boxing and wrestling smokers are conducted at least once each patrol. On Saturday and Sunday afternoons skeet shoots and card and ping pong tournaments are held. All in all, ANNAPOLIS provides something for everybody during the Navymen's unaccompanied tour on board.

Rest and relaxation is on everyone's mind in Vietnam, and ANNAPOLIS personnel are no exception. ANNAPOLIS' schedule has taken her to such exotic Asian ports as Subic Bay in the Philippines, Keelung and Kaohsiung in Taiwan, Sasebo and Yokosuka in Japan, Hong Kong, Singapore, and "down under" to Perth, Australia.

ANNAPOLIS has been commanded by Captains John J. Rowan, J.W. Newland, Henry Bress and William F. Casper, and is presently under the command of Captain William J. Wacker.

As a fitting climax to Captain Wacker's tour and ANNAPOLIS' eighteenth Patrol, ending three years of continuous service to SEVENTH Fleet ships in the Gulf of Tonkin, two awards have been bestowed upon ANNAPOLIS. On 16 September 1968, Rear Admiral R. L. J. Long, Commander Service Group THREE, awarded the Meritorious Unit Commendation to ANNAPOLIS for the period 9 January 1967



Rear Admiral R. L. J. Long, COMSERVGRU THREE, presents Meritorious Unit Commendation and Battle Efficiency Award to ANNAPOLIS; Captain Wacker is at right.

to 29 January 1968, and the Battle Efficiency Award. Both awards have made Captains Casper and Wacker, ANNAPOLIS' commanding officers during the aforementioned periods, and the crew of ANNAPOLIS justly proud. Officers and men of ANNAPOLIS stand ready to continue the ship's outstanding service when she returns to station after her much needed yard period.

NAVRADSTA LOLA COMMISSIONED

U. S. Naval Radio Station Lola, N. C., a component of NAVCOMMSTA Norfolk, Va., was formally activated at commissioning ceremonies conducted on 24 October.

The new RADSTA joins similar stations previously constructed at Lewes, Del. and Cape Cod, Mass. in giving the Navy a much needed, high capacity communications link with Atlantic Fleet ships. The Lola station extends coverage of this system southward along the Atlantic Ocean frontier.

The three stations are landward terminals of a tropospheric scatter communications system. The tropo technique provides two-way communications with many channels of information, and relies on reflection of transmitted signals over the horizon by dense layers in the atmosphere.

Construction of NAVRADSTA Lola was authorized by Congress in 1963. Resolution of problems related to siting and land acquisition required several years, and final detailed design and construction spanned an additional 15 months.

Lieutenant Bruce T. Mundy, USN, whose most recent previous assignment was as Communications Advisor to the RVN Navy in Saigon, is the RADSTA's Officer-in-Charge and Captain J. J. Zammit, USN, commands the parent NAVCOMMSTA at Norfolk. Captain L. S. Ashley, USN, Assistant Commander for Communications Systems Planning, Naval Communications Command, was guest speaker at the ceremonies.