

USS James E. Kyes (DD-787) Vietnam War Record (by Don Webb)

1965

During her 14th Westpac deployment in July 1965, KYES report for duty with TF 77, which she operated until September 10. During this period KYES served as "plane guard" for USS BENNINGTON (CVS-20), AAW and SSSC picket at the southern end of the Tonkin Gulf and carried out a mercy mission to a stranded South Vietnamese Sea Bee Battalion on Drummon Island in the Paracel Island group, providing them with food and water.

From August 30 to September 5, the ship fired her guns in "ANGER" for the first time since the Korean War, providing illuminations and destructive fire near the Quang Ngai Province area of South Vietnam while assigned as Naval Gunfire Support ship.

On October 7, 1965, KYES led DESDIV 231 back to Long Beach.

1966

From August 2 to August 7, 1966, KYES was assigned as NGFS ship off South Vietnam raising havoc with the enemy. The ship returned to the Tonkin Gulf for operations. From October 10 to November 24, KYES served as Surface-Subsurface Coordinator, and double as shotgun for the USS CHICAGO on PIRAZ station from October 25 to November 2. Between November 8 and November 15, KYES was again assigned duties as NGFS ship and expended 787 round of 5 inch projectiles against the enemy during this seven day period. KYES arrived in Long Beach on December 20, 1966 just in time for Christmas.

1967

August 19, 1967 marked the beginning of KYES 16th Westpac deployment. From October 24 to October 28 KYES was attached to Task Unit 70.9.9 as a gunfire support ship off the I (Eye Corps) area of South Vietnam and the DMZ. From October 29 to November 5, 1967, she was part of TU 77.1.1 on Operation SEA DRAGON. KYES ran shotgun for the Cruisers NEWPORT NEWS (CA-148) and CANBERRA (CAG-2) during this time and helped destroy North Vietnamese bridges, roads, and coastal gun sites, and disrupted logistics traffic headed south for use by North Vietnamese and Viet Cong troops in South Vietnam.

From November 6 to November 11, KYES was once more assigned to TW 70.8.9 off South Vietnam's I Corps area. During this period, KYES was one of the destroyers cited by the Admiral in charge of Amphibious Operations (KNOX and FORMATION LEADER), for extremely effective gunfire missions conduction "PROMPTLY AN IN A HIGHLY PROFESSIONAL MANNER".

Leaving the gun line on November 11, KYES had fired almost 3000 rounds of 5 inch ammunition against targets in both North and South Vietnam, and had destroyed or damaged 124 military structures, 300 meters of trenches and bunkers, 6 sampans, and a number of North Vietnamese coastal gun sites.

1968

On January 3, 1968, KYES was again underway for the Tonkin Gulf with Task Force 77. For her services to date in the Vietnam War, KYES had been awarded the NATIONAL DEFENSE SERVICE MEDAL (Second award), COMBAT ACTION RIBBON, VIETNAM SERVICE MEDAL with 4 Campaign stars, REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM CROSS OF GALLANTRY and the VIETNAMESE CAMPAIGN MEDAL with Clasp (60-).

KYES returned to Long Beach on April 6, 1968 after almost 8 months.

1969

On March 29, 1969, KYES was underway for her 17th Westpac deployment, her 4th tour to Vietnam waters, and her 7th tour to the gun line.

Arriving early in the morning of June 19, in the vicinity of Vung Tau, near the Mekong River Delta, the ship was at a tense General Quarters ready for anything. This soon relaxed after her first firing mission in support of Australian forces against VC base camps in a valley 16 miles east-northeast of Vung Tau. KYES then moved south into and up the Saigon River, fired several missions. The Saigon River, being fairly shallow in that area, got the crew a little more excited when KYES was leaving the area and throwing brown and red "Bottom Mud" up on the fantail.

On March 23, KYES hit enemy position 15 miles north of Qui Khon, destroying six military structures, damaging nine and destroyed an Ammunition Dump. From the 24th to the 26th, KYES fired several missions destroying enemy bunkers, structures and supply camps. On the 27th, the ship's batteries came to the aid of the 47th South Vietnamese Regiment during a Viet Cong attack seven miles northwest of Tuy Hoa in II Corps. Illumination rounds fired by the ship helped the friendly forces repel the VC. In addition, missions fired at enemy targets six and nine miles northwest of Tuy Hoa, destroyed ten Viet Cong bunkers. On the 28th and 29th, the ship fired in support of the Ninth ROK Infantry Division. July 1, KYES was off Phan Thet supporting units of the 101st Airborne and 506th Infantry, U.S. Army.

During the gun line period, JAMES E. KYES supported American, Australian, South Korean and South Vietnamese troops fighting ashore. The ship was responsible for destroying 41 bunkers, 4 caves, 29 military structures and causing five secondary explosions, of which one was an ammo dump. KYES was diverted to Korean waters in October 1969 when the North Koreans shot down an American Recon plane while in International air space. After several periods at sea in the Tonkin Gulf, KYES was detached and arrived in Long Beach on November 21, 1969.

1970

The year 1970 marked the first time since 1946 that the KYES did NOT deploy to the Western Pacific. However, she operated up and down the West Coast with many exercises after a Hull renovation from March to June. Completing Refresher Training and Naval Gunfire Support Qualifications, KYES was ready, will and able to do combat once again for the 1971 deployment.

1971

In 1971, KYES after several important exercises between Long Beach and Pearl Harbor, got under way for the Western Pacific on March 19th. Arriving in the Gulf of Tonkin and Vietnamese waters on April 3rd, KYES plane guarded for the USS HANCOCK and steamed with the USS RANGER. On May 11, 1971, the ship again arrived in the Gulf and plane guarded for the USS TICONDEROGA. Departing the war zone on May 14, KYES arrived in Yokosuka for R&R until May 25th.

After an exercise with ships from the Japanese Maritime Self Defense Force, the ship plane guarded for the TICONDEROGA once again. However, this lasted only 2 days as KYES along with Destroyer Squadron 23 was detached on June 17 and ordered to Long Beach via Adak, Alaska for refueling. The KYES moored in Long Beach on July 5 ending a 3 month Westpac cruise. The KYES along with the rest of Desron 23, changed homeports on September 1, 1971 from Long Beach to San Diego, California due to the Navy's general administrative reorganization.

1972

On June 5, 1972, KYES departed San Diego for her 21st and FINAL Westpac deployment. On June 6, KYES rendezvoused with USS ORISKANY and escorted the carrier to the Gulf of Tonkin arrive on June 22, 1972. On July 7, KYES began her first of sever Naval Gunfire Support missions off South Vietnam. She also participated in Naval Gunfire Strikes off North Vietnam and still more firing missions of South Vietnam. IN 1972, the ship spent 3 month in the war zone broken only by short upkeep and R&R periods in Subic Bay, Kaohsiung and Hong Kong.

On December 26, 1972, KYES in company with destroyers SHELTON, HOEL and GRAY departed Subic Bay for San Diego conducting extensive TYPE training exercises en route. USS JAMES E. KYES (DD-787) arrived in San Diego, California on January 13, 1973 thus ending her "Last at-sea period" as a commissioned United States Destroyer.

For her part in the Vietnam War, KYES made 7 deployments to the Western Pacific, 19 tours to the War Zone and was awarded the following:

NATIONAL DEFENSE SERVICE MEDAL (2nd award)
COMBAT ACTION RIBBON

VIETNAM SERVICE MEDAL with 7 campaign stars.
REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM CROSS OF GALLANTRY
VIETNAM CAMPAIGN MEDAL with Clasp (60-)
ARMED FORCES EXPEDITIONARY MEDAL (2nd award)

From February through March 1968 in Korea during the USS PUEBLO highjacking and October 1969 in Korea during the downed Recon plane by North Koreans.

KYES was decommissioned March 31, 1973 in San Diego and transferred to the Chinese Navy (Taiwan) on April 19, 1973 with the name of CHIENG YANG.

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Contributed by Don Webb