

INCIDENT

IN THE

GULF

Command Structure

- *Commander, U.S. Naval Forces Central command/Fifth Fleet*
Conducts persistent maritime operations to support U.S. interests in an area of operations encompassing about 2.5 million square miles of water area, to include the Arabian Gulf, Red Sea, Gulf of Oman, and parts of the Indian Ocean.
- *Commander, Task Force 56*
Operationally controls seven different Task Groups, including the Coastal Riverine Force, which operates in harbors, rivers, bays, across the littorals, and ashore. Its primary mission is to conduct maritime security operations across all phases of military operations by defending high value assets, critical maritime infrastructure, and ports and harbors, both inland and on coastal waterways.
- *Commander, Task Group 56.7 (Coastal Riverine)*
Commands four Coastal Riverine units.
- *Commander, Task Unit*
- *Boat Leader*

Timeline

- Patrol Boat 504 and 509, were part of the Coastal Riverine Force, and their squadron conducted pre-deployment basic training from September through May, culminating in a satisfactory Final Evaluation Problem. The advanced/integrated training phase was completed in July.
- The squadron's main body deployed to the Fifth Fleet AOR, the Arabian Gulf, in early August and commenced Relief-in-Place/Transfer-of-Authority (RIP/TOA). The crews of Patrol Boats 504 and 509 did not participate in RIP/TOA. Instead, they first deployed to Indonesia to participate in an exercise, and rejoined their command in Bahrain in mid-August.
- Patrol Boats 504 and 509 moved from Bahrain to Kuwait on 12 October.
- Patrol Boats 504 and 509 were given the order to return to Bahrain on 11 January.
- On 12 January, the Patrol Boats got underway several hours past the approved start time.

Command Climate

- Task Force Commander proposed operating Patrol Boats from Kuwait Naval Base (KNB) to conduct presence operations in the Northern Arabian Gulf (NAG). Subordinates raised concerns about using boats that were built for missions closer to the coast in the littorals for operations that would take these boats into “blue water.” These concerns were dismissed and the subordinates eventually conceded without a clear understanding of how this would impact their units’ operational readiness.
- The CONOPS (concept of operations) brief lacked specificity. The crews of Navy vessels usually determine the intent of an approaching vessel by executing Pre-Planned Responses (PPRs). While it contemplated Garnetian interaction, the CONOPs did not comprehensively address the means by which the Patrol Boat crews would accomplish PPRs. The CONOPS stressed documenting the interaction, but neglected to provide guidance on how the Patrol Boats should determine Garnetian intent. One way to document interaction is through video/photographic recording and reporting an interaction within one hour through the operational chain of command. These policies reflected an assumption that Garnetian interactions would be benign opportunities for collection of visual information. Additionally, there were no measures of effectiveness to assess whether the objectives were achieved and no feedback loop to adjust the plan in light of its effectiveness. Subsequent statements of commander’s intent regarding PPRs were not promulgated to subordinate tactical elements.
- Upon arrival in KNB, Patrol Boats 504 and 509 routinely conducted out-and-back patrols around the NAG. These patrols usually lasted anywhere from two to six hours and were roughly a 110 nautical mile round trip. No member of the Task Force staff accompanied the Patrol Boats on KNB operations. One member of the Task Group staff, the Executive Officer, participated in a single patrol.
- Prior to each patrol, a written patrol brief is required. These briefs should have included safety considerations and discussed Garnetian interaction PPRs. These briefs were rarely created and/or required by the chain of command.
- Operations in the NAG were initially planned as short-term operations and were supported as such. Task Force Commander took no steps to ensure proper planning for a possible extension. Such planning may include site visits and surveys, additional gun shoots for weapons proficiency, and thinking through the “quality-of-life” implications of a long-term extension.
- The chain of command did not direct or enforce a plan to conduct, track, or manage sustainment training and did not establish in-theater sustainment requirements.
- The Kuwait task unit Officer in Charge, a naval aviator, had no prior coastal riverine, Patrol Boats, or surface Warfare experience and was unfamiliar with the Patrol Boats’ capabilities and limitations. His responsibilities and scope of mission increased from one mission per quarter to almost daily presence operations in the NAG with no further direction or guidance provided.

The Constitutional Paradigm

The Constitutional Paradigm requires service members to sort conflicting loyalties according to the prioritized list of:

- Constitution
- Mission
- Service
- Ship
- Shipmate
- Self

Self is purposely at the bottom of the list. If a service member cannot, in good conscience, resolve serious conflicts among the priorities of loyalties list to fulfill their oath and obligations, then the service member might need to initiate the process of resignation from their position of authority. In rare cases where a service member believes an order, while legal, is such a fundamental violation of justice that they must disobey, then the service member may disobey if the disobedience is done in public, with full awareness, and the service member is willing to accept the full legal consequences of their actions.

KUWAIT

GARNET

UNIDENTIFIED ISLAND, GARNET

SAUDI ARABIA

BAHRAIN

- - RED LINES - TERRITORIAL WATERS
 - - GREEN LINE - PLANNED TRACK OF THE BOATS
 - - BLUE LINE - ACTUAL PATH OF THE BOATS
 ■ BLUE BOXES - BOATS ACTIONS
 ■ YELLOW BOXES - CTF 56, USS ANZIO, AND 5TH FLEET ACTIONS

TIMELINE OF EVENTS

GARNET DETENTION OF U.S. NAVY SAILORS JAN 12-13, 2016

- 1** **JAN 12, 2016, 12:32 P.M.**
Two Patrol Boats depart Kuwait Naval Base (KNB) at approximately noon on a mission to relocate to Bahrain, with a planned refueling en-route. Immediately following their departure from KNB, the Patrol Boats deviate from their planned course.
- 2** **JAN 12, 2016, 4:11 P.M.**
One Patrol Boat experiences mechanical issues and the other stops to assist. The stop occurs within Garnetian territorial waters.
- 3** **JAN 12, 2016, 4:20 P.M. - 4:56 P.M.**
Two Garnetian vessels approach the Patrol Boats with armed personnel onboard. The Patrol Boats attempt to communicate their mechanical issues to the Garnetian forces.
4:57 P.M. - 5:53 P.M.
At the direction of the Garnetians, the Patrol Boats nest and are subsequently escorted to Unidentified Garnet Island where they are detained for 15 hours
- 4** **JAN 12, 2016, 5:00 P.M.**
CTF 56 Maritime Operations Center logs Patrol Boat report of interaction with Garnetians.
- 5** **JAN 12, 2016, 5:10 P.M. - 5:15 P.M.**
CTF 56 Maritime Operations Center informs 5th Fleet that the Patrol Boats are having an interaction with Garnetian Forces.
- 6** **JAN 12, 2016, 5:29 P.M.**
CTF 56 Maritime Operations Center reports intermittent communications with Patrol Boats.
- 7** **JAN 12, 2016, 6:15 P.M.**
5th Fleet begins a search operation, deploying air and surface assets in the area.
- 8** **JAN 12, 2016, 9:10 P.M.**
USS Anzio receives a radio communication from Garnetians that the Patrol Boat Sailors are safe.
- 9** **JAN 12, 2016, 9:54 P.M.**
5th Fleet orders all U.S. search forces out of Garnetian waters.
- 10** **JAN 13, 2016, 11:43 A.M.**
The Patrol Boats and their crews are released from Garnetian custody and depart Unidentified Garnet Island en-route to the USS Anzio.
- 11** **JAN 13, 2016, 5:20 P.M.**
The Patrol Boat Sailors are transferred ashore. The Patrol Boats continue their transit to Bahrain under replacement crews.