[redacted]

21 OCTOBER 2000

MEMORANDUM

From: LT [redacted], USN, [redacted]

Subj: OBSERVATIONS OF EVENTS SURROUNDING THE EXPLOSION ONBOARD USS COLE (DDG 67) INPORT ADEN, YEMEN ON 12 OCTOBER 2000

1. I am LT [redacted] Weapons Officer, USS COLE (DDG 67). I was commissioned in [redacted] and I reported onboard COLE in April 2000. I assumed the collateral duty of Force Protection Officer in June 2000. The following account details my observations of the events surrounding the explosion on Thursday, 12 October 2000 and includes background information regarding our Force Protection (FP) Program. The scope of events begins on 12 October 2000 with reveille and concludes with the post-blast securing of topside spaces. Note that all times are local (-3C). Any events that are annotated with approximate times or no time at all are an indication that I did not note the time.

2. I awoke at 0445 to prepare for the Sea & Anchor Detail for entering port. The previous evening we briefed that the Detail would be set at 0530. The first item on my agenda was to confirm our Weapons Postures for entering Aden. I called the CO at approximately 0515 to discuss possible weapons configurations. We decided that with only a brief period scheduled inport, we would maintain the current Weapons Postures with the exception of maintaining CIWS in Standby [redacted] I then called the Combat Systems Controller (CSC) on watch, FCC(SW) [redacted]. I briefed him on the planned Weapons Postures, and I instructed him not to change our Weapons Posture until we were entering the harbor itself. [redacted] It is standard practice to avoid changing equipment configuration during Sea & Anchor Detail to relieve the watchteam of unnecessary distractions from safe navigation.) FCC(SW) [redacted] noted that he would be unable to install the Sector Holdback Tool after the Sea & Anchor Detail was set, because his CIWS Mount Captain was a linehandler on the

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Sea & Anchor Watchbill. I instructed FCC(SW) [redacted] to find a qualified Mount Captain who was not a linehandler to standby MT 22 (after CIWS) during the Sea & Anchor Detail. (NOTE: MT 21 (forward CIWS) had been documented non-operational via Casualty Report (CASREP) since operating in the Adriatic, leaving MT 22 as the only active CIWS mount.) The Tactical Action Officer (TAO), LT [redacted] called shortly after I spoke with FCC(SW) [redacted] to confirm the planned Weapons Postures. [redacted]

3. The Sea & Anchor Detail was set later than we had briefed (I did not note the time). I reported to the bridge and observed the Officer of the Deck (OOD), LTJG [redacted] attempting to contact Aden Port Control to confirm the pilot pick-up time. (NOTE: It is understood among OODs that the watch should not be turned over if critical information is missing or unresolved. In light of the pilot confusion, LTJG [redacted] did not ask me to commence our turnover, and I did not prompt him to begin turning over.) As LTJG [redacted] and his watchteam attempted to contact Port Control, we eventually discussed all pertinent information. While the pilot issue remained unresolved, the CO directed us to turnover the watch. I felt very comfortable with the situation and assumed the watch (I did not note the time). At turnover, the entering port checklist was complete with the exception of the following items:

a) CHECK DRAFT READING.
b) VERIFY TUGS AND PILOT.
c) TEST BRIDGEWING MANEUVERING COMMS.
d) PASS "THE SHIP WILL MOOR _____ SIDE TO AT TIME _____. UNIFORM FOR ENTERING PORT IS _____. ALL DEPTS MAKE PREPS FOR ENTERING PORT AND MAKE REPORTS TO THE XO."
e) SET RESTRICTED MANEUVERING.
f) CLOSE INTERNATIONAL CALLSIGN.
g) SET QUARTERDECK WATCH.
h) RECEIVE AND LOG DRAFT REPORT.

4. When I assumed the watch, we were still closing Aden while attempting to contact Port Control. After finally answering, we tried to confirm a 0630 pilot pick-up, however their standard response was to claim that our transmission was broken and

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unreadable. At approximately 2 NM from land, we stopped closing the beach and held our position, slowing to bare steerageway and turning in place, as we waited for the pilot. Throughout this communications process, the Tactical Communicator, ENS [redacted] manned the bridge-to-bridge radio, however the CO answered several radio call-ups and personally called Port Control.

5. At approximately 0730, Port Control notified us that the Pilot was ready and directed us to proceed into port. As we began heading toward the pilot pick-up point, the entering port checklist was complete with the exception of the following items:

a) TEST BRIDGEWING MANEUVERING COMMS.
b) PASS "THE SHIP WILL MOOR _____ SIDE TO AT TIME _____. UNIFORM FOR ENTERING PORT IS _____. ALL DEPTS MAKE PREPS FOR ENTERING PORT AND MAKE REPORTS TO THE XO."
c) SET RESTRICTED MANEUVERING.
d) CLOSE INTERNATIONAL CALLSIGN.
e) SET QUARTERDECK WATCH.

(NOTE: With the exception of testing bridgewing communications, all items were completed as the schedule allowed. Bridgewing communications were tested during the 0200-0700 watch, and the test was unsatisfactory due to a blown fuse. The fuse was not replaced until we maneuvered to enter the channel. The duty Electronics Technician, ET3 [redacted] immediately reported to the bridge and corrected the casualty.)

6. After a few minutes, Port Control appeared agitated that we were not proceeding quickly enough and asked why we were not closing. The tone of the Port Control operator's voice, which conveyed that we were doing something wrong, caused us to question whether we had misinterpreted his permission to enter port. The CO answered Port Control and confirmed that we were directed to enter port, however Port Control indicated that we were not closing fast enough.

7. The pilot pick-up was a routine evolution. He arrived on the bridge shortly afterward, and his demeanor was very serious and focused. He immediately proceeded forward and was entirely focused on entering port. (NOTE: While I do not have any experience in the mannerisms of the Yemenis, the meeting of the pilot and the CO did not follow the usual protocol. Pilots will

generally greet the CO and spend a few minutes engaging in cordial conversation. He avoided conversing with the CO and bridge watchteam outside the scope of his piloting duties.) While he prompted us to increase speed at the beginning of the transit, he never pushed us to proceed any faster than we were comfortable, and he was very knowledgeable in transiting the harbor. Throughout the transit, he made sound recommendations for a safe passage. The only point of disagreement between the CO and pilot was regarding our berth position. Our intention was to berth starboard side to and position the ship to enable us to get underway and exit the port as quickly as possible without tugs in the event of an emergency. (NOTE: We executed the same berthing plan during our last port visit in Koper, Slovenia. At no time did we ever convey the reason for our berth position, because we did not want to alert the pilot to any consideration of a harbor escape plan.) The pilot insisted that we berth port side to, claiming that the positioning of ships in an adjacent berth would prevent us from executing our plan. The pilot refused to compromise based on the CO's wishes, however he conceded when the CO indicated that it was a fueling configuration requirement. The rest of the transit was uneventful. Several small military patrol craft approached the ship, however they never maneuvered or acted out of the ordinary. The pilot departed shortly after mooring.

8. While positioning our lines, the Flightdeck CPOIC reported that a trash barge was attempting to come alongside the ship and asked if he should accept it. The CO said that we were not planning to use trash services, and that we would hold all trash onboard until we returned to sea that evening. I instructed the flightdeck to wave off the boat. They reported that GM2 [redacted] approached the pilot's ladder with her weapon, and the boat departed. I instructed the Junior Officer of the Deck (JOOD), ENS [redacted] to verify that the small boat had cleared the ship. The JOOD reported that the boat had departed.

9. After securing from the Sea & Anchor Detail, the duty section implemented all measures in accordance with the Force Protection Plan (FPP) for Aden submitted (COLE 071856ZOCT00) and approved by Commander Task Force 50 (CTF50 102230ZOCT00) with the exception of items a through s listed below. (NOTE: Upon submission of the FPP on 07 October 2000, we did not have a confirmed berthing position. We developed an FPP for the worst case scenario, and the most vulnerable position for a ship is

alongside a pier. In addition to the inherent waterline exposure, the ship is at risk to any type of pier threat and is accessible via the brow and mooring lines. With that in mind, we designed our FPP for a pierside mooring. The FP measures related to pierside security noted below were not implemented because we moored to a fueling dolphin with no brow in place. All other FP measures listed were included in our FPP for use if the nature of our portcall changed but were not implemented due to the brevity of our visit. Item s was not implemented because no high-risk personnel were onboard.)

a) Post qualified armed pier and pier entrance sentries.
b) Issue night vision devices to selected security personnel.
c) Coordinate pier/fleet landing security with collocated forces and local authorities.
d) Establish unloading zones on the pier away from the ship.
e) Deploy barriers on the pier.
f) Post warning signs in the local language on the brow.
g) Inspect vehicles entering the pier.
h) Ensure liberty boats make security tours around the ship.
i) Rig hawsepipe covers and ratguards on lines, cables and hoses.
j) Conduct security drills.
k) Review liberty policy.
l) Remind personnel to lock vehicles after exiting and inspect vehicles prior to entering.
m) Designate a picket boat crew and maintain a 15-minute alert status.
n) Place an armed brow watch on the pier.
o) Restrict vehicle access to the pier and discontinue parking on the pier.
p) Conduct pier searches.
q) Lay out fire hoses.
r) Obstruct helicopter landing areas.
s) Implement additional measures for high-risk personnel.

As a result of our conversation noted in paragraph two, the CO and I decided to exceed the small caliber weapons requirements of our FPP. Our small caliber weapons, four 50 caliber and two M60 guns, remained on-station with ammunition in the Ready Service Lockers. (NOTE: During our port visits in the COMSIXTHFLT AOR, we experienced similar scenarios where our FPP did not specifically fit our mooring situation upon arrival. When we visited Valletta, Malta, we were unable to deploy

barriers on the pier as planned. I informed Commander Task Force 60 (CTF 60) with an email explaining the circumstances and asked if they required notification via naval message. CTF 60 indicated that a naval message was not required, however they instructed us to include it in our port visit after-action report. My intention was to contact CTF 50 in the same manner.)

10. I attended to a few administrative issues prior to lunch. At approximately 1115, the Operations Officer, LT [redacted] and I entered the Wardroom and joined the Strike Officer, LTJG [redacted] and the Anti-Submarine Warfare Officer, ENS [redacted] for lunch. At approximately 1120, we felt a large explosion on the port side, [redacted] and the ship immediately listed to port. My initial assessment was that there had been a fueling accident, and I was concerned that the ship was defenseless to attack and unable to escape the port if required. I immediately proceeded to the Security Force Issue Room (SFIR) to obtain a sidearm and ensure that the Ship's Self-Defense Force (SSDF) had responded. I was unable to descend to the DC Deck because of the mass of personnel egressing to the weatherdecks. As I waited for the steady stream of personnel to get topside, I observed the smell of gunpowder and evaluated that the explosion was not a fueling accident but rather an explosive device. I accessed the weatherdecks through the starboard break and saw personnel wandering about. I directed everyone to take cover within the starboard break and picked up a shotgun and ammunition that had been dropped on the portside quarterdeck. I immediately proceeded to the SFIR via the 5-inch magazine trunk on the forecastle. The SFIR was secured with numerous personnel waiting outside. I attempted to establish communications with the armory on the Internal Voice Communications System (IVCS) Net 91 [redacted] I then proceeded to the Armory via the weatherdecks. From the armory I obtained a sidearm and flack-jacket and directed SSDF personnel to man all Small Caliber weapons. We manned four 50 caliber guns, two M60 guns, and numerous personnel were armed with a variety of 9mm, M14, and 12-gauge weapons. Once topside spaces were secured, ship's force began moving wounded personnel to the flightdeck and amidships.

11. The FP Program, including the development of FPPs, was administered in accordance with COLEINST 3300.55. (NOTE: Enclosure (1) of COLEINST 3300.55, the THREATCON Measure Implementation Plan, is based on Navy-wide shipboard physical

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security guidelines established by the Chief of Naval Operations (CNO 191301ZJUN99). The COMFIFTHFLT AOR operates under theater-specific standards outlined in COMUSNAVCENT/COMFIFTHFLT OPORD 99-01. Prior to submitting our FPP for Yemen, the CO gave verbal authorization to tailor enclosure (1) to meet the requirements of COMFIFTHFLT.) We have worked to keep the crew continually informed of terrorist activity in the region. I conducted a terrorism threat assessment briefing for the Wardroom and Chiefs Mess during the Atlantic transit that covered both COMFIFTHFLT and COMSIXTHFLT AORs. We conducted Level I Anti-Terrorism Training for the entire crew before we deployed, and we have systematically trained personnel who arrived at the command during the deployment. We conducted our most recent Level I training on 11 October 2000, and all personnel had received Level I training when we arrived in Yemen.

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