



U. S. S. ENGLISH (DD-696)
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Dear Friends

As the Commanding Officer of the USS ENGLISH (DD 696) I am continuing a program called the "Family Gram" during our deployment to the Mediterranean area. With the Family Gram, or just plain old letter if you prefer, I hope to be able to tell you about the ENGLISH, your son's or husband's ship, and a bit of what we do, why we are here and why this whole business of Mediterranean deployment is important.

First, a word or two on the length of the deployment. It is called a 4 month deployment but as we all know, it adds up to being away from our home port for 5 months. We are due back in Norfolk the first week in September. The extra month is used up in transit times to and from the Mediterranean and in turnover time after we arrive and before we depart. Five months is without a doubt a long time but it is a considerable improvement over the 7 months cruises of recent years. These extended periods are necessary, basically for two reasons. First, the number of ships available to meet the commitments and obligations of the United States are such that shorter rotation periods are not feasible. Secondly, to meet the high standards of operational readiness in the Sixth Fleet, it is actually impractical to reduce deployments to periods shorter than four months on station.

A few facts about the United States Sixth Fleet in the Mediterranean may give you a better feeling for the importance of the ENGLISH's present mission:

The Sixth Fleet is a modern, well-balanced fleet including an attack aircraft carrier striking force, and amphibious landing force, and a variety of sustaining auxiliary ships which make it possible for the Fleet to operate indefinitely at sea without shore bases in the Mediterranean. The Sixth Fleet is an instrument of national policy and power whose goals are peace, stability and good will gained by maintaining operational readiness and earning respect for the United States. Its exercises and maneuvers are assigned for self education, improvement of its wartime potential, and for perfection of working relationships with our friends and allies. Its aims are entirely friendly, but it is always battle ready-capable of waging any kind of warfare: hot or cold, limited or general, atomic or conventional.

The ships of the fleet are organized into three main task forces.

First of these is the Attack Carrier Striking Force (Task Force 60), consisting normally of two large carriers, two surface to air missile equipped Cruisers, and about twenty Destroyers. Varying numbers of these Destroyers are equipped with surface to air missiles. Task Force 60 is the main striking arm of the Sixth Fleet. It is equipped with highspeed jet bombers having a striking radius in excess of 1,000 miles. The Carriers are capable of operating their aircraft day and night in all kinds of weather.

Second, is the Amphibious Force (Task Force 61). This force consists of a squadron of amphibious shipping with a reinforced battalion of about 2,000 combat-loaded and combat-ready Marines embarked. The ships generally include an amphibious command ship, attack transport and cargo ships, minesweepers and a variety of amphibious assault types.

Third is the Service Force (Task Force 63). This Force, forming the floating base which enables the Fleet to stay at sea for indefinite periods of time, is a collection of auxiliary ships including tankers, repair ships, and a variety of supply and provision ships. This force, in effect, is a mobile grocery store, repair shop, hardware store and fuel station.

In addition to these three major forces, the Fleet is supported by land-based aircraft for scouting and antisubmarine operations, and by submarines used principally to provide training services to the Fleet.

The composition of the Fleet changes completely every four to six months, with ships from the United States replacing those in the Mediterranean. The only exception to the rotation policy among combatant ships is the Cruiser which is used as the permanent Flagship of the Fleet. Permanent in this case means a little more than two years. Villefranche-sur-Mer, France, (near Nice) is used as the home port of the Flagship, with families of personnel assigned to the Fleet Commander's Staff and the Flagship living there on the economy. A few auxiliary ships in the Service Force use Naples as their home port. In a normal year, the ships having home ports in the Mediterranean can expect to be in those home ports between twenty and twenty-five percent of the time.

Everyone of course is interested in the liberty ports that one has the opportunity to visit during a trip to the "Med" and, fortunately, the ones we on ENGLISH have visited to date have been quite good. Our first stop out of Norfolk was Rota, Spain (a rather small town near the much better known city of Cadiz). While this stop was for fuel only and thus quite short, we did manage to get half the crew ashore for a special show at the Enlisted Mens' Club. The show consisted of authentic Spanish Flamenco Dancers in native costumes, a team of comic pantomime clowns, and a girl singer who chanted "Moorish" songs. It proved to be nice relaxation after our fast crossing with the SARATOGA.

Palermo, Sicily and Marseille, France were our next two ports of call. Palermo for Easter Weekend and Marseilles for a ten day visit in late April and early May. Marseillè is the second largest city in France and the largest seaport in the "Med". As always, there is plenty to do in a big city, but, if one does not like the life of the big city, the countryside around Marseille offers much to see - from thriving University towns to quaint fishing villages and resort areas.

Perhaps the highlight of our liberty ports to date was Rapallo, Italy. Rapallo is one of the principal resort areas on the Italian Riviera. It is truly a beautiful area and Rapallo and the nearby towns of Santa Margharita and Portofino are featured in a twenty page article in this June's National Geographic Magazine. (If you would like a good description of one of the areas your Navy man has had the opportunity to visit during this deployment, it is available in June's National Geographic).

I am certain that most of you have the pamphlet our two Squadron Chaplains prepared. They contain a wealth of information concerning how to go about things in case you need help while your Navy Man is deployed.

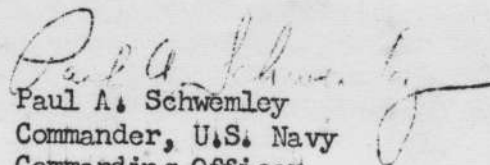
Just in case this has been misplaced, I'll include the correct address, if you must contact us by telegram.

(Your Son's or Husbands Name and Rate)
USS ENGLISH (DD 696)
c/o Naval Communications Station
Washington 25, D. C.

May I also remind you that if emergency arises in which you feel the presence of the Serviceman is required, the correct way to request that he be granted emergency leave is by having your local Red Cross Chapter verify your emergency and request the serviceman's presence.

I shall attempt to keep you informed about the ENGLISH's "doings" from time to time during the next two months.

Sincerely


Paul A. Schwemley
Commander, U.S. Navy
Commanding Officer

P. S. Mail call is always a big event on the ENGLISH and I can assure you that it's a happy day when the division mail Petty Officer passes out a letter to your man - so keep the letters coming.