

Last Run: Of the USS Everglades AD24



I found him there last winter, in the black hours before dawn, on a beach called Alang -- a shoreline strewn with industrial debris on the oily Gulf of Cambay, part of the Arabian Sea. I'd been warned that Koltar Saktave would resent my presence and see me as a meddling Westerner. But he gave no sign of that now. I introduced myself and announcing his name clearly and properly, this I could see pleased him as most Westerners butchered it. Obviously his name was part of his family's pride. Captain Koltar was a sturdy, middle-aged merchant captain wearing clean khakis, sneakers, and a baseball cap. Outwardly he was a calm, businesslike mariner with a job to do. His Voice carried and was obviously well educated in the Kings English. He stood among a group of indifferent, rougher-looking men, some in traditional *lungis* and turbans, and accepted offers to share their coconut meat and tea. He checked his watch and looked out across the dark sea.

I could just make out the Motor Launch running lights and bow wake that was plowing through the dark murky water. Without hesitation the boat ran up on the sand just sufficient to hang there suspended between incoming tide and the churning propellers that kicking up mud and oily debris. Without much ceremony we hopped in and the boat backed away smoothly Captain Koltar remained on the beach clean and dry but I was neither.

The high tide would raise the ocean's level by thirty feet, bringing the waterline a quarter mile inland and nearly to the top of the beach. In the blackness offshore hid two ships that lay at anchor, visible only by their masthead lights. The first was a 492-foot Destroyer Tender of the Hamul (AD20) class she displaced 14900 tons fully loaded, her name was Everglades (Formally the USS Everglades AD24) Her last Home port was Philadelphia where she served as special service accommodation ship were she was used as central hub of repair and maintance in the Philadelphia moth ball fleet. The Everglades was built in Todd Ship Yard Seattle and outfitted in San Pedro California. She was completed in 1946, but the war was over so she was inactivated and sent to Fleet Reserve along with two of her sister ships. With advent of Korean conflict she was finally commissioned in May 1951 The Everglades Served her life primarily on the East Coast, Baltimore, Mayport, Charleston and Norfolk were some of her home ports. Proximally 2749 sailors served aboard and called her home for over 20 years of active service. I served aboard her for 3 years in Charleston South Carolina.

The Everglades deployed to Mediterranean 7 times to provide Repair and Maintenance to the Sixth Fleet. Everglades was Decommissioned in 1970 and sold for scrap (\$715,122) in 1991 and towed to Alang India to await her fate as all ships did in Alang .



Captain Koltar raised a two-way radio to his lips and, calling himself "Alang Control," said, "Okay, *Everglades*, heave up your anchor, heave up your anchor."

The *Everglades* captain acknowledged the order in thickly accented English. "Roger. Heave up anchor."

From Captain Koltar he radioed the ship to turn away from the coast and gather speed. "You make one-six-zero degrees, full ahead. What is your distance from the ship behind you?"

"Six cables, six cables." (Apx 3600 ft uk)

Captain Koltar could not see us, only our Running lights were visible in Dark before the dawn.

"Okay, you make course one-six-zero, full ahead."

Captain Koltar could see the masthead lights began to creep through the night. When the captain reported that the ship was steady on the outbound course, Captain Koltar ordered hard starboard rudder. He said, "Let me know your course every ten degrees."

The answer came back shortly: "One-seven-zero, *Everglades*." The turn was under way.

"One-eight-zero, *Everglades*." You could only feel the ship turn, as it cut though the black night and you could also feel the great mass of steel trembling under power as you swung toward the shore in the capable hands of her crew. The *Everglades* had two Steam Boilers that drove Geared Turbine engine that produced 8500hp to its single screw. She was capable of 18 knots, but one Boiler Needed to be Re-Bricked the last time she got underway in 1970, but the Indian Enginemen knew just how far they could push this old power plant. She had sufficient fuel for just one run to the beach, her *last run*. The *Everglades* captain called the changing courses with tension in his voice. I got the impression he had not done this before. Over the radio Captain Koltar voice was nonchalant. I could imagine him gazing at silhouettes of sheds that were at the top of the beach and sipped his tea. The radio said, "One-nine-zero ... two-zero-zero ... two-one-zero." As we made our turn gaining speed towards the beach.



"Two-two-zero."

On the Beach they were, using mechanical controls, Captain Koltar had kept a plot within the confines of a 1.5-inch moving square. Now, using a hand-held radio, he was going to ram the *Everglades*, a ship with a beam of seventy feet, into a plot on the beach merely ninety-eight feet wide. It was presumptuous of him, and they knew it. I admired the Captains cool.

As we completed our turn we could feel the Flump, Flump, Flump of the Old Bent shaft or was it the propeller? Probably both. This had been damaged in Portico on a Sand Bar as she backed out of the harbor many years ago. This was not the only thing shaking and clattering, besides my nerves. I was on a ship at high speed hurtling towards land and I would be surprised if something major did not fall off or totally fail before we got to the beach.

The lights of the ship grew closer. The radio said, "Two-three-zero."

Captain Koltar questioned the *Everglades* Captain, you are ballasting, no?"

"Yes, sir, we are ballasting. Ballasting is going on."

We had started Ballasting as soon as we started our turn with forward tank first, so as to keep the propeller deep in the water. The *Everglades* had a 25' draft, but was already riding high as she was running with limited fuel ballast.

"Very good, please continue came from the beach."

The numbers counted up. At "three-one-zero," with the *Everglades* now closing in from offshore, Captain Koltar finally showed some emotion buy raising his voice, he said, "Okay, make three-two-zero, steady her. Okay, now you give maximum revolution, Captain! Give maximum revolution!"

The Engineers and Crew vacated the engine room, as everything started to really shake and you could hear the ship groan under the stress. Except for Sea Trials in 1951 she had never had been ran at full power (Flank) and that was over 40+ years ago. The crew was fully aware that someone had to go down and shut everything down after they got to the beach. (Wonder who got the short straw) ?

I went down to look over the side. The *Everglades* could be seen looming out of the darkness, thrashing the ocean's surface with its single screw, raising a large white bow wake as it rushed toward the beach. I could make out the figures of men on the beach looking up at the bow rising over 50 feet in the air coming right at them it's Hull Number D24 painted out but still visible pushing a bow wave rising as the depth of the water got shallower. The sound of the bow wave, got louder and was like that of a waterfall, drowned the drumming of the engine. A group of workers who had been standing nearby scattered to safety.



The *Everglades* kept coming. It was caught by an inshore current that carried it briefly to the side. Then the keel hit the bottom, and the ship drove hard onto the flooded beach, carried by its weight, slowing under full forward power until the rudder no longer functioned and the hull veered out of control and slid to a halt not a hundred yards from where Captain Koltar stood. Anchors the size of cars rattled down the sides and splashed into the shallows. The engine finally stopped, a cloud of black smoke belching out of her stack. The lights switched off in succession from bow to stern, and abruptly the *Everglades* lay dark and still, with only a trace of steam drifting away like a ghostly apparition leaving the ship in the morning light.

I know that a ship is an inanimate object, but I cannot deny that at that moment the *Everglades* did die.

She had been built in Seattle in 1945, and had faithfully performed its duties for 45 years and now, as I stood watching from the bridge, it became a ferrous corpse -- in Indian law as well as in practice no longer a ship but just a mass of imported steel. The seamen, who lingered aboard, probing the dead passageways with their flashlight beams, were waiting for the tide to go out, so that they could lower a rope ladder, climb down the side, and walk away on dry land. The new owner would have his workers start cutting by noon day.

I asked Captain Koltar if he found this sad, and he answered emphatically that he did not.

I as a sailor who served aboard I would have answered yes, as I started to choke up a bit

As the dawn spread across the gargantuan landscape -- Alang, in daylight barely recognizable as a beach, a narrow, smoke-choked industrial zone six miles long, where nearly 200 ships stood side by side in progressive stages of dissection, yawning open to expose their cavernous holds, spilling their black

innards onto the tidal flats, and submitting to the hands of 40,000 impoverished Indian workers. A narrow, roughly paved frontage road ran along the top of the beach, parallel to the ocean.

It was still quiet at this early of the morning, although a few battered trucks had arrived early, and were positioning themselves now for the day's first loads of steel scrap. Business as usual. On the ocean side the frontage road was lined by the metal fences that defined the upper boundaries of the Ships Grave Yards at Alang.

Epilog:

The Alang Wrecking Yards consume over 700 ships a year, the Everglades was one of the last groups of US Military ships to be dispatched to India. Currently the Wrecking goes on US soil providing Jobs and rough recourses for US industry. These yards are probably no less harsh than the ones at Alang, but Environmentally better.

by William Langewiesche Editorialized by Gary Adams Ships Historian



Check out you tube Video

http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=mRJYgNc_TNc

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ein5dj-Dc-w&feature=player_embedded

[WELL,...this is another way to do it!!!](#)