



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY

USS MITSCHER (DDG 57)
FLEET POST OFFICE
AE 09578-1275

Rec'd 4/4/97

IN REPLY REFER TO:
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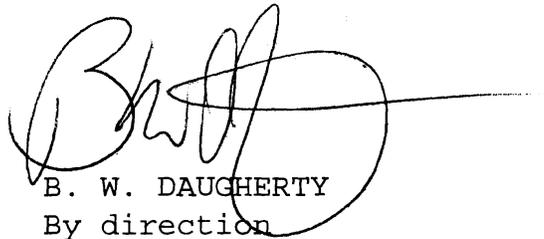
From: Commanding Officer, USS MITSCHER (DDG 57)
To: Director of Naval History, Washington DC (N09BH)

Subj: COMMAND HISTORY

Ref: (a) OPNAVINST 5750.12F

Encl: (1) USS MITSCHER (DDG 57) Command History

1. In accordance with reference (a), USS MITSCHER (DDG 57) submits its command history for the period of 01 January - 31 December 1996.


B. W. DAUGHERTY
By direction

PART I

COMMAND COMPOSITION AND ORGANIZATION

COMMAND COMPOSITION

USS MITSCHER (DDG 57)

Primary Missions: Air, Surface, and Undersea Warfare.

Secondary Mission: Strike Warfare

Immediate Senior: Commander, Destroyer Squadron TWO ZERO

Commanding Officer: CDR Raymond A. Spicer

Homeport: Norfolk, VA

PART II

CHRONOLOGY

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January:

01-07: Holiday leave/Upkeep
08-10: Upkeep Norfolk VA
11-12: Cruise Missile Tactical Qualification (CMTQ)
13-28: Upkeep Norfolk
29-30: U/W enroute NWS Yorktown
31: Ammo Onload - NWS Yorktown

February:

01-02: Ammo Onload - NWS Yorktown
03-19: Upkeep Norfolk
20-29: U/W enroute Puerto Rico OPAREA (COMPTUEX)

March:

01-04: Port Visit: St. Croix
05-20: U/W PROA (COMPTUEX)/ enr Norfolk
21-24: Upkeep Norfolk
25-31: U/W Cherry Point OPAREA (COMPTUEX PHASE II)

April:

01: Late Arrival Norfolk
02-04: Upkeep Norfolk
05: Ammo Onload/Crossdeck from USS NORMANDY (CG 60)
06-25: Upkeep Norfolk
26-30: U/W for CJTFEX 96-2

May:

01-15: U/W CJTFEX 96-2
03: Change of Command Ceremony
16: Late Arrival Norfolk
17-24: Upkeep Norfolk
25-31: Standown Norfolk

June:

01-21: Standown Norfolk
22-27: POM Norfolk
24: Embark Midshipmen for LANT-MEDTRAMID Phase II
28-30: U/W enroute Mediterranean with ENTBATGRU

July:

01-10: U/W Translant
11: Inchop Sixth Fleet
12: Turnover with GWBATGRU
13-18: Port Visit: Barcelona, Spain
17-18: Exercise: Caesar Sword 96-04
18: Debark Midshipmen
19-20: U/W enroute Eastern Med

21-24: Pony Express Operations - East Med
25-28 Port Visit: Haifa, Israel
29-31 U/W Med

August:

01-04: Port Visit: Corfu (Kerkira), Greece
05: U/W enroute Koper, Slovenia
06-10: Port Visit: Koper, Slovenia
10-20: U/W ISO Exercise Rescue Eagle 96
10-21: Adriatic REDCROWN
22-23: Exercise: Caesar Sword 96-05
24-27: Exercise: Shark Hunt - East Med
28-31: Port Visit: Alexandria, Egypt

September:

01: U/W enroute Rhodes, Greece
02-05: Port Visit: Rhodes, Greece
06-08: U/W Med
09-12: COMSIXTHFLT INVITEX
13-15: U/W Med
16-20: Port Visit: Istanbul, Turkey
20-30: U/W Med ISO Exercise: Dynamic Mix

October:

01-03: Exercise: Dynamic Mix
04-06: Port Visit: Theoule, France
07-16: Port Visit: Cannes, France
17-22: U/W Med - ISO Dogu Akdeniz 96
23-27: Port Visit: Aksaz Karagaac, Turkey
28: U/W enroute Larnaca, Cyprus
29-31: Port Visit: Larnaca, Cyprus
29: President of Cyprus/U.S. Ambassador to Cyprus Official visit

November:

01-03: Port Visit: Larnaca, Cyprus
04-06: U/W Med
07-13: Port Visit: Naples, Italy
14: U/W enroute La Maddalena, Sardinia
15-21: IMAV: La Maddalena, Sardinia
22-28: U/W USN-FGN MISSILEX
29-30: Port Visit: Souda Bay, Crete

December:

01: Port Visit: Souda Bay, Crete
02-04: U/W USN-FGN MISSILEX
05-07: U/W enroute TRBATGRU turnover
08: Turnover with USS RAMAGE (DDG 61)
09-17: Translant Group Sail
11-13: Mid-Cycle Assessment
18: Arrive Bermuda - Embark Dependents for Tiger Cruise

20: Return to Homeport
20-31: Holiday Leave/Standown

PART III

NARRATIVE

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1996 provided many challenging and rewarding experiences for the crew of the USS MITSCHER (DDG 57). The ship dedicated all of its efforts during the first half of the year in preparation for its maiden deployment with the ENTERPRISE Battle Group from 28 June to 20 December. Throughout workups and a successful deployment, the crew continually demonstrated its versatility, teamwork, professionalism and winning spirit.

Following Holiday Standown in early January, the Combat Systems Department overcame another obstacle in its extensive preparations for deployment, the Cruise Missile Tactical Qualification (CMTQ). CMTQ was supervised by the members of the Combat Systems Training Group (CSTG), who administered the test over a two day period. After a review of training records and observation of training scenarios, the evaluators recommended a grade of Unsatisfactory. The ship later made up the scenario portion of the qualification, earning a grade of Satisfactory.

In the end of January MITSCHER got underway, bound for Naval Weapon Station Yorktown to onload ammunition. Following completion of the onload, the ship returned to Norfolk for upkeep and to get ready for the challenges of the Composite Training Unit Exercise (COMPTUEX) Phase I, scheduled for 20 February through 20 March.

COMPTUEX marked the first time that the ENTERPRISE Battle Group operated as a unit and consisted of a series of scenarios in all warfare areas. In Air Warfare, MITSCHER launched two SM-2 missiles at drones launched by A-4s earning two kills and maintaining its perfect firing record. MITSCHER also recovered from a misfire and set a ship record in its Naval Surface Fire Support (NSFS) qualification while shooting on the range at Vieques Island.

The fast pace of COMPTUEX was offset by a port visit to St. Croix in the beginning of March. The crew took the opportunity to relax and recover before finishing strongly in the remainder of the exercise.

The ship returned to Norfolk for a few days before getting underway again as a participant in COMPTUEX Phase II. This exercise involved the Amphibious Ready Group (ARG) and focused on Amphibious assault and NSFS. Although poor weather canceled several of the events, MITSCHER completed an operational test of the Advanced Field Artillery Tactical Data System (AFATDS), a digital communication link that allows spotters ashore to call for fire support either by entering information manually or by using a laser range finder.

The ship returned to Norfolk in early April. Shortly thereafter, MITSCHER received the Tomahawk and SM-2 missiles from the USS Normandy (CG 60) that it would carry throughout its deployment during an ammunition crossdeck at Naval Station Norfolk.

The next three weeks were spent gearing up for the Combined Joint Task Force Exercise (CJTFFEX) 96-2. This exercise involved roughly 50 ships from the United States and Great Britain and was the final evaluation prior to deployment. Again, MITSCHER excelled in all areas. During the first week of the exercise, CDR Roy J. Balaconis was relieved by CDR Raymond A. Spicer as commanding officer in a ceremony on the flight deck.

After a week of upkeep, the ship entered a Preparation for Overseas Movement standown. The crew was reduced to duty section only for part of the time to allow people to take care of last minute business and to spend time with family prior to deployment. On June 28, MITSCHER cast off all lines and was underway for the Mediterranean.

The Battle Group continued to train as it crossed the Atlantic. The Strike Team participated in a Translant TLAMEX, and the ship spent quite a bit of time as the Plane Guard ship for the Enterprise while it conducted flight operations. MITSCHER inched to Sixth Fleet on 11 July.

After turning over with the USS STOUT (DDG 55), the ship pulled into Barcelona for its first Mediterranean port visit. The ship was very well received both officially and by the local townspeople. Many of the crewmembers participated in community service. The ship also participated in Exercise CAESAR SWORD 96-04, a Sixth Fleet-sponsored TLAM exercise.

After leaving Barcelona MITSCHER received orders to participate in Pony Express Operations. Upon completion of this national tasking, the ship pulled into Haifa, Israel.

Haifa was also an exciting port of call, and many sailors ranked it as one of the best. This high praise was due at least in part to the opportunity to tour Jerusalem and Bethlehem. The people were also friendly, and there was plenty for anyone to do.

After spending several days underway MITSCHER arrived in Corfu, Greece. Corfu was also rated highly by the crew, but the ship returned to sea after only a few days.

On the Fourth of August Mitscher was back underway and made her way up the Adriatic for a port visit in Koper, Slovenia. The ship was extremely well received in Koper, and it welcomed over 5000 civilians for tours.

MITSCHER then got underway in support of Exercise Rescue Eagle 96 and to assume duties as Adriatic Red Crown for the next eleven days. Toward the end of the month, the ship also participated in Exercise Caesar Sword 96-05, a Sixth Fleet-sponsored TLAM exercise, and Shark Hunt, a USW exercise conducted in the Eastern Mediterranean. MITSCHER then pulled into Alexandria, Egypt, for several days of liberty.

Although the crew did enjoy seeing the Pyramids at Giza, Alexandria did not have much to offer the crew and there were no regrets when the ship left bound for Rhodes, Greece. The Rhodes port visit was shared with the USS ENTERPRISE (CVN 65).

Soon MITSCHER was underway again and transited the Dardanelles enroute to Istanbul, Turkey. While in Turkey MITSCHER gave a presentation on the capabilities of the SPY-1F radar to the Turkish Navy, which is considering purchasing several Aegis ships. The presentation was also attended by RADM Huchting, Aegis Program Manager.

MITSCHER also participated in an exercise with the Turkish Navy, known as Dynamic Mix. After completion of Dynamic Mix, the ship pulled into Theoule, France, to celebrate DeGrasse's birthday. The French Navy and representatives from MITSCHER attended a mass and participated in a wreath laying ceremony as part of the event. Several days later the ship moved five miles and anchored off Cannes, for a short visit that was extended due to a casualty to the ship's only anchor windlass. While in Cannes members of the crew attended a reception in their honor, and others managed to take leave and spend time with their wives or girlfriends who had flown over to meet them. By the 17th MITSCHER was back to sea.

On the 23rd of October the ship anchored off Aksaz Karaagac, Turkey, following another exercise with the Turkish Navy, Dogu Akdeniz. While in Aksaz, the crew took its liberty in the nearby resort town of Marmaris.

Following the port visit to Aksaz, MITSCHER steamed eastward to the island of Cyprus for a port visit in Larnaca. The President of Cyprus, an avid sailor, and the U.S. Ambassador to Cyprus came aboard and toured the ship. He was very impressed with the ship and her crew and made a special point to send a message thanking MITSCHER for the visit.

After Larnaca the ship sailed for Naples, Italy, for a week of liberty and an opportunity to purchase uniform items at the local Navy Exchange. Many crewmembers made trips to Rome, and some were admitted to a Papal audience with John Paul II. The crew attended the audience in uniform and was very well received by tourists from all over Europe and the United States, receiving a standing ovation.

The ship then took one day to move to La Maddalena, Italy, for its Intermediate Availability (IMAV). For a week the ship was tied up to the USS SIMON LAKE, a tender assigned to Sixth Fleet to handle intermediate level repair and refitting.

After departing from La Maddalena, the ship made final preparations for the USN-FGN-ITN MISSILEX in which German Tornado Fighter-Bombers launched a total of 30 Kormoran air-to-surface missiles. This event marked the first time that a NATO missile exercise was conducted in the Mediterranean. MITSCHER was both OCE and a primary participant in the exercise, firing two SM-2 missiles against incoming Kormorans, and tracking all of the remaining missiles.

Initially, the ship was supposed to launch as many as four missiles in order to test the SPY-1D radar's capability against a stream raid. Although two of the missiles were deleted from the exercise and the participants had to adapt to changing weather conditions, the crew was satisfied with the results. In between phases of the exercise, the ship pulled into Souda Bay, Crete, for its final port visit prior to return to homeport.

After the MISSILEX was completed MITSCHER began to head westward on its way home. It met up with USS RAMAGE (DDG 61), part of USS THEODORE ROOSEVELT(CVN 72) Battle Group, and

completed turnover on the eighth of December. Later that night MITSCHER passed through the Straits of Gibraltar and began a lengthy trek home that had to be repeatedly altered to avoid bad weather.

While on its way home, MITSCHER successfully completed its end-of -deployment Mid-Cycle Assessment (MCA) with an overall adjective grade of "effective." The engineering department put a lot of hard work into preparing for MCA, and the Repair Lockers were especially noted for their enthusiasm and ability.

The ship then anchored in the harbor off Bermuda to pick up dependents for a Tiger Cruise. With the dependents onboard, the ship headed out on its final leg of deployment. Many of the events that had been scheduled for the Tiger Cruise were unfortunately canceled due to bad weather, but the riders did receive a good taste of life at sea. MITSCHER returned to Naval Station Norfolk, Pier 25, on a cold but sunny morning on the 20th of December to a much anticipated reunion with friends and family members.

The men of MITSCHER truly distinguished themselves over the course of 1996 through their ingenuity, initiative and determination. Mitschermen carried themselves proudly during the course of their first deployment, excelling in every exercise and representing the Nation well throughout the Mediterranean.