

CONCORD SQUADRON -1964 – Paul Fields asked me to update the website about the Concord Squadron 1964 which consisted of the carrier BON HOMME RICHARD CV31, an Essex class carrier, destroyers FRANK KNOX, SHELTON, BLUE and oiler HASSAYAMPA formed TF-90. The squadron departed from Subic Bay March 31, 1964 on the first leg of a goodwill cruise into the Indian Ocean. After crossing the South China Sea, TF-90 navigated the tight waters of the Malacca Straits and out into the Indian Ocean toward the East coast of Africa. The cruise book recalls “The ships maintained peak readiness with operations on an exceptionally high tempo. Constant flight ops and first light refuelings on the Sabbath became standard practice.”

On April 8 the squadron entered the Southern Hemisphere conducting “crossing the line” ceremonies. “During the following three-week period, the force visited Diego Suarez, Madagascar, transited the northern Mozambique Channel to the principle Kenyan port of Mombasa, and thence, returned to the British Protectorate of Aden” According to the cruise book. “On the second of May, in the Gulf of Oman, the Shah of Iran landed aboard the BON HOMME RICHARD to witness a fire power demonstration by Carrier Wing Nineteen and the flagship’s escorts. FRANK KNOX memorably performed as memorably surface gunnery and ASW firing ship.”

“With bows to the EAST and flight ops uninterrupted, Task Force Ninety rounded the northwestern tip of Sumatra and reentered the Malacca Straits on May 11. Five days later in Subic Bay, having logged a total of 18,113 engine miles, the force was dissolved.”

History will record that the 47-day cruise served American and Great Britain interests in a number of important areas recalls the Cruise Book. “The extended tour was a visible demonstration of American concern for the integrity and well-being of free peoples in Africa and the Middle East . Valuable information concerning the Indian Ocean was compiled. The operation reaffirmed the United States’ belief in freedom of the high seas . And, the Squadron demonstrated the mobility and endurance of the Naval task force.”

The underlined phrases above highlight three goals focused on Indonesia and then President Sukarno. Sukarno wanted to restrict the passage of US and British ships through the tight passages of Malacca and Suda. The US led the first forced opening during the Concorde passage. The British would follow in August 1964 in the Straits of Suda. Second, former British colonies were in transition and ripe for unrest. The US force reinforced the idea that the US could extend its’ power to support Britain. Last, The Indian Ocean was a vast unknown for Navy units. Task force transits gathered a host of useful information, stored for future operations. Hays off to TF 90 and the crew of the USS FRANK KNOX the lead destroyer. Well done