



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY

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

5000
Ser/ 099
15 Mar 04

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

Subj: 2003 COMMAND HISTORY FOR USS AUSTIN (LPD-4)

Ref: (a) OPNAVINST 5750.12G

Encl: (1) Command Composition and Organization
(2) Command History 2003 Chronology
(3) Command History 2003 Narrative
(4) Commanding Officer's Biography and Photo
(5) USS AUSTIN (LPD 4) Command History 2003 Disk
(6) Welcome Aboard Pamphlet
(7) Current Ship's Photo
(8) Patriot's Day Speech
(9) CY03 Battle "E" Submission

1. In accordance with reference (a), the 2003 Command History for
USS AUSTIN (LPD 4) is forwarded.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "M. R. GRAHAM", with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

M. R. GRAHAM

Copy to:
COMPHIBGRU TWO
COMPHIBRON SIX

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.

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: A crew complement of 408 personnel predominantly from eight departments make up the bulk of the AUSTIN's organization. They are, listed from the largest to the smallest in size, Engineering, Deck, Supply, Operations, Air, Navigation/Administrative/Executive, Medical and Dental. In addition to the department heads of the these major departments, the Commanding Officer has a number of Executive Assistants that assist him in various areas. They include a Command Chaplain, a Command Master Chief, a Combat Cargo Officer (U.S. Marine Corps Officer), a Master-at-Arms, and a Material and Maintenance expert, to name a few.

Administrative Chain of Command

AUSTIN - Commander Michael R. Graham
PHIBRON SIX - Captain Daniel N. Hartwell
PHIBGRU TWO - Rear Admiral Reubin B. Bookert
SURFLANT - Rear Admiral Terrance T. Etnyre
COMLANFLT - Admiral William J. Fallon
CNO - Admiral Vernon E. Clark
SEC NAV - Honorable George England
SEC DEF - Honorable Donald Rumsfeld
PRESIDENT - President George W. Bush

Commanding Officer: Commander Michael R. Graham

Permanent Duty Station: Norfolk, Virginia

Enclosure (1)

2003 HISTORY - CHRONOLOGY

01-18 Jan	United Arab Emirates Exercise IRON MAGIC
31 Jan - 2 Feb	Inport Naval Support Activity Bahrain
4 Feb - 1 Mar	Inport Naval Support Activity Bahrain
10 Feb	Change of Command from CDR Richard A. Colonna to CDR Scott S. Gordon
15 Mar	Strait of Hormuz Transit (Leaving Gulf)
19 Mar	Strait of Hormuz Transit (Returning to Gulf)
20 Mar - 1 May	Operation IRAQI FREEDOM
5 May	Strait of Hormuz Transit (Leaving Gulf)
11 May	Suez Canal Transit (Entering Mediterranean)
15 May	Frocking Ceremony for First, Second, and Third Class Petty Officers
27 May	Moorehead City, NC for offload of USMC elements
28 May	Tiger Cruise
29 May - 7 Jul	Inport Naval Station, Norfolk, VA
7 Jun	CDR Michael R. Graham assumes Command
8-12 Jul	Earle, New Jersey visit (Weapons offload)
16-18 Jul	Depot Phased Maintenance Availability, Metro Machine, Norfolk, VA
18 Jul - 3 Sep	Drydock
16 Sep	Chief Petty Officer Promotion ceremony for seven selectees
17 Sep	Exit Metro Machine drydock and transit to Norfolk Naval Shipyard due to approaching Hurricane Isabel
18 Sep	Hurricane Evacuation (Hurricane Isabel)
22 Sep	Return to Metro Machine drydock
26 Sep	AUSTIN Command Picnic
25-26 Nov	Light-Off Assessment (LOA)
1-5 Dec	Anti-Terrorism Force Protection Phase I
12 Dec	Holiday Party
18 Dec	Aviation Certification (AVCERT)
18-19 Dec	Sea Trials
19-31 Dec	Inport Naval Station, Norfolk, VA
19-31 Dec	Holiday Leave Period

Enclosure (2)

COMMAND HISTORY NARRATIVE

01 January 2003, USS AUSTIN was deployed in the Arabian Gulf, off the coast of United Arab Emirates, conducting Exercise IRON MAGIC with USS NASSAU and USS TORTUGA. The three ships comprised the Naval vessels of the NASSAU Amphibious Ready Group (ARG). 31 January AUSTIN headed for a well-deserved liberty port at Naval Support Activity Bahrain. The crew enjoyed themselves as the NSA Bahrain base support was excellent. The base had all the comforts of a large base on a smaller scale to include excellent telephone support, restaurants, gym facilities, ships store and clubs. The base United Services Organization had a wide variety of souvenirs, and AUSTIN Sailors and Marines took advantage of all amenities. The nearby town of Manama was quite interesting. There was a good combination of Arabic and Western influence. Many personnel took full advantage of the opportunity to walk the city streets and visit the gold and silver shops and the hand-made carpet stores. There were also a variety of restaurants, which included a Hard Rock Cafe and other familiar favorites. On 2 February, AUSTIN departed Bahrain.

Upon experiencing a critical casualty to AUSTIN's engineering plant, AUSTIN returned to Bahrain, the closest repair facility, on 4 February. The extra time in Bahrain was not all rest and relaxation. The ship continued to train, drill, clean, and conduct maintenance to maintain proficiency and a high level of readiness. On 10 February, AUSTIN underwent a change of command, as CDR Scott S. Gordon relieved CDR Richard A. Colonna as AUSTIN's 28TH Commanding Officer with a ceremony held on the flight deck.

On March 1, AUSTIN was once again underway and en route to meet the rest of the NASSAU ARG. Also on 1 March, AUSTIN celebrated her 38TH birthday- AUSTIN is the oldest amphibious ship in the Navy. On 19 March, Operation IRAQI FREEDOM began and AUSTIN played a key role in the largest special operations force since the Vietnam War.

Marine elements of the 24TH Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU), Special Operations Capable (SOC), several of which were embarked on AUSTIN, and AUSTIN Sailors conducted operations in support of Operation IRAQI FREEDOM. During the combat operations, AUSTIN loaded 657,009 pounds of stores, 37,000 kilos of mail, 2,479 tons of cargo and equipment and over 5,000

Enclosure (3)

passengers. The Marines illustrated their flexibility and staying power as a unit. The Marines who work in many different specialties pulled together to ensure each event was completed successfully. Communication was critical in ensuring plans were coordinated with members of the MEU still aboard AUSTIN and with other key players in different locations.

The crew continuously worked long hours to support the 24TH MEU Air Combat Element (ACE), which operated the CH-53E Super Stallion, CH-46E Sea Knight, AH-1W Super Cobra, and UH-1N Iroquois (Huey) helicopters. Air Department conducted over 3500 mishap-free aircraft evolutions and transferred 190,000 gallons of JP-5 and 267 gallons of MOGAS to aircraft, boats, and vehicles. Deck department utilized the well deck to deploy and recover landing craft. Several qualified watch teams assisted in the offloading of Marine Troops and Equipment into Kuwait and Iraq in support of Operation IRAQI FREEDOM. Also, Deck Department completed all underway replenishments and precision anchorages safely with no mishaps.

On 1 May, the combat portion of OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM was over, and AUSTIN weighed anchor and set course for home after an extended nine-month deployment. Deck Department was responsible for the safe back-load of troops and equipment used in Iraq, which were transported back to the United States (North Carolina). With the Persian Gulf now behind AUSTIN, the Marines and Sailors of the USS AUSTIN and members of the 24TH MEU sailed into the Red Sea on 7 May. Shortly after, AUSTIN transited the longest canal without locks in the world, the Suez Canal. The Suez Canal is the link between the Mediterranean Sea and the Red Sea with an overall length of 193 KM. On 15 May, 49 AUSTIN Sailors were frocked to First, Second, and Third Class Petty Officers.

On 27 May, Marines from the 24TH MEU arrived back home to Camp Lejuene, North Carolina. Members of the unit began arriving at Onslow Beach in small groups aboard landing craft units. Some arrived at the state port in Moorhead City, where a crowd waved flags and cheered as AUSTIN transited through Beaufort Inlet. On 28 May, family members and friends set sail on the good ship AUSTIN for a Tiger Cruise back to Norfolk, Virginia. On 29 May, AUSTIN arrived in Norfolk to the sounds of cheers and the excitement of family, friends, and loved ones.

On 7 June CDR Michael R. Graham assumed duties as AUSTIN's 29th Commanding Officer. LCDR Christopher Landis arrived in early July to assume the duties as AUSTIN's Executive Officer. On 8 July, AUSTIN set sail for Earle, New Jersey, for an ammunition offload. AUSTIN returned to Norfolk shortly after. On 16 July, AUSTIN got underway for an extended Depot Level Phased Maintenance Availability (DPMA) in Metro Machine Shipyard. On 18 July, AUSTIN "dead-sticked" into Metro's drydock. While in drydock, AUSTIN was raised out of the water and the screws and rudders were removed. AUSTIN underwent extensive repairs to sustain her performance at sea. Repairs ranged from the installation of new radars and refurbishing antennae topside to repairs and preservation below the normal waterline.

Deck Department maintenance included repairs done on both LCPLs, which were taken to Portsmouth and housed in the Boat Shop for the duration of the yard period for refurbishment. During DPMA, Deck Department provided their own personnel to work as boat crew and Deck personnel comprised the paint spray-out team, which sprayed all shipboard berthing spaces. These personnel worked during the evening through the majority of the yard period to accomplish this task. Both the port and starboard anchor and associated chain links (colored shots) were repainted. Deck Department underwent renovation by having the topside decks resurfaced, lagging completed, the well deck repainted, and most of deck planking in the well deck replaced from the stern gate to the false beach. The Boat and Aircraft (B&A) Crane satisfactorily weight tested during DPMA. AUSTIN's hull was hydro-blasted, repainted, and draft marks repainted. The life rafts were sent to Norfolk Naval Shipyard to be refurbished, tested, and re-certified.

Engineering accomplishments included major overhaul to both boilers and to 2B SSTG. Auxiliary equipment was repaired to optimal status and many repairs were made to numerous pumps and valves. Both evaporators were repaired allowing AUSTIN to make water at her maximum capability. Engineering spaces saw the installation of new deck plates, lagging, and piping. Refurbishment of spaces included painting of all spaces and calibration of gages. During DPMA, Air Department revitalized the flight deck and JP-5 systems. Navigation Department had the stern light replaced and all navigational lights certified. A new electronic ship's whistle was also installed.

On 16 September, 6 brand new Chief Petty Officers were welcomed to the CPO mess, which included AUSTIN's first German-national Senior Chief. On 17 September, AUSTIN conducted a dead-stick move from Metro Machine to Norfolk Naval Shipyard (NNSY), where AUSTIN was to be berthed during Hurricane Isabel. At the time, AUSTIN did not have the capability to get underway on own ship's power because the ship did not have the resources available due to maintenance of the boilers, screws, and so forth. The line handling crews worked with no electrical power to the capstans and utilized sheer manpower to both take in lines at Metro and to moor the ship safely and securely at NNSY. On 19 September, Hurricane Isabel passed through the Hampton Roads area causing a great deal of damage - AUSTIN escaped unmarked and returned to Metro Machine on 22 September.

One week later on 26 September, the crew enjoyed the festivities of a Hawaiian Luau - themed command picnic that included a whole roasted pig. Over \$15,000 in prizes were awarded to the crew and family and the crew enjoyed challenges like the CPO/Officer softball game and a host of fun activities. From 25-26 November, AUSTIN went through an engineering inspection called a Light-off Assessment (LOA). LOA was "Engineering" intensive. LOA consisted mainly of three areas: fire fighting, engineering programs, and material checks. At the end of LOA, AUSTIN was certified to light off the engineering plant to get underway. On 27 November (Thanksgiving Day), AUSTIN gave thanks for a successful LOA while dining on a well-prepared Thanksgiving meal. From 1-5 December, AUSTIN conducted an intensive anti-terrorism/force protection (AT/FP) exercise. The ship successfully repelled small boat attacks and attempted boardings by unknown suspects. AUSTIN was now ready for the second phase of AT/FP.

On 5 December, AUSTIN participated in the annual Safety Stand Down. On 12 December, AUSTIN Sailors celebrated the holiday season by hosting an MWR sponsored ship's party at the Marriot Waterside Hotel located in downtown Norfolk, Virginia. The Command gave away \$20,000 in door prizes and gifts. On 18 December, AUSTIN got underway from Metro Machine Shipyard on her own power and sailed to conduct engineering drills and other sea trials for the first time in five months. AUSTIN's aviation facility was certified for flight operations and the first helicopter (UH-3H) touched down two hours later certifying the aviation proficiency of Air Department. The ship completed training and returned to port Norfolk, Virginia on 19 December for a much deserved holiday period. The end of 2003 had all AUSTIN Sailors home for the holidays.