

Philippine President Diosdado Macapagal Visits BENNINGTON During LIGTAS Exercise

Top officials of the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization, led by President Diosdado Macapagal of the Philippine Islands, were on board the USS BENNINGTON 4 June to witness this carrier's ASW participation in the SEATO exercise "LIGTAS."

Taking part in the LIGTAS exercise were military units from the U.S., Britain, France, Australia, New Zealand, Thailand, Pakistan and the Philippines. The combat troops taking part in the giant training operation were supported by approximately 300 planes and backed up by 75 ships from the eight nations.

The mighty armada of warships carried a 20,000-man striking force and made a D-day landing 4 June on the Philippine Island of Mindoro near San Jose.

Bennington's role in the gigantic allied operations was anti-submarine defense for the entire armada. This entailed flying the embarked squadron's planes 24-hours a day for three days before and after the D-day landing.

After watching the D-day landings from a helicopter, President Macapagal was taken to the exercise base camp near San Jose for a briefing by military officials. Later that morning he arrived aboard the USS BENNINGTON where he was greeted by Captain John S. Hill, Commanding Officer, and given a tour of the ship. The President, escorted by Rear Admiral Turner F. Caldwell, COMASWGRU FIVE, viewed flight operations from the O7 level and the Flag Bridge before flying back to Manila later that same day.

The following message was received from COMSEVENTHFLT regarding Bennington's role in operation LIGTAS:

1. Your highly professional performance in planning and executing LIGTAS has demonstrated the quality and the readiness of our SEATO forces, enhanced our training and our ability to work together, and deepened our common mastery of the complexities of assault from the sea and the air.

2. Well Done.



Capt. John S. Hill welcomes Philippine President Diosdado Macapagal and Vice Admiral Thomas H. Moorer, Commander, SEVENTH Fleet, as they arrive on board 4 June to observe ASW operations during "LIGTAS." The SEATO exercise was the 27th mass military maneuver since the organization was formed 10 years ago.