

# 2 Destroyers Return From Vietnam Duty

Two Navy destroyers have dropped anchor in Long Beach after more than two years of combat operations off the coasts of North and South Vietnam.

The two ships—USS Blue and USS Collette—and their men and officers were given a tumultuous homecoming welcome as they docked at Pier 15.

During 26 months of combat patrols in the Tonkin Gulf, the two World War II veterans fired nearly 35,000 rounds on selected enemy targets, a Navy spokesman said.

Their operation, termed "Operation Sea Dragon," consisted of patrolling the North Vietnamese coastline from the Demilitarized Zone northward and destroying North Vietnamese logistics craft carrying arms and war materials to the enemy in the south.

On six tours of Sea Dragon operations, USS Blue was taken under fire 18 times with one shrapnel hit which resulted in only superficial damage to the ship and no injuries to personnel.

During the 112 days of Sea Dragon, Blue destroyed or damaged a score of logistic craft, leveled a dozen enemy structures, destroyed an enemy oil-storage facility and interdicted movement of enemy war materials to South Vietnam.

Moreover, the Navy said, the ship provided artillery support for American troops and those of our allies in South Vietnam as a unit of the Naval Gunfire Support Team.

The vessel is commanded by Cdr. Harold W. Bademan of Sioux Falls, S.D., who received the Bronze Star for meritorious action during a record 26-day combat tour on Sea Dragon Operations.

The USS Collette carried out

plane guard duties with aircraft carriers, conducted antisubmarine warfare exercises and rescued downed Air Force pilots.

Collette is commanded by Cdr. J. R. Kearney.

Both ships arrived at Long Beach Naval Station from Yokosuka, Japan.