

Contributed by Capt. Civ. Curtis A. Smith

R 032030Z OCT 16
FM USNS GRAPPLE
TO COMSC NORFOLK VA
COMSC LANT NORFOLK VA
INFO CNO WASHINGTON DC
COMUSFLTFORCOM NORFOLK VA
COMNAVSEASYSCOM WASHINGTON DC
COMNAVSEASYSCOM DET INACTSHIPOFF PORTSMOUTH VA
COMNAVSEASYSCOM DET INACTSHIP PHILADELPHIA PA
COMSIXTH FLEET
COMSC EURAF NAPLES
COMFOURTHFLT
NAVHISTHERITAGE WASHINGTON DC
NVR NORFOLK VA
CTF 80
CTF 83
MOBDIVSALU TWO
COMNECC LITTLE CREEK VA
COMEODGRU TWO
JNTEXPBASE LITTLE CREEK FORT STORY VA
FLEAWEACEN NORFOLK VA
CDR JPAC HICKAM AFB HI
USS EMORY S LAND
USS FRANK CABLE
USS MOUNT WHITNEY
USS PONCE
USNS APACHE
USNS CATAWBA
USNS NAVAJO
USNS GRASP
USNS GRAPPLE
USNS SAFEGUARD
USNS SALVOR
USNS SIOUX
USNS ZEUS
USNS BIG HORN
USNS HENRY J KAISER
USNS JOHN LENTHALL
USNS KANAWHA
USNS LARAMIE
USNS LEROY GRUMMAN
USNS PATUXENT
USNS MEDGAR EVERS
USNS ROBERT E PEARY
USNS ARCTIC
USNS JOSHUA HUMPHREYS
USNS SUPPLY
USNS SPEARHEAD
USNS CHOCTAW COUNTY
USNS COMFORT
USNS LEWIS B PULLER
USNS MOUNT WHITNEY
USNS TRENTON
USNS BRUNSWICK
USNS MILLINOCKET
BT
UNCLAS
MSGID/GENADMIN/USNS GRAPPLE/--/OCT//
SUBJ/GRAPPLE NAVAL HISTORY//

REF/A/RMG/CNO/261701ZJUL16//

AMPN/NAVADMIN DIRECTING INACTIVATION STATUS AND NAVAL HISTORY MESSAGE//

1. USS GRAPPLE (ARS-53) WAS THE FINAL SAFEGUARD CLASS RESCUE AND SALVAGE SHIPS TO BE BUILT AT Peterson Builders, Sturgeon Bay, WI. It WAS LAUNCHED ON 8 December 1984. GRAPPLE IS THE SECOND SHIP IN THE NAVY TO BEAR THIS NAME. TRANSFERRED TO MSC IN 2013, GRAPPLE (T-ARS 53) SUBSEQUENTLY UNDERWENT A SHIPYARD PERIOD FOR CONVERSION PERIOD FOR OPERATION BY MSC CIVILIAN MARINERS.

2. SOME HIGHLIGHTS FROM HER SERVICE:

A.) 1987 -USS GRAPPLE TOWED OCEAN MINESWEEPERS USS INFLICT, FEARLESS AND ILLUSIVE TO THE PERSIAN GULF TO SUPPORT US NAVY ESCORT OPERATIONS IN OPERATION EARNEST WILL. THE SHIPS DEPARTED LITTLE CREEK VA 06 SEP AND ARRIVED GULF OF OMAN 02NOV. THAT 9,000NM TRIP WAS THE LONGEST THREE SHIP TOW EVER COMPLETED BY US NAVY SHIP.

B.) 1996 AUG AND SEP GRAPPLE PARTICIPATED IN THE TWA FLIGHT 800 SALVAGE MISSION. GRAPPLE OPERATED THE NAVYS REMOTE OPERATED VEHICLE (ROV) "DEEP DRONE" TO RECOVER SMALL PIECES OF DEBRIS A THE DEPTH OF APPROX 120 FT OFF LONG ISLAND, NY. ADDITIONALLY, DIVERS CONTINUED TO LOOK FOR CLUES FOR THE CRASH, FINDING EVEN THE SMALLEST PIECES OF WRECKAGE ON THE OCEAN FLOOR AND RETURNED IT TO THE SURFACE.

C.) 1998 SEP - A SHORT TWO YEARS LATER, USNS GRAPPLE, HMCS HALIFAX AND CANADIAN NAVY DIVING TENDER SECHELT CONDUCTED SEARCH AND RECOVERY OPERATIONS AT THE CRASH SITE OF SWISS AIR FLIGHT 111 OFF PEGGYS COVE, CANADA. GRAPPLE BROUGHT MOBILE UNDERWATER DEBRIS SURVEY SYSTEM (MUDSS) TECHNOLOGY TO PROVIDE DETAILED IMAGES OF THE OCEAN FLOOR. GRAPPLE ALSO HELPED RETRIEVE VICTIMS AND AIRCRAFT DEBRIS FROM THE CRASH SITE.

D.) 1999 NOV - GRAPPLE CONDUCTED SEARCH AND RECOVERY OPERATIONS FOR AN EGYPT AIR BOEING 767 THAT CRASHED NEAR THE ISLAND OF NANTUCKET ON 31 OCT. ALL 217 PASSENGERS PERISHED. ALTHOUGH RECOVERY EFFORTS WERE STALLED DUE TO HIGH SEAS AND BAD WEATHER, WITH WAVES UP TO 22FT AND WIND GUSTS OVER 35 MPH, THE 'BLACK BOX' WAS EVENTUTALLY RECOVERED BY DEEP DRONE.

E.) 2001 APR TO MAY - GRAPPLE ASSISTED IN THE RECOVERY OF RUINS OF THE HISTORICAL WRECK OF THE CIVIL WAR IRONCLAD EX-USS MONITOR, 17 MILES OFF CAPE HATTERAS, NC. FOLLOWING THE FAMOUS BATTLE IN HAMPTON ROADS WITH EX-CSS VIRGINIA (AKA MERRIMACK) ON 09 MAR 1862, MONITOR PERFORMED BLOCKADE DUTY. ON HER WAY TO NORTH CAROLINA UNDER TOW, THE IRONCLAD FOUNDERED OFF CAPE HATTERAS SHORTLY AFTER MIDNIGHT ON 31 DEC 1862.

F.) GRAPPLE COMPLETED HER LAST DEPLOYMENT AS A COMMISSIONED VESSEL IN JULY 2004. AFTER SPENDING FIVE MONTHS IN THE MEDITERRANEAN SEA, IN SUPPORT OF GLOBAL WAR ON TERROR, CONDUCTING 12 PORT VISITS IN SIX DIFFERENT COUNTRIES. WHILE IN THE MED, DIVERS ONBOARD ALSO CONDUCTED SALVAGE TRAINING WITH TUNISIAN DIVERS.

G.) USS GRAPPLE WAS DECOMISSIONED AND TRANSFERRED TO MSC IN A CEREMONY AT NAVAL AMPHIBIOUS BASE LITTLE CREEK, JULY 13 2006 AFTER COMPLETING 20 YEARS OF ACCOMPLISHED SERVICE. AT THE CEREMONY, LCDR KEVIN BRAND, GRAPPLES LAST COMMANDING OFFICER, TURNED OVER COMMAND TO CAPT CURTIS SMITH, A SEASONED CIVILIAN MARINER WHO HAD COMMANDED OVER 20 SHIPS IN HIS 27 YEAR CAREER WITH MSC. AT THE CEREMONY, GRAPPLE WAS RECOGNIZED FOR ONE OF HER MOST MEMORABLE NAVAL MISSIONS, OPENING CRITICAL SHIPPING LANES OF MOBILE BAY, ALABAMA, IN THE WAKE OF HURRICANE KATRINA.

H.) IN 2008 USNS GRAPPLED TOWED DE-FUELED DECOMMISSIONED NUCLEAR SUBMARINE EX-HYMGAN G RICKOVER (SSN-709) THROUGH THE PANAMA CANAL ON THE FIRST LEG OF A 10,000 MILE TOW FROM PORTSMOUTH NAVAL SHIPYARD IN KITTERY MAINE, TO PUGET SOUND NAVAL SHIPYARD BREMERTON, WASHINGTON.

THE SHIPS DEPARTED PORTSMOUTH 08 APR AND EX-RICKOVER ARRIVED BREMERTON 20 MAY. THE SUBMARINE WAS TOWED THROUGH THE PACIFIC BY USNS SIOUX (T-ATF 171).

I.) IN APRIL 2009, GRAPPLE TOWED EX-USS CONOLLY (DD979) TO SEA TO BE EXPENDED AS A TARGET DURING A SINKEX AS PART OF UNITAS GOLD 2009. EX-CONOLLY WAS SUNK DURING THE EXERCISE ON 29 APR. GRAPPLE DEPARTED FOR DEPLOYMENT TO AFRICOM ON 01 OCT 2009 AND VISITED 9 COUNTRIES WITH 14 PORT CALLS BEFORE RETURNING TO NORFOLK IN MAR 2010.

J.) ONE AIRCRAFT RECOVERY AND 2 WEEK REPAIR PERIOD, AND SHE WAS BACK TO THE MED FOR A EUCOM 2010 DEPLOYMENT. VISITING 9 MORE COUNTRIES AND 12 PORT VISITS LATER, SHE RETURNED TO NORFOLK 09 SEP 2010.

K.) AFTER CONUS DIVING AND TOWING OPERATIONS, GRAPPLE RETURNED TO AFRICOM MAR 2011, VISITING 3 COUNTRIES AND CONDUCTING 8 PORT VISITS.

L.) AFTER A 45 DAY OVERHAUL ENDING IN FEB 2012, SOUTHCOM CALLED FOR GRAPPLE, AND WITH MDSU COMPANY EMBARKED SHE WORKED IN 5 COUNTRIES WITH 9 PORT CALLS. IN JULY OF THAT YEAR GRAPPLE WENT FROM SOUTHCOM TO POW/MIA ACCOUNTING COMMAND (JPAC) RECOVERY MISSION IN MINGAN, QUEBEC. IN SEPTEMBER, SHE DEPLOYED TO THE MED ONCE AGAIN FOR A JPAC POW/MIA MISSION OFF CALVI, CORSICA. THAT MISSION WAS FOLLOWED BY 5 MORE COUNTRIES AND 13 PORT VISITS. JUST BEFORE COMPLETING THAT DEPLOYMENT IN FEBRUARY, SHE WAS ASSIGNED A MISSION TO IDENTIFY, LOCATE AND RECOVER WRECKAGE OF US AIR FORCE F-16 FIGHTING FALCON WHICH CRASHED IN THE ADRIATIC DURING A TRAINING MISSION. THE MDSU TEAM HAD TO OVERCOME COLD WEATHER, HIGH SEA STATES, DEEP MUD, AND ZERO VISIBILITY TO RECOVER MORE THAN 200 PIECES OF DEBRIS. UPON SUCCESSFUL COMPLETION OF THAT A/C RECOVERY, GRAPPLE STEAMED BACK TO MAYPORT FL IN MAR 2013 FOR AN FFG TOW TO PHILADELPHIA. FOLLOWING THE FFG TOW THERE WERE TWO MSC SHIPS THE EX-USNS FLINT AND EX-OBSERVATION ISLAND WERE BOTH TOWED TO BEAUMONT, TX AND TURNED OVER TO MARAD.

M.) IN 2014 DURING JUNE AND JULY, ANOTHER JPAC POW/MIA MISSION IN BOTWOOD NEWFOUNDLAND.

N.) 2016 BROUGHT ANOTHER AFRICOM DEPLOYMENT. TWO SIGNIFICANT EVENTS, ONE TOOK PLACE DURING THE BIZERTE, TUNISIA VISIT, WHERE GRAPPLE SUCCESSFULLY MOVED A 90FT TUG THAT HAD BEEN ON THE BOTTOM FOR OVER 30 YEARS ALONG SIDE A PIER THAT THE TUNISIAN NAVY WANTED TO REBUILD FOR THEIR FLOATING DRY DOCK. THIS WAS THE SIXTH ATTEMPT TO SALVAGE THIS WRECK. TUG LA GALITE WAS MOVED ACROSS THE HARBOR BY GRAPPLE WITH 140,000LB PULL. THE SECOND EVENT WAS THE CHANGE IN MISSION FROM AFRICOM MISSION TO NATO STANDING NATO MARITIME GROUP-2 (SNMG 2) MIGRANT AND REFUGEE CRISIS SUPPORT IN THE AEGEAN SEA. THIS TACON SHIFT TO NATO WAS TO OBSERVE/REPORT AND IF NECESSARY ASSIST WITH SOLAS PURPOSE, ANY MIGRANT, REFUGEE AND/OR SMUGGLING OPERATIONS BETWEEN TURKEY AND THE GREEK ISLANDS OF LESBOS AND CHIOS. AFTER FINISHING THAT MISSION IN AUG, GRAPPLE RETURNED TO MAYPORT AS STBY TOW ASSET FOR LCS SHOCK TRIAL. GRAPPLE THEN RETURNED TO JOINT EXPEDITIONARY BASE IN LITTLE CREEK FOR DE-ACTIVATION PREPS.

O.) THERE HAVE BEEN MANY MORE TOWS AND MISSIONS THAN THOSE LISTED ABOVE. THE ABOVE WERE JUST THE HIGH LIGHTS OF A VERY SUCCESSFUL AND MEANINGFUL CAREER.

3. SHIP'S SHIELD: THE ROMEO FLAG IS FLOWN BY GRAPPLE SHOWING HER TO BE READY AT A MOMENTS NOTICE TO LEAVE PORT AND PERFORM HER MISSION. THE FLAG ON BOTH OLD AND NEW CREWS REPRESENTS CONSTANT VIGILANCE DEMAND OF BOTH CREWS. THE MK 12 DIVER, CARRYING UNDERWATER HYDRAULIC TOOL, AND STANDING ON THE MODERN STATO ANCHOR CONTRAST THE MK5 EELLS ANCHORS ON THE ORIGINAL CRES SYMBOLIZE THE COMMITMENT TO BEING THE MOST TECHNOLOGICALLY ADVANCED SALVAGE SHIP AFLOAT.

4. THE CREST: THE BLUE AND GOLD WREATH SHOWS THE COLORS WORN BY ALL NAVY DIVERS WHILE DIVING AND PHYSICALLY TRAINING. THE FLAME

REPRESENTS THE FURY AND DANGER OF WAR; THE THREE STARS STAND FOR THE THREE WARS IN WHICH THE ORIGINAL GRAPPLE SERVED. THE LION AMID FLAMES REPRESENTS THE COURAGE NEEDED TO SAVE OTHER SHIPS IN COMBAT. THE TWO WHITE STARS UPON THE COLLAR STAND FOR THIS SHIP, THE SECOND TO BE NAMED GRAPPLE.

5. USNS GRAPPLE HAS RECEIVED THE FOLLOWING AWARDS:

2007 DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY SAFETY EXCELLENCE AWARD

2008 CNO SURFACE SHIP SAFETY AWARD

2016 LETTER OF APPRECIATION AND INDIVIDUAL LETTERS OF COMMENDATION FROM CHIEF OF STAFF, TUNISIAN NAVY

6. USS GRAPPLE AWARDS, CITATIONS AND CAMPAIGN RIBBONS:

TOP ROW - NAVY UNIT COMMENDATION

SECOND ROW - NAVY MERITORIOUS UNIT COMMENDATION - NAVY BATTLE "E" RIBBON (10) - NATIONAL DEFENSE SERVICE MEDAL.

BOTTOM ROW - ARMED FORCES EXPEDITIONARY MEDAL - GLOBAL WAR ON TERRORISM EXPEDITIONARY MEDAL - ARMED FORCES SERVICE MEDAL.

7. GRAPPLE, OUT//

BT

NNNN