



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY

USS ORIOLE (MHC-55)
FPO AA 34092-1954

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From: Commanding Officer, USS ORIOLE (MHC 55)
To: Director of Naval History (N09BH)

Subj: USS ORIOLE (MHC 55) COMMAND HISTORY FOR CALENDAR YEAR
1999

Ref: (a) OPNAVINST 5750.12F Command Histories

Encl: (1) Biography of Commanding Officer
(2) Copy of NAVSTA Ingleside paper Foc'sle

1. Command Composition and Organization.

Mission: The detection, classification and neutralization of mine like objects in coastal and harbor waters.

Immediate Senior Command: Commander, Mine Countermeasures Squadron Three, Captain Charles Gary Belcher, USN

Commanding Officer: CDR Michael A. Strano, USN

Permanent Homeport: Naval Station Ingleside, Texas

2. Chronology:

January:

12: Dock trials
13: Sea trials
24 - 25: U/W Corpus Christi Operations Area (CCOA) Naval Reserve Training
26 - 29: U/W CCOA TSTA I / DASMN

February:

1 - 4: U/W CCOA TSTA II / DASMN
8 - 11: U/W enroute Mobile, AL.
11 - 16: Inport Mobile, AL. Visit Ship for Mardi Gras Celebration.
17 - 20: U/W enroute Ingleside, TX.

March:

1 - 5: TSTA I MIW inport Ingleside, TX.
29 - 31: U/W CCOA TSTA II MIW

April:

5 - 16: IMAV AIT
19 - 22: U/W enroute Panama City, FL.
23 - 26: Inport Panama City, FL.
27 - 29: U/W Panama City Operations Area (PCOA) TSTA IV MIW
29 - 30: Inport Panama City, FL.

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May:

- 1 - 2: Inport Panama City, FL.
- 3 - 4: U/W PCOA TSTA IV MIW
- 5: Inport Panama City, FL.
- 6 - 7: U/W PCOA TSTA IV MIW
- 8 - 9: Inport Panama City, FL.
- 10 - 11: U/W enroute New Orleans, LA.
- 12 - 16: Inport New Orleans, LA. Visit Ship for Armed Forces Week Celebration.
- 17 - 20: U/W enroute Ingleside, TX.
- 24 - 28: U/W CCOA TSTA IV / III
- 28: Lightning strike

June:

- 21: U/W CCOA Sea trials, PCO School Ship.
- 28: U/W CCOA Final Evaluation Period.

July:

- 1 - 7: EMR Facility
- 20 - 21: U/W CCOA MCM Training

August:

- 2 - 13: CSRR / Target / Diesel Inspection
- 20 - 24: Hurricane Moor / Hurricane Bret
- 30 - 31: U/W CCOA MCM Training

September:

- 1 - 2: U/W CCOA MCM Training
- 20 - 23: U/W CCOA GOMEX 99-2
- 26 - 28: U/W CCOA GOMEX 99-2 / Cooperative TELOS
- 29 - 30: U/W enroute Key West, FL.

October:

- 1 - 4: U/W enroute Key West, FL.
- 4 - 16: Inport Key West, FL.
- 17 - 21: U/W enroute Little Creek, VA.
- 21: BSF Little Creek, VA.
- 21 - 22: U/W enroute Annapolis, MD.
- 22 - 25: Inport Annapolis, MD. U.S. Naval Academy Homecoming Visit Ship.
- 25: U/W enroute Baltimore, MD.
- 25 - 31: Inport Baltimore, MD.

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November:

1 – 2: U/W enroute Little Creek, VA.
2 – 3: Inport Little Creek, VA.
4 – 6: U/W enroute Newport, RI.
6 – 8: Inport Newport, RI.
8 – 11: U/W Egypt Air Flight 990 Salvage and Recovery Operation
11 – 13: Inport Newport, RI.
13 – 15: U/W enroute Little Creek, VA.
15 – 17: Inport Little Creek, VA.
17 – 22: U/W enroute Key West, FL.
22: BSF Key West, FL.
22 – 26: U/W enroute Ingleside, TX.

December:

17 – 31: Holiday stand down

3. Narrative: ORIOLE began 1999 with its third Commanding Officer LCDR Michael A. Strano, who took the helm in a change of command ceremony held on 4 December 1998. In January 1999, the ship entered the Basic Phase of Training (TSTA I/II) in the Corpus Christi Operations Area. From 11-17 February 1999, ORIOLE was visit ship in Mobile, Alabama for Mardi Gras. From 22 April to 9 May, the ship operated out of Panama City, Florida conducting TSTA IV Mine Warfare Training, this training included the deep water MP 1 cutter neutralizations of two moored mine shapes. ORIOLE sailed up the Mississippi River on the way to New Orleans to be visit ship for the Armed Forces Week celebrations lasting from 12 to 16 May. ORIOLE arrived home on 20 May 1999. The following week, the ship was in the Corpus Christi Operations Area conducting TSTA IV Mine Warfare Training. On 28 May, ORIOLE was struck by lightning approximately 10 miles off the coast of Aransas Pass, Texas. After one month of repairs, ORIOLE completed her Final Evaluation Period and Navigation Certification on 28 June 1999. On 1 July 1999, ORIOLE became the first MHC to enter the Electromagnetic Roll and Calibration Facility in Ingleside for a degaussing check ranging. During July and August, the ship conducted training in the Corpus Christi Operations Area and completed a Combat Systems Readiness Review, Medical Readiness Certification, and comprehensive Diesel Engine Inspection on four of her five engines. September 1999 found ORIOLE participating in GOMEX 99-2 and the Partnership for Peace Cooperative TELOS exercise. During this exercise, she demonstrated a complete detect to engage sequence including the neutralization of a moored mine with MP 1 cutters. On 29 September, ORIOLE departed for Key West, Florida and an East Coast cruise. Enroute, the ship sustained a casualty to her NR 1 Main Propulsion Diesel Engine. After arriving in Key West, her engineers completed repairs replacing

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parts of the gear train, main and connecting rod bearings, and conducting all alignments within two weeks. While inport Key West ORIOLE weathered Hurricane Irene. Departing Key West on 17 October, and after a brief stop in Little Creek, Virginia, ORIOLE sailed up the Chesapeake Bay to Annapolis, Maryland, to be Homecoming Visit Ship for the U. S. Naval Academy from 22-25 October. Leaving Annapolis, ORIOLE sailed to Baltimore, Maryland where she hosted more than 3,000 visitors from 25 October to 1 November. On 31 October, EgyptAir Flight 990 crashed into the sea off Nantucket Island, Massachusetts. ORIOLE was tasked to join Commander, SECOND FLEET to assist in the Salvage Operations under the command of COMPHIBGRU TWO and the National Transportation Safety Board. ORIOLE arrived in Newport, Rhode Island on 6 November and assisted in mapping out the crash site with her SQQ-32 sonar. The ship returned to Ingleside on 26 November 1999.

4. Command Awards

COMNAVSURFLANT 1999 Battle Efficiency "E" for COMCMRON TWO
Engineering Survivability Red "E" (fourth consecutive award)
Command and Control Excellence Green "E" (second consecutive award)
Unit Wellness Green "H"
COMINWARCOM Self Sufficient ship of the quarter, Oct. – Dec. 1999.


M. A. STRANO