



**DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY**

USS KEARSARGE (LHD 3)  
FPO AE 09534-1662

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IN REPLY TO:

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**7 MAR 2000**

From: Commanding Officer, USS KEARSARGE (LHD 3)  
To: Chief of Naval Operations (N09BH)

Subj: COMMAND HISTORY FOR 1999

Ref: (a) OPNAVINST 5750.12F

Encl: (1) 1999 Command History  
(2) USS KEARSARGE 1999 Competitive Cycle Award  
Nomination Submission  
(3) Compiled Published Articles  
(4) The KEARSARGE Shot Line  
(5) KEARSARGE Welcome Aboard Pamphlet

1. Per reference (a), the following enclosures are submitted.

  
R. B. BOOKERT

USS KEARSARGE (LHD 3) COMMAND HISTORY  
CALENDAR YEAR 1999

*Command Composition and Organization*

**Mission:** To load, transport and land troops and their equipment.

**Organizational Structure:**

Commander Amphibious Group Two

**Commanding Officer**

Captain Reubin B. Bookert

**Executive Officer**

Captain Steven C. Schlientz

**Command Master Chief**

FCCM (SW) Bernard Quibilan

**Ship's Homeport:** Naval Station Norfolk, Virginia

**Ship's Awards for 1999:** Golden Anchor Award, COMNAVSURFLANT Battle "E" Award

***Chronology:***

*USS KEARSARGE (LHD 3)*  
**SHIP'S SCHEDULE 1999**

**January**

01-11 Holiday Upkeep, Norfolk, VA  
01-14 IMAV, Norfolk, VA  
11-22 Combat Systems Readiness Review Phase II, Norfolk, VA  
23-24 Inport Norfolk, VA  
25-31 MEUEX, Cherry Point Operating Area, N.C.

**February**

01-03 MEUEX Cherry Point Operating Area, N.C.  
04-10 Upkeep Norfolk, VA.  
11-28 JTFEX 99-2, SACEX, SOCEX Cherry Point Operating Area, N.C. and  
Puerto Rican Operating Area, PR.

**March**

01-03 JTFEX 99-2, SACEX, SOCEX CPOA/PROA.

- 04-16 Upkeep Norfolk, VA.
- 17-31 Preparations for Overseas Movement (POM) Norfolk, VA.

### April

- 01-13 POM Norfolk, VA.
- 01 Sea Trials, Dependent's Day Cruise Virginia Capes.
- 14 KSGARG Deployment, MARG 99-2.
- 15 Onload 26 MEU (SOC) Onslow Bay, N.C.
- 23 Unrep (refueling) with USNS LARAMIE.
- 25 CHOP COMSIXTHFLT OPCON.
- 29 Arrived Adriatic Sea, Relieved NASSAU ARG as CTF 61 for Operation NOBLE ANVIL/ALLIED FORCE.

### May

- 01-31 Operations Adriatic Sea ISO Operation NOBLE ANVIL/ALLIED FORCE.
- 03 Unrep (refueling) with USS MONONGAHELA.
- 05 Commander, Sixth Fleet visit. Visit included:
  - VADM Daniel J. Murphy, JR, COMSIXTHFLT
  - CDR [REDACTED], DACOS N3
  - MAJ [REDACTED], Amphib Ops
  - LCDR [REDACTED], Flag Aide
- 10 Unrep (refueling/FFV) with USS ARCTIC.  
Commander, U.S. Marine Forces, Atlantic visit. Visit included:
  - LtGen Pace, COMMARFORLANT
  - BGen Amos, Deputy STRIKFORSOUTH
  - SGTMAJ Hoole, Command Sergeant Major
  - Maj [REDACTED], Aide
- 12 Unrep (stores) with USNS SATURN.
- 17 Unrep (refueling/FFV/ammo) with USS ARCTIC.
- 24-25 Italian Amphibious Ship Design Team embarks from Rome, Italy.
- 25 Unrep (refueling/FFV) with USS ARCTIC
- 29-31 Port visit Brindisi, Italy.

### June

- 01-03 Port visit Brindisi, Italy.
- 04 Backload 26 MEU Marines from Albania, commence transit to Aegean Sea
- 05-06 Transit to Aegean Sea.
- 05 Unrep (refueling) with USNS LARAMIE.
- 07-30 Operations Aegean Sea ISO Operation JOINT GUARDIAN.
- 10 Commence offload of 26 MEU (SOC) across Litokhoron beach, Greece for movement to Skopje, FYROM. Offloaded Marines in 34 hours.
- 16 Unrep (stores) with USNS SATURN.
- 22-23 Commence transit to Haifa, Israel.

- 22 Unrep (refuel/cargo/FFV) and VERTREP with USNS LARAMIE.
- 24-30 Port visit/IMAV Haifa, Israel.

## July

- 01-05 Port visit/IMAV Haifa, Israel. Capt Bookert, PCO arrives.
- 06 Depart Haifa, Israel.
- 07-09 Transit to Aegean Sea.
- 08 AV-8B Harriers flyoff to shore base in Souda Bay, Crete.
- 10-14 MODLOC north Aegean Sea ISO 26 MEU (SOC) ashore.
- 13 VERTREP (Stores/Cargo) with USNS SATURN;  
Inport Thessaloniki, Greece for seven hours for U.S. SECDEF visit. Visit included:  
SECDEF, the Honorable Mr. William S. Cohen  
Greek Minister of National Defense, Mr. Apostolos-Athanasios Tsohatzopoulos  
U.S. Ambassador to Greece, Mr. Nicholas R. Burns  
COMSIXTHFLT, VADM Daniel J. Murphy Jr.
- 15-17 Inport Thessaloniki, Greece for backload of 26 MEU (SOC).
- 15 Commandant of the Marine Corps VIP visit. Visit included:  
CMC, GEN James L. Jones  
Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps, SGTMAJ McMichael
- 16 Change of Command. Capt Reubin B. Bookert, USN, assumes command of USS  
KEARSARGE (LHD 3).
- 18-26 Transit to Rota, Spain. AV-8B Harriers move to Rota, Spain.
- 22 Unrep (refuel/FFV) with USNS LEROY GRUMMAN.
- 27-31 Inport Rota, Spain for 26 MEU (SOC) vehicle maintenance and wash down.

## August

- 01-10 Inport Rota, Spain for 26 MEU (SOC) vehicle maintenance and wash down.
- 03 Commander-in-Chief, U.S. Naval Forces, Europe, VIP visit. Visit included:  
CUSNE, ADM James Ellis, Jr.  
Military Assistant, LTCOL [REDACTED] USMC
- 11-12 Transit to Palma, Spain.
- 12 Unrep (fuel) with USNS LEROY GRUMMAN.
- 13-18 Port visit Palma, Spain.
- 19-22 Transit to Izmit, Turkey to conduct Military Disaster Relief Operations, Operation AVID  
RESPONSE, in support of the government of Turkey for earthquake disaster victims in  
Izmit, Turkey.
- 20 Unrep (stores) with USNS SATURN.
- 21 Unrep (fuel) with USNS JOHN LENTHALL.
- 23 KSGARG arrives in Sea of Marmara to assist in Turkish earthquake relief operations.  
U.S. Ambassador to Turkey and Turkish Minister of Health VIP visit. Visit included:  
U.S. Ambassador, The Honorable Mark R. Parris  
Turkish Minister of Health, Mr. Sukru Gurel
- 28 Turkish Minister of National Defense VIP visit. Visit included:  
Turkish Minister of National Defense, Mr. Sabahattin Cakmakoglu

Office of Defense Cooperation (ODC), MGEN Mike Boots, USAF

- 31 Provide helo support to Mr. Anderson, Director USAID, the President's Special Advisor for Disaster relief, for a visual reconnaissance of damaged areas of Izmit and Golcuk, Turkey.

**September**

- 03 Unrep (fuel/FFV) with USNS LEROY GRUMMAN.
- 05 ARG/MEU (SOC) provides helo lift to Secretary of State, Honorable Madeline Albright, distinguished party during her visit to Istanbul, Topel airfield and the earthquake struck area around Golcuk, Turkey.
- 10-12 KSGARG completes Earthquake Relief Operations. Commence transit of the Dardenelles and transit to Catania, Sicily.
- 12 Unrep (fuel) with USNS JOHN LENTHALL.
- 13-15 Port visit Catania, Sicily. Conducted INREP (stores) while inport Catania, Sicily.
- 15-16 Transit to Tunisia for Exercise ATLAS HINGE
- 17-24 Exercise ATLAS HINGE. Conducted Assault Confirmation Brief in the Wardroom.
- 18-19 Deputy Commander, Sixth Fleet, VIP visit. Visit included:  
RADM Casey W. Coane, Deputy Commander Sixth Fleet  
LtCol [REDACTED], Aide. Arrived at 1230 to observe amphibious operations, receive briefs and participate in an AH-1W Cobra, AAV and helo rides.
- 19 Deputy Commander, U.S. Marine Forces Europe, VIP visit. Visit included:  
MGen Bice, Deputy COMMARFOREUR and 2 guests arrived for a 45-minute ship tour.
- 20 Deputy Commander-in-Chief, USEUCOM VIP visit. Visit included:  
ADM Charles Abbot, DCINC USEUCOM  
Mr. Bernd McConnel, SES-5, DASD-ISA  
Ambassador Peter Chaveas, FE-MC, USEUCOM POLAD  
Col Michael Broderick, ODC Chief to Tunisia  
Col Roger Bass, DATT to Tunisia and 10 guests arrived for lunch and a ship tour.
- 22 Deputy Director, Tunisian Armed Forces Department of Military Security VIP visit. Visit included:  
Colonel Major Khalif, Deputy Director, Tunisian Armed Forces Department of Military Security (one star equivalent)  
Colonel Daoud, TAFDMS  
Colonel Roger Bass, U.S. Defense attaché to Tunisia plus one.
- 25-26 Transit to Rota, Spain.
- 27-30 Inport Rota, Spain for ARG/MEU (SOC) vehicle washdown and agricultural inspection.

**October**

- 01 Inport Rota, Spain for 26 MEU (SOC) vehicle washdown and agricultural inspection.
- 01 Conducted ARG turnover with BATAAN ARG.
- 02-11 Transit Atlantic Ocean
- 02 CHOP OPCON to COMSECONDFLT
- 02 Unrep (fuel) with USNS LEROY GRUMMAN.

- 11 Unrep (fuel) with USNS LARAMIE.
- 12-13 Offload 26 MEU (SOC) Onslow Bay, N.C.
- 14 Arrive Norfolk, VA. Conclude MARG 99-2 Med deployment.
- 15-31 Post-deployment leave period, Norfolk, VA.

**November**

- 01-14 Post-deployment leave period, Norfolk, VA.
- 15-19 Ammo offload, Earle, NJ.
- 20-30 Inport Norfolk, VA.
- 29-30 FMAV Norfolk, VA.

**December**

- 01-31 Inport Norfolk, VA
- 01-19 FMAV Norfolk, VA.
- 20-31 Holiday Upkeep, Norfolk, VA.

***Narrative:***

USS KEARSARGE (LHD 3) began the reporting period by completing an Intermediate Maintenance Availability (IMAV) while inport Naval Station Norfolk, VA. After the Combat Systems Readiness Review Phase II was completed on 22 January 1999, the ship departed her homeport at Naval Station Norfolk to participate in MEUEX in the Cherry Point Operating Area from 25 January to 03 February.

On 11 February, KEARSARGE participated in JTFEX 99-2 which was conducted in the Cherry Point and Puerto Rican Operating Areas. While conducting JTFEX 99-2, the KSGARG also conducted a SACEX off of Puerto Rico and a highly successful STREAM raid missile shoot involving both the NATO Seasparrow and RAM missile systems. JTFEX 99-2 concluded 3 March with the KSGARG completing a highly successful SOCEX which resulted in the ARG's designation as Special Operations Capable (SOC). KEARSARGE returned to her homeport on 17 March and began her Preparations for Overseas Movement (POM) phase. A one day Dependents Day cruise was conducted in the local Virginia Capes (VACAPES) operating area on 1 April to test various ship's systems prior to deployment and allow crew members to show their dependents their ship during underway operations.

On 14 April, the KEARSARGE Amphibious Ready Group (KSGARG) departed Naval Station Norfolk to begin MARG 99-2, a six-month deployment to the Mediterranean Sea. The 26<sup>th</sup> Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable) (26 MEU (SOC)), was unloaded 15 April across Onslow Bay, N.C. during deteriorating weather. The heavy weather delayed the ARG's departure from CONUS by a day and damaged the air bag of LCAC 28. While transiting the Atlantic Ocean, the ARG/MEU aggressively planned for preparation to support real-world contingency operations in the EUCOM Theater of Operations. Upon arrival off the coast of Spain, KEARSARGE received fuel during an underway replenishment (UNREP) with USNS Laramie on 23 April. Making best speed while maximizing training, KSGARG chopped to SIXTHFLT nine days after departing CONUS, on 25 April, allowing the NASSAU ARG to return home on schedule.

As events unfolded in Kosovo, the KSGARG executed a high speed transit of the Mediterranean Sea to the Adriatic Sea while completing contingency plans to support Tactical Recovery of Aircraft and Personnel (TRAP), Medical Evacuation (MEDEVAC), Mass Casualty, Security in support of Humanitarian Assistance (HA), Close Air Support (BAI/CAS) and Non-combatant Evacuation Operations (NEO) for the recently executed Operations ALLIED FORCE and NOBLE ANVIL. Conducting an "electronic" turnover with the NASSAU ARG while transiting the Mediterranean, the KSGARG arrived in the Adriatic Sea on 28 April and assumed the duties as CTF 61/62 and an alert 60 TRAP/SAR posture for all strike missions flown in support of CAOC taskings in support of Operation NOBLE ANVIL/ALLIED FORCE off the coast of the former Yugoslavia. From 28 April to 20 June, the ARG remained on continuous alert, maintaining a TRAP alert response in support of combat operations, and a two-hour MEDEVAC response time to support medical needs throughout the AOR.

From 28 April to 5 June 1999, the Marines of 26 MEU (SOC) provided continuous security for two refugee camps supporting more than 2,500 Kosovar Albanians. Dealing with the threat of criminal violence and theft, the Marines created an intricate, tightly woven security perimeter around the refugee camps, Camp Hope and Camp Eagle, ensuring the safety and well being of their inhabitants. Additionally, the 26 MEU (SOC) Marines provided security for over

40 sorties flown by CTF 64 helicopters delivering humanitarian supplies to various locations throughout Albania.

While in the U.S. European Command Theater, the KSGARG conducted maritime operations in the Adriatic Sea in support of Operations ALLIED FORCE and NOBLE ANVIL to mitigate internal violence in Kosovo. Operation SHINING HOPE was supported by providing security assistance to both refugee camps in Albania and CTF 64 (USS INCHON) heavy lift helicopters operating in support of Humanitarian Assistance Operations in Albania. The KSGARG support of contingency Operations ALLIED FORCE and NOBLE ANVIL deterred and halted Serbian aggression against Kosovo Albanians, promoted stability, and demonstrated a Naval force ready to respond to a full spectrum of crisis. During this period, the KSGARG Blue/Green team planned, coordinated, directed and executed 1380 sorties for a total of 1800 flight hours and the movement of 4133 personnel, 172,596 pounds of mail, and 870,100 pounds of cargo during high-tempo operations.

The KSGARG provided a vital U.S. combat and expeditionary presence off the Montenegrin/FRY coastline and assisted in the vigilant watch for underway FRY naval combatants while providing a deterrent to aggressive actions ashore. While on station in the Adriatic Sea, the KSGARG tirelessly supported the planning, coordination and execution of over 45 AV-8B harrier strike missions and over 1335 helicopter missions flown in direct support of Operation ALLIED FORCE/NOBLE ANVIL. For over 50 consecutive days, the KSGARG maintained the near continuous alert condition required for TRAP and SAR missions.

On 3 May, KEARSARGE received fuel in the Adriatic Sea during an UNREP with USS MONONGAHELA. VADM Daniel Murphy, Commander, Sixth Fleet, visited the ship on 5 May and spoke with both officers and enlisted crewmembers on the ship. On 10 May, KEARSARGE again refueled, this time with USS ARCTIC while LtGen Pace, COMMARFORLANT, and BGen Amos, Deputy STRIKFORSOUTH, visited with Marines and Sailors in KEARSARGE's hangar bay. KEARSARGE received stores during an UNREP with USNS SATURN on 12 May and fuel and ammunition from USS ARCTIC on 17 May. On 24-25 May, an Italian Amphibious Ship Design Team embarked KEARSARGE from Rome, Italy with the express purpose of identifying unique U.S. amphibious ship systems which could be incorporated into the development of future Italian amphibious ships. KEARSARGE conducted a final UNREP in the Adriatic Sea with USS ARCTIC on 25 May. In the early morning hours of 29 May, KEARSARGE departed her station in the Adriatic Sea for her first liberty port visit in Brindisi, Italy.

While in port Brindisi, word was received that peace had broken out in Kosovo and the Marines from 26 MEU (SOC) were needed to head up a peacekeeping force which was to be inserted through Macedonia. KEARSARGE cut short her port visit and departed Brindisi 3 June to backload the 26 MEU (SOC) Marines in Albania and transit to the Aegean Sea. Showing the tremendous inherent flexibility of the Navy/Marine Corps Team, over 300 troops and dozens of vehicles and associated equipment were extracted from their assigned locations, staged on an Albanian beach, and back loaded aboard ARG shipping within less than 24 hours. While conducting the high-speed transit from the Adriatic to Litokhoron Beach, Greece, KEARSARGE topped off fuel from USNS LARAMIE as she transited north of the island of Crete while the embarked Marines readied for deployment as the enabling force for peacekeeping efforts in support of Operation JOINT GUARDIAN.

KEARSARGE arrived in the vicinity of Thessaloniki, Greece on 7 June and after a couple of false starts, offloaded 26 MEU (SOC) on 10 June across Litokhoron Beach, Greece, for



movement to Skopje, Macedonia. While the world watched live coverage on CNN, the KSGARG conducted a textbook perfect amphibious landing, the first amphibious debarkation of U.S. Marines across a beach for wartime operations since the Korean War. In 34 hours, the entire combat power of 26 MEU (SOC) including infantry, armored vehicles, artillery, aviation assets and integrated logistics was moved across Litokhoron Beach, Greece on its way to the American Sector in Kosovo. The MEU reached initial combat capability at its forward operating base in 42 hours from the first craft touch down on the beach through the dedicated efforts of the superb Navy/Marine Corps Team.

On 16 June, KEARSARGE received stores from USNS SATURN while still on station in the Aegean Sea. After numerous discussions with COMSIXTHFLT and CINCEUR, it was decided that the KSGARG would conduct maintenance availability in Haifa, Israel while the Marines were ashore in Kosovo. An extensive and detailed air plan was developed which provided daily flights from Haifa to Kosovo to Sigonella and back allowing a one day turn around on required parts, equipment repairs and personnel moves. With all the details settled, the KSGARG departed the Aegean Sea on 22 June, conducted a stores VERTEP with USNS LARAMIE, and transited to Haifa, Israel, for a valuable maintenance period. KEARSARGE arrived in Haifa on 24 June and departed on the morning of 06 July. From 07-09 July, KEARSARGE transited to the Aegean Sea to backload the Marines of 26 MEU (SOC). The AV-8B Harriers departed KEARSARGE on 8 July for shore basing in Souda Bay, Crete. On 13 July, the ship again received stores from USNS SATURN.

KEARSARGE arrived inport Thessaloniki, Greece on 13 July for seven hours in support of SECDEF's visit to Greece. In addition to the U.S. Secretary of Defense, the Honorable Mr. William S. Cohen, the Greek Minister of National Defense, Mr. Apostolos-Athanasios Tsohatzopoulos, the U.S. Ambassador to Greece, Mr. Nicholas R. Burns and COMSIXTHFLT, VADM Daniel J. Murphy, visited the ship and spoke with sailors and Marines on the flight deck. KEARSARGE returned to port in Thessaloniki on 15 July to backload the Marines of 26 MEU (SOC). On 15 July, GEN James L. Jones, Commandant of the Marine Corps, and the Sergeant Major of the Marine Corp, Sergeant Major McMichael, visited KEARSARGE. CAPT Reubin B. Bookert relieved CAPT Peter A. Masciangelo as Commanding Officer of USS KEARSARGE during a change of command ceremony conducted on the ship's flight deck on 16 July.

KEARSARGE departed Thessaloniki 18 July to transit to Rota, Spain for 26 MEU (SOC) vehicle maintenance and wash down. The ship fueled from USNS LEROY GRUMMAN on 22 July as she continued enroute to Rota, Spain. KEARSARGE arrived in Rota, Spain, on 27 July and immediately commenced offload of all Marine vehicles. On 3 August, Admiral James Ellis, Jr., Commander-in-Chief, U.S. Naval Forces, Europe, visited KEARSARGE and talked with sailors and Marines on the flight deck. After backloading all Marine vehicles, KEARSARGE departed Rota, Spain, on 11 August and transited to Palma de Mallorca, Spain, for her second liberty port visit, arriving 13 August. Prior to arriving in Palma, KEARSARGE completed her monthly UNREP with USNS LEROY GRUMMAN and reembarked all of the AV-8B Harriers.

While inport Palma de Mallorca, Spain, a devastating earthquake struck Izmit, Turkey. KEARSARGE departed earlier than scheduled from her port visit on 19 August and conducted a high-speed transit across the Mediterranean and Aegean Seas. KEARSARGE restocked her stores from USNS SATURN on 20 August and refueled from USNS JOHN LENTHALL on 21 August to top off for an anticipated lengthy operation off the coast of Turkey. KEARSARGE transited the Dardenelles and the Bosporous Straits during the evening of the 22<sup>nd</sup> and arrived in the Sea of Marmara to assist in Turkish relief operations on the morning of the 23<sup>rd</sup> of August.

The ARG/MEU assisted some of the 600,000 displaced Turks with potable water making capability and began setting up general purpose tents provided by other relief agencies. The casualty toll crept up past 12,000 dead and more than 35,000 injured. Quake damage was estimated at up to \$20 billion. U.S. Ambassador, the Honorable Mark R. Parris and the Turkish Minister of Health, Mr. Sukru Gurel, visited KEARSARGE on 23 August and received the ARG/MEU capability and Earthquake Relief Operations briefs. On 28 August, the Turkish Minister of Defense, Mr. Sabahattin Cakmakoglu and the Office of Defense Cooperation, MGEN Mike Boots, USAF, visited KEARSARGE to further assess the capabilities of the KSGARG to assist with disaster relief. On 31 August, KEARSARGE provided helicopter support to Mr. Anderson, Director USAID, the President's Special Advisor for Disaster Relief, for a visual reconnaissance of the numerous and widely spread damaged areas around Izmit and Golcuk, Turkey.

On 3 September, USNS LEROY GRUMMAN arrived in the Sea of Marmara and refueled the KSGARG. On 5 September, the KSGARG and 26 MEU (SOC) provided helicopter lift support to Secretary of State, the Honorable Madeline Albright, during her visit to Istanbul, Topel airfield and the earthquake struck areas around Golcuk, Turkey. During the early morning hours of 10 September, the KSGARG completed their participation in the Earthquake Relief Operations and KEARSARGE headed east to exit the Sea of Marmara. On 12 September, KEARSARGE received fuel from USNS JOHN LENTHALL before arriving in Catania, Sicily, for her third and final liberty port visit, which commenced on 13 September.

On 15 September, KEARSARGE departed Catania, Sicily, to participate in Exercise ATLAS HINGE with the Tunisian military. This multi-service, combined exercise took place 17-24 September off of Cap Serrat, Tunisia. On 18 September, RADM Casey W. Coane, Deputy Commander, U.S. Sixth Fleet, visited Kearsarge and observed the amphibious landing rehearsal. The following day on 19 September, MGEN Bice, Deputy COMMARFOREUR and two guests visited KEARSARGE and witnessed the combined amphibious landing with Tunisian military forces. Admiral Charles Abbot, Deputy Commander-in-Chief, USEUCOM, Mr. Bernd McConnel, SES-5, DASD-ISA and Ambassador Peter Chaveas, FE-MC, USEUCOM POLAD, visited KEARSARGE on 20 September and received an overview of the ARG/MEU's capabilities and a "MARG 99-2 accomplishments to date" brief. On 22 September, Colonel Major Khalif, Deputy Director of the Tunisian Armed Forces Department of Military Security, visited KEARSARGE and received a tour of JIC and the Command and Control spaces as well a tailored intelligence brief prepared by the COMPHIBRON TWO N2 .

On 27 September, KEARSARGE pulled into Rota, Spain, for Marine vehicle wash down and maintenance along with a KSGARG-wide agricultural inspection. On 1 October, the KSGARG completed its turnover with the BATAAN ARG and relinquished the duties as CTF 61/62. On 2 October, the KSGARG departed Rota, Spain, fueled from USNS LEROY GRUMMAN and commenced her transit of the Atlantic Ocean. On 11 October off the coast of North Carolina, KEARSARGE topped off fuel from USNS LARAMIE for the last time during the MARG 99-2 deployment. That afternoon, the embarked AV-8B Harrier detachment flew off and returned to M.C.A.S. Cherry Point, N.C. The KSGARG offloaded 26 MEU (SOC) across the beach in Onslow Bay, N.C. on the 12<sup>th</sup> and the morning of the 13<sup>th</sup> of September. After the Marines had debarked, approximately 400 civilian guests (Tigers) arrived by bus from Norfolk and embarked KEARSARGE by LCU for an overnight trip to Norfolk. KEARSARGE arrived at Naval Station Norfolk on the 15<sup>th</sup> of October concluding her MARG 99-2 deployment.

After returning from the deployment, KEARSARGE commenced her Post-Deployment Leave Periods with the first running from 15-31 October and the second leave period running from 1-14 November. With all crewmembers back aboard ship on 15 November, KEARSARGE transited to Naval Weapons Station Earle, NJ, for an ammunition offload. All shipboard ammunition was removed from the ship in preparation for the ship's planned Dry Docking Preventative Maintenance Availability (DPMA) scheduled 6 January 2000. KEARSARGE returned to Naval Station Norfolk on 19 November and commenced her holiday leave and upkeep periods. KEARSARGE conducted her first Fleet Maintenance Availability (FMAV) since her return from deployment from 29 November to 19 December.