



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY


COMMANDING OFFICER
USS ASHLAND (LSD 48)
FPO AE 09564-1736

IN REPLY REFER TO:

5750
Ser CO/C072
9 Mar 99

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 -- Unclassified upon removal of enclosure (2)

From: Commanding Officer, USS ASHLAND (LSD 48)
To: Director of Naval History (N09BH), Navel Historical
Center, Washington Navy Yard, 901 M Street SE, Bldg. 57,
Washington, DC 20374-5060

Subj: 1998 COMMAND HISTORY

Ref: (a) OPVAVINST 5750.12E

Encl: (1) Command History
(2) Supporting Documentation [IN CLASS FILE]
(3) Press Releases

1. Per reference (a), enclosures (1) through (3) are forwarded.


A. O. HEIMER

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USS ASHLAND (LSD 48) COMMAND HISTORY FOR 1998

1. Command Composition and Organization:

- a. Mission: Amphibious warfare; designed to transport Marines and their combat equipment to designated areas throughout the world, and then to launch and support assault landing craft and helicopters during amphibious operations ashore.
- b. Organizational Structure: Assigned to Commander, Amphibious Group TWO, Little Creek, Virginia.
- c. Commanding Officer: Commander Antony O. Heimer, USN
- d. Homeport: Naval Amphibious Base, Little Creek, Norfolk, Virginia

2. Chronology:

PORT VISIT, NAPLES, ITALY	1 JAN - 5 JAN
TRANSIT MEDITERRANEAN SEA	5 JAN - 7 JAN
STEAMING OFF COAST OF SARDINIA	8 JAN - 10 JAN
EXERCISE, INVITEX - GOLF DI TEULADA	10 JAN - 17 JAN
TRANSIT MEDITERRANEAN SEA	17 JAN
TRANSIT STRAIGHT OF GIBRALTAR	18 JAN
EXERCISE, SPANISH PHIBLEX - EASTERN ATLANTIC	18 JAN - 25 JAN
MCA VISIT	19 JAN - 3 FEB
TRANSIT STRAIT OF GIBRALTAR	25 JAN
TRANSIT MEDITERRANEAN SEA	26 JAN - 27 JAN
PORT VISIT, TARRAGONA, SPAIN	27 JAN - 2 FEB
TRANSIT MEDITERRANEAN SEA	2 FEB - 4 FEB
ANCHORED AUGUSTA BAY, SICILY	4 FEB
TRANSIT MEDITERRANEAN SEA	5 FEB - 8 FEB
TRANSIT SUEZ CANAL	8 FEB - 9 FEB
TRANSIT GULF OF SUEZ	9 FEB - 10 FEB
TRANSIT RED SEA	10 FEB - 13 FEB
TRANSIT ARABIAN SEA	13 FEB - 15 FEB
TRANSIT GULF OF OMAN	15 FEB - 16 FEB

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TRANSIT STRAIT OF HORMUZ	16 FEB
PORT VISIT, BAHRAIN	18 FEB - 20 FEB
STEAMING IN ARABIAN GULF	20 FEB - 24 FEB
TRANSIT Q-ROUTS OFF KUWAIT COAST	24 FEB
PORT VISIT, KUWAIT	25 FEB - 05 MAR
TRANSIT Q-ROUTS OFF KUWAIT COAST	5 MAR
TRANSIT ARABIAN GULF	5 MAR - 8 MAR
TRANSIT STRAITS OF HORMUZ	8 MAR
TRANSIT GULF OF OMAN	8 MAR - 9 MAR
TRANSIT ARABIAN SEA	10 MAR - 13 MAR
TRANSIT RED SEA	13 MAR - 16 MAR
TRANSIT GULF OF SUEZ	16 MAR
TRANSIT SUEZ CANAL	17 MAR
TRANSIT MEDITERRANEAN SEA	17 MAR - 21 MAR
TRANSIT STRAIT OF GIBRALTOR	22 MAR
TRANSIT ATLANTIC OCEAN	22 MAR - 31 MAR
ANCHORED, ONSLOW BAY, NC	31 MAR
TRANSIT ATLANTIC OCEAN	01 APR
ANCHORED MOORHEAD CITY, NC	01 APR
TRANSIT ATLANTIC OCEAN/TIGER CRUISE	1 APR - 2 APR
MOORED LITTLE CREEK	2 APR
INPORT LITTLE CREEK	2 APR - 13 MAY
POST DEPLOYMENT STANDDOWN	2 APR - 1 MAY
PLOT I	11 MAY - 13 MAY
EN ROUTE ANNAPOLIS, MD	13 MAY - 14 MAY
PORT VISIT, ANNAPOLIS, MD	14 MAY - 18 MAY
EN ROUTE, YORKTOWN, VA	18 MAY
AMMO OFFLOAD, YORKTOWN, VA	18 MAY - 21 MAY
EN ROUTE LITTLE CREEK, VA	21 MAY
INPORT LITTLE CREEK, VA	21 MAY - 26 MAY
TRANSIT NEWPORT NEWS SHIPYARD	26 MAY
INPORT NEWPORT NEWS SHIPYARD	26 MAY - 25 AUG
TRANSIT TO DRYDOCK	8 JUN
PLOT II	22 JUN - 24 JUN
OUT OF DRYDOCK	23 JUL
PLOT III	10 AUG - 14 AUG
LOA	19 AUG - 22 AUG

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SEA TRIALS	25 AUG - 27 AUG
HURRICANE BONNIE EVAC	26 AUG - 29 AUG
INPORT LITTLE CREEK	30 AUG - 10 SEP
COMMAND PICNIC - OCEAN BREEZE FUN PARK	4 SEP
AVCERT	8 SEP - 11 SEP
EN ROUTE NEWPORT, RI	11 SEP - 13 SEP
PORT VISIT NEWPORT, RI	13 SEP - 21 SEP
EN ROUTE LITTLE CREEK	21 SEP - 22 SEP
INPORT LITTLE CREEK	23 SEP - 28 SEP
ARE	24 SEP
TRANING SERVICES, VCOA	29 SEP - 02 OCT
INPORT LITTLE CREEK	3 OCT - 8 OCT
HORSE	3 OCT - 8 OCT
TRANSIT NAUTICUS, NORFOLK, VA	9 OCT
INPORT NAUTICUS	9 OCT - 13 OCT
EN ROUTE LITTLE CREEK	13 OCT
INPORT LITTLE CREEK	13 OCT - 27 OCT
CART II	19 OCT - 23 OCT
AMMO ONLOAD	26 OCT
EN ROUTE PANAMA CITY, FL	28 OCT - 01 NOV
PORT VISIT PANAMA CITY, FL	2 NOV - 8 NOV
EN ROUTE NEW ORLEANS, LA	9 NOV
PORT VISIT, NEW ORLEANS, LA	10 NOV - 13 NOV
EN ROUTE PANAMA CITY, FL	14 NOV
SABRE OPS	15 NOV - 20 NOV
EN ROUTE LITTLE CREEK	21 NOV - 24 NOV
INPORT LITTLE CREEK	25 NOV - 7 DEC
TRANING SERVICES, VCOA	8 DEC - 10 DEC
INPORT LITTLE CREEK	11 DEC - 31 DEC

ASHLAND started off 1998 inport Naples, Italy. Arriving on 22 December, her holiday standdown period lasted through the New Year, until 5 January. ASHLAND shared her visit in Naples with USS GUAM (LPH 9), USS SOUTH CAROLINA (CGN 36), USNS APACHE (ATF 172) and USS ELROD (FFG 55). For most Sailors and Marines, the New Year was rung in with a New Year's party on the pier.

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On 5 January after a little R&R in Naples, ASHLAND was off and running. For three days, she steamed off the coast of Sardinia while her Marines prepared for their next exercise. 10 – 17 January, ASHLAND participated in INVITEX, which took place in Golfo Di Teulada. As the Marines worked ashore, ASHLAND stayed at sea performing various exercises of her own. Upon completion of INVITEX, once again ASHLAND transited through the Strait of Gibraltar on her way to her next exercise: SPANISH PHIBLEX.

SPANISH PHIBLEX took place in the Eastern Atlantic off the coast of Ensenda De Barbate, Spain. While the Marines were ashore, two Spanish ships operated with ASHLAND at sea. Officers of ASHLAND cross-decked to the Spanish ships. The week was filled with leap frogs, DIVTACS, and communication drills. The entire time the exercise was going on, the Engineering Department had their hands full with MCA. MCA came onboard and inspected every asset of the Engineering Plant.

Upon completion of SPANISH PHIBLEX, ASHLAND once again transited through the Strait of Gibraltar and was headed towards Tarragona, Spain. ASHLAND was inport Tarragona from 27 January to 2 February. The crew enjoyed Tarragona and it's nightlife. The city welcomed them with open arms. Some Sailors even took advantage of the train and headed up to Barcelona, Spain for a day trip to visit with friends on GUAM.

On 2 February, ASHLAND was again underway, en route to Venice, Italy. After two days of being underway, ASHLAND and the GUAM ARG were tasked to anchor at Augusta Bay, Sicily and wait for further direction. After a night of being at anchor, ASHLAND and the ARG were tasked to change their itinerary and head to the Arabian Gulf. By 8 February, ASHLAND and GUAM ARG made it to the Suez Canal. They anchored just outside the Suez until the south bound convey was ready. AT 2345 on 8 February, ASHLAND stationed sea and anchor detail and remained at sea and anchor until 1530 on 9 February when she had finished transiting the Suez Canal.

Upon exiting the Suez Canal, ASHLAND transited the Gulf of Suez. Upon entering the Red Sea, the ship went to Condition III steaming with all gun mounts manned. After transiting the Arabian Sea, Gulf of Oman and Strait of Hormuz, on 16 February, ASHLAND and GUAM ARG were in the Arabian Gulf.

ASHLAND was called into port from 18-20 February to visit Bahrain. There, the Marines were outfitted with specialized gear for the Arabian Gulf and received training. Despite being a dangerous part of the world to be in, Sailors and Marines enjoyed being able to visit a part of the world they had never seen before. The Sailors and Marines were granted liberty in the evenings to spend time on the base, or go into town. Many Sailors took advantage of the cheap price of gold in the Gulf.

ASHLAND departed Bahrain on 20 February and headed north. The ship steamed in the Arabian Gulf for four days, doing "gator squares". The nights were bright as oil rigs burned off their excess gases. It was getting late into the deployment. Washdown needed to be completed and they had to start heading back if they were going to make it back to the states on time. So, ASHLAND was called into Kuwait to complete their washdown. On 24 February, just after sunrise, ASHLAND transited the Q-routes off the

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coast of Kuwait. ASHLAND was inport Kuwait from 25 February to 05 March. As the Marines completed washdown, the agricultural inspectors checked the ship. Liberty was granted in the evenings, but was restricted to the pier and Camp Doha. On 5 March, ASHLAND pulled out of Kuwait and transited the Q-routes one more time.

ASHLAND and GUAM ARG stayed steaming in the Arabian Gulf just three more days. On 8 March, they all transited the Strait of Hormuz and were heading home. ASHLAND was anchored just outside the Suez Canal by the early morning of 16 March. The northbound traffic was scheduled to transit the Suez the afternoon of 16 March. A sandstorm prohibited any movement north or south in the Suez Canal. Traffic that had already begun the transit south earlier that day was made to anchor in the Suez and ride out the storm. Finally, the early morning of 17 March, the southbound traffic exited the Canal and the northbound traffic began their convoy.

Upon completion of the Suez Canal, the transit across the Mediterranean Sea was a difficult one. Winter storms causing 8-12 foot seas plagued ASHLAND and she tried so hard to make it home. On 22 March, ASHLAND steamed through the Strait of Gibraltar for one final time. Ten days later they had made it across the Atlantic Ocean. Finally, on 31 March, ASHLAND anchored off the coast of Onslow Bay, North Carolina. Despite the winter storms in the Mediterranean Sea, ASHLAND and GUAM ARG were able to make it home one day ahead of schedule. In Onslow Bay, the Marines offloaded all of their gear. ASHLAND remained at anchor overnight.

Early the next morning on 1 April, ASHLAND headed up to Moorhead City, North Carolina. There she anchored as she awaited the arrival of friends and family for the transit back to Little Creek. At approximately 1530, 130 riders made their way out to ASHLAND on an LCU. Finally, they were leaving for home. On 2 April at approximately 1000, ASHLAND shifted colors and moored at Naval Amphibious Base, Little Creek, Virginia. Families and friends waited for several hours on the pier with signs, flowers and balloons, welcome their Sailors home from their six-month deployment. ASHLAND with GUAM ARG was the last ship to make a 6-month deployment.

For the next month, ASHLAND enjoyed a little R&R. Standdown lasted until 11 May. Sailors got the chance to catch up on the last six months with their families.

13 May, ASHLAND was once again underway. For one day, they sailed up the Chesapeake Bay and anchored that night just 2 nautical miles from Annapolis inner harbor. 14-18 May, ASHLAND was the "ship in the yard" for the Naval Academy, in Annapolis, MD. That weekend, ASHLAND received over 300 visitors for tours.

18 May, ASHLAND left Annapolis and headed to Yorktown, VA. For 4 days, ASHLAND spent its days and nights in Yorktown completing their ammunition offload. Upon completion of the offload, dependents boarded ASHLAND prior to sunrise on the 21st for a dependent's day cruise, as ASHLAND made her way back to Little Creek.

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ASHLAND enjoyed one last week in Little Creek. On 26 May, she left Little Creek, not to return for three months. She headed into Newport News Shipyard, where she would stay until 25 August. After being in the shipyard for 2 weeks, on 8 June, ASHLAND shifted berths and went into the dry-dock.

The summer in Newport News was long and hot. The crew worked long hours and put in a lot of hard work preparing the ship. Red tags were hung everywhere as every facet of ASHLAND was being reviewed and maintained. On 23 July, ASHLAND was ready once again to float and came out of dry-dock and shifted berths.

The rest of July and August were grueling. All of the pieces of the puzzle had to be put back together again. Little by little, all of the systems were coming back on line. The crew put in long, hard hours preparing for PLOT III, LOA and ASHLAND leaving the shipyard. After working around the clock for days, ASHLAND's hard work paid off when they passed LOA.

By 25 August, ASHLAND was ready to sail again. She left Newport News, and headed to sea for her sea trials. Mother Nature, on the other hand, had different plans. Hurricane Bonnie was making her way up the East Coast. After 1 day of sea trials, on 26 August, all the other ships stationed at Norfolk and Little Creek joined ASHLAND. ASHLAND took on two landing craft air cushions (LCAC) and carried them safely in her well.

The evacuation lasted four days, as Hurricane Bonnie whipped through Virginia Beach. ASHLAND averaged 15-degree rolls daily. The crew pulled together helping their shipmates in need, taking on additional work for those who were sick and cleaning offices that was destroyed from the rolls. Finally, on Saturday night, 29 August, ASHLAND pulled into Little Creek.

After a grueling underway period, ASHLAND had two weeks inport to settle their stomachs. 4 September, they even enjoyed a command picnic at Ocean Breeze Fun Park. The day was a little rainy, and windy, but that only made the lines for rides shorter, with more fun for ASHLAND families.

Aviation Certification (AVCERT) was scheduled 8-11 September. Deck Department prepared for weeks. Their hard work paid off with exceptional remarks from inspectors. The inspection that usually takes four days, only took two on ASHLAND because they were so well prepared.

On 11 September, ASHLAND was once again underway. For two days, she made her way up the East Coast and pulling into Newport, RI on 13 September. ASHLAND was the host ship for SWOSCOLCOM, giving tours to over 500 division officer, department heads and PXO/PCO's.

On 21 September, ASHLAND departed Newport, RI and started heading home. Once home on the 23rd, ASHLAND successfully completed ARE. The week of 29 September, the Virginia Capes Operating Area (VCOA) was calling for training services once again. On 3 October, ASHLAND was inport for the engineering inspection, HORSE.

9-13 October was Hampton Roads Fleet Week. ASHLAND was chosen to be the "visit ship" at Nauticus, in downtown Norfolk. The visit lasted three days with over ...visitors. Upon completion of Fleet Week, ASHLAND returned to Little Creek for CART II and ammunition onload. Finally on 28 October, ASHLAND started heading south.

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On 2 November, ASHLAND arrived at Panama City, FL. She stayed in Panama City while an expeditionary warfare conference was going on. She received over 2,000 visitors from the community where they were welcomed with open arms. On 9 November, after Panama City, ASHLAND was headed for another port visit. She headed up the Mississippi River for a visit in New Orleans, LA.

After a little R&R at Panama City and New Orleans, ASHLAND headed back to the coast of Panama City to participate in SABRE Operations. ASHLAND was to partake in a multi-million dollar exercise. She brought realism to an exercise by loading specific weapons by helicopter and disembarking them by LCAC in the danger zone. After successfully completing the exercise, ASHLAND was ready to head home.

ASHLAND arrived in Little Creek two days before Thanksgiving. She remained inport until the week of 8 December for training services in VCOA. On 11 December, ASHLAND was once again pierside, where she began to enjoy her holiday season. This year, the New Year was going to be rung in with friends and family in the comfort of their own homes.

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Officers Assigned to ASHLAND as of 31 December 1998

CDR Heimer	Commanding Officer
LCDR Petersen	Executive Officer
LT [REDACTED]	Chief Engineer
LT [REDACTED]	Operations Officer
LT [REDACTED]	1 st Lieutenant
LT [REDACTED]	Supply Officer
LT [REDACTED]	Medical Officer
LT [REDACTED]	Dentist
LT [REDACTED]	Navigator/Admin Officer
LT [REDACTED]	Auxiliaries Officer
LTJG [REDACTED]	Communications Officer
LTJG [REDACTED]	MPA
LTJG [REDACTED]	CIC Officer
LTJG [REDACTED]	Disbursing Officer
LTJG [REDACTED]	Electrical Officer
ENS [REDACTED]	Engineering Admin Officer
ENS [REDACTED]	1 st Division Officer
ENS [REDACTED]	2 nd Division Officer
ENS [REDACTED]	Weapons Officer
CWO4 [REDACTED]	BOSN
CWO2 [REDACTED]	DCA

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