USS STARK (FFG-31) â€“ 20 Years Ago.

Description

Scanning the net before work, Lexâ€™s post reminded me of the incident that shaped a variety of things in the days afterwards. The things not so obvious in the the story of a ship attacked and damaged with lives lostâ€¦..â€•Battle Ordersâ€• became a standard item in the daily underway routine. In addition to the long used â€œNight Ordersâ€• that laid out the Captainâ€™s wishes for the hours when he would be getting that most valuable commodity, sleep. â€œBattle Ordersâ€• reflected the settings of the Combat System of the ship, and any anticipated changes in readiness already planned, that the watches in the night could operate on, without waking the CO.Damage control changed. New pieces of equipment were rapidly fielded: â€œFFE,â€• the fire fighting ensemble, the â€œNFTI,â€• an infrared detection device, exothermic torches to allow cutting of aluminum bulkheads and decks, and the Jaws of Life were the major ones. Along with those came training changes in the â€œtrain the way you fightâ€• methodology.Lectures were held in the school houses discussing the issues of crew fatigue in the long effort, in a hot, smoky environment. New discussions were earnestly held about â€œwhat condition do you place the CIWS (Mk-15 Close in Weapons System) in and when? â€œAuto/Auto?â€• Much more was talked on.Last year, hereâ€™s what I posted about my arrival at work in regards to my part of involvement in this day in history.Iâ€™ve not only walked the decks of a sister ship for 18 months, and sailed in the same waters, doing the same mission as the STARK a little over two years after the incident, but earlier in my career, I ran the office that trained the FFG-7 (Flight I and II) Pre-Commissioning Combat Systems teams. STARK was one of the crews my shop worked with for 4 weeks in the FFG-7 Combat Systems Operational Team Training Course at Fleet Combat Training Center, Atlantic. It was an interesting journey across twenty years that kept interacting with the little ships that did so much, for such a bargain basement price. Brad Penistonâ€™s book, â€œNo Higher Honorâ€• about the USS SAMUEL B ROBERTS (FFG-58) mine hit also covers the history of the acquisition and design decisions of the OLIVER HAZARD PERRY Class Guided Missile Frigates. Iâ€™d recommend the book again, to help frame some of the issues the STARK faced as a result of the work done in getting that class of ship to the building ways and to sea.A few more years later, and I think 10 years ago this month, I reported to the NAVSURFLANT Combat Systems Mobile Training Team as the Combat Systems Assessment Officer. On those hundreds of inspections I did over three years, I regularly walked up to talk with the lookouts during the Detect-to-Engage (DTE) exercise and

asked them where the â€œthreatâ€• (usually a contracted Learjet) for the scenario. Most every time they hadnâ€™t been clued in by the CIC team as to what was happening, let alone where to look. Iâ€™d spend a few minutes letting them know they were important eyes for the ship and how little time they were likely to have when a cruise missile came over the horizon at them, but it was maybe their only chanceâ€¦..The STARK hit affected quite a lot of the â€œbusiness as usualâ€• conditions.Update: CDR Wm Boulay, USN (Ret), the XO of USS CONYNGHAM (DDG-17) left this comment today, but on the post from last year:

> Thank you for this post. I was the XO of the Conyngham that you referred to. I am so very pleased to see that the contributions of the Ã¢â‚¬Å“Gus BoatÃ¢â‚¬Â• crew mentioned. I also drafted the message you read, using the immediate observation of my chiefs and officers for the body. Today is the 20th anniversary and as I do every May 17, I say my prayers for the men we left behind, and search the ever dwindling news stories for mentions of the anniversary. That is how I found this post and the absolutely correct summary of our message. I will finish with the observation that a few years later, Surface program Director under the watch of Joe Taussig, the Deputy Undersecretary of the Navy for Safety and Survivability, I helped make good on those words by deploying COTS solutions for the most serious material deficiencies and later, at the Office of Naval Research, helped develop a fire research program EX-USS Shadwell in Mobile Alabama. On her we can simulate the 2000 degree fire that almost took the Stark and from what we learned and continue to learn there, our fire fighting posture is vastly improved.

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