



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY
USS WHIDBEY ISLAND (LSD 41)
FPO AE 09591-1729

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From: Commanding Officer, USS WHIDBEY ISLAND (LSD-41)
To: Director, Naval History (NO9BH), Naval Historical Center,
Washington Navy Yard, 901 M Street SE, Bldg. 57,
Washington, DC 20374-5060

Subj: 1997 COMMAND HISTORY

Ref: (a) OPNAVINST 5750.12F

Encl: (1) Command Composition and Organization
(2) Chronology
(3) Narrative
(4) Supporting Documents

1. In accordance with requirements set forth in reference (a), enclosures (1) through (4) are submitted for the period 01 January 1997 to 31 December 1997.

T.C. PIERCE
T. C. PIERCE

Copy to:
COMPHIBGRU TWO

COMMAND COMPOSITION AND ORGANIZATION

The mission of USS WHIDBEY ISLAND (LSD-41) is to conduct prompt, sustained combat operations at sea, worldwide, in support of national policy. Designed, built and manned to carry maneuver warfare and the "over the horizon" amphibious assault, WHIDBEY ISLAND - homeported in Little Creek, Virginia and under the immediate senior command of Commander, Amphibious Group TWO - can carry four (4) Landing Craft Air Cushion (LCAC's) in its flood-able well, serve as the Primary Control Ship during an assault and provide a boat haven with docking, repair and fueling services for landing craft and boats. In short, WHIDBEY ISLAND is ideally suited to support our Navy's foremost strike asset...the U.S. Marine!

The WHIDBEY ISLAND class introduces to the fleet significant improvements with updated communications, combat systems, 20 and 60 ton cranes, expanded repair shops, two helicopter landing spots, completed medical and dental facilities, automated computer-based logistic support and an impressive engineering plant that gives WHIDBEY ISLAND an excellent capability for self sufficient operations. Equally effective in peace time as in wartime, WHIDBEY ISLAND is well suited to carry out a variety of humanitarian missions such as evacuations and disaster relief.

With primary missions of Amphibious Warfare, Mobility, Command and Control, and Anti-Air Warfare, WHIDBEY ISLAND is designed to support Special Warfare, Fleet Support Operations (refueling other ships), non-combatant operations, Ocean Surveillance and Electronic Warfare. Clearly a multi-mission capable ship, WHIDBEY ISLAND's crew, embarked Marines and detachments must also be, and are multi-talented. Representing almost every state in the Union, Puerto Rico, U.S. Virgin Islands, and the Philippines, we all are privileged and proud to serve in WHIDBEY ISLAND.

Enclosure (1)

JANUARY 1997

1 -3 JAN Holiday leave period #2 continues

1 - 8 JAN Inport NAB , Little Creek, VA

 6 JAN Command Amphibious Group Two, Rear Admiral (LH) W. Fladd visit

 7 JAN UNITAS Turnover brief

6 - 8 JAN Environmental Health Survey

7-10 JAN Combat System Training Group Gun systems checks

7 -16 JAN TSTA I

9 -16 JAN Underway VACAPES oparea, AAV ops, swept channel piloting exercise,
 GQ, CIWS Pacfire, Small arms famfire

17-20 JAN Inport NAB, Little Creek, VA

 17 JAN Zone inspection

 20 JAN Martin Luther King Jr. Day

21-24 JAN TSTA I, Underway VACAPES oparea, Flight Ops with Army Special
 Forces helps, Seal training, Well deck ops with LCM-8 craft, GQ, Abandon
 ship

21-31 JAN Shipboard crane improvement program

25-31 JAN Inport NAB, Little Creek, VA

27-31 JAN LMA assist visit

28-29 JAN Force Dental Officer Visit

FEBRUARY 1997

- 1 - 2 FEB Inport NAB, Little Creek, VA, visit ship
- 3 - 7 FEB Underway, VACAPES oparea, TSTA II, GQ, Main space fire training, BEECEs
- 6 FEB TACN recert
- 9 FEB USS WHIDBEY ISLAND (LSD-41) Birthday
- 10 FEB BASCOLEX Instructors ship visit
- 11-12 FEB BASCOLEX 5-96
- 17 FEB President's Day
- 7 -18 FEB Inport NAB, Little Creek, VA, ERAT Assessment
- 11 FEB CO guest lecturer, Marine Corps Staff College, Quantico, VA
- 18-21 FEB Underway, VACAPES oparea, ECERT preps and ECERT
- 22-28 FEB Inport NAB, Little Creek, VA
- 24-28 FEB "I" Division
- 25 FEB NSE planning meeting
- 27-28 FEB UNITAS Supply/logistics conference

MARCH 1997

- 1 - 4 MAR Inport NAB, Little Creek, VA
- 3 - 7 MAR Pre-Insurv
- 4 MAR E-4 EXAM
- 5 MAR U/W VACAPES OP AREA
- 5 -20 MAR Inport NAB, Little Creek, VA
- 10-14 MAR Shipboard Crane Improvement Program (SCIP) and Crane Certification
- 17-21 MAR FEP
- 18-21 MAR U/W VACAPES OP AREA
- 20 MAR UNREP USS Seattle (AOE-3)
- 21 MAR UNREP USS Simpson (FFG-56)
- 21-31 MAR Inport NAB, Little Creek, VA
- 24-28 MAR CSRR/TARGET, IMAV, Remove Visit, Configuration Review

APRIL 1997

- 1 -21 APR Inport NAB Little Creek, VA
- 1 - 4 APR CSRR Phase I, Target, Remove Visits, IMAV
- 2 APR BUPERS Detailer Visit
- 7 -11 APR INSURV
- 8 APR U/W VACAPES Oparea, return to port NAB LCRK
- 9 APR INSURV open and inspect, NAV Beach Group FEP
- 16 APR Pre-deployment brief for couples
- 21-24 APR P-MINT
- 21 APR U/W enroute Onslow Bay NC, Embark Assault Craft Unit 2 LCM-8 Craft (2), Beach Master Unit 2 Personnel, R2 P2 training, OBA, EEBD, Egress training for BMU/ACU personnel
- 22 APR Anchored Onslow Bay, NC, Wet Well ops for LCM-8 launch/recovery, embark Marfor UNITAS, CO Welcome aboard, Landing force troop familiarization/integration training
- 23 APR Flight Ops (CH46 DLQ's), Wet well ops for launch/recovery of LCM-8, small boats, and AAV recovery, GQ/Abandon ship, shop/shore movement and control training, CO SITE TV Question and Answer
- 24 APR Wet well ops for launch/recovery of LCM-8 and small boats, launch AAV, off load Marfor UNITAS, MODPMINT Hotwash up/debrief, UW enroute NAB LCRK
- 25 APR Anchored Lynnhaven anchorage, disembark ACU-2 and BMU-2 LCM-8 craft and personnel, UW enroute 2LC & NAB LCRK
- 28-30 APR CSRR Phase 2, I division, Predeployment diesel inspection, PRT
- 29-30 APR UNITAS Mid embark planning conference, Range evolution

MAY 1997

- 1 May Pre-deployment Outbrief
- 1 - 2 May CSRR Phase II, Indoc
- 2 May Gettysburg Visit, Pre-deployment Diesel Inspection Outbrief
- 3 - 8 May LMA, Hull Cleaning
- 7 - 8 May Physical Readiness Test
- 8 May USS Gunston Hall (LSD-44) Change of Command
- 9 May USS Wasp (LHD-1) Change of Command, Command Picnic
- 12-22 May U/W Onslow Bay, and Puerto Rico Opareas, Index, Marfor Certification
- 12 May Degaussing Run, USS Whirlwind (PC-11) Refueling, Embark ACU2 LCM-8 craft
- 13 May Anchor Onslow Bay, Embark Marfor UNITAS
- 14 May Wet well ops for LCM-8 launch and recovery and AAV embarkation
- 15 May Flight Quarters for CH-46 DLQ
- 16-17 May Off-load Marfor UNITAS personnel and equipment
- 17 May U/W enroute Puerto Rico Oparea
- 18 May Holiday Routine
- 19 May HI-line/dry hook up with USS Compte de Grasse (DDG 974) and USS DeWert (FFG 45), Non-maneuvering tactical signals drill, emcon, deceptive lighting exercise, RT/flashing light exercise
- 20 May Pubex, Flight Quarters for Compte de Grasse pax transfer, Towing exercise, air/surf trackex, pubex, BECEES, non-maneuvering tactical signals drill
- 21 May Non-maneuvering Divtacs, Leapfrogs, pubex, flaghoist, flashing light semaphore drill, extended EMCOM Exercise

MAY 1997

- 22 May PC refueling training, wet well operations for disembarkation of ACU2 LCM-8 craft, moor NAB Little Creek, VA
- 22-26 May Inport NAB Little Creek, VA
- 26 May Memorial Day
- 27-30 May Commuter Week
- 27-29 May Ammo loadout Yorktown NWS, VA
- 29 May Dependents Cruise, PO3 and PO2 frocking ceremony/awards ceremony, steel beach picnic
- 29-30 May POM period

JUNE 1997

- 1 - 10 June First Pre-overseas Movement Leave Period
- 1 - 12 June Stores Onload
 - 3 June Quality of Life Visit
- 3 - 27 June Intermediate Maintenance Availability Period (IMAV)
 - 5 June Maritime Administration Tour
 - 11 June POM Leave period turnover, Command Advancement Program Ceremony
ICO EN2(SW) Kenneth Langley
- 11-24 June Second Pre-overseas Movement Leave Period
 - 13 June Commanding Officers' Conference (COMPHIBGRU Two)
 - 17 June Ammo Onload, Commanding Officer/COMPHIBGRU Two UNITAS Brief
 - 25 June Fast Cruise
 - 26 June Naval Beach Group Visit
 - 30 June COMPHIBGRU Two, RADM Fladd visit, Helo Firefighting School

JULY 1997

- 1 - 31 July Deployed for UNITAS XXXVIII
 - 1 July Embark Assault Craft Unit 2 LCM-8 Craft, GQ
- 1 - 2 July U/W enroute Moorehead City, NC
 - 2 July Launch and recover LCM-8 craft, Inport Moorehead City, NC, Onload MARFOR UNITAS, U/W enroute Onslow Bay, Onload 3 CH-46 Helicopters, Wet well operations, Onload MARFOR AAV's
- 2 - 7 July U/W enroute Naval Station Roosevelt Roads, Puerto Rico
 - 3 July GQ, Man overboard drill
 - 4 July Fourth of July, Steel beach picnic
 - 5 July Safety Stand-down
- 7 - 11 July Inport Naval Station Roosevelt Roads, Puerto Rico
 - 7 July Flight Quarters, CH-46 fly-off, Wet well operations, Launch LCM-8 craft, Moor Naval Station Roosevelt Roads, Puerto Rico, Launch PL-1, Task group medical rep meeting, Embark foreign shipriders, EOD embark, Boat officer and coxswain qual, review and test onboard USS Dewert (FFG-45), Commence UNITAS phase zero, Logistics coordination meeting onboard Comte De Grasse (DD-974), Boat crew topside walk-thru of USS Sand Lance (SSN-660), Chief-of-Staff informal dinner
 - 8 July Sports Day, Task group BBQ, Amphibious planning conference, small boat training/night training, Amphibious officers no-host socials
 - 9 July Equipment and ammo off load, Officer reception onbd Whidbey Island, CTF-138 Rear Admiral Lyons and DCINC SOUTHCOM Rear Admiral Doran visit
 - 10 July Amphib final confirmation brief, exchange shipriders with ARV Capana, equipment and ammo off load
 - 11 July U/W enroute Vieques Puerto Rico, Landing force, ammo movement to Vieques, Personnel transfer via PC PHIB, Rehearsal confirmation brief

JULY 1997

- 11-14 July Anchored IVO Vieques, Puerto Rico, Amphibious training
- 12 July Wet well operations for launch/recovery of MARFOR UNITAS, Beach Masters Unit Four LARC, LCM-8 craft and AAV's, Radm Lyons visit, backload assault force, Landing confirmation brief, Rehearsal critique
- 13 July Radm Lyons visit, Wet well operations for launch of amphibious exercise assault of Vieques, Puerto Rico
- 14 July Wet well operations for LCM-8 launch, Embark NEO Planners
- 15 July Wet well operations to recover MARFOR UNITAS, AAVS and LCM-8 craft, U/W enroute Naval Station Roosevelt Roads, Puerto Rico, Moored Naval Station Roosevelt Roads, launch submarine fenders to USS Dewert (FFG-45), Ops/Comms conference onboard USS Compte de Grasse (DD-974)
- 15-17 July Inport Naval Station Roosevelt Roads, Puerto Rico
- 16 July Refueling, Pre-sail brief, Amphibious critique/plaque exchange, SPECWAR EOD equipment/ammo onload
- 17 July U/W enroute Carupano, Venezuela, Wet well operations for recovery of LCM-8 craft, Detach from Task force
- 17-19 July U/W enroute Carupano, Venezuela
- 19 July Rendezvous with ARV Goajira, Wet well operations for launch of LCM-8 craft, Anchor in Carupano, Venezuela, Port arrival brief, Activities coordination brief onboard ARV Goajira, Off load project Handclasp and presentation, Visit ship, planning meeting at Venezuela Marine HQ, Sports day
- 19-22 July Anchored Carupano, Venezuela
- 20 July COMREL project Liceo "Simon Rodriguez" School, Professional amphibious operations seminar, Visit ship
- 21 July COMREL project Liceo "Simon Rodriguez" School, Backload MARFOR ROC, U/W enroute Puerto La Cruz, Venezuela
- 22 July Anchored Puerto La Cruz, Venezuela, Co-hosted officers reception in honor of Venezuelan Navy Day

JULY 1997

- 22-26 July Anchored Puerto La Cruz, Venezuela
- 24 July Venezuelan Navy Day
- 25 July ARV Guarillo visit
- 26-31 July U/W southwestern Caribbean sea, Conducting divtacs, Communications exercises, flight quarters, AAWEX with Colombian Navy participants and other UNITAS XXXVIII participants

AUGUST 1997

- 1 - 31 Aug Deployed for UNITAS XXXVIII
 - 1 Aug U/W enroute Cartagena, Colombia. ICW, USS Comte De Grasse (DD-974), USS Dewert (FFG-45), USS Zephyr (PC-8), USS Squall (PC-7), USS Sandlance (SSN-660)
- 2 - 7 Aug Inport Cartagena, Colombia
 - 2 Aug Arrival conference, launch LCM-8's
 - 4 Aug USCG Birthday, General ship visit, Colombian Marines (COLMAR) cadets visit, Project Handclasp, Officer reception, official luncheon CO only
 - 5 Aug Marine Corp symposia with COLMAR, CMC visit onboard Comte De Grasse, Sports day, PC stores offload
 - 6 Aug Detach, TF 138 departs, 50 COLMAR onboard for MARFOR classes, recover LCM-8's and MARFOR vehicles, Ammo offload for MARFOR live fire
 - 7 Aug LIMPETEX with SPECWAR, MARFOR classes onboard for COLMAR, Ammo offload for MARFOR live fire, backload EOD, onload SBU RHIBs and WBI UB and PL1
 - 8 Aug U/W enroute Panama, CIWS/25mm pacfire, embark two MH-69 Army helos
 - 9 Aug Anchor Colon, Panama, Transit Panama Canal, embark Tiger Cruise participants for Panama Canal transit, re-enlistment ceremony, Moor Rodman Naval Base, Panama, arrival conference
- 9 - 14 Aug Inport Rodman Naval Base, Panama
 - 10 Aug Offload MARFOR rolling stock for transportation to Rodman range and Fort Sherman, offload MARFOR Rigid Raiding Craft (RRC), HHMWVs and ammo, General ship visit
 - 11 Aug UNITAS Golf tournament, refueling, General ship visit, stores offload for USS Squall (PC-7) and USS Sandlance (SSN-660)
 - 12 Aug Detach TF 138, Small arms safety brief, backload MARFOR RRCs

AUGUST 1997

- 13 Aug 160th SOAR equipment onload, recover SBU RHIBs, SPECWAR ammo onload, onload MARFOR vehicles and personnel, backload EOD equip
- 14 Aug U/W enroute Malaga Colombia, flight quarters DLQ with 128th Aviation brigade, General Quarters, CIWS Pacfire
- 15-17 Aug Anchored Malaga, Colombia
- 15 Aug Arrival conference, launch MARFOR RRCs, final critique, Launch LCM-8, MARFOR classes onboard for COLMAR
- 16 Aug Sports day, Ambassador Frechette ship visit/luncheon and awards ceremony, No-host officer reception
- 17-19 Aug U/W enroute Salinas, Ecuador
- 17 Aug Sortie enroute Salinas, Ecuador
- 18 Aug Helicopter crossdeck, detach from TF 138, Independent steaming, recover Army MH-60 helicopters, End Phase Two
- 19 Aug Commence Phase three, Freeplay, Rendezvous with TF 138, Photoex, SPECWAR/EOD/MARFOR pre-load LCM-8s, SPECWAR/EOD ammo transfer, anchor Salinas, Ecuador, Launch LCM-8s, Offload SPECWAR personnel and equipment
- 19-24 Aug Anchored Salinas, Ecuador
- 20 Aug Launch SBU RHIBs, off-load SBU trailers and trucks, MARFOR RRC's, MARFOR weapons platoon, Wet well operations for launch of AAV's, recover LCM-8s for off load of MARFOR LAVs, and MARFOR rolling stock, recover LCM-8s and Army MH-60s.
- 21 Aug Off-load PC supply via PC RHIBs, Ship visit/training of Ecuadorian Marines, launch and recover 10 AAVs and Army MH-60s
- 22 Aug Littoral warfare symposium, visit, launch and recover Army MH-60 sports day, disembark and recover 2 platoons of MARFOR personnel and equipment, co-hosted officers reception onboard
- 23 Aug Final amphib coordination meeting, launch and recover Army MH-60s, disembark and recover 2 platoons of MARFOR personnel and equipment

AUGUST 1997

- 24-26 Aug U/W Amphibious ops with Ecuadorian Navy and Marines
- 24 Aug Launch LCM-8s for recovery of MARFOR rolling stock, LAVs, and Beach Masters equipment, embark BATOPE Co., BATOPE ship familiarization, U/W for amphibious operations, anchor in AOA for rehearsal
- 25 Aug Flight quarters for launch and recovery of Army MH-60, amphib exercise rehearsal, Wet well operations for launch and recovery of LCM-8s and AAVs, back-load, sortie for transit to AOA for amphib ops, rehearsal critique
- 26 Aug Wet well operations for dynamic launch of LCM-8s and AAVs, launch and recovery of Army MH-60, anchor in AOA, CITC training
- 27 Aug Amphib back-load, Wet well operations for launch and recovery of LCM-8s and recovery of AAVs, flight quarters for recovery of Army MH-60s, U/W enroute Salinas, Ecuador, anchor Salinas Ecuador, Mail/Cargo on-load
- 27-30 Aug Anchored Salinas, Ecuador
- 28 Aug USCOMSOLANT visit, Admiral's Call, refueling, off-load MH-60 equipment and COMREL supplies, back-load MARFOR RRCs and SBU trailers and truck, resupply day, Surface Warfare symposium, Wet well operations for recovery of LCM-8s
- 29 Aug Surface Warfare symposium, Amphib final critique, wet well operations for launch and recovery of LCM-8s, back-load EOD/SPECWAR equipment and SBU RHIBs and equipment, Officer reception
- 30 Aug Sortie enroute Paita, Crossing the line ceremony, End Phase three
- 30-31 Aug U/W enroute Paita, Peru
- 31 Aug Commence Phase four, rendezvous with Peruvian Navy assets, Holy Helo, anchor Paita, Peru, arrival conference, wet well operations for launch of LCM-8s

SEPTEMBER 1997

- 1 - 30 Sep Deployed for UNITAS XXXVIII
- 1 - 2 Sep Import Piata Peru
 - 1 Sep Labor Day, off-load EOD ammo, launch/recover LCM-8 craft, Ops/Comm conference Specwar planning mtg, exchange ship-riders with Pervuian Navy ships Pisco and Mariatiagui, embark IMAP peronnel
- 2 - 4 Sep Underway enroute Ancon Peru
 - 2 Sep Launch/recover LCM-8 craft, embark EOD, SBU equipment, MARFOR mout classes and ship orientation
 - 3 Sep Becces, GQ, Nixie stream
 - 4 Sep Anchor Ancon, Peru, launch SBU RHIBs, E-4 exam, launch AAV, LCM-8, disembark MARFOR equipment
- 4 - 5 Sep Anchored Ancon, Peru
 - 5 Sep Off-load MARFOR Weps platoon, Amphib coordination meeting, re-embark IMAP, back-load MARFOR equipment, Sortie enroute Salinas, Peru
 - 6 Sep Anchor Salinas, Peru, Sterngate transfer of MARFOR Recon platoon, dynamic launch/recovery of LCM-8 and AAVS rehearsal critique, sortie for Freeplay
 - 7 Sep Amphib assault exercise, dynamic launch of LCM-8S
 - 8 Sep Dynamic launch of AAVs, anchor Ancon, Peru, USCOMSOLANT dental visit, Amphib assault H-hour, back-load MARFOR personnel and equipment, Amphib assault critique, sortie enroute Callao, Peru
 - 9 Sep Inport Callao, Peru, E-5, Exam
- 9 - 13 Sep Inport Callao,
 - 10 Sep Off-load Handclasp/Comrel supplies, SAR Trng, stores off-load, visit ship
 - 11 Sep E-6 exam, visit ship, SPECWAR on-load, Co-hosted Officer Reception

- 12 Sep VIP ship visit U.S. Ambassador to Peru, Honorable Mr. Jett, Phase four debrief with USCOMSOLANT, Ambassador Jett, re-embark MARFOR RCCs, EOD on-load
- 13 Sep Underway enroute Coquimbo Chile, opposed sortie, freeplay
- 13 - 17 Sep Underway enroute Coquimbo, Chile
- 14 Sep Phase five on/offload planning conference, end phase four
- 15 Sep Refuel USS Zephyr (PC-8) and USS Squall (PC-7)
- 16 Sep CPO Initiation/frocking, YNC(SW) Bartko, RMC Combs, MSC(SW) Oxley, fresh water wash down, Becces
- 17 Sep Anchor Coquimbo, Chile, Launch SBU RHIBs, arrival conference, Handclasp presentation, launch LCM-8, Amphib planning conference, Officer reception
- 17 - 20 Sep Anchor Coquimbo, Chile
- 18 Sep Refuel USS Zephyr and USS Squall, Full Dress ship, visit ship, FF&V on-load, Chilean Independence Day celebration
- 19 Sep POW/MIA day, embark Chilean Marines
- 20 Sep Safety stand-down, sortie enroute Puerto Aldea, Chile, Anchor Puerto Aldea, Chile, static launch of LCM-8 and AAV
- 21 Sep Hump day, rehearsal coordination meeting, astern refueling of USS Zephyr and USS Squall, crossdeck MARFOR personnel to Chilean Navy ship Miapo, Underway sortie to launch position, launch RRCS and LCM-8S
- 22 Sep Amphib rehearsal, dynamic launch of LCM-8 and AAVS, anchor Puerto Aldea, Chile, back-load, sortie enroute Valparaiso, Chile
- 23 Sep Amphib assault, dynamic launch of LCM-8 and AAVS, anchor Puerto Aldea, Chile, back-load, sortie enroute Valparaiso, Chile
- 24 - 27 Sep Inport Valparaiso, Chile
- 24 Sep Visit ship, stores off-load, wreath laying ceremony at USS Essex cemetery and Iquique Monument
- 25 Sep Underway for Amphib demonstration, Moor Valparaiso, Chile

- 26 Sep Visit ship, off-load Comrel/Handclasp supplies, SPECWAR off-load, back-load MARFOR equipment, Pre-sail conference, ammo transfer
- 27 - 29 Sep Underway enroute Talcahuano, Chile
- 27 Sep UNREP with Chilean Navy Oiler, Araucano
- 29 - 30 Sep Moor Talcahuano, Chile, visit ship, Friendship lunch, final critique, USCOMSOLANT visit for Chilean In-land waterways transit brief, underway enroute Punta Arenas, Chile

OCTOBER 1997

- 1 - 5 Oct Inland waterways transit/Straits of Magellan, RDVU/Unrep w/Araucano, Detach from CTF-138, Anchor Punta Arenas, Project Handclasp presentation

- 6 Oct Disembark Chilean Nav Pilots/Embark Argentine Nav Pilots/End Phase six, U/W enroute Estancia Las Violetas, Sortie from Punta Arenas, ESWS Trng-Communications with RMC(SW) Combs, BECCE'S, Anchor Rio Grande

- 7 Oct UNITAS Band Concert, Launch RHIBs, Set condition 1A Crane and Wet Well OPS for launch/recovery of LCM-8s and AAVs, Arrival conference, Embark 125 ARGMAR/CATF/CLF(Via SH-3), ARGMAR Tour WBI, Insert Recon(Via AR SH-3)

- 8 - 11 Oct Set condition 1A for Wet Well ,CRANE, Small Boat OPS/LAUNCH SBU, ESWS Trng-Aviation OPS-BM1(SW) Tate, Debark CLF to Estancia Las Violetas, Set condition 1A for Wet Well(Backload), Rembark MARFOR, U/W Puerto Belgrano, U/W enroute to Baliza Chica, BECCEs, ESWS Trng-Engineering watches, EN3(SW), GQ, Anchor in Baliza Chica

- 12 Oct Set condition 1A for Wet Well and Small Boat OPS, offload of AAVs, Moor Puerto Belgrano, Arentina, Amphibious Coord Conference, CATF Hosted Dinner

- 13 Oct Offload RRCS/2 and HMMVS/PC Supplies, ESWS Trng-ENG logs/Admin-EN3(SW) Brien, Sortie for and Anchor in Baliza Chica, ARGMAR AAV recovery/launch Trng, Insert Recon(all ARGMAR)

- 14 Oct Refuel PC's at anchor, Set condition 1A for Wet Well OPS, QA Trng(ENG/OPS), Embark AAVS, Launch SBU for demolition of Underwater obstacles, At-Sea Fire Party Drill

- 15 Oct Launch PL1 and PL2, Set 1A for Small Boat and Wet Well OPS, DC Trng, Launch LCM-8S, ARGMAR AAVS, LARCS and receive AAVS, ESWS Trng-ENG Plant OPS-EN3(SW) Brien, Recover small boats and LARC'S,

- 16 - 19 Oct Set 1A for Wet Well and Small Boat OPS, MARFOR withdrawal, Moored Puerto Belgrano, Argentina, ESWS Trng-Boiler, MM1(SW) Abrams, underway enroute to Rio De Janeiro, BECCE'S, Steal Beach Picnic

- 20 Oct BECCE'S, ESWS Trng-Diesel Engines, EN3(SW) Nusca, GQ

- 21 Oct U/W enroute to Rio De Janeiro, BECCE'S, QA Trng, ESWS Board, 'I' Division-Career Info and NR&R/Sexual Harassment Trng
- 22 - 24 Oct Moored Rio De Janeiro, Brazil, ESWS Trng-Diesel Propulsion, EN3(SW) Nusca, Amphibious Planning Conference, Sports Competition(Soccer, Volleyball, Tug of War, B-Ball) 200 MARFOR, 50 Navy, U/W enroute Marambia, FLIGHT QTRS(DLQ'S)(CRASH/SMASH DRILL), Arrive Marambia, Set condition 1A for Wet Well and Small Boat OPS, Recover RAV'S and PL'S, Launch SBU
- 25 Oct Set Condition 1A for Wet Well OPS, Launch LCM-8'S(Wave 4), Set Condition 1A for Small Boats, Launch PL'S and AAV'S, RCV HH-60, Set Condition 1A for Crane OPS(Launch 4 RRC'S), Recover, Load, Launch LCM-8'S
- 26 - 28 Oct ESWS Trng,-Gas Turbine, EN(SW) Langley, Re-Embark MARFOR, Set condition 1A for Wet Well, Small Boat and Crane(Backload RRC'S) OPS U/W enroute to Rio De Janiero, Moor Rio De Janiero, Brazil, RADM Lyons arrives
- 29 Oct RADM Lyons arrives, Arrival, Tour, Lunch and Depart Senior Brazilian Officers, U.S. Ambassador, CINCSOUTH, and SECNAV arrives, USMC Ball
- 30 Oct Embark Tow JAC Molesworth Ship-riders, Stores Onload-50 man working party(25 Navy, 25 Marine), Offload TF 138 Supplies and NON-WATC MARFOR equipment
- 31 Oct Casino night, U/W enroute to Capetown, South Africa, ESWS Trng-Throttles/Main OP STA, EN2(SW) Langley, QA Trng

NOVEMBER 1997

- 1 - 5 Nov BECCE'S, SEED, OBA, and EGRESS Trng, FLGHT DECK washdown, ESWS Trng-Propulsion Turbines/Reduction Gears, EN2(SW) Langley, GQ, L/O Trng, ESWS Board, D/C Firefighting Trng, ESWS Trng-Bearings/Propellers, EN1(SW) Lemaster, CICWO Board

- 6 Nov QA Trng, BECCE'S, ESWS Board

- 7 Nov Well Deck Washdown, BECCE'S (GQ) (Abandon Ship), ESWS Trng-Pitch Propeller, EN2(SW) Langley

- 8 - 10 Nov BECCE'S, Holiday routine, BOAR/ZULU WARS Brief, Inport Capetown, South Africa, ESWS Trng-Compressed Air, EN1(SW) Bridges, Press Conference onboard WBI(WBI/MARFOR CO), US Naval ATT, NCIS Agent, San Officers Brief

- 11 Nov AM FFV Onload, EOD Det DEMO, Inport Capetown, South Africa, AMPHIB Warfare DEMO'S, Briefs for 20 Army attendees onboard WBI, AMPHIB briefing resume

- 12 - 16 Nov Inport Capetown, South Africa, U.S. Coast Guard briefing for SAN, HANDCLASP/COMREL meeting, US Ambassador to South Africa arrives, DLQ'S w/SAN Aircraft, U/W enroute Walvis Bay

- 17 Nov BECCE'S, GQ, ESWS Trng-AC&R, EN3(SW) McGill, Safety Standdown

- 18 Nov Inport Walvis Bay, Namibia, Set condition 1A for Wet Well OPS, Launch LCM-8S, Moor Walvis Bay, Namibia, Arrival Conference, CO/MARFOR CO call on Mayor of Walvis Bay, CO/MARFOR Co call on Swakopmund Mayor, CO/MARFOR Co call on Erongo Governor, EOD planning meeting

- 19 - 23 Nov MARFOR washdown, Inport Walvis Bay, Namibia, FFV onload, MARFOR onload 3 vehicles, Engineering Program Review, Sports Day, MARFOR Backload, Underway, Holiday Routine

- 24 Nov BECCE'S, GQ, ESWS Trng-Gyorcompass, IC1(SW) Golden

- 25 - 27 Nov BECCE'S, CRAFTSMAN Trng(ET/FC/EW/ENG), Crossing Line Meeting, QA Trng(QAI/WCS), ESWS Trng-Degaussing, EM1(SW) Shumaker, GQ, Holiday Routine, Thanksgiving Day Dinner

- 28 - 30 Nov BECCE'S, ESWS Trng-Security, RMC(SW) Combs, GQ, Freedom of Navigation(Liberia, Sierra Leone), 25MM/M-60/Marine FAM Fire,

DECEMBER 1997

- 1 - 3 Dec Freedom of Navigation(Sierra Leone), BECCE'S, PAC-Fire brief, CIWS PACFIRE, ESWS Trng-Administration, YNC(SW) Bartko, ESWS Board, Celestial NAV Trng(QM'S/Junior Officers/ESWS, Holiday Routine

- 4 Dec Gas Free ENG Trng(all hands), Craftsman Trng, BECCE'S/GQ

- 5 Dec Gas Free ENG Trng(all hands), Heat Stress Trng(all hands/site tv)

- 6 - 10 Dec BECCE'S/GQ, ESWS Board, PO Indoc, Admin GQ, MCA preps, SOQ Board, Loss of Steering Drill, Anchor Bermuda, U/W enroute Morehead City, NC

- 11 Dec MCA, Ammunition Transfer to LCM-8, BECCE'S, VA State Trooper Traffic Safety brief

- 12 Dec Set condition 1A for Wet Well and Small Boat OPS, Launch LCM-8S and AAVS, Recover Small Boats, Enroute to Morehead City, NC, Moor, USMC offload, Disembark MCA Team, Embark VIP'S, Embark Tigers, U/W enroute Little Creek, VA

- 13 - 18 Dec CPG-2 Arrive/Departs, Set condition 1A for Wet Well OPS, Launch-8/LARC vicinity of Cape Henry, Moor Pier 17N, Bow Out, Little Creek, Holiday Leave standdown, COMNAVSURFLANT DAPA Meeting

- 19 - 31 Dec Holiday Leave Standdown

JANUARY 1997

Continuing preparations for Commander Amphibious Group Two (CPG-2), Rear Admiral Lower Half W. Fladd, visit, the crew of Whidbey Island (LSD-41) opened 1997. Rear Admiral Fladd toured the entire ship paying particularly attention to the engineering main spaces. He was impressed with the overall cleanliness of the ship and the morale of the crew.

Following the visit of CPG-2, Whidbey Island embarked on her first phase of Tailored Ships Training Assessment (TSTA-I). During this underway period Whidbey Island's crew would be tested in her knowledge of her primary and secondary missions, to include amphibious operations with AAVs, and helo operations. Other exercises would include Underway replenishment, CIWS PAC-fires and small arms FAM-fires. Instructors during TSTA I would include teams from Fleet Training Group Atlantic, Combat Systems Training Group Atlantic, and Engineering Training Group Atlantic.

Whidbey Island celebrated the memory of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. with a cake cutting ceremony and a speech given by the Captain. Following the national holiday, Whidbey Island again set sail to continue TSTA I, training. While underway, LSD-41, conducted joint training with U. S. Army special forces' helicopters.

Whidbey Island rounded the first month of the year with a Logistics Maintenance Assessment assist visit, preparing all onboard for the impending LMA in April. Whidbey Island's Dental department was paid a visit and inspection by the Force Dental Officer, during the last week of the month.

The schedule of January amply prepared the crew of the Whidbey Island for the coming months. Engineering department readied for the upcoming Engineering Certification, in February, with great assistance from the entire crew.

FEBRUARY 1997

Feverishly preparing for the impending Engineering certification (ECERT), the crew of Whidbey Island (LSD-41) began the month of February with TSTA II. Aiding in the preparations an inspection team from Engineering Training Group, Atlantic embarked during TSTA II to hone the skills of the engineering team to a razor fine edge. For an entire week the engineering department, with considerable aid from the entire crew conducted a full frontal assault, consisting of cleaning, evolution training, BECCE's, and last minute preparations.

After a week underway, LSD-41 returned to Little Creek to continue to prepare for the Propulsion Examination Board. During the week in port the Commanding Officer, Cmdr. T. C. Pierce, lectured at the Marine Corps Staff College, in Quantico, VA. Several junior officers of Whidbey Island's wardroom attended as well. To prepare for ECERT the crew of Whidbey Island worked on President's day to ensure care was given to last minute details.

With an Engineering Training Group, Atlantic team aboard, Whidbey Island departed NAB Little Creek on 18 February to begin the week of ECERT. A team from the Propulsion Examining Board, Atlantic conducted the Engineering certification. During the inspections both main machinery rooms experienced casualties, that halted the inspection. Due to the extreme dedication and professional knowledge of the engineering department the necessary repairs were made in record time and allowing the inspection to continue.

Whidbey Island passed the engineering certification with flying colors. PEB was extremely impressed with the progress the Engineering department had made since CART II in December of 1996. The passing of ECERT was truly a great victory for the entire crew of Whidbey Island. All hands had a part in the outcome of ECERT. The day after ECERT, Whidbey Island's Wardroom celebrated the event while attending the Amphibious Officer Spouse Gator Ball.

Not to rest on her laurels, the crew of LSD-41, begun the following week picking up where it left off, and begun preparing for Pre-INSURV, INSURV, Final Evaluation Problem (FEP), LMA and the upcoming deployment.

MARCH 1997

With the Engineering Certification successfully passed, Whidbey Island and her crew began to prepare for the Final Evaluation Problem and INSURV. During the first week of March the Amphibious Group Two Pre-Insurv Inspection team boarded Whidbey Island to groom her for the impending inspection. Spending a week aboard, the inspection looked over the entire ship and her programs.

The pre-insurv inspection included a single day underway. During the underway period, Whidbey Island conducted Anchor Drop tests, Full Power runs, Detect-to- Engage exercises, and Rudder swing checks. The inspectors left Whidbey Island with a small list of items that needed to be corrected prior to the official Insurv Inspection.

The following week Whidbey Island continued her training and inspection cycle with the SCIP inspection and Crane Certification. Both the inspection and certification were essential to preparing Whidbey Island for the upcoming Final Evaluation Problem (FEP).

During FEP Whidbey Island passed the setting of Material conditions Yoke and Zebra the first time. Whidbey Island is one of three ships on the east coast to pass the Yoke and Zebra checks during FEP and the only one to pass it the first time in the past year. Whidbey Island's sailors conducted themselves throughout the week of FEP with pride and professionalism, impressing all the inspectors.

The Final Battle problem for FEP was unique. In order to simulate the chaos of war, Damage Control Training Teams (DCTT) members blasted rock and roll music over the ship's loud speakers. Other inspections throughout out the week included an underway replenishment with the USS Seattle (AOE-3), and a Close-in replenishment of the USS Simpson (FFG-56). Whidbey Island also conducted amphibious operations with LCM-8 boats.

Whidbey Island ended the month with both the TARGET and CSRR visits. The purpose of both visits was to inspect the ship's material readiness and make necessary repairs, was met with great success. During the last two weeks Whidbey Island also made the final preparations for the INSURV inspection.

APRIL 1997

Continuing with the inspection cycle Whidbey Island (LSD-41) geared up for the final inspection the Board of Inspection and Survey (INSURV) visit, by fully utilizing a Combat systems readiness review (CSRR), and TARGET and REMOVE visits. For the INSURV visit Whidbey Island would spend one day at sea to conduct tests of the ship's anchors , and electronic equipment.

Toward the end of the month Whidbey Island embarked MARFOR UNITAS, BMU-2, and ACU-2 personnel and equipment for the MARFOR UNITAS PMINT. The PMINT conducted off the coast of NC had outstanding results. A true sense of cooperation between green and blue forces was fostered. All embarked personnel were trained in basic damage control, and ship board safety precautions.

During the month several predeployment briefs were conducted by the NAB Little Creek Family Service Center, and the Whidbey Island Spouse group.

Whidbey Island and her crew continued to make preparations for the upcoming UNITAS deployment, scheduling and conducting weapons training with all inport watchstanding personnel and a predeployment diesel inspection of the ship's main engines and diesel generators.

MAY 1997

The Combat Systems Readiness Review (CSRR) along with Logistic Management Assessment (LMA) wrapped up Whidbey Island's long inspection period. Following the LMA outbrief, several Whidbey Island Officers conducted a staff tour of the Gettysburg, PA battlefields. Whidbey Island's Captain, Cmdr. Terry C. Pierce led the group and explained the different Maneuver Warfare tactics that were displayed on the battlefield more than a hundred years ago.

After successfully completing all of her training phases she jumped right into the work up phase of UNITAS XXXVIII. Between 12 and 22 May Whidbey Island sailors were instrumental in the certification of the MARFOR UNITAS troops, and completed with laudatory comments the Independent deployers exercise (INDEX) with USS Comte de Grasse (DD-974) and USS De Wert (FFG-45).

During the MARFOR UNITAS certification Whidbey Island conducted wetwell operations with AAV and Assault Craft Unit 2 LCM-8 craft. Deck landing qualifications with Marine Corps CH-46 helos were also conducted. During the INDEX phase of workups Whidbey Island performed such exercises as leapfrogs, and towing exercises with the USS Comte de Grasse. Whidbey Island also participated in several Close-in Under Way replenishments with both the Comte De Grasse and the De Wert.

Following INDEX Whidbey Island took a small break to celebrate the memory of our fallen comrades on Memorial Day. Shortly after Memorial day Whidbey Island set sail for Naval Weapons Station, Yorktown, VA for the pre-deployment ammo load-out. Completing the ammo load-out Whidbey Island then treated the crewmembers and their family members with a dependent cruise back to NAB Little Creek. Enjoying the sounds of the ship's band a steel beach picnic, many family members enjoyed and day trip back to homeport.

Mooring in Little Creek, begun the pre-overseas movement leave period for the first half of the ship. Whidbey Island began her final Intermediate maintenance availability prior to leaving for UNITAS XXXVIII to close out the month of May.

JUNE 1997

The month of June began with approximately one half of Whidbey Island's crew enjoying a Pre-overseas Movement Leave period. During the first two weeks of the month Whidbey Island conducted on-load of supplies and equipment for UNITAS XXXVIII participants.

Whidbey Island on-loaded ten refrigerated MILVANS and began filling them with perishable goods. The MILVANS are onboard to carry supplies for all United States Navy participants of the UNITAS XXXVIII cruise. Whidbey Island also on-loaded equipment for EOD, SEALs and the USS Sand Lance (SSN-660).

Using the last month prior to deployment, Whidbey Island took full advantage of a scheduled IMAV, conducting last minute maintenance and repair on shipboard equipment. The day prior to the deployment Whidbey Island enjoyed a visit from RADM Fladd, COMPHIBGRU Two. RADM Fladd wished the crew a safe cruise and complimented the crew on their accomplishments throughout the training cycle.

JULY 1997

Whidbey Island (LSD-41) began UNITAS XXXVIII on July 1. Transiting to Moorehead City, NC to onload MARFOR UNITAS, Whidbey Island ballasted down to embark personnel and equipment from Assault Craft Unit-Two (ACU-2) and Beach Masters Unit-Four (BMU04). ACU-Two embarked two LCM-8 landing craft with BMU dozers and other equipment. BMU-4 also embarked two LARC vehicles. With the embarkation of all Navy units participating in UNITAS Whidbey Island continued enroute to Moorehead City, NC.

Whidbey Island arrived in Moorehead City the morning of 2 July. The smooth onload of MARFOR UNITAS rolling stock and personnel enabled Whidbey Island to leave Moorehead City with plenty of time to anchor in Onslow Bay, NC for the embarkation of MARFOR UNITAS AAV and the landing of three CH-46 aircraft. After completing the onload Whidbey Island weighed anchor and set sail for Naval Station Roosevelt Roads, Puerto Rico to rendezvous with the remaining UNITAS XXXVIII participants.

While in Puerto Rico Whidbey Island joined one of the largest assemblies of international navies in years. More than thirty ships from various European, and South American countries were present for phase zero of UNITAS. Participants from the United States, Germany, Canada, France, Netherlands, Columbia, Venezuela and other countries participated in activities while inport and underway. United States Ships participating in UNITAS included USS Comte de Grasse (DD-974), USS Dewert (FFG-45), USS Sandlance (SSN-660), USS Squall (PC-7) and USS Zephyr (PC-8).

Whidbey Island in conjunction with a Venezuelan amphibious unit ARV Capano conducted an amphibious training assault on the near by island of Vieques. Off loading MARFOR UNITAS personnel and equipment and using LCM-8 craft to transport Venezuelan Marines to the beach, the assault went smoothly as did the onload the next day. After the back load of all MARFOR personnel and equipment, Whidbey Island returned to Naval Station Roosevelt Roads, Puerto Rico. After wrapping up phase zero with debriefs and conferences Whidbey Island and ARV Capano conducted independent transits to Carupano, Venezuela.

JULY 1997

Whidbey Island arrived and anchored in the bay of Carupano, Venezuela on 19 July. While visiting Carupano, Whidbey Island Sailors and MARFOR UNITAS Marines participated in Project Handclasp exchanges and Community Relations (COMREL) projects. The COMREL project consisted of rehabilitating Liceo "Simon Rodriguez" school. A local girls' orphanage was the recipient of the Handclasp material. MARFOR UNITAS Marines were able to participate in live firing exercises with Venezuelan Marines in a near by weapons training range. While others participated in a professional amphibious seminar with Venezuelan Marines and Navy elements.

After back-loading marine equipment Whidbey Island weighed anchor and departed Carupano setting sail for Puerto La Cruz, Venezuela. While in Puerto La Cruz, Whidbey Island and MARFOR UNITAS officers enjoyed a co-hosted reception in honor of Venezuelan Navy Day. Marines and Sailors both enjoyed the many tours and shopping opportunities offered in Puerto La Cruz. On 25 July Whidbey Island gladly played host to the sailors and officers of the ARV Guarillo as they visited the ship. After four days in Puerto La Cruz Whidbey Island departed and began phase two of UNITAS XXXVIII on 26 July.

Phase two began with Colombian naval assets, and included communication exercises, divtacs, AAW exercises and the other United States Navy assets. Whidbey Island along with USS Comte De Grasse, USS Dewert, USS Sandlance, USS Zephyr and USS Squall conducted phase two operations until the end of the month.

AUGUST 1997

During the month of August the USS Whidbey Island (LSD-41) continued her deployment on UNITAS XXXVIII, in company with the 2nd MEF MARFOR UNITAS, USS Comte de Grasse (DD-974), USS DeWert (FFG-45), USS Sandlance (SSN-660), USS Squall (PC-7), USS Zephyr (PC-8) and USCGC Harriet Lane. After completion of Phase One, the task force set sail for Colombia to commence phase two of UNITAS. Arriving in Cartagena, Colombia the task force once again was together to celebrate the United States Coast Guard's birthday.

While in port Cartagena, Whidbey Island and MARFOR UNITAS held intensive training with the Colombian Marines. Whidbey Island also hosted a general ship visit for Colombian citizens who wanted to see an American warship. EOD and SPECWAR elements used the time in port to train Colombian Navy counter-parts as well.

Weighing anchor on 8 August, Whidbey Island began her transit toward Panama to transverse the Isthmus of Panama to arrive in the Pacific Ocean. Prior to entering the Panama Canal, Whidbey Island rejoined the UNITAS task force. While anchored in Colon, Panama awaiting her turn through the canal Whidbey Island embarked American citizens eager to travel through the canal. Whidbey Island treated her guests to one of her world famous Steel Beach Picnics. A few lucky sailors also had the opportunity to re-enlist in the Navy while traveling through the Canal.

After passing through the length of the canal, Whidbey Island and the UNITAS task force remained in port Rodman Naval Base, Panama. MARFOR elements used the opportunity to conduct live fire exercises on the Rodman range and at Fort Sherman. Again Whidbey Island welcomed aboard more than one thousand Panamanian visitors. Whidbey Island embarked elements of the 128th SOAR to include two MH-60 Blackhawk helicopters and their ground crews.

After back-loading MARFOR, EOD and SPECWAR equipment and personnel, Whidbey Island was again ready to set sail to complete her duties in UNITAS Phase two. After a three day transit Whidbey Island rejoined the task force and anchored at Malaga, Colombia. Malaga, a naval base surrounded by dense rain forest, proved to be an excellent training area for MARFOR elements.

AUGUST 1997

While anchored in Malaga, Whidbey Island was especially pleased to be chosen to host the U. S. ambassador to Colombia, Ambassador Frechette to lunch and a general ship visit. Again MARFOR personnel held intense training sessions for Colombian marines both ashore and onboard the Whidbey Island.

Leaving Malaga Whidbey Island and task force participants continued to train with the Colombian Navy. On 18 August Phase two ended and Whidbey Island continued enroute to Salinas Ecuador.

While in Salinas, much time was devoted to planning an amphibious exercise with the Salinas Navy and Marine elements. Prepositioning SPECWAR, EOD and certain MARFOR equipment was also a task accomplished during the first Salinas port visit. During the time in Salinas, the embarked Blackhawk helicopters were used to support SPECWAR elements.

Departing Salinas, Whidbey Island and Ecuadorian Marine elements conducted amphibious exercises. Whidbey Island embarked Ecuadorian Marine personnel of the BATOPE Co. Whidbey Island conducted familiarization training for all BATOPE CO personnel.

Completing the amphibious exercise, Whidbey Island returned to Salinas and rejoined task force UNITAS. While anchored in Salinas USCOMSOLANT, RADM Lyons visited Whidbey Island and held Admiral's call with the crew and marines.

Whidbey Island ended the month of August by wrapping up Phase three and transiting to Paita, Peru to commence Phase four.

SEPTEMBER 1997

The month of September began with USS Whidbey Island (LSD-41) inport Piata, Peru. Whidbey Island continued her duties with Combined Task Force 138 deployed for UNITAS XXXVIII. Ships in company included USS Comte de Grasse (DDG-974), USS Dewert (FFG-45), USS Sandlance (SSN-660), USS Zephyr (PC-8), USS Squall (PC-7) and USCGC Harriet Lane. Embarked elements on USS Whidbey Island include, MARFOR UNITAS, SBU, EOD, Navy SEAL and BMU-2.

Continuing phase four of UNITAS Whidbey Island embarked Peruvian Marines for cross training with MARFOR UNITAS and participating in Amphibious exercises. Whidbey Island conducted Amphibious assault training and rehearsals with Peruvian Navy ships PISCO and MARIATIAGUI. The rehearsal took place in the area of Ancon, Peru. Whidbey Island then weighed anchor and sailed to Salinas, Peru for the actual amphibious assault exercise. Launching BMU-2 LCM-8 craft Whidbey Island off loaded MARFOR UNITAS equipment and conducted a dynamic launch of the AAVs.

Recovering all MARFOR equipment and personnel Whidbey Island departed Salinas and transited enroute Callao, Peru. The port city in the outskirts of Lima, Peru. While in Callao Whidbey Island rendezvoused with the CTF 138 units.

While pierside in Callao Whidbey Island was treated to a visit from the United States ambassador to Peru the Honorable Mr. Jett. Ambassador Jett visited and participated in the phase four debrief given by Admiral Lyon, USCOMSOLANT and his staff. After leaving Callao, Whidbey Island sorted for free play with Peruvian Navy elements while enroute Coquimbo, Chile.

Several times during the month both while underway and at anchor Whidbey Island lended timely support for Patrol Crafts USS Zephyr and USS Squall through refueling and re-supply. The two patrol craft would remain with Whidbey Island throughout the month of September and participated in most amphibious exercises. The patrol craft were key players in supporting the embarked NAVY SEALS and EOD detachment.

On 16 September, Whidbey Island's Chief Petty Officer's mess welcomed three new chiefs to its ranks, YNC(SW) Bartko, RMC(SW) Combs and MSC(SW) Oxley.

SEPTEMBER 1997

While in port Coquimbo, Chile Whidbey Island recognized the Chilean Independence day with a full dress ship. Chilean visitors were also welcomed onboard Whidbey Island for a general ship visit. Chilean Marines also embarked onboard Whidbey Island for training for the upcoming amphibious exercises. Whidbey Island then transited to Puerto Aldea, Chile for the amphib rehearsal exercises.

On 21 September, Whidbey Island reached the half way point of the deployment and celebrated with an enormous cake baked by MS3 Rodvik. Several MARFOR personnel were crossed decked to the Chilean amphibious assault ship Miapo. Whidbey Island would once again show her prowess for amphib operations by conducting dynamic launches of LCM-8, AAV and MARFOR CRRC boats. The long day of rehearsal would end with the back load of all personnel and equipment and getting underway for the actual amphib assault exercise.

Again, just as rehearsed Whidbey Island conducted pre-dawn dynamic launches of all MARFOR equipment. After a day on the beach MARFOR personnel, equipment and vehicles re-embarked onboard and Whidbey Island set sail for Valparaiso, Peru.

Whidbey Island sailors were honored to take place in the wreath laying ceremonies honoring both United States sailors and Chilean sailors. Wreath laying ceremonies took place at the USS Essex cemetery and the Uquiue Monument. After a day in port, Whidbey Island and her crew of Sailors and Marines got underway to show the citizens and dignitaries of Chile how to conduct Amphib operations. Testing the skill of every sailor onboard Whidbey Island in conjunction with MARFOR UNITAS conducted a flawless launch and landing of LCM-8 craft and AAVs. The AAVs landed on the beach in front of an enthusiastic crowd. Whidbey Island then returned to her moor in Valparaiso.

On 27 September all the elements of CTF 138 set sail for Talcahuano, Chile. While enroute to Talcahuano Whidbey Island conducted an underway replenishment of fuel with the Chilean Oiler Araucano. Arriving in Talcahuano, Chile on 29 September Whidbey Island remained in port until the end of the month. USCOMSOLANT conducted the Chilean in-land waterways transit brief for all Commanding Officers in CTF-138 onboard Whidbey Island before the task group set sail on 30 September.

OCTOBER 1997

The month of October began with USS Whidbey Island (LSD-41) underway from Talcahuano, Chile heading to the Chilean in-land waterways. Whidbey Island continued her duties with CTF-138 deployed for UNITAS XXXVIII. Ships in company included USS Comte de Grasse (DD-974), USS Dewert (FFG-45), USS Sandlance (SSN-660), USS Zephyr (PC-8), USS Squal (PC-7), and USS Harriet Lane. Embarked elements aboard USS Whidbey Island include MARFOR UNITAS, SBU, EOD, Navy SEAL, BMU-2, and ACU-4.

The transit through the Chilean waterways took three days to complete. The ship utilized two separate navigation and sea and anchor details. On 02 Oct, Whidbey Island conducted astern refueling with USS Squall and USS Zephyr. Two days later, Whidbey Island received fuel from the Chilean Oiler Araucano. The underway replenishment, also conducted in the straits, was at a close distance of 120 feet, vice the usual 180 to 220 feet.

The next and last port visit of Chile was Punta Arenas, the southern-most city in the world. While there, the ship conducted a press conference and a Project Handclasp presentation.

On 06 Oct, Whidbey Island was underway again in the straits. Shortly after, the ship left Chilean waters, marking the beginning of Phase Seven. The next day, Whidbey Island anchored at Las Violetas to conduct amphibious exercises.

Whidbey Island was underway to Beliza Chica to perform amphibious operations with the Argentine amphibious forces. While at anchor, Whidbey Island took in the Argentine form of the AAV into the well deck, a first for UNITAS XXXVIII. In addition, this was the only time during the UNITAS, any participating country used the Whidbey Island as the platform ship during amphibious operations. Whidbey Island followed up the successful training with a port visit to Puerto Belgrano, Argentina for two days. During the short stay, Whidbey Island conducted their usual community relations programs and a Project Handclasp presentation.

OCTOBER 1997

The ship found herself underway on 18 Oct., for Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, beginning Phase Nine of the cruise. During the four-day transit to Brazil, Whidbey Island conducted General Quarters drills, Basic Engineering Casualty Control Exercises, and Indoctrination for newly reported personnel. On 22 Oct., Whidbey Island pulled into her final UNITAS port.

On the first day in Rio, Whidbey Island conducted an amphibious planning conference aboard in addition to a stores onload. On 24 Oct., the ship was underway for an amphibious exercise at Marambia which included a NEO-evaluation exercise on 26 Oct. The next day, MARFOR UNITAS re-embarked aboard and the ship steamed back to Rio de Janeiro for three days. On 29 Oct., Whidbey Island was host to several VIP visitors included, Gen. Wilhelm, CINCSOUTH and the Secretary of the Navy, the Honorable John H. Dalton.

Later that evening, MARFOR UNITAS hosted the Marine Corps Ball in downtown Rio de Janeiro. Several, VIP, whom visited the Whidbey Island earlier that day, attended the ball. On 31 Oct, Whidbey Island was underway for the West African Training Cruise, ending the ship's involvement with the UNITAS deployment.

NOVEMBER 1997

During beginning of November, Whidbey Island was making the transit across the Atlantic Ocean; commencing the West African Training Cruise 1997. Embarked elements aboard Whidbey Island included MARFOR WATC, EOD, BMU-2 and ACU-4. The Navy SEALs, SBU and the majority of the EOD personnel transferred off during the port visit of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

During the transit across the Atlantic, Whidbey Island conducted training on EEED's, the use of SEED, EGRESS, Gas-Free Engineering Safety, Quality Assurance, and BECCE's.

Whidbey Island arrived in Capetown, South Africa on 10 Nov. During her five days in port, Whidbey Island participated in a community relations project and a Project Handclasp presentation. Whidbey Island also hosted a press conference, as this was one of the first U.S. ships to moor in Capetown in over 30 years. Locals traveled from over 1,000 miles away to visit.

During this port visit, Whidbey Island held an amphibious warfare demonstration to 20 South African Army personnel, held a VIP reception with the U.S. Ambassador to South Africa and participated in sports relations events with the host country.

On 15 Nov, Whidbey Island pulled in the mooring lines and set sail for Walvis Bay, Namibia. On early morning 18 Nov, the ship moored in Walvis Bay, Namibia. Whidbey Island Commanding Officer Cmdr. Terry C. Pierce and MARFOR WATC Commanding Officer Major Mike B. West held a meeting with the Mayor of Walvis Bay, before holding a press conference onboard. Later in the day, Whidbey Island hosted a tour for NDF officers.

During the West African Training Cruise, Whidbey Island conducted lectures with senior South African Officers regarding ARG structure, LCAC operations and ship to shore movement. Whidbey Island also demonstrated an assault using data from a previous exercise to show how the Combat Information Center Team operates. The flight quarters team conducted seven DLQ's with a South African Puma Helicopter.

NOVEMBER 1997

The Coast Guard Detachment demonstrated a three-hour symposium of Coast Guard missions and Maritime Law Enforcement procedures to ten South African Naval Officers and three civilian from the Department of Transportation and Department of Environmental Affairs. The EOD detachment conducted training on U.S. procedures for disposal of explosive ordinance. On 22 Nov, Whidbey Island was underway and making its 18 day transit across the Atlantic to Morehead City, N. C. During the transit, Whidbey Island conducted BECCE's and GQ drills in preparation for the Mid-Cycle Assessment.

DECEMBER 1997

The month of December began with USS Whidbey Island (LSD-41) underway transiting the Atlantic Ocean to Morehead City, N.C. Embarked units aboard Whidbey Island included MARFOR WATC, EOD, ACU-2, and BMU-4. On the way back to U. S., Whidbey Island participated in a successful Mid-Cycle Assessment inspection that included a main-space fire drill and general quarters.

On 11 Dec, Whidbey Island pulled in to Morehead City and offloaded all Marine personnel and equipment. With Marine Forces UNITAS/WATC on their way to Camp Lejune, N.C., Whidbey Island was underway for Naval Amphibious Base, Little Creek, VA.

On 13 Dec, Whidbey Island set condition 1A for Wet Well Operations and launched the ACU-4, LCM-8's and BMU-2 LARK's for the final time in the deployment. Shortly after, the crew manned the rails and Whidbey Island pulled into Pier 17N. The rest of December consisted of Whidbey Island being pierside at NAB Little Creek with half the crew on the first of two post deployment leave periods.