

SHIP COVERS RELATING TO THE IRAN/IRAQ TANKER WAR & REFLAGGED KUWAITI TANKERS, 1987-88¹

“The Kuwaiti fleet reads like a road map of southern New Jersey”

By Captain Lawrence B. Brennan, U.S. Navy Retired²

Thirty years ago there was a New Jersey connection to the long-lasting Iran-Iraq War. That eight years of conflict was one of the longest international two-state wars of the 20th century, beginning in September 1980 and effectively concluding in a truce in August 1988.

The primary and bloody land war between Iran and Iraq began during the Iranian Hostage Crisis. The Shah had left Iran and that year the USSR invaded Afghanistan. The conflict expanded to sea and involved many neutral nations whose shipping came under attack by the combatants. The parties' intent was to damage their opponents' oil exports and revenues and decrease world supplies. Some suggested that Iran and Iraq wanted to draw other states into the conflict.

An Iranian source explained the origin of the conflict at sea.

The tanker war seemed likely to precipitate a major international incident for two reasons. First, some 70 percent of Japanese, 50 percent of West European, and 7 percent of American oil imports came from the Persian Gulf in the early 1980s. Second, the assault on tankers involved neutral shipping as well as ships of the belligerent states.³

The relatively obscure first phase began in 1981, and the well-publicized second phase began in 1984.

New Jersey, half a world away from the Persian (Arabian) gulf, became involved when the United States agreed to escort Kuwait tankers in an effort to support a friendly nation and keep the international waters open. Kuwait, along with Saudi Arabia, tilted towards Iraq.

The Iranian document continues:

Iraq began ignoring the moratorium soon after it went into effect and stepped up its air raids on tankers serving Iran and Iranian oil-exporting facilities in 1986 and 1987, attacking even vessels that belonged to the conservative Arab states of the Persian Gulf. Iran responded by escalating its attacks on shipping serving Arab ports in the Persian Gulf. As Kuwaiti vessels made up a large portion of the targets in these retaliatory raids, the Kuwaiti government sought protection from the international community in the fall of 1986. The Soviet Union responded first, agreeing to charter several Soviet tankers to Kuwait in early 1987.

Washington, which had been approached first by Kuwait and which had postponed its decision, eventually followed Moscow's lead. United States involvement was sealed by the May 17, 1987, Iraqi missile attack on the USS Stark, in which thirty-seven crew members were killed. Baghdad apologized and claimed that the attack was a mistake. Ironically, Washington used the Stark incident to blame Iran for escalating the war and sent its own ships to the Persian Gulf to escort eleven Kuwaiti tankers that were "reflagged" with the American flag and had American crews. Iran refrained from attacking the United States naval force directly, but it used various forms of harassment, including mines, hit-and-run attacks by small patrol boats, and periodic

stop-and-search operations. On several occasions, Tehran fired its Chinese-made Silkworm missiles on Kuwait from Al Faw Peninsula. When Iranian forces hit the reflagged tanker Sea Isle City in October 1987, Washington retaliated by destroying an oil platform in the Rostam field and by using the United States Navy's Sea, Air, and Land (SEAL) commandos to blow up a second one nearby.

In early 1988, the Persian Gulf was a crowded theater of operations. At least ten Western navies and eight regional navies were patrolling the area, the site of weekly incidents in which merchant vessels were crippled. The Arab Ship Repair Yard in Bahrain and its counterpart in Dubai, United Arab Emirates (UAE), were unable to keep up with the repairs needed by the ships damaged in these attacks.⁴



Fig. 1: Shipping lanes in the Persian Gulf.

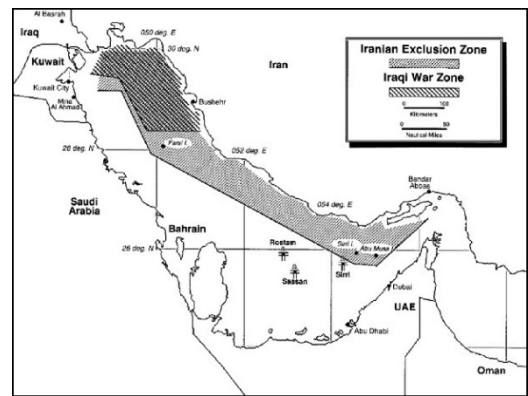


Fig. 2: Iran & Iraq war zones in the Persian Gulf.⁵

Operation Earnest Will

President Ronald Reagan's May 29, 1987 address following the Stark incident announced the commencement of U.S. Navy's largest protection of merchant ships since World War II. The Arabian (Persian) Gulf became an international war zone, where the primary targets were neutral tankers which were subject to mining and attacks. The President cited freedom of navigation and opposition to the Soviet Union. His words marked a decision to reflag eleven Kuwaiti oil tankers and begin military naval escorts through the Persian Gulf: Operation Earnest Will.

The *Washington Post* on June 17, 1987 summarized the renaming of the tankers when they came under US flag.

JERSEY SHORE NAMES TO ADORN REFLAGGED KUWAITI TANKERS

By Bob McHugh June 17, 1987 WASHINGTON POST

Kuwaiti tankers reflagged under U.S. colors will also get new names, officials said yesterday, with maritime monikers including Surf City, Ocean City and Sea Isle City -- all borrowed from resort towns in New Jersey.

The plan to rechristen the Persian Gulf ships with the seashore names prompted one Garden State lawmaker, Rep. William J. Hughes (D), to tell colleagues, "All of a sudden, the Kuwaiti fleet reads like a road map of southern New Jersey."

The Reagan administration has proposed reflagging 11 oil tankers to protect them from attack in the Iran-Iraq war. The policy, which may also include U.S. Navy escorts, has drawn congressional criticism.

THE IRAN/IRAQ TANKER WAR AND RENAMED TANKERS ~ Lawrence Brennan, (US Navy Ret.)

Under the plan, four of the reflagged tankers will get New Jersey names, according to a House report. They'll shift from Arabic names such as Al Rekkah and Casbah to Surf City, Ocean City, Sea Isle City and Bridgeton.

Other tankers are proposed to become the Chesapeake City, Middleton, Townsend, Gas Queen, Gas Princess, Gas King and Gas Prince.

According to the House Merchant Marine and Fisheries Committee report, ownership -- originally Kuwaiti -- would be transferred to a Dover, Del., corporation, the Chesapeake Shipping Co.

U.S. law requires any ship under the American flag to be owned by Americans, said Coast Guard spokesman Nicholas Sandifer. He said the Coast Guard is awaiting bills of sale to prove the Kuwaiti vessels have been transferred.

How the new names were chosen remains a mystery. Gene Miller, the Washington-based lawyer for Chesapeake Shipping, said he is unsure who proposed them.

Sandifer of the Coast Guard said the ships' new owner has no legal obligation to change the names.

Hughes said he has been unable to find out why the New Jersey names were picked.

"I don't mind the added publicity, and I'm sure our communities won't either," he said. But he wondered if the publicity might turn sour -- the same risk some members of Congress have noted with the Persian Gulf policy.⁶

Nearly a month later, the *Los Angeles Times* reported:

Navy to Begin Escorting Kuwaiti Tankers July 22

July 15, 1987|JAMES GERSTENZANG AND JOSH GETLIN | Times Staff Writers

WASHINGTON — U.S. Navy vessels will begin protecting Kuwaiti oil tankers in the Persian Gulf on July 22, Adm. William J. Crowe Jr., the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, told House and Senate leaders Tuesday.

Crowe disclosed the information in a Capitol Hill briefing, House Armed Services Committee Les Aspin (D-Wis.), who attended the meeting, said. He quoted Crowe as saying that the first Kuwaiti ship will be escorted next week, a second will be escorted Aug. 6 and three more will receive U.S. protection later in the same month.

The Administration has decided to go slowly with the plan for "operational reasons," Aspin said. He added that White House officials did not say when Kuwait's remaining six tankers would receive U.S. protection.

Defense Secretary Caspar W. Weinberger, Secretary of State George P. Shultz and National Security Adviser Frank C. Carlucci also attended the meeting.

The timing of the operation has become a key issue in recent weeks as members of Congress have sought to delay the escorts, which the Administration says are designed to underscore its commitment to keeping open international shipping lanes in the gulf. Many fear for the safety of U.S. servicemen in the region, where Iran and Iraq have been at war for almost seven years, and where 37 U.S. sailors were killed in May when a U.S. frigate, the *Stark*, was attacked by an Iraqi jet.

Although no specific date had been set for the operation, which was originally scheduled to begin in June, it had been delayed several times. Administration officials have

attributed the postponements to military preparations and the time-consuming process of re-registering the Kuwaiti vessels under the American flag.

Kuwait, which has backed Iraq financially and militarily, sought the protection for its tankers last winter in the face of Iranian attacks on its shipping in the gulf and reported Iranian efforts to mine Kuwaiti waters.

White House spokesman Marlin Fitzwater, addressing another factor in the escort plan, told reporters Tuesday that the United States had received "final approval" from Saudi Arabia for its assistance in providing aerial reconnaissance from airborne warning and control system (AWACS) aircraft, operated jointly by U.S. and Saudi crews.

The House approved a non-binding resolution last week asking the Administration to delay the policy for 90 days. In the Senate, however, Democrats failed for the third time Tuesday to force a vote on a non-binding resolution that urges the Administration to delay the protection operation.⁷

Iran attacked ships serving the Arab side of the Gulf to intimidate the Gulf States supporting Iraq as well as to reduce Iraq's imports. It was analogous to a blockade which generally is offensive to the high seas freedoms enjoyed by neutral nations.

In 1981 Iraq started the tanker war in the Gulf by initiating attacks on ships steaming to or from Iranian ports at the extreme northern end of the Gulf. This continued for nearly three years without a parallel Iranian response at sea. In March 1984, Iraq increased the rate of its attacks and expanded their geographic scope by attacking ships serving more southerly Iranian points, particularly the oil-loading complex at Kharg Island. Two months later, Iran initiated its own attacks, and the tanker war became a two-way affair.

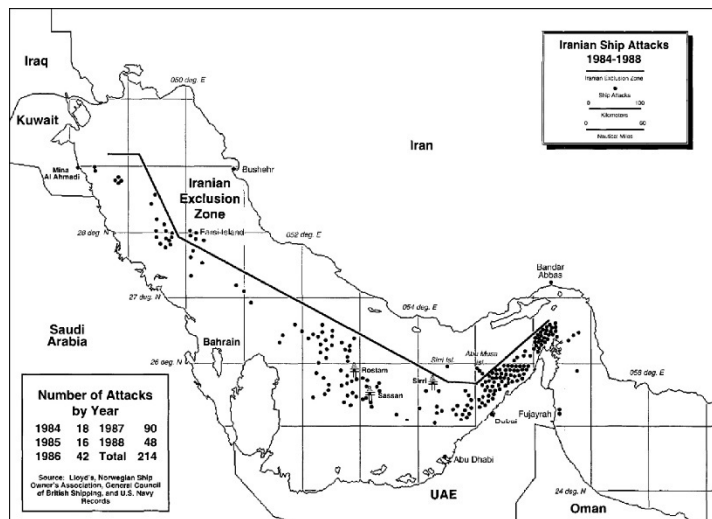


Fig. 3: Number of attacks in the Gulf, by year. ⁸

The Iraqi mine attack occurred near Kuwait, within a day of the Iraqi attack on USS *Stark* (FFG 31). The victim of the mining was one of three Soviet-flag ships chartered by Kuwait. Mining accounted for few attacks in 1987.

The Reagan administration worked out the basic details of the plan to escort the reflagged tankers in talks with Kuwait in the early months of 1987. The administration informed Congress and then the public about the operation in the latter part of March, and initiated the first convoy on 21-22 July. The war was ended about 13 months later. By the end of the year, 23 escorted transits involving a total of 56 ships were reported to have been completed. The above-normal cost of U. S. operations in and around the Gulf (which include, but are not limited to, the escorting of the reflagged Kuwaiti tankers) was estimated at \$69 million for fiscal year 1987, and \$10 million to \$15 million per month in fiscal year 1988.

Operation Earnest Will (24 July 1987 – 26 September 1988) was the protection of Kuwaiti-tankers (now owned and reflagged by the U.S.) from Iranian attacks years into the Tanker War. It was the largest naval convoy operation since World War II. The ships used in Operation Earnest Will consisted mostly of Battleship Battle Groups, Carrier Battle Groups, Surface Action Groups, and ships from the Third, Sixth, and Seventh Fleets.

Also, this was the first tactical operation of the US Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) that involved Navy SEALs, Special Boat Units, and 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment (Airborne) ("Nightstalkers") aviators.

MT Bridgeton Incident

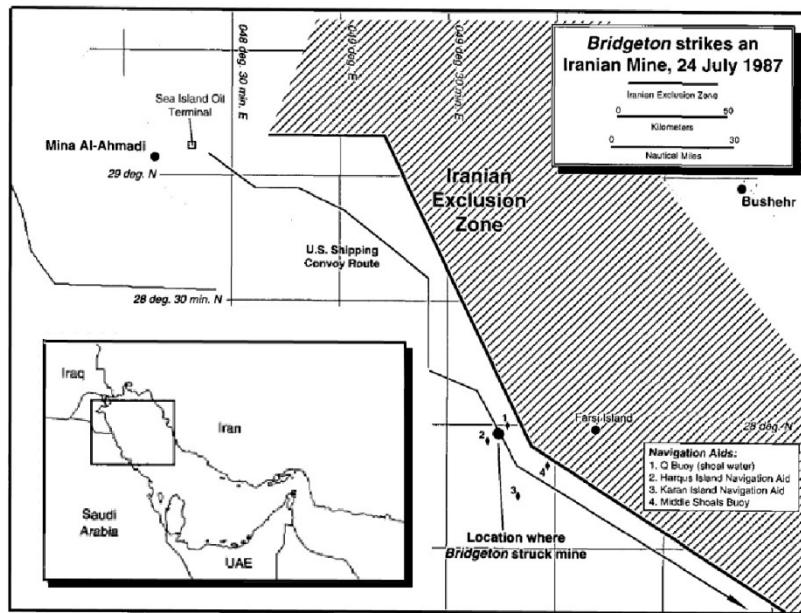


Fig. 4: Bridgeton's convoy route and the place it was hit.⁹

During the first escort mission, on 24 July 1987, the Kuwaiti oil tanker *al-Rekkah*, reflagged as MT *Bridgeton* and escorted by US navy warships, struck an Iranian submarine mine planted some 20 miles west of Farsi Island the night earlier by an Iranian Revolutionary Army special unit, damaging the ship, but causing no injuries. *Bridgeton* proceeded under her own power to Kuwait, with the U.S. Navy escorts following astern to avoid mines.

The commander of the task force admitted that in spite of intelligence warnings, no one had thought it necessary to check the route for mines. Soon it was disclosed that the U.S. did not

have any minesweepers in the Persian Gulf, nor did it have any easily accessible minesweepers at all, so the escort operation was placed on hold until minesweepers would be available. The Pentagon deployed eight minesweeping RH 53 Sea Stallion helicopters, five oceangoing minesweepers, and six small coastal minesweepers.

Subsequent Operations

During the following 14 months, many U.S. warships took up escort duties. At one point, more than 30 warships supported the operations.



Fig.5: MH-60 landing on Hercules.¹⁰

Operation Prime Chance

Operation Earnest Will overlapped with Operation Prime Chance, a largely secret effort to stop Iranian forces from attacking Persian Gulf shipping. Despite the protection offered by U.S. Navy vessels, Iran used mines and small boats to harass the convoys steaming to and from Kuwait, a principal ally of Iraq. Special Boat Teams with six Mark III Patrol Boats and two Navy SEAL platoons were deployed. The Middle East Force converted two oil service barges, *Hercules* and *Wimbrown VII*, into mobile sea bases. These vessels were moored in the northern Persian Gulf, allowing special operations forces to thwart clandestine Iranian mining and small boat attacks.

On 21 September 1987 MH 6 and AH 6 launched from USS *Jarrett* (FFG 33) and USS *Klasking* (FFG 42) to track the Iranian ship, *Iran Ajr*. The helo crews watched *Iran Ajr* turn off its lights and begin laying mines. After receiving permission to attack, the helicopters fired guns and rockets, stopping the ship. *Iran Ajr*'s crew continued to push mines over the side, and the aircraft resumed firing until the crew abandoned ship. At first light, a SEAL team, assisted by Special Boat Teams, boarded the vessel and discovered nine mines on the vessel's deck, as well as a logbook revealing areas where previous mines had been laid. USS *Hawes* (FFG 53) towed the mine layer (a converted tank landing craft) to the Iran-Iraq war zone. Explosive Ordnance Disposal technicians from EOD Mobile Unit 5 scuttled the vessel the following day. The logbook implicated Iran in mining international waters. Special operations forces launched three Little Bird aircraft and two patrol craft to the buoy. The aircraft arrived first and were fired upon by three Iranian boats anchored near the buoy. In a short but intense firefight, the aircraft sank all three boats. The captured and wounded Iranians were later taken aboard the USS *Guadalcanal* LPH-7 for treatment, and later transported to an undisclosed location for interrogation.

Operation Nimble Archer



Fig. 6: Rostam, one of two Iranian oil platforms set ablaze after shelling by US destroyers.

On 15 October, the reflagged U.S. tanker *Sea Isle City* was struck by an Iranian Silkworm missile while anchored near the oil terminal outside Kuwait City. Seventeen crewmen and the American captain were injured in the attack. On 18 October, the U.S. Navy responded. Four ships shelled two oil platforms in the *Rostam* oil field. After the shelling, USS *Thach* (FFG 43) landed a SEAL platoon and a demolition unit that planted explosives on one of the platforms to destroy it. The SEALs next boarded and searched a third platform two miles away where documents and radios were captured for intelligence.

On 14 April 1988, 65 miles east of Bahrain, USS *Samuel B. Roberts* (FFG 58) struck a mine causing significant hull damage; 10 crewmen were injured. On 18 April, U.S. forces launched Operation Praying Mantis, attacking the Iranian frigates *Sabalan* and *Sahand* and oil platforms in the Sirri and Sassan oil fields. After U.S. warships bombarded the *Sirri* platform and set it ablaze, a UH-60 helicopter with a SEAL platoon flew toward the platform but was unable to get close enough because of the roaring fire. Secondary explosions soon wrecked the platform.

Admiral A. N. Langston, US Navy, Retired, described the strikes he led to sink an Iranian warship.

Shortly after takeoff, [on 18 April] the Battle Group air intelligence officer (E-2) alerted us and the carrier of indications that a Saam-class frigate in Banbar Abbas was getting underway. We were already approaching Strait of Hormuz when the signals collection aircraft from VAQ-135 informed me they confirmed a Saam frigate electronic emission at a 2:00 position. My B/N confirmed radar contact and forward-looking infrared imagery (FLIR) of possibly the frigate *Sabalan* coming out of port at Bandar Abbas making about thirty knots. It was difficult getting a visual to sufficiently identify the ship because of the milk bowl low horizontal visibility in the Gulf.

Positive identification was mandatory. I made the decision to fly close aboard the ship to visually ID it even though we would be vulnerable to attack. I put the A-6 in steep dive five miles astern of the target ship leveling out below 100 feet elevation at 500 knots. As we approached about a mile astern, the ship opened up with AAA and possibly shoulder-fired anti-aircraft missiles or rocket-propelled grenades.



Fig. 7: Iranian frigate IS Sahand (74) burns after being attacked by aircraft of Carrier Air Wing 11 from the nuclear-powered aircraft carrier USS Enterprise (CVN 65), in retaliation for the mining of the guided missile frigate USS Samuel B. Roberts (FFG 58). The ship was hit by three Harpoon missiles plus cluster bombs. (USN Photo # DN-SN-89-3122)

We went by the ship's port side at deck level which had Sabalan's number on its hull. Bright AAA muzzle flashes and tracers passed behind us as the Iranian gunners failed to lead their shots.

We egressed out twenty miles, called the E-2 on positive ID and told them to pass to the Enterprise: 'launch the Strike Group.' I then came up UHF Guard channel and told the Sabalan that they had five minutes to abandon ship because I was going to sink them.

We didn't see anyone abandoning ship after ten or so minutes, so we made a Harpoon attack. The missile failed to launch so we had to go out again reset all the ordnance switches and make another run. This time, the missile locked on and launched correctly. We watched the Harpoon skim low on the water and impact the frigate behind the bridge. Fire and billowing black smoke came from the explosion and the ship went dead in the water. We made another attack run with the Skipper rocket assisted bombs and a laser guided bomb.

By this time, I could hear the Walleye-equipped A-7s calling in hot followed by the A-6 calling out the Harpoon attack. One Walleye hit the front gun turret in a massive explosion, knocking it partially off the deck. Subsequent hits put the ship further ablaze as the remaining four A-7s rolled in with their strings of 500-pound bombs. The ship remained on fire and listed heavily but did not sink as the attack ended and the strike group egressed.

As we climbed back to altitude en route back to Enterprise, I heard the E-2 report another frigate coming out of Bandar Abass at high speed behind the track of what I thought was the Sabalan. One of the A-6 SUCAP aircraft flew overhead it and took fire from the frigate. In accordance with the rules of engagement calling for immediate retaliation, the A-6 attacked with 500 pound LGB hitting the ship right at the stack. They saw flames and smoke explode from the impact and the ship went dead in the water. The ship had the Hull number of the Sahand. The A-6 called on UHF Command Net asking permission to

continue the attack to sink the frigate. This transmission was heard by Admiral Less, the War Room in the Pentagon and the White House Crisis Room with President Reagan listening. President Reagan intervened and told Admiral Crowe to call off the attack saying the Iranian²s had enough for one day.

It wasn't until we got back to the ship later that night that [we learned] the Sahand was the ship hit by the War at Sea Strike and the Sabalan was the Frigate hit by the single LGB. It took the Sahand several hours into the evening before it rolled over and went to the bottom.¹¹

Iranian attacks on neutral ships dropped drastically. On 3 July 1988, USS *Vincennes* shot down Iran Air Flight 655 over the Strait of Hormuz after mistaking the delayed flight for an Iranian F-14. All 290 passengers and aircrew aboard the Airbus A300B2 died.

Iran agreed to a ceasefire on 18 July 1988 and a permanent end to hostilities on 20 August 1988, ending its eight-year war with Iraq. On 26 September 1988, USS *Vandegrift* escorted the operation's last tanker to Kuwait. The remaining SEALs, patrol boats, and helicopters then returned to the U.S.

In 1993, the World Court ruled that U.S. attacks on Iranian oil platforms in 1987-1988 were not justifiable as self-defense, but the United States did not violate the controlling treaty with Iran. One legal scholar observed:

[T]he International Court of Justice (ICJ or Court), the principal judicial organ of the United Nations located in The Hague, The Netherlands, ruled, by 14 votes to two, that a series of retaliatory attacks by the U.S. Navy against certain Iranian oil platforms in the Persian Gulf in 1987 and 1988, although constituting an unlawful use of force, did not violate a 1955 commerce treaty between the U.S. and Iran since the attacks did not adversely affect freedom of commerce between the territories of the parties. The judges from Egypt and Jordan dissented. The ICJ also rejected, by 15 votes to one, the U.S. counterclaim seeking a finding of Iran's liability for interfering with the freedoms of commerce and navigation in the Gulf by attacking ships through missiles and mines. The judgment, which comes at a time when the requirements for the use of force are hotly debated among UN member states, includes important statements regarding [the legal] limits on the use of force, including the criteria of necessity and proportionality.¹²

Two years after the ceasefire, Iraq invaded and captured Kuwait. The United States led the "coalition of the willing" and began Operation Desert Shield to protect other Arab Moslem States from attack and in early 1991 commenced Operation Desert Storm to liberate Kuwait by defeating Iraq. Nearly half a century ago the British Empire retreated from East of Suez and the United States assumed effective responsibility of leadership and defense in much of the Middle East and beyond. The United States and the US Navy have been involved in continuous presence and hostilities in those foreign waters since Iran captured the US embassy in Teheran and seized the US hostages in November 1979.

**COVERS RELATING TO THE TANKER WAR
(including renamed tankers, and ships conveying them)**

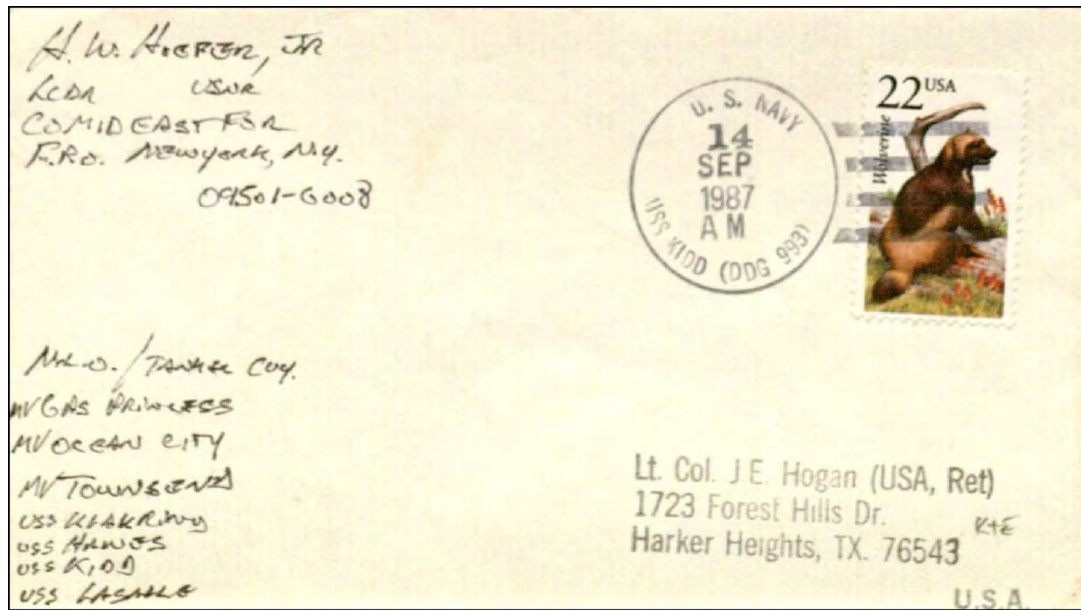


Fig. 8: A naval cover from USS Kidd (DGG 993) with the ship's rubber stamp on a US commemorative 22¢ stamp. Sent through FPO 09501-6008 (New York), it lists the renamed tankers and US naval vessels in this convoy. USS Kidd was deployed to the Persian Gulf to protect the renamed tankers.

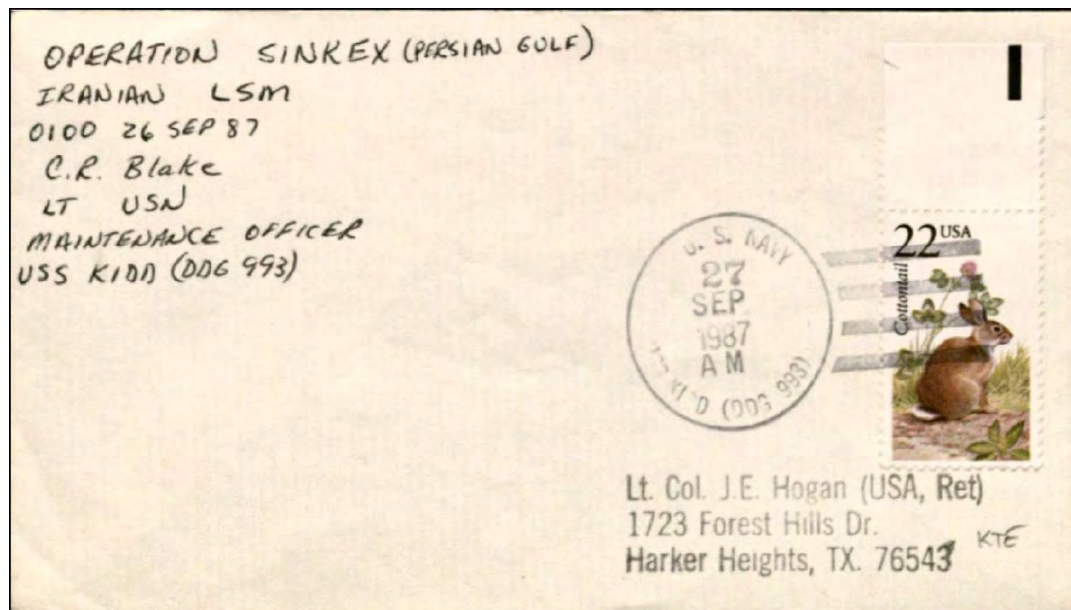


Fig. 9: A naval cover from USS Kidd (DGG 993) with the ship's rubber stamp on a US commemorative 22¢ stamp. . . Signed by the Maintenance Officer C. R. Blake while Kidd was deployed to the Persian Gulf to protect the renamed tankers.

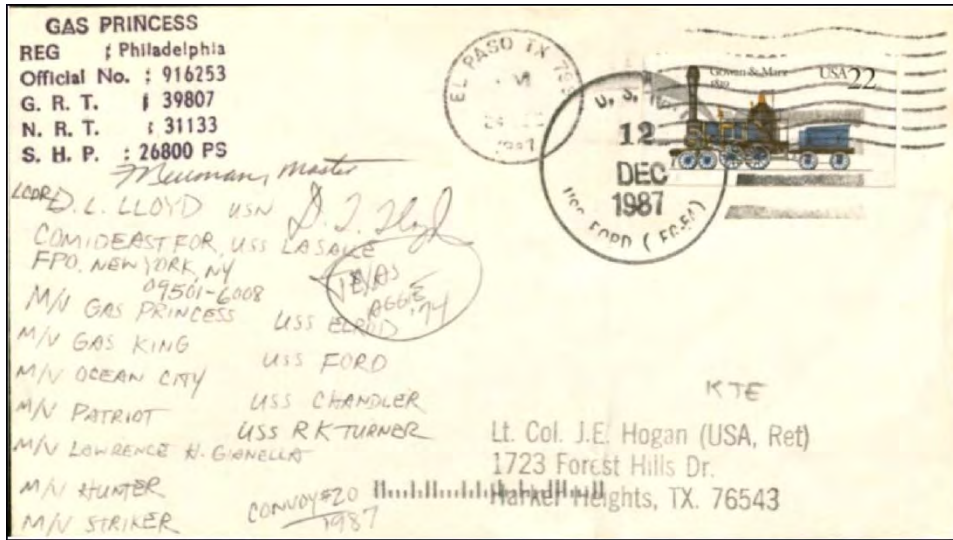


Fig. 10: A Convoy #20 1987 naval cover with a MT Gas Princess handstamp with the ship's rubber stamp showing her hailing port, Philadelphia, official number, details: gross and registered tonnage and shaft horsepower. It bears the handwritten return address of "LCDR D. D. Lloyd, USN, Commander, US Mideast Force, USS LaSalle, FPO, New York, NY 09501-6008 followed by the handwritten names of four warships, USS Elrod (FFG 55), USS Ford (FFG 54), USS Chandler (DDG 996), and USS Richmond K. Turner (CG 20), as well as seven merchant ships, Gas Princess, Gas King, Ocean City, Patriot, Lawrence H. Gianella [MSC ship], Hunter, and Striker. It bears a USS Ford (FFG-54) hand cancel dated 12 December 1987 during its service as part of Operation Earnest Will, and a 22¢ US commemorative stamp at the domestic rate and an El Paso Dec. 24 machine transit cancel, which it seems to have received on its way to Harker Heights (north of Austin), Texas.



Fig. 11: A naval cover with MT Gas King with the ship's rubber stamp showing her hailing port, Philadelphia, official number, details: gross and registered tonnage and shaft horsepower. It bears a USS Okinawa (LPH 3) hand cancel dated 23 December 1987. (Okinawa was deployed to the Persian Gulf in support of mine sweeping operations from 7 October 1987 to 7 April 1988).¹³ It carries a US definitive stamp at the domestic rate.

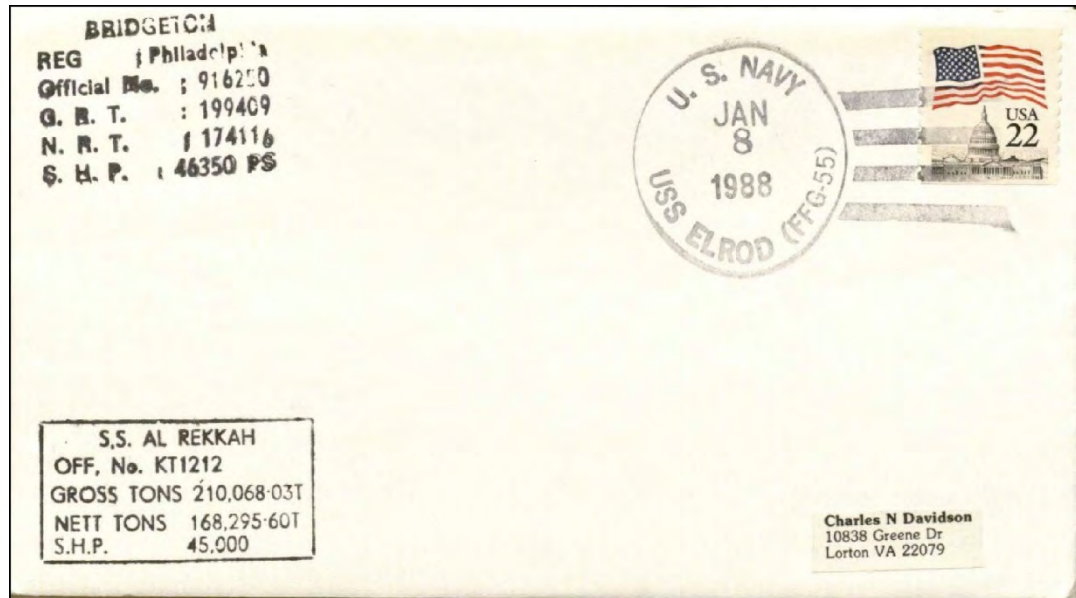


Fig. 12: A cover with a MT Bridgetown handstamp with the ship's rubber stamp showing her hailing port, Philadelphia, official number, details: gross and registered tonnage and shaft horsepower. The lower rectangular box bears the ship's prior name, S.S. Al Rekkah, Kuwaiti Official Number and details. N.B. The discrepancies between the details in both boxes. It has a USS Elrod (FFG 55) hand cancel dated 8 January 1988 and a US definitive stamp at the domestic rate.

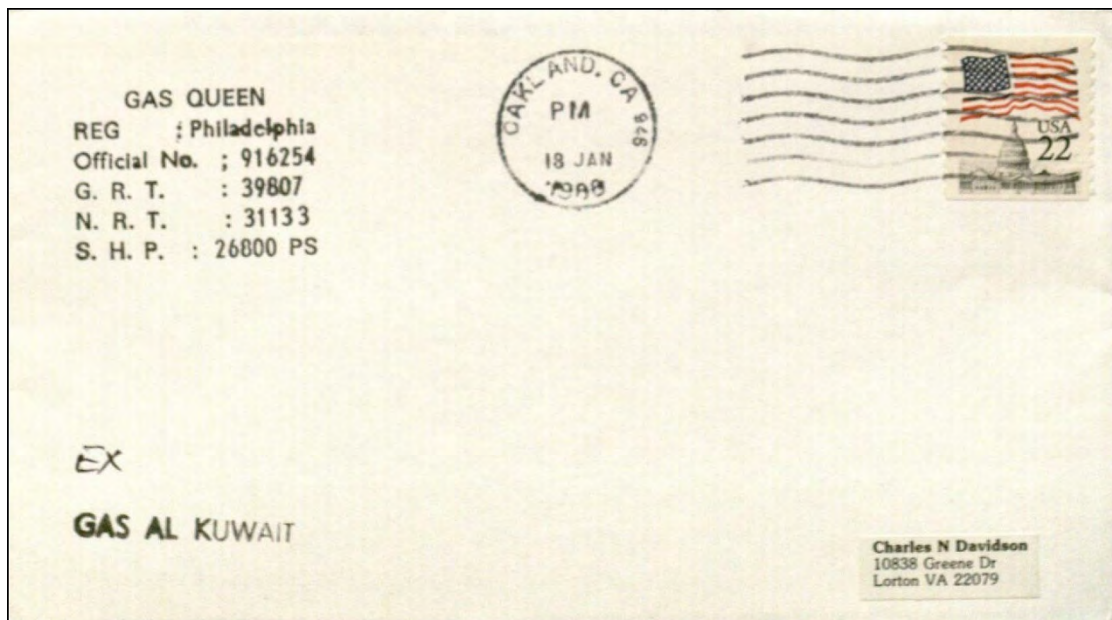


Fig. 13: A cover from MT Gas Queen with the ship's rubber stamp showing her hailing port, Philadelphia, official number, details: gross and registered tonnage and shaft horsepower. The lower straight line marking is her prior name, Gas Al Kuwait. It was posted in Oakland, and bears an Oakland, California machine cancel dated 18 January 1988 and a US definitive stamp at the domestic rate.

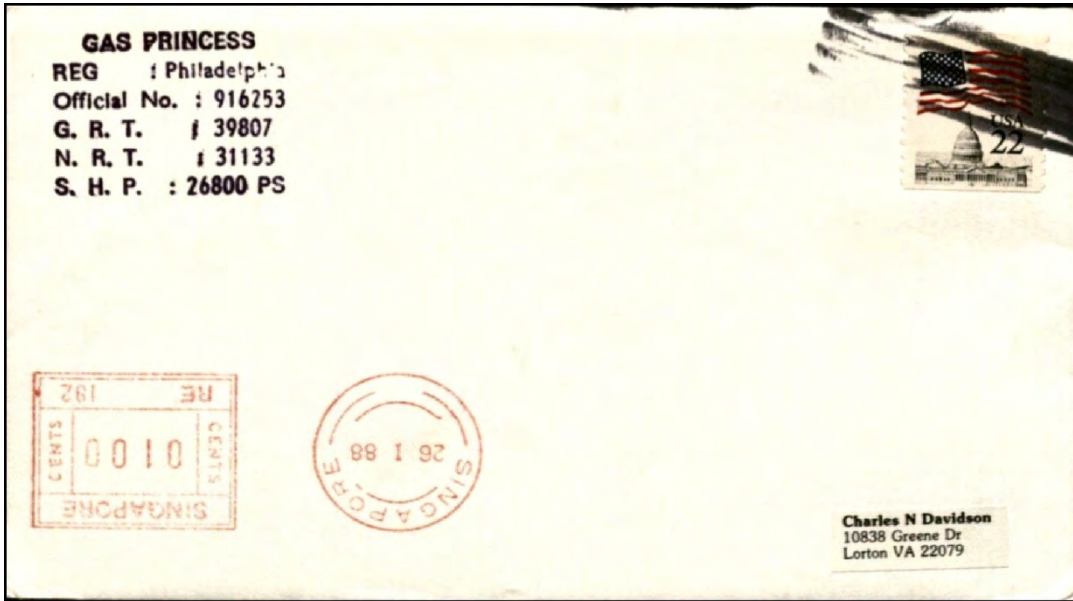


Fig. 14: A cover from MT Gas Princess with the ship's rubber stamp showing her hailing port, Philadelphia, official number, details: gross and registered tonnage and shaft horsepower. It bears a multiple straight line cancel obliterating the stamp, an inverted Singapore machine post meter in lieu of a cancel dated 26.1.88 paying the postage, and a US domestic rate definitive stamp, obliterated and not part of the postage

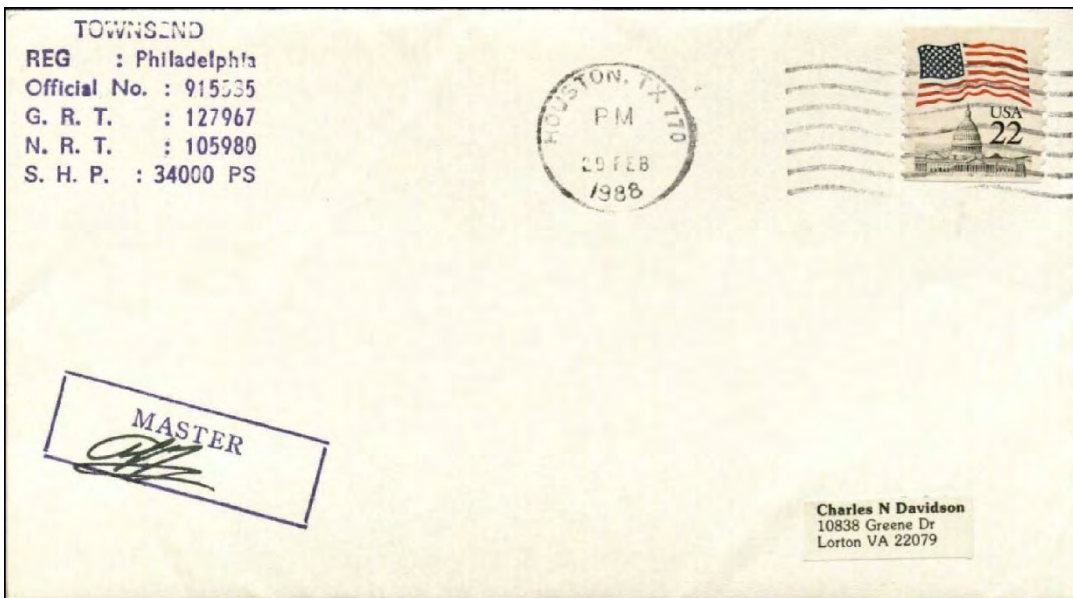


Fig. 15: A cover from MT Townsend with the ship's rubber stamp showing her hailing port, Philadelphia, official number, details: gross and registered tonnage and shaft horsepower. The lower rectangular box bears the Master's illegible signature. It appears to be posted in Houston; it bears a Houston, Texas machine cancel dated 29 February 1988 (Leap Day) and a US definitive stamp at the domestic rate.

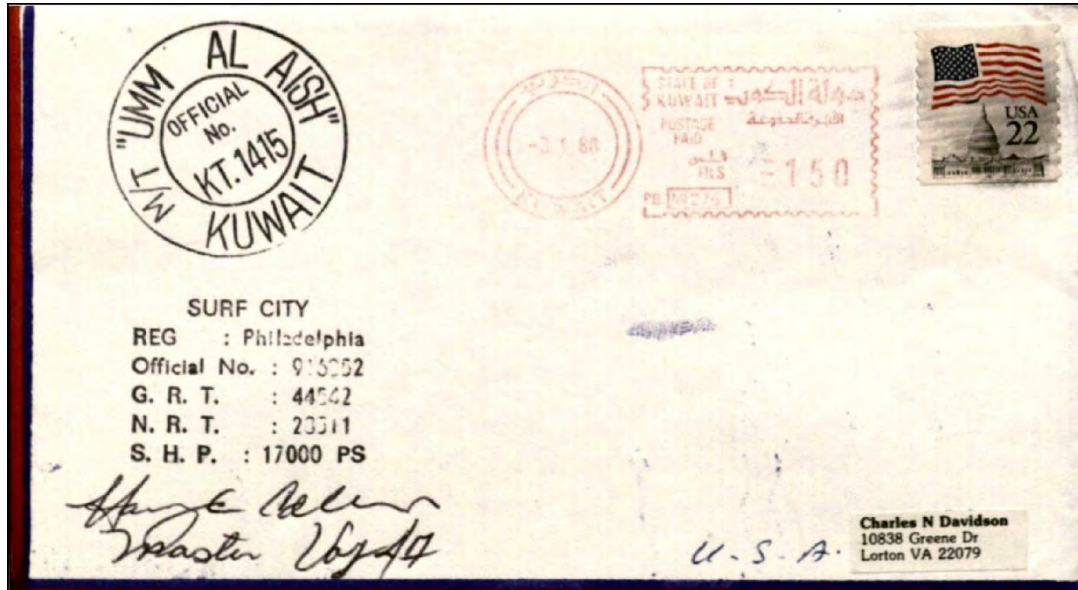


Fig. 16: A cover from MT Surf City with the ship's rubber stamp showing her hailing port, Philadelphia, official number, details: gross and registered tonnage and shaft horsepower. The upper circular marking bears her former name, M/T Umm Al Aish, and Kuwaiti Official number. The Master's signature is beneath the markings. It is cancelled with a Kuwaiti machine post meter dated 3.1.88 which pays the postage, and a US 22¢ definitive stamp at the domestic rate which is obliterated and not part of the postage payment.



Fig. 17: A sailor's mail cover from Chief Warrant Officer G.M. McCary, Attack Squadron 94 with his handwritten return address and machine cancel from USS Enterprise (CVN 65) dated 11 May 1988 on a 22¢ embossed envelope plus a 3¢ definitive stamp at the domestic rate. Enterprise was the first nuclear powered carrier to transit the Suez Canal during this deployment, as part of Operation Earnest Will.¹⁴

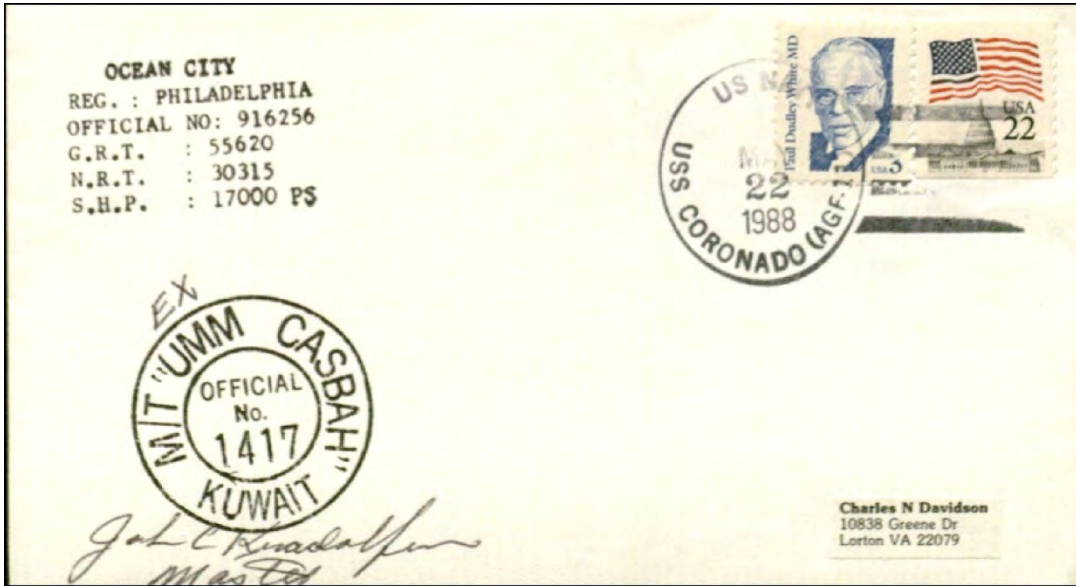


Fig. 18: A naval cover from MT Ocean City with the ship's rubber stamp showing her hailing port, Philadelphia, official number, details: gross and registered tonnage and shaft horsepower. The lower circular marking bears her former name, M/T Umm Casbah, and Kuwaiti Official number. The Master's signature is beneath the markings. It bears a USS Coronado (AGF 1) hand cancel during her deployment to the Persian Gulf as command ship for Commander, U.S. Middle East Force in January 1988, and flagship for Operation Praying Mantis.¹⁵ It is dated 22 May 1988, with a US commemorative stamp at the 22¢ domestic rate.

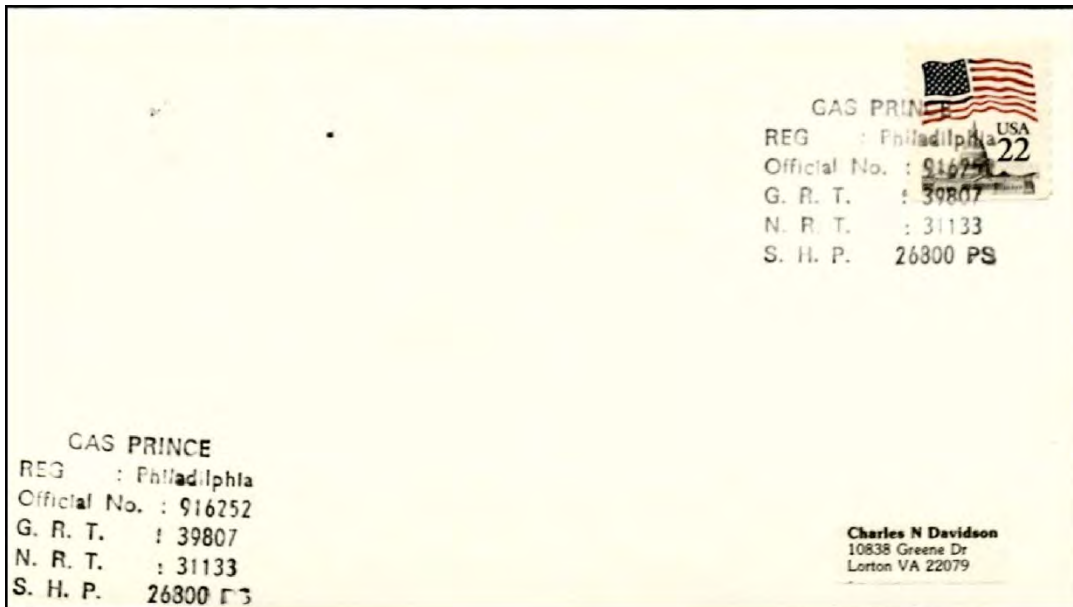


Fig. 19: A cover from MT Gas Prince with the ship's rubber stamp showing her hailing port, Philadelphia, official number, details: gross and registered tonnage and shaft horsepower. It bears a second version of the same marking in lieu of a postmark and a US definitive stamp at the 22¢ domestic rate, but no indication of mailing.

ENDNOTES:

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² Adjunct Professor of Law, Fordham Law School; Captain, U.S. Navy retired. While serving on CNO's staff, Captain Brennan was involved in the review, analysis, and declassification of the investigation into the Airbus Shoot down. He also was a consultant to the US Department of State regarding factual and legal issues that led to the ultimate resolution of the claim by Iran for loss of the Airbus and deaths of the passengers. Nearly a decade earlier, he was the Legal Officer in USS *Nimitz* (CVN 68) when she launched the helicopters as part of the Iranian Hostage Rescue Mission. He was Navy's nominee to be the environmental war crimes prosecutor following the First Gulf War.

³ http://www.iranchamber.com/history/iran_iraq_war/iran_iraq_war3.php

⁴ http://www.iranchamber.com/history/iran_iraq_war/iran_iraq_war3.php

⁵ <http://www.icj-cij.org/files/case-related/90/8632.pdf>

⁶ <https://www.nytimes.com/1987/06/18/world/casbah-aka-ocean-city.html>

⁷ http://articles.latimes.com/1987-07-15/news/mn-2502_1_kuwaiti-tanker

⁸ <http://www.icj-cij.org/files/case-related/90/8632.pdf>

⁹ <http://www.icj-cij.org/files/case-related/90/8632.pdf>

¹⁰ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:MH-60_Blackhawk_landing_on_Hercules.JPG

¹¹ <http://www.navyhistory.org/2017/04/operation-praying-mantis-an-enterprise-combat-mission/>

¹² Bekker, Pieter H. F., "The World Court Finds that U.S. Attacks on Iranian Oil Platforms in 1987-1988 Were Not Justifiable as Self-Defense, but the United States Did Not Violate the Applicable Treaty with Iran", 8 *ASIL Insights* 25, November 11, 2003. <https://www.asil.org/insights/volume/8/issue/25/world-court-finds-us-attacks-iranian-oil-platforms-1987-1988-were-not>

¹³ [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/USS_Okinawa_\(LPH-3\)#Gulf_War](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/USS_Okinawa_(LPH-3)#Gulf_War)

¹⁴ [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/USS_Enterprise_\(CVN-65\)#1980s](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/USS_Enterprise_(CVN-65)#1980s)

¹⁵ [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/USS_Coronado_\(AGF-11\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/USS_Coronado_(AGF-11))

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