

USS HIGGINS (DDG 76)  
Command History

Revs 3/6/10  
w/o disk

**Command Composition and Organization**

CO: Commander James L. T. "Red" Smith, USN  
XO: Commander Francis X. Martin, USN  
CMC: EMCM(SW) Douglas W. Healey  
Total Officers Onboard as of 31 December 1999: 27  
Total Chief Petty Officers Onboard as of 31 December 1999: 30  
Total E-1 through E-6 Onboard as of 31 December 1999: 286  
Total Crew Onboard as of 31 December 1999: 343  
ISIC: Commander Destroyer Squadron 21 (Captain Michael Lefever, USN)  
Mission: Precommissioning, Commissioning, homeport shift and shakedown of USS HIGGINS (DDG 76)  
Homeport: San Diego, California

**Chronology**  
**Important Shipboard Events in 1999**

January

1-3: Phase 4 Arrival in Bath  
4: Start of Shipboard Routine (Duty Section 1)  
Begin Ship Loadout  
14: Ship Custody Transfer  
15: Colonel Higgins' Birthday  
19-21: BEQ/Atrium Packout  
22: Crew Move Aboard – Surf and Turf Lunch

February

1-5: Light Off Assessment Training (ATRCD Philadelphia)  
1-12: Final VLS Certification  
8-12: NSFS Trainer  
Pre-Light Off Training (PLOT II)  
12: MSI/ARPA Training (Newport, RI)  
16-19: Aviation Assist (RSO)  
Harpoon Material Inspection  
Crew Cert Phase I  
16-26: Tomahawk Material Inspection  
Radioman/Electronic Technician Team Training  
24: Commissioning Trip – Cincinnati (Commanding Officer, Command Master Chief, Damage Control Assistant, Fire Control Officer, First Lieutenant)

March

1-5: Pre-Light Off Training (Plot III)  
6: First Ship Tours to Public  
7-9: Commissioning Trip – Ft. Lauderdale (Commanding Officer, Executive Officer, Operations Officer, Fire Control Officer)  
8-10: Microminiature Repair Certification  
8-12: Field Calibration Activity Certification  
11: Aviation Assist Visit – Upgrade to Aviation Readiness Evaluation  
18-19: Crew Cert Phase II  
21-23: Light Off Assessment  
25: In Commission without Ceremony  
26: Sailaway and Family Cruise (arrive Portland, Maine)

- 29: Awarded Coast Guard Meritorious Unit Commendation  
Underway Portland local area
- 30: Underway Portland local area
- 31: Underway (transit to Earle, NJ)

#### April

- 1: Arrive Weapon Station Earle
- 1-2: Combat System Ship Qualification Trial (CSSQT) Onload
- 2: Underway (transit to Norfolk)  
Harbor Transit – New York City
- 5: Arrive Norfolk
- 5-9: Inport CSSQT Equipment Groom  
Underway Replenishment Training
- 7-8: PRT
- 12: Underway (transit to Ft. Lauderdale, FL)  
First DLQs  
First VERTREP
- 14: First Underway Replenishment (USNS PATUXENT)  
Actual Emergency Breakaway
- 17: Inport Mayport, Florida, to unwrap spanwire from port shaft
- 19: Arrive Port Everglades, FL
- 19-23: Commissioning Preparations/Festivities
- 19-26: CSSQT Inport Phase I – Hull, Mechanical and Electrical (HM&E)
- 23: Commanding Officer Reception  
Former President George Bush Tour of Ship/Reenlistment
- 24: Commissioning – Principal Speaker: General Charles Wilhelm, Commander in Chief U.S.  
Southern Command
- 27: Underway (transit to Roosevelt Roads, Puerto Rico)
- 27-30: CSSQT HM&E
- 29: HIGGINS' First Swim Call
- 30: Arrive Roosevelt Roads

#### May

- 3: Underway (Puerto Rico OPAREA)
- 3-6: CSSQT Gunnery Events
- 6: Brief Stop for Fuel (BSF) – Roosevelt Roads
- 7: Underway (transit to Cartagena, Colombia)
- 10: Arrive Cartagena
- 14: Underway (transit to Panama Canal)
- 15: Panama Canal Transit (commences 1800)
- 16: BSF – Rodman, Panama
- 17: Underway (transit to Equator)
- 17-26: CSOSS Stage II – ATRCD San Diego  
Engineering Limited Team Trainer (LTT) – ATGPAC
- 19: Cross Equator – 183 Pollywogs Turn Shellback
- 20: SLAMEX 30-99 (HIGGINS First SLAMEX)
- 26: Arrive Mazatlan, Mexico
- 29: Underway (transit to San Diego)

#### June

- 1: Arrive San Diego
- 1-19: Warranty Repairs
- 21: Start 9-section Duty
- 26-27: Visit Ship – First Community Tours in San Diego
- 28: Start CSSQT Phase II HM&E

## July

- 8: Ammo Onload – NAS North Island
- 12: Underway (transit to Pearl Harbor, HI)
- 19: Arrive Pearl Harbor  
Finish CSSQT Phase II HM&E
- 20: Underway (transit to Barking Sands OPAREA)
- 21-23: Manned Raids  
Surface/Strike Trials
- 23: MULTEX – ATRCD
- 25: Pre-Missile Readiness Review Meeting – Kauai
- 26-27: MISSILEX (8 SM-2s fired)
- 28-30: TORPEX
- 30: Vertical Launched ASROC Firing
- 31: FORACS Range

## August

- 2: Arrive Pearl Harbor
- 3-5: Supply Management Assessment
- 6: Underway (transit to Lahaina, Maui)  
Family Cruise  
Inport Lahaina
- 9: Underway (transit to Pearl Harbor)  
Arrive Pearl Harbor
- 10: Underway (transit to San Diego)
- 11-24: Engineering and Damage Control LTT – ATG MIDPAC
- 16: Spotter Services – San Clemente
- 17: FIREX I – San Clemente (earned record score)
- 21-23: Leaders to Sea
- 24: Arrive San Diego (Broadway Pier)  
Kenny Loggins Concert
- 30: Start INSURV

## September

- 1: Complete Final Contract Trials
- 2: Underway (transit to Deperming Pier)
- 3: Wrap Deperming Cables
- 4-12: Deperm
- 13: Unwrap Cables
- 15: Underway (SOCAL OPAREA)  
Family Cruise
- 17: CPO Pinning (6 new CPOs)
- 17-19: Defuel
- 20: Deadstick transit to Southwest Marine  
Begin Post Shakedown Availability

## October

- 4: VADM Moore presents Chezek Award, Gold/Silver Warrior Spirit Pennants
- 5-20: Drydock
- 25-28: PRT

## November

- 15: AEGIS Light Off
- 15-24: SISCAL
- 22: Mainspace Turnover
- 22-24: Move to Ship
- 29: Regional Support Organization (RSO) observed hot and cold checks

- ASIR  
Begin EOSS Validation  
30: Main Engine Light Off

December

- 1: Dock Trials  
3: Main Space Fire Demo for RSO  
Finished EOSS Validation  
5: Christmas Party – Island Club (NAS North Island)  
7: Underway (Sea Trials)  
8: First post-PSA underway replenishment  
13: Underway (transit to Seal Beach)  
13-16: Collective Protection System Groom  
15: Arrive Seal Beach  
15-16: Ammunition Onload  
16: Underway (transit to San Diego)  
17: Arrive San Diego  
Petty Officer Frocking  
Captain authorizes Sea Service Ribbon for crewmembers who have been onboard 1 year

## Narration

Nineteen Hundred and Ninety Nine was the first year in the life of USS HIGGINS (DDG 76). Although many crewmembers reported to the Precommissioning Unit (PCU) - Bath, Maine, and Precommissioning Detachment (PCD) - San Diego, California, prior to 1999, HIGGINS was not formally established as a naval warship until ownership was transferred from Bath Iron Works to the Navy on January 14, 1999.

The majority of the crew arrived in Bath, Maine, at the beginning of January. Major snowstorms throughout the country delayed HIGGINS sailors transferring from San Diego to Bath, at airports in Pittsburgh, Cleveland, Chicago and Boston. Despite delays in personnel reporting to PCU HIGGINS, the shipboard daily routine began on 4 January. HIGGINS sailors were initially divided into three duty sections for training.

On January 14 in a ceremony in HIGGINS' pilothouse, Captain Hepburn, Supervisor of Shipbuilding – Bath, Maine, and HIGGINS Commanding Officer James L. T. "Red" Smith took custody of Naval Warship 76 from Bath Iron Works.

Due to limited quarters in the Bath/Brunswick area, many TAD crewmembers were housed at The Atrium hotel in Brunswick. From 19-21 January, a massive pack-out organized by STGCS(SW) ██████████ took place. Piling their seabags onto a stake truck, HIGGINS crewmembers bid farewell to barracks and the hotel, and moved onboard the ship. They were greeted with navy blue comforters and mints on their pillows. At the same time, offices were being transferred from the Precommissioning Unit building at 590 Washington Street down the icy paths to the HIGGINS. Previously, the ship was loaded out with equipment, supplies, spare parts and consumables, under the cognizance of SKCS(SW/AW) ██████████. The loadout was done in record time, earning HIGGINS an AEGIS Excellence Award.

January 22 was "Move Aboard Day." The crew marched from the PCU to the ship in a double column and the Captain was rung aboard for the first time. Section One had duty, standing a 24-hour duty day for the first time. LCDR ██████████ was the first Command Duty Officer. GM1(SW) ██████████ was the first Officer of the Deck. The crew enjoyed a feast of lobster and steak for the first meal onboard.

Until Sailaway on March 26, the crew performed a number of inspections and certifications to ensure they could conduct proper at-sea operations. HIGGINS successfully completed certifications on the Vertical Launch System, Harpoon Weapon System, Tomahawk Weapon System and Aviation facilities. HIGGINS passed Crew Certification Phase I with flying colors, proving her sailors were completing necessary qualifications and training. In March, HIGGINS completed Light Off Assessment (LOA), proving her ability to operate the engineering plant safely and effectively. She was commissioned without ceremony on 25 March, allowing her to transit to her Commissioning port under Commander Smith's command. HIGGINS sailed down the Kennebec River on 26 March with many families and friends aboard, never to return to the place where she was built. The first Officer of the Deck Underway was LCDR ██████████ ENS ██████████ ██████████ was the first Conning Officer, driving under the watchful eye of Captain Walker, who had piloted every Bath-built DDG down the Kennebec.

That afternoon the ship moored in Portland, Maine, where she spent the weekend. On Monday and Tuesday she went out for day trips of self-training in the Gulf of Maine. Also on Monday, Rear Admiral R.M. Larrabee, Commander of the First Coast Guard District, paid the ship a visit to award HIGGINS the Coast Guard Meritorious Unit Commendation with Operational Distinguishing Device pennant for assistance provided to the Coast Guard throughout the precom phase. HIGGINS was the first Navy ship to earn a MUC prior to Commissioning. On Wednesday, 31 March, she transited to Earle, New Jersey for a weapons onload, and arrived there 1 April. The ship took on near-capacity loads of chaff, 20mm Phalanx and 5-inch ammunition, as well as

standard missiles, in preparation for Combat Systems Ship Qualification Trial (CSSQT) events. The majority of the crew was able to enjoy an evening of liberty in either New York City or Atlantic City.

On 2 April, the ship got underway again, bound for Norfolk, Virginia. First stop was New York Harbor, where HIGGINS sailed past the Statue of Liberty and Manhattan. Spending Easter at sea, HIGGINS moored in Norfolk on 5 April, and spent the week doing several training events, including underway replenishment, aviation training, and combat systems equipment grooms in preparation for upcoming CSSQT gunnery events. Crewmembers also took the Command Physical Readiness Test (PRT) and prepped the ship for the Commissioning ceremony. It was the ship's first experience in a real Navy port, and vans to the Navy Exchange were never empty.

The ship got underway again on April 12 to conduct training in the Virginia Capes OPAREA (VACAPES). The ship landed its first helicopters, and also conducted its first Underway Replenishment (UNREP) with the USNS PATUXENT. Toward the end of the UNREP, loss of steering indications were received by the Pilothouse and HIGGINS conducted an actual emergency breakaway. Equipment "failed safe" the way it was designed, and no one was injured. Soon after the breakaway a noise was heard in Shaft Alley. Assuming that either the port shaft was damaged, or something was wrapped around it, the Captain ordered Engineering Department to lock the shaft. HIGGINS drove to Mayport, Florida, at a maximum speed of 13 knots and there divers determined that a 400-foot section of spanwire had wrapped itself around the port shaft but had not caused any damage. It was removed, and HIGGINS proceeded to Fort Lauderdale, Florida, arriving there April 19.

As the ship approached Port Everglades, a flotilla of boats surrounded the ship and a plane flew overhead with a banner streamed behind, welcoming HIGGINS to South Florida. Robin Higgins, ship sponsor and widow of its namesake, was on the pier to welcome the ship into its Commissioning port. A large group of family members and JROTC cadets also met the ship. Throughout the week, HIGGINS sailors were wined and dined in the Fort Lauderdale area, courtesy of the Commissioning Committee headed by Mrs. Fran Shaw. The following festivities took place during the week: Monday, 19 April – All Hands Party at Iguana Cantina; Tuesday, 20 April – Adopt-a-Sailor dinners and a Wardroom Beach Cookout; Wednesday, 21 April – Ladies Luncheon hosted by Tracy and Ted Conrad, Golf Tournament at Inverrary Country Club, Chief Petty Officer Association Reception; Thursday, 22 April – Fishing Tournament, Intracoastal Waterway Cruise, Commissioning Committee Reception on HIGGINS; Friday, 23 April – Commanding Officer's Reception at Broward County Convention Center and Crew Party at the Parrot Lounge. On Friday night, former President George Bush, who had close ties to Col. Rich Higgins, visited the ship and reenlisted Fire Controlman Second Class (Surface Warfare) Eric Vance. He received a tour of the ship and then was the honorary speaker at the CO's Reception that evening, where the U.S. Marine Corps Silent Drill Team also performed.

Commissioning Day, 24 April, began with a VIP Breakfast at Lauderdale Yacht Club. From there, guests were driven to the pier to participate in the Commissioning. At 1000, the Commissioning Ceremony began. Guests of Honor included Florida Governor Jeb Bush; Commander in Chief of U.S. Southern Command, General Charles Wilhelm; and Commander, Naval Surface Forces Pacific, Vice Admiral Edward Moore Jr., placed the ship in commission. The color guard was provided by Col. Higgins' alma mater, University of Miami – Ohio. The long glass was ceremoniously handed to GMC(SW) [REDACTED] by Col. Higgins' daughter, Christine Higgins, and Robin Higgins gave the order to "Man our ship and bring her to life," at which point the crew ran onboard and shipboard equipment began rotating, buzzing, and whistling. A post-Commissioning reception followed the ceremony. Approximately 5,000 people attended the Commissioning, and the ship hosted tours for more than 2,000 people that week. The following day a Beach party was organized for the crew, and many sailors attended a Florida Marlins baseball game in Miami. Monday the 26<sup>th</sup> was a work day in preparation for getting underway on the 27<sup>th</sup>.

From the 27<sup>th</sup> until the ship arrived in Roosevelt Roads, Puerto Rico, on 3 May, HIGGINS began CSSQT in earnest, conducting numerous gunnery events, including shooting CIWS at towed drones, and gun exercises against high speed maneuvering surface targets, killer tomatoes, and towed sleds. The crew also experienced its first swim call in the warm waters of the Caribbean. The scheduled FIREX I Naval Gunfire Support (NGFS) at Vieques was cancelled due to an accident that had occurred two weeks prior in which a bomb from a military aircraft had struck an observation tower, killing a guard. HIGGINS instead conducted trilateral operations with the Belgian and Dutch navies, who were in the Caribbean on deployment. The navies were able to organize personnel exchanges, formation steaming and submarine operations with each other.

On May 6, HIGGINS stopped once more in Roosevelt Roads to take on fuel, and then was underway on the 7<sup>th</sup> enroute Cartagena, Colombia. HIGGINS anchored in Cartagena Bay on 10 May and sailors spent 4 days sightseeing. On the 14<sup>th</sup> the ship was underway again toward the Panama Canal.

Early in the day on the 15<sup>th</sup>, HIGGINS arrived at the Panama Canal. Originally told the transit would begin at 1200, the ship was subsequently ordered to drop anchor among several other supertankers and merchant ships waiting to cross from South (Atlantic) to North (Pacific). Finally, at 1800, HIGGINS was given the go-ahead to commence transit. Approximately 10 hours later, the ship moored at Rodman, Panama, to fuel up again and spend one night.

On the 17<sup>th</sup>, HIGGINS turned south instead of north and steamed toward the Equator in order to make Shellbacks of the numerous Pollywogs onboard. The ship crossed the Equator two days later on 19 May. Following a neo-traditional ceremony in which 183 sailors were made Shellbacks, the ship turned North again and began its trek toward Mexico. In the following week, HIGGINS ran numerous Combat and Engineering scenarios, and began preparing for the missile shots that would take place during CSSQT in July.

HIGGINS arrived in Mazatlan, Mexico, on 26 May. Two mooring lines parted in the rough seas in which the ship was anchored, and the paint on the sides of the ship was badly marred by a service barge alongside. The weather was hot and sunny, though, and the crew enjoyed the nightlife and beaches of Mazatlan. On the 29<sup>th</sup>, following a morning of topside work to prepare the ship for her Homecoming in San Diego on 1 June, HIGGINS set sail.

On an atypically rainy day, San Diego's newest ship pulled into 32<sup>nd</sup> Street Naval Station. A throng of well-wishers greeted the ship as she moored at Pier 7. Approximately half the ship departed on leave, and Duty Section 1 took over. The ship was in stand down for the next two weeks, and warranty repairs commenced. On 21 June, duty sections were expanded to nine. From 21-25 June HIGGINS participated in Surface Line Week and earned several awards, including: Physical Excellence Competition – 3<sup>rd</sup> place overall, OS2(SW) [redacted] and OS3 [redacted] won first place in their categories; 10K Run – DC1(SW) [redacted] placed second in her category; Healthy Choice Cooking – MS2 [redacted] earned third place; Chili Cook Off – MS1(SW) [redacted] earned second place; Cake Decorating – MS2(SW) [redacted] earned second place; and Shiphandling – Ensign [redacted] earned third place.

On July 8, the ship got underway to Naval Air Station North Island to onload some remaining ammunition for CSSQT. On the 12<sup>th</sup>, HIGGINS left San Diego, bound for Hawaii. The ship stopped briefly in Pearl Harbor on the 19<sup>th</sup> to take on stores and fuel, and then transited to Barking Sands OPAREA off the western coast of Kauai to complete Air Warfare and Undersea Warfare events. On 26 and 27 July, HIGGINS shot a total of eight SM-2 missiles, all successfully. In the following days, HIGGINS shot a number of torpedoes and a Vertically Launched ASROC on 30 July, which was the only VLA test firing on the West Coast in 1999. HIGGINS then sailed back to Pearl Harbor, where she spent three days in port and embarked family members on the August 6<sup>th</sup> for a Family Cruise to Lahaina, Maui.

HIGGINS arrived in Lahaina on the 6<sup>th</sup> and anchored. The crew spent three days on Maui and then returned to Pearl Harbor on the 9<sup>th</sup>, where the ship off-loaded its CHT tank and refueled. On the 10<sup>th</sup> the ship transited north, focusing training on its upcoming FIREX at San Clemente Island.

On 16 August, HIGGINS conducted Spotter Services on San Clemente. The following day, HIGGINS shot her first FIREX I and earned an amazing 105.92, the highest score on the range that year and the highest in DDG history. HIGGINS' score later proved enough to win the Chezek Award for Excellence in Naval Gunnery (the "Top Gun" award), which Vice Admiral Edward Moore Jr. presented to the crew in October.

An ammunition offload at Seal Beach was cancelled due to a higher priority onload, and HIGGINS pulled into San Diego on the 19<sup>th</sup> to offload at North Island. The ship got underway again to host Leaders to Sea from the 21<sup>st</sup> to 23<sup>rd</sup>, and then moored at Broadway Pier downtown San Diego to serve as a backdrop for a Kenny Loggins Concert that was the finale to a major convention. The next day the ship moved to Pier 7 and in the following days, commenced a major move to a berthing barge in preparation for Deperming and Post Shakedown Availability. The INSURV board arrived on 30 August and conducted Final Contract Trials until 2 September. After earning outstanding reviews from the inspectors, the ship got underway again on the 2<sup>nd</sup> to transit to the Deperming pier at Sub Base, Point Loma.

On 3 September, the entire crew wrapped the ship with deperming cables. The evolution took the majority of the day. The crew was essentially stood down the following week while the ship was being demagnetized. On the 13<sup>th</sup> the crew unwrapped the cables and on the 15<sup>th</sup>, the ship got underway in SOCAL in support of a family cruise. The ship returned to Pier 7 that day to finish its move aboard the berthing barge. Six Chief Petty Officers were pinned on 17 September. HIGGINS dead-sticked to Southwest Marine on the 20<sup>th</sup> to begin a 3-month yard period.

On 4 October, Vice Admiral Moore presented the ship with the aforementioned Chezek Award, as well as the Gold and Silver Warrior Spirit pennants in recognition of HIGGINS' outstanding Surface Warfare and Enlisted Surface Warfare qualification process. From October 5-20, the ship was in drydock. The crew took the fall PRT October 25-28.

AEGIS Light Off took place on 15 November, and Mainspace Turnover was on the 22<sup>nd</sup>. Move Aboard the ship occurred from the 22<sup>nd</sup> to the 24<sup>th</sup>. On 30 November, the main engines were lit off. Dock Trials were held 1 December, and the ship got underway on 7 December for Sea Trials. The Command Christmas Party took place on 5 December at the Island Club on North Island.

On 13 December, the ship got underway for Seal Beach for a training cycle onload on the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup>. The ship returned to Pier 13 in San Diego on 17 December and commenced Christmas stand down. During an Awards Ceremony on 17 December the Captain announced that the Commissioning crew was authorized to wear the Sea Service Ribbon. The ship increased security measures and took various precautions in preparation for Y2K mishaps, but there were no outages or breaches of security to report as Year Two Thousand arrived.

- END -



### Fun Facts

Awards Won:

Green H (1998, 1999)  
Coast Guard Meritorious Unit Commendation  
Chezek Award for Excellence in Naval Gunnery  
Gold and Silver Warrior Spirit Awards for warfare qualifications  
COMNAVSURFPAC Safety Award  
Morale, Welfare and Recreation Annual Awards (2<sup>nd</sup> place)  
CHINFO Merit Awards (2<sup>nd</sup> place)

Awards Nominated for (pending):

Maritime Warfare Excellence E  
Supply Management Excellence E  
Engineering/Survivability E  
Command and Control Excellence E

Number ESWS pins awarded:

112

Number SWO pins awarded:

11

Number SWSCO pins awarded:

1

Rounds of 5-inch expended:

640

Rounds of CIWS expended:

5,900

Number of Missiles Expended:

8 SM2, 1 VLA, 14 Torpedoes

Nautical Miles sailed:

15,000