



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY

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

Revised 3/18/98  
W/o disk

5750

Ser 01/027A

11 Mar 98

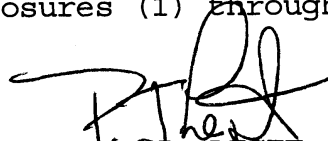
From: Commanding Officer, USS GRAPPLE (ARS 53)  
To: Director of Naval History, Naval Historical Center,  
(Attn: N09BH) Washington Navy Yard, Washington, DC  
20374-5060

Subj: COMMAND HISTORY

Ref: (a) OPNAVINST 5750.12F

Encl: (1) Command Composition and Organization  
(2) Ship's Schedule  
(3) Narrative

1. Per reference (a), enclosures (1) through (3) are submitted.

  
P. J. LEGET  
By direction

## Command Composition and Organization

Commanding Officer: William J. Robertson, LCDR, USN

ISIC: Commander, Combat Logistics Group TWO

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 120,000 pounds and has an installed double drum towing machine 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 five 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 mounted on board GRAPPLE. These fire monitors are supplied with up to 1,000 gallons 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 rollers and the stern rollers simultaneously.

DIVING: The MK21 air diving system on board GRAPPLE provide divers with capability of tethered dives to 190 feet of seawater. GRAPPLE has a recompression chamber for treatment of decompression sickness or for routine surface decompression.

# SHIP'S SCHEDULE

13 DEC-05 JAN	CHRISTMAS STANDDOWN
13 JAN-15 JAN	SHIPBOARD EXPLOSIVE SAFETY INSPECTION
03 MAR-06 MAR	INSPECTION SURVEY (INSURV)
10 MAR	NATO SECRET CONTROL POINT INSPECTION
10 MAR-12 MAR	LOGISTICS MANAGEMENT ASSESSMENT (LMA)
18 MAR	COMMAND INSPECTION
05 APR-07 APR	DIVING OPERATIONAL READINESS ASSESSMENT
22 APR	NAVCERT
23 APR-12 MAY	PREDEPLOYMENT STANDDOWN
15 MAY	DEPLOY FOR MEDITERRANEAN FROM LITTLE CREEK, VA
27 MAY	RELIEVED USNS POWHATAN IN ROTA, SPAIN
01 JUN-05 JUN	ILES D'OR MINE RECOVERY, MARSEILLES, FRANCE
10 JUN-17 JUN	ALCUDRA 97 MINE RECOVERY, MAJORCA, SPAIN
24 JUN-25 JUN	SHAREM 121 TORPEDO RECOVERY EXERCISE, SARDINIA, ITALY
30 JUN-06 JUL	INPORT CATANIA, ITALY
08 JUL-10 JUL	ARIADNE 97 MINE RECOVERY, PATRAS, GREECE
17 JUL-24 JUL	ROMANIAN POSEIDON 97 DIVING EXERCISE, CONSTANTA, ROMANIA
31 JUL-08 AUG	IMAV WITH USS SIMON LAKE AND HARBOR CLEARANCE DIVE OPERATIONS, LA MADDALENA, ITALY
10 AUG-15 AUG	TUNISIAN SALVAGE EXERCISE, BIZERT, TUNISIA
24 AUG-02 SEP	EXERCISE NOBLE MELINDA, HAIFA, ISRAEL
05 SEP-10 SEP	INPORT SOUDA BAY, CRETE
18 SEP-24 SEP	SLOVENIAN DIVING EXERCISE, KOPER, SLOVENIA
06 OCT	RELIEVED BY USNS APACHE, ROTA, SPAIN BEGAN RETURN TRANSIT TO HOMEPORT
18 OCT-22 OCT	DIVERTED TO BERMUDA FOR STORM EVASION
25 OCT-25 NOV	ARRIVED HOMEPORT, LITTLE CREEK, VA POST DEPLOYMENT STANDDOWN
26 NOV-17 DEC	UPKEEP
18 DEC-04 JAN	CHRISTMAS STANDDOWN

## NARRATIVE

GRAPPLE accomplished a record of unparalleled success during 1997. During the first five months of the year, GRAPPLE prepared for a Mediterranean deployment by successfully completing several required inspections to include a Shipboard Explosive Safety certification, an Inspection Survey (INSURV), a NATO Secret Control Point inspection, and a Logistics Management Assessment (LMA). While deployed GRAPPLE's crew distinguished themselves as hard-working professionals and ambassadors of peace working in the politically sensitive countries of Romania and Slovenia in support of COMSIXTHFLT's Partnership for Peace(PPE) program.

Steaming independently, GRAPPLE began her transit across the Atlantic on May 15th and arrived in Rota, Spain on the 27th of May. There she relieved the USNS POWHATAN(T-ATF 166) as SIXTH Fleet's ready salvage asset in the Mediterranean.

GRAPPLE spent the month of June completing two mine and one torpedo recovery exercises. Off the coast of France, near Marseilles, she participated in the Iles D'or mine recovery exercise, and further south off the Island of Majorca, Spain, she participated in the Alcudra mine recovery exercise. During both exercises, divers stationed onboard GRAPPLE were deployed utilizing scuba and hand-held sonar equipment to locate and recover bottom moored mines. Off Majorca, GRAPPLE also assisted Navy technical representatives in recovering several variable exercise mines or VEMs. Accustomed to operating independently, the Sharem torpedo recovery exercise afforded GRAPPLE a rare opportunity to operate alongside CRUDES units.

Under COMDESRON 24, GRAPPLE along with USS SPRUANCE(DD 963) and USS VICKSBURG(CG 69) worked to form a screen around USS JACKSONVILLE(SSN 69) in a Battle Group live fire scenario. During the two day event, GRAPPLE recovered 10 MK-46 torpedoes in support of the USW exercise.

In July, GRAPPLE completed another mine recovery exercise off the west coast of Greece. During exercise Ariadne, GRAPPLE recovered 10 of 10 bottom moored mines in a single day.

## **NARRATIVE (con't)**

The Black Sea and the city of Constanta, Romania played host to 1997's Poseidon Divex from 17-24 July. The purpose of the diving exercise was to enhance U.S. Naval to Naval contacts, cooperation, mutual training and interoperability with the Romanian Navy under the Partnership for Peace initiative. GRAPPLE was tasked to use its scuba and salvage capabilities to train their Romanian counterparts in MK21 Surface Supplied Diving System (SSDS) operations, emergency procedures, and diving medicine. While in Constanta, GRAPPLE reciprocated good hospitality by playing host to over 200 locals wishing to tour the ship, publicly laying a wreath at Romania's Hero Cemetery, and by personally giving of themselves to help paint and repair a local orphanage for children stricken with HIV.

Mooring alongside USS SIMON LAKE(AS 33) in La Maddalena, Italy, GRAPPLE completed a brief intermediate maintenance availability(IMAV) from 31 July to 8 August, as well as, performed harbor clearance dives recovering over three tons of material left behind by U.S. Naval activities during 30 years of presence in La Maddalena. GRAPPLE next turned south to commence Salvex-97 in Bizert, Tunisia. GRAPPLE was again tasked with enhancing foreign relations by instructing Tunisian divers in MK21 SSDS operations and emergency procedures, along with the use of underwater cutting tools. Together, divers from both nations using Kerri cable removed pieces of the superstructure from a sunken WWII tug boat, which obstructs one of Bizert's piers. By the end of the exercise, a plan to fully remove the scuttled vessel had been formulated and submitted for use at a later date. August, ended with the embarkation of an Explosive Ordnance Disposal detachment and the commencement of Exercise Noble Melinda with Israeli explosive ordnance teams in Haifa, Israel.

September, signaled the beginning of the end of 97's Mediterranean deployment. GRAPPLE's last scheduled exercise took place in Koper, Slovenia. Once again acting in the spirit of Partnership for Peace, GRAPPLE became an ambassador of goodwill in a politically sensitive country by providing ready chamber support for embarked Explosive Ordnance Disposal units, while they instructed Slovenian dive teams in the uses of the MK16 underwater breathing device and side scan sonar techniques to locate, identify and render safe WWII type mines.

On October 6th, GRAPPLE out-chopped with USNS APACHE (T-ATF 172) before returning to her homeport on the 25th of October, where she began a month long post-deployment standdown followed by a regular upkeep period.