



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY

USS GUNSTON HALL (LSD 44)
FPO AE 09573-1732

Rec'd 3/14/01
W/O dist
5750
Ser ADM/ 027
19 Feb 01

From: Commanding Officer, USS GUNSTON HALL (LSD 44)
To: Director of Naval History (OP-09BH)
Subj: **2000 COMMAND HISTORY FOR USS GUNSTON HALL (LSD 44)**
Ref: (a) OPNAVINST 5750.12F
Encl: (1) List Of Abbreviations
(2) Command Composition And Organization
(3) Chronology For 2000
(4) Narrative
(5) Welcome Aboard Pamphlet

1. In accordance with reference (a), enclosures (1) through (5) are submitted.


M. E. DONAHUE

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(1) LISTS OF ABBREVIATIONS

AAV	- Amphibious Assault Vehicle
CASREP	- Casualty Report
CONREP	- Connected Replenishment
DPMA	- Docking Phased Maintenance Availability
JTFEX	- Joint Task Force Exercise
LCAC	- Landing Craft, Air Cushion
MEUEX	- Marine Expeditionary Unit Exercise
Medevac	- Medical Evacuation of Personnel
UNREP	- Underway Replenishment
VERTREP	- Vertical Replenishment
PACFIRE	- Pre Action Check Fire
FAMFIRE	- Familiarization Fire
CHT	- Collection Holding and Transfer
ITT	- Integrated Training Team
LOA	- Light Off Assessment
BPA	- Basic Phase Assessment
CART	- Command Assessment Of Readiness And Training

COMMAND COMPOSITION AND ORGANIZATION

1. USS GUNSTON HALL (LSD 44) is the fourth ship of the Whidbey Island class Landing Ship Dock Amphibious ships. The ship's mission is to provide functional support in three areas: amphibious warfare, mobility, and command and control. This mission is accomplished through the transportation of elements of a landing force, landing craft, and support equipment to an amphibious objective area and to launch preloaded assault craft in support of an amphibious assault operation.

2. USS GUNSTON HALL is permanently assigned to Commander, Amphibious Group TWO. The ship's type commander is Commander, Naval Surface Force Atlantic Fleet.

3. The ship experienced a change of command this year.

The former commanding officer, Commander Grace Mehl received a Bachelor of Science degree in Biology from the State University of New York and was commissioned in 1981 through Officer Candidate School.

The new commanding officer, Commander Mark E. Donahue, was born in [REDACTED] and raised in [REDACTED].

4. USS GUNSTON HALL (LSD 44) is homeported at Naval Amphibious Base, Little Creek, Norfolk, Virginia. UIC is 21422. Mailing address is FPO AE 09573-1732.

CHRONOLOGY FOR 2000

1. JANUARY - At the start of the year, USS GUNSTON HALL was moored inport at Little Creek, VA, in a holiday standdown period. The engineers performed tests of both port and starboard shaft on the 5th, and ran various ship's engineering components for testing on the 13th. On the 14th, the ship conducted a fast cruise in preparation for steaming into a Docking Phased Maintenance Availability at NORSHIPCO, Norfolk, VA on the 15th. At NORSHIPCO Pier 3, the ship began an extended maintenance period, remaining pierside the rest of the month.

2. FEBRUARY - The ship continued its maintenance overhaul at NORSHIPCO. Ship's watch sections started auxiliary watch section drills on the 8th, in order to prepare for main space light off. On the 11th, a piping rupture caused flooding in 2-49-2-L, but the rupture was isolated and repaired. On the 19th, a hydrogen sulfide leak was reported on board in #2 Injection Room, and a medical casualty was called away. One crewman was evacuated by ambulance to Portsmouth Naval Hospital. On the 29th, the ship suffered from a loss of firemain. NORSHIPCO placed the ship on emergency firemain until the ship's firemain system was restored. GUNSTON HALL continued its yard period into the next month.

3. MARCH - The ship stationed sea and anchor detail on the 3rd in order to move to the Titan Drydock at NORSHIPCO. An LP air rupture occurred in compartment 2-39-1-Q on the 6th, but was quickly repaired. The repair failed on the 14th, and ship's engineers inspected and repaired the fitting. On the 24th, the ship ran an administrative GQ for training. The ship was still in drydock at the end of March having the hull painted and screws polished.

4. APRIL - On the 2nd, the ship had flooding in #1 AMR during the evening. Duty section repair and cleanup continued into the morning of the 3rd. The ship left the drydock on the 13th, mooring back at pier 3 in NORSHIPCO. Rear Admiral Sutton visited the ship on the 20th. One crewman was evacuated from the ship by ambulance on the 21st, taken to Portsmouth Naval Hospital for an injury. Another medical emergency occurred on the 24th when a shipyard worker fell down the ladderway of #1 Machinery Room. Norfolk Medical Emergency Team arrived to evacuate the worker.

5. MAY - The month started with a commissioning ceremony for one of the ship's crew on the morning of the 1st. On the 6th, a crewman received an electric shock while working on a fuse panel in the engine rooms, and was evacuated to Portsmouth Naval Hospital. During a drill on the evening of the 8th, another crewman fell down a ladderway, straining his back and neck. The crewmember was craned off to an ambulance on the pier and evaluated by the hospital, and returned for work that evening. On the 16th, the ship completed Light Off Assessment. On the 17th, the ship fast cruised with a practice sea and anchor for the next day's underway, as well as testing all main engines throughout the day. On the 18th, the ship got underway for the Virginia Capes operating area to conduct sea trials and testing. The ship returned to port on the 19th, mooring at its homeport of Little Creek Amphibious Base. A severe weather message was received from COMPHIBGRU TWO on the 27th, and a tornado watch was in effect throughout the night. The ship ended the month with a fuel and lube oil onload on the 31st.

6. JUNE - The ship stayed pierside through the beginning of the month. On the 6th, the ship ran a GQ drill as practice for the upcoming Initial Assessment. On the 7th, the ship left the pier for Boston, MA, and the ship's participation in the Bunker Hill Parade. On route, the ship conducted ITT drill sets. The ship pulled into Boston harbor on the 9th, mooring at Charlestown Naval Yard, pier 4. The ship left Boston on the 12th, and continued drills in support of ITT on the return to home port. The ship set the anchor detail on the 14th, anchoring out at Lynnhaven Anchorage that night. The ship completed Well Deck Certification, Phase 1. The next morning, the ship returned to Pier 17 South, Little Creek. On the evening of the 21st, an improper valve line-up in the engine rooms caused a discharge of oily waste in the harbor. Ship's waste control teams placed booms in the water, with assistance from Little Creek PWC Environmental Control. The ship remained pierside at Little Creek for the rest of the month.

7. JULY - The ship set sea and anchor on the 5th for underway for Savannah, GA. On the 6th, the ship conducted testing of the countermeasure washdown system. On the 7th, the ship pulled into Savannah. Early on the morning of the 8th, an oily waste spill occurred in Savannah Harbor. The ship's clean-up team reported approximately 10 gallons of fuel spilled. The ship got underway on the 10th, in support of Marine amphibious training. The ship performed flight operations for training on the 10th, including night

vision landing operations. On the 12th, the ship conducted LCAC operations with the Marines, and then sailed for homeport. After setting sea and anchor, the ship made contact with the sailing vessel Trinca, which had lost its way and had no charts. A boat party was sent over with charts and directions for the sailboat to make Norfolk harbor. GUNSTON HALL then returned to the Quay Wall at Little Creek to perform ammunition onload. On the 17th, a crewman was evacuated with a mild injury. On the morning of the 18th, an oil spill was reported during pumping, and the ship's clean-up team and Little Creek PWC responded. Investigation revealed the oil to be a light sheen, and no further clean up was required. The ship completed CART II. The ship went underway on the 24th, shifting from the eastern quay wall to the western quay wall ammo pier. On the 31st, the new commanding officer checked aboard in preparation for the upcoming turnover.

8. AUGUST - USS GUNSTON HALL got underway on the 2nd for New York City and its change of command ceremony, bringing along an LCAC. That afternoon, one of the crewmembers was medevaced by helicopter to Portsmouth Naval Hospital for attempted suicide. On the 3rd, the ship pulled into port at Staten Island. On the 4th, Commander Mark E. Donahue properly relieved Commander Grace Mehl as commanding officer of GUNSTON HALL during a ceremony on the flight deck at Sullivan's Pier, pier. The crew enjoyed liberty in New York City until the 7th, when the ship departed for Little Creek. On the morning of the 8th, the ship conducted an LCAC offload and small arms training prior to pulling into port at Little Creek. The ship remained in port until the 17th, when it departed for the Virginia Capes operating area and the final portions of its Basic Phase testing. GUNSTON HALL conducted flight operations that afternoon and evening. A general quarters drill was conducted until the afternoon of the 18th, when the ship returned to Little Creek. On the 21st, the ship went underway to Lynnhaven Anchorage. On the morning of the 22nd, the ship conducted boat operations with an LCAC, and then weighed anchor and went out for flight operations, including hook and ladder exercises with special warfare teams. Flight operations continued throughout the 24th, when a crewmember fell overboard and was recovered after 11 minutes by the ship's boat. The crewman was immediately medevaced to shore. The ship returned to port on the 25th. On the 26th, an early morning CHT spill occurred in two spaces, and was cleaned up by the ship's crew. GUNSTON HALL went underway on the 28th for underway replenishment training in Onslow Bay, NC. These operations continued until the 31st, when the ship was forced to conduct an emergency breakaway following an error by the helmsman.

9. SEPTEMBER - GUNSTON HALL returned from Onslow Bay, NC, on the 1st, mooring at Little Creek. The ship suffered a pierside loss of shore power on the 3rd. On the 7th, the Defense Advisory Committee On Women In The Service visited GUNSTON HALL. COMPHIBGRU TWO came aboard on the 14th. The ship went underway on the 18th, conducting drills in the Virginia Capes operating area. GUNSTON HALL performed live fire exercises on the 19th and 20th. On the evening of the 20th, the ship went to flight quarters for training. On the 21st, the ship conducted well deck operations with LCACs GUNSTON HALL returned to Lynnhaven Anchorage to offload LCACs, and then pulled into port at Little Creek. The ship remained in port for the rest of the month.

10. OCTOBER - GUNSTON HALL was in port at Little Creek on the 1st, making preparations for underway the next day. The ship departed for Onslow Bay, NC, on the 2nd, conducting LCAC operations and night vision helicopter operations. The ship conducted an amphibious landing operation on Onslow Bay beachhead on the 4th and 5th. On the 6th, the ship returned to Little Creek, VA. The ship set Threatcon ALPHA on the 12th, in response to the bombing of USS COLE in Yemen. On the 17th, the ship went underway for Onslow Bay, NC, loading LCACs and steaming south to conduct operations with the 1st Royal Canadian Regiment. The ship conducted landing operations from the 20th to the 25th. GUNSTON HALL performed a precision anchorage on the 26th, and then pulled into homeport in Little Creek. On the 30th, the ship departed for Mayport, FL.

11. NOVEMBER - The ship conducted LCAC operations on the 1st, offloading an LCAC for display in Mayport, and then anchored out at St. John's River anchorage for a Steel Beach picnic and swim call. The next morning, the ship pulled into Mayport, FL, for a liberty port visit. The ship pulled out on the 6th, headed for Little Creek, conducted Basic Phase Assessment and pulled in on the 8th. GUNSTON HALL departed for operations and training in the Virginia Capes on the 14th. The ship conducted the Underway Demonstration and training helicopter landings and night vision exercises for the next two days returning to port on the 16th. The ship remained in port for a maintenance availability throughout the rest of the month.

12. DECEMBER - Supply department conducted the Supply Management Inspection December 4-8. The crew commenced a holiday standdown on the 15th following a Medical Health Fair and Safety Standdown. The ship ended the year in Little Creek.

NARRATIVE

FIRST QUARTER

The first quarter of 2000 was spent in DPMA. A large turnover of crewmembers continued following Mediterranean Deployment 99-2. Many of the ship's systems were upgraded, and overall maintenance and readiness was evaluated. The DPMA focused on Propulsion system upgrades and overhaul, tank preservation, well-deck over head preservation, complete hull painting and docked inspection of the hull. While the NORSHIPCO yard worked on preparing the ship, the crew worked at preparing themselves for the upcoming light off of the engine rooms. The entire crew divided into three auxiliary steaming watch teams, and commenced early morning fire drills to ensure they would be able to pass the Light-Off Assessment.

SECOND QUARTER

GUNSTON HALL remained at NORSHIPCO for much of this quarter. The crew moved back onboard from the BEQ at NNSY. DPMA was completed and the LOA successfully conducted. The ship left the yard, conducted sea trials and commenced the CO's Underway Training Time.

THIRD QUARTER

The ship began amphibious operations during this quarter, conducting maneuvers off the coast of North Carolina with both American Marines and the 1st Royal Canadian Regiment. The ship also continued certification and readiness training, participating in MEUEX and CART phase training.

FOURTH QUARTER

The ship returned home to Little Creek, Virginia, on 8 December, and commenced a well-deserved stand down after nine months of training and overhauls. The crew was able to celebrate the holidays with their families, while readying for a UNITAS deployment in the coming year.