



Captain E. L. Alexander
Commanding Officer

At Sea

17 November 2006

Dear MIDGETT Family and Friends,

Hope all is well with the family. We just completed a very successful MALABAR 06 operation with the Indian Coast Guard and Navy. Many of you have asked for more information about our mission so this letter will go into more detail about what we are doing and the conditions in the area.

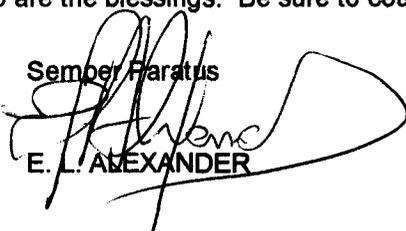
We are operating in vicinity of the Horn of Africa (HOA) and points south, involved in maritime interception operations (MIO). As you may know HOA is very unstable with Islamic fundamentalists bidding for power in the region and fueled by rampant arms smuggling and outside intervention from neighboring states. Somalia itself is divided into three separate parts each with its own ruling group/coalition, Somalia in the south, Puntland in the central region on the horn and Somaliland in the northwest. Ethiopia and Eritrea are backing opposite sides in Somalia between the Transitional National Government (TNG) and the Islamic fundamentalist's Union of Islamic Courts (UIC) respectively, and using the situation in Somalia to fight a proxy war. There is a chance Kenya will be drawn into the fray as Somalis flee from the North due to violence and recent flooding. Radical Islamic elements have threatened to conduct attacks in Kenya for allegedly supporting the interim Somali Transitional National Government (TNG). Kenya has suspended all flights into Somalia.

The sea is barren of most shipping off the coast of Somalia. What little shipping traffic we have seen is mostly foreign fishing vessels taking advantage of the situation to fish just outside Somali territorial waters. Most ships avoid the coast of Somalia now due to piracy. The Somali pirates are typically unemployed fishermen that are recruited by leaders ashore. Pirates usually hold the hijacked ships for ransom and then take a cut of the profits if the Hijacking is successful. We boarded one of the recently hijacked vessels. After its capture, the ship was in turn captured by members of the UIC. The pirates that were captured (according to the ships crew) will be executed at a later date by the UIC. The human rights and due process that we take for granted in America simply do not apply in this part of the world. It is a smugglers paradise at sea. Smuggling is a way of life here, be it weapons or humans, if there is money in it they are smuggling it.

There is a true Coast Guard mission at sea here, where you have to be able to put boots on deck 24/7 and have the street smarts of a cop to figure out the situation quickly and take appropriate action. We hosted the Commander of Task Force 150 (Rear Admiral Lange, German Navy) recently, and he was truly appreciative of the skills sets we bring to this area. We also work during our port visits as directed by NAVCENT or the local embassy. This work consists of "mil to mil" engagements where we interact and train some developing coast guard and naval forces as well as humanitarian relief work with various nations in the region. The Coast Guard is well known and respected everywhere we've been.

The weather is hot but crew is doing well overall. They have stood tall for each and every challenge. They are fast becoming seasoned professionals. We are getting into the middle part of the patrol where days seem to drag on forever and going home seems to be way ahead in the distant future. Holidays are coming up fast and this will be a challenge both here on ship and at home. This is where we need to work especially hard to show support for each other. The sacrifices and challenges for our members and their families at this time of year are great; however, we have so much to be thankful for. So many families have lost loved ones to the War on Terror and are going through the holidays knowing they will never come home, they will never be able to talk to them, yell at them, laugh with them, or just hold them. The sacrifices of a free nation are many, but so are the blessings. Be sure to count the blessings.

Semper Paratus


E. L. ALEXANDER