

Rec'd 7/1/91

SHIP'S MISSION

United States Ship COMSTOCK (LSD 45) is the fifth ship of the WHIDBEY ISLAND (LSD 41) class, and the third ship of the class to serve in the Pacific Fleet.

COMSTOCK'S mission is to transport United States Marines with their combat equipment to designated areas around the world, and then to launch and support assault landing craft and helicopters during amphibious operations against hostile shores. COMSTOCK can carry four of the new Landing Craft Air Cushion (LCAC). The LCAC is an assault hovercraft with the ability to exceed 40 knots while carrying a 60 ton payload. Using this new craft, COMSTOCK forces will be able to carry out an amphibious assault against a significantly wider range of beaches.

COMSTOCK accomplishes her mission through the use of a well deck which is flooded to embark and launch assault craft. After leaving the ship, the assault craft are directed towards the shore by the ship's Combat Information Center.

To provide continuing support to the assault force, COMSTOCK is equipped with the Navy's latest advanced technology including updated communication and combat systems, 20-ton and 60-ton cranes, expanded repair facilities, two helicopter landing areas, complete medical and dental facilities and an automated computer based supply system.

IMMEDIATE SENIOR IN COMMAND

Commander, Amphibious Group THREE

Commander, Amphibious Squadron SEVEN

Commanding Officer, USS COMSTOCK (LSD 45)

(R. H. Howe, CDR, USN/1110)

CHRONOLOGY

12 Jan 90

- Avondale hull number 50C3-250-2350 accepted into naval service as COMSTOCK (LSD 45).

01 Feb 90

- COMSTOCK moved from Avondale Algiers ship yard to River Walk downtown, New Orleans, Louisiana for commissioning.

03 Feb 90

- At 1104 COMSTOCK commissioned into naval service. Attendees of note:

- GEN A. M. Gray, Jr 23rd Commandant of the U. S. MARINE CORPS
- REP Lindy Boggs Congresswoman from Louisiana
- MRS A. M. Gray Ship's sponsor
- VADM P. M. Hekman COMNAVSEASYSKOM
- VADM R. U. Kihune COMNAVSURFPAC
- RADM R. A. K. Taylor Deputy Assistant CNO Surface Warfare
- RADM J. J. Sweeney Retired
- RADM E. R. Baker COMPHIBGRU THREE
- MAJ GEN J. Pearson Commanding General 4th Marine Air Wing
- CAPT J. C. Donahue COMSUPSHIPS New Orleans LA.
- CDR L. J. Mahoney Chief Staff Officer, COMPHIBRON SEVEN
- CDR R. H. Howe Commanding Officer, USS COMSTOCK LSD 45
- LCDR J. K. Maloney Executive Officer, USS COMSTOCK LSD 45

05 Feb 90

- Underway from River Walk, downtown New Orleans to Algiers ship yard.

14-16 Mar 90

- Successfully completed Propulsion Examining Board PAC FLT light off examination (LOE).

29 Mar 90

- Underway from Algiers shipyard enroute Panama City, FL.

30 Mar 90

- Arrived Panama City, Florida. Embarked three Landing Craft Air Cushion (LCAC) for delivery to Assault Craft Unit 5, Camp Pendleton, CA. Departed Panama City, FL. enroute Cristobal, Panama.

05 Apr 90

- Arrived Cristobal, Panama. Commenced Panama Canal transit.

06 Apr 90

- Moored Rodman, Panama to offload cargo. Underway, continued transit enroute Camp Pendleton, CA.

10 Apr 90

- Arrived in Acapulco, Mexico to conduct medevac of Petty Officer First Class Kenneth Nightpipe (possible heart attack). Departed Acapulco, upon completion of medevac. Continued transit.

16 Apr 90

- Arrived off the coast of Camp Pendleton, CA. Launched the three LCAC'S (LC-16, LC-17, LC-24) for delivery to Assault Craft Unit 5. RADM S. J. Clarey, COMPHIBGRU THREE arrived onboard to inspect the new craft.

17 Apr 90

- VADM R U Kihune, COMNAVSURFPAC arrives onboard COMSTOCK to welcome maiden sea and anchor detail to San Diego harbor. COMSTOCK arrives at her homeport, 32nd Street Naval Station San Diego, California.

07-11 May 90

- Underway for Independent Southern California Operational Area (SOCAL OPAREA). Conducted local operations and engineering drills.

14-16 May 90

- Completed Mobile Training Team (MTT) inspection phase one.

04 Jun 90

- Underway for Independent OPS SOCAL OPAREA.

07-15 Jun 90

- Underway for Combat Systems Surface Qualification Test.

18-19 Jun 90

- Completed Aviation assist visit.

26-29 Jun 90

- Underway Independent SOCAL OPAREA.

02-03 Jul 90

- Completed Fleet Training Group training readiness evaluations.

05 Jul 90

- Completed Aviation readiness evaluation.

16 Jul 90

- Sea Cadets visit for shipboard orientation.

19-20 Jul 90

- Completed wet well operations in SOCAL OPAREA. Embarked 120 Midshipmen for shipboard orientation.

24-27 Jul 90

- Completed Mobile Training Team (MTT) phase three.

07-08 Aug 90

- Completed Propulsion Examining Board Pacific FLT Operational Propulsion Plant Examination (OPPE).

14-17 Aug 90

- Completed Board of Inspection and Survey (INSURV) final contract trials.

18-24 Aug 90

- Embarked COMPHIBRON ONE.

27 Aug-13 Sep 90

- Detached COMPHIBRON ONE
- Completed SHAKEDOWN training, SOCAL OPAREA.

14 Sep 90

- Completed Dependents cruise, SOCAL OPAREA.

15 Sep-12 Nov 90

- Completed Planned Maintenance Availability in Southwest Marine Shipyard, San Diego, CA.

24 Nov-25 Nov 90

- Transited from San Diego CA to San Francisco CA for a training assist visit and public relations visit to Virginia City, NV.

30 Nov-02 Dec 90

- Transit from San Francisco, CA. to SOCAL OPAREA.

03 Dec-11 Dec 90

- Participated in Amphibious Refresher Training in SOCAL OPAREA.

Narrative

COMSTOCK was transferred to downtown New Orleans on 01 Feb 1990. On 03 Feb 1990 COMSTOCK was commissioned and the long wait for acceptance as a United States Ship was complete. After the ceremony, the ship was opened for general visiting over the weekend; estimated attendance was approximately 6,000 people. Additionally, a Navy Ecumenical Service was given pierside by CDR Benny J. Hornsby which was also open to the public.

Our return from downtown New Orleans back to Algiers landing was extremely gratifying. Now the long haul was over and business at hand could be pursued. Operating as an entity of the U. S. Navy had finally come and our first test was LOE. On the first try we needed more work in Damage Control, but we quickly recovered and passed on our second attempt.

Upon the successful completion of LOE we prepared for our transit to San Diego. First we loaded lifts of opportunity for delivery to Rodman Panama. Next we completed our first Sea and Anchor detail under ships power down the Mississippi River. Lastly we made preparations to load three LCACS at Panama City, FL., and off load at Camp Pendleton, CA.

COMSTOCK arrived in Panama City as scheduled. Inclimate weather precluded recovering the LCAC while moored as planned. As a result all three LCAC were recovered underway

Upon recovery of the LCAC, COMSTOCK Commenced her transit via the Panama Canal to Camp Pendleton, CA.

As we neared the Panama Canal, the excitement of seeing this magnificent feat of human endeavor was evident throughout the crew. During the transit the ship's public affairs officer gave several briefings on the area so that the crew could have some historical background. The transit was long and the crew was tired, but it was conducted safely.

We conducted a brief stop to offload cargo and passengers in Rodman, Panama. Upon completion of the off load COMSTOCK was underway for San Diego, California.

As we headed north, our training schedule was arduous. Captain Howe insisted in getting us battle ready, " We must train like we fight" is his motto, and assuredly, we did so until we got it right.

Unfortunately one of our crewmembers, First Class Petty Officer [REDACTED], required medevac to Acapulco, Mexico, due to heart trouble. He was escorted by our Dental Officer, LCDR [REDACTED]. Eventually Petty Officer [REDACTED] recovered from this incident and returned to the ship in San Diego, CA.

The closer we got to Camp Pendleton, the more anxious the crew became to completing the LCAC delivery and arrival at their future homeport. We off loaded the LCACS and headed on to San Diego harbor. The weather was unusual for this happy occasion. It rained and the seas were rough, but it didn't matter, we were almost home.

Admiral Kihune arrived onboard COMSTOCK just off San Diego harbor and welcomed COMSTOCK home.

COMSTOCK was scheduled for an ambitious post-commissioning period with MTT, TRE, CSSQT, OPPE, INSURV, Final Contract Trials, and Shakedown looming before us. To say the least, we had our work cut out for us, but the crew pulled together as a team and successfully passed one inspection after another. After Shakedown COMSTOCK was scheduled for a Planned Maintenance Availability to complete warranty/guarantee work by South West Marine.

Our deployment schedule at this point was ostensibly obscure because of the recent Desert Shield Operation. Several possible scenarios existed for the largest amphibious ARG since WWII and COMSTOCK was included at first, however our COMPHIBGRU THREE did not want all of his LSD 41 class ships deployed at the same time and COMSTOCK was backed out.

After PMA we headed for San Francisco, CA. We were scheduled for several more inspections and training opportunities mainly, PTRI, training port visit in San Francisco and AMPHIBREFTRA. PTRI was tough but Deck excelled. And for the San Francisco port visit, many of the crew were able to attend firefighting school in addition to visiting our sponsors for commissioning, in Virginia City, NV. We just simply overwhelmed the AMPHIBREFTRA inspectors with our TEAMWORK, DRIVE, AND COURAGE. COMSTOCK had a very busy productive and rewarding year.