



USS NASSAU (LHA-4)
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From: Commanding Officer, USS NASSAU (LHA 4)

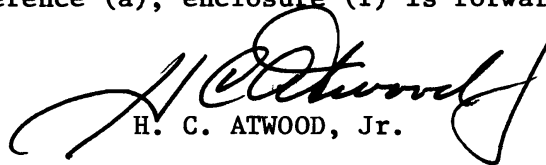
To: Director of Naval History (OP-09BH)

Subj: Command History; submission of

Ref: (a) OPNAVINST 5750.12C

Encl: (1) Command History of USS NASSAU (LHA 4) for period
1 Jan - 31 Dec 1980

1. In accordance with reference (a), enclosure (1) is forwarded.


H. C. ATWOOD, Jr.

COMMAND HISTORY OF USS NASSAU (LHA 4) 1 JAN - 31 DEC 80

With the beginning of the new year, 1980, USS NASSAU (LHA 4) continued shakedown/training operations that commenced following her commissioning. During the first two weeks in January, NASSAU steamed to Andros Islands, in the Bahamas, and, on 14 January, conducted ship's equipment accuracy tests at the Atlantic Fleet Underwater Systems Test Center (AUTEK) Range. This particular cruise marked the first time that NASSAU had embarked male dependents aboard as guests of the crew. During the return transit to homeport, she accomplished another major milestone in her brief career. During the morning and early afternoon of 18 January, while steaming through the Onslow Bay Operating Area off the coast of North Carolina, NASSAU successfully completed qualifications for the operation of the AV-8A Harrier jet aircraft; she became certified to launch and recover the VSTOL (Vertical/Short take off and landing) aircraft.

The remainder of January was spent in homeport preparing for Final Contract Trials. On the 29th of January, she was underway in the Virginia Capes Operating Area for Final Contract Trial preparations; the rehearsal was shortened by a winter storm that caused her early return to homeport. Following intensive inport preparations, NASSAU was underway again on 11 February with the Navy's Board of Inspection and Survey onboard for Final Contract Trials. Three intensive days of tests, drills and demonstrations followed and on 16 February, the Trials were completed. NASSAU was fully accepted by the U.S. Navy and another major milestone had been achieved.

During the weekend of 1 March, the worst winter storm of the century struck the Southeastern Virginia area. Despite over 18 inches of snow that virtually paralyzed the Tidewater Virginia area, NASSAU was busily preparing for her next operational exercise: CINCLANTFLT LHA Caribbean Operations, a 34 day training cruise through the Caribbean Sea and South Atlantic Ocean in response to President Carter's decision to increase U.S. Naval visibility in that vital area of U.S. interest. On the afternoon of 6 March she was underway and on the morning of 7 March, while at anchorage at Morehead City, North Carolina, she embarked personnel, equipment, helicopters and AV-8A Harriers of the 2nd Marine Division who would sail south with her. On the morning of 10 March, NASSAU arrived in her namesake, NASSAU, New Providence Island, the Bahamas, and later that morning, Admiral Harry D. Train, II, U.S. Navy, Commander in Chief, U.S. Atlantic Fleet/Commander in Chief, Atlantic broke his flag aboard; for the next two weeks, NASSAU would serve as the flagship for the U.S. Atlantic Fleet Commander. Following a highly successful port visit, NASSAU was underway on the morning of 12 March and on 14 March anchored at Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic. Departing the 16th of March, she anchored at Ft. De France, Martinique on 18 March, departing on 19 March; on 20 March she anchored at Bridgetown, Barbados, departing during the evening of 21 March; she completed the first half of the cruise when anchored at Kingstown, St. Vincent on 22 March. On the morning of 23 March, Admiral Train departed NASSAU to return to his headquarters in Norfolk, Virginia and Vice Admiral John D. Johnson, Jr., U.S. Navy Commander Naval Surface Force,

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U.S. Atlantic Fleet broke his flag aboard. For the next two weeks of Caribbean Operations NASSAU would serve as the flagship for the Atlantic Fleet Surface Force Commander.

On 23 March, NASSAU departed Kingstown and steamed toward the coast of Venezuela, anchoring at La Guaira, Venezuela on 25 March. During the five day visit to that ocean port gateway at Caracas, she was underway each afternoon for air shows and other amphibious demonstrations, returning to anchorage each evening. On 29 March she departed La Guaira and arrived at Colon, Panama on the afternoon of 1 April for her final port visit of the cruise. NASSAU departed Colon on 3 April for the return transit, and on the morning of 6 April, while off the coast of Key West, Florida, Vice Admiral Johnson and his staff departed via helicopter. NASSAU continued steaming homeward, and arrived in Norfolk on the morning of 9 April, after debarking her HC-6 detachment and the Marines of the 2nd Marine Division on the morning of 8 April while again at anchorage at Morehead City, North Carolina.

During each port visited throughout the cruise, NASSAU and her embarked units literally opened the doors. Air shows in each port featured the AV-8A VSTOL Harrier aircraft as well as demonstrations by the CH-46 Sea Knight and CH-53 Sea Stallion helicopters which were aboard. Additionally, since the majority of the port visits were conducted from anchorage, well deck operations by amphibious landing craft were extensively utilized. Open house was held in every port, and static displays of various Marine Corps weapons systems; from M-60 tanks, 150mm howitzers to tracked amphibian vessels were placed on display. The ship's hangar and flight decks were extensively decorated as NASSAU's two embarked Commanders hosted receptions in honor of various high ranking, civilian and military officials. In all, during the seven port visits, NASSAU and her embarked units hosted over 20,000 visitors during official receptions and ship visits open to the general public. The number of people who witnessed her air shows are unknown; estimates from Santo Domingo alone exceeded 30,000 spectators viewing from the shoreline.

Not only was NASSAU's cruise a display of military capabilities and readiness, it was a good will tour as well. The Atlantic Fleet Show Band was embarked and performed concerts in each port, climaxed by a "Battle of the Bands" with the Panamanian National Guard Band in Colon. Additionally, the band and the CINCLANTFLT Marine Honor Guard performed an impressive sunset parade each evening in every port. Various NASSAU sporting teams accepted challenges from local teams, further solidifying people-to-people relations. Local good will projects were accomplished in each port as volunteers assisted in painting schools, visiting retirement homes and performed other civic action programs; while in port at Panama, NASSAU's entire medical team was transported by helicopter to the interior to provide treatment and diagnostic services for needy people in the remote village of Las Cruces. The good will fostered between the host nationals and crew while in a liberty status further

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cemented the relations that were a focal point for the entire cruise. In recognition of the success of the mission, the Secretary of the Navy, in officially commending NASSAU and her crew, stated:

".....During the thirty-four day period, the ship steamed over 6,000 nautical miles, visiting seven Caribbean ports and utilizing aerial demonstrations, static displays, people-to-people programs, general visiting, civic action projects, and personal contacts. The positive impressions created by the Marine Corps flight demonstrations and static displays; the goodwill generated by organized civic action projects, band concerts, and sporting events; and the personal contact by crewmembers on liberty all contributed to the projection of the United States' interest in maintaining military and political stability in all countries of the Caribbean region."

After her return to homeport on 9 April NASSAU enjoyed a brief upkeep period and on 17 April was underway again enroute to New York City. She moored on 18 April and her crew enjoyed a weekend liberty visit to New York. Departing on 21 April, NASSAU anchored at the explosives anchorage in Hampton Roads Harbor on 22 April. While at anchorage, she off-loaded her supply of ship's ammunition and LFORM (Landing Force Operational Reserve Material (Marine supplies and munitions) and returned pierside at the Naval Station, Norfolk, on 24 April. This off-load was effected in preparation for entering Norfolk Naval Shipyard on 15 May to begin Post Shakedown Availability (PSA).

Upon completion of the LFORM off-load, and upon return to homeport, NASSAU began extensive preparation for her Post Shakedown Availability. On 13 May, NASSAU departed the Naval Station, Norfolk, and moored at the Naval Fuel Depot at Craney Island. Upon completion of defueling, she arrived at the Norfolk Naval Shipyard, Portsmouth on 15 May and commenced her ten month long Post Shakedown Availability. Scheduled for completion during the Post Shakedown Availability were intensive modification to the ship's propulsion plant and automatic cargo handling system; additionally, additional office plans for the AIMD department were constructed as well as extensive upgrading to the ship's major weapons and computer system. For the ship's crew, in addition to monitoring and assisting in the modification projects being undertaken by the shipyard, the emphasis shifted to training. For the remainder of the calendar year, over 8800 man-days, totaling in excess of 70,000 hours, of formal schools training were accomplished and documented. Additionally, extensive on-the-job training programs were effected and many crew members performed temporary additional duty aboard various deploying units of the Atlantic Fleet.

Although the environment onboard NASSAU changed markedly with her entry into the shipyard, general significant events occurred. On the 15th of July, during ceremonies conducted onboard USS SPARATANBURG COUNTY (LST 1192) NASSAU was officially presented the Meritorious Unit Commendation for her performance at Guantanamo Bay for REINFORCEX 1-79 the previous year. On 28 July, she celebrated her first year in commission with a ship-wide picnic, and, on 9 August, in ceremonies held aboard in

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the Norfolk Naval Shipyard, Captain Henry C. Atwood, Jr., U.S. Navy relieved Captain William A. Kearns, Jr., U.S. Navy, as Commanding Officer. Present at the ceremony were Vice Admiral John D. Johnson, Jr., U.S. Navy Commander Naval Surface Force, U.S. Atlantic Fleet and Rear Admiral W.C. Hamm Jr., U.S. Navy, Commander Amphibious Group TWO. Immediately following the ceremonies, Admiral Johnson promoted Captain Kearns to the rank of Rear Admiral and he departed the ship to assume his new duties as Inspector General, U.S. Atlantic Fleet.

Following the ceremonies of the summer, NASSAU continued her Post Shakedown Availability. Other major events that occurred during the remainder of the year was a thirty day period spent in dry dock. NASSAU successfully undocked on 22 December and, as the year closed, was busily preparing for a propulsion plant Light-off Exam, which would be completed early the next year.

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