



The repair ship sailed from Norfolk on 9 May and transited the Panama Canal on 18 May. After brief stops at Pearl Harbor and at Subic Bay in the Philippines, the repair ship arrived at An Thoi, Phu Quoc Island, in the Gulf of Siam, to support Operation

"Market Time" off the coast of South Vietnam.

Relieving Krishna (APL-28) on 19 July, *Tutuila* commenced servicing the nimble and hard-hitting PCF's, or "Swift" boats, attached to Division 11. WPB's of the Coast Guard's Division 11 were based on *Tutuila* as well. The following month found *Tutuila*'s LCM's and their crews participating in Operation "Seamount," an Army directed landing operation to clear the southern Phu Quoc Island of enemy forces. Landing South Vietnamese troops at four locations, *Tutuila*'s boats also carried supplies and ammunition to the Allied ground forces while helicopters evacuated casualties to the repair ship for medical attention.

Krishna returned to An Thoi on 8 October to relieve *Tutuila*, which then steamed to Bangkok, Thailand, for rest and relaxation for her crew. The repair ship then arrived back off the Vietnamese coast, reaching Vung Tau, off Cape St. Jacques, on 18 October. Here she supported Operations "Market Time", "Game Warden", and "Stable Door" through the end of 1966.

The opening days of the new year, 1967, saw the repair ship taking up support duties for the Mobile Riverine Force established at Vung Tau for operations in the Mekong Delta. Here, she assisted in the preparation of ASPB's and other small patrol craft until *USS Askari* (APL-30) arrived and took over the major repair and maintenance work.

*Tutuila* conducted in-country availability for the first time on *Hisser* (DER-100) on 9 January. Her repair crews finished another difficult job in just five days; the overhauling and repairing of the troublesome diesel generators of *USS Benewah* (APB 35).

Turned over to the operational control of Commander, Naval Support Activity, Saigon, in April 1967, the ship commenced services to LST's engaged in operations off the mouth of the Mekong River. During this period, the repair ship continued to provide support and maintenance facilities for craft of the Mobile Riverine Assault Force and supported Coastal Division 13 as well. Further, *Tutuila*'s 3-inch guns spoke in anger for the first time in the Vietnam conflict, as the ship undertook a shore bombardment

in the Rung Sat Special Zone, providing harassment and interdiction fire into an area of suspected Viet Cong activity north of Vung Tau.

Returning to An Thoi in October 1967, *Tutuila* relieved Krishna and provided support for coastal divisions of Navy and Coast Guard before proceeding to Kaoshiung, Taiwan, for five days of upkeep in late November. She returned to Vung Tau on 7 December to continue supporting coastal interdiction operations.

The repair ship remained at Vung Tau until taking over duties at An Thoi in April 1968 from Krishna. While remaining on station through the summer *Tutuila* also trained South Vietnamese sailors in the operation of PCF's, four of which had been transferred to the Republic of Vietnam in August. *Tutuila*'s hard work earned the **Navy Unit Commendation** as a result of the labors conducted at both Vung Tau and An Thoi.

Extensive improvements in habitability highlighted the yard work conducted at Yokosuka in January 1969, while the main engine, auxiliary pumps, and the three main generators were all subjected to thorough overhauling. On 21 March, the ship departed from Yokosuka for sea trials and refresher training, a virtually new ship both inside and out. The final week of training completed by 22 April, *Tutuila* cleared the Japanese isles on the 27th, bound, once more, for Vietnam.

After a five-day visit to Hong Kong en route, the ship dropped anchor at Vung Tau on 14 May. She commenced work almost immediately, conducting a temporary availability on *Brule* (AKL-28) before 1 June and filling 36 work requests from *Mark* (ARL12) as well as repair work and availability requirements for local YFR craft and the Republic of Korea LSM-610.

On 12 June, *Tutuila* got underway for An Thoi where she supported the continuation of "Market Time," as well as "SEAFLOAT" and "SEALORDS," while maintaining PCF's, YFU's, APUBI, and several LST's.

For the months of June and July, the ship also undertook further training operations; repairing 17 Vietnamese Navy PCF's and training 39 Vietnamese blue jackets in diesel engine overhaul. *Saint Francis River* (LSMR-525) underwent two weeks of restricted availability, adding to the repair ship's already busy and round-the-clock schedule. Fulfilling these and other requests for South Vietnamese, Korean, Thai, and United States Navy units, *Tutuila* remained busy for the remainder of her active career off Vietnam; receiving three **Navy Unit Commendations** in the process. Late in 1971, she was selected for transfer to the

Republic of China Navy.

On New Year's Day 1972, *Tutuila* departed Vung Tau after six years of combat support duties. Many times she had hoisted PCF's or other patrol craft onto pontoons alongside for complete overhauls; her crew had taught their Vietnamese counterparts the intricacies of diesel power plants and generators. Her guns had even conducted one offensive shore bombardment. Vietnam lay behind her as she headed for Hong Kong on 1 January 1972. Six days of bad weather jostled her before she finally made port at the British Crown Colony on 7 January.

Her stay at Hong Kong was not all rest and relaxation, however, as much lay ahead to be done in preparation for the transfer to the Chinese Navy. *Tutuila*'s crew gave her a "face lift" which included painting, overhauling engines, and getting her records and accounts in order. She departed Hong Kong on 13 January and arrived at Subic Bay two days later, where upon arrival, the work of off-loading supplies and ammunition began.

Departing Subic Bay on 29 January, *Tutuila* made port at Kaoshiung on 2 February to the accompaniment of a Chinese military band which played tunes from the dockside. For the next three weeks, final checks were undertaken to put the finishing touches on the transfer. Finally, by 21 February 1972, all was in readiness. On that day, *Tutuila* was decommissioned and struck from the Navy list. Transferred to the Nationalist Chinese Navy, she was renamed Pien Tai and serves as a supply ship into 1979.

***Tutuila* received (7) Battle Stars, (3) Navy Unit Commendations, and for her Vietnam service.**

Awards earned during the Vietnam War: (3) **Navy Unit Commendations, Meritorious Unit Commendation, RVN Gallantry Cross with Palm, RVN Civil Action Medal, First Class, with Palm, RVN Campaign Medal with 60's device and (7) Battle Stars for her Vietnam Service Medal.**

Crewmember **Larry Maust** reports these additions and corrections to the above:

"Just wanted to correct some things about the History of the USS *Tutuila*, I was aboard her from about the beginning of 1970 until she was turned over to the Chinese at Kaoshiung in 1971. All the time I was aboard except for when I came aboard in Japan and a few R&R trips the *Tutuila* was stationed in Nha Be. Your history does not indicate that for almost 2 years she sat in the river there."

**Respectfully Submitted,  
John A. Altfeltis, USN-Retired**