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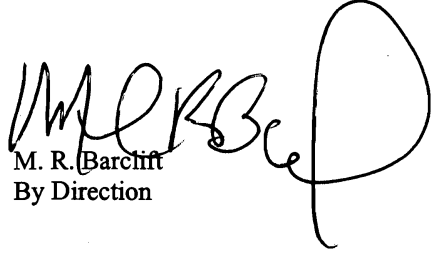
From: Commanding Officer, USS MITSCHER (DDG 57)
To: Director of Naval History, Washington, D.C. (NO9BH)

Subj: COMMAND HISTORY

Ref: (a): OPNAVINST 5750.12F

Encl: USS MITSCHER (DDG 57) COMMAND HISTORY

1. In accordance with reference (a), USS MITSCHER submits its command history for the period of 01 January 1997 - 31 December 1997.


M. R. Barclift
By Direction

COMMAND COMPOSITION

USS MITSCHER (DDG 57)

Primary Missions: Air, Surface, and Undersea Warfare.

Secondary Mission: Strike Warfare

Immediate Senior: 01Jan-30 Nov: Commander, Destroyer Squadron TWO ZERO; 01 Dec-31 Dec,
Commander Destroyer Squadron TWO.

Commanding Officer: CDR Raymond A. Spicer

Homeport: Norfolk, VA

1997 CHRONOLOGY

- 01 January: Continue standdown for leave period one.
- 07 January: All hands on board, begin leave period two.
- 21 January: Return from standdown, begin upkeep in Norfolk.
- 27 January: Depart Norfolk, transit to Yorktown NWS, commence ammo offload.
- 29 January: Return to Norfolk, continue upkeep.
- 03 February: Depart Norfolk, U/W VACAPES OPAREA.
- 07 February: Return Norfolk, continue upkeep.
- 11 February: Commence Restricted Availability Period (RAV).
- 03 March: Commence PLOT II Assessment.
- 04 March: Commence Aviation Assessment.
- 07 March: Complete PLOT II, evaluated as SAT.
- 13 March: Complete Aviation Assessment.
- 14 April: Commence PLOT III and SWTW week.
- 18 April: Complete PLOT III and SWTW week.
- 22 April: Commence Light Off Assessment (LOA).
- 24 April: Complete LOA, evaluated as SAT.
- 09 May: Complete Restricted Availability (RAV).
- 09 May: Depart Norfolk, U/W VACAPES Post-RAV shakedown.
- 10 May: Return Norfolk, continue upkeep.
- 13 May: Aviation Readiness Evaluation (ARE).
- 16 May: Commence/complete Aviation Certification (AVCERT) score of SAT. Depart Norfolk, U/W VACAPES.
- 20 May: Arrive Annapolis MD for port visit. US Naval Academy Commissioning Visit Ship.
- 24 May: Depart Annapolis, transit to Norfolk. Continue upkeep.
- 27 May: Embark Midshipman for LANTRAMID Phase II.
- 02 June: Safety Stand-down, all hands complete OBA, EEBD and egress training.
- 09 June: Commence CART II.
- 13 June: Complete CART II, score SAT.

16 June: Depart Norfolk. Arrive NWS Yorktown for ammo onload.

18 June: Complete ammo onload, depart NWS Yorktown, arrive Norfolk.

19 June: Embark Midshipmen for CORTRAMID. Depart Norfolk, U/W VACAPES.

20 June: Arrive Norfolk, debark LANTRAMID and CORTRAMID Midshipmen.

21 June: Depart Norfolk, arrive Natuicus for visit ship for Cajun Food Festival..

23 June: Depart Natuicus, arrive Norfolk, continue upkeep.

07 July: Commence Tailored Ship Training Availability (TSTA) I.

08 July: Depart Norfolk, U/W VACAPES for TSTA I/CMTT.

10 July: VANDALEX

11 July: Arrive Norfolk.

15 July: Depart Norfolk, U/W VACAPES for TSTA I/ETG.

18 July: Arrive Norfolk.

23 July: Depart Norfolk U/W VACAPES for TSTA I.

24 July: Arrive Norfolk, late evening.

25 July: Depart Norfolk, U/W VACAPES for TSTA I, RDT+E Support, and FTG.

31 July: Arrive Norfolk.

03 August: Embark Midshipmen for LANTRAMID Phase III.

04 August: Depart Norfolk, U/W VACAPES for TSTA I FTG.

06 August: Arrive Norfolk, complete TSTA I, score SAT.

18 August: Commence TSTA II.

18 August: Depart Norfolk, U/W VACAPES for TSTA II ETG.

22 August: Arrive Norfolk, disembark Midshipmen for LANTRAMID Pahse III.

26 August: Safety Survey conducted by Naval Safety Center. Score SAT.

02 September: U/W VACAPES TSTA II, ETG/PEB.

03 September: Engineering Certification (ECERT). Score SAT. Arrive Norfolk.

12 September: Cruise Missile Tactical Qualification (CMTQ). Score SAT.

18 September: TYCOMMEX

29 September: Embark Illinois Leaders to Sea. Depart Norfolk, U/W VACAPES, TSTA II CSTG. Disembark Illinois Leaders to Sea by helo.

30 September: Arrive Norfolk.

06 October: Commence Logistics Management Assessment (LMA).

09 October: Complete LMA. Score Excellent.

14 October: Complete TSTA II.

15 October: Commence TSTA III. Depart Norfolk U/W VACAPES for TSTA III .

17 October: Arrive Norfolk. Complete TSTA III.

24 October: Fall PRT

27 October: Depart Norfolk, U/W VACAPES, Begin Final Evaluation Problem (FEP).

30 October: Arrive Norfolk, complete FEP, score SAT.

31 October: Ships Halloween Party. Continue Upkeep.

21 November: National War College visit.

01 December: Transfer from DESRON 20 to DESRON 2.

05 December: NATO Officer visit.

08 December: Commence CSRR/TARGET FTSCCLANT assist.

11 December: Commence Command Inspection.

12 December: Complete Command Inspection, score SAT.

17 December: Begin Holiday Leave/Standdown for period one.

19 December: Complete CSRR/TARGET assist.

COMMAND HISTORY
SUMMARY OF EVENTS 01 JAN - 31 DEC 1997

1997 represented a year marked by inspection teams and evaluations. MITSCHER went through an intense post deployment maintenance availability and an accelerated work up cycle in preparation for an early deployment to the Persian Gulf in 1998. The impending disestablishment of DESTROYER SQUADRON 20, MITSCHER's parent squadron for most of 1997, and her transfer to DESTROYER SQUADRON TWO, would cause this early deployment to the Persian Gulf to not come to pass. Instead, MITSCHER would continue with the accelerated training cycle preparing for any emergent tasking.

The command's focus for 1997 was on training and upkeep. The year was full of inspection and assessment teams, and many of the plank-owners were transferring off the ship. MITSCHER kept a rigid training regimen throughout 1997, ensuring the crew was ready for the challenges that lay ahead.

MITSCHER began the year with much needed leave and stand-down after her maiden deployment. Following stand-down and an ammunition off-load at Yorktown Naval Weapons Station, MITSCHER entered a Restricted Availability (RAV) in February to allow major repairs and ship alterations to be completed following her first deployment. The RAV was completed early May, on budget and ahead of schedule, with no personnel injuries.

During the RAV, MITSCHER went through the first of her major assessments. Pre Light-Off Training (PLOT) phase I, II, and III in March and April assessed the engineering plant and ship survivability; including basic engineering and damage control drills, main space fire drills, and the review of management programs. The PLOT assessments prepared MITSCHER for the first major inspection; LOA.

The Light-Off Assessment (LOA) was conducted 22-24 April, toward the end of the RAV. MITSCHER was evaluated on her ability to safely bring on-line and maintain the engineering plant. The ship demonstrated the first-DDG class LOA using the underway watch and damage control organization while in-port. The high state of readiness maintained during the extended inport period and RAV enabled this revolutionary concept to become a reality. The successful completion of this first milestone demonstrated MITSCHER was safe to operate her Engineering plant. Upon completion of the RAV and LOA in early May, MITSCHER got underway for a trouble-free shakedown cruise of newly-installed systems and upgrades after a five-month inport period.

Upon returning to Norfolk in early May, MITSCHER underwent and passed her second set of assessments; the completion of the Aviation Readiness Evaluation and Aviation Certification. During these evaluations, MITSCHER made her first port visit since returning from the Mediterranean. MITSCHER was the visit ship at the US Naval Academy Commissioning Week 1997. The "ship in the yard" was in Annapolis for three days of much needed rest for the crew and a chance to show off the ship to visitors and newly commissioned naval officers.

MITSCHER returned to Norfolk and in early June began the next round of assessments with the Command Assessment of Readiness and Training Phase II (CART II): MITSCHER was the first ship on the waterfront to complete this assessment using the new objectives-based training administered by own-ship training teams. The crew presented a "FEP-ready" Integrated Training Team (ITT) Total Ship Survivability Exercise at the beginning of the basic training phase, and was deemed ready for independent steaming.

In preparation for upcoming events in the basic training cycle, MITSCHER made a trip to the Naval Weapons Station Yorktown in early April, unloading SM2s to be used in VANDALEX exercises in 1998. MITSCHER embarked 16 Third class midshipman in late June for CORTRAMID, affording them a view of the navy's finest warship at work, and life in the modern surface navy.

After the CORTRAMID cruise, MITSCHER pulled into downtown Norfolk at the Nauticus Maritime Museum for the visit ship at the Norfolk Cajun Festival. While there, MITSCHER hosted over 500 visitors and guests.

The basic training cycle began in early July with the start of the Tailored Ships Training Availability (TSTA) designed to train and evaluate every aspect of the ship and her overall combat readiness. July 7 marked the beginning of TSTA I, an intense round of engineering assessments and combat systems scenarios designed to pinpoint areas requiring additional training.

MITSCHER's first underway for TSTA I focused on combat systems and included the VANDALEX exercise on 10 July. The missile shoot was a flawless combat system performance. MITSCHER experienced a perfect detect-to-engage live-fire sequence. This represented the 18th consecutive successful live SM2 missile engagement by MITSCHER. System response time during the engagement was among the fastest observed by any Aegis ship in service.

TSTA I continued after a long weekend in port, as more assessment teams came onboard. The Fleet Training Group (FTG) got underway for a week to continue to assess and train the ship's damage control and combat systems teams. The ship's training teams were the major

focus of this visit, evaluating the crew's ability to train itself. The Engineering, Damage Control, and Combat Systems Training Teams worked long hours ensuring MITSCHER was ready for the challenging drills run FTG.

TSTA I continued through the first week of August, culminating in a large battle scenario monitored by FTG. MITSCHER earned a grade of Satisfactory, the highest grade available, through TSTA I. Because of the proficiency of the CSTT and cruise missile teams, MITSCHER was recommended by the Cruise Missile Training Group (CSTG) for an early Cruise Missile Tactical Qualification evaluation, to be completed during TSTA II in September.

The training pace did not slow down after TSTA I. TSTA II began two weeks later and once again ETG went underway with MITSCHER, this time to act as evaluators rather than trainers.

MITSCHER returned to Norfolk for some needed maintenance and rest on August 24. The Naval Safety Center and Afloat Training Group conducted their annual Safety Survey on August 26. MITSCHER received an overall grade of "Excellent" from both groups with only minor safety discrepancies. It was one of the few ships in the fleet with no class A or B mishaps.

The ship was back to sea again on 2 September and the focus was on engineering. The ship's Engineering Training Team (ETT) had been working hard throughout TSTA I and II preparing for 3 September; Engineering Certification (ECERT). The Propulsion Examining Board (PEB) evaluated the engineering plant on safety of operation, management programs, casualty control, and main space fire drills. A normal 2-3 day assessment was completed in an intense one and a half days, culminating in an overall assessment of the ship's engineering plant. The plant was assessed as safe to operate, and earned an overall grade of SAT.

MITSCHER returned to Norfolk and continued with inport maintenance and TSTA II training. With ECERT completed, the focus again shifted to combat systems. MITSCHER underwent the Cruise Missile Tactical Qualification (CMTQ) on 12 September, and in a rarely granted upgrade of a training assist, was awarded full TYCOM certification. MITSCHER achieved this milestone in an already greatly compressed training cycle.

A further milestone was met on 19 September with the satisfactory completion of the Communications Readiness Assessment. MITSCHER received a total score of 96.5 percent, a ship record and one of the best in the fleet.

The ship got underway for the final underway CSTG assist in late September. During this period, MITSCHER was selected as one of the first ships to host the special Navy "Leaders at Sea" program. The program is designed to allow civilian leaders to see the Navy in action, and foster their support for the naval service. Several prominent Illinois leaders arrived to the

ship on 30 September to get a feel for life at sea. The feedback from their time on board was exceptionally positive.

With little rest in sight, MITSCHER's accelerated inspection timetable continued on 6 October, spotlighting the Supply Department and shipwide 3-M program with the Logistics Management Assessment (LMA). Once again, the ship proved herself a cut above the rest, receiving scores of 95.5% in General Stores, 96.4% in Food service and 97% in Retail operations and earned an overall score of 96 %, among the best afloat. The assessment was accomplished in two and a half days instead of the normal 4, continuing the accelerated timetable.

MITSCHER completed TSTA II on 14 October and began the final TSTA phase on 15 October. TSTA III was the last opportunity the ship would have available to train in preparation for the Final Evaluation Period (FEP), scheduled for late October. TSTA III concentrated on integrated training events coordinated by the Integrated Training Team, combining combat systems drills with engineering causalities and damage control evolutions.

After pulling back to Norfolk, MITSCHER had ten days in which to complete making the ship "FEP ready" and took the opportunity to conduct the semi-annual Physical Readiness Test. The crew proved that even with the accelerated schedule and demanding training, physical readiness was and continued to be a high priority.

The Final Evaluation Period (FEP) began on 27 October and ran through 30 October. During FEP, the ships training teams combined the many aspects of a battle problem and presented them to the evaluation team, and earned exceptional marks. MITSCHER successfully completed the Basic Phase of the Inter-Deployment Training Cycle (IDTC) on an accelerated schedule despite massive post-maiden deployment personnel turnover and accelerated training timetable; a testament to the hard work and diligence of the crew to perform above and beyond expectations.

Upon the completion of FEP, upkeep and maintenance was the priority now that the ship was scheduled to be inport for an extended period of time. On 21 November, MITSCHER hosted a group of senior officers from the National War College to give them a feel for one of the Navy's newest and most combat ready ships.

MITSCHER continued her inport maintenance through December. On 01 December, MITSCHER shifted from DESRON 20 to DESRON 2, and joined the EISENHOWER battle group. The most significant impact to the ship was the change in the deployment schedule. MITSCHER would now deploy as a part of the EISENHOWER battle group to the Mediterranean in the summer of 1998, instead of her planned Persian Gulf deployment in February of 1998.

The ship underwent a Command Inspection in preparation for the January 1998 change of command. MITSCHER was found to satisfactorily meet all inspection criteria.

The final assist of the year was an extensive technical review of the ship's engineering plant and combat systems equipment conducted by FTSCANT Norfolk. The TARGET/CSRR visit had civilian experts digging into nearly every system on the ship, ensuring it was operating at peak performance and pinpointing current and potential problems. The crew was ready for anything coming out of FEP and the training cycle; TARGET/CSRR ensured the ships systems were able to meet the demands of the professionally trained crew. 1997 ended with holiday leave and stand-down, giving much needed rest to the crew.

Throughout 1997, MITSCHER prepared for the 21st century. The ship fielded the most capable and modern Local Area Networks afloat in a DDG class ship. This state-of-the-art, fiber-optic network has been developed well beyond the baseline configuration, including the latest version of the COMPASS database which was field-tested on MITSCHER.

MITSCHER indeed demonstrated herself throughout 1997. As a testament to her outstanding reputation and performance, MITSCHER was selected as the Navy's "Poster Ship," and was featured in the Navy's newest Recruiting Command television commercial. MITSCHER was the public affairs ship of choice for COMNAVSURFLANT and CINCLANTFLT, hosting over 20 major visits/tours in 1997. This included corporate CEOs, Flag Officers, Congressional delegations, foreign Navy distinguished visitors, and senior service college classes. MITSCHER also hosted over 75 NJROTC students, teaching the naval personnel of tomorrow the benefits and excellence of the navy today. The ships enormous success and accomplishments of 1997 have set the standard for further achievements by MITSCHER in 1998.