



**USS NASSAU (LHA-4)**  
**FPO NEW YORK 09557**

IN REPLY REFER TO:  
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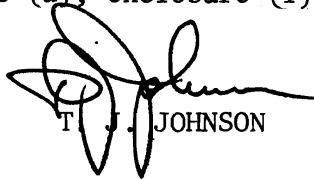
From: Commanding Officer, USS NASSAU (LHA 4)  
To: Director of Naval History (Op-09BH)

Subj: Command History; submission of

Ref: (a) OPNAVINST 5750.12C

Encl: (1) History of USS NASSAU (LHA 4) from 1 Jan 81 thru 31 Dec 81

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

  
T. J. JOHNSON

COMMAND HISTORY OF THE USS NASSAU (LHA 4) 1 JAN 81 thru 31 DEC 81

NASSAU started the new year under the command of Captain Henry C. Atwood Jr. just nearing the end of her Post Shakedown Availability at the Naval Shipyard in Portsmouth. A major milestone was accomplished when the ship passed her Engineering Plant Light-Off Examination on January 16.

February was marked by two days of sea trials in the Virginia Capes operating area. Also that month, NASSAU received the 1980 Naval Amphibious Base Admiral's Cup Championship Trophy in the Large Commands Afloat Division.

On 10 March, NASSAU departed the shipyard for the Virginia Capes operating area for Post-Shakedown Availability Trials and crew training. The ship's helo was embarked on the same day and her landing was the first of 3,262 landings that were to be made by all aircraft onboard NASSAU in 1981.

On 12 March, NASSAU provided assistance to a Coast Guard H-3 helicopter in support of Commander, Coast Guard District Number FIVE. The helo was on her return flight to Elizabeth City, North Carolina from Bermuda after assisting in a search and rescue effort for a capsized tanker. On that morning, NASSAU effected rendezvous and refueled the H-3 to ensure her safe passage on her final leg to home base. After assisting the helo, NASSAU assumed a heading for Craney Island for refueling on 13 March. The following day NASSAU moved to Pier 7 at Norfolk Naval Station, Norfolk, Virginia.

On 16 March, NASSAU was notified that within thirty days the ship would sail to the Mediterranean with a deckload of 20, AV-8A Harrier aircraft. The mission of the cruise was to demonstrate the Navy/Marine Corps ability to deploy anywhere in the world on short notice. To prepare for this deployment, the crew worked day and night to load the supplies and aviation maintenance equipment needed to support these vertical/short take off and landing jet aircraft. Near the end of March, NASSAU loaded a 10 day supply of aviation ordnance and steamed south off the coast of North Carolina to provide a platform for carrier qualifications by the pilots of VMA 231 and VMA 542. Following carrier qualifications, NASSAU returned to Norfolk for refueling and loading of landing force operational material and ammunition. Making one more trip to North Carolina to embark the marine contingent of men, support equipment, and aircraft, NASSAU enjoyed one final weekend in Norfolk prior to deployment.

Steaming in company with USS AMERICA (CV 66) with Commander, Carrier Group SIX, CTG 20.2, embarked, NASSAU departed for her first Mediterranean deployment on 13 April. Embarked onboard NASSAU were: Commander Amphibious Squadron EIGHT, Captain W.D. ZIRBEL; Marine Air Group-32 (Forward), commanded by Colonel B.J. PALMER; and a detachment of two H-46 helos from HC-16, with LCDR R. FINDLAY as Officer in Charge. MAG 32 (Forward) included HMM-231, commanded by LTCOL W.R. SPICER and HMM-542, commanded by LTCOL D. WILLIAMS.

Enclosure (1)

On 20 April 900 miles west of the Gibraltar Straits at 36-06'-0"N Latitude and 22-57'-0"W Longitude, an AV-8A Harrier was lost off the starboard bow of the ship immediately after take-off. The pilot ejected safely and was recovered from the water by the HC-16 Detachment Search and Rescue crew in a matter of minutes. The pilot suffered a broken leg and minor bruises--the AV-8A was lost at sea.

NASSAU entered the Gibraltar Straits on 22 April and for the next 56 days steamed in company with various units of Task Force 61, Commander Carrier Group SIX, and Commander Destroyer Squadron 26 while under the operational control of Commander SIXTH Fleet. During this period, NASSAU refueled at sea on ten different occasions as well as providing fuel to other ships twice. The ship performed her first underway refueling from USNS NEOSHO receiving 765,000 gallons of diesel fuel marine on 23 April. While deployed, NASSAU participated in NATO Exercise "DAILY DOUBLE" and various "ENCOUNTEREX" exercises. The ENCOUNTEREX exercises included carrier battles with USS FORRESTAL and other units of Task Force 61. NASSAU set many precedents on her deployment, including carrying three times the normal complement of Harriers for LHA class ships; launching the first Harriers carrying live ordnance from the LHA platform; achieving landings number 4,000 and 5,000; launching over 1,000 Harrier sorties during the cruise; and conducting her first underway replenishment of another ship, USS MILLER (FF-1091)

Participating in the Midshipman Summer Training Program, NASSAU embarked over 150 midshipmen at Souda Bay, Crete. To test the adequacy of NASSAU's emergency evacuation bill, midshipmen were instructed to simulate evacuees and were processed onboard using evacuation procedures. When USS NITRO (AE-27) was immobilized by a major fire in her main engineering spaces and subsequently towed to Souda Bay, NASSAU was called upon to return to Souda Bay to render assistance. NASSAU provided hotel services, medical assistance, food, clothing and supplies to NITRO until she was towed to Naples for repairs.

Malaga, Spain had originally been scheduled for 13 May as a port visit, but as the ship entered Malaga Harbor, she received verbal orders to steam to the Eastern Mediterranean to participate in Lebanon evacuation contingency operations.

NASSAU made one port call to Rota, Spain on 17-19 June before departing for Norfolk. Returning to the operational control of Commander Second Fleet, NASSAU's transit across the Atlantic enroute to the United States was interrupted by a medical emergency on USS EDENTON (ATS 1). NASSAU was directed by Commander in Chief, U. S. Atlantic Fleet, to rendezvous with EDENTON to provide assistance. Upon arrival on 26 June, it was discovered that EDENTON had also contaminated half her fuel supply and needed refueling. Although EDENTON was in a towing situation, NASSAU was able to go alongside to deliver the required fuel and enable EDENTON to complete her mission.

NASSAU arrived at Morehead City, North Carolina on 28 June, to debark all USMC assets. The ship then turned homeward and at 1525, on 29 June, arrived in Norfolk.

The month of June brought a great deal of recognition to NASSAU for her accomplishments during the Mediterranean Cruise. Congratulatory messages were received from Commander SIXTH Fleet, Commander SECOND Fleet, Commander Amphibious Group TWO and Commander Amphibious Squadron EIGHT, for the ship's outstanding performance. The ship hosted visitors both in June and July, including: the Japanese Defense Minister; Mr. Joaquin Garcia-Famanillos, member of the Spanish Parliament; Lieutenant General A. G. Schwenk, Commanding General, Fleet Marine Forces, Atlantic; Vice Admiral J. D. Johnson, Commander, Naval Surface Force, U. S. Atlantic Fleet and Secretary of the Navy, The Honorable John G. Lehman, who was accompanied by Vice Admiral Harry D. Train, III, Commander in Chief, U. S. Atlantic Fleet.

After a one month stand down period for leave and liberty, NASSAU resumed operations in the Virginia Capes Operating area and loaded ammunition in preparation of Amphibious Refresher Training. Following one week's training, NASSAU sailed north to Boston on August 19th for a four day port visit. This highly successful port visit saw over 8000 visitors tour the ship and received wide media recognition.

After Labor Day weekend, NASSAU returned to anchorage to load ammunition for the imminent deployment and the three week deployment work up period. Following ammunition onload, she steamed into the Virginia Capes operating area to conduct her Engineering Plant Operational Propulsion Examination. After several days of operations, NASSAU returned to Norfolk on 11 September with only one phase of the examination left incomplete. The following day, 860 dependents were embarked for a one day dependent's cruise.

Late in September, on the 23rd, NASSAU received a "Distinguished Visitor" visit from the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Equal Opportunity and Safety, Dr. Sharon Lord who toured the ship's facilities and spaces. Her departure was followed closely by the arrival of celebrity and bodybuilder Mr. Arnold Schwarzenegger who came to give a weightlifting and bodybuilding demonstration on the flight deck. His appearance brought out an audience of over 200, including crewmen from the NASSAU and other ships, as well as members of local bodybuilding clubs. His appearance received coverage from Time and People magazines, as well as local military and civilian press and some southern ABC-affiliate TV stations.

The month of October began with a visit by the Oceanographer of the Navy, Rear Admiral J. B. Mooney, for a tour of the ship's Meteorological facilities. On 14 October, the Type Commander's Medical Inspector inspected NASSAU's Medical facilities. On 16 October, NASSAU received a visit from Vice Admiral Teles de Aragao, the Brazilian Navy Surgeon General. From October 23rd through October 30th NASSAU extended her hospitality to the British carrier HMS HERMES. Hosting the crew of this 750-foot ship, NASSAU sponsored several sporting events, dinners, and receptions.

The first week of November brought NASSAU off the coast of Onslow Beach, North Carolina for gunfire support exercises, amphibious training, and helicopter operations. After returning to port on the 7th, NASSAU embarked and became the flagship for Commander Amphibious Squadron EIGHT. During 24 and 25 November, NASSAU successfully completed and passed her Operational Propulsion Examination.

The ship was one more time underway on 30 November for three weeks of Amphibious refresher training and Marine Amphibious Readiness Group (MARG) 1-82 Deployment work-ups off Onslow Beach and Moorehead City, North Carolina.

With only one weekend in port, NASSAU practiced deployment operations in company with USS TRENTON (LPD-4), USS NEWPORT (LST-1179) the embarked 34th Marine Amphibious Unit, and Assault Craft Unit TWO.

On December 18th, NASSAU returned to port for Christmas stand down and final preparations prior to the deployment.

SIGNIFICANT STATISCAL DATA

Aircraft launchings and recoveries.....3262  
Aircraft launchings and recoveries since commissioning.....6038  
Ammunition expenditures:  
    5-inch projectiles.....119  
    Sparrow III missiles.....3  
Aircraft types aboard:  
    UH-1N.....AH-1T.....HH-2D.....H-3.....HH-3D.....CH-46E  
    CH-53D.....CH-53E\*  
Cargo and equipment handled:  
    Vehicles.....9  
    Cargo:     ordnance, pallets.....1050  
              squadron, pallets.....300  
              ordnance, cubic feet.....39000  
              squadron, cubic feet.....21000

Commanding Officer:                      Captain Henry C. Atwood, Jr.

\*The CH-53E was an experimental version of the CH-53D, and NASSAU was the first LHA platform to receive this helo under operational usage.