



rec'd 10/3/89

DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY

USS TRENTON (LPD-14)
FPO NEW YORK 09588-1716

5750
Ser/ADM 455
28 SEP 1989

From: Commanding Officer, USS TRENTON (LPD 14)
To: Director of Naval History (OP 09BH), Washington Navy Yard,
Washington, D.C. 20374

Subj: COMMAND HISTORY

Ref: (a) OPNAVINST 5750.12C

- Encl:
- (1) Photograph and biography of Captain, R. J. Reader, USN
 - (2) Photograph and biography of Captain, R. M. Nutwell, USN
 - (3) 1988 Chronology
 - (4) 1988 Command Narrative
 - (5) TRENTON ltr dtd 16 January 1989
 - (6) TRENTON ltr 5080 Ser 084 dtd 28 February 1989
 - (7) Rakow, W. M., COL, USMC, "Marines in the Gulf - 1988", Marines Corps Gazette, December 1988
 - (8) Inhoff, R. G., CAPT, USMC, "HMLA-167 Presence in the Persian Gulf"
 - (9) Diagram of Topside Weapons Locations on board USS TRENTON during Persian Gulf Deployment JAN-JUL 1988
 - (10) Plan of the Day
 - (11) TRENTON GATORGRAMS dtd
 - (12) TRENTON Welcome Aboard Pamphlet
 - (13) Photograph of USS TRENTON

1. Submitted in accordance with reference (a).

a. **BACKGROUND:** USS TRENTON (LPD 14), an amphibious transport dock, is named for the historic capital of New Jersey that was founded by an 18th century shipowner and businessman, Colonel William Trent. The present USS TRENTON is the third U.S. vessel to bear the name. The first was a steam sloop of war commissioned in 1874. The second was a light cruiser, CL 11, commissioned in 1924, which served with Asiatic, Caribbean and Southeast Pacific fleets during World War II. The keel for the present TRENTON was laid on 8 August 1966. She was christened on 3 August 1968 by Mrs. Richard J. Hughes, wife of the then governor of New Jersey. TRENTON's mission is to transport, land, and support Marine forces on a hostile shore. The amphibious transport dock (LPD) is a very versatile class of amphibious ship. TRENTON can carry over 900 troops plus their vehicles, equipment, weapons, ammunition and supplies. She also carries landing craft in her floodable well deck and topside, and she can operate helicopters and VTOL aircraft from her flight deck. TRENTON participated in the 1983 liberation of Grenada, was a member of the Multinational Force off the coast of Beirut, Lebanon, in 1983-1984, and was a participant in Operation PRAYING MANTIS in April 1988 during a six month deployment to the Persian Gulf.

Subj: COMMAND HISTORY

b. COMMANDING OFFICER:

- (1) Captain Robert J. Reader, USN, 1 JAN - 5 FEB 1988
- (2) Captain Robert M. Nutwell, USN, 5 FEB - 31 DEC 1988

c. HOMEPORT: Norfolk, Virginia

d. CHRONOLOGY: Attached as enclosure (3).

e. NARRATIVE: Attached as enclosure (4).

f. STATISTICS:

- (1) Navigation: Miles traveled for 1988: 26,506
- (2) Aviation: Landings: 3915
Aircraft moves: 2435
JP5 aviation fuel delivered: 350,000

2. Enclosures (5) through (13) are submitted to supplement the 1988 Command History


J. A. CURTIS

1988 CHRONOLOGY

01 - 19 JAN	IMAV WITH USS SHENANDOAH
20 - 23 JAN	AMMUNITION ONLOAD YORKTOWN NWS
24 - 27 JAN	INPORT NORFOLK, ONLOAD MAGTF 2-88
28 JAN	UNDERWAY FOR ATLANTIC OCEAN TRANSIT ENROUTE MEF
05 FEB	CHANGE OF COMMAND
07 FEB	INPORT ROTA, SPAIN
07 - 13 FEB	TRANSIT MEDITERRANEAN SEA
14 FEB	SOUTHBOUND TRANSIT OF SUEZ CANAL
15 - 21 FEB	TRANSIT RED SEA AND INDIAN OCEAN
22 FEB	TRANSIT STRAITS OF HORMUZ, ENTER PERSIAN GULF
24 FEB	TURNOVER WITH USS PORTLAND
26 - 09 APR	PROVIDED LOGISTIC/SUPPLY/ MAINTENANCE SUPPORT FOR MCMGRUCOM MSO'S
10 - 14 APR	MOORED AD DAMMAN, SAUDI ARABIA
14 APR	UNDERWAY, USS SAMUEL B. ROBERTS HITS MINE, PROVIDED MEDEVAC AND SAR OPERATIONS
18 APR	OPERATION PRAYING MANTIS, SASSAN OIL FIELD
20 - 22 APR	MOORED DUBAI, U.A.E., FOR AMMUNITION OFFLOAD OF USS SAMUEL B. ROBERTS
23 - 21 MAY	PERSIAN GULF OPERATIONS PROVIDING CONVOY ESCORT AREA SURVEILLANCE Q-ROUTE SURVEY AND MAGTF/MSO AND CRUDES SUPPORT
23 - 03 JUN	MOORED, MINA SULMAN PIER, BAHRAIN, FOR BOILER MAINTENANCE

04 - 22 JUN	PERSIAN GULF OPERATIONS PROVIDING CONVOY ESCORT, AREA SURVEILLANCE, Q-ROUTE SURVEY AND MAGTF/MSO AND CRUDES SUPPORT
23 - 24 JUN	TURNOVER WITH USS DUBUQUE
26 JUN	TRANSIT STRAITS OF HORMUZ OUT OF PERSIAN GULF
27 - 03 JUL	TRANSIT INDIAN OCEAN AND RED SEA
04 JUL	NORTHBOUND TRANSIT OF SUEZ CANAL
05 - 09 JUL	TRANSIT MEDITERRANEAN SEA
10 - 12 JUL	INPORT MALAGA, SPAIN
13 - 21 JUL	TRANSIT ATLANTIC OCEAN
22 JUL	MOOR MOREHEAD CITY, NC OFFLOAD MAGTF 2-88
23 JUL	UNDERWAY TIGER CRUISE
24 JUL	MOOR LITTLE CREEK, VA COMPLETE MAGTF 2-88
25 - 23 AUG	LEAVE AND UPKEEP, LITTLE CREEK, VA
24 - 26 AUG	UNDERWAY VACAPES
27 - 28 AUG	INPORT NORFOLK, VA
29 - 02 SEP	INPORT AND UNDERWAY MITT
03 - 06 SEP	INPORT NORFOLK, VA
07 - 09 SEP	AMMUNITION OFFLOAD, "W" ANCHORAGE
10 - 11 SEP	INPORT NORFOLK, VA
12 - 13 SEP	ANCHOR CHESAPEAKE BAY, DLQ'S
14 SEP	INPORT NORFOLK, VA
15 - 17 SEP	UNDERWAY, OPPE

17 - 20 SEP

INPORT NORFOLK

21 SEP - 31 DEC

DPMA METRO MACHINE NORFOLK, VA

COMMAND NARRATIVE

While deployed to the Persian Gulf as a unit of the U.S. Middle East Force (MIDEASTFOR) from February to June 1988, USS TRENTON (LPD 14) pioneered a new role for the versatile amphibious transport dock. TRENTON relieved an LPH as the host ship for a Contingency Marine Air-Ground Task Force (CMAGTF), and she relieved an LSD as the "mother ship" for the six ocean minesweepers (MSO's) in the Gulf.

Since this was the largest detachment of helicopters ever embarked in an LPD for extended operations, some reconfiguration of the ship was required. An aviation intermediate maintenance support capability was provided by installing standard Marine field support vans on TRENTON's Upper Vehicle Storage deck. (This installation required a modification to the ship's electrical distribution system.) Additionally, vans were installed topside to serve as a ready room and administrative office. Most importantly from an operational standpoint, TRENTON's large flight deck was certified for four new deck edge launch/recovery spots in addition to the two standard LPD centerline spots. The new spots provided the additional flexibility necessary to operate eight helicopters effectively and to meet MIDEASTFOR commitments. TRENTON's Helicopter Operations Bill was extensively revised to accommodate the new flight deck loading and certification.

During the deployment, CMAGTF 2-88 provided security detachments and weapons training to other units in the Gulf. MAGTF helicopter operating from TRENTON and other platforms conducted Aerial mine-hunting, provided protection for friendly ships from surface and helicopter attack, and provided indispensable logistics support. The MAGTF also trained extensively for its various contingency missions. This training paid off on 18 April when TRENTON/CMAGTF 2-88 played a key role in neutralizing the Iranian Sassan oil platform in the central Persian Gulf during Operation "PRAYING MANTIS."

An unexpected addition to TRENTON's unusual flight deck load on this deployment resulted from the mine damage to SAMUEL B. ROBERTS (FFG 56) on 14 April. Following this incident, the ROBERTS' SH-60B LAMPS MK III helicopter from HSL-44 Det 5 was embarked on TRENTON, where it remained for the remainder of the deployment. Fully integrated into TRENTON/MAGTF operations and command/control procedures, the LAMPS significantly enhanced surface surveillance and mine-hunting capabilities while continuing to support other units in the Gulf.

TRENTON provided logistical support to the MSO's in both operating and rear base areas. The logistical support consisted of fuel, fresh water, electricity, crew services, repairs, and resupply of food, parts, and material. Most support was provided by bringing the MSO alongside while TRENTON was at anchor. When necessary, the crew services, resupply, and repair support was provided via TRENTON boats.

The LPD also provided important operational support of the MSO's. TRENTON's communication division assisted with incoming and outgoing messages and guarded selected circuits for the MSO's. MAGTF helicopters, the LAMPS, and TRENTON's

weapons helped to defend the MSO's against surface and helicopter attack. Helicopter mine-hunting in advance of the MSO significantly improved the safety of mine clearance operations.

Except when preparing for and executing an actual contingency mission ("Praying Mantis"), the MAGTF and MSO support missions proved not only compatible but complementary. Most MAGTF training could be conducted in conjunction with MSO support operations, and most importantly the helicopter-equipped LPD was able to provide significant operational support to the MSO's.

In late June of 1988 USS DUBUQUE (LPD 8) relieved TRENTON as the MIDEASTFOR LPD. The successful dual-mission deployments of these two ships demonstrated the excellent versatility of the highly-capable amphibious transport dock. The ability of the LPD to act as a "mini-LPH/LHA" offers policymakers an attractive option for scenarios in which a larger ship is not desired for political or military reasons. The MIDEASTFOR LPD deployments also provide another outstanding example of Navy/Marine teamwork and ingenuity successfully applied to a tough national security challenge.



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY

USS TRENTON (LPD-14)
FPO NEW YORK 09588-1718

5000


16 JAN 1988

From: Commanding Officer, USS TRENTON (LPD-14)
To: Commander, Naval Surface Force, U. S. Atlantic Fleet, Norfolk, VA
23511-6292

Subj: PROPOSED PRESS RELEASE

Encl: (1) Proposed Text

1. Enclosure (1) is submitted for review and approval for release to the Office of the Mayor of Trenton, N. J., for possible publication in local newspapers. This release was written at the request of the Mayor's office.


R. M. NUTWELL

Copy to:
CJTfME
COMPHIBGRU 2
COMPHIBRON 12

The amphibious transport dock USS TRENTON (LPD-14) left Norfolk, Virginia on January 27, 1988, with 30 officers and a crew of 400 men for the Persian Gulf. Originally scheduled for a deployment to the Mediterranean Sea at the end of February, TRENTON was ordered in early January to prepare to sail for the Persian Gulf by the end of the month.

During her six month deployment, TRENTON performed two primary missions: she served as host ship for Contingency Marine Air-Ground Task Force 2-88, (a 350-man U. S. Marine force with 8 U. S. Marine helicopters) and as "mother ship" for the 6 U. S. Navy minesweepers on station in the Persian Gulf.

TRENTON's tasking was unique. Her flight deck was crowded with 8 U. S. Marine helicopters, 2 CH-46 "Sea Knights", 4 AH-1T "Cobras", and 2 UH-1N "Hueys", the most ever operated from the flight deck of an LPD. Also, taking minesweepers alongside for replenishment and repairs had never been attempted by an LPD.

The officers and crew of TRENTON used innovative and creative methods to solve problems faced during the six month cruise. Here is a brief account of her voyage:

The real work of the deployment started long before TRENTON left Norfolk in late January. When word was received in December that TRENTON was heading for the Persian Gulf less than four weeks hence, preparations began in earnest. Because a ship like TRENTON had never embarked 8 helicopters for an extended deployment, there was no prior experience to draw upon for reference. Special efforts were made to ensure that all the equipment essential for the repair and maintenance of the aircraft would fit on an LPD.

Supplies for a six month voyage had to be carefully loaded. Many of TRENTON's 400-man crew put in extra long days to make preparations for the trip, sacrificing precious time with family and friends in order to ensure everything was ready.

Because of the tight fit, many unique requirements for equipment stowage were creatively solved. A gear locker for TRENTON's quartermasters was converted into office space for intelligence operations and a portable ready-room was installed on an exterior deck topside for use by Marine pilots for briefings and planning sessions.

During her Atlantic crossing, TRENTON's crew and the 350 U. S. Marines learned how to live and work in close quarters. Marine pilots practiced landings and take-offs at the direction of Navy flight deck crews. General quarters and damage control drills were rehearsed to familiarize men with the equipment and techniques they needed to know to handle emergencies that might arise in the Gulf.

On February 7th, TRENTON stopped for 6 hours to refuel in Rota, Spain. She steamed through the Suez Canal on February 13th, then traversed the Red Sea and portions of the Indian Ocean and the Arabian Sea to enter the Persian Gulf via the Strait of Hormuz on February 21st.

Monday, February 22nd, found TRENTON in the Persian Gulf heading northwest with her escort, the guided missile frigate USS JOHN A. MOORE. In mid-afternoon two speed boats of a type operated by Iranian forces approached the ship at high speed. TRENTON issued radio warnings and fired flares at the approaching craft, but these signals went unheeded. TRENTON's crew was ordered to general quarters stations as warning shots from a .50 caliber machine gun were fired across the bow of the lead boat, causing it to veer away. The event impressed the crew and embarked Marines that operations in the Persian Gulf would require constant vigilance.

After almost a month-long voyage, TRENTON anchored in late February just off the coast of Bahrain, near the city of Manama. The United States Navy has a small "Administrative Support Unit", also known as "ASU", there. Service men stationed in the Gulf can cash checks, mail letters, and relax away from the shipboard environment. ASU has swimming pools, a library, and a club where American music can be heard on a juke box. Overseas telephones are one of the most popular features there!

Manama is also the capital city of the nation of Bahrain. TRENTON Sailors and Marines rapidly discovered that customs in the Middle East were very different from those in the United States. The crew was advised to be on their best behavior while on liberty, as Bahrain is a conservative, Moslem country. Conservative dress, including long trousers even in the mid-summer heat, is required. Drinking alcohol in public is not allowed. Many shops and restaurants close for prayer in the afternoon and early evening. Despite the differences from Western customs, TRENTON's Bahraini hosts were gracious and helpful, and crew members enjoyed liberty in Bahrain.

In the Gulf, TRENTON quickly learned to operate continuously, providing U. S. minesweepers with food, water, fuel, spare parts and repairs at all hours of day or night. Sailors on the minesweepers came aboard TRENTON for personnel services and "liberty." The "sweeps" are so small that coming aboard TRENTON was like a trip to town for their crews. Marine aircraft made runs to ASU for morale-boosting mail, which was sorted on TRENTON for distribution to the smaller U. S. ships in the Gulf.

Along with support to the minesweepers, TRENTON was home to the only U.S. ground force in the Gulf - the U.S. Marines. Marine helicopters from TRENTON performed almost round-the-clock flight operations. Their air crews searched for mines, performed surveillance, and accompanied convoys of warships and oil tankers through the Persian Gulf.

The marines and sailors of TRENTON continued to train for all contingencies. Exercises for defending the ship, coming to the aid of a

stricken ship, and handling large numbers of wounded personnel were held throughout the deployment.

From April 10th to the 14th, TRENTON visited the city of Dammam in Saudi Arabia. While in Saudi Arabia, TRENTON acted as a good will ambassador for the United States. Various types of equipment were displayed on the flight deck for viewing by visitors to the ship. Representatives of the Saudi Armed Forces examined U. S. Navy and Marine equipment, and Americans working in Saudi Arabia also visited TRENTON.

The American community in Dammam and neighboring cities hosted a "take-a-sailor-to-dinner" program. TRENTON sailors and marines were invited to the private homes of Americans and other Westerners and enjoyed an evening of home cooking in a relaxed, home-like atmosphere. The break was badly needed after more than a month of non-stop operations at sea. TRENTON in turn held a reception onboard for local diplomats and business men. In addition, some of TRENTON's officers and men were guests at the residence of the American ambassador to Bahrain for an evening of food and fellowship.

On Thursday, April 14th, TRENTON left Dammam to resume operations in the Gulf. After such a restful port visit, the Gulf waters seemed calm and quiet. At about 5:00 PM, the reality of war in the Persian Gulf quickly returned. Word was passed that the frigate USS SAMUEL B. ROBERTS had suffered an underwater explosion, later confirmed to have been caused by an Iranian mine.

TRENTON set a course for the ROBERTS to assist her damage control efforts. Equipment and fresh water were flown to the "Sammy B.". One of the 10 wounded sailors from the ROBERTS was flown to TRENTON where he was treated for burns to his upper body, arms, neck and face. After he was thoroughly examined and stabilized, the patient was flown from TRENTON to ASU Bahrain for further care.

On April 15th TRENTON supported operations that located the minefield in which ROBERTS was hit and identified the mines as Iranian in origin. The events of April 14th and 15th set the stage for Operation PRAYING MANTIS, the destruction of Iranian oil platforms and naval units in response to the Iranian mining of international waters. TRENTON and her embarked Marine task force, with the destroyers USS MERRILL and USS MCCORMICK, formed Surface Action Group "BRAVO".

On Monday, April 18th, Group "BRAVO" assaulted the Iranian Sassan Gas-Oil Separation Platform in the central Persian Gulf. After the occupants were warned and allowed to evacuate, the platform was taken under fire by the destroyers and helicopters. TRENTON's Marines then boarded the platform and set charges to destroy its potential for use by the Iranian military. When TRENTON's group departed the area, leaving the platform a smoking ruin, a decisive blow for freedom of navigation had been struck.

While in the Gulf, TRENTON hosted a number of distinguished visitors. The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Admiral William J. Crowe, USN, visited TRENTON following Operation PRAYING MANTIS to present two combat action awards. Other visitors included the Commander in Chief, Central Command General George B. Crist, USMC, Representative Beverly Byron (D-MD), Representative Wayne Owens (D-UT) and the U. S. Ambassadors to Bahrain and Dubai, U.A.E.

After the USS SAMUEL B. ROBERTS struck the mine, TRENTON embarked the ROBERTS' SH-60B helicopter, raising the number of helicopters operating from TRENTON's already-busy flight deck to nine. The Marine Air Combat Element, together with the Navy detachment from the ROBERTS, logged over 2200 flight hours and 3500 landings during the deployment, an unprecedented level of flight activity for an LPD. TRENTON's flight deck crews completed over 2300 aircraft moves without a significant mishap.

In late June, 1988, as the USS TRENTON left the Persian Gulf for the return voyage to Norfolk, Virginia, TRENTON received the following message from the Commander, Joint Task Force Middle East:

"Your support of the MSO's as "mother ship" can only be described as outstanding. Undaunted by the severe climate, regional tensions, high tempo, or the difficulties inherent at the end of a long logistical chain, you provided critical service and support to the U. S. minesweeping operation in the Persian Gulf. The professionalism, dedication and enthusiasm shown by the men of TRENTON and the MAGTF providing security, helicopter escort and surveillance support for the MSO's and tanker escort missions were most noteworthy.

When, in the aftermath of the mining of USS SAMUEL B. ROBERTS, U. S. Forces launched a retaliation strike against Iranian assets, the TRENTON/MAGTF team was again called upon and again responded superbly. Your efforts were instrumental in the neutralization of the Sassan Oil Platform, one of the primary objectives of the mission."

On the way home, TRENTON sailors and marines enjoyed a well-earned visit to the city of Malaga on the Spanish "gold coast".

On July 24th, TRENTON moored at the Naval Amphibious Base at Little Creek, Virginia (in Norfolk), having steamed over 25,700 miles in six months and successfully carried out operations crucial to U. S. policy in the Persian Gulf. The joy of reunion with family and friends was combined with pride in the ship's accomplishments during a unique and challenging deployment.

TRENTON is commanded by CAPT Robert M. Nutwell, USN, of New Providence, New Jersey. Contingent MAGTF 2-88 was commanded by COL William M. Rakow, USMC.

TRENTON/MAGTF 2-88 TEAM ON DUTY IN THE GULF

As 1987 came to a close, the crew of USS Trenton was busy making preparations for a late February 1988 deployment to the Mediterranean Sea. These plans changed drastically when the Trenton was scheduled to leave for the Arabian Gulf with less than 30 days notice.

When Trenton left Norfolk on 27 January 1988 her task was unique: proceed to the Arabian Gulf to act as a minesweeper (MSO) support ship and as host ship for Contingency Marine Air-Ground Task Force 2-88.

The MAGTF is composed of four units: a command element, a ground combat element, an aviation combat element, and a combat support service element. "Our MAGTF is task organized based upon the assigned mission," states Major Sam Brinkley the MAGTF Executive Officer. "The broad goal is to be a contingency force supporting the Commander Joint Task Force Middle East. Also, we are working to support the Trenton in her mine counter-measure support role."

Previous Contingency MAGTF'S were embarked on a large amphibious assault ship, specifically an LPH. When Trenton was selected to replace both the LPH and LSD (the previous MSO "mothership") in the Middle East Force, MAGTF 2-88 had to slim down in order to fit aboard Trenton. This meant only the most versatile and essential gear was on-loaded. Even so, eight helicopters from Marine Light/Attack Helicopter Squadron 167 (HML/A 167) were squeezed on to Trenton's flight deck for Arabian Gulf operations.

The tough task of planning the onload of equipment was the job of Trenton's Combat Cargo Officer, First Lieutenant [REDACTED]. "The equipment embarked was unusual for an LPD and created many challenges. Normal loading techniques had to be modified to accommodate the outsized items such as the Aviation Element's maintenance vans. Alterations were made to the well deck so the maintenance vans could receive electrical power from the ship. The onload was completed with only a few hours to spare before getting underway."

Because of the tight fit, many unique requirements for equipment stowage were creatively solved. A gear locker for Trenton's quartermasters was converted into the Joint Intelligence Center and a portable ready-room was welded to the weatherdecks on the 0-2 level.

As well as supporting the MAGTF, Trenton is providing a full range of "mother-ship" services to the minesweepers and frigates patrolling the Gulf.

"Being a mother-ship is an unusual role for an LPD," states Trenton's Supply Officer LT [REDACTED]. "We have to be very flexible. We take on stores from a Combat Stores Ship then give the smaller vessels what they need."

If the minesweepers cannot pull alongside Trenton, stores can be delivered by the ship's LCM-8 Assault Craft carried in the well deck. "We not only supply food stores but also parts support, repair support, disbursing services, ship's store and barber services, medical and dental support, and even hotel services!," states LT Westmoreland.

Minesweepers crews remain in the gulf four months at a time. When it is time for the new crew to step aboard there isn't enough berthing aboard the MSO for both crews, so, "HOTEL TRENTON" provides the additional berthing required during the crew rotation period.

Repair services are one of the many areas in which Marine and Navy elements complement each other. Trenton's Hull Technicians can handle the largest welding and repair jobs while the Marine Combat Service Support Element has the equipment to supplement the ship's capability to repair delicate radar and communications gear.

Other services offered to the minesweepers and frigates by Trenton include a sail loft that can make awnings and hatch covers, two ship's stores selling everything from necessities like socks and shaving cream to such luxuries as cassette tapes and jewelry, and medical and dental departments that offer the most immediate access to health care in the Gulf. Between TRENTON and the embarked MAGTF repair services are available for valves, gauges, teletypewriters, communication equipment, refrigerators, and small arms to name only a few.

As for the crew, morale is very high. Lance Corporal [REDACTED] from New River, North Carolina volunteered for this mission with the Marine Aviation Combat Element. "The Gulf is where the action is. We work 12 hours on and 12 hours off with the Ship's Air Department on board. We don't get too many weekends off but liberty in Bahrain is exciting."

SN [REDACTED] reports, "We're not afraid to go to General Quarters. I'm a look-out and we're working together with the Combat Information Center. We can spot contacts way out with our binoculars and watch them after CIC tells us where to look. The Marines are really great. They help us in working parties when we load supplies or have to move gear around the ship."

A typical lunch time aboard Trenton can give an indication of the diversity of the ship's mission. Sailors and Marines eat elbow-to-elbow on the mess deck. Sailors from a nearby Minesweeper are shopping in the ship's store for toiletries, watches, postcards and gifts for friends in the States. Just outside on the flight deck, helicopter rotors beat at the air as Marine aircraft take off and land, directed by Navy flight-deck personnel. Fork-lifts shuttle pallets of MSO supplies between storage spaces and the flight deck while the ship's Boat and Aircraft (B & A) Crane lowers them into the waiting LCM-8 craft alongside. Near the ship's bridge, members of the Marine Ground Combat Element clean a .50 caliber machine gun as Navy lookers scan the horizon for contacts.

On 20 December 1988 the USS TRENTON received the Joint Meritorious Unit Award for her contribution to OPERATION PRAYING MANTIS. The award was presented by Captain Thomas S. Treanor, Commander Amphibious Squadron Twelve.

Operation PRAYING MANTIS was the code name given for actions taken by the United States against Iranian assets in the Gulf in retaliation for the mining of international waters by Iran. The USS SAMUEL B. ROBERTS struck an Iranian anti-shipping mine in international waters on April 14, 1988. During PRAYING MANTIS on April 18, 1988, TRENTON participated in the boarding of the Iranian Sassan Gas-Oil separation platform.

In addition to the Joint Meritorious Unit Award, eleven TRENTON sailors received the Navy Achievement Medal from the Commander of the Joint Task Force Middle East for contributions made during TRENTON's six month deployment to the Persian Gulf from February to July 1988.

In his remarks, Commodore Treanor noted that TRENTON's actions in the Persian Gulf helped shorten the conflict between Iraq and Iran and helped keep international waters free from terrorism. Additionally, the Commodore complimented TRENTON for a successful yard upkeep period at Metro Machine Shipyard in downtown Norfolk. Also present at the ceremony was Colonel William Rakow, USMC, Commander of Contingency Marine Air-Ground Task Force 2-88, the embarked U.S. Marine contingent on TRENTON during the cruise.

Captain Robert M. Nutwell, the Commanding Officer of TRENTON, encouraged the crew to take pride in their past accomplishments as they face the challenges of a new operating cycle with determination to further enhance the ship's performance.

Navy Achievement Medal recipients were:

ICC(SW) [REDACTED]
MM1 [REDACTED]
BT1 [REDACTED]
HT1 [REDACTED]
MR1(SW) [REDACTED]
BMC(SW) [REDACTED]
GMC2(SW) [REDACTED]
BM2 [REDACTED]
ET1 [REDACTED]
RM1 [REDACTED]
DK2 [REDACTED]