

SURVIVE AND THRIVE IN CHAOS
A SPECIAL PERSPECTIVE ON THE USS COLE

ATTACK

The following thoughts on the attack on the USS Cole were written by RADM John Morgan, the commissioning commanding officer of the USS Arleigh Burke, the lead ship of the DDG 51 class. N&MIS News thanks Leland "Bud" Wood of our Washington, D.C. office for this submission.

SURVIVE AND THRIVE IN CHAOS

The tragedy that has befallen USS COLE (DDG67) has many sides. Sometimes in strange ways, tragedies can also capture the goodness of an institution like the Navy. As the first Captain of the first ship of this class of Destroyers, I have a different perspective when I look at the damage to COLE. Having stood on the first piece of steel laid in these ships; having touched and traced every engineering system in these ships; and having served as the Captain of one of these ships longer than any officer in the Navy; I see three things when I look at the sea flooding freely into COLE's port side.

I see:

1. A Great Captain
2. A Great Crew
3. A Great engineering design and shipbuilding team

Imagine a 40-foot gash in the side of a ship at the waterline, yet the ship is steady with only a 4-degree list! TITANIC sank by striking a stationery iceberg. A single torpedo with less explosive power than the sophisticated terrorist bomb has sunk many a ship. Yet, COLE absorbed devastating damage and stayed steady.

Here's why:

*The Captain obviously trained his crew to survive and thrive in the chaos that ensued at the very instant that powerful bomb exploded. There is no higher praise for a Captain.

*That well trained crew, COLE men and women, obviously saved their ship despite losing some of their shipmates.

There is no tougher fight and there is no tougher crew than the one which saves a ship.

*Last but not least, we should not forget the brilliant American designers, engineers, and shipbuilders who built what I have frequently referred to as '505 feet of American fighting steel'

There is no comparable group of men and women to those who forge American technology into the finest fighting force in the world. In the next few days I will inevitably mourn as I watch the flag draped coffins of American sailors coming home from important and courageous duty in far away places. But as I mournfully stare at those American flags, I will know one thing - That Captain; that crew and their fallen shipmates; those engineers; and those shipbuilders - they are the stars in the field of blue.

Rear Admiral John Morgan, U.S. Navy