

Mixed Manning Demonstration Was a Success: Guided-Missile Destroyer Sailed with Multinational Crew

Chief of Naval Operations Mike Mullen has spoken about the combined advantages of a "1000-ship Navy," - a fleet-in-being made up of the best capabilities of all freedom-loving Navies of the world.

Mullen challenged Navy men and women to imagine the possibilities of increased interoperability through more standardized training, procedures, and command and control protocols.

"This 1000-ship Navy would integrate the capabilities of the maritime services to create a fully interoperable force - an international city at sea," Mullen said.

The US Navy has always worked closely with Allied Navies. That was especially true with the USS Claude V. Ricketts (DDG-5), which had an Allied crew.

Claude V. Ricketts was a test ship for the "Mixed-Manning Demonstration," where half of the destroyer's complement was comprised of officers and men from other NATO nations.

(Note: Originally built as USS Biddle (DDG-5) and commissioned in 1962, the ship was renamed Claude V. Ricketts in June of 1964, shortly after the death of Adm. Ricketts, the ship's namesake, who was serving as the Vice Chief of Naval Operations. DDG-5 was decommissioned in 1989.)

The 18-month demonstration helped validate the concept of having mixed-manning on a modern warship as part of a "Multilateral Force" (MLF) under NATO command. In addition to ten officers and 164 sailors from the US Navy, Claude V. Ricketts had officers and men from West Germany, Italy, Greece, United Kingdom, The Netherlands, and Turkey. Both the commanding officer and executive officer were American. The entire crew used English as the common language. The experiment started in June 1964 and was completed at the end of 1965. The policy was for no nation to provide more than 40percent of a given department.

The crew received specialized training in their respective countries and at US Navy service schools. Officers reported first, followed by the enlisted complements from the various countries. The non-US personnel had several weeks of turnover before relieving their American counterparts.

Claude V. Ricketts conducted routine operations, and deployed to the Mediterranean during 1965. The ship called at ports in Italy, Greece, England, The Netherlands, and Germany.

A typical watch on the bridge was led by an Italian OOD, a Dutch JOOD, a German helmsman, and a British Boatswain's Mate.

The ship's library featured books from all seven nations. The menu featured a greater variety of international cuisine compared to other US ships. The crew was not berthed by nationality, but by the divisions in which the sailors worked. One press report speculated that Claude V. Ricketts would be able to field the US Navy's best soccer team.

Disciplinary matters were handled by the commanding officer in conjunction with the senior officer on board of the respective nation.

The crew was paid in US dollars at augmented rates of pay established by their own Navies.

The proposed MLF was to consist of 25 ships under multi-national command, configured as merchant ships, but armed with eight Polaris ballistic missiles. The MLF concept was created to give NATO nations a more meaningful involvement in the nuclear affairs of the alliance.

"The objective was to demonstrate that a complex ship, a modern guided-missile destroyer, could be smoothly and effectively handled by men of different nations," said secretary of the Navy Paul Nitze upon the concluding of the demonstration. "This objective has been singularly achieved."

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