



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY

USS BENFOLD (DDG 65)

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From: Commanding Officer, USS BENFOLD (DDG-65)  
To: Director of Naval History (N09BH), Washington Navy Yard, 901 M Street, SE, Washington, DC 20374-5060

Subj: USS BENFOLD (DDG-65) COMMAND HISTORY FOR CY 1997

Ref: (a) OPNAVINST 5750.12E

- Encl: (1) Welcome Aboard Pamphlet
- (2) "Bold Defender" Newsletters
- (3) Ship's pictures
- (4) Commanding Officer's Photograph

1. Command Composition and Organization.

Mission: *To be ready to win the next war at sea. We will be ready to conduct prompt and sustained combat operations at sea, executing assigned tasks correctly, safely, and decisively in support of our national policy objective.*

Immediate Senior in Command: *Captain P.J. Slattery, Destroyer Squadron TWENTY-ONE.*

Commanding Officer: *Commander D. Michael Abrashoff.*

Permanent Duty Station: *San Diego, California.*

2. Chronology.

January 13, 1997 - January 15, 1997	<i>Deperming</i>
January 16, 1997	<i>Ammunition Onload - Seal Beach</i>
February 7, 1997 - February 9, 1997	<i>Port visit - Mazatlan, MX</i>
February 13, 1997 - February 15, 1997	<i>JTFEX 97-1(OPFOR)</i>
February 25, 1997 - February 28, 1997	<i>TSTA III</i>
March 4, 1997 - March 13, 1997	<i>Hunter Warrior Exercise</i>
April 8, 1997 - April 10, 1997	<i>Final Evaluation Problem (FEP)</i>
April 16, 1997 - April 18, 1997	<i>NSFS - FIREX AND TYT</i>
April 28, 1997 - May 9, 1997	<i>Combat System Readiness Review (CSRR)</i>
May 18, 1997 - May 21, 1997	<i>Port visit - Cabo San Lucas, MX</i>
June 17, 1997 - June 19, 1997	<i>MEFEX 97-3 Phase I</i>
June 20, 1997	<i>Change of Command</i>
June 26, 1997 - June 27, 1997	<i>Ammunition Onload - Seal Beach</i>
July 7, 1997 - July 11, 1997	<i>MEFEX 97-3 Phase II</i>
July 14, 1997 - August 13, 1997	<i>Pre-Overseas Movement (POM)</i>
August 19, 1997 - August 25, 1997	<i>MEFEX 97-3 Phase III</i>
August 25, 1997 - August 26, 1997	<i>Port visit - Pearl Harbor, HI</i>
August 29, 1997	<i>Crossed International Date Line</i>
September 2, 1997	<i>Chopped to Seventh Fleet</i>
September 8, 1997	<i>Transited San Bernadino Strait</i>
September 10, 1997	<i>PASSEX - German SAG</i>
September 12, 1997 - September 16, 1997	<i>Port visit - Singapore</i>
September 18, 1997 - September 23, 1997	<i>Port visit - Phuket, Thailand</i>
September 29, 1997	<i>Chopped to FIFTH Fleet</i>
September 30, 1997	<i>Transited Strait of Hormuz</i>
September 31, 1997 - January 4, 1997	<i>Arabian Gulf Operations</i>
October 2, 1997 - October 8, 1997	<i>Port visit - Bahrain</i>
October 16, 1997 - October 19, 1997	<i>Port visit - Bahrain</i>

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December 13, 1997 - December 16, 1997	Port visit - Dubai, United Arab Emirates
December 24, 1997	Chief of Naval Operations visit
December 24, 1997 - December 26, 1997	Port visit - Dubai, United Arab Emirates
December 28, 1997 - December 31, 1997	Port visit - Bahrain
December 31, 1997	FIFTH Fleet Awards Ceremony

### 3. Narrative.

**Deperming.** *On January 13-15, USS BENFOLD (DDG 65) executed its first deperming at the Magnetic Silencing Facility (MSF). The event involved a three-day, labor intensive process of wrapping electrical cabling around the ship and performing electrical shock tests. This process calibrates the ship's internal degaussing system to reduce its magnetic signature and prevent detection.*

**Ammunition Onload.** *On January 16, BENFOLD onloaded weapons at Naval Weapons Station, Seal Beach, CA. This intense evolution was BENFOLD's second major training ammunition onload. Over 50,000 rounds of ammunition, including Standard Missiles, were loaded onboard in a safe and expeditious manner.*

**JTFEX 97-1 (OPFOR).** *JTFEX was a warfare exercise in which BENFOLD participated as part of the opposing force against the USS CONSTELLATION battlegroup in preparation for deployment.*

**Tailored Shipboard Training Availability - Phase III (TSTA III).** *Conducted from February 25 to February 28, TSTA II was the second event in BENFOLD's Basic Training Phase. This inspection by the Afloat Training Group (ATG) concentrated on parallel training by the command's training teams. The command's training teams are the Integrated Training Team (ITT) and the Damage Control Training Team (DCTT) led by the Executive Officer, Combat Systems Training Team (CSST) led by the Combat Systems Officer, the Engineering Training Team (ETT/ECCTT) led by the Chief Engineer, and the Seamanship Training Team (STT) led by the Operations Officer. All areas were evaluated as satisfactory or better.*

**Hunter Warrior Exercise.** *During March 4-13, 1997, BENFOLD was selected to be a test platform in the Chief of Naval Operations sponsored event HUNTER WARRIOR. The ship was outfitted with an advanced experimental Tomahawk Weapons Control System allowing us to simulate an arsenal ship. Using state of the art, extremely high frequency satellite communications, BENFOLD answered digital call for fires from Marines over 100 miles away. In less than three minutes from call, the ship would have a simulated Tomahawk or experimental rocket assisted projectile in flight. Even though no live ordnance was fired, the simulated computer models proved the arsenal ship concept.*

**Final Evaluation Problem (FEP).** *The Final Evaluation Problem was conducted April 8-10, 1997 and provided the final evaluation of the BENFOLD's overall operational readiness. Battle readiness and and Training Team effectiveness were evaluated to be outstanding in all areas.*

**NSFS - FIREX AND TYT.** *BENFOLD went back to sea April 16-18, 1997 for Naval Surface Fire Support (NSFS) Qualification. Over two days, the gun teams shot over 160 rounds and scored an overall 96 percent score.*

**Combat System Readiness Review (CSRR).** *CSRR was conducted from April 28 to May 9, 1997 by FTSCPAC. CSRR is conducted on a two to three year periodicity and is designed to provide onboard maintenance training to improve ship technician ability and self-sufficiency, assist and train ship's force in correcting identified equipment problems normally beyond their capability, and ensure the ship's combat system is in its highest readiness state prior to deployment.*

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*Change of Command. The first change of command ceremony in BENFOLD was performed on June 20, 1997. Vice Admiral A.J. Kreckich, COMNAVSURFPAC and guest speaker of ceremonies, witnessed Commander D. Michael Abrashoff relieve Commander Mark E. Ferguson III.*

*MEFEX 97-3. To prepare BENFOLD for her upcoming Arabian Deployment, Destroyer Squadron TWENTY-THREE conducted Maritime Expeditionary Force Exercises broken into three phases. Phase I was held in June 1997 and consisted of classroom training. Topics covered were Rules of Engagement, Intelligence, Fifth Fleet Operational policies and rules, and expected deployment tasking. Phase II was a week at sea in July 1997 for all the ships deploying together: USS BENFOLD, USS GARY and USS HARRY W. HILL. This week included basic integrated ship operations, basic Visit, Board, Search and Seizure training, and live weapon firings. Phase III was conducted in August 1997, as the three deploying ships, now a Surface Action Group (SAG), transited to Hawaii. This training was graduate level training in all warfare areas and concluded with a Undersea Warfare Exercise against a live U.S. nuclear powered attack submarine.*

*PASSEX - GERMAN SAG. On September 11, 1997 USS BENFOLD conducted a PASSEX with a German Navy Surface Action Group (SAG) enroute to Eastern Asia comprised of GLUCKSBURG (A 1414), the lead ship of the GLUCKSBURG Class auxiliary replenishment ships, BAYERN (F 217) of the BRANDENBERG Class Frigates, and BREMEN (F 207), the lead ship of the BREMEN Class Frigates. This opportunity allowed BENFOLD to conduct mutual training with NATO ships which is rare among US ships on the West Coast. Exercises conducted included a dry underway replenishment alongside GLUCKSBURG, seamanship drills, formation maneuvering and personnel exchange via helo between the ships.*

*Arabian Gulf Operations. BENFOLD deployed and operated with FIFTH Fleet in the Arabian Gulf for 100 days during MEF Deployment 97-3 from October to December 1997. During this intensive three months, BENFOLD was underway 75 percent of the time performing Maritime Interception Operation (MIO) duties in support of United Nations' sanctions against Iraq, as well as preparing for possible real-world contingency strike operations during periods of increased tensions. In support of the arms embargo against Iraq, BENFOLD boarded and searched 19 ships and assisted HMS CONVENTRY while tracking a known smuggler. BENFOLD established itself as the premier strike platform, expertly performing over ten Tomahawk Strike Exercises, and preparing for numerous contingency strike operations. During this time, BENFOLD was also assigned to Task Force FIFTY comprised of the NIMITZ and GEORGE WASHINGTON Carrier Battle Groups, an Amphibious Ready Group, 2 submarines, and 4 other MEF deployed ships. BENFOLD conducted surface screening and plane guard for both carriers. For two separate periods, BENFOLD was also the Regional Air Defense Commander for the Gulf and provide radar coverage over Kuwait and Southern Iraq. Port calls in theater included several visits to both Bahrain and Dubai, UAE. From 19 August 1997 to 19 February 1998, BENFOLD traveled approximately 40,000 NM to complete a six month maiden deployment with overwhelming success.*

*Chief of Naval Operations visit. While in Dubai, UAE, USS BENFOLD (DDG-65) hosted a visit by the Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral Jay Johnson, and his wife, Mrs. Garland Johnson on Christmas Eve. The visit was one of several stops on the CNO's tour to visit deployed sailors and marines in the Arabian Gulf. Also accompanying Admiral Johnston were Vice Admiral Fargo, Commander U.S. Naval Forces, Central Command and Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy, ETCM(SW) Hagan. The distinguished visitors were given a brief tour of the ship and took time to meet and speak to the crew. The CNO stopped by the Combat Information Center where he met and congratulated the combat systems and operations teams that have performed so well since BENFOLD's arrival in the gulf. Arriving last October, BENFOLD has performed several key Arabian Gulf missions, including Regional Air Defense Commander, radar coverage for Operation Southern Watch, maritime interception operations, ready strike platform and air defense ship for two carrier battle groups. Following the Combat Information Center, the visitors continued to the mess decks where a special presentation was given to Master Chief Hagan for his service while serving as Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy. The presentation was given by Signalman Second Class*

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Petty Officer [REDACTED] age 24, of [REDACTED] Petty Officer [REDACTED] thanked Master Chief Hagan specifically for his work in establishing single sailor VHA and BAQ for Second Class Petty Officers. From Petty Officer [REDACTED], "We just wanted to let him know that we appreciated all the work he did for junior sailors. It was great to be able to thank him personally." The CNO spoke to the crew and thanked them for sacrificing their holiday season to be in the Arabian Gulf while fulfilling a vital role. Admiral Johnson reminded the crew of BENFOLD, "what you do out here is important, it's important to our navy and its important to our country."

Fifth Fleet Awards Ceremony. Excelling in performance of their duties during BENFOLD's first MEF deployment, personnel were recognized by COMFIFTHFLT and COMDESRON FIFTY. Outstanding performance in support of Operations SOUTHERN WATCH, Maritime Interception Operations and carrier Group SEVEN earned BENFOLD a reputation worthy of her name. Over forty-five crewmembers were awarded the FIFTH Fleet Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal, Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal, Letter of Commendation or COMIDEASTFOR Letter of Commendation for their performance during BENFOLD's MEF Deployment in FIFTH Fleet AOR.

#### 4. Biography of former commanding officer - Commander Mark E. Ferguson III.

CDR Ferguson was born in [REDACTED] Raised in Maryland, he is a distinguished graduate of the United States Naval Academy, where he earned a Bachelor of Science Degree in Systems Engineering. Upon graduation, he received the National Society of the Sons of the American Revolution awards for the highest standing in weapons systems studies and professional military courses.

Following graduation, Commander Ferguson completed naval nuclear propulsion training. His sea assignments have been both the Atlantic and Pacific fleets, with tours on the nuclear-guided Missile cruiser USS SOUTH CAROLINA (CGN 37), the aircraft carrier USS DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER (CVN 69), and the destroyer USS FIFE (DD 991). His operational deployments included participation in Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm.

Ashore, he has served in the Bureau of Naval Personnel as the Surface Nuclear Assignment Officer (PERS-412N) and as the Assistant Surface Captain Assignment Officer (PERS-41A). His most recent assignment was to the Secretary of the Navy's Office of Legislative Affairs, where he was responsible for providing liaison to the House and Senate Armed Services Committees for all surface warfare, sealift, and shipbuilding programs. In 1984, Commander Ferguson graduated with distinction from the Naval Postgraduate School, earning a Master of Science degree in Computer Science. He is also a graduate of the United States Air Force Command and Staff College.

His decorations include the Meritorious Service Medal, the Navy Commendation Medal, the Navy Achievement Medal, and various unit awards and campaign ribbons.

Commander Ferguson is married to the former [REDACTED] of [REDACTED] They have two children, [REDACTED].

#### 5. Biography of current commanding officer - Commander D. Michael Abrashoff

Commander Donald Michael Abrashoff was born in [REDACTED] He is a 1982 graduate of the United States Naval Academy. His initial sea duty assignment was in the USS ALBERT DAVID (FFG 1050) where he served as Communications Officer and Anti-Submarine Warfare Officer. Upon completion of Department Head School, he was ordered to USS HARRY W. HILL (DD 986) where he served as Combat Systems Officer. His second tour was as Combat Systems Officer in USS ENGLAND (CG 22). During this tour, he participated in Operation DESERT SHIELD in Southwest Asia. He served as Executive Officer in USS SHILOH (CG 67) which also deployed to Southwest Asia.

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*Commander Abrashoff served ashore as Aide and Flag Lieutenant to Commander, Naval Surface Group Western Pacific/Commander Surface Combatant Force Seventh Fleet and Commander Logistics Support Force Seventh Fleet in Subic Bay, RP. In Washington, D.C., he served as a Surface Warfare Assignment Officer, Junior Officer Shore Coordinator and Cruiser Destroyer Atlantic Fleet Placement Officer. Additionally, he served as the Military Assistant to the Secretary of Defense, the Honorable William J. Perry.*

*Commander Abrashoff's personal awards include the Defense Superior Service Medal, the Meritorious Service Medal, four Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medals, and one Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal, various Campaign and Service Medals and four Battle "E" Awards for shipboard excellence.*

*D.M. Abrashoff*  
D. M. ABRASHOFF