

INTRODUCTION TO VIETNAM

I was about to be transferred from Destroyer Squadron 22 as Chief Staff Officer to shore duty because I had been on sea duty onboard destroyers for about 5 years. The Commodore asked me to extend onboard because the squadron was to be deployed to Vietnam for 7 months. I said I would, but wasn't wild about it. It took 6 weeks to transit from Norfolk via the Panama Canal to Vietnam with stops at various Pacific naval ports for briefings.

Our station for 7 months was at the border between N and S Vietnam. We were to provide gunfire support for U.S. Marines. When we arrived "on station" the Marines gave us several targets. We provided accurate gun fire support for them. Then the Marines said "Welcome to the Tonkin Gulf Gun Club". Several minutes later we had explosions around the ship. That was the north Vietnamese shooting at us from their shore batteries, welcoming us to the area.

About two weeks later we got hit amidships in the vicinity of Mount 52 resulting in 1 KIA and 14 wounded. But in the next 6½ months we were successful in avoiding their gun fire and providing over 22,000 rounds of 5 inch 54 gunfire support.

Submitted by CAPT Ace Trask, USN RET.