

UNCLASSIFIED

TM3 [REDACTED] was interviewed via telephone by LCDR Thomas L. Copenhaver, JAGC, USN, on 16 November 2000. TM3 [REDACTED] was on leave at his parent's home [REDACTED]. He is on leave until 1 December 2000.

1. Were you briefed on the threat situation in Aden? No. No one briefed him on any threats prior to pulling into Aden. When the ship made a port visit to Bahrain, his division officer briefed him that bars were off limits and there would be no drinking, it was not explained why this was the rule. Restaurants were OK to visit

What was your understanding of the threat? Nothing in particular, he had a basic understanding that the Middle East was not a friendly place, but he had not received a brief on this.

2. Were you briefed on the security/force protection plan for Aden? No. There was no brief prior to pulling into Aden on his duty as a roving watch. He was also assigned as a line handler for this evolution. TM3 [REDACTED] received the word while working as a line handler that he was to assume his duty as a roving watch. When he was finished with line handling, he got a 12-gauge shotgun and assumed the forecandle topside rover watch. He had ten rounds of ammunition in his pocket. Keeping the rounds in his pocket was the normal way to stand this watch. There is no instruction that states you are to carry the rounds in your pocket.

3. Were the rules of engagement for small boat threats ever discussed with you? None prior to the explosion. After the explosion, he was instructed to inform any approaching small boat to "go" in their language. If the boat continued to approach the ship, he was instructed to shoot to kill.

What was your understanding of the rules? As addressed above, tell them to go, if they didn't shoot to kill.

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4. What was your understanding of how you were to keep unauthorized boats away from the ship? If he saw an approaching boat he was to inform the OOD and standby for instruction. He saw two small boats around USS COLE prior to the explosion. The OOD had passed the word that trash collection was to occur and assumed that these two boats were there for that purpose. He saw these boats while he was standing on the port side of COLE. After seeing the two boats, he headed over to the starboard side to keep an eye on a man, in uniform, standing on the barge with an AK 47 rifle. The OOD was aware of this man and had requested that TM3 [redacted] watch him. TM3 [redacted] was not sure if either of the two boats he saw was the one that caused the explosion. He does not really remember what the boats looked like. He recalls seeing two boats, each with two men in them and the men looked like they were "from there." Does not recall any better physical description of the men. He believes the boats were white fishing boats.

Was this discussed with you prior to your assuming the watch? There was no brief prior to assuming the watch, he knew how to stand the watch from his PQS. The PQS states that weapons are not loaded in normal situations.

5. Did anyone tell you what boats were authorized to be along side? Yes, the OOD put out the word over the IMC that trash collection would occur.

6. How many boats do you remember coming along side? What order, and what were they doing? Two. They were there for trash collection.

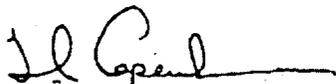
7. Were you told to report any suspected threats to the ship or crew to a particular person in your chain of command? Not specifically told for this evolution. It is common sense to report threats to the OOD and this is also covered in the PQS.

8. If you saw a suspicious vessel near your ship, what were you trained to do? Report to the OOD and wait for instruction. If there was no time to make the report, then tell the boat to stay back. He cannot fire his gun without permission [TM3 ██████ explained that he can't shoot unless the boat presents a threat; either shoots at them or has weapons out. He learned this from his PQS.].

9. Did you have any specific training on when it is appropriate to use deadly force when faced with a treat to your ship and/or crew? Yes, shoot to kill anytime the ship or a crewmember is in danger. Danger is when someone points a gun or is shooting. It is very typical to have lots of small boats around the ship whenever they are in port loading and unloading things.

Under what circumstances do you believe you could use deadly force? When a gun is pointed, when someone with a gun is really angry or when you are shot at.

10. When was the last time you had firearms training? TM3 ██████ did not specifically remember, but it was less than six months. They shot off the back of the ship and used the 12-gauge shotgun, 9mm pistol and 50-caliber machine gun.



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