



**DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY**

USS KEARSARGE (LHD 3)

FPO AE 09534-1662

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05 May 04

From: Commanding Officer, USS KEARSARGE (LHD 3)

To: Chief of Naval Operations (N09BH)

Subj: USS KEARSARGE COMMAND HISTORY FOR 2003

Ref: (a) OPNAVINST 5750.12H

- Encl:
- (1) 2003 Command History Timeline and Narrative
  - (2) Biography and Photo of CAPT Terry McKnight
  - (3) Biography and Photo of CAPT Luke Parent
  - (4) The Amphibian - Ship's Newspaper (54 issues)
  - (5) Bravo Zulu and Farewell Messages from Operation Iraqi Freedom
  - (6) Vice Admiral Rufus B. Taylor Award Nomination
  - (7) Captain Virgil J. "Virg" Lemmon Award for Naval Aviation Maintenance Excellence Submission
  - (8) Captain Charles J. "Chuck" Nechvatal Award Submission
  - (9) Arleigh Burke Trophy Nomination
  - (10) Secretary of the Navy Energy Conservation Award Submission
  - (11) Chief of Naval Operations Large Ship Environmental Award Submission
  - (12) TYCOM/CNO Safety Award Submission
  - (13) Competitive Cycle Award Nomination
  - (14) Vice Admiral Robert B. Pirie Naval Air Traffic Controller of the Year Award Submission
  - (15) Admiral Flatley CY03 Award Submission
  - (16) Change of Command Program

1. Per reference (a), enclosures (1) through (16) are submitted.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "L. R. Parent".

L. R. PARENT

**USS KEARSARGE (LHD 3)  
UIC 21700  
Command History  
Calendar Year 2003**

***Command Composition and Organization***

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

**ISIC:** Commander, Amphibious Group TWO

**Commanding Officer**

Captain Terence E. McKnight (1 January- 5 December)

Captain Luke R. Parent (5-31 December)

**Executive Officer**

Captain Luke R. Parent (1 January – 28 June)

Commander Neil R. Parrott (28 June – 31 December)

**Command Master Chief**

CMDCM (SW/AW) Edward W. Myers Jr. (1 January – 1 December)

CMDCM(SW/AW) Joseph V. Schnurbusch (1-31 December)

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

## Chronological History 2003

### January

04 January Underway to Earle, NJ for ammo on-load  
05 January Arrive Earle, NJ for ammo on-load  
07 January Underway from Earle, NJ. Ammo on-load complete  
08 January RAS with USNS LARAMIE (T-AO 203)  
08 January Crew receives first Anthrax vaccination  
09 January Arrive Norfolk, VA  
09 January KEARSARGE receives Surge Deployment Order  
11 January Embark 1,100 2-MEB Marines  
12 January KEARSARGE deploys in support of Operation Enduring Freedom  
13 January Arrive Onslow Bay, NC to begin on-load of 2D MEB  
15 January Embark RADM Nowakowski, ATF East  
15 January Embark media embed, Reporter Dennis O'Brien, Virginian-Pilot  
16 January RAS with USNS LARAMIE (T-AO 203) (Heavy weather)  
17 January VERTREP with USNS SATURN (T-AFS 10)  
17 January KEARSARGE and ATFE ships begin translat  
20 January Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Celebration  
20 January KEARSARGE hosts ATFE Commander's Conference  
21 January Crew receives second Anthrax vaccination  
24 January Crew receives Smallpox vaccination  
26 January Super Bowl Sunday, crew watches game in Hangar Bay  
28 January Transit the Strait of Gibraltar  
29 January CONREP with USNS JOHN LENTHALL (T-AO 189)  
31 January VERTREP with USNS SPICA (T-AFS 9)  
31 January Cross 39N in Ionian Sea - cross Tax Free Zone

### **February**

01 February NASA tragedy - Space Shuttle Columbia explodes over Texas  
01 February Black History Month Celebration  
02 February Enter Free Mail Zone  
02 February RAS with USNS KANAWHA (T-AO 196)  
04 February Transit Suez Canal  
05 February KEARSARGE Tae Kwon Do Team Testing  
05 February Entered Red Sea, Combat Zone and Tax Free Zone  
05 February Chop to Commander Fifth Fleet  
06 February Crew receives third Anthrax vaccination  
07 February Transited Bab el Mandeb Strait, entered Gulf of Aden  
08 February Djibouti FIREX  
09 February Big Bucks Combat Bingo on SITE TV  
09 February Navy/Marine Corps Send-Off Worship Service, Flight Deck  
10 February Entered Arabian Sea  
11 February VERTREP with USNS NIAGARA FALLS (T-AFS 3)  
12 February Entered Gulf of Oman  
12 February RAS with USNS ERICSSON (T-AO 194)  
13 February Transit Strait of Hormuz  
15 February Arrive off the coast of Kuwait  
15-20 February 2D-MEB off-load to Kuwaiti Naval Base.  
19 February Cross-deck all AV/8B Harriers to USS BATAAN (LHD 5)  
21 February Commence transit to Bahrain

22 February Arrive Mina Sulman Pier, Manama, Bahrain  
 23 February Replace Challenge Athena antenna dome  
 24 February Disembark RADM Nowakowski, CPG-2  
 24 February Underway, en route to Northern Arabian Gulf  
 25 February Arrive LHOA 3  
 27 February RAS USS CAMDEN (AOE 2)  
 28 February VERTREP USNS NIAGARA FALLS (T-AFS 3)

## March

01 March Navy/Marine Corps Relief Fund Drive kicks off  
 01 March C4I, Combat Systems and Security merge into C5I  
 02 March All Hands Awards Quarters  
 03 March FST-8 embarks  
 04 March MGEN Amos, 3<sup>rd</sup> Marine Aircraft Wing, visits KEARSARGE  
 06 March E-6 Navy-wide Rating Exam  
 06 March RAS with USNS PECOS (T-AO 197)  
 06 March CBR Medicinals issued to crew  
 09 March Big Bucks Combat Bingo  
 13 March E-5 Navy-wide Rating Exam  
 13 March VERTREP with USS RANIER (AOE 7)  
 15 March Embark 84 CRTS-4 Medical Augmentation personnel  
 15 March RADM March, CTF-51, visited KEARSARGE  
 17 March President Bush addresses the Nation  
 18 March RAS/VERTREP with USNS PECOS (T-AO 197) – 30K lbs. mail  
 19 March Mass-Casualty Drill held on Flight Deck and in Medical  
 20 March E-4 Navy-wide Rating Exam  
 20 March RAS USNS ERICSSON (T-AO 194)  
 20 March VERTREP USS ANCHORAGE (LSD 36)  
 20 March President executes OPOD 1003V, Operation Iraqi Freedom begins. Hostilities commence.  
 21 March Ground war and "Shock and Awe" campaign start.  
 28 March VERTREP with USNS NIAGARA FALLS (T-AFS 3)  
 28 March Navy and Marine Corps Relief FSA For a Day Event  
 29 March Navy and Marine Corps Relief Weight Lifting / Tug-of-War Competition  
 29 March MCPO results released. NCCM(SW) McBride.  
 29 March HMH-464 fly off in preparation for Bahrain shipyard period  
 29 March KEARSARGE Tae Kwon Do Team Testing  
 30 March CPR-8 cross-decks to USS SAIPAN (LHA 2)  
 30 March Big Bucks Combat Bingo  
 31 March Departed LHOA 3 en route Bahrain

## April

01 April Arrive ASRY Shipyard, Manama, Bahrain  
 11 April Depart ASRY Shipyard  
 11 April RAS with USNS PATUXENT (T-AO 201)  
 12 April Arrive LHOA 3  
 12 April CPR-8 re-embarks  
 17 April RAS USNS YUKON (T-AO 202)  
 18 April MCPON(SS/AW) Terry Scott visits KEARSARGE  
 18 April KEARSARGE qualified to fly the ESWS Pennant  
 19 April Big Bucks Combat Bingo  
 20 April CTF-51 Photo Exercise (15 ships participate)  
 20 April Easter. Steel Beach Picnic

24 April RAS/VERTREP with USS BRIDGE (AOE 10)  
24 April CTRS-4 departs  
25 April SCPO results released. ASCS(AW) [REDACTED] / ABHCS(AW) [REDACTED]  
26 April All Hands Awards Quarters  
29 April VERTREP with SS CAPE JOHN  
30 April Navy and Marine Corps Relief Drive concludes. \$33,511.00 raised.  
30 April VERTREP with USS TARAWA (LHA 1) for gearbox transfer

## May

01 May RAS with USNS YUKON (T-AO 202)  
01 May Helo Wash for Navy and Marine Corps Relief  
01 May President Bush announces an end to major combat in Iraq  
03 May All Hands Photo taken on the Flight Deck  
03 May Talent Show in the Hangar Bay  
05 May HMH-464 Change of Command (LtCol Jeffrey Bowden relieved by LtCol Joaquin Malavet)  
06 May 2-MEB Back Load Commences  
07 May RAS with USNS YUKON (T-AO 202)  
07 May RAS with USNS NIAGARA FALLS (T-AFS 3)  
08 May E4-E6 Advancement results released  
10 May All-Hands Awards Ceremony, frocked all E5 and E6 Petty Officers (60)  
12-14 May Petty Officer Indoctrination (first half)  
15-17 May Petty Officer Indoctrination (second half)  
17 May All-Hands Awards Ceremony, frocked all Petty Officer Third Classes (63)  
18 May VERTREP with USNS KISKA (T-AE 35)  
18 May 2D-MEB Back Load Complete  
19 May Family VTC opportunities for 28 Sailors  
19 May Depart LHOA-3 for the last time  
20 May VERTREP with USNS SIRIUS (T-AFS 8)  
21 May RAS / VERTREP with USNS GUADALUPE (T-AO 200)  
22 May Transit Strait of Hormuz  
23 May Family VTC opportunities for 27 Sailors  
23 May Mast/Island Wash-down  
24 May All-Hands Awards Quarters, ESWS and EAWS awardees  
24 May RAS / VERTREP with USNS PATUXENT (T-AO 201)  
24 May Big Bucks Bingo  
25 May Flight Deck Wash-down day one  
26 May All Hands Memorial Day Service on the Flight Deck  
26 May Flight Deck Wash-down day two  
27 May Transited Bab el Mandeb Strait, enter Red Sea  
27 May RAS with USNS PATUXENT (T-AO 201)  
28 May Small Arms Qualification on Flight Deck  
29 May Steel Beach Picnic / Beer Day  
29 May Malta Port Visit canceled  
30 May Homecoming Advanced Party departed for USS SAIPAN  
30 May Make-up Beer Day on Mess Deck

## June

01 June Asian-Pacific Heritage Celebration / Karaoke Night  
02-04 June Support to the President of the United States during visits to Sharm el-Sheik, Egypt and Aqaba, Jordan during summits with Arab leaders.  
04 June CG 2D-MEB and CO KEARSARGE meet with the President at Sharm el-Sheik, Egypt  
04 June Transit Strait of Tiran; enter the Gulf of Aqaba  
05 June Transit Strait of Tiran; enter the Red Sea  
06 June Transit Suez Canal

06 June CMC results out. ETCM(SW) [REDACTED] selected  
 07 June RAS with USNS BIG HORN (T-AO 198)  
 07 June VERTREP with USNS SPICA (T-AFS 9)  
 09 June VOD to Sigonella, received more than 33,000 pounds of mail  
 10 June CO All Hands Call – Announced Homecoming may be delayed because of redeployment to SHINING EXPRESS  
 11 June Senior Enlisted Academy Results released: HMCS [REDACTED], MMCS [REDACTED], JOCS [REDACTED] and BMCS [REDACTED]  
 11 June Responded to potential small boat in distress...Moroccan refugees headed for Spain  
 11 June Transit Strait of Gibraltar  
 12 June RAS with USNS KANAWHA (T-AO 196)  
 12 June Personnel / Equipment transfer with BATAAN / SAIPAN in preps for Operation SHINING EXPRESS  
 12 June Begin transit to Liberia  
 13 June NEO Drill  
 13 June All Hands Awards Ceremony  
 14 June USMC Embassy Helicopter Evacuation Drill  
 14 June All Hands Awards Ceremony  
 15 June Father's Day  
 16 June NEO Drill  
 17 June CG 2D-MEB and CO KEARSARGE meet with John W. Blaney, Ambassador, Republic of Liberia in Monrovia  
 18 June Embark BGen Jones, Commander Joint Special Operations Task Force – Shining Express (JSOTF-SE)  
 18 June KEARSARGE released from Operation SHINING EXPRESS  
 18 June VERTREP with USNS KANAWHA (T-AO 196)  
 19 June Disembark BGen Jones, Commander Joint Special Operations Task Force – Shining Express (JSOTF-SE)  
 19 June KEARSARGE redeployment order received to proceed to homeport  
 19 June Cruise book sales conclude, 843 sold  
 20 June RAS with USNS KANAWHA (T-AO 196)  
 20 June BJOQ / JSOQ Boards  
 21 June All Hands Awards Ceremony  
 21 June SOQ Board  
 22 June Steel Beach Picnic  
 23 June All Hands Awards Ceremony  
 26 June All Hands Awards Ceremony  
 26 June RAS with USNS KANAWHA (T-AO 196)  
 27 June Anchor - Onslow Bay, N.C.  
 28 June Embark RADM Nowakowski, CPG-2, for a one-hour visit  
 28 June Commence 2D-MEB Off Load  
 28 June Disembark BGen Natonski, CG 2D MEB  
 29 June Complete 2D-MEB Off Load  
 29 June Embark Tigers  
 29 June Underway, enroute Norfolk  
 29-30 June Tiger Cruise  
 30 June Moor Pier 9, Naval Station Norfolk. Secure from surge combat deployment.  
 30 June HOMECOMING!  
 30 June First Stand-down leave period begins

## July

13 July Last day of first stand-down leave period  
 14 July Turnover Day  
 14 July Second Stand-down leave period begins  
 27 July Last day of second stand-down leave period

28 July All Hands return  
29 July Fast Cruise  
30 July Failed to Sail  
31 July Underway, Sea Trials

## August

01 August Return to Homeport  
02 August CPG-2 Reserve Detachment Visit (17 people)  
04 August ENCS(SW) [REDACTED] Retirement  
04 August CPO Results announced. KEARSARGE had 13 Selectees  
06 August Office of Naval Intelligence (USMC MCIA) Visit (42 people)  
07 August Joint Forces Staff College Visit (22 people)  
07 August CPG-2 Golf Tournament  
08 August OSC(SW) [REDACTED] Retirement  
08 August SNA Golf Tournament  
08 August Fleet Maintenance Availability (FMAV) Begins  
11-13 August Chief Petty Officer Indoctrination  
12 August USAF JAG Officer Visit (41 people)  
13 August USMC NCO PME Visit (50 people)  
15 August All Hands Awards Ceremony  
15 August Command Picnic, Little Creek Amphibious Base  
15 August USMC Food Service Course Visit (80 people)  
19 August Richmond Navy League Visit (55 people)  
21 August NROTC Hampton Roads Consortium Visit (50 people)  
21 August CPG-2 COC Rehearsal  
21 August ABHCS [REDACTED] Retirement  
22 August CPG-2 COC, RADM Bookert relieves RADM Nowakowski  
29 August Captain Chapman (CPG-2 COS) retires aboard KEARSARGE

## September

03 September Greg Biffle (NASCAR Driver) and Grainger visit (10 people)  
02-03 September Crew receives Forth Anthrax vaccination  
04 September Savings Deposit Program 10% interest program ends  
10 September Task Force History visit (3 people). Conducted interviews with CPR-8/CO/Air Boss/CCO  
11 September HMS Sultan visit (11 people)  
15 September DASN for Safety and Safety Editors Conference visit (35 people)  
15 September Joint Forces Staff College visit (25 people)  
15 September CPO Initiation postponed because of Hurricane Isabel  
17 September Hurricane Isabel hits Hampton Roads. KEARSARGE remains at Pier 9  
21 September CPO Initiation begins at CPO Beach, Little Creek Amphibious Base  
22 September CPO Pinning Ceremony aboard KEARSARGE  
22 September Fast Cruise  
23-26 September Underway for INSURV preps

## October

02 October Underway for UNSURV preps  
03 October Return to Homeport  
03-06 October IT-21 LAN Upgrade  
08 October German Armed Forces University visit (7 people)  
16 October USS KEARSARGE 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Cake Cutting / CO's luncheon – all former CO's present  
16 October USS KEARSARGE Captain's Cup 5K Race

20-24 October INSURV (Board of Inspection and Survey team aboard)  
22 October Underway / return to Homeport  
24 October USS KEARSARGE serves as host ship for USS IWO JIMA Homecoming  
27 October Uniform shift to blues  
27-29 October Small Arms Gun Shoot, Camp Allen  
29 October Officers Hail and Fairwell  
30 October CPOA Dining Out

## **November**

05-12 November Command Physical Fitness Assessment (PFA)  
06 November All Hands Award Ceremony  
06 November USS KEARSARGE Captain's Cup Softball Tournament  
07 November USS KEARSARGE Captain's Cup Golf Tournament  
10 November E5 and E6 Results Announced  
13-21 November Underway in CPOA for CQs  
21 November Return to Homeport  
24 November Expeditionary Warfare School Visit (130 People)

## **December**

01-05 December SWO Recruiting Video Taped on USS KEARSARGE  
04 December USS KEARSARGE Holiday Party, Norfolk Waterside Marriott  
05 December Change of Command, Captain Luke Parent relieves Captain Terry McKnight  
08 December Underway to Earle, New Jersey for ammo off-load  
09 December Arrive Earle, NJ for ammo off-load  
09 December MWR Coordinates NETS vs SONICS Game for Sailors  
10 December Return to Homeport  
11 December Arrive Norfolk, Virginia  
15 December First Holiday Leave Period Begins  
29 December First Holiday Leave Period Expires  
29 December Second Holiday Leave Period Begins



## **NARRATIVE**

The multipurpose amphibious assault ship USS KEARSARGE (LHD 3) began 2003 with short-fused orders to deploy with only 72 hours notice as the flagship for Amphibious Task Force EAST (ATF-E), RDML Michael P. Nowakowski, along with six other Atlantic Fleet ships: USS BATAAN (LHD-5), USS SAIPAN (LHA-2), and USS PONCE (LPD-15), based at Naval Station Norfolk and USS ASHLAND (LSD-48), USS PORTLAND (LSD-37) and USS GUNSTON HALL (LSD-44), based at Naval Amphibious Base Little Creek.

Two days after receiving the order to deploy Jan. 9, 1,100 Marines from the Second Marine Expeditionary Brigade (2D MEB) boarded the ship in Norfolk. KEARSARGE deployed Jan. 12 and arrived off Onslow Bay, N.C., safely loading 1,980 tons of equipment and 24 aircraft in only two days. Additional troops joined the ship during the onload.

By Jan. 17 KEARSARGE was headed across the Atlantic Ocean. The ship completed the transit across the Atlantic, through the Mediterranean Sea, the Suez Canal and the Red Sea, across the Gulf of Aden and into the Arabian Gulf in a little over a month. Once there, KEARSARGE and the rest of ATF-E joined Amphibious Task Force WEST, forming Task Force Five ONE, the largest amphibious force assembled in decades.

The ship began offloading elements of the 2D MEB's Marines at Kuwait Naval Base on Feb. 15, debarking approximately 1,300 Marines and tons of equipment, including Light Armored Vehicles (LAV), trucks and artillery using Assault Craft Unit FOUR's Air Cushion Landing Craft (LCAC).

Following the offload, the ship assumed the role of consolidated Heavy Lift Ship for the task force, providing sea basing for 16 CH-53E Super Stallion helicopters.

A day after the start of Operation Iraqi Freedom on March 20, Marine Heavy Helicopter Squadron 464 (HMH-464) was called upon to support an emergency re-supply mission. The squadron, based on KEARSARGE, was tasked with delivering ammunition to elements of the 11th Marine Artillery Regiment, which was providing an umbrella of protection for advancing coalition forces.

The ship was called to flight quarters shortly after midnight, and within two and a half hours the squadron's CH-53E helicopters were airborne and headed to the Kuwait-Iraq border.

KEARSARGE also served as a primary Casualty Receiving and Treatment Ship (CRTS). The ship boasts a medical capability second only to the Navy's two dedicated hospital ships, making it ideally suited for the task of treating critically sick or injured personnel.

Though KEARSARGE was at war, there was still time for recreation. The ship held several ship-wide "Big Bucks Combat Bingo" contests, as well as other fundraisers; the profits went to the Navy and Marine Corps Relief Society fundraising drive. In all, KEARSARGE's Sailors and Marines raised \$33,511 for the cause, more than any other ship within SURFLANT.

The ship also made two brief visits to Bahrain. Though it was a working port, the crew had the opportunity to spend a few hours off the ship and relax.

Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy MCPON(SS/AW) Terry D. Scott visited KEARSARGE April 18 as part of a whirlwind tour of ships in the Arabian Gulf. After meetings with the ship's leadership, MCPON Scott was escorted to a packed Hangar Bay for an All Hands Call. He began by "pinning" 12 warfare qualifications on newly qualified Enlisted Surface and Aviation Warfare Specialists. He then addressed the crew, emphasizing the importance of the Navy's mission in Operation Iraqi Freedom and what it means for both the American and Iraqi peoples.

"They have a future, when they didn't have much of one before," he said. "That's what you've accomplished here in the last couple of months. That's your contribution to history."

President George W. Bush announced the end of major combat operations in Iraq May 1, and by May 6 KEARSARGE began backloading the 2D MEB's Marines and equipment. The evolution, which included a meticulous agricultural inspection of every vehicle and piece of equipment that went ashore, took 12 days.

KEARSARGE, along with the other ships of ATF-E, transited the Strait of Hormuz and departed the Arabian Gulf May 21, and began the long voyage home.

On Memorial Day, May 26, KEARSARGE and the 2D MEB honored the 23 Marines from the Brigade who lost their lives during Operation Iraqi Freedom with a solemn service on the ship's flight deck that included a 21-gun salute.

As the ship steamed through the Red Sea, KEARSARGE was tasked to provide support for President Bush's historic summits in Sharm el-Sheik, Egypt, and Aqaba, Jordan. While in the Gulf of Aqaba, Commanding Officer Capt. Terence McKnight and the 2D MEB's Commanding General, Brig. Gen. Richard Natonski, were invited to Sharm el-Sheik to meet the President.

Before the order came to change course and head for the Gulf of Aqaba, KEARSARGE was due to transit the Suez Canal and visit the Mediterranean port city of Valletta, Malta, where the crew would have had a few days off. It would have been the first liberty port of the deployment. Despite the port call's cancellation, the crew remained upbeat and ready to serve the Commander-in-Chief.

Completing that mission, KEARSARGE set course for the Suez Canal, transiting the historic, 101-mile long waterway for only the second time in the ship's history.

While transiting the Mediterranean, KEARSARGE was once again called on to take part in another vital mission, this time off the coast of the war-torn West African country of Liberia in Operation SHINING EXPRESS.

KEARSARGE was diverted to the region at the request of the U.S. Ambassador to Liberia and by the direction of the Secretary of Defense to provide additional capability in case a large scale Non-combatant Evacuation Operation (NEO) became necessary.

"We were chosen for the mission because we had the most capable platform for helicopters and combat forces in the area," said McKnight. "The mix of aircraft, landing craft, medical capability and combat forces aboard made KEARSARGE uniquely qualified to get the job done."

Fortunately, after less than a week on station, a large-scale evacuation was not needed due to a U.S.-brokered cease-fire that stopped the fighting.

Following the ship's release from Operation SHINING EXPRESS, the long-awaited journey home finally resumed.

KEARSARGE ended its historic deployment by conducting a Tiger Cruise from Onslow Bay, N.C. to Norfolk. Almost 500 Tigers were provided the rare opportunity to spend a night at sea aboard a warship.

KEARSARGE returned to Naval Station Norfolk to family and friends on June 30, 2004.

Following homecoming, KEARSARGE spent the next few months preparing for its Board of Inspection and Survey evaluation, which was conducted on 20-24 October. The INSURV team was impressed with the ship and crew, and KEARSARGE passed with flying colors.

October also marked KEARSARGE's 10<sup>th</sup> birthday, which was celebrated with a lunch and cake-cutting attended by all of KEARSARGE's former commanding officers.

On 5 December, CAPT Luke R. Parent relieved CAPT McKnight as KEARSARGE's Commanding Officer.

Before beginning its holiday standdown period, KEARSARGE offloaded ammunition in Earle, N.J. in preparation for the ship's Planned Maintenance Availability in January 2004.

KEARSARGE and its crew hit several significant milestones during its historic deployment in support of Operation IRAQI FREEDOM.

- From Jan. 12 to its return in Norfolk, 170-days total, the ship steamed nearly 33,000 nautical miles and transited five different straits and canals... twice.
- The ship earned the right to fly the Enlisted Surface Warfare Specialist Pennant for the second year running. The award signifies the command's excellence in qualifying 100 percent of all eligible personnel for the warfare qualification. In all, 250 Sailors earned ESWS qualifications, while 204 earned Enlisted Aviation Warfare Specialist (EAWS) qualifications during the deployment.

- Among the ship's Officer corps, six qualified as Surface Warfare Officers, eight as Surface Warfare Medical Department Officers and four as Surface Warfare Supply Corps Officers.
- KEARSARGE's Sailors and Marines consumed 9,065 pounds of bacon and 20,621 dozen eggs. They ate an additional 34,135 pounds of frozen eggs and 76,083 pounds of potatoes. They washed it all down with 15,803 gallons of milk and 396,888 cans of soda.
- The ship's Post Office handled nearly a million pounds of mail.
- The Medical Department saw 2,280 patients and filled over 11,000 prescriptions. The ship's medical professionals also performed 6,600 immunizations, including Anthrax and Smallpox vaccinations.
- The Air Department oversaw 151 Harrier landings and 2,705 helicopter landings. Aircraft from KEARSARGE spent over 2,600 hours in the air. The department also issued nearly a million gallons of aviation fuel.
- KEARSARGE's weather forecasters launched 45 weather balloons and provided 253 five-day forecasts and 358 mission essential forecasts. They also presented 1,167 mission specific and tactical planning briefs.
- The Engineering Department produced over 19 million gallons of fresh water, while the Deck Department dropped the ship's anchor 13 times.
- During the deployment 125 enlisted Sailors advanced, while 11 of the ship's Officers were promoted. Two Chief Petty Officers advanced to Senior Chief Petty Officer. One Senior Chief Petty Officer advanced to Master Chief Petty Officer and four were selected to attend the Navy's Senior Enlisted Academy at Newport, R.I. One of the ship's Master Chief Petty Officers was also selected for the Command Master Chief program.