



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY  
USS NASSAU (LHA-4)  
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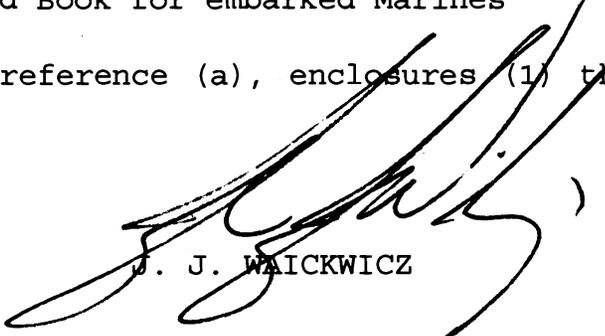
From: Commanding Officer, USS NASSAU (LHA 4)  
To: Director of Naval History (OP 09BH)

Subj: COMMAND HISTORY 1996

Ref: (a) OPNAVINST 5750.12F

Encl: (1) USS NASSAU Command History for period 01JAN96-31DEC96.  
(2) Copies of Personal For messages  
(3) Welcome Aboard Pamphlet  
(4) Ship Photo  
(5) Familygram (2)  
(6) Fact Sheet  
(7) Welcome Aboard Book for embarked Marines

1. In accordance with reference (a), enclosures (1) through (7) are forwarded.

  
J. J. WAICKWICZ

## COMMAND COMPOSITION AND ORGANIZATION

1. The Ship's Mission: The mission of the LHA is to embark, deploy and land elements of a Marine landing force in an assault by helicopters, landing craft, amphibious vehicles or by a combination of these methods; thus possessing the capabilities of the LPH, LSD, LPD and LKA class ships. The USS NASSAU can operate independently or in conjunction with other units conducting heliborne and surface amphibious operations. The TARAWA class multipurpose, amphibious assault ship was designed to maintain "Tactical Integrity" or to get a balanced force to the same point at the same time.

USS NASSAU can carry a complete Marine Battalion Landing Team (approximately 1,800 personnel), supplies and equipment needed in an assault, and vehicles to land the team ashore either by helicopter and/or small amphibious craft. Furthermore, USS NASSAU routinely operates with the Marine Corps AV-8B vertical take-off and landing jet for close air support of an amphibious assault.

USS NASSAU's ability to do this was clearly demonstrated during GTMO REINFORCEX '79 when the President of the United States ordered the Naval Base at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, to be reinforced by a Marine Amphibious Unit (MAU). This evolution was the first test of this class ship in full scale landing operation.

The ship's capabilities were further demonstrated during OPERATION DESERT STORM when USS NASSAU deployed with only eight days notice. As Flagship for the Commander of the Amphibious Task Force and the Commanding General of the Marine Expeditionary Brigade, USS NASSAU flew the first combat sorties from an LHA platform. More than 250 combat missions were flown with a record 56 flown in one day.

A secondary mission of USS NASSAU is that of evacuation and civilian disaster relief. Hundreds of tons of relief materials can be carried aboard and delivered to disaster victims within hours of the ship's arrival on the scene. Additionally, fresh water and electricity could be provided from the ship's engineering plant until restoration of domestic services. USS NASSAU's full medical facilities can provide hospitalization for up to 300 patients (including intensive care) and provide out-

patient treatment for hundreds of additional sick or injured personnel.

USS NASSAU is attached to Commander, Amphibious Group TWO.

2. CHRONOLOGY OF SIGNIFICANT EVENTS JANUARY - DECEMBER 1996.

- 1-8 Jan: Ship inport Norfolk for holiday leave period.
- 8 Jan: Crew returns from holiday leave.
- 9-14 Jan: Ammunition onload at Gulf Anchorage, Norfolk, Va.  
Severe cold weather closes Naval Base and Naval Weapons Station. Ammunition onload delayed until 10 Jan.
- 19 Jan: 50-60 knot winds caused ship to break away from pier parting all lines. Tug boats pushed ship back to pier. There were no injuries reported.
- 22-26 Jan: Underway.
- 29 Jan-2 Feb: Underway (STS).
- 9 Feb: Underway for New Orleans port visit.
- 15-21 Feb: Inport New Orleans, ship open for general visiting.
- 22 Feb: Underway from New Orleans. Fuel oil leak in Aft Lower Vehicle stowage, General Quarters sounded at 2230. Quick response leak isolated, no injuries or fire.
- 23 Feb: Ship diverted back toward Cuba, to assist in rescue efforts for a civilian plane that was shot down in international waters near Cuba.
- 29 Feb: Inport Norfolk.
- 6-15 Mar: Underway for Type Commander's Amphibious Training/Tailored Ships Training Availability IV.
- 9-12 Apr: Tailored Ships Training Availability II/Combat Systems Training Group.
- 27-28 Apr: Hosted HMS FEARLESS crew.
- 28 Apr: Sports Day and picnic for NASSAU and FEARLESS crews.
- 2-17 May: Participated in Combined Joint Task Force Exercise Purple Star with U.S. and British ships.
- 10 May: Conducted amphibious assault.
- 20 May: Underway for Naval Weapons Station, Earle, N.J. for weapons onload.
- 28-31 May: Underway for Tailored Ship's Training Availability II and Engineering Training Group.

- 10 Jun: Underway, experienced casualty to deck edge elevator causing ship to return to Golf Anchorage.
- 11 Jun: Moored Norfolk, Va.
- 12 Jun: Deck edge elevator removed and taken to Norfolk Naval Shipyard for repairs.
- 13-28 Jun: Underway for training.
- 29 Jun-5 Aug: Inport Norfolk for upkeep and maintenance.
- 10 Jul: Ship moved to Norfolk Naval Shipyard as a safe haven from Hurricane Bertha.
- 10-16 Jul: Ship moored at Norfolk Naval Shipyard.
- 17 Jul: Commanding Officer and many of the ship's junior officers traveled to Camp Lejune, N.C. to observe Marine capability exercise.
- 18-31 Jul: Aircraft Elevator repaired and engineering plant repairs completed.
- 5-10 Aug: Underway for training. Conducted Amphibious Assault Vehicle (AAV) operations.
- 13 Aug: Partnership for Peace program ship visit.
- 19-23 Aug: Underway for Tailored Ship's Training Availability.
- 21-23 Aug: Propulsion examination
- 19 Aug: Underway. During transit, practiced transiting a "swept channel" and loss of gyro. Practiced CBR general quarters, and conducted 5" gun fire. Completed Tailored Ship's Training Availability.
- 21 Aug: Anchored at Lynnhaven Anchorage to pick up LCU's. Practiced small boat attack defense procedures. Underway.
- 22 Aug: CBR General Quarters drill and underway replenishment with USNS JOHN LENTHAL.
- 23 Aug: Early morning amphibious assault at Camp Lejune. Practiced a non-combatant evacuation operation.
- 24 Aug-8 Sep: Inport Norfolk, Va.
- 26 Aug-6 Sep: Combat Systems Readiness Review.
- 28 Aug: Partnership for Peace lunch and ship tour.
- 9 Sep: Underway for COMPTUEX Phase II with THEODORE ROOSEVELT Battle Group and NASSAU Amphibious Ready Group. Conducted LCU operations at Lynnhaven Anchorage. Conducted AV-8 Harrier operations en route to North Carolina.
- 10 Sep: 26 MEU onload.
- 11-13 Sep: LCU operations at anchorage near Camp Lejune.
- 14 Sep: Conducted LCU operations.

- 19 Sep: 26 MEU off-load.
- 20 Sep: Moored Norfolk, Va.
- 26 Sep: Partnership for Peace tour.
- 7 Oct: Underway for JTF-EX 1-97, ships diverted east due to tropical storm.
- 10 Oct: Anchored Onslow Bay, N.C. received loads from beach. Underway for Radio Island, N.C.
- 11 Oct: Anchored Radio Island, N.C., 26 MEU onload, returned to Onslow Bay, N.C. to pre-load tanks.
- 20 Oct: Ship visited by 19 members of the media.
- 21 Oct: Began amphibious assault at Camp Lejune, N.C. Landing craft air cushion (LCACs) participated in off-load.
- 25 Oct: Moored Norfolk, Va., commenced Preparation for Overseas Movement period.
- 25 Oct-24 Nov: Preparations for Overseas Movement.
- 18 Nov: Fast cruise, lit off boilers, conducted underway drills. 1830 Childrens' pre-deployment brief held on mess decks.
- 19 Nov: Underway for pre-deployment sea trials, conducted high-speed run.
- 20 Nov: Anchored Lynhaven Anchorage, picked up LCUs and family members, underway for family day cruise.
- 25 Nov: 0800 underway for deployment (MARG 97-1).
- 26 Nov: Anchored Morehead City, N.C., commenced 26 MEU onload and ACE fly-on.
- 27 Nov: Underway from Morehead City, anchored Onslow Bay, N.C. to complete onload. 1200 underway for Rota, Spain.
- 28 Nov: Ship observed holiday routine for Thanksgiving Day.
- 3 Dec: Conducted underway replenishment with USS NASHVILLE. NASSAU transferred 1,000 gallons of DFM to NASHVILLE. Marine squadron "Blue Knights" celebrated 35,000 hours mishap free flying.
- 8 Dec: Turnover with USS SAIPAN of coast of Rota, Spain.
- 9 Dec: Moored Rota, Spain.
- 10 Dec: Underway from Rota, Spain. Transited the Straights of Gibraltar.
- 11-13 Dec: Norfolk television (WVEC-TV) reporter Joe Flanagan and cameraman aboard to videotape material for annual Christmas Special, "A Navy Christmas."
- 14 Dec: Conducted safety standdown.

- 15 Dec: Conducted underway replenishment with USNS LEROY GRUMMAN. Burials at sea for U.S. Army Veteran, Specialist 5 George Allen Ingmire, Jr. and U.S. Navy Veteran, BU1 David Bruce Nonnemacher.
- 17 Dec: Ship set Condition 1A for LCU and small boat operations off coast of Yugoslavia.
- 19 Dec: Marines practice TRAPEX in Croatia.
- 23 Dec: Arrive Trieste, Italy for Holiday port visit.
- 25 Dec: Actress Halle Berry visits crew.

3. Narrative: 1996 began with NASSAU in port Norfolk with half the crew on holiday leave. On 8 January, the crew returned from holiday leave. On 10 January, following a one-day delay for severe winter weather, the ship proceeded to Gulf Anchorage to conduct an ammunition on-load. Following the ammunition on-load, ship returned to Pier 7 on 14 January.

On 19 January more severe winter weather with winds near 60 knots caused NASSAU to break away from pier, parting all lines. Tug boats pushed the ship back to the pier. There were no injuries.

On 15 February, NASSAU arrived in New Orleans where it served as a floating barracks for nearly 1,700 Midshipmen, ROTC and JROTC cadets participating in the many Mardi Gras parades. It also proved to be an excellent opportunity for the crew of USS NASSAU to enjoy some well deserved liberty.

While returning to Norfolk from New Orleans, NASSAU was diverted to waters off the Cuban coast in support of Operation SENTINAL LIFEGUARD to aid in search and rescue efforts for a civilian plane that was shot down in international waters. After being delayed two days the ship returned to Norfolk on February 29.

From 6 to 15 March the ship was underway again for Type Commander's Amphibious Training (TCAT) and Tailored Ships Training Availability IV evolutions. Then from 9 to 12 April NASSAU was underway for Combat Systems training (Combat Systems Training Group) and Tailored Ships Training Availability II.

On 27 and 28 April the NASSAU hosted the crew of the visiting Royal Navy amphibious assault ship, HMS FEARLESS, treating them to a picnic and sports day on 28 April.

In May, the ship and the 26th MEU participated in Combined Joint Task Force Exercise PURPLE STAR along with units from all branches of the U.S. Armed Forces as well as British ships and Marines. Operation PURPLE STAR was NASSAU's first opportunity to exercise all of its amphibious assault capabilities with the 26th MEU since completing SRA.

NASSAU's participation in Operation PURPLE STAR served not only to aid the SAIPAN ARG prepare for its upcoming deployment, but also provided a valuable training opportunity for NASSAU to prepare for its key role in JTF Exercise 1-97.

On 17 May, NASSAU returned to port for three days before getting underway for Naval Weapons Station, Earle, N.J. for a weapons onload.

When not conducting work-ups at sea, NASSAU continued to serve in key roles for the United States.

With the "Iron Curtain" a fading memory, USS NASSAU played a small but important role in the development of relationships between former Eastern-Bloc nations and the NATO alliance.

In an exchange visit between the U.S. and former Soviet-Bloc nations, a 75-member delegation of Eastern European Ministers and Chiefs of Defense visited NASSAU for an orientation tour and briefing on 15 August. The delegation represented "Cooperative Osprey," a "Partnership for Peace" program consisting of Eastern European nations which are in the process of aligning themselves with Western nations.

The delegation was welcomed aboard NASSAU by Rear Admiral Wirt R. Fladd, Commander Amphibious Group TWO, and NASSAU's Commanding Officer, Captain Allan D. Wall.

Following a briefing about America's amphibious Navy, the delegation was given a tour of the NASSAU. The tour gave Eastern European military leaders a first-hand look at how the U.S. Navy operates, as well as a positive look at life aboard a U.S. Navy warship.

Members of the delegation were impressed by NASSAU's squared-away Sailors and how well-kept the ship was.

The group included defense representatives from Austria, Sweden, Moldova, Uzbekistan, The Republic of Georgia, Belarus, The Former Yugoslave Republic of Macedonia, Latvia, Kyrgyzstan, Slovak Republic, Kazakstan, Slovenia, Estonia, Ukraine, Romania, Bulgaria, Albania, the Czech Republic, and Poland.

Even though NASSAU often impresses visitors in port, the job the ship does best is amphibious warfare.

Putting Marines on a hostile beach is no easy task, but the Sailors and Marines of the USS NASSAU and 26th MEU demonstrated that they are trained and ready to do just that.

The assault began 14 miles off the coast of the fictitious country of Korona (North Carolina) at 0400, 22 October, as two Landing Craft Utility (LCUs) from NASSAU slipped out of the well deck en route to the beach under the cover of darkness. The LCUs maneuvered into position safely away from the beach and launched combat rubber raiding crafts to conduct a reconnaissance mission of the planned landing site for the amphibious assault.

Five hours later, back onboard NASSAU, with the recon mission complete and landing site approved, "General Quarters" was announced throughout the ship. With the ship at its maximum state of readiness, NASSAU along with the other ships of its Amphibious Ready Group (ARG) were ready to launch an assault.

This was just the beginning of a scenario leading to one of the phases incurred by the NASSAU ARG during the Joint Task Force Exercise that involved units from all branches of the armed services. The exercise involved more than 15,000 participants and was the final exam for units preparing for deployment overseas. JTF-EX 97-1 simulated a real world scenario requiring interaction by U.S. Forces to support and ultimately defend U.S. assets.

JTF-EX was divided into five phases, the Deployment Phase, Presence Phase, Hostilities Phase, Decisive Combat Phase and Redeployment Phase. Each phase brought the Amphibious Readiness Group to a higher level of readiness. Units from the 26th MEU embarked in NASSAU, NASHVILLE, and PENSACOLA were tested with a number of realistic drills.

The JTF-EX tested NASSAU's ability to handle realistic, non-combat missions. A Non-combatant Evacuation Operation (NEO) was conducted October 21st, in which the Navy and Marine Corps team practiced the safe extraction of U. S. citizens from a host country during times of political unrest.

The exercise was conducted at sea off the coast of North Carolina and at Camp Lejuene, North Carolina.

In October, during JTF exercises, ship's company personnel completed a project to correct a deficiency in crew's berthing space.

Due to the number of billets added to the ship since its commissioning in 1979, it was becoming harder and harder to accommodate the ship's crew.

Originally designed to accommodate 770 crew members, the NASSAU crew now comprises more than 1,000 Sailors and Marines. Until recently, additional crew members were berthed in troop berthing spaces, which are designed to berth embarked Marines.

To overcome the ship's growing pains, the command developed a plan of action to build two new berthing spaces so all crew members could have a rack of their own in "blue" spaces.

The command located two spaces -- the Air and Admin Department berthing lounges -- that could be converted into berthing spaces. With help from many people the plan went into action.

The two lounges were converted entirely by ship's company personnel. In addition to providing the required berthing spaces, the ship's self-help effort also saved the Navy a considerable amount of money. Cost estimates were anywhere from 500-thousand to one-million dollars.

Most of the materials were procured through Defense Reutilization Management Office (DRMO) at no cost.

Other equipment was removed from decommissioned ships.

On October 25, 1996, NASSAU completed its workups and began a 30-day pre-overseas movement (POM) period. On November 18 the ship got underway for sea trials with a family day cruise on November 19. A week later on November 25, NASSAU departed Norfolk on a routine six month deployment.

The NASSAU ARG braved the rough seas and had to travel a course more southerly than planned during the Atlantic crossing to avoid severe weather to the North.

After the trans-Atlantic crossing, the NASSAU ARG relieved SAIPAN ARG off the coast of Rota, Spain on December 8, 1996.

The following day NASSAU along with the other ships of the amphibious ready group stopped at Naval Station Rota, Spain to top off on fuel and supplies before departing for the Straits of Gibraltar on December 10.

Many of the Sailors and Marines of the NASSAU ARG were able to take advantage of the port visit to take a day of liberty. Even though the stop was primarily to prepare the ships of the NASSAU ARG for the last leg of their voyage into the Mediterranean Sea, many Sailors and Marines were able to enjoy visiting the city of Rota.

On 23 December, NASSAU arrived in the Adriatic port of Trieste, Italy, where the crew enjoyed the Christmas and New Years holidays. On Christmas Day, actress Halle Berry visited the ship to sign autographs and meet with members of the crew.