



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY

USS WHIDBEY ISLAND (LSD 41)
FPO AE 09691-1729

Rec'd 5/7/97

IN REPLY REFER TO:

5750
Ser LSD41/008
6 Feb 97

From: Commanding Officer, USS WHIDBEY ISLAND (LSD-41)
To: Director, Naval History (NO9BH), Naval Historical Center,
Washington Navy Yard, 901 M Street SE, Bldg. 57,
Washington, DC 20374-5060

Subj: 1996 COMMAND HISTORY

Ref: (a) OPNAVINST 5750.12F

Encl: (1) Command Composition and Organization
(2) Chronology
(3) Narrative
(4) Supporting Documents

1. In accordance with requirements set forth in reference (a), enclosures (1) through (4) are submitted for the period 01 January 1996 to 31 December 1996.

T.C. Pierce

T. C. PIERCE

Copy to:
COMPHIBGRU TWO

COMMAND COMPOSITION AND ORGANIZATION

The mission of USS WHIDBEY ISLAND (LSD-41) is to conduct prompt, sustained combat operations at sea, worldwide, in support of national policy. Designed, built and manned to carry maneuver warfare and the "over the horizon" amphibious assault, WHIDBEY ISLAND - homeported in Little Creek, Virginia and under the immediate senior command of Commander, Amphibious Group TWO - can carry four (4) Landing Craft Air Cushion (LCAC's) in its flood-able well, serve as the Primary Control Ship during an assault and provide a boat haven with docking, repair and fueling services for landing craft and boats. In short, WHIDBEY ISLAND is ideally suited to support our Navy's foremost strike asset...the U.S. Marine!

The WHIDBEY ISLAND class introduces to the fleet significant improvements with updated communications, combat systems, 20 and 60 ton cranes, expanded repair shops, two helicopter landing spots, completed medical and dental facilities, automated computer-based logistic support and an impressive engineering plant that gives WHIDBEY ISLAND an excellent capability for self sufficient operations. Equally effective in peace time as in wartime, WHIDBEY ISLAND is well suited to carry out a variety of humanitarian missions such as evacuations and disaster relief.

With primary missions of Amphibious Warfare, Mobility, Command and Control, and Anti-Air Warfare, WHIDBEY ISLAND is designed to support Special Warfare, Fleet Support Operations (refueling other ships), non-combatant operations, Ocean Surveillance and Electronic Warfare. Clearly a multi-mission capable ship, WHIDBEY ISLAND's crew, embarked Marines and detachments must also be, and are multi-talented. Representing almost every state in the Union, Puerto Rico, U.S. Virgin Islands, and the Philippines, we all are privileged and proud to serve in WHIDBEY ISLAND.

Enclosure (1)

JANUARY 1996

1 - 3 JAN INPORT VENICE, ITALY, ICO USS SHREVEPORT (LPD 12)
3 JAN UNDERWAY ICO USS SHREVEPORT (LPD 12) ENROUTE
ADRIATIC SEA ISO OPERATION JOINT ENDEAVOR

4 - 12 JAN UNDERWAY ADRIATIC SEA ICO USS WASP (LHD 1),
USS SHREVEPORT (LPD 12), USS SOUTH CAROLINA
(CGN 37), AND USS MONTEREY (CG 61)

5 JAN SMALL ARMS FAMFIRE, ALLIED STAFF LIAISON
NAVAL OFFICER VISIT

6 JAN FORMATION STEAMING, SWING SHIP, ENLISTED SURFACE
WARFARE SPECIALIST AWARD CEREMONY

8 JAN SMALL ARMS FAMFIRE, BECCES

9 JAN DIVTACS, LCU OPS

10 JAN MASS CASUALTY DRILL

13 JAN INPORT BRINDISI, ITALY, BACK LOAD 26TH MEU "E" CO
BLT 2/6, UNDERWAY ENROUTE ADRIATIC SEA ISO
OPERATION JOINT ENDEAVOR

14 - 18 JAN UNDERWAY ADRIATIC SEA ISO OPERATION JOINT ENDEAVOR

15 JAN DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. DAY CELEBRATION, EDATF,
LOW SLOW FLIER EXERCISE

16 JAN SMALL BOAT ATTACK EXERCISE, GQ

17 JAN UNREP USNS SATURN, ENGINEERING CASUALTY TO MRG
LUBE OIL COOLER

18 JAN E-7 ADVANCEMENT EXAM, LOW SLOW FLIER EXERCISE, LCU
OPS

19 - 22 JAN INPORT BARI, ITALY TO REPAIR MRG LUBE OIL COOLER

22 JAN UNDERWAY ENROUTE ADRIATIC SEA ISO OPERATION JOINT
ENDEAVOR

23 JAN RADM BOLONGARO (ITALIAN NAVY)/COMPHIBRON FOUR
VISIT

26 JAN DIVTACS, BECCES, GQ

27 JAN CIWS PACFIRE

29 JAN UNREP USNS BIG HORN

FEBRUARY 1996

1 - 9 FEB UNDERWAY EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN SEA FORMATION
STEAMING WITH USS WASP (LHD 1) AND USS SHREVEPORT
(LPD 12)

1 FEB UNREP/VERTREP USNS BIGHORN

9 FEB USS WHIDBEY ISLAND BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION

10 FEB UNDERWAY ENROUTE ROTA, SPAIN ICW USS WASP AND USS
SHREVEPORT (LPD 12)

12 FEB TURNOVER WITH GUAM ARG, FULL POWER RUN

14 FEB ARRIVE ROTA, SPAIN COMMENCE OFF-LOAD, WASH-DOWN

15 FEB INPORT ROTA, SPAIN, WASHDOWN, AGRICULTURE
INSPECTION, BACK LOAD

16 - 26 FEB TRANSLANT ENROUTE MOREHEAD CITY, NC

21 FEB CIWS PACFIRE, HELO CRASH DRILL, EMBARK VIRGINIA
STATE TROOPER, TRAFFIC SAFETY BRIEFS

22 FEB TRAFFIC SAFETY VIRGINIA STATES LAW BRIEFS

23 FEB VIRGINIA STATE TROOPER DEPARTS, FAMILY SERVICE
CENTER RETURN AND REUNION TEAM ARRIVES, RETURN AND
REUNION PRESENTATIONS, GQ

24 FEB RETURN AND REUNION PRESENTATIONS, CUSTOMS
INSPECTION

25 FEB RETURN AND REUNION PRESENTATIONS

26 FEB SEA AND ANCHOR DETAIL, LAUNCH LCU 1654 IVO RADIO
ISLAND, NC, RECOVER LCU 1653 OFF-LOAD 26TH MEU "E"
CO 2/6 BLT PERSONNEL, ENROUTE ONSLOW BAY, NC.
UNDERWAY LCAC OFF-LOAD OF FOUR M1A1 TANKS,
UNDERWAY LAUNCH OF AAV, EMBARK THREE ACU 4 LCACS,
ENROUTE MOREHEAD CITY, NC. PIERSIDE MORE HEAD
CITY, NC, CONTINUE OFF-LOAD OF MARINE EQUIPMENT
AND VEHICLES.

27 FEB INPORT MOREHEAD CITY, UNDERWAY ENROUTE LITTLE
CREEK, VA

28 FEB ARRIVE LITTLE CREEK, VA HOMECOMING REUNION
CELEBRATION, COMMENCE FIRST STAND-DOWN LEAVE
PERIOD

29 FEB INPORT LITTLE CREEK, VA CONTINUE STAND-DOWN

MARCH 1996

1 - 14 MAR POST DEPLOYMENT LEAVE AND STAND-DOWN FIRST PERIOD

7 MAR WHIDBEY ISLAND RECEIVED CNO MESSAGE AWARDING THE
CREW OF WHIDBEY ISLAND THE ARMED FORCES SERVICE
MEDAL (AFSM) FOR BOSNIA OPERATIONS FROM 25 SEP 95
- 12 OCT 95

15 MAR POST DEPLOYMENT LEAVE AND STAND-DOWN TURNOVER

16 - 31 MAR POST DEPLOYMENT LEAVE AND STAND-DOWN SECOND PERIOD

APRIL 1996

1 - 17 APR INPORT NAB LITTLE CREEK, VA

1 - 30 APR PRE-DPMA IMAV, DIESEL INSPECTION, HALON SYSTEM
UPGRADE, AEC INSPECTION

5 APR COMMANDER, AMPHIBIOUS SQUADRON FOUR CHANGE OF
COMMAND

8 - 12 APR ENGINEERING TRAINING GROUP PRE-INDUSTRIAL VISIT

10 APR SAFETY SURVEY

11 APR COMPHIBRON FOUR EMBARKED

16 - 18 APR I DIVISION

18 - 19 APR UNDERWAY VACAPES, BURIAL AT SEA, DIESEL TRENDS

19 - 30 APR INPORT NAB LITTLE CREEK, VA

20 - 21 APR VISIT SHIP, NJROTC VISIT

22 - 26 APR AVCERT PRE-AVAILABILITY TECH ASST, COMMAND
INSPECTION (COMPHIBGRU TWO)

29 APR HOST SHIP PICNIC, FOR RFS SIR GERIANT AND RFS SIR
GALAHAD

MAY 1996

1 - 5 MAY INPORT NAB LITTLE CREEK, VA
1 MAY MINI FAST CRUISE
2 MAY EMBARK JROTC STUDENTS FOR TIGER CRUISE
3 - 17 MAY EXERCISE PURPLE STAR
3 MAY UNDERWAY DEPART NAVAL AMPHIBIOUS BASE, LITTLE CREEK, ENROUTE MOREHEAD CITY, NC. RENDEZVOUS USS NASSAU (LHA-4), CIWS PACFIRE, SMALL ARMS PACFIRE, EMBARK 2 ACU-4 LCAC AND 2 MCAC, NJROTC TOUR OF LCAC/MCAC, OBA DEMONSTRATION, GQ
4 MAY ENGINEERING MPDE TRENDS, LAUNCH LCAC/MCAC TO SAFE HAVEN, INPORT MOREHEAD CITY, NC, ON-LOAD USMC PERSONNEL/EQUIPMENT, UNDERWAY DEPART MOREHEAD CITY, RECOVER LCAC/MCAC
6 MAY RENDEZVOUS RFA OLMA, UNREP WITH RFA OLMA
7 MAY REHEARSAL L-HOUR, LAUNCH/RECOVER LCAC/MCAC
8 MAY REHEARSAL H-HOUR, LAUNCH/RECOVER LCAC/MCAC, FINEX REHEARSALS, DISESTABLISH AOA, REHEARSAL DEBRIEF ONBOARD USS NASSAU
9 MAY ASSAULT, ONSLOW BAY, NC, LAUNCH/RECOVER LCAC/MCAC
10 MAY ON CALL WAVES, LAUNCH/RECOVER LCAC/MCAC
12 MAY HOLIDAY ROUTINE, STEEL BEACH PICNIC
14 MAY LAUNCH/RECOVER LCAC/MCAC
15 MAY HIV DRAW, ENROUTE NAB LITTLE CREEK, VA
16 MAY ARRIVE NAB, LITTLE CREEK, LAUNCH LCAC/MCAC
16 - 31 MAY INPORT NAB, LITTLE CREEK, PRE DPMA IMAV
17 MAY AMMO OFF-LOAD, BERTH SHIFT
22 MAY WOMEN AT SEA MEETING (CPG-2), NCIS PRESENTATION, EXCEPTIONAL FAMILY MEMBER BRIEF
23 MAY BLOOD DRIVE, PRE-AVAILABILITY CRANE ASSIST VISIT
28 MAY HURREX 96, CARGO/WEAPON ELEVATOR ASSESSMENT, DEFUELING, I-DIVISION

JUNE 1996

1 - 3 JUN INPORT NAB LITTLE CREEK, VA
3 JUN PETTY OFFICER INDOCTRINATION, UNDERWAY ENROUTE
NORSHIPCO SHIPYARD, NORFOLK, VA, ARRIVE NORSHIPCO
3 - 5 JUN HURREX 96
3 - 31 JUN INPORT NORSHIPCO SHIPYARD, NORFOLK, VA, DPMA, SIMA
CONCURRENT IMAV
24 - 28 JUN COMMAND TRAINING TEAM TRAINING, ATIS TRAINING,
CSTT TRAINING

JULY 1996

1 - 31 JUL DPMA & CONCURRENT IMAV, INPORT NORSHIPCO SHIPYARD,
NORFOLK, VA

3 JUL COMMANDING OFFICER CALL, AWARDS CEREMONY FOR NORTH
ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANIZATION (NATO) SERVICE MEDAL
AWARDED TO WHIDBEY ISLAND AND HER CREW FOR
SERVICES IN SUPPORT OF NATO MISSIONS IN THE FORMER
YUGOSLAVIA 1DEC95 - 6FEB96

4 JUL INDEPENDENCE DAY

8 JUL COMPHIBGRU TWO, REAR ADMIRAL FLADD, VISIT

10 JUL BERTH SHIFT TO NORSHIPCO CONCRETE PIER, IN
PREPARATION FOR ARRIVAL OF HURRICANE BERTHA

11 - 13 JUL HURRICANE BERTHA/HEAVY WEATHER CONDITIONS ALERT

15 JUL ENTER "TITAN" DRY DOCK

15 - 31 JUL NORSHIPCO, "TITAN" DRY DOCK

15 - 20 JUL SURFACE WARFARE TRAINING WEEK

22 - 24 JUL ETG VISIT/ASSIST

AUGUST 1996

1 - 31 AUG DPMA, NORSHIPCO, NORFOLK, VA
1 - 15 AUG INPORT NORSHIPCO, DRY DOCK "TITAN"
5 AUG PXO, LCDR BOWE, CHECKS ONBOARD
4 - 8 AUG I DIVISION
5 - 9 AUG XO TURNOVER
7 AUG PC1 (SW) [REDACTED] RETIREMENT CEREMONY
9 AUG LCDR BOWE RELIEVES CDR KOMYKOSKI AS XO, CDR
KOMYKOSKI DEPARTS
14 AUG WOMEN-AT-SEA DEPENDENTS BRIEF AT ACU-4
16 AUG CREW PICTURE IN DRY DOCK BY SCREWS. DEPART
NORSHIPCO, DRY DOCK "TITAN". DEAD STICK TRANSIT
TO PIER 3S NORSHIPCO.
21 AUG SURFLANT DAY AT KINGS DOMINION
27 AUG CMS ASSIST VISIT
28 AUG OHSAT ASSIST VISIT
29 - 30 AUG ERAT VISIT

SEPTEMBER 1996

1 - 23 SEP DPMA, NORSHIPCO, NORFOLK VA
2 SEP OBSERVED LABOR DAY
3 - 4 SEP LUBE OIL ONLOAD
5 - 6 SEP REFUEL
5 SEP E-4 ADVANCEMENT EXAM
9 - 10 SEP MAGAZINE SPRINKLER SAFETY INSPECTION
10 SEP E-5 ADVANCEMENT EXAM
11 SEP WELL DECK PRE-CERT VISIT
12 SEP E-6 ADVANCEMENT EXAM, CIPM ASSIST
13 SEP CHIEF PETTY OFFICER INITIATION
16 SEP ERAT PRELIGHT OFF ETG VISIT
17 SEP MEMORIAL SERVICE AT NNSY CHAPEL FOR EN3 MICHAEL
ROMSKA
19 SEP PLASTIC WASTE PROCESSOR EVALUATION
20 SEP COMPHIBGRU TWO WOMEN AT SEA PHYSICAL MODIFICATION
CERTIFICATION, PLASTIC WASTE PROCESSOR TRAINING
23 SEP UNDERWAY DEAD STICK TRANSIT FROM NORSHIPCO,
NORFOLK TO NAVAL AMPHIBIOUS BASE LITTLE CREEK, VA
23 - 30 SEP INPORT NAB LITTLE CREEK, VA
24 - 30 SEP RESURFACE FLIGHT DECK

OCTOBER 1996

1 - 15 OCT INPORT NAB LITTLE CREEK, VA

1 - 11 OCT DPMA

2 - 4 OCT LIGHT - OFF ASSESSMENT (LOA)

7 OCT PCO CDR TERRY C. PIERCE ARRIVES

8 OCT JP-5 ONLOAD

9 OCT CONTINUE LOA

10 OCT FAST CRUISE/DOCK TRIALS

11 OCT CHANGE OF COMMAND, CDR TERRY C. PIERCE RELIEVES
CDR TERENCE E. MCKNIGHT

15 - 16 OCT UNDERWAY/SEA TRIALS

15 OCT MAN OVERBOARD DRILL, DIESEL TRENDS,
BALLAST/DEBALLAST TRAINING, AFFF ACTIVATION TEST,
DTE SEQUENCE, CPP SYSTEM TEST

15 - 18 OCT I DIVISION

16 OCT ANCHOR LYNNHAVEN ANCHORAGE, DEGAUSSING RANGE RUN

16 - 21 OCT INPORT NAB LITTLE CREEK, VA

17 OCT AVIATION TECH ASSIST/AVIATION ASSIST VISIT

21 - 23 OCT UNDERWAY VACAPES OPAREA

21 OCT ANCHORED LYNNHAVEN ANCHORAGE, WET WELL RECOVERY/
LAUNCH OF LCU, LAUNCH/RECOVERY OF SMALL BOATS,
STATIC WELL RECOVERY/LAUNCH OF LCAC

22 OCT UNDERWAY FROM LYNNHAVEN ANCHORAGE, DTE SEQUENCE,
GQ, DYNAMIC LAUNCH/RECOVERY OF LCAC

23 OCT ANCHORED LYNNHAVEN ANCHORAGE, RECOVERY/LAUNCH OF
LCU, ESWS BOARD, UNDERWAY FROM LYNNHAVEN
ANCHORAGE, ARRIVE INPORT NAB LITTLE CREEK, VA

23 - 31 OCT INPORT NAB LITTLE CREEK, VA

24 OCT AMMO ONLOAD, BERTH SHIFT

28 - 31 OCT AVIATION TECH ASSIST/ARE, CSTG LTT, CRAT, SEMI-
ANNUAL PRT, REFUELING

30 OCT COMPHIBRON 2 EMBARKED, SEAL TEAM FOUR TRAINING

NOVEMBER 1996

1 - 19 NOV INPORT NAB LITTLE CREEK, VA
1 NOV AVIATION TECH ASSIST/ARE, CSTG LTT, GALLEY
SANITATION INSPECTION
2 - 3 NOV VISIT SHIP
4 - 8 NOV I DIVISION, PRETARGET ASSIST, IH SURVEY
4 - 25 NOV IMAV
5 NOV HOST SHIP
6 NOV QUALITY OF LIFE INSPECTION, BONE MARROW BLOOD
DRAW
8 NOV OFFICER/CPO GETTYSBURG TRIP
10 NOV MARINE CORPS BIRTHDAY
11 NOV VETERANS DAY
12 - 13 NOV TYCOMMEX ASSIST SHIP
19 - 22 NOV UNDERWAY VACAPES OPAREA
19 NOV ANTENNA RADIATION PATTERN, BECCES, HELO OPS,
HELO CRASH DRILL
20 NOV BECCES, HELO OPS, GENERAL QUARTERS DRILL
21 NOV NAVY SMOKEOUT DAY, NIXIE STREAM, HELO OPS, BECCES
22 NOV BECCES, GQ DRILL
23 - 24 NOV VISIT SHIP
25 - 30 NOV CART II PREPS
25 NOV 60 TON CRANE WEIGHT TEST, SAFETY STANDDOWN
25 - 27 NOV SHIPBOARD EXPLOSIVE SAFETY INSPECTION
26 NOV PORT OPS SURVEY, REENLISTMENT BMCS [REDACTED]
27 NOV FAMILY DAY
28 NOV THANKSGIVING DAY

DECEMBER 1996

1 DEC INPORT NAB LITTLE CREEK, VA
2 - 6 DEC CART II
7 DEC WHIDBEY ISLAND CHILDREN'S CHRISTMAS PARTY
9 DEC TYCOMMEX
10 - 13 DEC TECRA VISIT
12 DEC WHIDBEY ISLAND AWARDED MERITORIOUS UNIT
COMMENDATION FOR OPERATION UPHOLD DEMOCRACY
(11 SEP 94 - 31 MAR 95)
12 - 13 DEC ERAT MATERIAL ASSESSMENT
13 - 20 DEC UNDERWAY VACAPES OPAREA, HELO OPS, BECCES,
PRECISION ANCHORAGE
16 DEC E-4, E-5, E-6 FROCKING CEREMONY
20 DEC NAVIGATION CHECK RIDE, ARRIVE INPORT NAB LITTLE
CREEK, VA
21 - 26 DEC HOLIDAY LEAVE PERIOD 1
27 DEC HOLIDAY LEAVE TURNOVER
27 - 31 DEC HOLIDAY LEAVE PERIOD 2

JANUARY 1996

The "Jewel of the Adriatic," Venice Italy, played host to Whidbey Island, the embarked Marines of 26 MEU "E" Co. BLT 2/6, and embarked Sailors of Assault Craft Unit Two, and Beach Masters Unit Two for the New Year's day celebration. In company with USS Shreveport (LPD 12), Whidbey Island continued her port call in Venice until 3 January. Leaving in dense fog and heavy traffic, Whidbey Island began patrols of the Northern and Central Adriatic Sea in support of Operation Joint Endeavor, off the coast of Bosnia.

Patrolling the Adriatic Sea in company with USS Wasp (LHD 1), USS Shreveport (LPD 12), and USS South Carolina (CGN 37), Whidbey Island was kept busy conducting extensive training, which included, DIVTACS, Man-Overboard drills, CIWS/small arms FAM-Fires, BECCES, and LCU operations. Elements of the 26 MEU "E" Company BLT 2/6 Marines were air lifted to Italy, to conduct three days of cold weather training with the Italian Army.

Spending little less than eight hours inport, Whidbey Island back-loaded the Marine elements in the southern Italian port, of Brindisi. Once the backload was complete, Whidbey Island reported to her assigned sector and continued a vigilant watch in the Adriatic Sea and along the coast of Bosnia.

On 17 January the Marine Amphibious Readiness Group (MARG 3-95) conducted an Underway Replenishment with the USNS Saturn. Experiencing a Main Reduction Gear lube oil cooler casualty,

Enclosure (3)

Whidbey Island was restricted to single shaft operations. In order to effect repairs to the damaged cooler, Whidbey Island made her way to the familiar port of Bari, Italy. Spending three days in Bari, Whidbey Island repaired the cooler and once again departed for the Adriatic Sea.

On 23 January, Admiral Bolongaro, of the Italian Navy and the MARG Commander, Captain Buchanan, visited Whidbey Island. Commodore Buchanan, had encouraging words for the crew of Whidbey Island, relating the importance of the MARG's mission in the Adriatic.

Continuing the patrol of the Adriatic Sea, MARG elements honed their skills with constant training for the remainder of the month. An Underway Replenishment with the USNS Big Horn on 29 January concluded a training intensive month.

FEBRUARY 1996

Whidbey Island began the month of February steaming in the eastern Mediterranean Sea in the vicinity of the Suez Canal. The Wasp ARG received tasking in late January to transit to the eastern Mediterranean sea in support of national interests. Enroute Whidbey Island conducted a short notice underway replenishment and vertical replenishment with USNS Big Horn. Whidbey Island and the ARG units remained in the vicinity of Suez Canal in the event a Non-combatant Evacuation Operation (NEO) of United States diplomats and citizens.

With the arrival of the Guam ARG in the Mediterranean Sea the Wasp ARG was relieved of her assignment in the eastern Mediterranean and began a transit across the Mediterranean to Rota, Spain. Arriving in Rota, Spain, Whidbey Island, conducted her off-load, wash-down, agricultural inspection and back-load in less than 36 hours. Completing the record breaking port call in Rota, Spain, Whidbey Island and the ARG units sortied and began the last leg of the MARG 3-95 deployment, the transatlantic, enroute Morehead City, NC.

While transiting the Atlantic Ocean, Whidbey Island's crew continued to hone her skills as an effective war fighting team. Whidbey Island conducted a CIWS Pacfire, Small Arms shoots, General Quarters and other damage control training evolutions.

In order to ease the transition from deployment life back to homeport living, Whidbey Island embarked a team from the Family

Service Center, Little Creek, VA. The Family Service Center team held seminars explaining the reunion process to the crew. They offered tips, on car buying, re-establishing ties with family after a long absence and other helpful information.

Arriving in Morehead City on 26 February, Whidbey Island debarked Assault Craft Unit Two's LCU 1654, carrying Beach Masters Unit Four in the vicinity of Radio Island, NC. Shortly after the departure of LCU 1654, a supplemental LCU was brought into the well deck to off-load personnel of the 26th MEU "E" Co. 2/6 BLT. Whidbey Island continued to Onslow Bay to off-load Marine Amphibious Assault Vehicles (AAV) and the M1A1 main battle tanks. Conducting underway LCAC launch and recovery, Whidbey Island completed the debark of the tanks and selected rolling stock. Conducting an underway launch of the AAVs Whidbey Island arrived in Morehead City before dusk. While in Morehead City, Whidbey Island's crew worked long into the night off-loading the remaining Marine equipment.

Departing Morehead City on 27 February, Whidbey Island began the transit to Little Creek VA. Carrying the three Assault Craft Unit Four, LCAC's which were instrumental in the off-loading of the Marine equipment, Whidbey Island launched the LCAC's near the Chesapeake Bay Bridge and continued her triumphant return to her homeport.

MARCH 1996

Returning to homeport, Little Creek, after a six month Mediterranean deployment, the crew of Whidbey Island began its leave and stand-down period. Shortly after arriving onboard, preparations began for the upcoming COMPHIBRON FOUR Change of Command. Civilian contractors and SIMA personnel also visited Whidbey Island throughout the month assessing projects for the upcoming Drydock Phase Maintenance Availability (DPMA) and Intermediate Maintenance Availability (IMAV).

On 7 March, Whidbey Island received a message from the Chief of Naval Operations awarding the crew of Whidbey Island the Armed Forces Service Medal (AFSM) for Bosnia operations from 25 September 1995 to 12 October 1995 while the ship was stationed of the coast of Bosnia in the Adriatic Sea.

APRIL 1996

April began and the crew of the Whidbey Island continued to prepare for the Commander, Amphibious Squadron Four, Change of Command. Commodore Buchanan was relieved by Captain Ertel, with a traditional ceremony, on 5 April 1996. An elegant reception on the flight deck followed the Change of Command ceremony. Whidbey Island and her crew received laudatory comments on their preparations and execution of the day's ceremonies.

On 18 April, Whidbey Island departed Little Creek for the Virginia Capes (VACAPES) operations area. While operating in the VACAPES, Whidbey Island conducted sea trials, diesel trends and General Quarters. Whidbey Island was called upon to conduct six burial at sea ceremonies, on a calm day, outside the 100 fathom curve.

The work schedule quickened for Whidbey Island, as she was tested with inspections, pre DPMA technical assistance visits and a IMAV hroughout the month. Commander, Amphibious Group TWO, command inspection of the ship was held concurrently with an Aviation Certification Pre-Availability Technical Assistance visit.

Preparing for JTFEX 96, Purple Star, Whidbey Island was named host for two Royal Navy amphibious ships. The English ship's RFS Sir Geriant and Sir Galahad were treated to a picnic by the crew of the Whidbey Island.

MAY 1996

Preparing for the upcoming Exercise Purple Star, Whidbey Island was hard at work beginning the month of May. 45 NJROTC students embarked, for the transit from Naval Amphibious Base (NAB) Little Creek to Morehead City, NC. The NJROTC students observed the embarkation of both Landing Craft Air Cushion (LCAC) and Multi-purpose Craft Air Cushion (MCAC) units from Assault Craft Unit-4. The MCAC, a new innovation within the Mine Warfare community, is a LCAC with mine clearing explosive charges. Both the LCAC and MCAC onboard played vital roles in Exercise Purple Star and was the first time the experimental MCAC units were used to participate in an exercise on the east coast.

Exercise Purple Star contained two Amphibious Readiness Groups (ARG) working in close proximity of each other. Both the Nassau and Siapan ARGs participated in the Exercise as part of work-ups for future deployments. Other amphibious ships and units active in the exercise included, USS Pensacola (LSD-38), USS Gunston Hall (LSD-44), USS Ponce (LHD-15), USS La Moure County (LST-1174), and the largest contingent of British Sailors and Marines to set foot on U.S. soil since the War of American Independence. With the inclusion of the USS Enterprise (CVN-65) battle group, the exercise boasted over 50 Naval ship participants.

The amphibious portion of Exercise Purple Star consisted of late night and early morning rehearsal landings on the beaches of

Camp Pendleton. Before each rehearsal the MCAC units conducted successful mine clearing tests by the MCAC.

Each rehearsal tested the ship driving skills of all involved. Formation steaming with as many as thirty ships into an anchorage to launch amphibious craft was truly a significant accomplishment. After several days the ARG commander and Commander Amphibious Group Two decided to conduct the final exercise assault on the beaches of Onslow Bay, NC.

During the exercise, Whidbey Island participated in an Underway Replenishment with the Royal Fleet Auxiliary (RFA) Olma. The entire evolution went well for both ships.

Arriving inport Little Creek, Whidbey Island began to prepare for the impending Drydock Phased Maintenance Availability (DPMA). The initial preparation for the DPMA was the ammo off-load on 17 May. After the ammo off-load Whidbey Island got underway and shifted berths from the ammo pier to pier 15 North. Almost immediately the Pre-DPMA IMAV began and civilian shipyard workers began work alongside the crew to prepare the ship for the shipyards.

On 29 May, Whidbey Island received her first female Officer as part of ship's company. Ensign [REDACTED] relieved LTJG [REDACTED] as the ship's Disbursing Officer.

Whidbey Island wrapped up the month of May by honoring some of her top Sailors. A command wide awards ceremony took place on the flight deck. In all 16 Sailors were awarded medals from Commander, Sixth Fleet, for their achievements during MARG 3-95.

JUNE 1996

Following the first weekend of June, Whidbey Island began a four month Drydocked Phased Maintenance Availability (DPMA). Leaving Naval Amphibious Base, Little Creek, VA on 3 June, Whidbey Island made her way up the Elizabeth River to Norfolk Shipbuilding & Drydock Corporation, NORSHIPCO, in Norfolk, VA, where she remained for the summer of 1996.

Shortly after Whidbey Island's arrival in the shipyard, work began on many major renovations. The most extensive of which was the "Women at Sea" ship alteration. The "Women at Sea" ship alteration package included the conversion of crew and troop berthing, Chief Petty Officer and Senior NCO berthing, and Officer staterooms into appropriate female living compartments.

On 18 June, the arrival of the first enlisted female joined the crew of Whidbey Island. DPCM(SW) Alexis A. Hines began her duties as the Senior Enlisted onboard, after relieving HMCM(SW) Mark R. Weldon as Command Master Chief.

JULY 1996

At an award ceremony just prior to the Independence Day holiday, CDR McKnight presented the entire crew the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) Service Medal. The Medal was awarded to Whidbey Island and her crew for services involved the Bosnia operations from 01 December 1995 to 06 February 1996 while stationed off the coast of Bosnia in the Adriatic Sea during her most recent Mediterranean deployment.

On 8 July, Whidbey Island was honored with a visit by Commander, Amphibious Group TWO, RAMD Fladd. He inspected the ship and the progress of the current repairs and modifications taking place during the DPMA.

10 July was one of the more hectic days of the month. While the remainder of the Atlantic Fleet sortied to sea in preparation for the predicted arrival of Hurricane Bertha, Whidbey Island shifted berths in the shipyard to a more secure pier. Predictions had Bertha arriving in the Norfolk area in the early morning hours of 13 July. The crew of Whidbey Island stayed onboard the ship the evening of 12 July. Luckily, Bertha was downgraded to a Tropical Storm and safely passed the ship by.

The following Monday, 15 July, Whidbey Island shifted berths to the NORSHIPCO "Titan" drydock. While in drydock Whidbey Island had her hull and superstructure sand blasted and painted. Also conducted was a ten year maintenance inspection of all the underwater appendages and equipment. The results showed

excellent overall condition of the ship and its equipment.

Engineering Training Group (ETG) visited the ship for three days between 22 and 24 July for an evaluation and assist. Checking all engineering programs, ETG was able to gauge progress as Whidbey Island neared the end of the availability.

Throughout the month, Navy Rights and Responsibilities (NRR) workshops were conducted in preparation for the arrival of the female crew members.

AUGUST 1996

On 5 August, Whidbey Island welcomed its perspective Executive Officer, LCDR Patrick D. Bowe onboard. LCDR Bowe would relieve CDR Francis J. Komykoski, who had been the Command's Executive Officer for the past fifteen months. LCDR Bowe arrived a little more than halfway through the DPMA with Whidbey Island in the later stages of the drydock portion of the availability. On 9 August LCDR Bowe relieved CDR Komykoski as Whidbey Island's Executive Officer after a thorough turnover and briefings by Department Heads and other key crewmembers.

After completion of the sandblasting and hull painting Whidbey Island departed the drydock and went pierside in the NORSHIPCO complex to continue the final stages of the DPMA. During the morning of 16 August, Whidbey Island's crew gathered for a picture under the ship's twin five bladed screws. Shortly after the picture NORSHIPCO workers commenced the flooding of the drydock "Titan". Whidbey Island was afloat again by midday. By 1600 Whidbey Island was pierside NORSHIPCO pier 3 South.

Throughout the month the crew continued specialized training to prepare for the arrival of female crewmembers. Specialized training included a dependents Women-at-Sea brief given by the ship at Assault Craft Unit Four on Little Creek Naval Amphibious Base.

Towards the end of the month Whidbey Island began to gear up for the upcoming inspection and training cycles that would commence shortly after the DPMA. Assist visits by Onboard Handling/Storage of Ammunition Training, Communication Material Security and Engineering Readiness Assist teams, all took place the last week of August.

SEPTEMBER 1996

Whidbey Island began wrapping up her four month Drydock Phased Maintenance Availability (DPMA) at NORSHIPCO, Norfolk VA. Shortly after the month began lubrication oil was brought onboard for the main engines and the ship's service diesel generators and refueling began. While NORSHIPCO stepped up the pace to complete all projects on time, the crew made preparations for the numerous inspections that follow DPMA, and training for all hands intensified.

Four Whidbey Island crewmembers completed Chief Petty Officer's initiation and joined the ranks of the Chief Petty Officer's Mess. EWC(SW) [REDACTED] SMC(SW) [REDACTED] ENC(SW) [REDACTED] and ENC(SW) [REDACTED] all made it through the long initiation process and now wear khakis with pride.

Commander, Amphibious Group TWO Engineering Training Group (ETG) conducted a pre-lightoff assist visit. During their time onboard they inspected the engineering spaces and personnel training programs. They also looked at the duty section inport fire parties during daily fire drills.

On 17 September, Whidbey Island Sailors paid their last respects to a fallen shipmate. A memorial service was held at the Norfolk Naval Shipyard chapel in memory of EN3 Michael Romska, who lost his life in a tragic motorcycle accident.

One of the major projects of the yard period was installation of the Plastics Waste Processor. It was evaluated

by ship's company and SUSHIP Portsmouth and training was held for operators and maintenance personnel.

On 20 September, the COMPHIBGRU TWO Woman at Sea certification team inspected the physical modifications onboard Whidbey Island. After the inspection was completed Whidbey Island was certified ready to carry females onboard. Also, on this day Whidbey Island paid tribute to the nation's Missing in Action and Prisoners of War, by flying the POW/MIA flag from the mast.

Whidbey Island departed NORSHIPCO on 23 September to complete the DPMA at her homeport of Naval Amphibious Base, Little Creek, VA. The trip from NORSHIPCO to Little Creek was a dead stick transit. Whidbey Island sailed under the tow of civilian tugs. Upon her arrival in Little Creek the final weeks of the DPMA continued. Most notable was the resurfacing of the entire flight deck.

OCTOBER 1996

Whidbey Island began the month of October continuing her DPMA at her homeport Naval Amphibious Base, Little Creek. Shipyard workers continued to finish up industrial work throughout the ship, while Whidbey Island Sailor's conducted Light-off Assessments, and prepared for the Change of Command.

On 11 October, Whidbey Island conducted a Change of Command ceremony in which CDR Terence E. McKnight was relieved by CDR Terry C. Pierce. The Officers and Sailors of Whidbey Island gathered on the flight deck and hosted Navy and Marine Corps VIP's, Vice Admiral LaPlante, Vice Admiral Schoultz, Rear Admiral Gunn, Rear Admiral Fladd, Rear Admiral (select) Suggs, and the Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy.

Immediately after assuming command CDR Pierce began training both the Wardroom and Chief's Mess on the tenets of Maneuver Warfare. Using FMFM-1 Warfighting, NDP-1, and other Navy and Marine Corps doctrine documents the members of the Wardroom and Chief's Mess began to learn how to apply the tenets of Maneuver Warfare both in wartime and peacetime.

Shortly following the Change of Command, CDR Pierce led Whidbey Island through the post DPMA sea trails. With a host of civilian representatives from NORSHIPCO, Whidbey Island conducted diesel trends, anchoring, ballasting, and a myriad of other events designed to test the various repairs and alterations onboard. Underway for the first time in four months the sea

trials availed both new and experienced Whidbey Island Sailor's the chance to hone their sea faring skills. After completing sea trials Whidbey Island began the post availability inspection cycle. Whidbey Island passed her first inspection of the Well Deck with no difficulty.

Whidbey Island was soon underway again to conduct more training. During a three day under way excursion Whidbey Island conducted both LCAC and LCU operations with units from Assault Craft Units Four and Two. Practicing both dynamic and static launch and recovery of the landing craft, Whidbey Island Sailor's gained invaluable experience for the upcoming CART and TSTA cycles.

The month ended on a high note as Whidbey Island, became the first LSD on the east coast to upgrade an Aviation Technical Assist to a Flight Deck certification in decades.

NOVEMBER 1996

Whidbey Island began the month of November with the first of many off ship visits and inspections. With Deck department's usual efficiency the Aviation Technical and Aviation Readiness Evaluation Assist visits were both upgraded to certifications, a first for an east coast LSD in ten years.

On 8 November the Whidbey Island's Chiefs and Officers conducted a staff tour of the Gettysburg Battlefield. The tour was part of an ongoing training cycle to teach the tenets of Maneuver Warfare to the Khaki community of the ship.

Whidbey Island sailed in the latter portion of the month, conducting LCAC, helo and Well Deck operations. Using U. S. Army Special Forces' helicopters, Whidbey Island's flight deck crew conducted Helo crash drills and personnel casualty drills on both the flight deck and well deck.

Upon returning to port the entire crew continued to prepare for the CART II inspection. Preparations for CART II was the main effort of the command for the remainder of the month.

On 27 November, Whidbey Island said thank you to the families of the crewmembers and invited them onboard for a special brunch. Crewmembers on watch during the Thanksgiving holiday were able to treat their families to a Thanksgiving feast prepared by S-2 division. The ship sponsored a Holiday Feast Basket contest. Various divisions onboard created baskets that were judged by the CO, XO and CMC. Second Division's basket was judged the best in show.

DECEMBER 1996

Continuing her inspection and training cycle Whidbey Island began the month of December with CART II. The week following CART II, a TECRA assist visit was conducted to validate the onboard test equipment calibration equipment. On Saturday, 7 December, Whidbey Island received notification awarding her a Meritorious Unit Commendation, for operations during Operation Uphold Democracy, in the Haitian Theater of Operations from 11 September 1994 to 31 March 1995.

After an extensive visit from the Amphibious Group Two Engineering Readiness Assessment Team, Whidbey Island spent a week underway, conducting Helo Operations, BECCE's, and Engineering evolution training. Prior to returning to Little Creek, Whidbey Island conducted a Navigation Check ride. Upon returning to port the first of two holiday leave periods began.