



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY

USS CHAMPION (MCM-4)
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IN REPLY REFER TO:

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From: Commanding Officer, USS CHAMPION (MCM-4)
To: Chief of Naval Operations (N09BH)

Subj: COMMAND HISTORY FOR 1997

Ref: (a) OPNAVINST 5750.12F

Encl: (1) 1997 Battle Efficiency and Command Excellence Package

1. The 1997 command history for USS CHAMPION (MCM-4) submitted in accordance with ref (a) for Department of the Navy archives.

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USS CHAMPION (MCM-4) 1997 CHRONOLOGICAL COMMAND HISTORY

January 1-14 – Upkeep at Naval Station Ingleside, TX. LCDR Lewis C. Nygard is Commanding Officer. LCDR Curt W. Steigers is Executive Officer.

January 15-16 – Underway from Naval Station Ingleside for MIW LTT in Corpus Christi Oparea (CCOA), TX.

January 17-20 – Upkeep at Naval Station Ingleside, TX.

January 21 – Tailored Ship Training Availability (TSTA) II Engineering Training Group (ETG) begins.

January 22-23 – CHAMPION fails to get underway for TSTA II ETG due to inclement weather (fog).

January 24 – Completion of TSTA II ETG.

January 25-January 28 – Upkeep at Naval Station Ingleside, TX.

January 29-30 – CHAMPION conducts shipboard explosives safety inspection inport Ingleside, TX.

January 31-February 5 – Upkeep at Naval Station Ingleside, TX.

February 6 – Underway from Naval Station Ingleside for Engineering Certification in CCOA, TX. CHAMPION successfully completes ECERT.

February 7-9 – Inport Naval Station Ingleside, TX for upkeep.

February 10 – Inport Naval Station Ingleside, TX for TSTA II MIW administrative and material checks.

February 11-13 – Underway from Ingleside Naval Station for TSTA II MIW in CCOA, TX.

February 14 – Inport TSTA II MIW at Ingleside Naval Station, TX. Berthed at A-2 berth to repair acoustic and magnetic cable grounds.

February 15-March 2 – Inport Naval Station Ingleside, TX for upkeep.

March 3-7 – Underway from Ingleside Naval Station for TSTA IV MIW in CCOA, TX. Conducted sonar conditions check and minehunting.

March 8-9 – Underway from Ingleside Naval Station for Selective Reservist (SELRES) training in CCOA, TX. Return to Ingleside Naval Station after completion of SELRES training.

March 10 – CHAMPION fails to get underway for TSTA IV MIW due to inclement weather (fog).

March 11-13 – Underway from Ingleside Naval Station, TX for TSTA IV MIW in CCOA, TX. Conducted mechanical and combination influence sweeping.

March 17-18 – Underway from Ingleside Naval Station, TX for TSTA IV MIW in CCOA, TX. Conducted minehunting, explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) boat vectoring and mine neutralization vehicle (MNV) operations.

March 19 – CHAMPION fails to get underway due to necessary repairs on NR2 SSDG.

March 20-21 – Underway from Ingleside Naval Station, TX for TSTA IV MIW in CCOA, TX. Conducted combination influence sweep, mechanical sweep and MNV missions.

March 22-23 – Inport Ingleside Naval Station for upkeep.

March 24-28 – CHAMPION conducts Mine Readiness Certification Inspection (MRCI) in CCOA, TX.

March 29-30 – Inport Ingleside Naval Station for upkeep.

March 31-April 4 – Inport Ingleside Naval Station, TX for TSTA I Damage Control/Seamanship/Navigation (DASMN).

April 5-6 – Inport Ingleside Naval Station for upkeep.

April 7-11 – Underway from Ingleside Naval Station, TX for TSTA I DASMN.

April 12-13 – Inport Ingleside Naval Station for upkeep.

April 14-18 – Underway from Ingleside Naval Station, TX for TSTA II DASMN.

April 19-27 – Inport Ingleside Naval Station for upkeep.

April 28-May 2 – Underway from Ingleside Naval Station, TX for final Mine Readiness Certification (MRC) and TSTA III in CCOA, TX. Return to Ingleside Naval Station after completion of MRC and TSTA III.

May 3-4 – Inport Ingleside Naval Station for upkeep.

May 5 – Inport Ingleside Naval Station for Final Evaluation Period (FEP) inport briefs.

May 6-8 – Underway from Ingleside Naval Station, TX for FEP in CCOA, TX. Return to Ingleside Naval Station after completion of FEP.

May 9-18 – Inport Ingleside Naval Station for upkeep.

May 19-30 – Underway from Ingleside Naval Station, TX for GOMEX 97-2 in CCOA, TX. EOD Mobile Unit 6 Detachment 4 embarks for exercise.

May 31-June 1 – Inport Naval Station Ingleside, TX for upkeep.

June 2-16 – CHAMPION completes Fleet Maintenance Activity Availability (FMAV) inport Ingleside Naval Station, TX.

June 17-22 – Inport Naval Station Ingleside, TX for upkeep.

June 23-26 – Combat Systems Readiness Review (CSRR) conducted.

June 27-30 – Inport Naval Station Ingleside, TX for upkeep.

July 1-2 – Underway from Ingleside Naval Station, TX enroute Lake Charles, LA for port visit.

July 3-5 – Port Visit in Lake Charles, LA for 4th of July celebration.

July 6-7 – Underway from Lake Charles, LA enroute Ingleside, TX.

July 8-24 – Inport Naval Station Ingleside, TX for upkeep and leave period.

July 25-29 – Underway from Ingleside Naval Station, TX enroute to Key West, FL for BSF.

July 29 – BSF in Key West, Florida.

July 29-August 1 – CHAMPION departs Key West, Florida enroute Charleston Naval Base, SC for degaussing checks.

August 1-10 – Port visit at Charleston Naval Base, SC. LATR ship instrumentation package installation, stores onload and degaussing runs in preparation of JTFEX 97-3 conducted.

August 10-13 – CHAMPION departs Charleston Naval Base, SC enroute to Wilmington, NC for port visit, BSF and stores onload.

August 13-17 – Port visit in Wilmington, NC.

August 17 – CHAMPION departs Wilmington, NC enroute to JTFEX 97-3 operating area.

August 18-September 4 – Joint Fleet Exercise (JTFEX) 97-3 begins. CHAMPION conducts integrated MCM operations as a member of Task Group 955.6.

September 5-8 – Enroute Little Creek, VA for BSF and port visit.

September 8-10 – Port Visit and BSF in Little Creek, VA upon completion of JTFEX 97-3.

September 10 – CHAMPION departs Little Creek, VA enroute Annapolis, MD for port visit.

September 11-15 – Port Visit at United States Naval Academy in Annapolis, MD.

September 15-19 – CHAMPION departs Annapolis, MD enroute to Nassau, Bahamas for port visit.

September 19-23 – Port Visit in Nassau, Bahamas.

September 23-25 – CHAMPION departs Nassau, Bahamas enroute to Key West, FL.

September 25-29 – Port Visit and BSF in Key West, FL.

September 29-October 1 – CHAMPION departs Key West, FL enroute to Ingleside, TX.

October 1 – Arrival at Ingleside Naval Station, TX.

October 2-November 2 – Upkeep period with continuing Logistics Management Assessment preparations.

October 4 – Ship Alteration (S/A) 174D (Lightning Protection system) begins.

October 6-8 – Logistics Management Assessment conducted, CHAMPION receives 97% and is rated an overall outstanding. Restricted Availability begins.

October 8-9 – Automated Information System inspection conducted. CHAMPION

October 13 – Installation of Field Changes (FC) 1MC, 10MC, 12MC and 3CC on SLQ-48 Mine Neutralization System (MNS) begins.

October 14 – Regional Support Group (RSG) Diesel Engine Inspection begins.

October 17 – Completion of S/A 174D.

October 24 – RSG Diesel Engine Inspection ends.

October 27 – Completion of SLQ-48 MNS Field Changes. Installation of S/A 008K (AC plant non-CFC) begins.

October 29 – Communications Security Material System (CMS) Inspection completed, receiving satisfactory grade.

November 3-December 31 – USS CHAMPION (MCM-4) enters dry-dock at Southwestern Marine Shipyard in Ingleside, TX for commencement of DPMA. Installation of S/A 184K (UHF DAMA Upgrade), S/A 185K (OTCIXS) and S/A 009K (RSS plant non-CFC) begin. NKMS Phase II shipcheck begins.

November 8 – Installation of Precise Inertial Navigation System (Version 4) begins.

December 10-12 – Installation of FC2 on WSN-2 Gyrocompass.

December 15-17 – Afloat Training Group (ATG) PLOT I training.

December 19-31 – Holiday upkeep and leave period.

USS CHAMPION 1997 NARRATIVE HISTORY

USS CHAMPION (MCM-4) was on holiday standown moored at Naval Station Ingleside, Texas from January 1st through January 6th. New Years' Day was celebrated in Navy tradition with the holiday standards and lights strewn for the occasion. CHAMPION returned to normal working hours on January 7th to prepare for the upcoming interdeployment training cycle (IDTC). CHAMPION was scheduled to deploy with COMCMRON ONE (Immediate Superior in Command) in support of JTFEX 97-3 in WESTLANT in August, and all preparations were geared towards being a successful surface minecountermeasures vessel during this exercise. For the entirety of calendar year 1997, LCDR Lewis C. Nygard was CHAMPION's Commanding Officer and LCDR Curt W. Steigers was CHAMPION's Executive Officer.

After an upkeep and training period from January 7th through January 14th, CHAMPION was ready for her first underway of the new year. CHAMPION took in all lines on the morning of January 15th for a mine warfare LTT (MIW LTT) in the Corpus Christi Operating Area (CCOA). Embarking members of the Afloat Training Group (ATG), CHAMPION streamed a MK 5A, straight magtail sweep for the first day of the MIW LTT, focusing on fantail minesweep boatswain training. On January 16th, CHAMPION conducted minehunting training in CCOA, focusing on training in the Combat Information Center (CIC) and supportive watchstations.

CHAMPION returned to Naval Station Ingleside, TX on January 17th for an upkeep period through January 20th. On January 21st, the Engineering Training Group (ETG) embarked for Tailored Ship Training Availability (TSTA) II ETG. Due to inclement weather (fog), CHAMPION was unable to get underway January 22nd and 23rd and TSTA II ETG was conducted inport through January 24th. During the visit, CHAMPION's safety programs (heat stress, hearing conservation, electrical safety and tag-out) were assessed as "partially effective or effective". After receiving a list of discrepancies to work on, the engineering department went to work January 25th through February 5th to prepare for the upcoming Engineering Certification on February 6th. CHAMPION also completed the shipboard explosive safety inspection (SESI) from January 29th-30th.

CHAMPION successfully completed Engineering Certification in the CCOA on February 6th. The assessment found the ship certified to conduct unrestricted engineering operations and integrated training. Two of two watch teams presented were certified as the ship successfully completed 7 of 8 drills (87.5%), 21 of 24 (84%) evolutions and one Main Space Fire Drill. All administrative programs were assessed as "effective" during the certification.

The next operational commitment for CHAMPION was TSTA II MIW from February 11th through February 14th after four days inport Naval Station Ingleside, TX. On February 10th, ATG conducted an inport inspection of administration and minesweeping gear. CHAMPION was underway the morning of February 11th in the CCOA, training on watchstanding procedures, the Double Oprea mechanical sweep and small arms fire procedures. On February 12th, the port mechanical sweep gear was streamed for the duration of the day while preparations were made to stream a combination influence sweep on February 13th. On the morning of February 13th the deck crew streamed a MK6H combo sweep with the TB-26 acoustic device. Grounds were found in both the acoustic power cable and the magnetic sweep cable. CHAMPION returned to port on the afternoon of February 13th to accomplish repairs on both cables. February 14th, the final day of TSTA II MIW, focused on training mission package (MP) build-ups as well as danning and master reference buoy build-ups.

After completion of acoustic and magnetic cable repairs during an upkeep period from February 15th through March 2nd, CHAMPION was underway with ATG the morning of March 3rd for TSTA IV MIW. March 3rd concentrated on sonar conditions check and mine neutralization vehicle (MNV) training. On March 4th the deck crew streamed a Single Oprea mechanical sweep to starboard, rigging for a combination influence sweep that evening. March 5th focused on mine hunting and MNV training, with two successful MNV missions. On March 6th combination influence sweep training was held, with CHAMPION returning to Naval Station Ingleside early in the afternoon of March 7th. ATG evaluated the first week of TSTA IV as an outstanding training.

March 8th-9th was spent inport Naval Station Ingleside, TX. March 10th was a lost training day due to inclement weather (fog). On March 11th, CHAMPION was underway with ATG embarked for the second week of TSTA IV MIW in the CCOA. March 11th-12th focused on sonar conditions checks, Q-routes, mine hunting and MNV training with five MNV missions conducted. March 13th-14th was concentrated on combination influence sweep training, with CHAMPION returning pierside on the afternoon of March 14th. March 15th-16th was spent inport in preparation for the final week of TSTA IV MIW.

CHAMPION was underway the morning of March 17th bound for the CCOA. March 17th-18th focused on sonar conditions check, mine hunting, Q-routes, EOD boat vectoring and mine neutralization. March 19th was a training day lost due to a casualty to NR2 SSDG (repaired that evening inport Ingleside). On March 20th-21st CHAMPION conducted three MNV missions, a MK5A combination influence sweep and a Double Oprea mechanical sweep to complete TSTA IV MIW. ATG evaluated CHAMPION as effective and ready for follow-on training.

The Mine Warfare Readiness Certification Inspection (MRCI) was conducted onboard CHAMPION from March 24th-March 28th. Crew proficiency was rated as satisfactory during the inspection, while material was rated unsatisfactory due to out of periodicity degaussing tests. The lack of a magnetic silencing facility at Naval Station Ingleside hindered the mineforce in attaining certification during this time frame. CHAMPION received her final MRC on April 18th.

During April, CHAMPION conducted the inport and underway phases of TSTA I/II Damage Control /Seamanship/Navigation (DASMN). The first week of April was devoted to the inport phase, with TSTA I and TSTA II being accomplished the following two weeks. During the training CHAMPION focused on development of engineering, damage control, combat systems, seamanship and integrated training teams. The training teams imposed small boat attacks, terrorist aircraft attacks, fires, flooding, loss of equipment and man overboards during the training. This groomed both the training teams and the watchstanders for the upcoming Final Evaluation Period (FEP), which is the culmination of the basic phase of the training cycle.

CHAMPION conducted the Final Evaluation Period (FEP) in the CCOA from May 6th-8th. Flexing the crew, CHAMPION's training teams imposed engineering casualty control drills, combat systems casualty drills, navigation drills, seamanship drills and intelligence exercises. ATG evaluated all training teams as effective, particularly noting outstanding performance during MNV operations. Completing the basic training phase, CHAMPION prepared to commence intermediate training in Gulf of Mexico Exercise (GOMEX) 97-2.

After an upkeep period from May 9th-18th, CHAMPION was underway on the morning of May 19th for GOMEX 97-2. The exercise was conducted in the CCOA off North Padre Island through May 28th. Objectives for the mineforce were establishing transport areas, transport lanes and fire support areas in support of simulated amphibious operations. The exercise also afforded units the opportunity to enhance formation steaming, tactical maneuvering and Battle Stations skills in preparation for the JTFEX 97-3 deployment. EOD detachment 64 embarked on CHAMPION for the exercise, assisting in identification and neutralization of mines during the exercise.

Upon completion of GOMEX 97-2, CHAMPION entered an upkeep period with a Fleet Maintenance Activity Availability (FMAV) from June 2nd-June 16th. During the FMAV, CHAMPION and the Ship's Intermediate Maintenance Activity (SIMA) completed over 40 jobs. Following the FMAV and upkeep period that extended to June 22nd, CHAMPION conducted a Combat Systems Readiness Review (CSRR) from June 23rd-26th. This assist encompassed a thorough review and groom of all communications, navigation and mine warfare specific equipment. From June 27th-June 30th, CHAMPION was in an upkeep period inport Naval Station Ingleside, TX.

Crewmembers aboard CHAMPION enjoyed the 4th of July in Lake Charles, Louisiana, leaving Ingleside on July 1st for a July 3rd arrival. Participating in the "Red, White, Blue & You 4th of July Parade and attending an open air concert, the City of Lake Charles greeted CHAMPION with open arms. CHAMPION departed Lake Charles on the morning of July 7th after enjoying the splendid hospitality and true southern charm.

CHAMPION returned to Ingleside early on the afternoon of July 9th for an upkeep period before the JTFEX 97-3 deployment. On July 25th, CHAMPION took in all lines and departed for Key West, Florida, the first fueling port on the route to the deployment oparea. On July 29th, CHAMPION fueled in Key West and enjoyed two days of liberty in the mineforces' favorite port. CHAMPION set sail once again on August 1st, bound for Charleston, South Carolina to conduct degaussing runs in preparation for JTFEX 97-3.

CHAMPION arrived late on the evening of August 1st at Charleston Naval Base. Accomplishing LATR ship instrumentation package installations, stores onloads and degaussing runs through August 10th, CHAMPION then departed for Wilmington, North Carolina. From August 13th-17th, CHAMPION enjoyed a port visit in Wilmington while making final preparations for JTFEX 97-3. On August 17th, CHAMPION departed Wilmington enroute to the JTFEX 97-3 oparea.

During JTFEX 97-3 (August 18th-September 4th), CHAMPION conducted integrated MCM operations as a member of Task Group 955.6. Exploratory mine hunting and environmental assessment was conducted in the outer sea echelon area for the first three days of the exercise. Follow on tasking consisted of AMCM contact reacquisition and prosecution as well as clearance mine hunting in the inner transit area, fire support area and transit lane. Reacquisition was achieved utilizing CHAMPION's SQQ-30 sonar while neutralization efforts were carried out using EOD mobile unit detachment four and the MNV. Operating flawlessly with USS SENTRY (MCM-3), USS HERON (MHC-58) and USS ORIOLE (MHC-57), it was evident that the training cycle in Ingleside had paid great dividends. Throughout the deployment, CHAMPION met every operational commitment and demonstrated keen self-sufficiency and sustained superior performance.

Upon completion of JTFEX 97-3 CHAMPION proceeded to Little Creek, VA to refuel and enjoy liberty through September 9th. On the morning of September 10th, CHAMPION was underway for a high visibility port visit at the United States Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland. Arriving in Annapolis on September 11th, CHAMPION remained pierside along Farragut Field until September 15th. Dining with midshipman in King Hall, visiting campus and hosting ship tours, CHAMPION sailors were thoroughly delighted with the visit. CHAMPION departed Annapolis on the afternoon of September 15th enroute to Nassau, Bahamas for a port visit.

Arriving in Nassau on September 19th, CHAMPION partook in some Caribbean liberty until September 23rd. Although expensive, Nassau offered fine beaches and impressive extracurricular activities. CHAMPION departed Nassau on September 25th enroute to Key West, Florida for the final port visit of the JTFEX 97-3 deployment.

CHAMPION arrived in Key West late in the evening on September 25th. Remaining in Key West until September 28th, CHAMPION took advantage of the exciting night life and beautiful beaches this final liberty port offered. Weary from extensive travels, CHAMPION began the journey home to Ingleside on the morning of September 29th, arriving at Naval Station Ingleside on the afternoon of October 1st. Reunited with family members and friends, CHAMPION sailors were ecstatic after completing a successful deployment and seeing numerous U.S. and Caribbean ports.

CHAMPION remained inport for the remainder of the calendar year, with the exception of moving the ship into dry-dock in November. The upkeep period in October saw numerous ship alterations (S/A) and inspections. Completion of S/A 174D (Lightning protection system), S/A 008K (A/C plant non-CFC configuration) and SLQ-48 MNV field changes were noteworthy accomplishments during this period. From October 6th through October 8th, CHAMPION received a 97% grade on the Logistics Management Assessment. CHAMPION completed the Automated Information Systems inspection during October 8th through October 9th. The Regional Support Group conducted a successful diesel inspection October 14th through October 24th. On October 29th, CHAMPION completed the final inspection for the period; a Communications Security Material System (CMS) Inspection that received a satisfactory grade.

CHAMPION entered the dry-dock at Southwestern Marine Shipyard in Ingleside, TX on November 3rd for commencement of a five-month Docking Phased Maintenance Availability (DPMA). Installations accomplished during the availability include S/A 184K (UHF DAMA Upgrade), S/A 185K (OTCIXS) and S/A 009K (RSS plant non-CFC). November also saw the upgrading of an essential mine warfare piece of gear, the Precise Inertial Navigation System, with two tactical displays installed in the Combat Information Center (CIC).

CHAMPION remained in the dry-dock throughout December, seeing additional field changes on the WSN-2 Gyrocompass and the commencement of ATG PLOT I training. The holiday upkeep period began December 19th and endured through December 31st. With a clear break-out performance in 1997, CHAMPION crew looked forward toward building on their distinctive accomplishments in 1998.