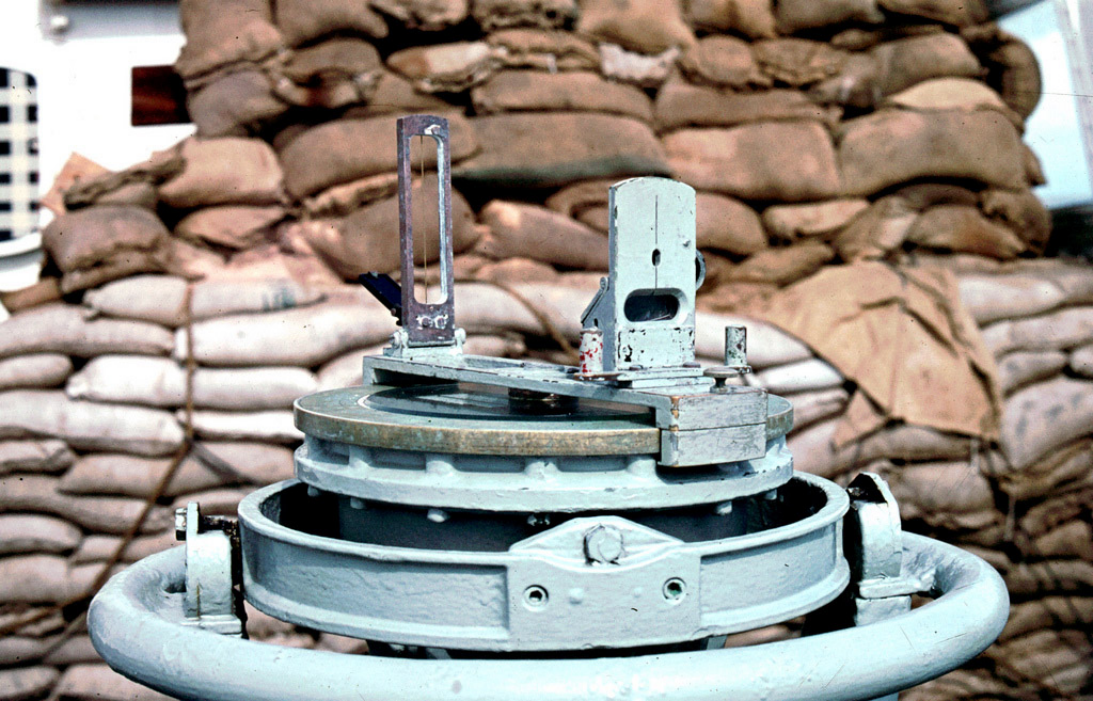


ARCA











ARCA



"Eastgate" attacked at Vung Ro



The fifth ship to be named "Eastgate" built by Turnbull and Scott 1957
Shell 'K' or 'H' type vessel, turbine product tanker 12166grt

British tanker 'Eastgate' under attack at
Vung Ro bay June 6 1968.
story as told by W, T. Alexander

It promised to be an interesting stay in
Vung Ro right from the start.
As we were mooring up to the sea
buoys a US Navy destroyer at the
entrance to the bay started lobbing 5-
inch shells over us and the surrounding
hills.
This made us look questioningly at the
2 members of the US Army who were
taking samples of our JP4 cargo prior
to discharging.

"Don't you worry non son. There is a
bit of battle goin on over them thar
hills. But thars 10000 Koreans in them
hills and Charlies scared shitless of
them Koreans"

He then regaled us with stories of
Koreans taking Viet Cong heads and

sticking them on poles outside their
bases. It all sounded very reassuring.

I was 17 years old and training to be
an officer in the British Merchant
Marine.

This was my first trip to sea and life
was exciting. I'd joined the Eastgate
just a couple of weeks before in Hong
Kong. From there we had sailed to
Singapore to load JP4 and other
petroleum products for the United
States Military in Vietnam.

Vung Ro was a small port south of Qui
Nhon.

There were 4 buoys to berth a tanker
a short distance from the shore. The
tanker discharged through a submarine
pipeline attached to a buoy. This
pipeline supplied an airbase inland.
A jetty for cargo ships was just north of
the base. These berths were

occupied by the "American Scientist" and another US merchant vessel.

The day passed quickly with lots of things happening. A cliff face was blown up by the army engineers. A blast which knocked all of us interested spectators back two paces. Then two Hueys landed on the beach and some very nice looking young ladies stepped out and were escorted into the camp.

Our two resident army radio operators informed us of a strip show at the base that evening and if any of the crew where interested they would whistle up a boat. Well amazingly enough most of the crew where interested. So those who could get the time off duty duly went ashore and where royally treated by our American hosts.

Unfortunately I was not one of the chosen few but you can't win them all.

I came on watch at midnight to find all was quiet.

Andy, my sidekick, informed me that pumping had been stopped due to a suspected hole in the pipeline and the hole was to be investigated the next morning. Sounded good to me.

0130. I was on the poop on a routine fire watch, looking over towards the base ashore.

A flash and a shower of silver sparks form the middle of the base followed immediately by an explosion, followed by another, and another. I got to thinking that this shouldn't be happening.

I went back midships to see the 2nd Officer who was also of the opinion that this was not usual. The 2/O hit the alarm bells whilst I went to let the Captain know what was happening.

The Chief Officer started to organize the disconnection of the pipeline and attaching it to the buoy ready for use next time. Andy and I where sent off to make sure the ships blackout was complete whilst the Captain was conferring with the two radio operators as to the next move.

Meanwhile a mortar round exploded close to the bow of the "American Scientist".

Many of the crew jumped overboard whilst others left the ship on the landward side. They ran along the jetty but 2 shells landed at the shore end of the jetty and they turned and ran back to the ship.

When I got back on deck after checking the blackout I found all the engineers on deck with lifejackets. I asked the 3rd engineer what was going on and he said the Captain had told them to get ready to abandon ship.

What had happened was that the Captain was a bit unsure of what to do and had asked the American radio operators. The operators had lost touch with the shore and where unhappy about sitting on top of 12.000 tons of JP4 with mortar shells flying around the place. So they had advised getting everyone ashore.

Whilst the Captain considered the Chief Engineer, an old gnarled Scotsman with a limp, stormed up to him and told him in no uncertain terms "Captain you'r not abandoning this fucking ship".

This had the effect of pulling the Captain out of his uncertainty and ordered the Chief to get the engines ready for leaving.

Our problem was that there was no emergency evacuation plan for leaving

the port. We had lost touch with all other units and the local patrol boats where busy picking up the men in the water from the "American Scientist". Ashore there was nu letup in the assault on the base with the sound of the mortar shells being joined by that of small arms fire.

Finally we where ready for off. We had to let our mooring ropes go from the ship as there where no boats available to let them go from the buoys. This would add to the hazards of leaving because of the risk of the ropes fouling the propeller.

We let go one from each buoy, but then came the next problem. The "American Scientist" had let go her moorings and was manoeuvring to leave the bay. It was far too dangerous to have 2 large vessels manoeuvring in such confined waters at night, blacked out, and in the middle of a battle. So we had to wait.

In the mean time helicopter gunships had arrived and where spraying the hillside above the base with gunfire and rockets. This was hugely spectacular and worth waiting to see.

So we where all stand by waiting to complete unmooring as soon as the "American Scientist" was clear. The only crew members who where not at their stations where our Arab firemen who where under the port lifeboat with packed suitcases. They where eventually driven back down the engine room by the 2nd Engineer.

I was up on the bridge as the order was finally given to let go the remaining mooring lines and leave the bay. A manoeuvre which the Captain did brilliantly, his former nerves now seemingly well settled. Our American radio operators still couldn't get in

touch with the base and where more than a little worried sat on the deck on the bridge wing. Our Captains remark to Dave Piggott the helmsman when we finally cleared the bay was "I don't know about you Piggot but I think I need a new pair of underpants" Bit of a wag at times our Captain.

And so we spent the night a safe distance offshore to see what the morning would bring.

And the following morning, still no radio contact with the base, so we continued our offshore patrol.

Later in the day we received a message from Shell Tankers that we where to proceed to Qui Nhon to complete the discharge. But then the next problem. Most of our mooring ropes where still attached to the bouys in Vung To Bay and the Captain was loatch to go without them.

So we headed back towards the bay to see if we could get them back. As we approached the bay one of the patrol boats dashed out and a chap with a megaphone demanded to know "what the fuck are you doing here with that ship Captain ?"

The Captain explained that we had been told to go to Qui Nhon but could we have our ropes back first please.

Eventually a party of our crew went into the bay on the patrol boat and towed the mooring ropes out and we said goodbye to our radio men who seemed quite relieved to be off.

From there we sailed to Qui Nhon. Three days later we passed Vung Ro on the way back to Singapore. We could see fighter bombers attacking the hills to the north of the bay. And so it went on.

Postscript

About 8 years later I was on a chemical tanker sailing from Newhaven to Elizabethport. The pilot for Long Island Sound turned out to be the Captain of the other merchant vessel that was berthed alongside the "American Scientist" and a regular runner into Vung Ro.

He told me that the Koreans had been moved from the hills around Vung Ro but no one had thought to inform the American troops of this fact. They thought they were well protected but were not.

The other thing he told me was that the "American Scientist" had a large quantity of napalm on board hence the crew reaction to the near miss.

W.T. Alexander
Hornsea England

"Eastgate" sunk 30.3.1973
as a result of a collision when
approaching Hong Kong at night.
With the French mv "Circea".
fire amidships and 3 crewmembers lost
their lives.

Total loss and delivered to ship
breakers at Kaohsiung 3 months later.



Minesweeper in Long Tau channel

In deep channels, mines are set up at varying depths to best handle different vessels. Some of the mines may be controlled from the shore. Most water mines appeared to have one thing in common; the detonation is usually initiated electrically. Conventional mine sweeping operations will detect these mines, but there is the danger that during the course of the operation a mine will be detonated by a VC on the river bank. Using information from local people is the best way to detect and to make provisions to eliminate a mine threat. Water mine locations are similar to those for land mines. The VC seek to place water mines where vessels must slow down, bunch up, or stop.

The mines may be found at bends, narrow straits, and in mid-channel. Since some water mines can be positioned by the operator on the shore, they may be located anywhere in a channel. Since water mines are often used with ambushes, likely ambush sites are also likely mine sites.



LOGISTIC SUPPORT BASE - NHA BE

CAN CU YEN TRU TIAP VAN NHA BE

TELEANT COMMANDS

COMMUNICATIONS	01 00 00
ENGINEERING	01 00 00
GENERAL	01 00 00
HEALTH	01 00 00
LOGISTICS	01 00 00
PLANNING	01 00 00
TRAINING	01 00 00
WARRANTS	01 00 00



QUIN VI TAM TRU

COMMUNICATIONS	01 00 00
ENGINEERING	01 00 00
GENERAL	01 00 00
HEALTH	01 00 00
LOGISTICS	01 00 00
PLANNING	01 00 00
TRAINING	01 00 00
WARRANTS	01 00 00

STOP





"Arca" in Nah Be at night

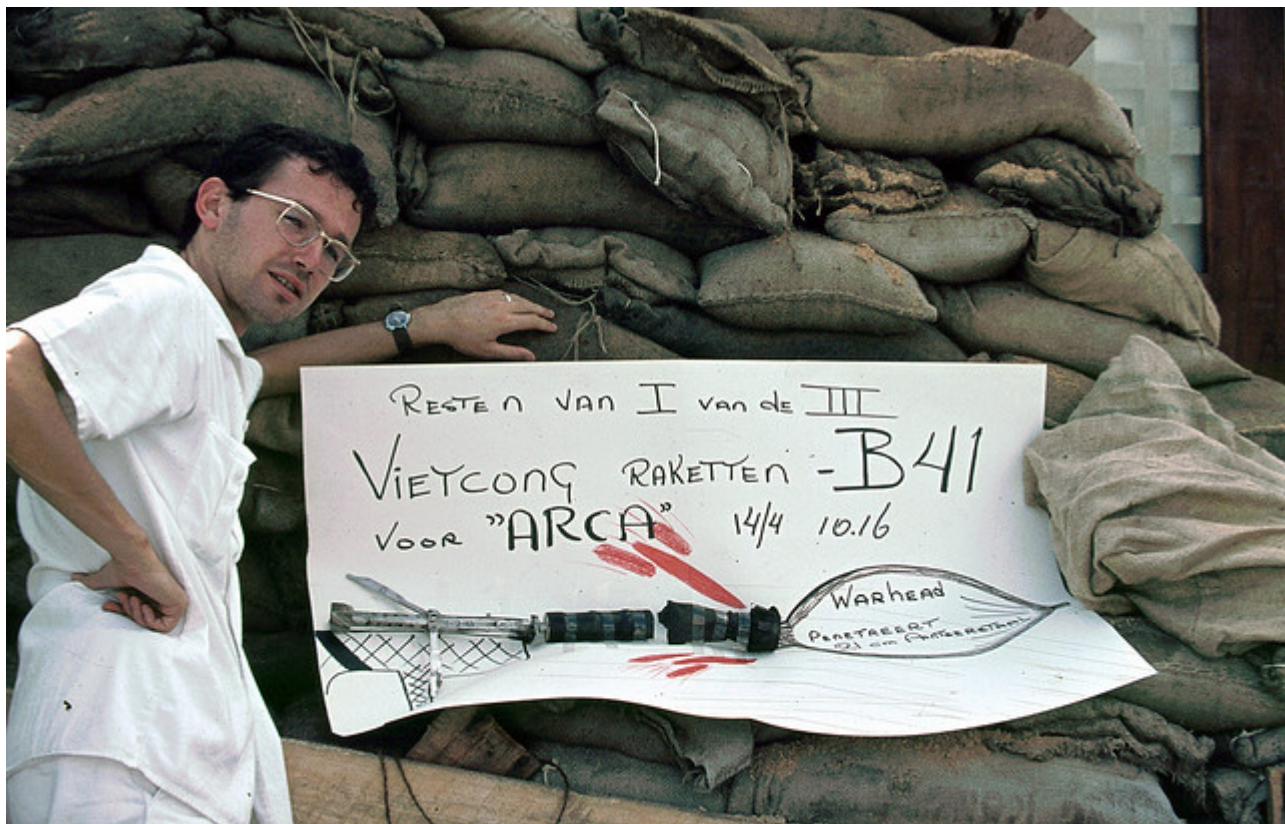


April 1970

Moored at Saigon Nha Be Shell oil storage facility.

Floodlights were secured on Arca's rails and directed into the waters around the ship at sunset.

Armed sentries were posted during darkness to defend against any attempt to attach an explosives charge to Arca's hull. Sentries patrolled the deck and handgranades were thrown into the river at short intervals. This went on all night and explosions were deafening for watchkeepers in the engine room



The spoils of war

april 15th 1970 at 10.16 lt

3 RPG's exploded close to Shelltanker "ARCA".
Rocket debris caused minor damage.
No crewmembers were hurt.

US weapons expert explained how they worked.
Nasty things !



RPG with launcher

After the attack, a US weapons expert showed this RPG launcher and projectile.

RPG's a much feared short range weapon.

Still widely used, very effective, very destructive.

Very useful in close combat situations with armored targets.

Some models can penetrate 330mm of steelarmor and kill.

Unskilled operators can hit a vehicle sized target at a range of 50-100m.

Skilled operators can hit moving targets at 300m and 500m against stationary targets.

4,5 seconds from firing the RPG self-explodes.

This probably saved the Shelltanker "ARCA". Pictured with the background of protection provided to wheelhouse,

chartroom and radiostation. Did not feel that safe anymore !



Foto boven: De tanker s.s. "Katelysia" (1953) van N.V. Petroleum Maatschappij "La Corona" te Den Haag.

[Terug naar Overzicht](#)

Scheepswerf: RDM.

Opdrachtgever: N.V. Petroleum Maatschappij "La Corona", Den Haag.

Tonnage: 12143 brt, 18170 dwt, 23000 twvp.

Hoofdafmetingen: Loa = 168,38 m, B = 21,16 m, H = 11,90 m, d = 9,35 m.

Voortstuwing: Twee Werkspoor Pametrada stoomturbines, 7500 apk, snelheid 14,5 kn.

Verdere gegevens: Roepletters PFHO, IMO nummer 5183481.

Bemanning: 50 man.

Radio: Hoofdzenders Philips SMZ, noodzender Marconi Reliance ontvangers Marconi Mercury & Electra.

Opmerking: Dit was het eerste door de RDM gebouwde schip met Pametrada stoomturbines. De bouwnummers 287, 288, 289, 291, 292, 293, 296, 297, 298, 299, 301 en 302 zullen in deze volgen. PAMETRADA is een afkorting van: **Parsons And Marine Engineering Turbine Research And Development Association**, zie "Artikelen" hieronder. Overigens betekent de naam Pametrada-turbine geen bepaald systeem, zoals Zoelly, Parsons of Curtis. Het zijn slechts turbines die door Pametrada zijn ontworpen en waarbij verder een willekeurig systeem kan worden toegepast.

Historie:

Op 05-08-1977 aanvang sloop te Kaohsiung, Taiwan.

Citaten:

- www.helderline.nl, 27-02-2009, Dirk de Jong:

... .. Ik heb met interesse je verhaal in Voeks Nieuws nummer 3 gelezen. Ik heb zelf ook op de "Acmaea" een contract gevangen als 5e wtk. En dan gaat het weer leven, wat we toen op de "Katelysia" in Vietnam hebben ondervonden. De preciese datum weet ik niet meer, want ik kan mijn monsterboekje niet zo gauw vinden. Ik was 4e wtk en we kwamen van Tabangac met een lading smeerolie voor Saigon. Het was toen net vrede in Vietnam (1975). De Saigon rivier op en dan vallen daar de ontbladerde oevers op. En dan zie je dat het echt waar was, wat er allemaal in het nieuws verteld werd. Maar toen we voor de wal lagen, werden op de railing allemaal cargolights gehangen en op het water gericht. We begrepen er niets van, maar 's avonds werd het duidelijk waarvoor ze nodig waren. 's Avonds was de 8-12 tot een kwartier voor het einde rustig verlopen. Ineens werden er heel veel handgranaten in het water gegooid. De "Katelysia" sprong zelfs een beetje op bij iedere granaat. Dat was die ene koelwaterpomp, die bij stond, te veel. Hij tripte. De machinekamer stond ineens vol stoom. Samen met de 5e werd een reserve pomp razend snel bijgezet en de stoom was weg. Het gevaar voor een black-out was ook weg. Op dat moment ging het brandalarm. In eerste instantie begrepen we er niets van. Maar al snel werd het duidelijk dat er een

kleefmijn tegen ladingtank SBI was geplakt. Iedereen direct van boord af. Dat het serieus was, bleek toen we ons ergens op de wal schuil moesten houden. Er liepen mensen met geweren in de aanslag rond. Aan boord was dus niemand, terwijl in de machinekamer alles nog bij stond. Dus af en toe toch even aan boord en snel een rondje maken, met het gevaar dat je van kippeloop af geschoten werd. De hele oorlogsmachine kwam snel op gang, want in no-time vlogen helikopters met zoeklichten op langs de oevers om te zoeken naar een man. De ander was getroffen door een handgranaat, die in het water was gegooid. Tenslotte ging de kleefmijn af. Vonken bliezen omhoog, de "Katelysia" kwam een klein stukje met de bak omhoog, zonk gelijk een stuk naar beneden en lag met de bak een stuk dieper. Maar het licht bleef branden! Gelijk weer aan boord om de machinekamer op te vangen, want als hij in de kop lag ging de machinekamer op tilt. Bij verder inspectie van SBI bleek dat er gat was geslagen van SB naar BB dwars door de centertank. Aan BB waren de huidplaten naar buiten omgekruld. Dat er geen brand of explosie was veroorzaakt, kwam doordat er in die tank smeerolie had gezeten en daardoor gasvrij gebleven was. Dus dat was een geluk bij een ongeluk. Verder was er in voorpompkamer een stoomleiding een beetje gaan lekken, dat was alles! Toch een bewijs, vond ik, dat ze bij de ADM (dat moet RDM zijn, driewerf foei!) goed schepen konden bouwen. De stuurman had de boot weer netjes met de bunkers recht getrimd we zagen er weer netjes uit, alsof er niets aan de hand was. En toen de andere dag op de 8-12 vertrekken en dus manoeuvreren. Toen we eenmaal midden op de rivier waren en de order "Volle Kracht" kregen, wilden we zo snel mogelijk weer op zee zijn. Dat vond de 5e wtk ook en dus vonden we dat de klappen maar omhoog moesten, i.p.v. de 80 (dacht ik) die bij VK gebruikelijk waren. We hebben toen de luchtverhitters bijgezet van de ketel, dus we konden meer stoom maken en dus meer klappen. We kwamen al snel op de 95 en we hoorden van de brug geen commentaar dat we te snel gingen. Met bijna zeespeed gingen we de rivier af. Wat je allemaal niet verzint als je in de knijpert zit. En toen met een bloedneus naar Singapore. Eenmaal op zee heb ik nog foto's van dat gat gemaakt. Wel een mooi gezicht van de kleuren van de zon die door het water schijnt. We kregen we orders voor Keppel Shipyard in Singapore.

Ook in Nederland heeft dit ongeluk de krant gehaald en mijn vriendin had toen kantoor gebeld en zij vertelden haar dat er geen persoonlijke ongelukken waren. Maar mijn contract zat er op en ik ging in Singapore naar huis. Hoe het verder is gegaan, weet ik niet. Zo zie je hoe een berichtje in de Voeks tot leuke herinneringen leidt.