

Mayport Gears Up For Stark Memorial Service

From Staff

A ceremony of remembrance, along with a "Meet and Greet" CPO Steak Night and USS Stark Memorial Dinner will mark the 25th anniversary of the attack on USS Stark (FFG 31) that cost 37 Sailors their lives.

Each year, NS Mayport hosts a memorial ceremony on May 17 at Mayport's Memorial Park. The ceremony will be at 10 a.m. and guest speaker for this year's event is Rear Adm. David M. Thomas Jr., Commander, Naval Surface Force Atlantic.

Preceding the event, HSL-60 CPO Mess is hosting an all-hands Steak Night at the CPO Club on May 15 from 4-7 p.m. Tickets are \$10 in advance, \$12 at the door and can be purchased from the CPO Club are by calling 716-1465.

COMDESRON 14 CPO

Mess is also sponsoring a 25th anniversary memorial dinner on May 16 at Ocean Breeze Conference Center. Tickets are \$35 for adult and \$17.50 for kids 12-18 and \$8.75 for children 11 and under. Call Ocean Breeze Conference Center at 270-5313 for tickets.

Special commemorative USS Stark coins may also be purchased from Jeff Lawrence for \$10. Proceeds benefit the Stark memorial.

On May 17, 1987, while on patrol in the Arabian Gulf, 37 Sailors died when two Iraqi missiles struck USS Stark. Despite the severe damage inflicted, the heroic efforts of Stark's crew saved the ship. Stark was decommissioned at Mayport in 1999. In order to preserve the tradition once the ship was retired, the Naval Order of the United

States, North Florida Commandery, assumed sponsorship for the memorial service.

Several members of the 1987 crew of Stark will attend the service. The service will feature accounts of some of the events that occurred following the attack, both aboard ship and here in Mayport, from crew and volunteers who worked to provide information and support services to the families of crew members.

Mayport's Memorial Park was established Aug. 1, 1987, with the dedication of the Stark monument.

Thomas, a native of Norfolk, graduated from the United States Naval

Academy in 1981 and is a distinguished graduate of the Industrial College of the Armed Forces.

Assignments at sea included USS *Shreveport* (LPD 12) as main propulsion assistant and navigator; engineer officer in USS *Estocin* (FFG 15) and USS *Willamette* (AO 180); flag lieutenant to commander, 2nd Fleet; executive officer in USS *Leyte Gulf* (CG 55); command of USS *Ross* (DDG 71); and command of Destroyer Squadron 26.

Ashore, Thomas served in the Surface Warfare Junior Officer Assignment Branch of the Bureau of Naval Personnel; in the Personnel Plans and Policy Division of the

Joint Staff; as flag secretary to commander, Naval Surface Force, U.S. Atlantic Fleet; on the staff of the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations as executive officer to the director of the 2001 Quadrennial Defense Review and executive assistant to the director of Operations, Plans, and Policy (N3/N5); and as chief of staff to commander, 2nd Fleet.

Upon selection for flag officer, Thomas has served as the deputy chief of staff for Global Force Management and Joint Operations on the staff of commander, U.S. Fleet Forces Command; and commander, Joint Task Force, Guantanamo

Bay, Cuba; commander, Carrier Strike Group Two; and his current assignment as commander, Naval Surface Force Atlantic.