



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY
COMMANDING OFFICER
USS ASHLAND (LSD 48)
FPO AE 09564-1736

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UNCLASSIFIED UPON REMOVAL OF ENCLOSURE (2)

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

Subj: 1999 COMMAND HISTORY

Ref: (a) OPNAVINST 5750.12E

Encl: (1) Command History (U)
(2) Supporting Documentation(C) *(IN CLASS FILE)*

1. Per reference (a), enclosures (1) and (2) are forwarded.

George Sierra
J. SIERRA

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USS ASHLAND (LSD 48) COMMAND HISTORY FOR 1999

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:

INPORT LITTLE CREEK	01 JAN - 18 JAN
TRNG SVCS (VCOA)	19 JAN - 22 JAN
INPORT LITTLE CREEK	23 JAN - 09 FEB
TSTA I (CSTG/ETG)	01 FEB - 12 FEB
TSTA I, VCOA	10 FEB - 12 FEB
INPORT, LITTLE CREEK	13 FEB - 15 FEB
CAPSTONE CAPEX, NC	19 FEB - 19 FEB
INDUSTRIAL HYGIENE VISIT	16 FEB - 26 FEB
INPORT LITTLE CREEK	20 FEB - 28 FEB
TSTA I (CSTG/FTG), VCOA	01 MAR - 07 MAR
TRANSIT MAYPORT, FL	07 MAR
TSTA I (CSTG/FTG) JAXO	08 MAR - 17 MAR
INPORT MAYPORT, FL	12 MAR - 14 MAR
TRANSIT MIAMI, FL	17 MAR
INPORT MIAMI, FL	18 MAR - 22 MAR
TRANSIT LITTLE CREEK	22 MAR - 24 MAR
INPORT LITTLE CREEK	24 MAR - 12 APR
LMA	29 MAR - 02 APR
HULL INSPECTION/CLEAN	29 MAR - 02 APR
ETG MSFD EVALUATION	5 APR
TSTA II (ETG), INPORT LITTLE CREEK	12 APR - 13 APR
TSTA II (ETG), VCOA	14 APR - 16 APR, 19 APR
EQUAL (ETG), VCOA	20 APR
TRANSIT, ANNAPOLIS, MD	21 APR

Enclosure (1)

IPT ANNAPOLIS, MD	22 APR - 26 APR
TRAINING SERVICES, VCOA	26 APR - 28 APR
INPORT, LITTLE CREEK	28 APR - 23 MAY
QUALITY OF LIFE INSPECTION	06 MAY
FINAL EVALUATION PERIOD	24 MAY - 26 MAY
TRANSIT, HALIFAX, NOVA SCOTIA	26 MAY - 27 MAY
IPT HALIFAX, NOVA SCOTIA	27 MAY - 02 JUN
TRANSIT, NEWPORT, RI	02 JUN - 03 JUN
IPT, NEWPORT, RI	03 JUN - 10 JUN
TRANSIT, LITTLE CREEK	10 JUN - 11 JUN
IPT, LITTLE CREEK	11 JUN - 21 JUN
CHANGE OF COMMAND	16 JUN
TRAINING SERVICES, VCOA	22 JUN - 24 JUN
IPT, LITTLE CREEK	24 JUN - 24 AUG
FMAV	06 JUL - 24 AUG
ASHLAND FAMILY DAY LUAU	18 AUG
SEA TRIALS, VCOA	24 AUG - 26 AUG
IPT, LITTLE CREEK	26 AUG - 15 SEP
HURRICANE FLOYD AVOIDANCE, VCOA	15 SEP - 18 SEP
IPT, LITTLE CREEK	18 SEP - 27 SEP
TYPE COMMANDERS AMPHIB EXERCISE (TCAT 3-99)	27 SEP - 04 OCT
CPOA	
CAPEX, CPOA	04 OCT - 07 OCT
TRANSIT, NORVA	07 OCT - 08 OCT
IPT, NAUTICUS, VA ISO FLEET WEEK '99	08 OCT - 12 OCT
TRANSIT, LITTLE CREEK	12 OCT
AMMUNITION ONLOAD, QUAY WALL, LITTLE CREEK	12 OCT
IPT, LITTLE CREEK	12 OCT - 19 OCT
TRAINING SERVICES (US SOCOM), VCOA	19 OCT - 22 OCT
IPT, LITTLE CREEK	22 OCT - 31 DEC
HOLIDAY LEAVE AND STAND DOWN	16 DEC - 31 DEC

ASHLAND rang in the New Year, pierside in her homeport of Naval Amphibious Base, Little Creek, Virginia. Unlike the previous year, on deployment in Naples, Italy, Sailors were able to enjoy the holidays with friends and loved ones in the comfort of their own homes.

After six weeks pierside, the training bells began to ring and ASHLAND was off and running. She began a series of training services in the Virginia Capes Operations Area (VCOA). 1 February started the Total Ship's Training Availability (TSTA I) with Combat Systems Training Group (CSTG) coming aboard pierside 1-5 February and Engineering Training Group (ETG) coming onboard 8-12 February (10-12 February was underway in the VCOA). Drills were run day and night, training the Sailors of ASHLAND. It was an exhausting, but productive time.

After a relaxing three-day weekend for President's Day, ASHLAND got underway for CAPSTONE CAPEX. The exercise was designed to demonstrate to senior officers how the amphibious navy worked. 16-19 February she underway along the coast of North Carolina to take part in the exercise and then returned to Little Creek. Concurrently the industrial hygiene visit started and continued on through 26 February.

1 March started an immense amount of training. For two weeks, every facet of ASHLAND was challenged in a continuation of TSTA I. The first week took place in the VCOA. The week was full of navigation drills, Landing Craft Air Cushion (LCAC)/ Landing Craft Unit (LCU)/ Amphibious Assault Vehicle (AAV) operations, towing exercises, underway replenishments and flight operations. At the end of the first week, ASHLAND headed south to Mayport, FL. The second part of TSTA I was to take place in the Jacksonville Operating Area (JAXOA). The drills continued with general quarters, mass casualties and combat systems drills. The crew was able to take a two-day break, pulling into Mayport, FL from 12-14 March.

Upon completion of TSTA I, on 17 March, ASHLAND headed farther south, and on 18 March she pulled into Miami. There she stayed until 22 March. The crew enjoyed the port immensely, taking advantage of the warm sun and beautiful weather. On 22 March she pulled out of Miami and returned to Little Creek on 24 March.

After being underway for three and a half weeks, the Sailors didn't get much of a rest. The inspections continued on 29 March with a Logistics Maintenance Assessment (LMA) and a hull cleaning. On 5 April, ETG returned

and evaluated ASHLAND during a Main Space Fire Drill (MSFD). The inspectors determined that the ship was certified to fight Main Space fires and no further MSFD evaluation was required. ASHLAND got underway 14-16 April to practice one last time before the Engineering Qualification (EQUAL), which was held on 20 April in the VCOA. ASHLAND sailors proved once again their expertise and professionalism, and after the inspectors left, the sailors got a chance to unwind in Annapolis, MD, anchoring in the vicinity on 21 April.

While in Annapolis, the ship hosted tours for midshipmen at the United States Naval Academy, exposing the mids to the ship and her capabilities. ASHLAND transited back down the Chesapeake Bay on 26 April and spent the next couple of days providing services for helicopter deck qualifications and LCU operations in the VCOA. Bad weather forced us back into port on 28 April.

Back inport with family and friends, ASHLAND junior officers attended the Shiphandling Complex 3-5 May at Naval Station Norfolk, giving them a unique opportunity to drive the ship without the CO and XO looking over their shoulders. The next day they returned to ASHLAND for a grueling Quality of Life inspection which was passed with flying colors.

The final preparations were made for the Final Evaluation Period (FEP), which was conducted 24-26 May in the VCOA. ASHLAND sailors performed superbly, as always. After flying the inspectors back to shore, we steamed hard to Halifax, Nova Scotia for some much needed R&R over Memorial Day weekend. While in Halifax, ASHLAND hosted tours during the Canadian Navy's Family Days celebration. ASHLAND's host, the HMCS TORONTO provided excellent support and suggestions for liberty and services. ASHLAND also embarked 17 midshipmen for a month-long summer cruise.

ASHLAND got underway from Halifax 2 June in a thick bank of fog. The Halifax Pilot mentioned that these fog banks often extended out to 200 miles. He wasn't kidding. ASHLAND maintained a low visibility watch that day and through most of the night. After clearing the fog bank, we increased speed and moored in Newport, RI on 3 June. ASHLAND spent the next week serving as school ship for the Surface Warfare Officer School. We provided tours and demonstrations for Division Officers, Legal School students and prospective Commanding Officers (PCOs). ASHLAND's prospective Commanding Officer, Commander Jorge Sierra, reported aboard in Newport and rode us back to Little Creek, 10-11 June.

Commander Sierra relieved Commander Heimer as Commanding Officer of USS ASHLAND (LSD 48) on 16 June 1999 in a ceremony held in Little Creek in

ASHLAND's well deck. It was a perfect "Navy" day, complete with rain and wind. ASHLAND got underway the next week, 22-24 June to take the new CO out and show him what we could do. Five PCOs and an additional 10 midshipmen also rode us for the week.

ASHLAND returned to Little Creek to begin an 8-week Fleet Maintenance Availability (FMAV). Contractors and Shore Intermediate Maintenance Facility (SIMA) technicians began swarming the ship to help the crew make much-needed repairs throughout the ship. During the FMAV, ASHLAND was outfitted with the IT-21 upgrade, bringing ASHLAND's technology into the 21st century. The IT-21 upgrade gave the crew continual access to personal e-mail accounts and gave the command access to the world wide web. ASHLAND also received Direct to Sailor (DTS) giving us 24-hour satellite TV access through the Armed Forces Radio/Television Service (AFRTS). Now sailors can catch the big game on ESPN or get the latest news on CNN, even out at sea.

The crew took off early on 18 August and got their families together for the ASHLAND Family Day Luau. Morale, Welfare and Recreation (MWR) put on a huge spread of grilled chicken, burgers and dogs, not to mention numerous salads and desserts that were enjoyed by all.

ASHLAND was back underway again 24 -26 August for Sea Trials to test all the repairs made over the last six weeks. We returned to port to make some further repairs until sortied with the rest of the Norfolk fleet to avoid Hurricane Floyd 15 - 18 September. We returned safely to port, thankfully finding very little damage, and prepared to head south to North Carolina with the other members of the SAIPAN Amphibious Ready Group (ARG) for the Type Commander's Amphibious Training (TCAT) 3-99 27 September - 4 October. The purpose of TCAT is to expose Marines to shipboard life prior to embarking for a six-month cruise and to allow our sailors to work with Marines and tailor our processes and training to fully integrate the Marines into our operation. ASHLAND remained behind after TCAT and again participated in the CAPSTONE CAPEX, 4 - 7 October.

ASHLAND transited back to Norfolk and moored at Nauticus in Norfolk, VA on 8 October in support of Fleet Week '99. While at Nauticus, we provided tours to the citizens of Hampton Roads, VA and participated in the Fleet Week festivities in downtown Norfolk. We returned to Little Creek 12 October and performed an ammunition onload. There was little rest for the weary as the crew got underway again on 19 October to provide services to US Special Operations Command (SOCOM) forces in the VCOA until 22 October.

After returning from the VCOA, ASHLAND remained inport for the remainder of the year, performing upkeep, sending our crewmembers to schools and taking some much-needed time off with family and friends for the holidays and preparing for our upcoming deployment in July 2000.