

USS NASSAU (LHA-4)



FAMILY GRAM

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NASSAU Makes A Mediterranean Cruise

Doing things first, and best, is not new to NASSAU. In October of 1979, only 81 days after Commissioning, NASSAU served as the flagship for the Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, Reinforcement Exercise (REINFORCEX 1-79), moving an entire U.S. Marine Battalion Landing Team ashore exactly on schedule without a single accident or injury.

March of 1980 again brought new challenges to NASSAU, as she departed on a six-week trip to seven Caribbean ports. These show-the-flag Caribbean operations included air demonstrations, civilian ship visiting, and various community relations projects.

Those were definitely hard acts to follow. Shortly after returning from the Caribbean, NASSAU entered a 10-month Post Shakedown Availability (PSA) at the Norfolk Naval Shipyard in Portsmouth, Va.

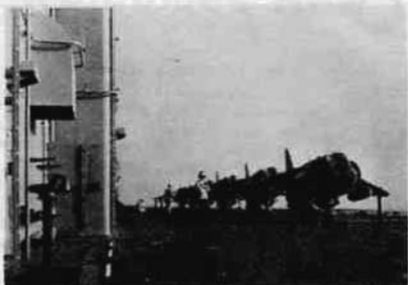
The shipyard period was hard work for all, tempered only by the



Overhaul completed, NASSAU leaves the Norfolk Naval Shipyard.

fact that married crew members were able to go home most every night, and even the bachelors could have an occasional night on the town. However, ten months pier-side is too long for most sailors, and the departure from the shipyard was welcomed by all as NASSAU again joined the operational forces of the Atlantic Fleet.

Mediterranean Cruise (cont.)



Six Harriers prepare for launching. The jets will launch one after another and in a matter of minutes all will be airborne.

Act III was about to commence. Two days after NASSAU steamed proudly back to Naval Station, Norfolk following the successful completion of sea trials, the word was received: "Stand by to make a short Mediterranean deployment in mid-April." And, on top of that, the orders went on to explain that her payload would not be the normal mission load of a U.S. Marine Battalion Landing Team, but rather two squadrons (20) of the Marine Corps AV-8A "Harriers". These are Vertical/Short Take Off and Landing (VSTOL) jets; powerful, adaptable and ideally suited for use onboard the LHA. However, never before had so many Harriers been sent into the Mediterranean on any ship, and never had an LHA been used exclusively in this "aircraft carrier" capacity.

It was another first for NASSAU. In the four weeks between receiving the deployment orders and the scheduled departure date, an immense amount of work had to be accomplished. The crew turned to. Loading of provisions, fuel, munitions and aviation equipment proceeded day and night while plans for the deployment were finalized.

Import loadout periods had to be squeezed between underway times so the necessary training and carrier qualifications could be realized. Things were equally as busy for the pilots and support personnel of Marine Aircraft Group 32, who were to deploy with NASSAU.

All hands, Navy and Marine alike, did their job, and the afternoon of April 13th saw NASSAU steaming past Cape Henry on schedule with two squadrons of Harriers on the flight deck. Since then, NASSAU has crossed the Atlantic and steamed across most of the Mediterranean, participating in both NATO and U.S. exercises designed to demonstrate our ability to augment U.S. forces anywhere in the world.

One of the exercises during the early days in the Sixth Fleet involved practice bombing attacks on a special bombing range set aside for this purpose. The live ordnance dropped by the Harriers during this exercise was the first that we know of to ever leave the flight deck of an LHA on an aircraft. While this capability is one we trust we'll never have to use for real, knowing how to do it could be vital for an operational ship.

Life onboard has continued to include a number of reenlistments, awards, and other interesting events since we sent the last Familygram to you. This special issue will bring you up to date on some of them. The next issue of the NASSAU Familygram should include pictures and stories of events which occurred during the remainder of our Mediterranean deployment, as well as pictures of some of the highlights of the well-deserved port call in Malaga, Spain.

"Harriers" Not Your Average Airplane

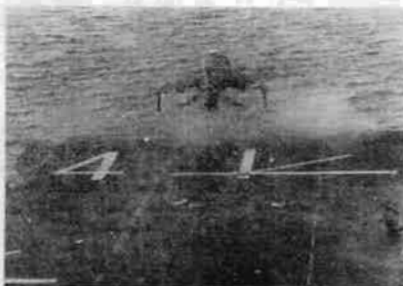


The terms "Harrier" and "VSTOL" are used in many of the articles appearing in this Familygram. They both apply to the type of aircraft NASSAU has onboard during the present deployment. The U.S. Marine Corps AV-8A is a jet aircraft which has the capability to take off and land vertically, much like a helicopter can do. It does this in a manner entirely different from a helicopter, however. The AV-8A "Harrier" has 2 exhaust nozzles on each side of the fuselage, all connected to the single Rolls-Royce jet engine. The nozzles are adjustable in that they may be turned to point directly astern, as in a regular jet aircraft; directly downward, or even slightly forward of down.

When the nozzles are pointed directly downward, the aircraft is capable of producing enough thrust to take off by lifting directly upward - almost like a rocket or missile. After takeoff, the pilot can then point the nozzles toward the rear of the aircraft and fly like a regular jet. Since the maximum weight is normally experienced on takeoff (with full fuel tanks and any ordnance payload), the desired launch method is to have the aircraft do a short rolling takeoff

rather than a vertical launch. This saves fuel and allows a heavier initial aircraft weight. Thus we get the term Vertical or Short Take Off and Landing - VSTOL. NASSAU's flight deck is about 820 feet long. This is not long enough to launch regular jet aircraft (Carriers are several hundred feet longer, and they have a catapult to give the jets an extra "push"), but it is long enough to allow the Harriers to perform a short rolling take off. Landings are usually made vertically, since the aircraft is normally lighter at this point and it is easier to land aboard ship in the vertical method.

The flexibility of takeoff and landing procedures, and the extreme maneuverability resulting from the adjustable nozzles make the Harrier extremely effective for close-air support missions (assisting troops on the beach). It is ideally suited for use aboard the LHA, as the present Mediterranean deployment has demonstrated.



Indoctrination Division Welcomes New Crewmembers

The USS NASSAU's Command Master Chief, BMCM Virgil Jennings, has used his talents and the experience he's gained in 38 years of active duty to improve a number of areas onboard NASSAU, but the one which may have the most significant long term effect is his revitalization of the ship's "I" Division program.

The "I" in I Division stands for Indoctrination, although some say Introduction is more appropriate. To a new man reporting aboard ship, frequently right out of Boot Camp or "A" School, the ship is an enormous place full of unfamiliar spaces (almost 1400 of them!), new people, and hundreds of years of tradition. Even simple tasks, such as knowing when to eat or where the Disbursing Office is, can be very difficult. The overall mission of NASSAU, and her place as a part of the Amphibious Forces of the Atlantic Fleet, might remain a mystery for weeks. What these sailors really need is for somebody who has "been there", to sit down with them in a quiet environment and explain things to them.

This is what NASSAU's I Division is all about. During the first few weeks onboard, every new crewman is assigned to I Division for about a week. The time there is well spent. New crewmen will meet Master Chief Jennings, tour the entire ship and see their shipmates at work. They will also receive short briefings about the various jobs performed by each Department onboard the ship. Damage Control, Security and various safety areas will be covered, as will watch standing and Quarterdeck procedures. The ship's Medical and Dental Officers will proudly display their facilities (and probably schedule some checkups...), and the Chaplain will have his hour.

The program doesn't stop here. The wives and parents of NASSAU crewmen are important as well. Married crewmembers will have a chance to find out information about the Norfolk area as a place to live. In fact, Master Chief Jennings even writes a personal letter to the wife or parents of each new man, explaining about the ship, the man's job aboard, and, in the case of NASSAU wives, the wide range of clubs and activities designed to keep families in touch with each other and up to date on the ship while NASSAU is at sea.

Toward the end of the week, NASSAU's Executive Officer and Commanding Officer each spend about an hour with the group. Questions that may have arisen during the week are answered, ship's policies explained, and each man is personally welcomed aboard. When the I Division secures on that final day of class, they are fully part of the crew, and they know it.

It is not uncommon for a ship to have an I Division, but thanks to the efforts of NASSAU's Command Master Chief and over 20 other people, the I Division onboard NASSAU is interesting, informative, and well-received.



YN2 Joseph Maggio fields a question from one of the I-division members.

"New" NASSAU Library



NASSAU's shipboard library was officially re-opened on April 20 in a ceremony which culminated over six months of hard work by a number of NASSAU crew members. The ship's Executive Officer, Captain R.J. Ianucci, cut the ribbon at 4 p.m., opening up one of the largest U.S. Navy Libraries afloat.

NASSAU has always had a library. The problem was that most of the books were stored in boxes and crates, because the library had shelf-space for only a small percentage of them. Once a Sailor or Marine picked out his book, finding a quiet place to sit and read it presented new challenges. The library was too small. Expanding a shipboard library is not quite as easy as adding a wing to the city building for expansion of a city library. A nearby space was needed, and the remodeling had to be something that the ship's crew could do for itself - a "self-help" project.

The ship's first Commanding Officer, Capt. W. A. Kearns, Jr., formulated the idea of utilizing the adjoining crew's lounge spaces for the library expansion. The lounge was nice, but it duplicated lounge facilities which are located in each of the ship's berthing compartments. It was decided that the space could be better utilized as a library addition. OS2 Milton Saracho working closely with the Executive Officer and RPI George Irvin converted the idea of an expanded library into specific working plans.

The ongoing Post Shakedown Availability at the Norfolk Naval Shipyard gave the library crew time to get their plans turned into action before the ship left the yard.

The ideas and talents of many people, notably RPI Irvin, RP2 Jesus Chan, SN Greg Wagner and many of the men from the Engineering, Deck and Air Departments were used in the work. The materials were supplied by the ship, but the majority of the work was done by volunteer crewmembers after they had completed their normal working days.

The results of their hard work made it all seem worthwhile. The "new" library has more than doubled in available space, with two large 12-foot tables available for studying as well as 11 study carrels (enclosed study desks) for the more serious students.

Two couches were added for the casual reader, and a television set was added to the space for use with various educational programs.

Eight more bookcases will be added soon to spaces that are standing ready. This will enable the library to display over 4000 books as well as periodicals, encyclopedias and other reference materials. Longer range plans include the acquisition of tape recorders and earphones with accompanying music as well as academic study tapes.

Has Grand Reopening

A flexible partition has been installed between the two main spaces which allows one to be partitioned off for use as a classroom facility or meeting room while the remainder of the library continues to function normally.

The work of a few has benefited many. NASSAU Sailors and embarked Marines now have a spacious, quiet place to retreat at the end of a long day. Prospective college graduates onboard have an excellent classroom facility for onboard PACE courses.

All hands have a quiet, clean space to worship in. NASSAU's new library is just one more reason why she is the proudest ship in the Fleet - and intends to stay that way!



The library is now twice as large and holds over 4000 books and magazines.

First Underway Replenishment



Fuel lines from USS NEOSHO feed a steady stream of diesel oil to NASSAU refueling stations during the first underway replenishment in NASSAU's history.

There have been several noteworthy accomplishments during this deployment. Refueling at sea, or Underway Replenishment, is common in the Navy and most ships do it several times a month. However, a ship's first underway replenishment (UNREP) is a significant milestone in her history.

NASSAU set another "first" in the fleet during this cruise by being the first ship to ever have her first UNREP while deployed to the Mediterranean. (Let's face it... most ships don't hold enough fuel to steam that far without refueling.) In a flawless operation, NASSAU took on over one million gallons of fuel from the USNS Neosho (AO-143) on April 21st while in the western Mediterranean.

E-7, E-8, Promotions

A Senior Chief Petty Officer along with two Chief Petty Officers were frocked recently to Master Chief and Senior Chief respectively.

Senior Chief Mess Management Specialist Nelson Richard was frocked to Master Chief Petty Officer reaching the zenith of the enlisted ladder.

Radioman Chief Petty Officer Harold Edwards and Electrician's Mate Chief Petty Officer Robin Baur were both frocked to the rank of Senior Chief Petty Officer.

Congratulations to all three of these members of NASSAU's crew.



MSCM Nelson Richard (far right) joins Command Master Chief BMCM Virgil Jennings (center) and a new addition to the NASSAU crew AFMC John Welch (far left).

Crewmember receives award

The December issue of the newsletter reported that AD1 Ricky Shoaf, a Search and Rescue Aircrewman (SAR) stationed on Nassau, helped save the life of a Norfolk area man.

In recognition of his action Petty Officer Shoaf was awarded a Navy Commendation Medal during an April 2 ceremony held on Nassau.

Petty Officer Shoaf is qualified in Cardio Pulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) and it was this training that he used to save the injured man's life. The victim had suffered a heart attack while driving and became involved in a five-car accident.

AD1 Shoaf and another SAR crewman were returning to the Norfolk Naval Station when they witnessed the accident and determined the heart-attack victim needed CPR which they promptly began.

Doctors at DePaul hospital where the victim was treated, credited Shoaf and AW1 John Watts (assigned to FASOTRAGRULANT) with saving the man's life.



NASSAU volleyballers were 3-0 before leaving for the Mediterranean.



B43 Bobby Rimer leaves the ground while trying to score a goal during a team handball game.

Ship's Athletes Excel

During the month of March Nassau athletes participated in three Admiral's Cup events.

Two of these sports were team events played at the Amphibious Base gymnasium.

Nassau was 3-0 in volleyball before leaving for the Med and many thought the team capable of going all the way to a league championship.

In team handball, a relatively new sport, Nassau showed determination and talent, however these qualities were negated by a lack of familiarity with the game.

Team Handball is a new sport which combines aspects of soccer and basketball. The game is very fast moving as two five-man teams drive from one end of the court to the other in an attempt to score goals by throwing a small soccer-like ball into the opposition's soccer style net.

The third sport was played on-board Nassau during an at sea period. While other units of the Amphibious Force were competing in a table tennis tournament in the base gym, Nassau table tennis enthusiasts played in a tournament held in the acclimation room over a three-day period.

FTM3 Terry McKinstry was the winner of the first Nassau Table Tennis Classic, defeating ABF3 Owen Hall in the tournament final. In all over 20 crewmembers participated in the event.

More athletic events are planned when Nassau visits Malaga, however specific details were not available at press time.

DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY

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