DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY
USS GRAPPLE (ARS 53)
C/O FPO AE NEW YORK 09570-3223

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From: Commanding Officer, USS GRAPPLE (ARS 53)
To: Director of Naval History

Subj: **COMMAND HISTORY**

Ref: (a) OPNAVINST 5750.12E

Encl: (1) Command Composition and Organization
(2) Chronology
(3) Narrative

1. In accordance with reference, (a) enclosures (1) through (3) are submitted.

Porter W. Lewis, Jr
P. W. LEWIS

Command Composition and Organization

Commanding Officers: William T. Crooks, CDR, USN (01JAN94-18FEB94)
Porter W. Lewis, LCDR, USN (18FEB94-31DEC94)

ISIC: Commander, Combat Support Squadron Eight (01JAN94-30SEP94)
Commander, Combat Logistics Group Two (01OCT94-31DEC94)

Mission: GRAPPLE's mission is to provide rescue and salvage service to the fleet. Her capabilities include:

Towing: GRAPPLE is capable of rescue and open-ocean towing. The ship can develop a bollard pull of 131,000 lbs with an installed double drum towing machine rove with 3,000 feet of 2 1/4
inch wire rope on each drum.

Salvage: GRAPPLE carries transportable cutting and welding equipment, hydraulic and electric power sources, dewatering equipment, and hull repair materials to effect temporary hull repairs on stranded or otherwise damaged ships. GRAPPLE also has a 7 ton boom forward and a 40 ton boom aft to off-load a disabled ship and handle heavy equipment during salvage operations.

Beach Gear: A stranded vessel may be extracted from the beach using six sets of beach gear carried by GRAPPLE. Two beach gear ground legs can be rigged on GRAPPLE and four beach gear ground legs can be rigged on the stranded vessel.

Off-Ship Fire Fighting: There are three fire monitors on board GRAPPLE. These fire monitors are supplied with up to 1,000 gallons per minute of sea water or aqueous film forming foam(AFFF) to fight fires on other ships.

Heavy Lift: A dynamic lift of 300 tons can be made using the main bow and stern rollers simultaneously.

Diving: The MK 21 air diving system on board GRAPPLE provides divers the capability of tethered dives in up to 190 feet of sea water. GRAPPLE has a recompression chamber for treatment of decompression sickness and for normal surface decompression. GRAPPLE's recompression chamber is also designed to mate with a portable recompression chamber at the outer lock entry door.

SHIP'S SCHEDULE

19 JAN	POST-DPMA SEA TRIALS
24 - 26 JAN	U/W MAYPORT, FL
27 - 28 JAN	MAYPORT, FL
29 JAN - 02 FEB	TOW EX-USS YOSEMITE
18 FEB	CHANGE OF COMMAND
04 - 06 MAR	SALVOPS - MARINE CORPS AAV
07 - 18 MAR	TSTA I (FTG) VACAPES
20 - 25 MAR	U/W CHESBAY, ETG PREPS
28 - 31 MAR	U/W CHESBAY, TSTA I ETG(DISCONTINUED)
05 - 06 APR	U/W CHARLESTON, SC
07 APR	INPT CHARLESTON, SC
08 - 18 APR	TOW EX-VON STEUBEN (CHARLESTON - PANAMA)
19 APR	ANCHORED CRISTOBAL, PANAMA
20 - 23 APR	U/W KEY WEST
24 - 25 APR	INPT KEY WEST
26 - 29 APR	U/W LITTLE CREEK (TSTA I ETG COMPLETED)
09 - 13 MAY	SEAT VISIT
19 MAY - 03 JUN	INPT LITTLE CREEK, IMAV
04 JUN - 27 JUN	POM

MED ARS 94-2

28 JUN	ATLANTIC TRANSIT
09 - 13 JUL	INPT ROTA, SPAIN
17 - 18 JUL	INPT AUGUSTA BAY, SICILY
22 JUL	TRANSIT BOSPORUS - DARDENELLES STRAITS
23 - 28 JUL	INPT BURGAS, BULGARIA (EX BLACK SEA BREEZE '94)
29 JUL - 03 AUG	INPT CONSTANTA, ROMANIA (EX POSIEDON '94)
04 AUG	TRANSIT BOSPORUS - DARDENELLES STRAITS
08 - 15 AUG	INPT CORFU, GREECE (IMAV - USS PUGET SOUND)
17 - 20 AUG	INPT TOARMINA, ITALY
23 - 29 AUG	INPT LIVORNO, ITALY (ISO USS BAINBRIDGE PORT VISIT)
31 AUG - 01 SEP	BSF AUGUSTA BAY, SICILY
02 - 10 SEP	BIZERTE, TUNISIA (DIVING EXERCISE WITH TUNISIAN NAVY)
12 SEP	BSF AUGUSTA BAY, SICILY
13 - 19 SEP	INPT NAPLES, ITALY
21 SEP	BSF AUGUSTA BAY
25 SEP - 01 OCT	ANTAYLA, TURKEY (EX DYNAMIC GUARD)
04 - 11 OCT	AKSAZ KARAAGAC,TURKEY (IMAV - USS PUGET SOUND)

14 - 18 OCT	AUGUSTA BAY, SICILY (SWAC ONLOAD)
19 - 22 OCT	ENV DATA COLLECTION ISO SWAC PROJECT
23 - 29 OCT	INPT AUGUSTA BAY, SICILY (SWAC EQUIPMENT ONLOAD)
30 OCT - 09 NOV	OPS IN STRAITS OF SICILY ISO SWAC PROJECT
10 - 13 NOV	AUGUSTA BAY, SICILY (SWAC EQUIPMENT OFFLOAD)
15 - 23 NOV	SOUDA BAY, CRETE (BOLLARD PULL)
28 NOV - 02 DEC	GIBRALTAR, UK - OUTCHOP
12 DEC	ST GEORGES, BERMUDA (OPERATIONAL PROPULSION PLANT EXAM)
17 DEC	ARRIVE LITTLE CREEK, VA
18 - 31 DEC	POST DEPLOYMENT/HOLIDAY STANDOWN

USS GRAPPLE paused slightly at the beginning of 1994, then never looked back. For the Officers and crew, completing a scheduled 11 month deployment workup in 6 months, while assuming increasing responsibilities in a shrinking Navy, meant constant performance under pressure.

Shrinking the Navy means decommissioning ships. Unfortunately ships cannot always be decommissioned at an INACT shipyard and towing the EX-YOSEMITE from Mayport to Norfolk is as good a test as any. The tow occurred in late January, a week after full power trials following GRAPPLE's three month DPMA and represented the last major evolution for CDR Crooks.

When LCDR Lewis assumed command in February, only four months remained prior to deployment. Preparations for the MED continued to compete with operational tasking for increasingly precious time. In early March, while GRAPPLE was running DC and Engineering drills in the Chesapeake, Amphibious exercises off of North Carolina left an Amphibious Assault Vehicle(AAV) on the bottom of the Atlantic. Dodging Winter storms to get around Cape Hatteras, GRAPPLE took a short break from practice, recovered the AAV, and returned to Little Creek to continue preps.

After squeezing in a two week TSTA I with FTG in early April, the call to duty came once again. Decommissioned submarines prove to be even more of a challenge than ships. Once stripped, they must be towed to the Panama Canal to be picked up by a West Coast ship for the final transit to Washington State. A broken ATF towing machine and hefty amount of schedule juggling dropped GRAPPLE in the slot six days prior to departure. After onloading stores GRAPPLE picked up the EX-Von Steuben in Charleston, SC, and met USS RECOVERY for the trip down.

While returning from the voyage, the crew took a brief rest in Key West, FL, catching their breath and picking up a team from ETG to conduct her engineering TSTA I on the return trip to NAB, Little Creek. GRAPPLE returned to Virginia in late April with only a month left before POM standown and final preps for the Mediterranean. Time had become the most precious commodity of all and none was wasted; an LMA assist, SEAT visit, and pre-deployment IMAV filled up those last vital moments.

GRAPPLE started the trip across the pond at the end of June, arriving in Rota, Spain in early July. Salvage ship's play a unique role for the Sixth Fleet and continually rotate, ensuring that their services are always available. GRAPPLE's small size and distinctive capabilities enable her to show the flag and support exercises no other vessel can.

Leaving the Mediterranean shortly after arriving, the deployment really began in the Black Sea. Exercise Black Sea Breeze '94 represented each country surrounding this body of water for the first time in modern history. Allowing for an exchange of ideas and operating techniques, operations concluded with a very successful demonstration of off-ship firefighting methods. GRAPPLE simulated

providing services to the USS DEYO, pulling alongside with all monitors going and launching a rescue and assistance party in a workboat for damage control demonstrations on DEYO's fantail.

Before transiting through the Bosporus and Dardanelles and the city of Istanbul, GRAPPLE continued up the coast to Constanta, Romania. Exercise Poseidon '94 involved joint diving operations with Romania. The language barrier turned out to be an insignificant obstacle, overcome by the Romanian hospitality and friendships that quickly developed. In exchange for lessons in local history and diving techniques, divers from the GRAPPLE taught classes on U.S. diving systems and underwater cutting and welding. While diving classes were in session, the crew offered up a small piece of American goodwill with humanitarian aid provided by PROJECT HANDCLASP. Smiling faces from one of the local orphanages made the journey worthwhile and the visit to the Black Sea a memorable one.

Back in the Mediterranean in early August, GRAPPLE stopped in Corfu, Greece for an IMAV with USS PUGET SOUND. Navy tenders offer one of the only sources for maintenance work beyond the capabilities of organic assets. A visit alongside provides an excellent opportunity to return the ship to peak operating levels before continuing with independent steaming operations.

Independent steaming often results in unique opportunities and port visits which are not possible when attached to a battle group. The last U.S. Naval vessel to visit the town of Toarmina, on the west coast of Sicily had been in 1989. While showing the flag, the crew enjoyed a well deserved liberty stop under the shadow of an active volcano.

Leaving Toarmina and traveling North, GRAPPLE transited the Straits of Messina and arrived at Livorno, Italy in late August. Located about half way up the eastern side of the "boot", Livorno is a short train ride from Pisa and the historic city of Florence. Seeing the famous buildings and works of art yields a glimpse of history that is not available back in the United States.

Most people in the United States don't get an opportunity to see Africa either. Bizerte, Tunisia, is situated on the northern coast of Africa close to Tunis and the ruins of the ancient city of Carthage. While in Tunisia GRAPPLE's divers conducted training with divers from the Tunisian Navy and EOD Mobile Unit Eight. As in Romania, GRAPPLE's crew took advantage of the opportunity to provide humanitarian aid while the joint dive-ops were taking place. A team of volunteers spent the week renovating a 150 year old church located nearby.

After completing dive-ops, PROJECT HANDCLASP, tours of Carthage, and a few camel rides, GRAPPLE dropped off members of EOD Mobile Unit Eight and returned to mainland Italy. Med-moored next to the Achille Lauro, calls were made to the headquarters of CTF 63, GRAPPLE's ISIC. Final preparations were completed during the week for a visit by the Engineering Training Group from Norfolk. An ETG team came aboard the final morning to conduct a special visit during the transit to Augusta Bay, Sicily. During the transit a

number of Engineering Casualty Control Drills were run, allowing ETG to have an accurate estimate of GRAPPLE's level of training prior to the Operational Propulsion Plant Exam.

Augusta Bay, Italy serves as an EXXON station for ships in the Med. It's location provided a center of operations and a stopping point for fuel and stores while travelling from port to port. ETG disembarked, food was onloaded, and GRAPPLE left to play it's part in Exercise Dynamic Guard.

GRAPPLE's part consisted of supporting joint operations between U.S. Navy SEALS and Turkish Commandos off the coast of southern Turkey. Due to limitations on the number of nuclear powered vessels allowed to enter Turkish waters each year, GRAPPLE also shuttled crew members from the submarine USS L. MENDEL RIVERS from outside the 12 mile limit to the beach. Another IMAV with USS PUGET SOUND followed the conclusion of the exercise. GRAPPLE and PUGET SOUND spent eleven days in Aksaz Karaagac harbor, along the southwest coast of Turkey.

From Turkey the path led once again to Augusta Bay, Sicily. For the remainder of October and the beginning of November GRAPPLE provided a platform to test the Shallow Water Acoustic Classification (SWAC) system. Gear was onloaded during multiple trips to Augusta Bay. While at sea, GRAPPLE assisted the scientists by collecting environmental data serving as a base of operations. After laying a 5 mile acoustic cable and settling into a three point moor, scientists onboard spent the rest of the time gathering data. The scientists departed after returning to Augusta Bay, but much of the gear remained onboard as GRAPPLE continued on to Souda Bay on the island of Crete.

Salvage operations require a variety of specific equipment and ship characteristics which are not available anywhere else. A new pier in Souda Bay built to accommodate aircraft carriers included four bollards capable of withstanding the stresses imposed by a ship of that size. Prior to use, each bollard required testing to 75 tons or 150,000 pounds of force. By connecting hydraulic pullers and the 2 1/4 in towing hawser to each individual bollard, GRAPPLE was able to apply the force necessary to adequately test the moor.

After completing the bollard pull GRAPPLE began the long trip back to CONUS, but not her services to the Sixth Fleet. A diesel generator on loan to the USS DETROIT was placed on the fantail for transport across the Atlantic and a team of divers was left behind in Souda Bay to assist in repairs on the USS PLATTE, scheduled to arrive later that morning.

Following a few short delays due to weather, and a brief stop in Gibraltar to pick up the dive team, GRAPPLE set off across the Atlantic for Bermuda. The Bermuda visit capped of the highly successful deployment with an overall GOOD on the Operational Propulsion Plant Examination. The Exam was conducted in the vicinity of Bermuda, waiting for the typically severe winter weather to subside along the east coast of the United States.

USS GRAPPLE returned to the United States on the morning of the 17th of December, 1994, to a crowd of friends and families in time for a well deserved holiday rest.