



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY

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

IN REPLY REFER TO:

5750

Ser CO/

6 Feb 03

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: 2002 COMMAND HISTORY

Ref: (a) OPNAVINST 5750.12G

Encl: (1) Command History

1. Per reference (a), enclosure (1) is forwarded.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "A. M. Simmons", is positioned above the typed name.

A. M. SIMMONS

By direction

USS ASHLAND (LSD 48) COMMAND HISTORY FOR 2002

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 Samuel C. Howard, USN

d. Homeport: Naval Amphibious Base, Little Creek, Norfolk, Virginia

2. Chronology:

INPORT LITTLE CREEK	01 JAN - 09 JAN
UNDERWAY TRAINING (VCOA)	09 JAN - 11 JAN
INPORT LITTLE CREEK	11 JAN - 25 FEB
CHANGE OF COMMAND	14 FEB
BERTHSHIFT TO QUAYWALL, LITTLE CREEK	25 FEB
UNDERWAY TRAINING (VCOA)	26 FEB - 01 MAR
INPORT NORFOLK	01 MAR - 06 MAR
UNDERWAY (VCOA)- PRE-INSURV	06 MAR
INPORT NORFOLK	07 MAR
UNDERWAY ENROUTE PROA	08 MAR - 14 MAR
INPORT ROOSEVELT ROADS, PR	14 MAR - 18 MAR
UNDERWAY PROA/ENROUTE NORFOLK	18 MAR - 23 MAR
INPORT NORFOLK	23 MAR - 01 APR
BERTHSHIFT TO LITTLE CREEK	01 APR
MAN OVERBOARD INDICATOR (MOBI) INSTALLED	APR
INPORT LITTLE CREEK	01 APR - 16 APR
UNDERWAY ENROUTE CHERRY POINT OPAREA	16 APR - 24 APR
INPORT LITTLE CREEK	24 APR - 03 MAY
BERTHSHIFT TO MOON ENG, PORTSMOUTH, VA	03 MAY
ECPINS ELECTRONIC NAVIGATION SYSTEM INSTALL	MAY
LCDR KURT KASTNER REPORTED AS XO	01 JUL
LCDR DAVID C. BEMENT RELIEVED AS XO	03 JUL
INPORT MOON ENG CO, PORTSMOUTH, VA	03 MAY - 23 SEP
BERTHSHIFT TO LITTLE CREEK	23 SEP
INPORT LITTLE CREEK	23 SEP - 17 OCT
UNDERWAY VACAPES (SEA TRIALS)	17 OCT - 24 OCT
INPORT LITTLE CREEK	24 OCT - 28 OCT
UNDERWAY VACAPES	28 OCT - 30 OCT

INPORT LITTLE CREEK	30 OCT - 12 NOV
UNDERWAY VACAPES	12 NOV - 14 NOV
INPORT LITTLE CREEK	14 NOV - 25 NOV
UNDERWAY VACAPES	25 NOV - 27 NOV
INPORT LITTLE CREEK	27 NOV - 04 DEC
HON. SUSAN LIVINGSTONE, UNDERSEC. OF THE NAVY VISIT	30 NOV
UNDERWAY VACAPES	04 DEC - 05 DEC
INPORT NORFOLK	05 DEC - 11 DEC
UNDERWAY VACAPES	11 DEC - 12 DEC
INPORT LITTLE CREEK	12 DEC - 31 DEC

USS ASHLAND rang in the New Year with family and friends in our homeport of Little Creek, Virginia. Upon the completion of holiday standdown, USS ASHLAND got underway for training on 9 January. While operating in the VACAPES, we trained on fire drills; INSURV evolutions such as an anchor drop test, and engineering casualty control exercises. Upon return from training, USS ASHLAND remained inport conducting repairs and maintenance to prepare for Engineering Initial Assessment and INSURV.

On February 14, 2002, CDR Samuel C. Howard relieved CDR Todd G. Ratner of command. This unscheduled change of command happened at the request of CDR Ratner in the wake of another failure to get underway. During the time from the January underway and the post change of command underway on 26 February, USS ASHLAND put the Engineering Initial Assessment behind them, and forged ahead with INSURV preparations. During the 26 February to 1 March underway, USS ASHLAND conducted drills and flight operations. Also, the entire ship responded excellently to a major lube oil leak in the CPP system on the evening of 28 February. Quick and competent actions led to the immediate control of the leak. USS ASHLAND returned to Norfolk Naval Base on 1 March 2002.

Returning to the Norfolk Naval Base allowed USS ASHLAND to conduct a Pre-INSURV with COMPHIBGRU TWO from 4 March to 6 March. Conducting the practice inspection in Norfolk removed tidal constraints at Little Creek from affecting an exact rehearsal of the schedule. Major event conducted during the one day underway on 6 March included a detect to engage sequence with Learjet services, anchor drop test, streaming nixie, counter measure washdown, ballast operations, and steering swing checks. A full power run was not conducted due to limited engine availability. USS ASHLAND returned to Norfolk Naval Base late in the evening on 6 March 2002.

On Friday, 8 March, USS ASHLAND got underway with the NASARG and proceeded south to the Puerto Rico OPAREA. During the transit, USS ASHLAND conducted multiple integrated team training drills in preparation for the Final Evaluation Problem (FEP). The USS NASSAU and USS ASHLAND were also tasked to conduct a telemetry missile shot of the RAM weapon system. After two failures to fire the telemetry missile due to various technical difficulties, USS ASHLAND pulled into Roosevelt Roads, Puerto Rico for debrief, training, and liberty. While in Roosevelt Roads, the decision was made to attempt another missile exercise. USS ASHLAND proceeded underway, conducted another failed missile shot, proceeded into anchorage in the Roosevelt Roads basin as part of FEP and proceeded out to sea toward Norfolk, all on March 19, 2002. It proved to be one of USS ASHLAND's busiest, most successful, yet disappointing day during 2002. USS ASHLAND returned to Naval base, Norfolk on Saturday 23 March, despite heavy weather and high seas northeast of Cape Hateras on the return voyage.

Upon returning from Puerto Rico, USS ASHLAND remained in port Norfolk with the USS NASSAU and USS AUSTIN to conduct the first phase of the NASARG AT/FP certification for deployment. On April 1st, USS ASHLAND returned to Little Creek to continue preparations for INSURV, contractor repairs to 1B MPDE, and prepare for the next NASARG exercise. On April 16th, USS ASHLAND left Little Creek, turned toward Norfolk to conduct a degaussing run, and then proceeded out to the VACAPES to rendezvous with two LCAC's and the rest of the NASARG. Once all three ships were in company, the ARG sailed south to Onslow Bay, off the North Carolina coast for PMINT. PMINT consisted of LCAC and AAV operations with the Marines of 2/2 MEU. On April 17th, USS ASHLAND launched and recovered the LCAC 60 and 87 three times, recovered 16 AAV's, conducted flight operations, and anchored over night. The 18th of April would be another long amphibious day. Hoppers 60 and 87 were launched first thing in the morning followed by launching the AAV's. After recovering AAV's, USS ASHLAND proceeded underway within 4000 yards of the beach near Risley pier and launched the AAV's again in the late morning. 40 minutes later the AAV's returned after a successful practice assault on the beach. Once all the AAV's were aboard, the LCAC's were recovered. Flight operations were conducted the evening of the 18th. The 19-23 April were similar to the previous two days to include general quarters and engineering casualty control exercises. On the evening of the 23rd after completing flight quarters, USS ASHLAND departed Onslow Bay, toward Little Creek. While conducting the amphibious operations, the starboard shaft CPP system hydraulic oil continuously tested unsatisfactorily. USS ASHLAND conducted many

of the operations with the starboard shaft locked, and preceded back to Little Creek in this condition, making barely 10 knots over ground in the current. Before dawn on the 24th of April, USS ASHLAND set the sea and anchor detail, launched Hopper's 60 and 87 and proceeded into Little Creek, having engaged the starboard shaft for the last 8 miles of the transit. This was the last time the USS ASHLAND sailed with the USS NASSAU ARG, in 2002.

On May 3rd, USS ASHLAND was towed to Moon Engineering Company (MECO), in Portsmouth, VA, for an emergent overhaul of all four main engines. Oceaneering Company had already been working on 1B MPDE, their contract continued, while MECO started work on the remaining three. This depot level work forced USS ASHLAND out of the USS NASSAU ARG, and into the USS IWO JIMA ARG. Since the decision to go into a depot level availability was made just one day prior to being towed to the shipyard, there was limited date as to how long USS ASHLAND would remain in the yards. Within a month of arriving, parts availability issues were settled, and USS ASHLAND was projected to remain at MECO until the end of September. In August, USS ASHLAND was removed from the IWO JIMA ARG into an independent deployer status due to basic training requirements versus the IWOARG projected deployment date. While in the shipyard, USS ASHLAND continued to run GQ drills, and make preparations for getting underway. Maximum advantage of the time was taken to attend schools and take leave. On September 23rd, USS ASHLAND was towed from MECO to Little Creek to complete the overhaul, conduct run-ins, and prepare for light off assessment.

After a week and a half of preparations, including drills and equipment checks, USS ASHLAND conducted Light Off Assessment for ATGLANT N43. Starting Monday October 7th through Wednesday October 9th, USS ASHLAND demonstrated they were safe to light off the engineering plant and proceed underway. After a three-day weekend, USS ASHLAND took in all lines and was towed out of the Chesapeake Bay to conduct engine run in's and conduct a full range of sea trials. After a week at sea, all the main engines were performing as expected, and USS ASHLAND completed a full power run at a top speed of 24 knots over ground. Upon completion of Sea Trials, the next underway periods were utilized for training towards upcoming assessments such as Initial Assessment (engineering) and CART II (all). USS ASHLAND pulled prior to Halloween, and enjoyed a Halloween party for friends and families at Bayside Elementary School, hosted by the Spouse Association of USS ASHLAND.

After Halloween, preparations for Initial Assessment continued as members of the wardroom attended the Marine Safety

International Bridge Resource Management at Norfolk. Junior Officers, Department Heads, and the CO and XO had the opportunity to flex their shiphandling abilities and teamwork skills. USS ASHLAND got underway 12-14 November to continue training for IA, CART II, and to conduct a Detect to engage exercise with land based aircraft. Upon return, final preparations were completed for Initial Assessment commencing Monday November 18th. ATGLANT N43 returned for IA and USS ASHLAND had a successful assessment.

USS ASHLAND got underway prior to Thanksgiving to prepare for CART II the week following. Engineering casualty drills were conducted to build on the previous training and to improve watchstander proficiency. Seamanship and Navigation drills were conducted, as well as the CART II battle problem scenario. For the first time the Man Overboard Indicator (MOBI) was issued and utilized in the problem scenario. Upon return, a five-day weekend was granted for those not on duties for the Thanksgiving Holiday. On Saturday November 30th, the Under Secretary of the Navy, the Honorable Susan Morrissey Livingstone visited USS ASHLAND as part of her Mid-Atlantic Region tour. During her tour she visited the well deck, MMR 1, DC Central, the forward weight room, the reefer decks, flight deck, medical ward, wardroom, and the pilothouse. After the long Thanksgiving weekend, USS ASHLAND conducted CART II with ATGLANT and representatives from COMPHIBGRU TWO. After two days of inport checks, the ship and the assessors got underway to evaluate the ship's training teams underway in addition to the inport drills. Upon return, USS ASHLAND made final preparations for a Pre-INSURV commencing December 9th and finishing in an underway-material inspection on December 11th. COMPHIBGRU TWO served as the senior inspector in preparation for the actual INSURV in January 2003.

The USS ASHLAND crew and their families gathered at the Surfside Inn and Oceanfront Suites Calypso room on Friday December 6th to celebrate their camaraderie, a safe and successful year and the holidays. All enjoyed great food and music as the evening was highlighted by over \$3000.00 in door prizes. The children's party was held on Sunday December 8th at Bayside Elementary School where all of USS ASHLAND children received a gift and an opportunity to see Santa Claus. After this fun and relaxing weekend, Pre-INSURV with CPG-2 was conducted at NOB successfully, and thus creating a solid worklist for the holiday leave period commencing December 13th. USS ASHLAND closed out 2002 much as it had started the year, on holiday standdown with most of the crew enjoying precious time with family and friends.