



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY

USS NASSAU (LHA-4)
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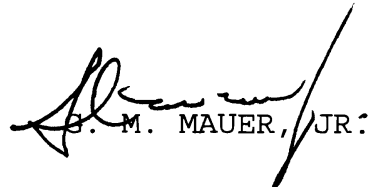
From: Commanding Officer, USS NASSAU (LHA 4)
To: Director of Naval History, Naval Historical Center

Subj: 1999 COMMAND HISTORY

Ref: (a) CNO ltr 5757 Ser 09BH/SH/0U505886 of 16 Oct 00

Encl: (1) Command Composition and Organization
(2) USS NASSAU's Mediterranean Deployment Book

1. Per reference (a), enclosures (1) and (2) are submitted.


A. M. MAUER, JR.

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 and LPD class ships. 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.

In November 1996, NASSAU departed on Marine Amphibious Ready Group (MARG 97-1) deployment. While deployed NASSAU participated in Operation SILVER WAKE, the non-combatant evacuation of Albania.

NASSAU evacuated over 600 personnel from 22 different countries. While off the coast of Albania, NASSAU also rescued 85 refugees from two vessels in distress. While on station in Albania, NASSAU was redeployed to the coast of Zaire in support of Operation GUARDIAN RETRIEVAL, steaming the 5123 nautical miles at 20 knots. NASSAU remained on station for more than a month in support of this operation, returning to Norfolk in May 1997.

USS NASSAU is attached to Commander, Amphibious Group TWO.

2. CHRONOLOGY OF SIGNIFICANT EVENTS JANUARY - DECEMBER 1999.

- 01-05 Jan: Inport Barcelona, Spain.
- 07-11 Jan: Inport Rota, Spain.
- 14 Jan: First East Coast AV8-B Harrier Night Vision Goggles flight.
- 16-19 Jan: Spanish Amphibious Exercise.
- 23 Jan: Underway Replenishment with the USNS Kanawha. Took on 550,000 gallons of DFM and 150,000 gallons of JP-5.
- 26 Jan: Underway Replenishment with the USNS Kanawha. Took on 90,000 gallons of DFM.
- 27 Jan-
- 06 Feb: Inport Souda Bay, Crete.
- 08 Feb: Underway Replenishment with USS Detroit. Took on 400,000 gallons of DFM and 70,000 gallons of JP-5.
- 16 Feb: Underway Replenishment with USS Detroit. Took on 400,000 gallons of DFM and 70,000 gallons of JP-5.
- 18-20 Feb: Inport Souda Bay, Crete.
- 27 Feb: Underway Replenishment with USNS Monongahela. Took on 400,000 gallons of DFM and 100,000 gallons of JP-5.
- 04-12 Mar: Exercise Alexander the Great.
- 06 Mar: Underway Replenishment with the USNS Monongahela. Took on 250,000 gallons of DFM and 80,000 gallons of JP-5.
- 12-18 Mar: Inport Rhodes, Greece.
- 19 Mar: Underway Replenishment with the USNS Monongahela. Took on 350,000 gallons of DFM and 70,000 gallons of JP-5.
- 20 Mar: Maltese President embarked NASSAU for a guided tour.
- 20-22 Mar: Inport Valetta, Malta.
- 21 Mar: NASSAU host reception for Maltese President and other dignitaries.
- 22 Mar: Underway in support of NATO operation Allied Force.
- 23 Apr: Arrive on station for NATO operation Allied Force.
- 23 Mar-
- 24 Apr: On station in support of NATO operation Allied Force.
- 26 Mar: Underway Replenishment with USNS Monogahela. Took on 450,000 gallons of DFM and 28,000 gallons of JP-5.
- 01 May: Relieved on station by USS KEARSARGE (LHD 3). Outchop of SIXTH Fleet operating area.

- 10-12 May: Anchor Morehead City, NC, commence offload of 24 MEU.
- 12 May: Family Day cruise
- 13 May: Arrive Norfolk Naval Station after successful six month Mediterranean deployment.
- 13-28 May: Commence first Post-Overseas Movement leave period.
- 28 May-
- 14 Jun: Commence second Post-Overseas Movement leave period.
- 28 Jun-
- 02 Jul: Conduct ammunition offload in Earle, NJ.
- 15 Jul: Dead-Stick move from Norfolk Naval Base to Norfolk Naval Shipyard for a nine-month overhaul.
- 28 Jul: NASSAU celebrates 20th Birthday with a cake cutting ceremony and a day at Busch Gardens Amusement Park.
- 14 Sep: Damage Control Quarters computer system installation.
- 23 Sep: NASSAU's new Chief Petty Officers are pinned.
- 09 Oct: NASSAU Sailors volunteer at 7th Special Olympics Fall Games.
- 02 Nov: NASSAU volunteers begin their efforts with a Habitat for Humanity project.

3. Narrative: NASSAU rang in the New Year in the port of Barcelona, Spain. NASSAU was in Spain as part of its six-month Mediterranean cruise.

While in Barcelona, NASSAU's First Class Petty Officers' Association and Marines of the 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU) tackled various projects at Barcelona's Cheshire Homes for the severely handicapped, giving the homes a much needed facelift. Sailors and Marines trimmed trees, cleaned the gutters of the building, painted and did some electrical wiring.

NASSAU Caroling Team also took their voices and a huge batch of holiday cookies to the Cheshire House. After arriving, NASSAU's Chaplain, LCDR [REDACTED], and his 'singing angels' belted out their best holiday songs.

The residents of Cheshire House received their new American friends with open arms. They enjoyed every song, had cookies and coffee with the Sailors and Marines, and asked many of them to autograph NASSAU postcards for them.

After leaving Barcelona, NASSAU visited the neighboring Spanish city of Rota. This port was a chance for personnel to pick up military items, seeing that Rota is one of the Navy's biggest bases in the Mediterranean. Sailors and Marines enjoyed sight seeing and getting some much needed time off.

Once Underway from Rota, Marines for the 24 Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable) participated in Exercise Spanish PHIBLEX. These types of exercises are conducted to help strengthen foreign country relationships.

After the completion of the successful exercise, NASSAU steamed towards the island of Crete. NASSAU pulled into Souda Bay, Crete. This would turn out to be the first of NASSAU visit to the small island. Sailors and Marines enjoyed Greek traditions and delicacies while in port.

Underway from Crete, NASSAU reached the halfway point of the cruise. Since leaving Norfolk in November, the 2,455 Sailors and Marines of the multi-mission, Amphibious Assault Ship USS NASSAU (LHA 4), were extremely busy maintaining U.S. presence in the Mediterranean. By the mid-cruise point, NASSAU safely navigated over 13,000 nautical miles, burning more than three million gallons of diesel fuel.

NASSAU conducted 173 hours of Wet Well Operations, off-loading 87 Landing Craft Utility (LCU) and 52 Landing Craft Air Cushion (LCAC), transferring over 7,300 people, 473 pallets of cargo, and 62,000 pounds of mail.

HMM-266, the embarked Marine Composite Squadron, kept NASSAU's flight deck very busy. Flying more than 2,800 hours, they burned over one million gallons of jet fuel in the first three months. The Navy/Marine Corps team has exceeded all expectations by safely completing over 6,000 flight deck evolutions, including 4,600 launch and recoveries, and nearly 1,500 aircraft moves. NASSAU's Supply Department prepared over half a million meals.

With integrated medical assets from the Marine Corps Air/Ground Elements, a Fleet Surgical Team, and ship's company medical personnel, the Medical Department treated over 2,400 sick call patients, filled nearly 3,000 pharmacy prescriptions, conducted over 3,500 laboratory procedures, and even performed 30 surgeries.

As the first Amphib to be installed with the IT21 Local Area Network (LAN), NASSAU's ADP Division operated at optimum efficiency. Providing Internet access to the entire crew, they processed over 6,500 e-mails a day.

Because of possible NATO intervention in the unstable province of Pristina, Kosovo, NASSAU was ordered to stay with in the operating area for further orders. After NATO talks were suspended, NASSAU stood on standby but allowed a port visit.

On the 18th of February NASSAU visited the port of Souda Bay once again, but this time only for two days. On the 20th NASSAU got underway to resume its standby in the operating area off Kosovo.

While the talks were convening, Marines participated in Exercise Alexander the Great.

After the backload of all the Marines NASSAU steamed towards the small island of Malta. Two Marine CH-46 Seaknight's launched from NASSAU's flight deck as the ship steamed toward the Maltese port of Valletta. Their mission, transport to NASSAU the President of Malta, Dr. Ugo Mifsud Bonnici, the American Ambassador to Malta, the Honorable Kathryn L. Proffitt, and members of the President's party for a brief visit before NASSAU pulled pierside.

The distinguished visitors were welcomed aboard in grand style. Eight Sideboys rendered honors and camera flashbulbs illuminated flight deck triage as Commodore Dusty Rhodes, NASSAU Amphibious Ready Group Commander, welcomed aboard the President and his entourage.

The brief visit included brunch on the Flag Bridge and a tour of the ship. As Valletta became visible on the horizon, the distinguished guests and their hosts discussed the city's unique architecture and history. This was NASSAU's first visit to Malta since 1997. President Bonnici recalled how much both Valletta and the U. S. Navy have changed over the years.

After presenting the distinguished visitors with gifts, the President and his party were flown back to Malta to await NASSAU's arrival.

The following day, officers of NASSAU and the 24th MEU teamed up with U. S. Embassy personnel to host over 300 guests at an official reception in NASSAU's Hangar Bay. Maltese and American flags framed the stage as Ambassador Proffitt addressed the guests.

The evening gave local representatives a chance to forge new friendships with Sailors and Marines, as well as learn more about what they do. Many guests took advantage of the night to take a guided ship tour and embarked Marines hosted various static displays of their aircraft and weapons.

Later, President Bonnici addressed the Sailors and Marines of NASSAU. "It is a pleasure to have so many young men and women with us from the United States Navy. We value the protection and peace keeping that the U. S. provides to the world," he said. "One has to realize the sacrifices made by the men and women on this ship. We salute this peace keeping effort that is done with much personal sacrifice," President Bonnici finished.

The morning after the reception, NASSAU received orders to head to the Aegean Sea to help out during the NATO operation Allied Force. NASSAU's main mission switched from an amphibious

assault to a Tactical Recovery of a downed Aircraft and Personnel (TRAP) mission. NASSAU got underway in seven hours and steamed from Malta to the Aegean Sea to standby as NATO forces conducted their first bombing campaign of the operation.

NASSAU arrived in Norfolk May 13 and wrapped up a very successful and eventful deployment. The crew enjoyed time with family and friends during post-deployment leave periods. On June 28th, the crew got underway again; this time for an ammunition offload in Earle, New Jersey. A few weeks later, on July 15th, NASSAU dead-stick moved down the Elizabeth River to Norfolk Naval Shipyard for a complex six-month overhaul.

One of the first major changes was NASSAU being installed with Damage Control Quarters (DCQ), a new integrated computer system that will improve communication and response time during a casualty.

While the biggest asset this new computer server will offer is fire fighting, it also has two other programs. "The computer server comes with three programs. The first is DCQ, which gives you all the capabilities of a plotter and is a fire fighting aid, the second is a ballast program, that allows you to ballast the ship, from anywhere if you have the user access, and a program that gives the user the ability to cutoff or isolate firemain valves," Cominoli explained.

Hurricane Floyd did more than threaten to hammer Hampton Roads with flood-causing rains and intense winds. The annoying storm also delayed the Chief Petty Officer Pinning Ceremony for the selectees aboard NASSAU.

NASSAU's ceremony, originally scheduled for September 16th, was pushed back until September 23rd, after the hurricane passed.

NASSAU Sailors, in partnership with Old Dominion University (ODU) students, volunteered for a South Hampton Roads Habitat for Humanity project designed to make the prospect of owning a home achievable for low-income working families.

The Habitat for Humanity is not a giveaway project, but a joint venture in which qualifying families work side by side with their building partners. Habitat homeowners are carefully selected based on an annual income below 80% of the area median, their housing need, ability to repay the zero profit and interest mortgage, and the willingness to maintain the good condition and attractive appearance of their property. Each homeowner family is required to invest 400 hours of "sweet equity" in the construction of their home or other Habitat projects.

The final year of the millennium proved to be a successful one for NASSAU and her crew. Every Sailor involved contributed to the success of a high-tempo deployment that saw NASSAU play a vital role in NATO Operation Allied Force. The crew quickly adapted to life in the shipyard and pulled together to ensure the

complex overhaul was success as well. Their hard work will prepare NASSAU for the challenges of the new millennium.