

FLEET FOCUS

Crommelin leads in interceptions

By Ens. Drew Kelly

USS CROMMELIN

After three months in the Fifth Fleet area of responsibility, including a challenging 62 day underway period, USS Crommelin (FFG 37) has established a reputation as the leader in maritime interception operations (MIO). Crommelin and its dynamic crew accepted the challenge of working in some of the most challenging waters in the world and thrive on the operational challenge of enforcing United Nations sanctions against Iraq.

While operating in the Northern Arabian Gulf, Crommelin's veteran Visit Board, Search, and Seizure (VBSS) team participated in 15 non-compliant boardings of suspected sanctions violators. Vessels are considered non-compliant when they fail to conform to the inspection process issued by United Nations Security Council.

Among the 15 non-compliant vessels, 10 were suspected of illegally smuggling petroleum products and were diverted to friendly ports for disposal of the ships and their illegal cargoes. Although non-compliant boardings are difficult, Crommelin's VBSS team has proven that a well-trained unit can handle the most challenging boarding assignments.

Following the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait on Aug. 2 1990, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) issued Resolution 661 and subsequent resolutions to create a strict trade embargo on all imports and exports transiting in and out of Iraq. Resolution 661 helped to create a created a Multinational Interception Force (MIF) for maritime enforcement. However, Iraq has not complied with the various regulations issued by the UNSC and continues to violate UNSC Resolution 661. Crommelin has proudly accepted the responsibility as the leader in maritime enforcement within the USS Abraham Lincoln (CVN 72) battle group and has developed new tactics to help disrupt the illegal flow petroleum products. "As long as the smugglers keep running, we'll keep right on boarding them," added Information Systems Technician 3rd Class Dameon Garber from Tucson, Arizona. Those new tactics enabled



File photo

USS Crommelin (FFG-37) returns from three months underway in the Northern Arabian Gulf. Crommelin's Visit Board, Search, and Seizure (VBSS) team participated in 15 non-compliant boardings of suspected sanctions violators

Crommelin to maneuver and position its VBSS team to conduct a near simultaneous takedown of two suspected smugglers within the same night.

"I've never conducted a double take-down in the same night during my 10 years of performing non-compliant boardings," stated Gunner's Mate Chief Petty Officer Gary Goodenbour.

USS Crommelin, a guided missile frigate, is homeported in Pearl Harbor, Hawaii and commanded by Cmdr. Alan C. Westphal.

The ship has a crew of approximately 240 officers and sailors, including an air detachment from the "Easy Riders" of Helicopter Anti-Submarine Squadron (Light) 37, homeported in San Diego, Calif.

USS Hopper takes on guests from USS Asheville while underway



Ens. Schreivel photo

In a recent underway to conduct exercises, USS HOPPER (DDG 70) hosted crew-members of USS ASHEVILLE (SSN 758). Submariners STS1(SS) Michael J. Wilkerson, ET3 Mark Fournier, FT2 Michael J. McGonagle, and LCDR John J. Shriver (shown l-r), experienced the exercises from the other end of the periscope.

USS O'Kane brightens holidays with Christmas lighting for harbor tours

By ET1 (sw) Jaime Gonzalez

USS O'KANE

In only its second Pearl Harbor holiday period, USS O'Kane walked away with the coveted Pearl Harbor Holiday Lighting Champion Award.

O'Kane, the Pacific Fleet's newest and most advanced combat ship has proven to be the one with the most holiday cheer. In a production that spared no cost and no shamelessness, O'Kane put on a never before seen Christmas lighting production worthy of Spielberg praise.

With participation from the crew's children all the way up to the commanding officer, it was an event to be part of.

As the sun began to set in Pearl Harbor, every ship simultaneously turned on their Christmas lights, but there was one notable exception, the USS O'Kane.

She sat in the harbor dark as night with only the noise of anxious children lining up on the fantail to see Santa walking out of the helo control tower.

As the Admiral's gig passed each ship with score cards in hand they wondered what could possibly be wrong with O'Kane. Why wouldn't she partake in such a festive event?

Were the fuses burned out, did they have a power loss, had the duty section been expanded too much to support a lighting detail or did they just give in to the cruisers across the harbor? Oh no, she was preparing for a true first in the holiday lighting tradition, a full out Christmas show.

After every ship had been judged, the Admiral's gig made one last pass by O'Kane's bow to see if anyone was awake. Much to their surprise, Santa was standing under a spotlight on the foc'sle waving wishing everyone a Merry Christmas. Then he announced "Ring in Christmas," with that every light came on.

From the foc'sle to the fantail, there were red and white lights hung in every conceivable place, as well as Christmas stars, red and white spotlights, and a decked out Christmas tree.

Once all the lights were on Santa guided the judges to a midship's slide show complete with a holiday season saxophonist playing his heart out and several crewmembers chanting Mele Kalikimaka to the astounded guests.

But the real surprise lay on the fantail, where over 30 crewmembers and guests circled around the children singing an original version of the Christmas hymn "Go tell it to The Admiral."

That song is a real Christmas tradition in these parts. After a final rendition of the children's chorus, there was a final Mele Kalikimaka and a huge cheer for the great effort the whole O'Kane families and crew had put into making the Christmas lighting production such a huge success.

Although O'Kane unanimously walked away with the award that night, it was not the competition but the spirit of the season that really meant so much to the crew and her families.

Sailors roll in dough while on liberty in Singapore

By Lt. Leslie Hull-Ryde

LOGISTICS GROUP, WESTERN PACIFIC

The Navy newest "million-dollar-man" hails from Tucson but cashed in today while on liberty in Singapore.

SK3 Michael Lukachie from San Dimas, Calif., serves aboard the fast attack submarine, USS Tucson (SSN 770). He re-enlisted at Singapore's famous Merlion statue on Sentosa Island.

When he signed up for six more years, the Navy handed him a check for almost \$20,000. The money, known as the Selective Re-enlistment Bonus, helps boost retention Navywide.

Since September, more than a quarter of the 100-member enlisted crew on Tucson has signed on for more duty. When they did, these Sailors cashed in on individual bonuses valued at \$20,000 to \$60,000. With Lukachie's re-enlistment, the sub's total SRBs awarded tops the \$1 million mark.

Almost \$950,000 of the bonuses awarded to Tucson's Sailors is tax-free. That's because they re-enlisted while on deployment in the Arabian Gulf.

In the past, Tucson's retention rate put it at the bottom of the Pacific's submarine community. But the boat surfaced to the top in just four months while on this deployment.

"We have turned the corner in fixing a long-term retention problem that has plagued Tucson since new construction [in 1993]. In the year 2000, we basically declared war on retention," says its com-

manding officer, Cmdr. Dennis Murphy.

"We have re-enlisted nearly twice as many people in 2000 than in 1998 and 1999 combined.

Lukachie comes from a Navy family. His grandfather served in Korea and World War II, and his dad was stationed on a submarine. The family's newest Sailor earned more than a bonus when he re-upped in the Lion City.

He was promoted through the Selective Training and Re-enlistment Program, known as STAR. That means extra cash in his paycheck every month.

"Our biggest success came from the first-term, nuclear-trained ratings, where 50 percent of them re-enlisted," says Murphy, a U.S. Naval Academy grad. "These guys arrived as E-4s and were eligible to STAR to E-5 at any time and earn tax-free SRB up to \$45,000. That incentive really makes a difference."

The submarine's retention push started a year ago when it looked for people eligible for re-enlistment on this deployment. From day one, the career counselor on board talked to brand new Tucson Sailors about the advantages of staying in.

The tactic worked on ET3 Norman J. Chadbourne of Kingfield, Maine. He reported to Tucson a month ago after spending two years in the nuclear training program. After just 30 days on board his first boat, he decided for stay on for another two years.

Now, he is almost \$45,000 richer, and he is wearing a second

chevron under his crow. The promotion means approximately \$300 more a month for the son of a retired Sailor.

The money may have lured Chadbourne to stay in, but other opportunities keep him in the Navy's "silent service."

"The Navy offers us the chance to get extensive training in high-tech fields," says Chadbourne who plans to apply to an officer program. "It also gives us the chance to earn college credits, work and get leadership experience — all while protecting our country."

Lukachie agrees, saying the money didn't drive his decision to stay in. The command climate fostered open discussions about the pros and cons of re-enlisting.

With this dialogue, the Sailors felt the crew's best interest was always a command priority. Lukachie adds that he also stayed in to carry on his family's naval tradition.

"We've got a lot of Navy pride in my family. My dad told me, 'If you join any other service, I'm going to disown you,'" says Lukachie, a two-year Navy vet.

"The money didn't have anything to do with it. I like the unity. Our lives pretty much depend on each other."

This officer-bound Sailor says he plans to invest his SRB — a testament to another successful program aboard Tucson.

The submarine couples the awarding of bonus checks with financial counseling. Lukachie says his extra cash is headed for mutual funds and a Roth IRA.



Lt. Leslie Hull-Ryde photo

SK3 Michael Mukachie of the USS Tucson (SSN 770) re-enlisted at Singapore's famous Merlion statue on Sentosa Island.

But the Sailors aren't the only ones cashing in by staying in.

The Navy wins too, beating out the private sector which often vies for the already trained, experienced commodity — the U.S. Navy Sailor.

Through programs like the SRB

and STAR, the Navy gets to keep talented young people, in whom it invested thousands of training dollars.

"We put these programs in place to retain people," says Murphy. "We had to do that to compete with the private sector."