



**USS NASSAU (LHA-4)  
FPO NEW YORK 09501**

IN REPLY REFER TO:  
LHA4/0111:gk  
5700  
Ser 162  
**2:9 MAR 1980**

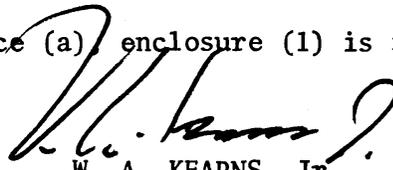
From: Commanding Officer, USS NASSAU (LHA 4)  
To: Director of Naval History (Op-09BH), Washington Navy Yard,  
Washington, DC 20374

Subj: Command History; submission of

Ref: (a) OPNAVINST 5750.12C

Encl: (1) The History of USS NASSAU (LHA 4)

1. In accordance with reference (a), enclosure (1) is forwarded.

  
W. A. KEARNS, Jr.

THE HISTORY  
OF  
UNITED STATES SHIP  
NASSAU  
(LHA 4)

## FORWARD

When the builders have finished with a new ship she is still an inanimate thing. Her hull is seaworthy, her engines are sound, and her gear is good, but you can't tell whether she is destined to become a proud and respected lady or a weak sister.

When her crew steps aboard, the ship comes to life. The skipper, the officers, and each man in the crew, all loan her a piece of their souls, to keep as long as they serve in her. These little pieces added together make up the soul of the ship and change her from so many tons of cold metal to a warm, living and breathing member of the seagoing community of ships.

Some people think that, despite all our modern, scientific knowledge, man will never learn how to put life into inanimate matter. Seafaring men have been doing this for centuries.

Daniel V. Gallery  
Rear Admiral, U. S. Navy (Retired)  
-1945

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Forward:.....i  
Table of Contents:.....ii  
Narrative History.....1  
Command, Internal Organization and Embarked Units:.....4  
Significant Statistical Data:.....5  
USS NASSAU (LHA 4) Commissioning Crew Members:.....6

HISTORY OF  
UNITED STATES SHIP NASSAU (LHA 4)

USS NASSAU (LHA 4) was designed and built by Ingalls Shipbuilding Division of Litton Industries at Pascagoula, Mississippi, as the fourth of the Navy's newest class of General Purpose Amphibious Assault Ship. Her keel was laid 13 August 1973; she was christened in January 1978 and commissioned on 28 July 1979. Named to commemorate the first ever Navy-Marine Corps amphibious operation of the American Revolution which captured Fort Nassau on New Providence Island, Bahamas Islands on 3 March 1776, she is over 840 feet long at the flight deck and has a beam of 106 feet; her boilers (the largest naval marine boilers in existence) power her 40,000 tons through the water at speeds in excess of 20 knots.

While Ingalls Shipyard was completing the final portions of the unique, modular construction, the Chief of Naval Personnel was busily engaged in identifying and writing orders for the crew that would commission NASSAU and sail her. In early December 1978, the first crew members began reporting to the Fleet Training Center at Norfolk, Virginia. In some instances, the specialized training that the crew members underwent had commenced over a year prior to their reporting. The training environment at the Fleet Training Center was hectic, as the first crew members prepared for their trip to the building site in Pascagoula, Mississippi. In early February 1979, the Prospective Commanding Officer, Captain William A. Kearns, Jr., U. S. Navy, was ready. He and the "Nucleus One" crew departed Norfolk and established the Pre-Commissioning Detachment in Pascagoula.

The nucleus crew's job was enormous. They were responsible for accepting each one of the 1399 compartments aboard. Additionally, they were responsible for preparing the ship and making her ready for acceptance by the U. S. Navy and for the establishment of the administrative organization that would make her following commissioning. In early April, the nucleus crew was augmented by an additional sixty personnel of the "Nucleus Two" crew. In all, the Pascagoula detachment would reach a size of approximately 150 personnel before the arrival of the balance crew.

The pace in Norfolk, where the Balance Crew of about 400 men was to be located, remained hectic. The Pre-Commissioning Unit, headed by the ship's Executive Officer, Commander Robert J. Ianucci, U. S. Navy, geared up for the arrival of the balance crew. The pace was intense; in one memorable Easter Sunday weekend, over one hundred crew members reported for duty. By the end of April, with the crew essentially together, the emphasis shifted to training. Before their departure for the ship, over 21,000 man days of class room instruction, formal schools instruction and on-the-job training aboard various Norfolk based ships would be accomplished and documented.

On June 27, the Balance Crew departed Norfolk in three separate airlifts for the building site and moved directly aboard ship. Once aboard in Pascagoula, an extensive forty-day period of hands-on training commenced. Additionally, round-the-clock work commenced preparing the ship for the commissioning ceremony. On July 28 1979, USS NASSAU (LHA 4) was placed into commission. Principal speaker for the occasion was the Honorable John Warner, U. S. Senator from the Commonwealth of Virginia. Also present and participating in the ceremony were the Secretary of the Navy, the Honorable W. Graham Claytor, Jr.; Commander Naval Surface Force, U.S. Atlantic Fleet, Vice Admiral John D. Johnson, Jr., U. S. Navy; the Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps and Chief of Staff, General Kenneth McLennan, U. S. Marine Corps; the Commandant of the Sixth Naval District, Rear Admiral Donald P. Hall, U. S. Navy; the Supervisor of Shipbuilding, Conversion and Repair, U.S. Navy, Pascagoula, Mississippi, Rear Admiral William E. McGarrah, Jr., U. S. Navy; and the ship's sponsor, Mrs. Louis H. Wilson, wife of the former Commandant of the Marine Corps.

Following the ceremony, NASSAU made ready for her initial underway period for transit to her homeport of Norfolk. Following her initial arrival in homeport, she hosted the change of command ceremony in which Rear Admiral W. G. HAMM, U. S. Navy, assumed command of Amphibious Group TWO. Two short at sea shakedown/training periods and a dependent's cruise closed the month of August. On 4 September, NASSAU was directed by Commander Second Fleet to get underway and that evening, she embarked Rear Admiral R. W. Watkins, U. S. Navy, Commander Service Group TWO and served as the flag ship of CTG 20.8, which was formed for the purpose of storm evasion due to Hurricane David.

On 1 October, NASSAU was again underway in the Virginia Capes Operating Areas conducting Underway Replenishment Ship Qualification Training. Early in the morning of 2 October, NASSAU was directed to return to her homeport and commence loading of ammunition and LFORM (Marine supplies and munitions) in response to a Presidential order to reinforce the U. S. Naval Base at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. On 9 October, she was underway enroute to Morehead City, North Carolina. A brief stop off the coast of Virginia Beach was made to embark four LCUs from Assault Craft Unit TWO, homeported at the Naval Amphibious Base, Little Creek. On 10 and 11 October, while anchored off the coast of Morehead City, NASSAU embarked the 38th Marine Amphibious Unit; later that evening, with Commander Amphibious Squadron SIX embarked, NASSAU, as flag ship for TASK FORCE ONE FOUR FIVE (which included USS PLYMOUTH ROCK (LSD 29) and USS SPARTANBURG COUNTY (LST 1192), steamed for Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, to "land the landing force." The Reinforcement Exercise was successfully accomplished with the landing at Guantanamo Bay on 17 October. After completing the administrative off-load of Marine supplies and cargo, NASSAU returned to her homeport for a short period of upkeep prior to the return trip to transport the Marines back to their home base of Camp Lejeune, North Carolina. This operation required the embarkation of 1660 Marine Corps troops and Navy staff, 258 Marine Corps tanks, trucks

and other vehicles, over a million and a half pounds of cargo and 27 helicopters. Thus, the Guantanamo Bay Reinforcement Operation was the first time that a ship of the LHA class was exercised at its maximum loadout capability. This operation was successfully conducted within ninety days of ship commissioning--with not a single injury, not a single aircraft incident, not a single pallet of cargo lost.

Following two weeks in port over the Thanksgiving holidays, NASSAU was underway in early December for intensive Damage Control Training, during which time she also successfully completed gun and missile Ship Qualifications Training and Certification. She returned to homeport on 9 December 1979 and began a month-long period of holiday leave, upkeep and tender availability. On 10 December, Rear Admiral W. G. HAMM, U. S. Navy, Commander Amphibious Group TWO, again broke his flag aboard NASSAU and she served as his flagship for a month-long period.

COMMAND  
INTERNAL ORGANIZATION  
AND  
EMBARKED UNITS

Since commissioning, NASSAU has been commanded by Captain William A. Kearns, Jr., U. S. Navy. Commanding Officer, USS NASSAU (LHA 4) reports to Commander Amphibious Group TWO for administrative purposes and to Commander Naval Surface Force, U.S. Atlantic Fleet for operational control.

NASSAU is internally organized with the following Departments

Administration	Navigation
Operations	Combat Systems
Air	Supply
Deck	Engineering
Communications	Medical/Dental
AIMD	

During storm evasion steaming, in September 1979, NASSAU was assigned to TASK GROUP TWO ZERO POINT EIGHT. During Guantanamo Bay Reinforcement Exercise 1-79 (October - November 1979), NASSAU was assigned to TASK FORCE ONE FOUR FIVE and reported to Commander Amphibious Squadron SIX. Embarked in NASSAU for the Reinforcement Exercise were the following units:

Commander and Staff, Amphibious Squadron SIX  
Tactical Air Control Squadron ONE, Detachment BRAVO  
Underwater Demolition Team TWO ONE, Detachment TWO  
Fleet Composite Operational Readiness Group TWO, Detachment TEN  
SEAL Team TWO, Detachment HOTEL  
Naval Beach Group TWO, Detachment CHARLIE

The following Marine Corps units composed the 38th Marine Amphibious Unit, embarked in NASSAU for the Reinforcement Exercise:

Headquarters 38th Marine Amphibious Unit  
Marine Medium Helicopter Squadron ONE SIX TWO  
Headquarters and Service Company, Battalion Landing Team 3/6  
INDIA Company, Battalion Landing Team 3/6  
KILO Company, Battalion Landing Team 3/6  
Weapons Company, Battalion Landing Team 3/6  
FOX Battery  
AT TOW Company, 2nd Tank Battalion  
Headquarters Marine Service Support Group THREE EIGHT

SIGNIFICANT STATISTICAL DATA

Boat Launchings and Recoveries:.....326

Aircraft Launchings and Recoveries:.....1482

Ammunition Expenditures:

5 inch projectiles:.....117 rounds

Sparrow III missiles:.....3

20mm:.....450 rounds

Cargo and Equipment Transported:

vehicles:.....258  
21278 square feet

cargo:.....1800 pallets  
108105 cubic feet