
SHIPS TRANSFERS--VIEWED FROM THE BELOW DECKS

By

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As the U.S. Navy builds toward a 600 ship fleet, our attention tends to focus on the mighty combatants of the future, such as the Aegis cruiser and the Trident submarine. Yet, many of our ships of the past continue to defend the free world in allied navies through the ship transfer program. Ship transfers are among the most visible and tangible of security assistance endeavors.

One such ship is the Turkish Republic ship TCG HIZIRREIS (S-342), formerly USS GUDGEON (SSAG-567). [Editor's note: Gudgeon was the first U.S. submarine to circumnavigate the world during February 1957 - February 1958.] The U.S. Navy transferred GUDGEON, a diesel-powered submarine, to the Turkish Navy on September 30, 1983. The GUDGEON transfer exemplified defense cooperation between allied nations at its best. Lessons learned in the GUDGEON transfer are shared below to assist SAOs in future ship transfers and other cooperative ventures.

PRE-IMPLEMENTATION

The Director of Security Assistance in the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations (CNO/OP-63) continually monitors the ship transfer wants and needs of allied navies. Turkey had registered its desire for conventionally powered submarines with OP-63, and had obtained the TANG, the first ship of its class, in 1980 via ship transfer. Then, after preliminary coordination with DOD and State Department agencies, OP-63 proposed to also offer the GUDGEON, a sister vessel of the TANG, to the Government of Turkey. This began the pre-implementation phase of the GUDGEON transfer.

The pre-implementation phase of a ship transfer initiates a complex transaction delineated in OPNAVINST 4900.90 (series). In the pre-implementation phase, (1) the ship to be transferred must be formally requested by the foreign government, (2) coordination of COMSEC equipment releasability and availability is commenced, (3) authorization for transfer, including approval by OSD and Department of State and Congressional notification under 10 USC 7307 must be obtained, and (4) the pre-implementation culminates with a formal offer to, and acceptance by, the foreign government.

Much like a surfer, the project officer in a ship transfer is better off slightly ahead of the wave than slightly behind, where the whole ride can be lost. In other words, a number of additional actions have to be initiated early on during pre-implementation, even though they may at the time seem somewhat premature.

One such action is identifying the members of the mobile training team (MTT). The GUDGEON was a "hot ship" transfer, meaning there was no interim between the U.S. decommissioning and the subsequent recommissioning under foreign flag. Accordingly, the GUDGEON MTT was comprised of selected members of the GUDGEON U.S. crew at the time of decommissioning. These members remained with the ship as the Turkish crew prepared for its voyage home.

The MTT should be identified about six months prior to the transfer, in order to allow sufficient time to administer follow-on assignments.

The importance of selecting a quality MTT cannot be overemphasized. The charter of the MTT to ensure a safe, effective transfer and provide maximum training to the foreign crew is an awesome task. Language and cultural barriers must be overcome in the midst of around-the-clock drills, instructional sessions, provisioning and repairs. Every member of the MTT must be dedicated to a successful transfer, and at the same time patient and sensitive to the problems of his foreign counterparts. Key ranks, specialties, and skill levels, within MTT numbers limitations, should be represented in the MTT.

In the case of a "cold ship" transfer, where a ship has been decommissioned and inactive for some time, the role of the MTT is even more complex. In addition to the normal training, drilling, and provisioning, the MTT in a cold ship transfer must assist in the ship's reactivation by the foreign crew. Their assignment will normally last longer than that of a hot ship MTT.

The composition of the recipient country's transfer crew is also critical, as is the early identification of the crew members. In the GUDGEON transfer, the Turkish transfer crew Commanding Officer had previously served as Executive Officer in the former TANG, sister ship to the GUDGEON. Most of his officers and petty officers had also served in the ex-TANG at one time or another, and all were experienced submariners. A country receiving a first-of-its-class ship might not have such a clear advantage in experience as the Turkish GUDGEON transfer crew, but any amount of experience pays dividends, particularly in a ship transfer.

The Turkish transfer crew assembled in Turkey a month prior to their departure to San Diego. They formed a watch organization, visited the ex-TANG, and even conducted some simple drills. The importance of establishing a crew identity prior to arriving in the U.S., as this Turkish transfer crew did, cannot be overstated. It is all they have to rely on once they have arrived in a strange country and taken the helm of a strange ship. Their shipmates, at least, should not be total strangers.

OTHER PRE-IMPLEMENTATION PHASE ACTIONS

General: It helps to have an SAO representative at the site of the transfer to assist the implementing agent in coordination and liaison. While keeping the single point of contact--CNO/OP-63--continually informed, establishing early informal contact with the prospective implementing agent facilitates coordinating the transfer and subsequent support.

Ammunition: Except for small arms ammo and pyrotechnics, any gun ammunition, missiles, and torpedoes the recipient country wants to remain on board must be purchased separately under FMS. An early identification of ammunition desired by the recipient is essential. Experience has shown that a seemingly straightforward action (identifying ammo) can become a snag in the transfer. FMS cases take time to implement, and no captain of a naval combatant wants to set sail without ammunition in the magazine, so get an early start.

Equipment Manuals: CNO delegates responsibility to screen and remove equipment from the transfer ship. These removals should be closely monitored. Removals can and should be challenged if there is reasonable justification for transferring the equipment with the ship. For example, a self-noise monitoring set which had been transferred to the Turkish Navy with TANG three years earlier was listed for removal from the GUDGEON. Investigation revealed there was no substantial USN requirement for the set and it was eventually transferred with GUDGEON.

Communications: Ensure the recipient Navy's communications plan is validated with U.S. support capabilities. In GUDGEON, the VLF equipment was removed, leaving the ship with an HF capability only. U.S. support capability, however, was primarily VLF, which necessitated considerable special efforts to arrange communications support. Advance coordination of the recipient's OPORDER with the implementing agent is advisable. One-way "transmission-in-the-blind" OPORDERS foreshadow endless OPORD changes.

Billeting and Shorebasing: In small ship transfers, such as submarines where on-board accommodations are limited, consideration should be given to arranging shore billeting to augment on-board berthing. As a minimum, office and storage space ashore should be arranged. This can be a considerable morale boost to the transfer crew, particularly while the ship is deep in the throes of provisioning, repairs, and drills in preparation for the homeward transit.

Controlled Medical Substances: Narcotics and anesthetics are removed from the ship prior to transfer unless specifically requested by the recipient country. Injuries are always possible during any shipboard evolution, so the recipient country should be strongly encouraged to specifically request at least small amounts of selected medical supplies.

Medical Entitlements: BUMEDINST 6320.31B (Section E) and NMPC INST 1750.1G (Appendix 3) state that active duty NATO personnel on temporary duty in the U.S. are authorized full medical entitlements the same as U.S. active duty personnel. Check the governing directives to verify the entitlements of the transfer crew members.

Third Country Diplomatic Clearances: If the transferred ship is to make port calls enroute to its home waters or transit sovereign waterways, the recipient country must obtain diplomatic clearance from the appropriate third countries. Encourage the recipient country to initiate their diplomatic clearance requests at least three months in advance to avoid embarrassing hold-ups when the ship attempts to enter territorial waters.

IMPLEMENTATION

When the four principal pre-implementation arrangements have been completed, OP-63 begins orchestrating the implementation phase. The primary instrument in the implementation phase is a planning directive issued by OP-63. This directive includes formal tasking of actions like those discussed earlier which should actually be initiated during the pre-implementation phase. The directive also designates the implementing agent, who acts as on-the-scene coordinator for the transfer.

TRANSFER AND SUBSEQUENT SUPPORT

The implementing agent becomes the focus of almost all events as the transfer date draws near. The GUDGEON transfer implementing agent, Commander Submarine Group FIVE in San Diego, made painstaking preparations to accommodate the transfer crew, arrange the transfer ceremony, ensure the material completeness and readiness of the ship, and oversee training to ensure operational readiness.

Public Affairs (PA): The Navy Chief of Information (CHINFO) is tasked by CNO to provide PA guidelines. Upon request, CHINFO may also arrange for film/video coverage of the transfer ceremony. Bear in mind U.S. video (NTSC) is not compatible with European (PAL) systems. Arrange to have one copy of the coverage delivered to the ship, and one to the SAO. This coverage can generate very favorable recipient country media recognition of the U.S. Security Assistance Program.

Hosting: The implementing agent, usually a squadron or group command, is often hard pressed to entertain large groups. Try getting the local Navy League interested in hosting some social events for the foreign transfer crew.

Milestones: The Navy Section at JUSMMAT developed a local-use, systematic chart (Figure 1 on the following pages) to compliment OPNAVINST 4900.90D guidance in tracking ship transfer milestones. This sort of management device can be extremely useful during the course of a ship transfer, especially for small SAOs.

Turks and Americans, representing over 30 Turkish and American service commands and government agencies, shared the success in the safe, effective completion of the GUDGEON transfer. The transfer culminated on December 16, 1983, after almost three years of coordination, when the newly commissioned Turkish Republic Ship TCG HIZIRREIS (S-342) proudly entered Izmit Bay to moor at the Turkish Main Naval Base, Golcuk, Turkey. The former GUDGEON was more than 10,000 nautical miles from her previous homeport of San Diego; yet, as she took her place in the Turkish submarine fleet halfway around the world, she would continue to serve the cause of freedom. As Chief of Naval Operations Admiral James D. Watkins stated on the occasion of the GUDGEON transfer, "This transfer . . . is symbolic of the ties between our two navies and our shared determination to protect the freedoms we value so highly."

Such is the beauty of ship transfers, even as viewed by a project officer, from the below decks.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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FIGURE 1
CHECKLIST
SHIP TRANSFER MILESTONES

NAME: (USN) _____ (FN) _____

PRE-IMPLEMENTATION REQUIREMENTS:

1. Notice of Availability (OP-63) _____
2. Material Inspection (TNFC/NAS) _____
3. Formal Request (TNFC/ATT) _____
4. Initiating Message (NAS) _____

AUTHORITY TO TRANSFER:

1. 30-Day Notice to Congress (OP-63) _____
2. Enabling Legislation (OP-63) _____

FMS CASE IDENTIFICATION:

1. For Ship Transfer/Material (TNFC) _____
2. MTT (TNFC) _____

TRANSFER LOA (DD 1513):

1. Tendered to GOT (Attache) (OP-63) _____
2. Accepted by GOT (Attache) (Attache) _____
3. Implementing Message (OP-63) _____

MATERIAL:

Ammunition

1. Small Arms/Pyrotechnics (OP-63) _____
2. Other Ammo Identified (OP-63) _____
3. LOR for Ammo (TNFC) _____
4. LOA for Ammo (OP-63) _____
5. Loading Plan (OP-63/NAS) _____

COMSEC

1. LOR for COMSEC (TNFC) _____
2. LOA for COMSEC (OP-63/USASAC) _____

Medical

1. Controlled Substances Identified (OP-63) _____
2. LOR (TNFC) _____

Other Items Req. Exception

1. Typewriters (TNFC) _____
2. NBC Equipment (TNFC) _____
3. Other (TN) _____

LOGISTICS:

1. Turnover Date (OP-63)
2. Turnover Location (OP-63)
3. Fuel Oil Support (OP-63/TNFC)
4. CONUS Supply Source
Identified (OP-63)
5. COSAL Status (OP-63)
6. Port Services (OP-63)

REPAIRS:

1. CSMP/Material Status to TNFC
(OP-63/NAS)
2. Identification of Desired
Repairs (TNFC)
3. Identification of CONUS
Repair Activity (OP-63)

FUNDING:

1. Issue OA to Local CONUS Activities
for Repairs, Port Services, Crew
Support (NAVILCO)

TRAINING:

1. MTT/REFTRA LOR (TNFC/NAS)
2. MTT/REFTRA P&A (OP-63)
3. MTT/REFTRA LOA (OP-63)

CREW REQUIREMENTS:

Advance Party

1. Identify (OP-63/TNFC)
2. Transportation Plan (TNFC)
3. Berthing (OP-63/TNFC)
4. Messing (OP-63/TNFC)

Main Body

1. Identify (OP-63/TNFC)
2. Transportation Plan (TNFC)
3. Berthing (OP-63/TNFC)
4. Messing (OP-63/TNFC)

OPERATIONS:

1. OPORDS Promulgated (TNFC)
2. Estimated Departure CONUS
3. Estimated Arrival Turkey

REMARKS:
