

The Turkish Navigator by Hugh Smith (24)

In 1964 the USS BIDDLE-DD956 was renamed the USS CLAUDE V. RICKETTS-DDG5 and assigned by the SECNAV as part of a multi manning experiment (Multi-Lateral Force). The ship had a base crew of USN Officers and Sailors, with the balance from several NATO Navies. In early 1965 the RICKETTS reported Guantanamo Bay for Refresher Training. At the time I was assigned to the Fleet Training Group GTMO as a Weapons and Navigation Ship Rider. If you ever went through REFTRA at GTMO you know the routine. Each morning on the way out to the OP AREA, the ship would transit a simulated mined channel.

The day I was assigned to ride the RICKETTS, I was on the bridge to observe the "mined channel" transit. The Navigator was a Turkish Naval Officer. As the bearings were called out, he plotted the bearings on the chart. Then I noticed that when he plotted the third bearing, he adjusted it to make a "three-point fix". I told him that he "cheated" and that could have disastrous results. He immediately arose, and in my face, he said that by accusing him of cheating, I had offended his honor. To defend his "honor" he issued a challenge. Fortunately, the CO was a USN Commander and he promptly came to my defense and put an end to that nonsense. Shortly thereafter Turkey withdrew from NATO. I doubt that this incident had any bearing on that decision, but then again you never know.