



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY
USS DEXTROUS (MCM 13)
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From: Commanding Officer, USS DEXTROUS (MCM 13)

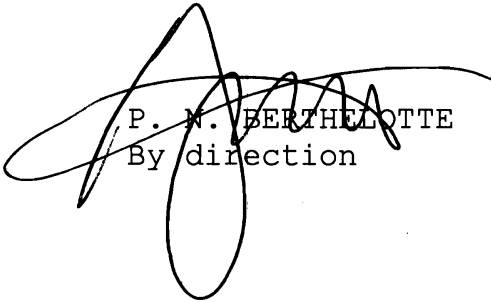
To: Director, Naval Historical Center

Subj: COMMAND HISTORY FOR 2001

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Encl: (1) Command Composition and Organization
(2) Chronology
(3) Narrative
(4) DEXTROUS Command History for 2001 (3.5" diskette)

1. Per reference (a), the following is submitted.


P. N. BERTHELLOTTE
By direction

USS DEXTROUS (MCM 13) COMMAND COMPOSITION AND ORGANIZATION 2001

COMMAND SHORT TITLE
USS DEXTROUS

UNIT IDENTIFICATION CODE
21901

IMMEDIATE SENIOR COMMANDER
COMMANDER, MINE COUNTERMEASURES DIVISION 31
COMMANDER BRIAN J. SHANAHAN, USN

COMMANDER
COMMANDER MICHAEL A. HEGARTY, USN

USS DEXTROUS (MCM 13) COMMAND HISTORY FOR 2001 (CHRONOLOGY)

JANUARY

01 - 31 IPT BAHRAIN

FEBRUARY

01 - 28 IPT BAHRAIN

MARCH

01-31 IPT BAHRAIN

APRIL

01-30 IPT BAHRAIN

MAY

29-31 IPT BAHRAIN

JUNE

01-25 IPT BAHRAIN

26-27 ACCELERATED HULL REPAIRS

28-30 U/W CAG

JULY

01-03 U/W CAG

04 IPT BAHRAIN (U/W PM)

04-07 U/W CAG

08-17 IPT BAHRAIN

18 U/W, ANCHOR FOR AMMO ONLOAD

19-20 U/W CAG, MINEHUNTING IN MCM OPAREA

21 U/W CAG, STREAM SINGLE O SWEEP

22-31 IPT BAHRAIN

AUGUST

01-11 IPT BAHRAIN

12-14 U/W CAG (MCM DIV 31 GROUP SAIL)

15 U/W CAG, MK5A INFLUENCE SWEEP

16 U/W CAG, RAS

17 U/W CAG, GUNNERY EXERCISE

18 U/W CAG, TOWEX W/ USS RAVEN

19 RTP, INPORT REFUELING

20-29 IPT BAHRAIN

30 U/W CAG (ATG ASSESSMENT)

31 IPT BAHRAIN

SEPTEMBER

01-08 IPT BAHRAIN

09-10 U/W CAG

11 RTP AM, U/W CAG PM (FIFTHFLT SORTIE)

12 RTP AM, IPT BAHRAIN

13-30 IPT BAHRAIN

OCTOBER

01-02 U/W CAG

03-09 IPT BAHRAIN

10-14 U/W CAG

15-17 IPT BAHRAIN

18 U/W CAG

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OCTOBER

19-21 IPT BAHRAIN
22-24 U/W CAG
25-29 IPT BAHRAIN
30-31 U/W CAG

NOVEMBER

01-03 RTP, IPT BAHRAIN
04 INPORT REFUELING
05-25 IPT BAHRAIN
26 U/W CAG
27 RTP, IPT BAHRAIN
28-30 IPT BAHRAIN

DECEMBER

01 IPT BAHRAIN
02-04 U/W CAG
05-08 IPT BAHRAIN
09-12 U/W CAG
13-31 IPT BAHRAIN (HOLIDAY UPKEEP)

USS DEXTROUS (MCM 13) COMMAND HISTORY 2001 (NARRATIVE)

The new year began quietly for the USS DEXTROUS, moored pierside at her homeport of Manama, Bahrain. The crew was enjoying a holiday standdown as well as four-section duty. The standdown ended 09 January, and the crew was back onboard and ready to begin a new year of challenges and opportunities.

The focus of the next few months was the scheduled ISRA. The "yards" as well as hull repairs were coupled with long-range planning for Initial Assessment and an Underway Demonstration. In preparation for the ISRA, a one day underway was conducted at anchorage in the vicinity of Mina Sulman Bahrain for the offload of ammunition not required for force protection.

The plan was for DEXTROUS to head to BASREC for ISRA. Arrangements had been made well in advance, and BASREC had been chosen over the Asry shipyard for what appeared-to-be improved force protection. But force protection requirements in light of the USS COLE made these plans untenable. After another week of logistical planning, the DEXTROUS entered ISRA while pierside at Mina Sulman. So the yards were never the really yards at all - just a few planned months of intensive maintenance pierside.

The crew had a lot of expectations about what a yard period would be like. Many had been on similar platforms or even DEXTROUS or ARDENT as part of ROTCREWS in past years. The expectations leaned towards greater liberty and less work. These hopes proved unfounded as the requirements to maintain positive force protection with dozens of foreign national contract workers meant long hours - longer than ever seen before in port. It was the new reality. But the extra time on the ship did have a few bonuses: during this time all E-5 and above successfully earned their Enlisted Surface Warfare Specialist (ESWS) qualifications. Radio division led the way by being the first division to hit 100% ESWS qualification.

As January rolled into February, the ISRA was in full swing. The ship faced three major requirements: first, complete the requirements of the ISRA. Second, repair damage to the starboard bow caused by a rough mooring to the pier in December 2000. Third, make preparations for Initial Assessment scheduled that summer. All these requirements were in addition to daily routine and maintaining security.

February saw the beginning of regular engineering drills in preparation for Initial Assessment. The limiting factor was the amount of work going on in the main spaces. Normally, a ship is a dangerous enough place to work and operate in. But now, the ship had gained the official status of being an industrial environment with the ongoing yard work. For the first two months of ISRA, all that could be done was level of knowledge training. Hot and cold checks could only become incorporated as ISRA work was completed in the engineering spaces.

Finally, in June, the engineering spaces were declared "safe to train." The first General Quarters drill since last December was successfully run. Though rough (but what would one expect after six months?), the constant training through the yard period minimized the drop-off in damage control knowledge and readiness throughout the crew. This would prove key for Initial Assessment. The biggest asset the ship had in this regard was an experienced group of chiefs that had both the knowledge and experience to carry the more inexperienced crewmembers through the early ISRA months. Without them, the crew could well have been starting from scratch.

Plans and schedules were all thrown out of the window on 22 June. FPCON DELTA was set and the crew was recalled. While the engineering plant was ready to go with all ISRA work completed, hull repairs had still not been completed. The unique composition of the MCM 1 Avenger class hull (Douglas fir and Alaskan yellow cedar) made obtaining materials difficult, and now on short notice, impossible.

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USS ARDENT (MCM 12), USS CARDINAL (MCM 60), and USS RAVEN (MCM 61) were sortied. DEXTROUS remained inport, manning the .50 caliber machineguns and the M-60s as well as posting additional watchstanders. With COMCMDIV31 embarked and additional watchstanders from MCM DIV31, DEXTROUS served as a communications platform. This was the first full use of the new IT21 upgrade that was installed onboard just weeks earlier.

Coincidentally (or maybe by sheer luck), the materials to repair the hull arrived in Bahrain shortly after setting FPCON DELTA. Plans were made and accelerated hull repairs began. DEXTROUS was underway once again (for the first time in 2001) on 28 June. Shortly after getting underway, DEXTROUS conducted small boat operations with RAVEN to transfer personnel who had missed their ship's movement at the time of the sortie.

Unlike sorties the previous year, an MCM OPAREA was established that would remain a "holding area" as well as a regular training area out in the Central Arabian Gulf. The MCM OPAREA is five nautical miles by five nautical miles, allowing enough room to maneuver with gear in the water for training and space to avoid shipping and fishing traffic. Over the rest of the year, this patch of water would become much too familiar for all mine warfare ships of MCM DIV31. But at least it was the end of the two nautical miles square boxes seen in 2000.

DEXTROUS quickly sought a routine that balanced training requirements with the increased need for vigilance underway. Man overboard drills were conducted 29 June and more small boat operations were conducted on the morning of 30 June. On the afternoon of 30 June, refueling approaches and leapfrogs were exercised with CARDINAL in CAG.

DEXTROUS continued her underway into July. On 02 July, man overboard and other shiphandling evolutions were conducted, as well as abandon ship drill. On 03 July, DEXTROUS conducted an astern refueling with the USNS ERICSSON in the morning. After the refueling, DEXTROUS headed home and moored outboard ARDENT. The plan was simple: get people home, duty-section only, etc. Time to celebrate Independence Day. But this inport plan for a July 04 celebration was not to be.

COMFIFTHFLT gave the order to sortie once again on July 04. This time DEXTROUS was ready and able to respond within an hour's notice of the order. The ship was underway with all her crew in the early afternoon, once again headed to the CAG. As the senior ship, DEXTROUS assumed the duties and responsibilities of OTC for all four mine warfare ships.

On 05 July, DEXTROUS conducted small boat operations with ARDENT, followed by more small boat operations again on 06 July. Early morning on 07 July, DEXTROUS refueled once again with the ERICSSON in preparation to return to port. This had become an unofficial part of the ship's concept of operations that developed after the USS COLE incident - refuel at sea, away from the threat.

DEXTROUS returned to port early on 08 July. Things finally seemed to settle to normal and the crew hit the beach as the ship remained inport until a scheduled underway on the morning of 18 July. DEXTROUS proceeded to drop the anchor at Sitrah Anchorage and onload the ammunition previously offloaded in January. After the onload, DEXTROUS headed north to the MCM OPAREA and arrived by nightfall. The ship was finally at one hundred percent in all respects.

DEXTROUS quickly shifted to full training mode. Time was split between mine warfare and engineering, keeping everyone busy at all hours. Minehunting tracks were begun and the ship conducted a Sonar Conditions Check in the MCM OPAREA on 20 July. Later that night, a major fuel oil leak was called away on #2 Ship's Service Diesel Generator. The ship immediately set

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General Quarters. Bilge sprinklers were activated. The fuel oil leak was isolated and the flammable material flushed to the bilge. Material condition Modified Zebra was reset within twenty minutes of the initial alarm. Thanks to the quick reaction of watchstanders, the flammable material never had the chance to ignite.

On 21 July the emphasis shifted to mechanical minesweeping. DEXTROUS placed a single "O" sweep in the water and ran exercise tracks. This is a full day evolution, but was shortened due to the heat and safe stay times out on the weather decks. The wet bulb temperature routinely exceeded 120 degrees Fahrenheit. At least it wasn't as hot as last summer, which saw in excess of 140 degrees on the wet bulb. Needless to say, Camelbacks proved a must as well as continued training and reinforcement of adequate fluid intake.

DEXTROUS returned to port on the morning of 22 July. Though dates for engineering inspections were tending to vary given the recent sorties, everyone knew that the time was drawing near. The ship began to conduct general quarters drills on a more regular basis from here on out, and stepped up damage control training across the board. This inport period would last several weeks as the ship maintained her optempo.

On 30 July, the ship permanently moved the quarterdeck to the pilothouse. It had been until now on either the port or starboard OOD stations, but the lack of visibility and cramped, uncomfortably hot space (especially during the summer) made the move a logical and long-awaited choice. It also provided a clear view of the Officer of the Deck's surroundings, allowing for improved command and control for force protection and general situational awareness. Now all mine warfare ships in the Gulf had the quarterdeck in the pilothouse.

After several days of inport Basic Engineering Casualty Control Exercises (BECES), DEXTROUS was underway again, heading for the MCM OPAREA to conduct minehunting training on 12 August. On 15 August the magtail was successfully deployed, allowing for routine maintenance. DEXTROUS refueled at sea the following morning.

On the morning of 17 August a planned gunnery exercise was disturbed by a high speed small boat that came around. Quickdraw was called away and watchstanders locked and loaded. No rounds were fired, and the speedboat turned away. Suspicion holds that this was a "test" of the ship's maneuvering capabilities.

Seamanship evolutions continued through this entire week, culminating with a tow and be towed exercise between DEXTROUS and RAVEN on 18 August. DEXTROUS returned to port on the morning of the 19 August and refueled while inport.

Finally ATG Ingleside had arrived and Initial Assessment and Underway Demonstration were at the forefront of everyone's minds. The ship got underway on 30 August for one day with CAPT Belcher, USN, Commander, Afloat Training Group (ATG) Ingleside, and a complete ATG team. The ship returned that evening, and would otherwise remain inport while conducting the ATG Assessment.

Not every evolution would have to be staged during ATG Ingleside's visit. While the ship was preparing to do Engineering Training Team scenarios on the morning of 04 September (and even before liberty expired onboard), a major fuel oil leak was called away on 1B Ship's Service Diesel Generator (SSDG). The ship set General Quarters but secured from it within a few minutes, as the leak had been isolated and the material flushed to the bridge. ATG witnessed the crew's reactions and were impressed. But the leak had been relatively minor, and General Quarters had been called away as per EDORM.

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They strongly recommended changing ship's EDORM to call away General Quarters only for uncontrollable leaks, which the command took onboard. (Several months later it would revert back to any fuel or lube oil leak. The reasoning is if it really is a minor leak, then the watchstander will just wipe it up. But if the watchstander makes the call, or if in doubt, call away General Quarters. Further judgement calls can always be made after the higher condition of readiness is set.

The ship would get underway again on 09 September. Performance tests were conducted on all four main engines, with satisfactory results. Later that evening BECCES were performed under ATG's critical eye. Yet again, an actual casualty - a magnetic particle detected in 1B SSDG, against which the ship's Casualty Response Team took swift action. BECCES secured as scheduled and the ship settled in for what was expected to be a quiet night. But almost an hour after taps, everyone bolted out of their racks to respond to General Quarters due to a major fuel oil leak on 1B SSDG. The Auxiliary Machinery Room (AMR) watchstander isolated the leak and the flammable material was washed to the bilge. Flooding was reported shortly afterward in the Forty Man Head - a watchstander had misaligned the fuel oil feed pump. The ship restored herself and finally settled in for what would at last be a quiet night.

More engineering training scenarios were drilled on the morning of 10 September. The afternoon was devoted to a General Quarters drill for a main space fire. Another actual casualty was called away - this time an "A" phase ground on #2 switchboard. Repair electricians isolated the ground and the drill continued without further incident.

The ship would return to Mina Sulman on the morning of 11 September at approximately 0800 local time. This would be shortest inport period ever seen by the command. In less than 12 hours, two commercial airlines would be hijacked and flown into the World Trade Center towers in New York City. A third would crash in the Pennsylvania countryside. Still another hijacked aircraft would crash into the Pentagon. The shock was immediate, and with little concrete information to go on, a sortie was ordered for all ships. Once again, the DEXTROUS sailed into the night.

During this sortie everything was up in the air. The ship was underway without even a destination at first. Then the HMAS ANZAC was assigned guardship duties and all mine warfare ships were ordered to head to the MCM OPAREA. Upon reaching the MCM OPAREA, the plan changed again - all mine warfare ships were ordered to return to port. Concerns over the ship's safety underway had overrode concerns about inport force protection for the first time in the AOR for all mine warfare assets. Inport watches were essentially doubled with additional firepower (.50 cal's and a roving M79).

A ship inport during FPCON DELTA is an interesting creature. Though force protection concerns were high, DEXTROUS had to be flexible in order to deal with requirements from port operations who now had greater concerns than just hotel services. DEXTROUS would berthshift on the morning of 16 September to make more room on the pier by mooring outboard of CARDINAL (which was already moored outside RAVEN). Shortly afterward, the watches relaxed in number but not in vigilance as the island downgraded to FPCON CHARLIE.

Once again, all schedules were thrown out the window. If there's anything for a commander to know in this AOR, it is *remain flexible!* DEXTROUS would be underway again on 25 September for yet another berth shift. The ship would then remain inport through the end of the month.

DEXTROUS would be underway again on 01 October. That afternoon was comprised of a man overboard training exercise followed by a small arms

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shoot. One of the biggest challenges has always been getting watchstanders proficient with small arms. While there is a range in Bahrain, near the airbase, but it is difficult to get time there. Even underway, considerations such as weather and dhow traffic get in the way. It now became a priority to shoot at every opportunity.

The ship returned to port on the morning of 03 October. On 06 October FPCON DELTA would be set again and the ship responded by collapsing duty sections and manning additional watches and weapons. The ship would be underway again 10 October, and did so without a guardship. DEXTROUS quickly went into training mode, and conducted minehunting in the MCM OPAREA the first night out. This evolution carried into the following evening. Then the engineers took over with BECCES. That night the ship rigged deceptive lighting.

A Main Space Fire Drill started off the morning of 12 October. A second General Quarters drill was run in the afternoon, coupled with a man overboard drill. The Flying Squad had its own drill that evening, and the ship also conducted a BSP drop and minehunted for the rest of the night. Every day at sea was a valuable training opportunity not to be squandered.

On the morning of 13 October it was finally time to put the Mine Neutralization Vehicle (MNV) in the water. Neither one had been flown in the water for over a year, and in the interim they had been shipped to SIMA Ingleside for overhaul. Once the vehicle was placed in the water however, CCS reported a Phase "C" ground that would appear in conjunction with the operation of the centerline winch. This would mark the start of problems with the vehicles and vehicle handling system that would last through the end of the year.

A man overboard drill kicked off the morning of 14 October to an early start. A General Quarters drill would follow before lunch. This would primarily be an admin drill to ensure that lockers would respond correctly in event of a CBR attack. That afternoon the ship would hold another General Quarters drill - this time a full CBR run through. The ship would return to port early on the morning of 15 October and refueled upon arrival. The FPCON remained high, and watches continued to be doubled.

DEXTROUS would be underway again on 18 October, this time with CDR Shanahan, COMCMDIV31, embarked. The ship remained near Bahrain to conduct a full set of BECCES and then returned back to port that same day.

The ship would be out again on the morning of 22 October. COMCMDIV31 accompanied the ship in order to judge the DEXTROUS candidate for the Junior Officer Shiphandler of the Year. CDR Shanahan rode as far as Sitrah Beacon, and then returned home on a Harbor Patrol small boat.

On the morning of 23 October the ship conducted a full-scale small craft engagement exercise, setting General Quarters and sending rounds downrange. Later that night would be more minehunting. The next day's emphasis would be minesweeping, and was followed by a return to port on the morning of 25 October. By now FPCON CHARLIE was set, and the ship was free to expand her duty sections once again. Alack! Even with the reduction in threat condition, the ship would miss her second Halloween again this year by getting underway on 30 October and conducting minehunting operations in the MCM OPAREA on 31 October.

The ship headed back to Mina Sulman on the morning of 01 November. Early that morning at approximately 0400 a class "C" fire started in the combat information center. The transformer to a status board fried, and the Flying Squad responded immediately. Smoke had been seen, but CO2 was applied by combat watchstanders even before any flames were observed. It took a week to get that smell out.

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Once near the pier, the winter weather proved to be in full swing. Not taking any chances, DEXTROUS requested a tug be made up amidships for mooring. Inport refueling wouldn't take place for a few days until 04 November. The entire month of November was spent largely inport and with little incident. However, on 22 November, a bomb scare on the pier sent the ship to Security Alert and Material Condition Zebra throughout the ship. This exact same scenario would happen again on 24 November.

DEXTROUS would be underway again on 26 November, enroute MCM OPAREA. On the transit out, Quickdraw was called away twice in response to dhows with close CPAs. Their presence was assessed to be benign. After reaching the MCM OPAREA, minehunting commenced. The ship would return to port the next day and remain inport through the end of the month.

Commodore Cornish, COMCMRON THREE, visited the ship on 01 December. DEXTROUS would be underway the next day. On the way to the MCM OPAREA, DEXTROUS and CARDINAL conducted leapfrog exercises and flaghoist drills. Flashing light drills would be conducted after dark with all four mine warfare ships. The excitement levels jumped just a bit on 03 November when the ship was close CPA'd by an Iranian P-3. Later that afternoon man overboard drills were conducted, allowing for several of the crew to try their hand at maneuvering the ship.

On the afternoon of 04 December, the ship conducted a Main Space Fire Drill. DEXTROUS would return to port on the morning of 05 December and depart again on 09 December. A small arms shoot was held on the morning of 10 December, qualifying several new watchstanders. The next day would be filled with complete man overboard drills - SAR swimmer in the water, small boat recoveries, everything. BECCES would be conducted that evening, followed by minehunting through the rest of the night. Another man overboard drill would be conducted on 12 December, followed by a Quickdraw exercise. That afternoon was reserved for MNV operations, which proved to be the first successful flight since September 2000.

The ship returned to port on 13 December and encountered a rather difficult mooring alongside RAVEN, even with the assistance of a tug. Once alongside, the ship found herself once again in FPCON DELTA. Watches were reinforced with more men and more guns. On 17 December, Commander Shanahan, COMCMDIV31 and a former Commanding Officer of DEXTROUS, held his change of command with Commander Williams. The ceremony was conducted on the forecastle, with members of the crew and members of the MCMDIV31 staff in attendance. The AOR reverted back to FPCON CHARLIE on 19 December. The command shifted into a holiday upkeep period that would only be interrupted by berth shifts on 20 December and 31 December. With that, the crew of the USS DEXTROUS rolled into a new year, completely different than the last and now mired in the fog of a war against terrorism.