



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY
COMMANDING OFFICER
USS DECATUR (DDG 73)
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USS DECATUR (DDG 73) Historical Narrative for 2003

USS DECATUR (DDG 73) had another banner year in 2003, setting high goals and reaching those goals from beginning to end. From an abbreviated Inter Deployment Training Cycle (IDTC) to a complex Command, Control, Communication, and Computers (C4I) Availability to the first training cycle for an Expeditionary Strike Group and finally an early and maiden deployment of Expeditionary Strike Group One in support of Operations IRAQI FREEDOM and ENDURING FREEDOM, DECATUR executed an aggressive schedule that achieved many firsts. The professional accomplishments this year are accredited to DECATUR's warrior spirit embodied in each of her sailors and their commitment to fulfill the finest traditions of Surface Warfare. DECATUR's 2003 operational schedule encapsulates the breadth of a ship's cycle from a various in-port availabilities and basic training to warfare on the high seas. The professional expertise, dedication to duty, and personal sacrifice of all onboard were evident all year through the many successes achieved.

DECATUR's IDTC provided unique challenges. As the first destroyer to deploy as part of an Expeditionary Strike Group, DECATUR provided valuable lessons learned, tailoring it to meet the needs of the ship and the assessors. DECATUR's Command Assessment of Readiness and Training (CART) II format was an outstanding success, commencing it ahead of schedule and successfully completing the Engineering Initial Assessment at the beginning of CART II. Additionally, DECATUR met all training requirements for the basic phase in just 11 weeks (6 underway training and 5 in-port) vice the notional 16 weeks. Finally, DECATUR also served as the common baseline ship in support of the Navy's SEA SWAP program, which involved crew swaps between the USS HIGGINS (DDG 76), USS BENFOLD (DDG 65), and USS JOHN PAUL JONES (DDG 53). DECATUR's support substantially contributed to the success of this high priority CNO project.

In the first half of 2003 DECATUR supported the testing of the new stabilized Mk 95 Mod 1 25 MM Gun Mount System and the EX 45 Mk 45 50 caliber machine gun, two high priority CNO Projects. Working with industry representatives, DECATUR conducted multiple successful live firings against high and low speed targets while balancing all the requirements of the IDTC. DECATUR's Strike Teams demonstrated their versatility, concurrently training and preparing for their highly successful Cruise Missile Tactical Qualification (CMTQ), which was successfully completed on the first attempt, far ahead of schedule with the newest baseline of software for the Advanced Tomahawk Weapons System.

Throughout 2003, DECATUR sense of mission accomplishment and professionalism was on display as the ship embarked on an aggressive schedule to install and test numerous systems, including: SINGARS Encrypted Very High Frequency communications system for Naval Surface Fire Support (NSFS), Sensitive Compartmented Information (SCI) Networks Upgrades, Aegis Weapons System Baseline 5.3.8.2 Software Upgrade, Coalition Web Area Networks (COWAN), Advanced Tomahawk Weapons System Software Upgrade, Ship's Gridlock System Mk 162 Mod 1 Upgrade, Battle Force Integrated Training (BFIT) 3.1 Software Upgrade, Navigation Sensor Systems Interface (NAVSSI), and the WSN-7 Ring-laser Gyro system and an Extremely High Frequency Medium Data Rate (EHF MDR) upgrade. The level of planning and coordination required to conduct these installations and trials during various availabilities throughout 2003 in a limited amount of time placed much emphasis on personnel management and leadership and, once again, DECATUR sailors responded superbly, sacrificing where required to meet deadlines and testing requirements.

The warrior spirit of DECATUR rose to the occasion and paved the way for the next hurdle - Battle Group operations.

Over the course of one weekend, DECATUR transitioned from C5RA availability to sailing in company with ships and aircraft of EXPEDITIONARY STRIKE GROUP ONE, another first accomplished by DECATUR sailors. DECATUR made this transition smoothly, executing multi-warfare missions aggressively and with the proficiency of more seasoned crews. DECATUR participated in multiple battle group exercises, including an ESGEX, Composite Unit Exercise (COMPTUEX), and Joint Forces Exercise (JTFEX). Highlights include activation as Alternate Air Defense and Surface Warfare Commander and joining with the Air Combat Element in multiple coordinated NSFS, Tomahawk Strike, and Anti-submarine warfare events. In fact, DECATUR was one of the rare DDGs tested as Air Defense Commander during the COMPTUEX Final Battle Problem without being the alternate.

The summer of 2003 was highlighted by DECATUR's first Board of Inspection and Survey Assessment (INSURV), which was an outstanding success. The crew of DECATUR was astoundingly prepared, as DECATUR scores were, in general, higher than the fleet average, including an unprecedented 95% in Combat Systems readiness. DECATUR's INSURV was described by the senior inspector as "the best in recent memory," and was further testament to the dedication, pride, and competency of the crew.

Shortly after completion of INSURV, DECATUR completed her deployment ammunition and logistics on-load, STREAM RAID, and MISSILEX. DECATUR's ability to deploy early with an experimental battle group is a testament to the expert planning, maintenance and overall combat efficiency of DECATUR Surface Warriors. DECATUR completed her advanced phase of training with an abbreviated, intense Joint Task Force Exercise (JTFEX) and then deployed August 22 to support Operations IRAQI FREEDOM and ENDURING FREEDOM.

At the end of September, DECATUR arrived in the 5th Fleet Area of Responsibility (AOR) and accomplished much during the last quarter of 2003. In support of the multi-national Coalition effort in the Global War on Terrorism, DECATUR supported extensive Maritime Interdiction Operations (MIO) in the Arabian Gulf, Gulf of Oman, and Gulf of Aden, oil field security in the Northern Arabian Gulf, and maritime security escort operations in the Straits of Hormuz. During this time, DECATUR conducted hundreds of queries of shipping and over 30 MIO Visit, Board, Search, and Seizure (VBSS) Boardings and intelligence stops. Additionally, DECATUR was used extensively for national-level tasking.

The highlight of DECATUR's MIO operations was tracking and takedown of a drug smuggling dhow while operating in the 5th Fleet AOR. The apprehension of this vessel led to the confiscation of over \$10 million dollars in drugs and the collection of valuable intelligence in the drug-trafficking activities of terrorist organizations.

DECATUR was able to achieve and maintain a high level of combat readiness throughout the year. During 2003, DECATUR pioneered and excelled in all aspects of her duties, including air warfare, surface warfare, undersea warfare, strike warfare, command and control warfare, and force protection.

Highlights of air warfare proficiency include the successful shooting of 3 SM-2's in support of an AAW-27-SF against a Vandal and an AAW-11A-SF against two incoming drones. DECATUR also successfully completed an AAW-21-SF with both forward and aft CIWS mounts against a towed sleeve target and an AAW-12-SF with the 5" gun mount against a towed sleeve target.

DECATUR's surface warfare abilities were by the outstanding performances of DECATUR's 5" inch gun team. DECATUR successfully completed the SUW-17-SF exercise twice firing at a towed surface target. The ship was also able to complete for the first time a SUW-7-SF and a SUW-19-SF, firing 5" rounds in the alternate local control mode and in a high-speed quick fire. Perhaps the most impressive of all was the fact that DECATUR expended over 650 rounds throughout the year in support of NSFS and almost 10,000 rounds of the Close In Weapons System Phalanx Gun, far surpassing even the capacity of the gun's magazine!

DECATUR also excelled in undersea warfare, successfully completing both the Surface Vessel Torpedo Tube (SVTT) Over-the-Side and LAMPS Vectored Attack live torpedo shoots among 12 events using underwater targets. DECATUR's Undersea Warriors also conducted over 45 simulated SVTT and Vertically Launched Anti-submarine Rocket (VLA) firings. Finally, DECATUR held 98 hours of live contact time against live US and Allied submarines and mobile targets and over 650 hours of acoustic analyst contact time.

DECATUR was a key component in many Strike Warfare exercises throughout the year. The ship participated in over 35 TLAMEXs, including over 30 SLAMEXs (one as Launch Area Coordinator) while deployed in the 3rd, 5th, and 7th Fleet AOR's. These TLAMEXs reflected the wave of the future for Tomahawk Strike Operations in the 5th Fleet AOR, requiring the Strike Team to man their stations with no notice and to be prepared to launch missiles in less than an hour. Additionally, DECATUR's Tomahawk Strike Team conducted the pilot test for INSURV's procedures for the demonstration of Tomahawk Proficiency with outstanding results.

As a further testament to the DECATUR's combat prowess, DECATUR was the first ship able to achieve a score of 95% during NSFS FIREX II and provided multiple separate NSFS spotter services, including NSFS events with coordinated aircraft participation. Pioneering new cutting-edge procedures with the Supporting Arms Coordination Center aboard the USS PELELIU (LHA 5), DECATUR helped develop valuable lessons learned concerning the integration of Navy and Marine Corps assets in shaping the littoral battle space to conduct combined air and surface fire support missions simultaneously in preparation for possible real world operations.

DECATUR was also able to exploit its advanced Command and Control Warfare (C2W) suite throughout 2003, to include soft kill tactics, the Combat Direction Finding Suite, deceptive lighting, and the Passive Countermeasure System (PCMS). The ship conducted one live chaff-firing event, including a coordinated Battle Group firing against a simulated inbound aircraft. DECATUR also conducted real world operations in support of Operations IRAQI FREEDOM and ENDURING FREEDOM.

DECATUR met the demand for improved Force Protection measures highlighted in today's armed forces in all aspects with impressive results. The ship was able to qualify over hundreds of sailors in the 9mm, M-14, and shotgun, accomplished through the aggressive use of Weapons Ranges and the ship's own Flight Deck Range. DECATUR's crew also participated and succeeded in two intensive in-port Force Protection Exercises, including one that involved multi-ship coordination with other ships in ESG-1.

Currently DECATUR remains deployed as part of EXPEDITIONARY STRIKE GROUP ONE Battle Group. The men and women of DECATUR have answered every calling with distinction. From the basic phase of training to the first stages of warfare, DECATUR's performance exemplifies the finest traditions of Naval Surface Warfare.