

From: Commanding Officer, USS ASHLAND (LSD 48)
To: Director of Naval History (N09BH), Naval Historical Center, Washington Navy Yard,
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Subj: 2003 COMMAND HISTORY

Ref: (a) OPNAVIST 5750.12G

Encl: (1) Command History

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

USS ASHLAND LSD 48 COMMAND HISTORY FOR 2003

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 Gary Boardman, USN
 - d. **Homeport:** Naval Amphibious Base, Little Creek, Norfolk, Virginia.
2. **Chronology:**

IN PORT LITTLE CREEK	01 JAN – 12 JAN
UNDERWAY (DEPLOYMENT)	12 JAN – 19 APR
IN PORT BAHRAIN	19 APR – 22 APR
UNDERWAY (DEPLOYMENT)	22 APR - 05 JUN
IN PORT CARTAGENA, SPAIN	05 JUN – 09 JUN
UNDERWAY (DEPLOYMENT)	09 JUN - 25 JUN
IN PORT LITTLE CREEK	25 JUN - 29 JUL
UNDERWAY	29 JUL – 30 JUL
IN PORT LITTLE CREEK	30 JUL – 19 AUG
UNDERWAY INSURV REHERSAL	19 AUG – 21 AUG
IN PORT LITTLE CREEK	21 AUG – 27 AUG
UNDERWAY (PRE INSURV)	27 AUG – 28 AUG
IN PORT LITTLE CREEK	28 AUG - 20 OCT
UNDERWAY VACAPES	20 OCT – 27 OCT
IN PORT LITTLE CREEK	27 OCT – 4 NOV
UNDERWAY VACAPES	4 NOV – 6 NOV
IN PORT LITTLE CREEK	6 NOV – 2 DEC
BERTHSHIFT TO NORSHIPCO	2 DEC
YARD PERIOD NORSHIPCO	2 DEC – 31 DEC

USS ASHLAND started the New Year preparing for the short-notice deployment. After departing NAB Little Creek, Va., She headed to Morehead City, N.C., joined six other amphibious ships, forming Amphibious Task Force East, commanded by RADM M.P. Nowakowski, Commander, Amphibious Group TWO.

USS ASHLAND headed for the Strait of Gibraltar and entered the Mediterranean Sea on Jan. 28, 2003. She then proceeded through the Suez Canal and entered the Fifth Fleet Area of Operations Feb. 13. In the Arabian Gulf, USS ASHLAND became part of the most capable Amphibious

Task Force in recent history, putting Marines and equipment ashore in Kuwait using embarked Landing Craft, Air Cushion (LCAC's) from Assault Craft Unit FOUR within 72 hours.

Still on station in the Arabian Gulf, USS ASLAND received the order to spearhead Operation Desert Tortoise. During this operation, she moved more than 53 tons of mail, almost 200 passengers and more than 300 pallets of cargo in support of the 14 ships in the Amphibious Task Force. She also maintained a ready flight deck for most of the large-deck amphibious ships, refueling helicopters and assisting with aircraft staging.

At the end of May, USS ASHLAND welcomed the Marines as well as their equipment back on board and began the journey home. Prior to heading home, She stopped in Cartagena, Spain, for some much needed liberty.

The last order of business before pulling into Naval Amphibious Base Little Creek was picking up family members for the traditional Tiger Cruise.

During the deployment, USS ASHLAND qualified 63 Enlisted Surface Warfare Specialists and seven officers as Surface Warfare Officers.

Upon returning to homeport, USS ASHLAND crewmembers were able to enjoy reconnecting with their friends and families during two leave periods. The first leave period lasted from 25 JUN until 8 JUL. The second leave period commenced on 8 JUL and lasted until 22 JUL.

After the leave periods were complete, USS ASHLAND returned to business as usual.

The last couple weeks in July were very busy for USS ASHLAND. Events of interest included a 25MM Ammunition move, a NAV check ride material inspection, degaussing run and an underway replenishment with the USS ARCTIC.

After returning to port, USS ASHLAND held a WPIC. *As soon as I find out what this was I will talk about it.* During the August underway period she ran an abandon ship drill, conducted medical training, PACFIRE Exercises.

In port during the month of September, USS ASHLAND went through these evolutions: MOCAT, MSI, FMAV, SISCAL, PATT ASSIST.

The month of October began with a NJROTC visit. Prior to getting underway, the crew participated in a Fast Cruise. The October underway period was a busy one, including a degaussing run, flight deck exercises, a CIWS PACFIRE, engineering casualty drills, full power trials and LCAC operations.

USS ASHLAND found itself underway again in November for the final time prior to the December yard period. While underway, TRACKEX happened.

In December, USS ASHLAND entered the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard for a two-month rehabilitation period.