



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY

USS AUSTIN (LPD-4)
FPO AE 09564-1707

16 Jan 03

From: Commanding Officer, USS AUSTIN LPD-4
To: Director, Naval Historical Center, Washington Navy Yard,
805 Kidder Breese SE, Washington, DC 20374-5060

Subj: 2002 COMMAND HISTORY FOR USS AUSTIN (LPD-4)

Ref: (a) OPNAVINST 5750.12G

Encl: (1) Command Composition and Organization
(2) Command History 2002 Chronology
(3) Command History 2002 Narrative
(4) Commanding Officer's Biography and Photo
(5) USS AUSTIN (LPD-4) Command History 2002 Disk
(6) Welcome Aboard Pamphlet
(7) Current Ship's Photo
(8) News Release: Port Visit Souda Bay, Greece
(9) News Release: Port Visit Port Victoria, Seychelles
(10) Family Gram October '02
(11) CY02 Battle "E" Submission

1. In accordance with reference (a), the 2002 Command History for USS AUSTIN (LPD-4) is forwarded.


R. A. COLONNA

Copy to:
COMPHIBGRU TWO

COMMAND COMPOSITION AND ORGANIZATION

Command Short Title: USS AUSTIN (LPD-4)

UIC: 07175

Mission: AUSTIN, an "Amphibious Transport Dock" Ship is designed to transport and land ashore her complement of Marines and their equipment by either helicopter or surface amphibious landing craft. Our Navy and Marine Corps team onboard is trained and ready to perform that mission if required.

Motto: *Potestas Maritimas per Mobilitate* or "Seapower through Mobility", AUSTIN's motto, emphasizes her capability of delivering combat ready troops and dispatching them, with precision by landing craft or helicopter to the scene of action at any position on the littorals of the earth, and only requiring minimal transit time.

Organizational Structure:

Maintenance Man
Work Center Supervisor
Leading Petty Officer
Leading Chief Petty Officer
Division Officer
Department Head
Executive Officer- LCDR Yeomans
Commanding Officer- CDR Colonna

Administrative Chain of Command:

AUSTIN- CDR Colonna
PHIBRON- CAPT O'Brien
PHIBGRU- ADM Nowakowski
SURFLANT- ADM Etnyre
COMLANTFLT- ADM Natter
CNO- ADM Clark
SEC NAVY- Hon. England
SEC DEF- Hon. Rumsfeld
PRESIDENT- Hon. Bush

Operational Chain of Command:

AUSTIN- CDR Colonna
PHIBRON- CAPT O'Brien
PHIBGRU- ADM Nowakowski
COMSECONDFLT-ADM Dawson
COMLANTFLT- ADM Natter
USNORTHCMD- GEN Eberhart
JCS- GEN. Myers
SECDEF- Hon. Rumsfeld
PRESIDENT- Hon. Bush

Commanding Officer: CDR Richard A. Colonna

Permanent Duty Station: Norfolk, VA

Enclosure (1)

2002 HISTORY - CHRONOLOGY

01-23 JAN IN PORT NORFOLK, VA. PHASED FLEET MAINTENANCE AVAILABILITY (PFMAV)
GQ, JP-5 ONLOAD, CACO TRAINING, NAV LTT, SHIP HANDLING TRAINING, SUPPLY MANAGEMENT INSPECTION, SIGNALS LTT

23-26 JAN UNDERWAY- VACAPES: UNDERWAY DEMONSTRATION PREPS

26-28 JAN IN PORT NORFOLK, VA.

29-30 JAN UNDERWAY MATERIAL INSPECTION (UMI)

31JAN-5FEB IN PORT NORFOLK, VA.

05-10 FEB UNDERWAY- VACAPES: UNDERWAY DEMONSTRATION PREPS

05-08 FEB CSTT, ETT, DC, NAV LTT

06-07 FEB ITT GQ

10-27 FEB UNDERWAY PHIBRON GROUP SAIL- VACAPES

13 FEB UNREP- REPLENISHMENT AT SEA (RAS)

15-16 FEB NAVIGATION CHECK RIDE

25-26 FEB UNDERWAY DEMONSTRATION PREPARATIONS

27FEB-8MAR IN PORT NORFOLK, VA: C5RA/SEMAT II

28FEB-1MAR MOGAS ASSIST

01 MAR AUSTIN BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION

08-22 MAR UNDERWAY ARG GROUP SAIL- MISSILE SHOOT

14-19 MAR IN PORT ST CROIX, VIRGIN ISLANDS

22-25 MAR IN PORT NORFOLK, VA. NAVAL MEDIA PICTURES

25-27 MAR UNDERWAY- VACAPES: UNDERWAY DEMONSTRATION PREPS

27-30 MAR IN PORT NORFOLK, VA.

01-06 APR UNDERWAY: AMMO ONLOAD- YORKTOWN, VA.
ARG/MEU IEPC-EWTG LANT
PMS STAND DOWN

07-16 APR IN PORT NORFOLK, VA.

08-12 APR 3M INSPECTION

09-10 APR SEAL/SBU CONEX BOX LOAD

10-11 APR MOGAS INSPECTION

11-12 APR HURREX TRAINING

16-26 APR UNDERWAY-PHIBRON/MARINE EXPEDITIONARY UNIT INTEGRATION (PMINT)

27APR-26MAY IN PORT NORFOLK, VA.

01 MAY BLESC TOUR/CRASH AND SMASH DRILL

03 MAY GENERAL QUARTERS (GQ)- CBR DRILL

06-18 MAY HURRICANE EXERCISE '02 (HURREX '02)

07-10 MAY FINAL EVALUATION PERIOD (FEP)

13-31 MAY FLEET MAINTENANCE AVAILABILITY (FMAV)

14-15 MAY MEDICAL READINESS ASSESSMENT (MRI)/AMW TACTICS SEMINAR

16-17 MAY AT/FP STAND-DOWN

26-27 MAY MOGAS ONLOAD

27-28 MAY UNDERWAY- VACAPES

28MAY-03JUN IN PORT NORFOLK, VA.

28MAY-22 JUN EMBARK MIDSHIPMEN

2002 HISTORY- CHRONOLOGY (CONT' T)

29 MAY	NORWEGIAN ARMY ACADEMY SHIP TOUR
29-30 MAY	AMMO ONLOAD
30-31 MAY	MGIT 2M CERT
01-03 JUN	ANTI-TERRORISM EXERCISE
03-14 JUN	UNDERWAY- VACAPES: MARINE EXPEDITIONARY UNIT EXERCISE (MEUEX)
13-14 JUN	UNDERWAY DEMONSTRATION
14-19 JUN	IN PORT NORFOLK, VA.
19-29 JUN	UNDERWAY- VACAPES: SPECIAL OPERATIONS CAPABLE EXERCISE (SOCEX)
19 JUN	MAIN SPACE FIRE DRILL
29JUN-21JUL	IN PORT NORFOLK, VA
01-03 JUL	SAFETY STAND DOWN HEALTH FAIR/BLOOD DRIVE
03 JUL	SHIP'S PICNIC
08-27 JUL	PRE-DEPLOYMENT FLEET MAINTENANCE AVAILABILITY (PDFMAV)
08-12 JUL	AT/FP EXERCISE Exercise "SOLID CURTAIN/SHIELD"
15-19 JUL	UNDERWATER HULL SURVEY
16-18 JUL	EW SYMPOSIUM AMMO ONLOAD
21JUL-19AUG	PRE-OVERSEAS MOVEMENT
22-23 JUL	UNDERWAY - VACAPES: BURIAL AT SEA
24JUL-26AUG	IN PORT NORFOLK, VA
21-22 AUG	FAST CRUISE
26 AUG-31DEC	DEPLOY: OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM
27 AUG	IN PORT MOOREHEAD CITY, NC. ONLOAD 24 MEU MSSG
27AUG-07SEP	TRANSIT ATLANTIC OCEAN
29 AUG	UNREP- RAS
07SEP	TRANSIT STRAITS OF GIBRALTAR INCHOP C6F
08-10 SEP	ANCHORED ROTA, SPAIN
11SEP	PATRIOTS DAY MEMORIAL CEREMONY
16-18 SEP	OFFLOAD MARINES: THESSALONIKI, GREECE
27-29 SEP	IN PORT SPLIT, CROATIA
30 SEP-05 OCT	CROATIAN PHIBLEX
07 OCT	STT- LOSS STEERING DRILLS
08 OCT	UNREP- RAS
09 OCT	ITT SCENARIO, LCU AND CIWS PAC FIRE
11-15 OCT	IN PORT SOUDA BAY, CRETE
16 OCT	NAVY BIRTHDAY DINNER
18 OCT	UNREP- RAS
20-23 OCT	BACKLOAD MARINES: THESSALONIKI, GREECE
24 OCT	UNREP- RAS

2002 HISTORY- CHRONOLOGY (CON'T)

26 OCT TRANSIT SUEZ CANAL
INCHOP C5F

31 OCT UNREP- RAS
HALLOWEEN COSTUME CONTEST

03 NOV VERTREP- RAS

06 NOV USMC BIRTHDAY DINNER

07 NOV UNREP- RAS
NY TIMES MEDIA VISIT

08-10 NOV OFFLOAD MARINES: DJIBOUTI, AFRICA

11 NOV VETERANS DAY CELEBRATION

12 NOV UNREP- RAS

9-19 NOV EXERCISE IMAGE NAUTILUS

19-21 NOV BACKLOAD MARINES: DJIBOUTI, AFRICA

22 NOV UNREP- RAS NATO BREAKABLE SPOOL

26 NOV THANKSGIVING CELEBRATION

27-30 NOV OFFLOAD MARINES: KENYA, AFRICA

30 NOV-09DEC EXERCISE EDGED MALLETT

01 DEC SWIMCALL

04 DEC UNREP- RAS

09-11 DEC BACKLOAD MARINES: KENYA, AFRICA

11 DEC HALFWAY DINNER CELEBRATION

12 DEC TALENT/NO TALENT CONTEST
BEER ON THE FLIGHTDECK

13 DEC VERTREP- RAS

13 DEC WOG REBELLION

14 DEC CROSSING THE LINE CEREMONY

15-18 DEC IN PORT, PORT VICTORIA, SEYCHELLES

23 DEC UNREP- RAS

24 DEC CHRISTMAS EVE PARTY

26 DEC TRANSIT STRAITS OF HORMUZ

29 DEC UNREP- RAS

31 DEC NEW YEAR'S EVE HOLIDAY

COMMAND HISTORY NARRATIVE

1 January 2002 found the USS AUSTIN moored at the Norfolk Naval Base in Norfolk, Virginia. The ship was in phased maintenance availability and was finishing up its fourth leave period for the Holiday Season. The ship was preparing for INSURV, and the week of the 14th - 19th January brought a Supply Management Inspection (SMI). The inspection was a major success; all division's received a grade of 92% or higher, receiving "BLUE E" qualifying scores. AUSTIN's underway period saw preparations for the Final Evaluation Period later in the year. This included various integrated training team drills in Medical, Combat Systems, Engineering, Damage Control, Seamanship and numerous General Quarters (GQ). On the 23rd of January, the USS AUSTIN got underway from Norfolk Naval Base and sailed in the VACAPES OPAREA to conduct engineering drills in preparation for Underway Demonstration and night deck landing qualifications (DLQ's) to keep up aviation proficiency. The ship completed training and returned to Norfolk, VA, on 26 January, for Underway Material Inspection (UMI).

On the 6th of February, USS AUSTIN again sailed to the VACAPES, beginning additional integrated training team drills in Medical, Combat Systems, Navigation, Engineering, Damage Control and Seamanship. The culmination occurred with an Integrated Training Team scenario, incorporating all areas of training with a General Quarters Drill. Underway Demonstration preparations and nightly DLQ's continued, ensuring maximum readiness. On 11 February, The Nassau Amphibious Readiness Group (NASSAU ARG) conducted a group sail in the VACAPES. COMMANDER AMPHIBIOUS SQUADRON TWO embarked onboard USS NASSAU (LHA 4). USS NASSAU (LHA-4), USS ASHLAND (LSD-48), and USS AUSTIN (LPD-4) conducted preparations for the upcoming NASSAU Amphibious Readiness Group (ARG) Mediterranean

Enclosure (3)

Deployment, performing PHIBRON Group Sail. AUSTIN conducted flight operations, replenishment at sea, and finished the 6-day underway period with the successful completion of a Navigation Check Ride. When the NASSAU ARG returned to port, the annual GATOR BALL, which was held on the 16th of February, saw the AUSTIN's enthusiastic centerpiece entry. Although the AUSTIN did not win any accolades, the ship was well-represented. Monday, the 18th of February, saw the AUSTIN again set sail for continued engineering drills. 26th of February, saw the start of an intense 2M and Electronics Material inspection, C5RA/SEMAT II.

C5RA/SEMAT II continued into March, with the successful completion occurring on March 8th. The AUSTIN conducted a RADHAZ/EMCON/HERO survey, medical training team drills, MOGAS assist, PHIBGRU habitability inspection, ILS Groom, Dental and Medical Assist Visit, and a communication readiness assessment. LCDR Yeomans arrived in March to assume the duties as AUSTIN's Executive Officer. March 1st also marked an important occasion - AUSTIN celebrated her 37th birthday. AUSTIN is the oldest amphibious ship in the Navy and is proud to proclaim her elite status as the only East Coast LPD to never run aground. On the 8th of March, AUSTIN again departed Norfolk, VA. She left with NASSAU to participate in the ARG group sail, which included a missile shoot. The 14-day underway period saw additional exercises readying AUSTIN for deployment. The ship enjoyed a 5 day port visit to St. Croix, U.S. Virgin Islands, affording her crew an opportunity to tour, relax, and partake in water sports, scenic beaches, and amazing cuisine. On the 20th of March, the AUSTIN departed St. Croix, finishing the Missile Shoot and returning to Norfolk. From the 23rd through the 25th of March, AUSTIN "posed" for Naval Media Pictures, a copy of which is attached. As AUSTIN returned to port, the Norfolk Naval Base began an intensive anti-terrorism/force protection (AT/FP) exercise. As the ship

successfully repelled small boat "attacks" and attempted boardings, the ARG Commanders Conference, held in Damneck, mapped out the upcoming deployment.

April 1st found USS AUSTIN heading for the Naval Weapons Facility at Yorktown, VA for ammunition onload and the ARG/MEU IEPC at EWTGLANT. Ammo onload, originally scheduled for 6 days, was completed after only 4 days of hard work and long days. The ship also conducted a Preventative Maintenance System (PMS) stand down in preparation for the 8th - 13th April 3M Inspection. The AUSTIN successfully completed their 3M Inspection, as well as a MOGAS inspection. AUSTIN was the first ship on the East Coast to be certified for 3M based on a Baseline Assessment. A Hurricane Training Exercise (HURREX '02) inbrief was held on the 11th - 12th of April in preparation for the upcoming hurricane season. AUSTIN began PMINT on 16 April, establishing the necessary relationship between the 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU) and Amphibious Squadron Two. Marine Service Support Group 24 (MSSG 24) embarked on AUSTIN, led by the Commander of Troops, Colonel Weston. After AUSTIN returned to port on the 27th of April, a GQ drill and crash and smash flight deck drill helped ensure AUSTIN's readiness and an effective training program.

On May 3rd, AUSTIN conducted a non-combatant evacuation (NEO) drill in preparation for possible tasking for the upcoming deployment. She also conducted a Chemical/Biological/Radiological General Quarters Drill on the 3rd of May to ensure AUSTIN was capable of meeting any CBR contingencies. On the 6th, a Final Evaluation Phase (FEP) inbrief was held, and FEP was successfully completed pierside from the 6th -10th of May 2002. FEP tested all areas of the AUSTIN crew and finally certified her as deployable. On the 6th of May, HURREX '02 also began. HURREX consisted of numerous heavy weather drills and ran through the 18th of May.

After FEP and HURREX '02, the ship entered into a Fleet Maintenance Availability. Naval Materials Review, IDOC, and AMW Tactics Seminar occurred in mid May. The AUSTIN also completed her semi-annual EEED/OBA/EGRESS training. On the 26th of May, AUSTIN unloaded 16,000 gallons of MOGAS before getting underway on the 27th. On the 28th, fifteen midshipmen embarked AUSTIN for their Second and First Class MIDN cruise. On the 29th of May, the AUSTIN hosted a ship tour for the Norwegian Army Academy. On the 30th -31st of May, AUSTIN completed MGIT and 2M Certification.

June was a busy month for AUSTIN. On 3 June, USS AUSTIN (LPD-4), USS TORTUGA (LSD 46), and USS NASSAU (LHA-4), departed to onload the 24 MEU Marines in Moorehead City, NC. TORTUGA had been chosen to replace the ASHLAND in the NASSAU ARG. After the successful Marine onload, the NASSAU ARG began Marine Expeditionary Unit Exercise (MEUEX) off the coast of North Carolina. The 10-day underway period refreshed the ARG on launching an intensive amphibious assault on the beach and on conducting numerous types of Military Operations Other than War. Minehunting and minesweeping operations were conducted in the boat lanes, while Landing Craft Air Cushion (LCAC), Landing Craft Utility (LCU), and Amphibious Assault Vehicles (AAV) offloaded the Marines. The AUSTIN served as Primary Control Ship for the assault, controlling the entire off-load superbly. Additionally, helicopters operated at all hours of the day delivering personnel and equipment ashore, while AV-8B Harriers operated off of the NASSAU. While the Marine's practiced their field skills, the Navy crew members honed their skills at sea. Upon completion of MEUEX, the ship returned to the VACAPES oparea to conduct Underway Demonstration on the 13th of June. The ship successfully completed U/D after many arduous engineering evolutions. This was the final qualification for the AUSTIN to achieve prior to deployment, but training did not stop here. The ship returned to Norfolk on 14

June for a much needed, albeit short, rest period, before setting sail again on the 19th for Special Operations Capable Exercise (SOCEX). This 11-day underway period qualified the 24 MEU Special Operation Capable, after another successful amphibious assault. The training simulated political unrest in a physically demanding environment and tested all levels of the Marine's response capabilities. On the 29th of May, the AUSTIN returned home and debarked her Midshipmen.

On the 1st of July, AUSTIN held a Health Fair onboard the ship, which covered topics such as weight control, stress management, and fitness. This was followed on July 2nd by the annual safety stand down held at the base theater. Annual refresher training was conducted on Electrical Safety, Recreational Safety, ORM, and Alcohol Awareness, to name a few. On the 3rd, AUSTIN celebrated her annual Ship's Picnic. The afternoon was a great success! The ship enjoyed additional safety instructions, including child fingerprinting and bike serial etchings, as well as a visit from the Police and Fire Department. Over \$9,000 in door prizes were awarded. The party was catered by Bully's Beach BBQ, and the crew enjoyed challenges like the CPO/OFFICER softball game and the three-legged Race. The 14th of July began the AUSTIN's pre-deployment fleet maintenance availability. This critical time period allowed AUSTIN to overhaul all three of her Plastic Waste Processing Units (PWP's), all 6 of her air conditioning units, and to complete extensive engineering repairs to her emergency switchboard and stern gate hydraulic operator. The ship was once again involved in a major Anti-terrorism/Force Protection exercise, along with all of the ship's pierside in Norfolk, VA. The ship underwent an Underwater Hull Survey from the 16th - 19th of June, and POM Period One concluded on the 22nd. The 22nd through the 23th found the AUSTIN underway for a burial at sea and final preparations and exercises for Mediterranean Deployment 02.

POM period two began on the 28th of July and finished out the month for the AUSTIN.

POM period Two continued from the 1st to the 5th of August, at which time the third POM period began and went until the 19th of August. On the 21st and 22nd of August, AUSTIN completed Fast Cruise pierside, with Man Overboard Training, General Quarters, and preparations for the Deployment. On the 23rd, AUSTIN conducted Rules of Engagement/Deadly Force Training for all Hands. Finally, the culmination of 8 months of hard work brought August 26th and saw the AUSTIN departing Pier One Norfolk, VA for Mediterranean Cruise '02 in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. The ship headed south to Moorehead City, NC, where the 24 MSSG embarked AUSTIN.

After nearly two weeks underway crossing the Atlantic Ocean, the AUSTIN transited the Straits of Gibraltar on the 7th of September. The evolution was a complex, all-hands event. The AUSTIN set modified Zebra, main deck and below, and formed a Column at 3000 yards interval behind the NASSAU and TORTUGA, respectively. "Crossing the Rock" took over 8 hours, but was completed safely under the vigilant supervision of UH-1's and AH-1W's flying overhead. AUSTIN entered the Mediterranean Sea, and headed East to Rota, Spain. The AUSTIN remained at anchor outside of Rota for three days, from the 8th - 10th of September, before getting underway en route to Thessaloniki, Greece. While underway on 11 September, the crew of AUSTIN and the Marines of the MSSG 24 held a ceremony in honor of those who lost their lives in the tragic events of September 11, 2001. On the 16th of September, the NASSAU ARG pulled into Thessaloniki for the beginning of a three day Marine Offload. As the Marine's conducted operations ashore, the AUSTIN split from the ARG and had her first port visit in Split, Croatia from the 27th - 30th of September. After a

much-needed break, the AUSTIN began Croatian PHIBLEX '02 on the 30th of September. The PHIBLEX is a joint Naval Exercise with the Croatian Navy. The 6-day exercise saw AUSTIN Sailors gain experience on a Foreign Naval Warship, as well as Croatian Sailors integrating into AUSTIN's crew.

Croatian PHIBLEX '02 concluded on the 5th of October. AUSTIN immediately headed back West to the Island of Crete for her second Port Visit in Souda Bay, Greece from the 11th - 15th of October. The crew enjoyed Souda Bay's shopping, resting, and dining in the quaint island restaurants. The AUSTIN got underway on the 15th of October to rejoin the ARG and returned to Thessaloniki, Greece, to backload the Marines with the NASSAU ARG from the 19th - 23rd of October. After departing Thessaloniki on the 23rd, the AUSTIN headed Southeast and crossed the Suez Canal on the 26th of October. Again, the complex evolution was completed safely. AUSTIN led the NASSAU, TORTUGA, and the PITTSBURGH (SSN 720) into the Fifth Fleet area of operations. After the Suez, the AUSTIN crossed into the Red Sea with the NASSAU ARG and headed to Djibouti, Africa. On the 31st of October, the AUSTIN enjoyed Halloween Festivities with a costume contest, a ship's decorating contest, trick-or-treating, and a "Haunted Medical Hallway."

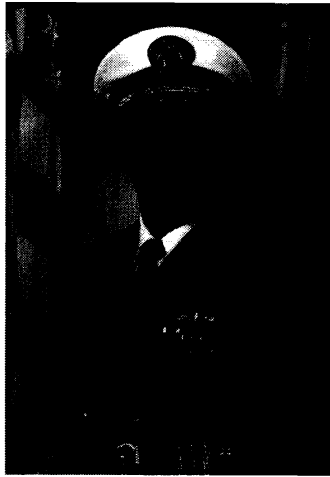
AUSTIN sailed into November, arriving in Djibouti, Africa, on the 8th, when the 24 MEU again departed the ship to conduct Operation Image Nautilus. As the AUSTIN operated around the Horn of Africa, she was able to conduct many drills to keep her crew ready to meet any threat. AUSTIN conducted Crash and Smash Flight Deck drills, SAR evolutions, Man Overboard drills, A Swept Channel Transit, and Visit, Board, Search, and Seizure Drills (VBSS). Upon completion of Image Nautilus, AUSTIN backloaded the Marines from the 20th - 22nd of November and again split from the NASSAU ARG. The highlight of November was the outstanding Thanksgiving Day Feast, celebrated on the 26th of November.

AUSTIN continued South, heading to Kenya, Africa. She arrived and began her offload in Manda Bay, Kenya, on the 27th of November. The offload continued in support of Operation Edged Mallet '02. During Operation Edged Mallet, the AUSTIN was privileged to host numerous Kenyan VIP's, including the Manda Bay Naval Base Commander, Commander Kenyan Forces, Commander Eastern Command, Chief, Training and Exercises Kenyan Army, Kenyan Navy Commander, and the Chief of Public Affairs. Additionally, the AUSTIN entertained several media members representing MSNBC, Associated Press, Reuters, and The Boston Globe. The Marine Backload began on the 9th of December and was completed on the 11th, when the AUSTIN headed East to her third port visit. The transit East was a busy one for the crew and Marines of AUSTIN. On the 11th, AUSTIN celebrated her halfway point of the deployment with a wonderful dinner of steak, lobster, and crab legs. After the feast, the AUSTIN prepared for her first "BEER DAY" on the 12th of December. After a grueling 45 days at sea, the sailors and marines aboard AUSTIN gathered on the flight deck for a Talent/No Talent Show and a much appreciated two beers! On the 13th, the pollywogs hosted the "WOG REBELLION," putting all of the shellback's on edge; the Chief Engineer and First Lieutenant were locked into their staterooms, while the Damage Control Assistant and Electronics Material Officer lost their door and their racks! The Shellbacks wreaked havoc on the Wogs, in return, on the 14th of December while Davy Jones and King Neptune welcomed some 500 Sailors and Marines into the Shellback Order during the time-honored Crossing the Line Ceremony.

The crew recovered in time for her third port call in Port Victoria, Seychelles. The AUSTIN anchored out, off the coast of MAHE and the LCU helped all of the Marines and Sailors enjoy a breath-taking tropical paradise. The AUSTIN set sail from the Seychelles on the 18th of December and headed North to rejoin the

NASSAU ARG. The crew celebrated Christmas Eve with a wonderful dinner, while the AUSTIN band played popular hits for the crew. The Christmas tree and ship's decorations helped Sailors and Marines get into the holiday spirit, while a group toured the ship caroling for the entire crew. On the 26th, the AUSTIN again set Modified Zebra, main deck and below, for the Straits of Hormuz transit. The AUSTIN sailed in a column behind the NASSAU and TORTUGA, entering the Arabian Gulf and heading East for Operation Iron Magic off the coast of The United Arab Emirates.

The end of Year 2002 brought the AUSTIN Sailors and Marines together for a New Year's Eve Celebration hosted by the Junior Officers of AUSTIN. The crew listened as the Disc Jockey played requests, and all hands gathered on the flight deck to hear the results of the ship's raffle and to watch the lighted ball drop to ring in the Year 2003.



COMMANDING OFFICER BIOGRAPHY

CDR Richard Colonna was born and raised in the town of [REDACTED]. He graduated from the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy, Kings Point, NY in 1983 with a B.S. in Nautical Science, a Third Mate's license and a commission in the Naval Reserve. After graduating, he sailed as a Merchant Mariner with Faustag Marine until he entered the Navy in 1986.

CDR Colonna's first assignment was aboard the Sixth Fleet Flagship, USS BELKNAP (CG 26), homeported in Gaeta, Italy. He served nearly three years onboard as Boilers, Auxiliary and Electrical Division Officer while earning his Surface Warfare Qualification. Shortly after BELKNAP hosted the Malta Summit for President Bush and Russian President Gorbachev, he detached and reported as Commanding Officer, Naval and Marine Corps Reserve Center, Ebensburg, PA where he prepared numerous Naval Reservists for recall to Operation Desert Shield/Storm. Upon detachment from Ebensburg, he reported to USS PLATTE (AO 186) for his first department head tour as Engineering Officer. After nearly 15 months and a deployment to South America, he reported to Commander, Amphibious Squadron FOUR (PHIBRON FOUR) for his second department head tour as Material and Logistics Officer. He deployed with PHIBRON FOUR embarked in USS INCHON (LPH 12) to the Mediterranean and subsequent stationing off the coast of Somalia for Operation Continue Hope. Upon completion of this tour, CDR Colonna transferred to Naval Reserve Center, Adelphi, MD where he served as Executive/Training Officer. He then returned to sea, reporting to USS AUSTIN (LPD 4) as Executive Officer. After 16 months and just days before AUSTIN's deployment, he transferred to the Staff of the Chief of Naval Operations, Expeditionary Warfare Division (N75), Washington, DC where he served as the Manpower Analyst. On 22 March 2001, CDR Colonna became the 27th Commanding Officer of USS AUSTIN.

CDR Colonna has been awarded the Meritorious Service Medal, Navy Commendation Medal (5 awards), Navy Achievement Medal, and several other personal and unit decorations.

He is married to the former [REDACTED] of [REDACTED]. They reside in [REDACTED], [REDACTED] with their four children: [REDACTED]

News Release
USS AUSTIN(LPD-4)
Commanding Officer
USS AUSTIN (LPD-4)
FPO AE 09564-1707

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

USS AUSTIN (LPD-4) Public Affairs

SOUDA BAY, GREECE

Written by: LTJG KiahRahming

Two months after deploying from its homeport of Norfolk, Virginia, the USS AUSTIN (LPD-4) made a port visit to Souda Bay, Greece located on the Island of Crete. Souda Bay is the largest natural protected harbor in the Mediterranean. Most Sailors spent their time visiting the beautiful, historic seaport of Chania. The county of Chania is located on the western part of Crete with a population of 140,000.

The Cretan tradition is marked by the production of some of the world's finest weaves, carpets, and blankets. A humble yet sophisticated organization of villagers also produce artistic handcrafts from glass, wood, metal, and leather.

During the visit, AUSTIN Sailors were offered tours of Chania, Elafonissi Island, and even horseback riding in Deres Village. In addition to tours, AUSTIN Sailors enjoyed great shopping for souvenirs, leather goods and jewelry.

The ship's crew made great use of the facilities at Naval Support Activity where they could be found at the Navy Exchange shopping for last minute items, or at the gymnasium utilizing the weight room, basketball court, and swimming pool. Additionally, the crew spent much of their time at base's Bowling Alley, and Sports Bar which provided a small movie theater and served delicious American styled dishes.

This four-day visit to Souda Bay provided AUSTIN Sailors with plenty of rest and relaxation from the rigors of life at sea. It also provided them the opportunity to make phone calls home, visit an interesting city, eat some delicious local food and experience the hospitality of the people of Crete.

News Release
USS AUSTIN(LPD-4)
Commanding Officer
USS AUSTIN (LPD-4)
FPO AE 09564-1707

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

USS AUSTIN (LPD-4) Public Affairs

PORT VICTORIA, SEYCHELLES

Written by: LTJG Ryan Waelchli

After being out at sea for almost two months without a port visit, USS AUSTIN (LPD-4) visited Port Victoria, Seychelles a beautiful island located in the Indian Ocean, approximately 900 miles from the eastern coast of Africa. Port Victoria, located on the Island of Mahe, afforded the Sailors and Marines of USS AUSTIN an excellent opportunity to rest and relax. Time ashore was spent touring the island, frequenting various shops, dining at local restaurants, relaxing on beaches, gambling in casinos, and partying at local dance clubs and bars.

During the visit, AUSTIN Sailors and Marines had the opportunity to participate in water sports such as kayaking, water skiing, parasailing, scuba diving, snorkeling, and even jet skiing. The Islands are rich in waterfront beaches and lush tropical parks. In fact, a vast majority of the Islands are designated Nature Reserves. These parks enabled the Sailors and Marines of USS AUSTIN breathtaking tours and an appreciation of the incredible natural beauty of The Seychelles.

Another attraction of Seychelles is the unbelievable fishing. Known for some of the best fishing in the world, several crewmembers and troops took advantage of local fishing trips offered and weren't disappointed with the outcome. Barracuda, Tuna and Yellow-finned Dolphin were just some of the fish that were pulled in and brought to shore for grilling. Fishing is a full-time business for

many of the islanders, and the fish are sold at an open-air market or often traded for other items of need.

In a more relaxed atmosphere, several groups of Sailors and Marines opted to rent hotel rooms, play cards, and just relax poolside.

This three-day visit to Seychelles provided AUSTIN Sailors a respite from the rigors of life at sea. It also provided them the opportunity to make phone calls home, visit an interesting island, eat some delicious local food, and experience the hospitality of the people of Seychelles.

Home-ported in Norfolk, Va., AUSTIN is currently deployed to the Central Command Area of Responsibility.