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USS Stark decommissions at Mayport

The guided-missile frigate USS Stark (FFG-31) was decommissioned at Naval Station Mayport May 7.

More than 350 guests watched as Cmdr. O. Wayne Young, Stark's last commanding officer, ordered the commissioning pennant and colors to be lowered for the final time, and the last watch secured.

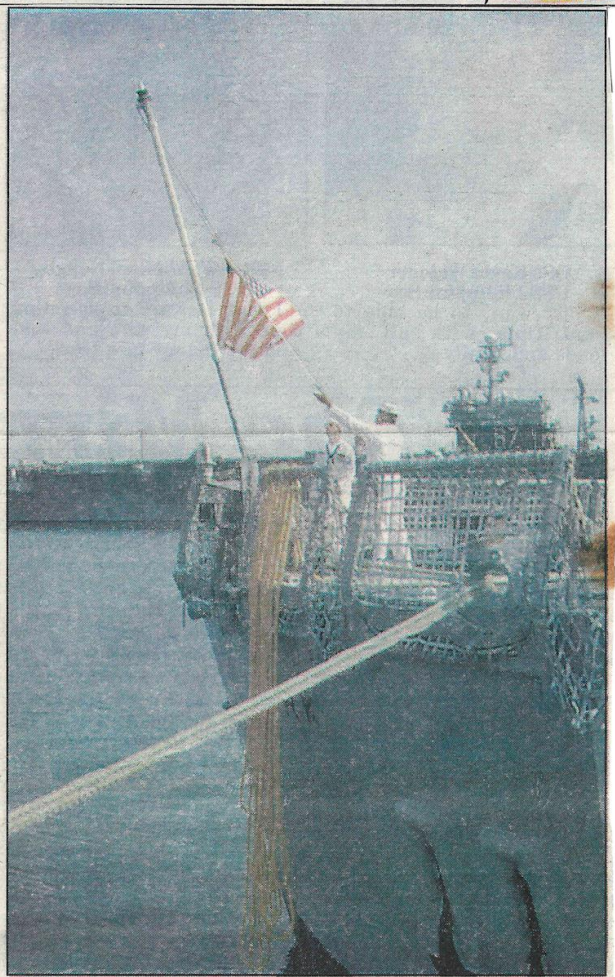
Over the past 17 years, the Stark traveled more than 240,000 miles. Early deployments included the Middle East Force in 1984 and 1987, and a Great Lakes Cruise in 1985. During the Middle East Force deployment, Stark was struck by two missiles fired by Iraqi aircraft. The fires that resulted claimed 37 lives. Today the only remaining sign of this tragic event is the memorial engraving at Mayport's Memorial Park which lists the shipmates who gave their lives.

The guest speaker for the decommissioning ceremony was a former Stark commanding officer, Rear Admiral Henry. Ulrich III, U. S. Atlantic Fleet Director of Operations, Plans and Policy.

Other Stark deployments include Standing Naval Force Atlantic in 1990, Middle East Force in 1991, Unitas in 1993, Operations "Support Democracy" and "Able Vigil" in 1994, Middle East Force in 1995, and Standing Naval Force Atlantic in 1997 and 1998.

Stark's achievements included rescuing 16 sailors from a burning merchant vessel hit by an Iranian missile in 1984; welcoming aboard more than 105,000 visitors during the Great Lakes Cruise; rescuing two downed helicopter pilots in the Persian Gulf in 1991; completing 77 boardings during Red Sea maritime interdiction operations; seizing a drug boat loaded with more than 14,000 pounds of marijuana during counter-drug operations; and conducting tours for more than 3,000 citizens of the former Soviet Union during a recent port visit to St. Petersburg, Russia.

Stark was commissioned October 23, 1982, in Seattle, Wash., and was homeported in Mayport for 16 years.



The National Ensign is lowered for the final time aboard the USS Stark. The ship was decommissioned last Friday at Naval Station Mayport after more than 16 years of commissioned service.