



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY

COMMANDING OFFICER
USS HERON (MHC 52)
FPO AA 34091-1951

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From: Commanding Officer, USS HERON (MHC-52)
To: Director of Naval History (N09BH)

Subj: COMMAND HISTORY FOR 1996

Ref: (a) OPNAVINST 5750.12F

1. As required by reference (a), the following command history of the USS HERON (MHC 52) is submitted for the calendar year 1996.
2. Supporting documentation attached.


R. D. FINK

Command Structure

COMNAVSURFLANT

VADM D. J. Katz

COMINWARCOM

RADM J. D. Pearson 01 Jan 96 - 09 Oct 96

RADM D. R. Conley 10 Oct 96 - 31 Dec 96

COMCMRON ONE

CAPT J. A. Haggart

COMCMRON TWO

CAPT. R. B. O'Donnell 18 Jul 96

CAPT B. T. Van Belle 19 Jul 96

COMREGSUPPGRU **INGLESIDE, TX**

CAPT. D. I. Parsons 18 Jul 96

CAPT R. B. O'Donnell 19 Jul 96

HISTORY AND MISSION

USS HERON (MHC-52) is the second ship in the U.S. Navy's MHC-51 (OSPREY) Class Coastal Minehunter program and the third U.S. Navy ship to bear that name. HERON's keel was laid on October 11, 1989 and was commissioned 6 August 1994.

MHC Class ships are the world's largest Glass Reinforced Plastic (GRP) ships and the first U.S. Navy ships designed solely for minehunting, the technique of locating mines with sonar and neutralizing them with a remotely controlled underwater vehicle. A precise navigation system is installed to integrate the minehunting sonar with the mine neutralization system. The ship is powered by two diesel engines driving two cycloidal propellers, a unique propulsions system that provides superior maneuvering and station keeping while the ship is operating in a mine field. The ship's mission is to clear harbor, coastal and ocean waters of acoustic, magnetic, pressure, and contact-type mines, utilizing reconnaissance, classification, and neutralization tactics. The MHC Class design integrates modern mine countermeasures technology into a uniquely designed platform with exceptionally low magnetic and acoustic signatures to protect against detonations during minehunting operations.

Two previous U. S. Navy ships have borne the name "HERON". The first HERON (AM-10) (1918-1946) took part in sweeping the North Sea Mine Barrage (1919). Reclassified as a small sea plane tender (AVP-2) in 1936, she earned a Navy Unit Commendation and four battle stars in World War II. The second HERON (AMS-18) (1947-1967) earned eight battle stars in Korea, in addition to one earned in World War II as the then-unmanned YMS-369.

The U. S. Navy MCM mission statement requires the following strategic factors be considered:

- Ability to deploy world-wide for multi-purpose missions.
- Ability to clear strategic U. S. or foreign ports and harbors of mines.
- Surveillance of U. S. and foreign coastlines.
- Neutralization of a variety of mine threats.
- Peacetime support of activities.

U.S. Navy strategic considerations provide the basis for the following MCM mission requirements:

- Search, detect, and neutralize moored and bottom mines.
- Accompany deploying forces overseas.
- Permit breakout of U. S. Forces from CONUS ports.
- Provide navigational assistance to other fleet surface units.
- Conduct underwater surveys of ports and harbors.
- Perform collection of oceanographic and navigational data.

CHRONOLOGY FOR 1996

January 1996

01-07 Inport Ingleside, TX. Holiday Stand Down
10 EMI Survey. Pierside MNV Ops. MLOCS for Sea Trials.
11 Fast Cruise. Completed Diesel Inspection.
12 Underway for Sea Trials. Full Power Run. Return to Port.
15 CO Departs for Washington DC
16 PSA. ICAS Visit.
18 CO Returns. Completed PSA.
19-22 Underway/Enroute Panama City, FL
23-28 Arrive/Inport Panama City, FL. Conducted 6 Pierside MNV
Missions.
29-31 Underway Panama City Op Area for MIW Training and SYQ-13
Testing.

February 1996

01-04 Inport Panama City, FL. ETG Preps. LMA Preps
05-08 Underway Panama City Op Area/Desoto Canyon Op Area for MIW
Training and Q-Route Survey.
09 Inport Panama City, FL.
10-12 Underway/Enroute Ingleside, TX.
13 CO Promotion Ceremony. LCDR Daniel I. Gallagher Promoted
to CDR.
14-28 Inport Naval Station Ingleside, TX. LMA Preps/Assist Visit. ICAS
Install

March 1996

01-05 Inport Naval Station Ingleside, TX.
06 Underway/Enroute Key West, FL.
08 Diverted to Panama City, FL Due to Weather.
10-12 Inport Panama City, FL. Refuel.
13 Underway/Enroute Key West, FL.
14 Arrive Key West, FL.
20 Underway/Enroute Mayport, FL.
21 Arrive Mayport, FL.
22 Underway for WESTLANT MCMV 96 Phase I.
29-31 Arrive/Inport Naval Weapons Station Charleston, SC for Casualty
Repairs.

April 1996

01-02 Inport Naval Weapons Station Charleston, SC.
03 Underway/Enroute Savannah, GA with units of Unified Spirit.
04 Arrive/Inport Savannah, GA.
06 PCO LCDR Robert D. Fink Reports Aboard.
07 LCDR Robert D. Fink Relieves CDR Daniel I. Gallagher as
Commanding Officer.
08 Underway Cherry Point Oparea for Unified Spirit/WESTLANT
MCMV 96 Phase II.
11 Arrive Moorehead City, NC to Disembark Personnel on
Emergency Leave. Underway to continue Unified
Spirit/WESTLANT MCMV 96 Phase II..
14 Arrive Morehead City, NC for refueling. Underway to continue
Unified Spirit/WESTLANT MCMV 96 Phase II..
15 Completed Unified Spirit/WESTLANT MCMV 96 Phase II.
Enroute Mayport, FL.
16 Arrive/Inport Naval Station Mayport, Fl.
19 Underway/Enroute Key West, FL.
22 Arrive Key West, FL for refueling. Underway/Enroute Ingleside,
TX.
26-30 Arrive/Inport Naval Station Ingleside, TX.

May 1996

01-12 Inport Naval Station Ingleside, TX. LMA inspection.
13 Defuel Ship
15 Start PSA II.
16 Underway/Enroute/Arrive Gulf Copper Shipyard, Aransas Pass,
TX.
17-31 Inport Gulf Copper Shipyard, Aransas Pass, TX.

June 1996

01-30 Inport Gulf Copper Shipyard, Aransas Pass, TX. PSA II.
Conducted QA Audit.

July 1996

01-09 Inport Gulf Copper Shipyard, Aransas Pass, TX. PSA II.
10 Underway/Enroute/Arrive NAVSTA Ingleside, TX.

15 Inport Naval Station Ingleside, TX. Completed PSA II. Dock Trials/Fast Cruise CART I.
17 Underway for Sea Trials. Return to Port.
18-28 Inport Naval Station Ingleside TX. CART II Preparations
30-31 CART II/PEB.

August 1996

01-04 CART II.
05 MNC(SW) [REDACTED] Commissioning Ceremony to CWO2 and Mrs. [REDACTED] relieves Mrs. [REDACTED] as ships OMBUDSMAN..
06 Underway for Sea Trials. Return to Port.
07-11 Inport Naval Station Ingleside, TX. TSTA I Preparations.
12-16 TSTA I/DASM.
19 Fast Cruise.
21-23 Underway for TSTA I/DASM.
26-27 Inport Naval Station Ingleside, TX. TSTA I/DASM.
28-30 Underway for TSTA I/DASM.

September 1996

03-05 Underway for TSTA I/MIW Training.
06 Inport Naval Station Ingleside, TX. TSTA I/MIW Training.
09-20 IMAV/TECRA/Ney Inspection/SESI Assist Visit.
23-26 Underway TSTA II/MIW Training.
27 Inport Naval Station Ingleside, TX. TSTA II/MIW Training.
30 TSTA II/Engineering Training.

October 1996

01-03 Underway for TSTA II/ Engineering Training.
04 Inport Naval Station Ingleside, TX. TSTA II/Engineering Training.
07 Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy Visit to Waterfront.
14 ECERT Preparations.
15-16 Fast Cruise/ECERT Preparations.
17 Underway for ECERT. Return to Port.
21-24 Inport Naval Station Ingleside, TX. NAVCERT/TSTA III Preparations.
25 Ship Tours.
28 TSTA III/Inport NavCheck Ride. Underway for Inchon Mission Demonstration/Moor Alongside.
29-31 Underway for NavCheck Ride/TSTA III.

November 1996

01-05 Inport Naval Station Ingleside, TX. MCM Training.
06-07 Underway for MCM/ITT Training.
08 Inport Naval Station Ingleside, TX.
11 Veterans Day. Final Evaluation Problem (FEP) Preparations.
13 Underway to Conduct Search and Recovery of AQS-14 Sonar.
Sonar Recovered Onboard HERON. Return to Port.
14-18 Inport Naval Station Ingleside, TX. FEP Preparations.
19-20 Underway for FEP.
21-30 Completed FEP. Inport Naval Station Ingleside, TX.

December 1996

01-05 Inport Naval Station Ingleside, TX. IMAV/Magazine Inspection.
06 Command Christmas Party.
09-15 IMAV/CSRR/TARGET.
12 Inclination Experiment.
16-17 CSRR. Cable Way Inspection.
18 Holiday Standown. HERON won NAVSTA Ingleside Christmas
Lighting Competition.
19-31 Magazine Sprinkler Inspection.

USS HERON (MHC 52) NARRATIVE

Nineteen Ninety Six was an extraordinary year for HERON. Her performance throughout the year was exemplary. HERON was the first Minehunter to transition from NAVSEA trials into a fully operational fleet unit. HERON was challenged with numerous exercises and evolutions that were a first for the class and has set high standards for the Minehunters that follow. Significant achievements by HERON and her crew were: HERON won Battle Efficiency Award for Minehunter Class for 1996, Awarded Maritime warfare (Power Projection/Sea Control) Excellence Award, Engineering/Survivability Excellence Award, Command and Control Excellence Award; and Logistics Management Excellence Award. Other notable achievements were: LTJG [REDACTED] qualified as a Surface Warfare Officer and was also 1996 Junior Officer Shiphandler of the Year for the Minehunter Class, QM1(SW) [REDACTED] was named as HERON's 1996 Sailor of the Year, MN1 [REDACTED], QM2 [REDACTED], and EM1 [REDACTED] qualified as Enlisted Surface Warfare Specialist.

The year began with the holiday stand down period and the continuation of Post Shakedown Availability (PSA) Phase I. Shipyard work continued with the objective of an accelerated completion in order to go to Panama City for a two week Mine Warfare Training Availability. On 15 January, the Commanding Officer, LCDR Gallagher took a trip to Washington, DC to personally visit the detailers of HERON's crew to discuss their situations, wants, needs and desires. He returned to HERON on 18 January. HERON was pushing for early completion of the availability but the shipyard was unable to meet any of its objectives. Resident Supervisor of Shipbuilding (RESUPSHIP) Ingleside was unsuccessful in administering the contract and the work stopped with HERON's departure for Panama City, FL on 19 January. A dispute ensued over warranty work and HERON was left to complete several cosmetic repairs.

HERON arrived in Panama City on 23 January for Mine Warfare (MIW) training but the addition of an Engineering Training Group (ETG) assist visit took several training days away from MIW training. The objective of MIW training was refresher training for all 1MH and 2MH watch teams and to qualify a new evaluator. HERON conducted numerous MNV missions while pierside in Panama City. HERON utilized the Combat Systems Ships Qualification Trials (CSSQT) mine fields and conducted mine hunting, mine neutralization and Q-route surveys. Training for the ETG assist visit included Engineering Training Team (ETT) drills and several main space fire drills.. The ETG assist visit was a success. HERON was further tasked to support Multi-Purpose Crane (MPC) testing for Mode 3 operations and AN/SYQ-13 Navigation, Command and Control (NAV/C2) software build 9.0 testing. HERON completed the MPC testing pierside but Mode 3 did not operate as the engineers had expected. Mode 3 tossed the MNV into the water breaking a hydraulic motor. MPC testing was secured after this event in order to conduct repairs to the MNV. The ship supported NAV/C2 testing by conducting several exercises in shallow water so that the Doppler Speed Log would remain in Bottom Track Mode. HERON transited to Desoto Canyon on 05 February for deep water trials in order for the Doppler Speed Log to operate in Water Track Mode. These tests were successful and helped identify final changes needed to be made in version 9.0 for distribution. HERON got underway for Ingleside, TX on 10 February.

On 13 February, LCDR Daniel I. Gallagher was promoted to CDR. Commanding Officer Regional Support Group Ingleside held a small informal promotion ceremony on the fantail.

The remainder of February was dedicated to Logistics Management Assessment (LMA) preparations, LMA assist visit and the Integrated Condition Assessment System (ICAS) installation. The LMA assist objective was to conduct an assessment of the supply logistics, mess management and 3M programs and provide training on how to improve them. A discrepancy list was generated as a guide for corrections to be made prior to the LMA scheduled in the spring. A major reorganization of work centers took place prior to this assist.

On 06 March, HERON was again underway for Key West, FL. HERON was making repairs and preparations for WESTLANT MCMV 96. This would be the first exercise to include MHC participation. While enroute to Key West, a low pressure system developed. After two days at sea and increasingly bad weather HERON diverted to Panama City, FL. Some of the major problems encountered during this period were: Taking 40-45 degree rolls regularly due to the seas being on the port beam, several rolls above 50 degrees were logged in the deck log, and 90 percent of the crew was sea sick and the only duty they were allowed to perform was watchstanding. Leaks started to develop in the Built-in Equipment Removal Plates (BERPS) above the Voith-Schneider Propeller (VSP) room which had been removed and replaced during PSA I. HERON diverted to Panama City, FL after being directed by COMNEWARCOM. While in Panama City, FL, HERON refueled and conducted repairs in order to continue with her mission in WESTLANT MCMV 96. HERON got underway 10 March from Panama City, FL to Key West, FL to continue her transit to participate in WESTLANT MCMV 96. During this transit NR2 Main Propulsion Diesel Engine (MPDE) and WSN-2 gyrocompass failed. HERON was expected to transit to Mayport, FL but was diverted to Key West, FL to effect repairs.

HERON got underway 20 March for Mayport and arrived 21 March to rendezvous with the foreign ships. HERON conducted a pre-sail conference with MCMRON Two for Phase I of WESTLANT MCMV 96. The exercise was changed from the Jacksonville Oparea to the Charleston Oparea due to risks and dangers to the Right Whale population along the Florida Coast. EODMU Six Det Four embarked HERON for WESTLANT MCMV 96 prior to leaving Mayport.

WESTLANT MCMV 96 Phase I objective was to conduct exploratory and clearance operations as tasked by the Commander Task Group (CTG) (Danish Commander) embarked on the HRMS Falster, a Danish Minelayer. HERON was assigned range safety duties for a P3 minelay. During this period, a U. S. F/A-18 Hornet flying out of North Carolina was lost at sea. The USS DEVASTATOR (MCM 6) was sent to commence search operations for the downed aircraft. HERON was tasked to join the search and participated in it for approximately 15 hours. HERON was then directed to discontinue the search and rendezvous with the rest of the multi-national MCM force to commence Phase I of MCMV 96. Phase I was centered on an area of shipping that had been closed due to minehunting and was in conjunction with a larger exercise called UNIFIED SPIRIT. HERON conducted minehunting operations in several pre-designated Q-routes in order to allow safe passage of shipping. HERON conducted the first EOD operations

from a Minehunter. HERON was tasked with a lead through operation of two commercial merchant ships and a Spruance class destroyer. During this lead through, the task group was harassed by a Canadian Frigate. Upon completion of the lead through operations, HERON was scheduled to rendezvous with the FGS NIENBURG to conduct an astern refueling. HERON was the first Minehunter to successfully complete this task. After refueling, CTG issued orders to proceed to anchorage in Charleston Harbor due to the increased sea state. HERON went back on task and suffered a catastrophic sonar failure. In order to expedite repairs, HERON entered the port of Charleston and proceeded to the Naval Weapons Station to effect repairs to the sonar. The remaining ships in the Task Force finished Phase I while HERON was inport conducting sonar repairs. The crew worked around the clock on the sonar casualty. After completing repairs, HERON got underway enroute to Savannah, GA for a scheduled port visit.

While inport Savannah, COMINSEAFCOM conducted an investigation into the actions of the CO after the ship left Ingleside, TX. All records were requested for the investigation and all officers were interviewed. On Saturday, 06 April, an Admirals hearing was held and PCO LCDR Robert Fink reported on board. After the hearing, CDR Gallagher was relieved early of command. On 07 April, LCDR Fink relieved CDR Gallagher and assumed command of HERON. All inventories and reviews that could be accomplished prior to the change of command were accomplished.

On 08 April, HERON was underway for WESTLANT MCMV 96 Phase II. MCMV 96 Phase II was conducted under the command of Commanding Officer Mine Countermeasures Squadron Two. This phase of the exercise was independent of any other exercises and was a mine warfare scenario in support of amphibious operations. The objectives were to practice the experimental tactics used for this kind of operations. HERON conducted Bumper Pool Operations with MH-53 helicopters with much success. HERON was tasked on two occasions to locate AN/AQS-14 sonars that had been lost by the helicopters. On both occasions, the sonar was found. Ship's divers successfully conducted salvage operations and recovered the sonar. EODMU 12 Reserves were embarked for this phase of WESTLANT MCMV 96. On 11 April, HERON arrived in Morehead City, NC to offload the AN/AQS-14 sonar, debark EOD, and place a crew member on emergency leave.

Upon completion of WESTLANT MCMV 96 Phase II on 15 April, HERON suffered a major casualty to one of the main engines while enroute to Mayport, FL. HERON completed repairs in two days. HERON departed Mayport, FL enroute Key West, FL on 19 April. USS DEVASTATOR (MCM 6) was ordered to rendezvous with HERON in Key West, FL prior to crossing the Gulf of Mexico. HERON arrived back home in Ingleside on 26 April.

The month of May found HERON preparing to enter Gulf Copper Shipyard in Aransas Pass, TX for a 6 week Post Shakedown Availability (PSA) Phase II and give the crew a much needed rest prior to starting the upcoming Notional Training Cycle. During this time, HERON underwent an LMA inspection 01-06 May. HERON qualified for the Supply Blue "E" with scores of 93% in food service, 91% in supply support, 98% in 3M. The 98% 3M score was recorded as the second highest on the waterfront and the highest for the Minehunter class. The Blue "E" marked the first for the HERON and the Minehunter class. HERON entered the

shipyard on 15 May. Work to be accomplished included: Fuel Oil Tanks clean and inspect, Combat Information Center (CIC) reconfiguration (continuation from PSA I), Fuel Oil Tank Sounding Tube modification (continuation from PSA I), install Manual Clutch Actuation device on Main Propulsion Diesel Engines (MPDE), install Lube Oil Shutdown Device on all engines, install new model Turbocharger, Radar Room reconfiguration, Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning (HVAC) modifications in all forward compartments, Crew's Mess seating rearrangement and modifications, Bridge Wing reconfiguration, Ships Service Diesel Generator frequency control, Uninterrupted Power Supply installation, Propulsion Shaft Torsionmeter installation, and crane limit switches installation. HERON was scheduled to end the yard period on 30 June, but delays in the completion of MPDE's and SSDG's extended HERON's availability until 15 July.

With the yard period complete, the focus was now on completing the Notional Training Cycle. First was Command Assessment of Readiness and Training (CART) II and Propulsion Examination Board (PEB) which began at the end of July.

On 05 August, the Command Chief MNC(SW) [REDACTED] was commissioned as CW02 Knop and was relieved as Command Chief by STGC(SW) [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] relieved [REDACTED] as Ship's OMBUDSMAN.

With CART II completed, Phase I of the Tailored Ships Training Availability (TSTA I) which consisted of deck and seamanship training, and MIW training commenced. These evolutions progressed into TSTA II which began 23 September. Working with Afloat Training Group (ATG), Ingleside, TX, the crew executed an aggressive training schedule. During the TSTA II process, underway training in the Corpus Christi Oparea included: Q-routing, mine hunting, sonar conditions checks, Mine Neutralization System (MNS) operations and small boat vectoring. The TSTA II training period enabled HERON to increase proficiency in its primary mission area of MIW.

As a result of the outstanding LMA inspection, HERON qualified for the annual Edward F. Ney Food Service competition. HERON completed in the first round of the Ney competition from 08-12 September. The Food Service Department performed an outstanding job in preparation for and during the inspection; however, HERON was not selected to compete in the second round.

Starting in the latter part of September, through the months of October and November had HERON progressing from TSTA II to TSTA IV training which included the Engineering Propulsion Examining Board Certification (ECERT). During this time, HERON also validated USS INCHON's (MSC 12) ability to astern refuel by performing a dry hookup. HERON's lesson learned provided the baseline for future Minehunter's to conduct astern refueling evolutions. On 04 October, Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy John Hagan visited Ingleside to get a first hand look at the MIW community, HERON sailors attended. On 28 October, HERON moored alongside the USS INCHON starboard side to validate INCHON's recent modifications and hotel services accessibility. This evolution was lauded as a great success. On 13 November, HERON was literally underway in minutes after receiving orders to recover, in conjunction with EOD

divers, a jettisoned AN/AQS-14 sonar in the Corpus Christi Operations area. The sonar was and returned to HM-15 personnel.

On 19 November, HERON conducted the Final Evaluation Problem (FEP), which is considered the graduation exercise for an intensive Notional Training Cycle. Due to outstanding performance at the TSTA III Integrated Team Training (ITT) phase, HERON's FEP was unique for Ingleside and LANTFLT. HERON completed the first ITT led FEP for Ingleside and LANTFLT ships. The ITT flawlessly orchestrated and executed an aggressive FEP scenario. The crew demonstrated professionalism and enthusiasm throughout the basic phase of training by embracing the process within the Tactical Training Strategy to train the way they fight and be validated as "training self-sufficient."

At the completion of FEP on 21 November, HERON entered an Intermediate Maintenance Availability (IMAV), Combat System Readiness Review (CSRR), Technical Assessment, Repair, Groom and Evaluation (TARGET) and conducted a magazine inspection. On 06 December, the ship had the Command Christmas Party for the family and friends of HERON. On 12 December HERON completed an Inclination Experiment to assess the stability of the Minehunter class. On 18 December HERON won the NAVSTA Ingleside Christmas Lighting Competition and concluded the year with a much deserved holiday leave and standown period.