



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY

USS MITSCHER (DDG 57)

FLEET POST OFFICE

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APR 19 1999

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 1998.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "M. D. Genung".

M. D. Genung
By Direction

COMMAND COMPOSITION

USS MITSCHER (DDG 57)

Primary Missions: Air, Surface, and Undersea Warfare.

Secondary Mission: Strike Warfare

Immediate Senior: Commander, Destroyer Squadron TWO.

Commanding Officer: 01 - 29 Jan: CDR Raymond A. Spicer, 29 Jan - 31 Dec: CDR Phillip H. Cullom

Homeport: Norfolk, VA

COMMAND CHRONOLOGY 1998

- 01 Jan Continue leave and standdown for leave section 2
- 12 Jan All hands onboard, secure from holiday leave and standdown.
Commence first Damage Control University
- 15 Jan Complete Damage Control University
- 16 Jan Fast Cruise for training
- 21 Jan Underway VACAPES for training and CO turnover
- 22 Jan UNREP with USNS Merrimack
- 23 Jan Return NOB Norfolk
- 29 Jan Change of Command Ceremony. CDR R. A. Spicer is relieved by CDR P. H. Cullom
- 02 Feb Underway for USWPT in VACAPES and PROA, in company with USS Stump, USS Arliegh Burke, and USS Deyo.
- 03 Feb UNREP with USS Supply.
- 09 Feb Commence COMPTUEX in company with USS Stump, USS Arliegh Burke, USS Deyo, USS Cape Saint George, USS Anzio and USS Eisenhower.
- 10 Feb UNREP/Vertrep with USS Supply
- 12 Feb MIO exercise with USS Arliegh Burke
- 20 Feb NGFS support qualification on Vieques. Complete COMPTUEX.
Arrive Ponce PR for Port visit.
- 23 Feb Depart Ponce, transit to NOB Norfolk
- 24 Feb African American History month Celebration
- 26 Feb Arrive NOB Norfolk, continue maintenance and upkeep
- 06 Mar Depart NOB Norfolk, transit to Cherry Point Op Area. Commence SACEX rehearsal in company with USS Stump, USS Austin, USS Saipan, and USS Tortuga.
- 08 Mar Return NOB Norfolk, continue maintenance and upkeep
- 03 Apr Retirement Ceremony Command Master Chief, GSCM Cacera
- 07 Apr NATO security officer visit
- 13 Apr Depart NOB Norfolk. Arrive NWS Yorktown for ammunition onload
- 15 Apr Ships Sports Day competition

- 16 Apr Depart NWS Yorktown for family day cruise in VACAPES op area.
First signing of MITSCHER DECLARATION
Arrive Nauticus, Norfolk.
- 20 Apr Depart Nauticus, arrive NOB Norfolk for continued maintenance and upkeep
- 22 Apr White House Fellows Visit
- 24 Apr Spring PRT
- 27 Apr Depart for JTFEX in Cherry Point op area and PROA, in company with USS Stump, USS Arliegh
Burke, USS Deyo, USS Anzio, USS Cape St. George, and USS Eisenhower
- 05 May Complete JTFEX, commence SACEX in company with USS Stump, USS Saipan, USS Tortuga,
and USS Austin.
- 09 May Commence gunnery exercise off Vieques
- 11 May Complete gunnery exercises, complete SACEX
- 12 May Burial at sea
- 14 May Arrive NOB Norfolk, commence POM leave and standdown for section 1
- 27 May All hands on board, commence POM leave and stand down for section 2
- 28 May Midshipmen arrive for LANTRAMID I.
- 08 Jun Admiral Giffin, COMNAVSURFLANT ship visit
- 09 Jun All hands on board, secure from POM leave
- 10 Jun Underway for deployment, MED 98-2 in company with USS Stump, USS Arliegh Burke, USS
Deyo, USS Anzio, USS Supply
- 15 Jun UNREP with USS Supply
- 21 Jun UNREP with USS Supply
- 22 Jun INCHOP 6th Fleet, transit straites of Gibraltar
- 24 Jun Port Visit Cassis France
Day of Hope project
- 27 Jun Debark Midshipman
- 30 Jun Depart Cassis, transit to Augusta Bay Sicily
- 03 Jul Port Visit Augusta Bay Sicily in company with USS Stump and USS Monterey
- 04 Jul Fourth of July celebration at Sigonella Naval Air Station

08 Jul Depart Augusta Bay, commence exercise SHAREM 125 in company with USS Stump, USS Monterey, USS Cape St. George, USS Narwahl, and USS Atlanta

10 Jul UNREP with USNS Merrimack

13 Jul UNREP with USNS Merrimack

16 Jul Complete SHAREM 125, transit to Messina

17 Jul Port visit Primo Settembre Messina, Sicily
Embark Midshipmen for LANTRAMID II

21 Jul Depart Messina, commence exercise MATADOR 98 in company with USS Stump, USS Arliegh Burke, USS Anzio, USS Cape St. George, USS Eisenhower, USS Saipan, USS Austin, USS Tortuga, USS Atlanta and USS Narwahl
UNREP with USNS Big Horn

25 Jul UNREP with USNS Big Horn

27 Jul Complete MATADOR 98, transit to Mykonos
UNREP with USS USNS Big Horn

30 Jul Port Visit Mykonos Greece

03 Aug Debark Midshipmen

04 Aug Depart Mykonos, transit for Adriatic operations

05 Aug UNREP with USNS Concord

07 Aug Port Visit Taranto, Italy

11 Aug Depart Taranto, underway for Adriatic operations in company with USS Austin

16 Aug UNREP with USNS Big Horn

22 Aug Admiral Giffin, COMNAVSURFLANT visit

23 Aug UNREP with USNS Big Horn

24 Aug Port Visit Venice Italy

29 Aug Depart Venice for continued Adriatic operations

31 Aug Admiral Fry visit

01 Sep UNREP with USNS Bighorn

03 Sep Complete Adriatic operations
Port Visit Corfu Greece

05 Sep DESRON 2 Arrive for MCA preparations

07 Sep Depart Corfu, commence MidCycle Assessment (MCA)

08 Sep UNREP with USS Supply

09 Sep Complete MCA
Hump Day Ceremony and dinner - mid point of deployment

10 Sep Port Visit Monaco

15 Sep Depart Monaco, underway for group sail
Commence CART I

16 Sep UNREP with USNS Big Horn

18 Sep Port Visit Mahon, Menorca.
Complete CART I

20 Sep COMREL project at US navy cemetery in Mahon

22 Sep Depart Mahon, commence exercise Sea Fancy.

23 Sep Foreign officer exchange with FS Jean Bart

25 Sep UNREP with French oilier FS Muse
Embark Discovery Film Crew

26 Sep Complete foreign officer exchange
Complete Sea Fancy
Debarck Discovery Film Crew

28 Sep Port visit Cagliari, Sardinia

29 Sep Depart Cagliari, transit to La Maddalena

30 Sep Arrive La Maddalena, Sardinia. Commence ammunition transfer with USS Deyo and USS
Simon Lake

01 Oct Complete ammunition transfer with USS Deyo, commence transfer with USS Arliegh Burke

02 Oct Complete Ammunition transfer with USS Arliegh Burke
Depart La Maddalena, transit to Algeria.
UNREP with USNS Kanawha

03 Oct Arrive Algiers Algeria for Algerian SAREX
Official Welcome banquet

04 Oct Depart Algiers for SAREX exercise with Algerian naval units.
Return Algiers, farewell banquet

05 Oct Depart Algiers, commence exercise Dynamic Mix 98

09 Oct UNREP with USS Kanawha

11 Oct Detach from Dynamic Mix, transit to Adriatic for operation Deliberate Force and Flexible Anvil,
in company with USS Eisenhower and USS Anzio

15 Oct UNREP with USS Supply

18 Oct Sixth Fleet media Embark
UNREP with USS Kanawha
Debark media

19 Oct Small Boat transfer with USS Narwhal and USS San Juan

21 Oct UNREP with USNS Kanawha

27 Oct UNREP with USS Kanawha

29 Oct Depart Adriatic, transit to Souda Bay

30 Oct Halloween celebration and Marathon

02 Nov UNREP with USNS Kanawha

03 Nov Port Visit Souda Bay, Crete

05 Nov Ship Sports day
Embark COMDESRON 2

10 Nov Fall PRT

12 Nov Debark COMDESRON 2

13 Nov Depart Souda Bay, transit to exercise SARDINA 98
UNREP with USS Kanawha

16 Nov Commence SARDINA 98 in company with USS Austin, USS Tortuga and USS Saipan

18 Nov Complete SARDINA 98, transit to Malaga

19 Nov UNREP with USS Platte

21 Nov Arrive Malaga Spain

25 Nov Thanksgiving Dinner Celebration

26 Nov Reception on ship for Malaga Dignitaries

29 Nov Depart Malaga, transit to Brumuda

29 Nov Transit Strait of Gibraltar

30 Nov Out Chop 6th Fleet, inchop 2nd fleet

03 Dec UNREP with USS Supply

06 Dec UNREP with USS Supply

07 Dec Arrive Bermuda, commence Tiger Cruise pickup

Depart Bermuda for transit to Norfolk

09 Dec UNREP with USS Laramie

10 Dec Arrive NOB Norfolk, complete deployment MED 98-2
Commence leave and standdown for section 1
DESRON 2 change of command

28 Dec All hands on board

28 Dec Commence leave and standdown for section 2

Through a challenging and intense 1998, the officers and crew of USS MITSCHER continued to work on professional development and strong warfighting skills that would be used in battle group workups and a Mediterranean deployment. Real world events in the Balkans and Middle East kept MITSCHER and the EISENHOWER battle group focused on training and combat readiness through the many exercises and drills the battle group participated in. Despite these challenges, MITSCHER never lost focus on the crew, encouraging personal qualification and advancement through Surface Warfare Officer and Enlisted Surface Warfare Specialist qualifications.

MITSCHER began 1998 with the second half of holiday leave and standdown. One of the new initiatives in 1998 was the Damage Control University. New members of the crew now completed their basic damage control requirements in a one week "university". For the remainder of 1998, DCU was held once every two months to ensure new arrivals were qualified as rapidly as possible with solid training.

MITSCHER's change of command took place on Jan 29, 1998, when CDR Raymond Spicer was relieved by CDR Philip Cullom as Commanding Officer, USS MITSCHER. CDR Spicer parted by saying his tour as Commanding Officer was the highlight of his naval career and he was proud of the crew and all their accomplishments. CDR Spicer stated he was happy to have had such a fine crew and wardroom, and that he was able to 'sit back and let the ship run itself'. The change of command concluded with a reception and the announcement by COMDESRON TWENTY that MITSCHER was selected as the recipient of the Battle Efficiency Award for the year 1997.

As a new addition to the EISENHOWER battle group, MITSCHER set sail for COMPTUEX with the ships of Destroyer Squadron Two on 02 February for a month of intense battle group operations focusing on integrating the separate ships into a cohesive unit. The first phase of the exercise, USWPT, was designed to focus the destroyer squadron on undersea warfare. Unfortunately, the weather did not cooperate with the schedule and most of the events were canceled due to rough seas. Upon arrival in the Puerto Rico operating area, DESRON Two joined the remainder of the EISENHOWER battle group for combined exercises including live missile firings, undersea warfare exercises, surface combat drills, and other events designed to flex all battle group assets.

Although MITSCHER completed a very successful session of live weapons firings, including an exceptional score of 100.4 on the NGFS range on the island of Vieques, a problem arose during the live SM2 shoot when an operator disabled the battle short function on the illuminator five seconds before intercept. When the illuminator was disabled, telemetry data being transferred from the missile to the ship's computer was lost and unavailable for later evaluation. As a result, the TYCOM later determined the missile shoot unsuccessful due to the disabling of battle override, and MITSCHER would not be honored with the Maritime Warfare Excellence Award.

Upon completion of COMPTUEX, the ship pulled into Ponce, PR for a three day port visit. MITSCHER arrived in time to celebrate the Ponce Carnival, one of the largest celebrations in the region. Sailors were able to sight see and enjoy the history, beaches, and casinos in Puerto Rico.

MITSCHER traveled through rough seas on her return voyage and arrived back to Norfolk on 27 February, and was underway the following weekend for a Strategic Arms Coordination Exercise (SACEX) rehearsal. The combat systems and operations teams had their first exposure to operating as Green Crown, controlling Marine Corps air assets during this 2 day exercise. This was an excellent opportunity to develop skills that would be used in later exercises and real world scenarios, and allowed the ship to optimize its experience with control of the ARG's ADZC while conducting a possible amphibious assault.

Returning to port allowed for needed maintenance and upkeep after the month at sea for COMPTUEX. During this time, the ship's Command Master Chief, GSCM(SW) Cacers retired after over 20 years of service. He was relieved by ENCM(SW) Downs.

On 13 April, MITSCHER set sail for Yorktown Naval Weapons Station to conduct the pre-deployment ammunition onload. After two intense days of unloading SM-2, VLA, and Tomahawk cruise missiles, and hundreds of five inch rounds, the crew was able to unwind with a sports day during which teams competed in softball, volleyball, basketball, and football.

MITSCHER departed from Yorktown having embarked nearly 100 family members and friends for a day long family cruise through the Chesapeake Bay and out into the VACAPES operating area. The day was filled with demonstrations of the ship's combat systems abilities, damage control, and ship handling characteristics. During this special day, the "MITSCHER Declaration" was unveiled to the crew and families. The Declaration was developed by the Captain and crew and outlined the crew's core values, representing what MITSCHER stands for: honor, integrity, and teamwork. MITSCHER returned to downtown Norfolk late in the afternoon, mooring at the Nauticus Maritime Museum for a four day visit.

JTFEX was a exercise designed to further solidify the EISENHOWER battle group's ability to conduct coordinated operations. The ships participation in SACEX would provide an opportunity to further develop the Green Crown role and NGFS team. MITSCHER departed on 27 April for the first exercise and conducted advanced operations involving surface ships, aircraft, and submarines in a full battle scenario. The battle group was flexed to the extent of its abilities and learned many valuable lessons in asset management and further developed the warfighting skills of the ships and crews. MITSCHER next operated with COMPHIBRON EIGHT and the SAIPAN ARG for a week long amphibious Strategic Arms Coordinated Exercise, SACEX. The group remained off the southern coast of Vieques, and while Marines of the group conducted a live fire amphibious assault of the island, a continual barrage of NGFS, air strikes, and Marine air attacks covered their advance. The SACEX was one of the few exercises ever to coordinate all these assets into a single event. MITSCHER continued to practice her role as Green Crown and ADZC, controlling the aircraft of the ARG as well as using her fleet defense AAW ability.

MITSCHER returned to Norfolk, once again sailing through extremely rough weather, on 14 May. Upon arrival, the ship commenced her Preparation for Overseas Movement leave and stand down. This allowed the crew time settle personal affairs before leaving for the six month deployment. On June 10th, MITSCHER took in all lines and was underway for her second Mediterranean deployment.

The transit across the Atlantic was filled with communication drills, division tactical exercises, and other events designed to maintain the battle group's combat readiness. MITSCHER in-chopped to Sixth Fleet on 22 June and transited the Straits of Gibraltar in a heavy early morning haze, obscuring the Rock of Gibraltar. The day began eventful with the spotting of an unknown submarine and ended with a distress call from an American Merchant, which was handled by another member of the battle group.

The first port visit of the deployment was to Cassis, France. Located on the southern coast, it was a visit that presented many opportunities for crew liberty including the World Cup, biking, and swimming, as well as numerous official visits. The ship and her crew were exceptionally well received by the city and attended many official functions and ceremonies. While in Cassis, members of the crew took part in the "Day of Hope", an event sponsored by the Ronald McDonald foundation. Children from a nearby children's hospital were brought together with kids from a local elementary school to participate in a day of goodwill and friendship. MITSCHER sailors helped facilitate this event and although only a handful spoke French, the

language barrier was no issue as children and sailors alike enjoyed a day of sports and companionship.

MITSCHER sailed from Cassis to Augusta Bay, Sicily in early July where USS STUMP and USS MONTEREY were also berthed. While there, the engineering department conducted a replacement of NR 3 Gas Turbine Generator which was damaged as a result of salt water intrusion into the lube oil system through a rupture in the lube oil cooler assembly. The Fourth of July was celebrated in true American style at the Sigonella Naval Air station, with personnel from five American warships on hand to enjoy the festivities.

The first major exercise of the deployment combined ships and submarines of the EISENHOWER battle group with assets from five NATO countries in an intense undersea warfare operation. SHAREM 125 was designed to test and evaluate new and updated tactics, weapons, and procedures, while developing integrated USW abilities. During the event, units evaluated new and innovative shallow water tactics. For possibly the first time ever in SHAREM history, MITSCHER demonstrated unparalleled cooperation between surface units and submarines by passing targeting data to an SSN for a coordinated attack. The event taught the MITSCHER undersea warfare team valuable lessons on tactics and survivability when operating in potentially hostile submarine environment.

MITSCHER sailed back to Sicily for a port visit in Messina. Mitschermen took advantage of the short train ride to the city of Taormina, ancient home of the Greeks and Romans for fantastic shopping, beautiful sights, and a very active night life.

The ship set out again on 21 July, well rested ready to take part in exercise MATADOR 98. This exercise flexed every possible tasking the combined battle group could face: air, surface, sub surface, non-combat expeditionary operations, and maritime interdiction were all mission areas MITSCHER had the opportunity to practice. The first focus was, like the SHAREM exercise, on USW tactics. The group then moved to anti-air and anti-surface warfare exercises, combining large numbers of ships and aircraft to make the event as realistic as possible. Finally, MITSCHER protected the SAIPAN Amphibious Readiness Group as they carried out a simulated non-combat expeditionary operation. The training was well rounded and MITSCHER completed the exercise more ready than ever to carry out any possible national tasking.

Upon the conclusion of the exercise, MITSCHER sailed into the Aegean sea for a much anticipated port visit to Mykonos, Greece. The small island is home to some of the most spectacular beaches the crew had ever seen. A party atmosphere abounded as the crew took advantage of extensive shopping, active night life, and historical tours to Delios island and the ancient Temple of Apollo. The stay could not have been long enough, and Mykonos was regarded as one of the highlights of the deployment.

After a brief stop in Taranto, Italy for food and fuel, MITSCHER was tasked with conducting precursor operations in the Adriatic sea off the coast of Macedonia and Albania in company with USS AUSTIN. Tensions had risen in the region as Kosovo sought to break away from Serbia and US forces were sent to the Adriatic to act as a stabilizing force. To further intensify the situation, the fear of terrorist action to US personnel in Albania necessitated the insertion of several hundred Marines from the AUSTIN to secure the American Embassy compound. MITSCHER was the sole surface combatant in the Adriatic and provided surface and air cover for the non-combat expeditionary operation. For the next thirteen days, MITSCHER took station 15 to 20 miles off the Serbian and Albanian coast, protecting AUSTIN from any possible threat and monitored all surface and air activity in preparation for the arrival of the remainder of the battle group, should further US action become necessary in the region.

While on station in the Adriatic, the crew was treated to a visit by Admiral Giffin, Commander of Surface Naval Forces, Atlantic Fleet.. He spoke to the crew about the critical

mission MITSCHER was performing in the Adriatic and in the Sixth Fleet theater of operations. He also spoke on changes taking place in the Navy, especially increased benefits for sailors, more pay, and growing advancement opportunities.

MITSCHER was temporarily released to make a port visit to Venice, Italy. After several days of shopping, fine food, and the many cultural arts Venice had to offer including the Pizza and Basilica of San Marco, exceptionally rough weather resulted in the suspension of liberty and the ship set an emergency sea and anchor detail due to dragging the anchor.

MITSCHER returned to support AUSTIN for a few more days during which Admiral Fry, Commander of the EISENHOWER Battle Group, made a visit to discuss the ongoing situation in Serbia and possible US and NATO reactions and responses. It helped bring perspective to the ships ongoing mission in the region.

The ship's next port visit was to Corfu, Greece, the second Greek visit of the deployment. With the memory of gyros fresh in the minds of the crew, Mitschermen enjoyed the extensive shopping and cultural events the city had to offer. Preparations were also made for the arrival of COMDESRON TWO for the ships Mid-Cycle Assessment (MCA).

Upon departure from Corfu, the crew began demonstrating the effectiveness and proficiency of the engineering plant and combat systems as a part of the MCA. MITSCHER conducted a complete integrated combat training scenario involving every aspect of shipboard operations, including a full combat and battle damage problem. MITSCHER performed very well. The ships engineering department was evaluated as effective and the combat systems department was once again recognized as ready to fight. Upon the conclusion of MCA on September 9th, the crew celebrated the mid point of the deployment. Otherwise known as "Hump Day", a special dinner was prepared and served to the crew by the officers and chiefs. It was a great was for the crew to unwind after an intense inspection.

MITSCHER arrived in Monaco for her next port visit on 10 September. Although the most expensive visit of the deployment, the city had a majestic air that impressed the crew. Visits to the palace of the Prince of Monaco and other official calls were made by the CO and members of the wardroom. The Casino of Monte Carlo was one of the main attractions for the unparalleled beauty and splendor of the building.

The ship departed Monaco and arrived in Mahon, Menorca on 18 September. Again anchored outside the harbor, rough weather made liberty boat launches extremely difficult and dangerous. Officers and crew serving as the boat crew made an exceptional effort to ensure the safety of personnel returning from a night of liberty. A main attraction of the visit was a service project conducted at a small cemetery located just outside the town of Mahon along the harbor. Built in the 1800s and forgotten until the 1960s, a number of US servicemen are buried on these once forgotten grounds. With help from the US Navy, specifically Sixth Fleet ships, the cemetery has been repaired and cleaned. Ships visiting the city take time to visit and preserve this piece of American history, as a large number of Mitschermen did during the four day stay in Mahon.

MITSCHER next participated in exercise "Sea Fancy", involving US and French naval forces. The EISENHOWER Battle group worked closely with the FS FOCH battle group conducting advanced SUW and AAW operations. During this exercise, MITSCHER swapped places with the FS JEAN BART and spent 4 days operating under tactical control of the FOCH battle group commander. A representative from the French navy rode MITSCHER while an officer from MITSCHER sailed on the JEAN BART to assist in the integration of the two ships into the other battle group. The exercise proved interesting and rewarding as it gave new perspective into operations with units of allied countries.

During "Sea Fancy", MITSCHER embarked several members of a Discovery Channel film crew to film a segment of a special show on the Navy's Chemical, Biological, and

Radiological defense abilities. As a part of the production, MITSCHER demonstrated the Collective Protection System, counter measure washdown system, and other precautions the ship would take in the event of a CBR attack.

With increasing tensions in the Adriatic MITSCHER cut short a stay in Cagliari, Sardinia and the ship sailed north to the US Navy installation in La Maddalena. While there, MITSCHER conducted a major ammunition transfer with the DEYO and ARLIEGH BURKE. Assisted by the crew of the tender SIMON LAKE, a number of tomahawk cruise missiles were transferred to MITSCHER with the possible tasking of returning to the Adriatic.

MITSCHER departed La Maddalena on 02 October bound for Algiers, Algeria to conduct the first ever naval exercise with units of the Algerian Navy. The day long SAREX was a search and rescue exercise involving a simulated fishing vessel that was on fire. As Algerian helicopters and patrol boats circled the distressed vessel, MITSCHER's RHIB joined Algerian divers in assisting the "victims" onto an Algerian patrol craft. At the reception following the exercise, many of MITSCHER's officers and crew received a luxurious reception in true regal style, as sailors and uniformed personnel from both countries had an opportunity to meet and talk about the exercise and events in general. The US ambassador to Algeria was present and stressed to the ship's crew how important this exercise was in of developing an increased bond between the two countries. Algeria has been seeking to become more open with western countries, in particular the US, and this exercise provided an excellent opportunity to continue to improve the developing relations.

After leaving Algiers on 5 October, MITSCHER sailed north to take part in exercise "Dynamic Mix 98", a multi-nation exercise combining French, Spanish, Greek, and Turkish naval forces in USW, SUW, and AAW events. During the exercise, however, MITSCHER received tasking to detach from Dynamic Mix and rendezvous with the EISENHOWER, ANZIO, and SAIPAN and steam for the Adriatic. The conflict between the breakaway republic of Kosovo and Serbia was again intensifying and a NATO presence was requested in the region to act as a stabilizing force in operations Deliberate Forge and Flexible Anvil. On 11 October, MITSCHER sailed into the Adriatic and took station off the cost of Serbia to provide surface and air coverage for the EISENHOWER. For the remainder of October, US surface, submarine, and aviation elements along with numerous allied forces maintained a vigilant watch while a diplomatic solution to the conflict in Serbia was sought.

During this period, MITSCHER's strike team continued to rehearse in the event a cruise missile strike was ordered. Throughout the deployment, MITSCHER participated in battle group "Caesar Sword" exercises simulating cruise missile tasking and launches. The strike team was renowned as one of the best in the fleet, one of the foremost reasons MITSCHER was tasked with the Adriatic operations.

While on station in the Adriatic representatives from various news organizations covering the ongoing events between Serbia and Kosovo visited ships stationed there. MITSCHER embarked representatives from Newsweek, CBS, Associated Press, and Stars and Stripes for a day long look into US Naval operations in the Adriatic.

By the end of October, it appeared as though the conflict in Kosovo had once again stabilized and MITSCHER was detached and ordered to proceed to a port visit in Souda Bay, Crete. Filled with hundreds of shops and restaurants, Crete offered many opportunities for the crew to relax after a exceptionally lengthy time at sea. Many took the opportunity to tour the island and see its historical legacy. The crew conducted the semi annual PRT and a sports day complete with barbecue while moored at the NATO refueling station. Material for Project Handclasp, a service project designed to assist troubled and impoverished areas in the Mediterranean and Black Sea, was made use of for the first time in Crete at the Chania Boys' Center. MITSCHER sailors painted a large lounge area and as a part of Project Handclasp

efforts. The ship donated cases of fruit drinks, soap, dental floss, and other health care items to the boys' care center and the children's institute. The final gift was also the highlight of the day as the ship donated a new sewing machine to the national institute for children with special needs. The sewing machine will be used in their skills training program.

MITSCHER set sail from Crete to take part in exercise "Sardinia 98", a combined arms exercise involving Marine forces from the US and Italy. For two days, MITSCHER provided NGFS to shore units, firing over 300 rounds onto Capo Taluda beach on the southern coast of Sardinia. The completion of "Sardinia 98" marked the conclusion of the final exercise of the deployment.

The final port visit was to Malaga located along the southern coast of Spain. Filled with exceptional history, shopping, restaurants, and Spanish and Irish pubs, there was no shortage of entertainment for the crew. Many took advantage of the MWR sponsored trip to Granada and enjoyed the Catholic and Arabic monuments there. The crew celebrated Thanksgiving in Spain with an amazing meal provided by the ship's Mess Specialists. The ship sponsored a reception on board which was attended by the Commandant of the naval harbor in Malaga and several members of the US state department, as well as many other dignitaries from the region. The crew was getting anxious to head home, however, and on 29 November set sail for the voyage across the Atlantic.

The Straits and Rock of Gibraltar, gateway to the Mediterranean that had remained obscured in haze on the ships arrival were clearly visible as MITSCHER sailed west. The ship detached from Sixth Fleet and rejoined Second Fleet on 30 November. The weather remained calm as MITSCHER headed across the Atlantic in company with the ships of DESRON TWO. On December 7th, MITSCHER anchored off the coast of Bermuda to welcome on board some 30 family members who were taking part in the end of deployment Tiger Cruise as the ship sailed home to Norfolk.

MITSCHER achieved many of her goals during the deployment including the receipt of the Engineering and Survivability Excellency Award, the Command and Control Excellence Award, and the Logistics Management Award. Training and combat readiness were maintained at peak levels at all times and were demonstrated in numerous real world situations. One of the greatest accomplishments was the achievement of the Silver ESWS pennant. Prior to leaving for deployment, the CO issued a challenge to all petty officers to qualify Enlisted Surface Warfare Specialist prior to our return. This would not only help personal advancement, but would contribute to the overall combat readiness of the ship. During the Atlantic transit home, a good part of that goal was met, qualifying all petty officers E-5 and above who had been on board for greater than 18 months, as well as most of the rest of the crew. As a result, MITSCHER was awarded the Silver ESWS pennant, which she proudly flew along side the Golden Surface Warfare Officer pennant representing the wardroom's success in qualification and readiness as she pulled into homeport.

On a cold but sunny day in December, MITSCHER put over all lines and at 1147 on December 10th was moored, starboard side to pier 24, NOB Norfolk. The crew was treated to the smiles and tears of family and friends happy to see their loved ones return home safe and secure. Post deployment leave and standdown began which allowed the crew to spend time once again with their families.