



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY

USS KEARSARGE (LHD 3)
FPO AE 09534-1662

IN REPLY TO:

5750
Ser OPS/073
18 Mar 05

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

Subj: USS KEARSARGE COMMAND HISTORY FOR 2004

Ref: (a) OPNAVINST 5750.12H

Encl: (1) 2004 Command History Timeline and Narrative
(2) Biography and photo of CAPT Luke Parent
(3) The Amphibian - Ship's Newspaper (19 issues)
(4) Surge deployment media articles (5)
(5) Surge deployment Bravo Zulu messages (2)

1. Per reference (a), enclosures (1) through (5) are submitted.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "L. R. Parent".

L. R. PARENT

**USS KEARSARGE (LHD 3)
UIC 21700
Command History
Calendar Year 2004**

Command Composition and Organization

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

ISIC: Commander, Amphibious Group TWO

Commanding Officer

Captain Luke R. Parent

Executive Officer

Commander Neil R. Parrott

Command Master Chief

CMDCM(SW/AW) Joseph V. Schnurbusch

Ship's Homeport: Naval Station Norfolk, Virginia

Chronological History 2004

January

- 12 Move to Norfolk Naval Shipyard
- 13 Begin Planned Maintenance Availability
- 15 Annual Chief Petty Officer Exam

April

- 5 Light Off Assessment begins
- 7 LOA Concludes
- 15 Forward, aft boilers lit
- 26 Depart Norfolk Naval Shipyard, underway for Sea Trials
- 28 Return to Naval Station Norfolk

May

- 3 Visit by Canadian Forces College (110 staff/students, with BGEN Gagnon, Commandant)
- 5 Visit by MGEN Lane, UK Royal Marines, Deputy Commander, NATO Rapid Deployable Force Italy; E4-E6 results announced, 90 Sailors selected
- 7 SCPO Results announced – MMCS ██████████, ASCS ██████████, SKCS ██████████, FCCS ██████████, ABHCS ██████████, HTCS ██████████, MACS ██████████, ISCS ██████████
- 10 IA/CART II assessments begin. SCPO Frocking Ceremony.
- 17 Deployment order signed. 3M Baseline Assessment, C5RA begins. Petty Officer Indoc begins. Visit by Defense Intelligence Agency Military Familizaization course students.
- 20 PO3 Frocking Ceremony
Underway, Well Deck certifications

June

- 7 Depart Norfolk, underway for Operation Iraqi Freedom III
- 8 Vertical Replenishment w/USSS DETROIT, Fueling at Sea exercise
- 9 Anchor at Onslow Bay, begin onload of 24th MEU, HMM-263
- 10 Onload complete
- 19 Underway Replenishment w/USNS JOHN LENTHALL
- 20 Transit Straits of Gibraltar
- 21 Combat Systems Training Team TSTA Begins, Shot Call
- 22 Shot Call
- 23 Refuel Visit to Augusta Bay, Sicily; Beer Day/Picnic for 24th MEU
- 25 Awards Ceremony
- 26 Enter Tax Free Zone
- 27 Suez Canal Transit

July

- 3 4th of July celebration; hanger bay celebration
- 4 UNREP w/USNS SUPPLY, Captain's Cup Tug of War
- 5 Transit Straits of Hormuz

- 6 Anchor at Kuwait Naval Base (KNB)
- 7 Begin Offload to KNB
- 8 Offload continues, COMPHIBRON FIVE Visits
- 9 Offload concludes, depart NAG
- 10 Straits of Hormuz Transit, enter Gulf of Oman
- 11 Ammo offload via LCAC with USS WASP, PHOTOEX with WASP
- 12 UNREP with USNS TIPPACANOE
- 21 Awards Ceremony
- 22 Inport Souda Bay
- 26 Depart Souda Bay
- 29 Arrive Valletta, Malta
- 30 Visit by Ambassador Gioia, U.S. Ambassador to Malta

August

- 2 Depart Malta
- 3 Engineering, Combat Systems TSTAs
- 4 UNREP w/USNS BIG HORN
- 8 Underway Demonstration
- 14 Homecoming
- 14-31 Post-Deployment POM

September

- 2 PO1 Advancement Exam
- 9 PO2 Advancement Exam
- 10 Commissioning Ceremony for CWO2 [REDACTED]
- 14 PO3 Advancement Exam
- 16 CPO Pinning Ceremony
- 22 Visit by Slovakian Minister of Defense
- 28 Visit by ADM Fallon, Commander, Fleet Forces Command
- 29 ESG/MEU Planning Conference

October

- 1 Commissioning Ceremony for CWO2 [REDACTED]
- 5-7 AT/FP Phase II
- 18 COMPHIBRON EIGHT Embarks
- 25-27 Group Sail
- 28 Arrive Earle NJ for ammo onload

November

- 2 Depart Earle NJ
- 4 Arrive Norfolk
- 8-12 Supply Management Assessment
- 15-23 Underway for PMINT

December

- 1 Frocking Ceremony
- 2 Command Holiday Party

7-17 Underway for MV-22 operations
17 First Holiday Leave Period Begins
27 Second Holiday Leave Period Begins

NARRATIVE

Summary:

It was a busy 2004 for USS Kearsarge (LHD 3) in a year that began in the shipyard, followed by a surge mission in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom and concluding with advanced certifications and preparations for its major deployment with its Expeditionary Strike Group.

On January 12, Kearsarge arrived at Norfolk Naval Shipyard for a three-and-a-half month maintenance availability. During this maintenance period, Kearsarge received several systems modifications and enhancements. The crew completed a number of ship's force work items, while hundreds others used the time in the shipyard to attend schools and training, to attain or maintain their professional and tactical proficiency. Much of the training aboard ship focused on damage control and firefighting training. In addition to weekly repair locker training, the crew participated in main space fire and total ship survivability exercise drills three times a week. These drills honed the crew's skills to combat a major fire in either of the ship's two boiler rooms.

Kearsarge returned to Naval Station Norfolk following the completion of sea trials April 26-28. Sea trials was the ship's opportunity to test all systems that were worked on during the yard period and all integrated and interconnected systems to ensure operability. During its three days at sea, Kearsarge conducted a Level I flex test for both boilers, full power demonstration, ballast/deballast tests and anchor tests, as well as tests and calibrations on its radar and electronics systems.

Six weeks after completing maintenance availability at Norfolk Naval Shipyard, Kearsarge departed Norfolk on June 7 for a short-fused surge mission to transport elements of the 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit to the U.S. Central Command Area of Responsibility. Once underway, Kearsarge was joined by three Landing Craft Air Cushions (LCACs) from Assault Craft Unit FOUR and a detachment of MH-60 Knighthawk helicopters from Helicopter Combat Support Squadron EIGHT. Kearsarge conducted an underway replenishment with USS Detroit (AOE-4) to onload 518 pallets of ammunition, and used the opportunity to conduct a fueling-at-sea exercise, an evolution that hadn't been done in more than four years.

On June 9, Kearsarge anchored off the coast of Onslow Bay, North Carolina and began unloading Marines and approximately 800-1,000 shore tons of vehicles and equipment.

On the 3,348-mile transit across the Atlantic, KEARSARGE completed its Damage Control, Engineering and Combat Systems Tailored Ship's Training Availabilities to ensure that the crew can effectively train itself. Trainers from Afloat Training Group Atlantic were aboard to assess the crew and evaluated Kearsarge as effective.

Kearsarge arrived on station in the Northern Arabian Gulf and conducted the offload on July 7-9. The evolution began with the CH-46 Sea Knight helicopters flying off, followed by wave after wave of LCAC runs to the beach, carrying Marines, tanks, armored vehicles and other equipment. For two and a half days, in temperatures where the heat index reached more than 120 degrees, Kearsarge's embarked LCAC detachment from ACU-4 ran about 16 trips a day, moving

250 Marines and 1,200 tons of equipment. Immediately following the offload, Kearsarge weighed anchor and headed for home.

Upon returning to the Mediterranean, the crew enjoyed some well-deserved liberty in Souda Bay, Crete and Valletta, Malta.

After departing Malta, the crew was back at work with ATG Atlantic evaluators for Engineering and Combat Systems Tailored Systems Training Availabilities, immediately followed by Underway Demonstration and Final Evaluation Problem, the last two events in Kearsarge's Basic Phase.

Kearsarge returned to Norfolk on August 14 and for the next month, the crew enjoyed some well-deserved leave and time with their families and loved ones.

In October, Kearsarge's Anti-terrorism/Force Protection (AT/FP) programs, training and crew were put to the test, successfully completing Afloat Training Group (ATG) Atlantic's AT/FP Phase III evaluation.

The evaluation, which consisted of a series of drills and scenarios covering the gamut of AT/FP issues, tested the crew's ability to combat a terrorist threat overseas.

Later that month, the ships of the Kearsarge Expeditionary Strike Group, which includes USS Normandy (CG 60), USS Gonzalez (DDG 66), USS Kauffman (FFG 59), USS Ashland (LSD 48) and USS Ponce (LPD 15), sailed together for the first time during an at-sea group sail exercise Oct. 25-27.

The Group Sail allowed the ships to get out as a group for the first time and work out the communications and interoperability issues before moving on to the next phase in training.

The sail included several exercises across various warfare areas, including a detect-to-engage exercise with incoming aircraft, over-the-horizon targeting with other ships, Harpoon missile engagements and anti-submarine warfare exercises.

The Kearsarge ESG completed PHIBRON-Marine Integrated Training (PMINT) while underway Nov. 15-23. PMINT is the initial training for the ESG that included the Marines of the 26th Marine Expeditionary Unit.

PMINT laid the groundwork for the ESG and the MEU to create a 'Blue-Green' team and to work through some of the initial challenges that arise when integrating the Marines aboard ship.

The eight-day exercise included many of the evolutions the ESG and MEU would execute during real-world operations, beginning with the onload of more than 900 Marines, vehicles and equipment of the 26 MEU at Onslow Bay, N.C. by landing craft air cushion (LCAC) and helicopter. Other training events included daily flight operations with Marine helicopter and AV-8B II Harrier jets, LCAC and amphibious assault vehicle operations and beach assaults via LCAC and helicopter.

In addition to integrating and training with the Marines, PMINT was also an opportunity for the ships of the ESG to continue training with each other, improving communications and interoperability that began with the ESG Group Sail in October.

In December, before beginning the holiday standdown period, Kearsarge sailed again, this time conducting landing operations with the MV-22 Osprey. The landing operations were an effort to qualify 23 Marine Corps pilots from Marine Tilt Rotor Test and Evaluation Squadron 22 (VMX 22) on day deck landings as well as to provide a foundation of experience for future operations.

AWARDS

Ship's Store Retail and Service Excellence Award

Kearsarge's Retail and Services Division earned the Commander, Naval Surface Force, U.S. Atlantic Fleet (COMNAVSURFLANT) Ship's Store Retail and Service Excellence Award for 2004. The award is given to ships that have a proven track record of sustained superior performance in professionalism and commitment to crew service. The Kearsarge Supply Department was recognized, for the second consecutive year, after scoring 98.9 percent in the retail operation area of their Supply Management Assessment (SMA).

CNO Afloat Safety Award

Kearsarge was named the winner of the 2003 CNO Safety Afloat Safety Award in the Large Amphibious category for the U.S. Atlantic Fleet. The annual award recognizes outstanding contributions to fleet readiness, increased morale, efficiency and economic use of resources through safety. The ship's safety department began focusing its efforts toward being competitive for the award in January 2003, when the ship deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. The department put together a plan that included aggressive safety programs that exceeded the requirements for consideration for the award. The programs included unique video training produced aboard ship, and Safety Eight O'clock reports that outline shipboard safety issues on a daily basis.

Green "H" Award

Kearsarge's Medical Department earned the Commander Naval Surface Force U.S. Atlantic Fleet Green "H" Unit Wellness Award. The award, which recognizes excellence in command health promotion programs marks the seventh consecutive selection. The ship's health promotion goals during 2003 were to promote healthy lifestyles for the crew and to improve command readiness through education about preventative health care practices. The department has a variety of programs available to help Kearsarge Sailors make healthier lifestyle choices. One of the most popular is the ship's smoking cessation program. Twenty-six Sailors entered the program in 2003, with 13 considered successful quitters.

DEPLOYMENT STATISTICS

OPTEMPO:

Second Fleet: 22 of 22 (100%) underway
Fifth Fleet: 24 of 24 (100%) underway
Sixth Fleet: 16 of 23 (70%) underway
TOTAL 62 of 69 (90%) underway

Liberty Port Visits:

Souda Bay, Crete
Valletta, Malta

Navigation:

Miles traveled: 18,270 nautical miles

Flight Evolutions:

Landings 895
Launches 895
Flight Deck Aircraft Moves 401
Elevator Runs 172
Hangar Deck Aircraft Moves 63

Reenlistments and Retention:

Reenlistments 24
Reenlistment Commitment 82 years
SRBs 7
SRB Amount \$118,531

Off Duty Education/NCPACE:

Students Enrolled 84 (including Academic Skills)
College Credits Earned 180

Qualifications on Deployment:

ESWS 45
EAWS 45

Food:

Coffee 302 pounds
Milk 2,505 gals
Cereal 23,520 boxes
Fresh Eggs 3,870 dozen
Ground Beef 4,900 pounds
Chicken 11,550 pounds
Flour 8,650 pounds
Fish 3,771 pounds
Rice 5,250 pounds

Bacon	128,400 slices
Hot Wings	4,140 pounds
Hot Dogs	4,300 pounds
Potatoes	4,364 pounds

Services:

Candy Bars	15,000
Chips	10,000 bags
Soda	20,000 cans
Store and Vending Machine	\$325,000
Laundry	315 loads (13,500 pounds)
Haircuts	2500