



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY

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

Rev. 02/10/00  
W/O disk

5750  
Ser 00/011  
31 Jan 00

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.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "D. E. DAVIS".

D. E. DAVIS

## COMMAND COMPOSITION AND ORGANIZATION

COMMANDING OFFICER: David E. Davis, LCDR, USN

ISIC: Commander, Combat Logistics Squadron Two

MISSION: GRAPPLE's mission is to provide rescue and salvage services 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 ¼ 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 seawater or Aqueous Film Forming Foam (AFFF) to fight fires on other ships.

HEAVY LIFT: The main bow rollers and stern rollers, if used simultaneously, can create a dynamic lift of 300 tons.

DIVING: The MK 21 air diving system on board GRAPPLE provides divers with the 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

07 JAN	DEPLOY MEDITERRANEAN SEA
20 JAN-23 JAN	INPT LAS PALMAS, GRAN CANARIA FOR TURNOVER WITH USNS MOHAWK (T-ATF 170)
26 JAN-28 JAN	INPT ROTA, SPAIN
01 FEB-03 FEB	INPT AUGUSTA BAY, ITALY FOR ONLOAD OF FLY-AWAY MIXED GAS SYSTEM (FMGS) AND MOBDIVSALU TWO OPERATORS
05 FEB-08 FEB	INPT SOUDA BAY, CRETE
13 FEB	TRANSIT SUEZ CANAL ENR RED SEA
14 FEB-15 FEB	INPT BUR SAFAGA, EGYPT FOR ONLOAD OF MR-2 ROV AND OCEANEERING OPERATORS
16 FEB	ENR SOUTHERN RED SEA FOR SH-60B HELICOPTER SALVAGE
19 FEB-27 FEB	SALVAGE OF SH-60B FROM 269 FEET OF SEAWATER
04 MAR	INPT BUR SAFAGA, EGYPT FOR OFFLOAD OF ROV AND OCEANEERING OPERATORS
06 MAR	TRANSIT SUEZ CANAL ENR MEDITERRANEAN SEA
08 MAR-09 MAR	INPT SOUDA BAY, CRETE FOR REFUELING
11 MAR-13 MAR	INPT CATANIA, ITALY FOR OFFLOAD OF FMGS AND MOBDIVSALU TWO OPERATORS
17 MAR-26 MAR	INPT GIBRALTAR, UNITED KINGDOM FOR SALVEX '99
27 MAR-30 MAR	INPT LISBON, PORTUGAL
31 MAR	INPT ROTA, SPAIN FOR TOW OF TWO YC BARGES
02 APR-08 APR	TOW OF TWO YC BARGES TO GAETA, ITALY
08 APR-12 APR	INPT GAETA, ITALY
12 APR-19 APR	INPT NAPLES, ITALY ACTING AS STANDBY TOW FOR USS MIAMI (SSN 755)
22 APR-28 APR	INPT PALMA DE MALLORCA, SPAIN
30 APR-04 MAY	INPT ROTA, SPAIN FOR TURNOVER WITH USNS APACHE (T-ATF 172)
08 MAY-10 MAY	INPT PONTA DELGADE, AZORES
20 MAY	ARR LITTLE CREEK, VA
20 MAY-21 JUN	POST-DEPLOYMENT STANDOWN PERIOD
28 JUN-02 JUL	TOW OF TWO YC BARGES FROM NORFOLK, VA TO EARLE, NJ
14 JUL-31 OCT	PLANNED RESTRICTED AVAILABILITY (PRAV)
31 OCT-19 NOV	SUPPORT OF SALVAGE AND RECOVERY EFFORTS OF EGYPTAIR FLT 990 IVO AMBROSE TRAFFIC SEPARATION SCHEME SOUTH OF NANTUCKETT SHOALS.
29 NOV-09 DEC	PRAV CONTINUATION
17 DEC-03 JAN	HOLIDAY STAND-DOWN PERIOD

Encl (2)

## NARRATIVE

Throughout 1999, GRAPPLE successfully accomplished a myriad of missions, upholding her motto of "Ready to Serve." During the first and second quarter, GRAPPLE supported the Sixth Fleet as its ready duty salvage asset in the Mediterranean. Tasked immediately to salvage a SH-60B helicopter from Helicopter Squadron 48 that had made a controlled ditch in the Southern Red Sea, GRAPPLE began her transit across the Mediterranean Sea on 28 January. During a brief stop in Augusta Bay, Sicily, GRAPPLE on-loaded the Fly-Away Mixed Gas System (FMGS) and four operators from Mobile Diving and Salvage Unit Two.

GRAPPLE arrived at the site of the crash on 19 February. Despite high winds and heavy seas, GRAPPLE located and successfully raised the SH-60B from 269 feet of seawater. This was the deepest manned salvage operation conducted by an ARS-50 class salvage ship, the deepest dive conducted using the new Fly-Away Mixed Gas System and the first use of the U.S. Navy's new mixed gas diving tables.

After the successful salvage, GRAPPLE returned to the Mediterranean, pausing briefly in Souda Bay, Crete for refueling, then continuing on to Augusta Bay for offloading of the SH-60B and the FMGS. From Augusta Bay, GRAPPLE continued west for SALVEX '99 held in Gibraltar, Great Britain where GRAPPLE divers participated in various training evolutions with their British counterparts in a spirit of cooperation and teamwork. During this same port visit, GRAPPLE Sailors participated in a much appreciated community relations project to aid the local women's shelter. This shelter, designed to provide assistance to abused women, was in need of general cleaning and the First Class Association stepped in to provide this service.

The next stop for GRAPPLE was the beautiful city of Lisbon, Portugal. This easily accessible port provided for great liberty including various site-seeing and shopping opportunities. From Lisbon, GRAPPLE transited to Rota, Spain for her next major assignment, a dual tow of two barges to Gaeta, Italy. This tow provided invaluable training for the entire ship, as it was the first dual tow for many aboard.

From Gaeta, GRAPPLE transited south to Naples to act as a standby tow for an U.S. nuclear powered submarine. This service allowed the submarine Sailors to enjoy some deserved liberty while providing a chance for GRAPPLE to visit the remains of the city of Pompeii and see one of the busiest ports on Italy's West Coast.

GRAPPLE's next stop was Palma De Mallorca, Spain for a six-day visit to paradise. While in Palma, GRAPPLE Sailors enjoyed one of the Mediterranean's premier vacation spots by touring the island's beaches, rock climbing, and enjoying its varied cuisine. During this visit, GRAPPLE Sailors once again participated in a much appreciated community relations project, aiding one of the local parishes in the painting and renovation of a homeless shelter. This day of teamwork and camaraderie led to a huge improvement of the shelter while demonstrating GRAPPLE's motto "Ready to Serve."

From Palma, GRAPPLE headed west to Rota, Spain for her turnover with USNS APACHE (T-ATF 172) and departed on 4 May for a brief stop in the Azores before returning to Little Creek on 20 May for a much deserved stand-down period.

Immediately following stand-down, GRAPPLE was tasked with the tow of two YC barges from Norfolk to Earle, New Jersey. After a quick four day tow, GRAPPLE returned to homeport for a Planned Restricted Availability. This 3 ½ month yard period allowed for some much needed maintenance and refurbishment. From refurbishment of all the crew's berthing spaces to the installation of a Rigid Hull Inflatable Boat to replace the starboard workboat, and

from scheduled maintenance on the Main Propulsion Diesel Engines and Ship Service Diesel Generators to replacing the SPS-64 antenna, GRAPPLE Sailors worked with Government contractors to ensure continued mission readiness.

On October 30, Egyptair Flight 990 crashed into the waters south of Nantucket killing all 217 aboard. On October 31, GRAPPLE was ordered out of a Restricted Availability status and tasked to assist in recovery operations with the U.S. Coast Guard, FBI, NTSB and NOAA. In only 12 hours, GRAPPLE was underway to Newport, RI for on-load of Deep Drone, a Remotely Operated Vehicle, and the Fly-Away Mixed Gas System. Using Deep Drone, GRAPPLE retrieved the Flight Data Recorder on 4 November and the Cockpit Voice Recorder on 13 November from a depth of 280 feet of seawater. Recovery operations concluded for GRAPPLE on 17 November with the decision to use a commercial ship supervised by the U.S. Navy's Supervisor of Salvage.

GRAPPLE concluded a busy and successful year by completing her yard period and enjoying a deserved holiday stand-down with friends and family.