

**USS SAIPAN (LHA 2)
COMMAND HISTORY - 2003**

1. Command Composition and Organization.

a. Mission. To embark, deploy, and land elements of a Marine amphibious landing force able to conduct opposed assault operations from the sea. Elements of the landing force may include AV-8 Harrier attack jets, CH-46, CH-53, AH-1W and UH-1 helicopters, conventional landing craft, air cushion or tracked amphibious vehicles or a combination of these elements. USS SAIPAN serves as the flagship for Expeditionary Strike Group (ESG) operations. Evacuation, disaster relief, and hospital ship are secondary missions of USS SAIPAN.

b. Organizational Structure

(1) Immediate Senior in Command: Commander, Amphibious Squadron Two, Norfolk, Virginia

(2) Units under operational/administrative control: None

(3) Command Organization:

Commanding Officer
Captain Norma L. Hackney, USN
(01 January 2003 - 14 August 2003)

Commanding Officer
Captain Christopher A. Hase, USN
(15 August 2003-31 December 2003)

Executive Officer
Captain Christopher A. Hase, USN
(01 January 2003 - 14 August 2003)

Executive Officer
Captain M R. Rios
(15 August 2003-31 December 2003)

Command Master Chief
CMDMC (SW/SS) Abraham Jackson, USN

(4) Composition. USS SAIPAN's crew is composed of 68 officers and 1058 enlisted personnel.

2. Chronology (CY 2003)

01 - 10 January

Inport Pier 7, Naval Station Norfolk, VA.

10 January

Departed Naval Station Norfolk VA eight months ahead of schedule for deployment to the Arabian Gulf in support of Operations ENDURING FREEDOM AND IRAQI FREEDOM

15 January

UNREP with USNS LARAMIE

27 January

UNREP with USNS LEROY GRUMMAN

28 January

SAIPAN passes through Straits of Gibraltar

29 January

UNREP with USNS JOHN LENTHALL

31 January

VERTREP and CONREP with USNS SPICA

2 February

UNREP with USNS KANAWHA

4 January

SAIPAN transits Suez Canal

7 February

SAIPAN led transit through Straits of El Mandeb

8 February

SAIPAN and ATF arrive at MODLOC off coast of Djibouti in support of MAG-29 CAS training flights.

12 February

UNREP with USNS ERICSSON

13 February

SAIPAN transits Straits of Hormuz

15 February

Offloaded Marines and equipment ashore into Kuwait.

27 February

UNREP with USNS CAMDEN

28 February

CONREP with USNS NIAGRA FALLS

28 February-2 March

SAIPAN conducts LCU operations in support of AFT West's offload

7 March

UNREP with USS RAINIER

10 March

UNREP with USNS ERICSSON

19 March

Operation IRAQI FREEDOM begins. SAIPAN conducts more than 2440 aircraft sorties and 3600 flight hours mishap-free, while providing maintenance and logistic support to Marines ashore in Iraq. SAIPAN spends record 148 consecutive days at sea.

29 March

UNREP with USNS NIAGRA FALLS

1 April

Dental Department attained an overall Operational Dental Readiness of 99% and a Dental Health Index of 56%, the highest in the Atlantic Fleet.

4 April

UNREP with USS RAINIER

10 April

UNREP with USNS PECOS

19 APRIL

UNREP with USNS PATUXENT

28 April-2 May

3M inspection conducted on board. Ship scores near perfect 99%.

3 May

UNREP with USNS SIRIUS and USNS YUKON

6-18 May

SAIPAN backloads Marines and equipment from Kuwaiti Naval Base.

22 May

SAIPAN conducts outbound transit through Straits of Hormuz

27 May

SAIPAN conducts transit through Straits of Bab El Mandeb

31 May

SAIPAN transits through Suez Canal

1 June

UNREP with USNS PATUXENT

2 June

CONREP with USNS SPICA

6-11 June

Port visit Rota, Spain.

22 June

SAIPAN anchored off coast of Morehead City, NC for offload of 2 MEB and MAG-29 assets

26 June

SAIPAN returns to homeport of Norfolk, VA.

5 August

Conducted tour for 36 guests from Uruguay Command and General Staff Military Institute.

11 August

Conducted tour for more than 60 Midshipmen from the United States Naval Academy

13 August

Conducted tour of 30 civilian leaders from Defense Intelligence Agency.

15 August

Captain Christopher A. Hase becomes SAIPAN's 28th Commanding Officer during Change of Command ceremony with Captain Norma L. Hackney.

16 August

Conducted tour for 40 members of Boy Scout troop #997.

19 August

Departed Norfolk Naval Station and arrived at Norfolk Naval Shipyards in Portsmouth, VA.

20 August-20 November

Maintenance period at Norfolk Naval Shipyards

24 September

Brigadier General Richard F. Natonski, Commanding General Second Marine Expeditionary Brigade, presents an AK-47 rifle to the ship's Wardroom to show appreciation for the support that SAIPAN's crew provided the 2D MEB during Operation IRAQI FREEDOM.

20 November

Departed Norfolk Naval Shipyards and conducted Sea Trials.

21 November

Returned to Norfolk Naval Station.

10 December

Ship hosts visit for 90 guests (interns) from SECNAV Acquisition Intern Orientation Norfolk, VA.

Dental Department attained an overall Operational Dental Readiness of 99% and a Dental Health Index of 56%, the highest in the Atlantic Fleet.

3. Basic Historic Narrative.

SAIPAN's year got off to an unexpectedly busy start, when the ship was called upon to deploy to the Arabian Gulf on short notice in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. The expected June deployment was moved up to January 10th. After onloading 2nd MEB assets on January 11, the ship proceeded across the Atlantic on January 17, passing through the Straits of Gibraltar on January 28. The ship passed through the Suez Canal February 4 and offloaded Marines up until February 21.

In addition to ship's company and 2-MEB, SAIPAN also deployed with assets from TACRON 21, HC-6 Detachment Two SAR det and EOD Mobile Unit Six Detachment Four.

From the end of February until May 4, SAIPAN operated in the Arabian Gulf and conducted 9 underway replenishments. From February 28 to March 2 the ship conducted LCU operations in support of ATF West's offload. The ship conducted flight deck evolutions 27 out of the 28 days in February and 30 of the 31 days in March, including a record high 412 flight deck evolutions on February 5.

On May 6, SAIPAN returned to the designated Sea Echelon Areas for backload of 2-MEB Marines and assets. The ship would conduct well deck operations during daylight hours and proceed underway at night. SAIPAN completed the backload on May 17 and conducted an UNREP with USNS SIRIUS while waiting for other ships to be complete. SAIPAN conducted the transit outbound from Arabian Gulf on May 22, passing through the Straits of Bab El Mandeb on May 27 and transiting the Suez Canal on May 31.

On June 6, after a ship's record 148 continuous days at sea, SAIPAN made her only port visit of deployment, stopping in Rota, Spain. The crew received some well-deserved liberty with tours including Grenada, Seville, Marbella and Portugal. The ship departed on June 11.

On June 22, SAIPAN anchored off the coast of Morehead City, NC and offloaded all 2-MEB and MAG-29 assets. The offload was completed June 25 and the ship left anchorage and transited to its homeport, Norfolk, VA, arriving the next day.

During the six-month deployment the ship conducted 10,806 flight deck evolutions averaging more than 8 hours a day at flight quarters. SAIPAN used more than 6 million gallons of fuel during OIF deployment, averaging nearly 218 gallons of fuel per mile.

The embarked EOD team conducted more than 400 missions and disposed of more than 12 million items. The embarked SAR det flew nearly 250 hours worth of missions during OIF.

The ship's Medical Department saw more than 3,700 patients, with medical services provided ranging from immunizations to more than 100 surgical procedures. The Supply Department brought 321,000 pounds of mail on board, and cooks used 20,538 eggs and baked nearly 124,000 cookies.

The ship remained at Norfolk Naval Station through its post-deployment stand down and return from stand down until departing on August 19th for a 3-month availability at Norfolk Naval Shipyard in Portsmouth, VA.

During the yard period the ship's wooden well deck was replaced with a synthetic material deck. Landing Craft Air Cushion (LCAC) interface modules were also added in the well deck, which gave the ship the added capability of bringing LCACs onboard.

The ship also had a de-mineralized water system installed which is designed to support AV-8 Harrier and MV-22 operations. The ship's illuminated hull number on the island was replaced by a new system with 4 light bulbs strung together with 400 feet of fiber optics, replacing 50 incandescent fixtures, providing greater illumination and better energy efficiency.

The flight deck was resurfaced with new non-skid during the availability and several spaces were resurfaced with new PRC decks. Other upgrades included quality of life improvements in several berthing spaces and electronics and computer upgrades.

SAIPAN returned to Norfolk Naval Station on November 21st, after leaving Norfolk Naval Shipyards the previous day and conducting Sea Trials en route. Upon returning the ship began training in watchstanding and damage control disciplines in preparation for her scheduled 2004 deployment.