



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY  
USS TARAWA (LHA-1)  
FPO AP 96622-1600

Rec'd  
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W/O Loh

5750  
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From: Commanding Officer, USS TARAWA (LHA 1)  
To: Director of Naval History (OP-09BH)

Subj: COMMAND HISTORY (OPNAV REPORT 5750-1)

Ref: (a) OPNAVINST 5750.12F

Encl: (1) Commanding Officer Biography and Photograph  
(2) Ship's Photo  
(3) 1996 Statistics  
(4) News Releases  
(5) Change of Command pamphlet

1. Per reference (a), the calendar year 1996 Command History for USS TARAWA (LHA 1) is submitted.

2. Command Composition and Organization:

a. Mission and Function of the Command: The Amphibious Task Force, which executes its tasks in support of the Navy's force projection mission is composed of LHA, LHD, LPH and LSD class ships. TARAWA, the lead ship of the LHA class of general purpose amphibious assault ships, combines the functional capabilities of the surface operations, in an amphibious assault. Explicitly, a former Chief of Naval Operations defined the LHA's mission as follows: "To embark, deploy and land elements of a Marine Landing Force in an assault by helicopter, landing craft, amphibious vehicles and by any combination of these methods."

b. Commanding Officer:

Christopher C. Ames, Captain  
U.S. Navy,  
Lineal Number: 002863-20, DOR: 01 September 1995

c. Command Structure:

Commander Naval Surface Forces, U.S. Pacific Fleet  
Amphibious Squadron Nine  
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d. Homeport: 32nd Street Naval Station, San Diego, CA.

e. Command Composition: The command was composed of USS TARAWA (LHA 1). Ship's company included 67 Officers and 971 enlisted.

### 3. Chronology

01	Jan	IPT SAN DIEGO
19	Apr	Underway 1996 Western Pacific/Arabian Gulf Deployment.
19 Apr-13 May		Underway, transit to COBRA GOLD
14-20 May		COBRA GOLD 96, Gulf of Thailand
21	May	Underway, transit to Singapore
22-27 May		Port Visit, Singapore
28	May	Underway, transit to Phuket
29 May-02 Jun		Port Visit, Phuket, Thailand
03 Jun-13 Jun		Underway, transit to Jeddah
12	Jun	Capt. C. C. Ames relieved Capt. J. A. Hayes as Commanding Officer USS TARAWA
14	Jun	Vertrep at anchor off Djibouti
15	Jun	Underway, transit to Jeddah
16	Jun	Port Visit, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia
16-18 Jun		INDIGO SERPENT, Red Sea
19-20 Jun		Underway, transit to Aqaba

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21 Jun Anchored Aqaba, Jordan, for off-load

22 Jun-09 Jul In-port Aqaba, Jordan, for INFINITE MOONLIGHT

29 Jun Jordanian Crown Prince, U.S. Ambassador to Jordan,  
and Field Marshal/Chairman of the Royal Jordanian  
Armed Forces visit.

10-20 Jul Underway, transit to Bahrain

21-22 Jul Port Visit, Bahrain

23-24 Jul GOLDEN OX RETURNS, Arabian Gulf

25-30 Jul Port Visit, Bahrain

31 Jul-06 Aug Red Reef, Arabian Gulf

07-08 Aug Underway, transit to Kuwait

09-24 Aug Anchored off Kuwait for MEU-EX

20 Aug U.S. Ambassador to Kuwait visit

25-26 Aug Underway, transit to Jebel Ali

27-31 Aug Port Visit, Jebel Ali

01-04 Sep Operation Desert Strike

02 Sep FAS with USNS TIPPECANOE

05-18 Sep Underway, transit to Manila

05 Sep UNREP with USS CAMDEN

13 Sep FAS with USNS YUKON

19-23 Sep Port Visit, Manila

23 Sep US Ambassador to the Philippines Visit

24 Sep-07 Oct Underway, transit to Pearl Harbor via Guam

24 Sep UNREP with USNS GUADALUPE

29 Sep LCU / LCAC Swap-out, Guam

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05 Oct RAS with USS CIMARRON  
07 Oct FAS with USS CIMARRON  
08-11 Oct Port Visit, Pearl Harbor  
12-17 Oct Underway, enroute Camp Pendleton  
17 Oct FAS with USNS RAPPAHANNOK  
18 Oct MEU off-load, Del Mar Boat Basin  
19 Oct Return to Homeport - San Diego  
20 Oct-19 Nov Post Deployment leave and upkeep  
02 Dec Underway, SOCIAL OPAREA  
02 Dec Burial at Sea  
02-06 Dec Ammo off-load

4. Narrative: January 1996 found TARAWA (LHA 1) pier side at Naval Station San Diego on Holiday routine.

USS TARAWA (LHA 1) set sail from San Diego on 19 April 1996 for a six month tour to the Western Pacific and Arabian Gulf. Accompanying TARAWA was USS RUSHMORE and USS DULUTH.

The initial Great Circle route across the Pacific was altered twice due to storms in the area which then caused a deviation for fuel. TARAWA then transited past Saipan, and through the Surragua Strait and Balabac Strait in the central Philippines.

Our next mission took us to the Gulf of Thailand for operation COBRA GOLD. With the embarked 13th Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable) to demonstrate our operational capabilities to our allies, the Royal Thai Armed Forces. Junior officers from both Navies received training when they crossdecked to their sister ships. TARAWA hosted the COMMANDER SEVENTH FLEET, Vice Admiral Archie Clements and Rear Admiral Brown for the Royal Thai Navy, along with hundreds of Thai military guest and reporters from all over Southeast Asia.

On May 22nd, TARAWA made it's first port call in Singapore. While there, TARAWA sponsored a SPORTSFEST for two days, consisting of softball, basketball, volley ball, and tennis tournaments between all three ships comprising the Amphibious Ready Group and embarked 13th MEU (SOC).

On May 28th TARAWA departed Singapore, transitted the Straits of

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Malacca, and made our first liberty port: Phuket, Thailand. Passing the Nicobar Islands and entering the Indian Ocean on June 3rd enroute to the Red Sea, TARAWA was diverted mid ocean off course southward to avoid a third storm.

On June 12th, TARAWA bid farewell to Captain James A. Hayes and welcomed Captain Christopher C. Ames as TARAWA'S new Commanding Officer during a change of command ceremony held aboard while steaming in the Indian Ocean. Steaming northward along the African coast, we arrived off Djibouti in time to assist a French warship in its search and rescue effort for a Sailor lost overboard, and for replenishment of fresh fruits, vegetables, and other stores.

On June 26th, TARAWA pulled into Jiddah, Saudi Arabia for exercise INDIGO SERPENT with the Royal Saudi Navy. While there, the Commander of the Naval base, Rear Admiral Abudawood, and his entourage toured the ship. The next several days were spent performing maneuvering and communications drills in the Red Sea with two Royal Saudi frigates.

TARAWAs' next passed through the Straits of Tiran enroute Aqaba, Jordan, arriving on June 21st. TARAWA led Exercise INFINITE MOONLIGHT (June 22nd - July 9th) staged from Aqaba, conducting a complete amphibious off-load of Marines and their equipment for exercise participation with the Royal Jordanian Armed Forces. During this time, TARAWA hosted numerous receptions, luncheons and tours for hundreds of guests including two of Jordan's Crown Princes, the Field Marshal/ Chairman of the Royal Jordanian Armed Forces, the U.S. Ambassador, and other civilian and military leaders.

Enroute to the Arabian Gulf (10-20 July), TARAWA transited the Red Sea, stopping in Djibouti on July 14th, Bastille Day. TARAWA hosted the U.S. Ambassador as well as the Commanding Officer and wardroom of the Jules Verne, a French Ammunition Vessel. Underway from Djibouti, TARAWA cleared the Bab El Mandeb Straits, transited the northern part of the Indian Ocean and passed through the Straits of Hormuz into the Arabian Gulf on July 19th, the exact midpoint of our deployment. The first stop in the Gulf was Bahrain where the visit was interrupted two days after our arrival for no-notice national tasking.

TARAWA returned to Bahrain on July 25th for 5 days and next participated in Exercise RUGGED NAUTILUS during the July 31st to August 6th timeframe.

TARAWA again served as flagship for Exercise RED REEF (July 31st - August 6th) off the shores of Saudi Arabia. Transiting to Kuwait on August 7th, TARAWA anchored off the city during the August 9th-24th period. During this timeframe, TARAWA hosted the

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U.S. Ambassador to Kuwait and his staff while also practicing in an evacuation of the staff from the newly constructed American Embassy. TARAWA also conducted a MEU-EX, providing great desert training opportunity for embarked forces. During this exercise, TARAWA conducted fast-pace flight operations, despite flight deck temperatures in excess of 130 degrees.

TARAWA arrived in Jebal Ali on August 27th for four days of liberty and maintenance.

While leaving the Arabian Gulf, TARAWA unexpectedly was diverted to the North Arabian Gulf to support OPERATION DESERT STRIKE tasking(01-04 Sep).

TARAWA completed Operation Dessert Strike tasking on Sep 4th and exited the Straits of Hormuz on September 5th enroute Manila, Philippines. Arriving in Manila on September 19th, TARAWA hosted the U.S. Ambassador and local school children to ship tours. TARAWA also sponsored a Navy Project Handclasp event, donating needed supplies to local children and refurbishing the children's library in a local barrio.

Departing the Philippines, TARAWA was diverted a fifth time to avoid "Super-Typhoons" Yates and Zane. TARAWA transited via the San Bernardino Strait into the Phillipine Sea, arriving in Guam on September 29th to conduct an LCU/LCAC Swap-out with USS GERMANTOWN.

TARAWA arrived in Pearl Harbor on October 5th and embarked over 300 "Tigers" to ride from Hawaii back to San Diego. Departing Pearl Harbor on October 12th, the ship headed for Camp Pendleton in California.

Following a FAS with USNS RAPPAHANNOK on October 17, all Marines and their gear were off-loaded to Camp Pendleton on October 18th. On October 19th, TARAWA sailed past Point Loma and into the ship's homeport of San Diego, mooring at pier 7 after a 6 month and 32,00 miles Arabian Gulf deployment.

October 29th though November 7th served as TARAWA's Post Deployment Leave and Upkeep period. On December 2nd, the ship was again underway for SOCAL OPAREA training and a Burial at Sea. TARAWA conducted its Ammo off-load during the December 2nd-6th period off Camp Pendleton's CALSITE #20. TARAWA remained pierside at Naval Station San Diego from December 6th-31st.

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During 1996, TARAWA was awarded the National Energy Conservation Award, the only U.S. Navy ship so distinguished and the Security of the Navy Energy Conservation Award, along with a clean sweep of all Warfare Excellence awards.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "C. C. Ames". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

C. C. AMES