

## **USS *Samuel B. Roberts* (Competence, Communicating)**

The actions of USS *Samuel B. Roberts*' (FFG 58) crew, when faced with disaster after striking a mine in the Persian Gulf, exemplified the competence and communicating aspects of the Seven Cs.

In April 1988, USS *Samuel B. Roberts* was heading to a convoy assignment when the ship wandered into a field of naval mines laid by the Iranian Navy in the Persian Gulf. While backing out of the field, *Roberts* accidentally detonated a 253-pound explosion. The blast lifted the entire ship at the point of impact, and the stern rose a few feet more than the bow. The keel failed entirely: at the hull's lowest point, a 12-foot section of steel beam curled away like a pipe cleaner. A gas bubble came hard on the heels of the shockwave, and a fireball filled the ship's main engine room. The fireball burst out the ship's exhaust stack. Seawater rushed in through the 25-foot hole, and within minutes, 1800 tons of seawater sloshed into the ship's belly. This placed a dangerous load on the deck—and, if the deck came apart, the ship would break up and sink.

Damage control crews leapt into action. They worked hard to save their ship, even getting creative by using clothing, pillows, and mattresses to plug holes when the wooden plugs they were supposed to use weren't working. Once the crew got power back to the engine, while the rest of the damage control continued, Commander Paul Rinn realized he still needed to get his ship out of the minefield. In two hours, *Roberts* finally exited the minefield. In the following days, EOD teams discovered that the ship had tiptoed past nine other mines during this treacherous exit. At 2105 that evening, the blazes that had burned aboard the frigate for over four hours were at last extinguished.

Four days after the explosion, Vice Admiral William Rowden, the head of Naval Sea System Command, held a press conference. He explained how the ship held up well under the tremendous stress. But the real heroes of the story were not the inanimate objects: the main deck or the onboard firefighting equipment. Rowden reported, "Had she been left to her own devices, she likely would have sunk. The real thing that separates losing this ship from saving this ship was the performance of the crew."

*Competence is defined as the "ability to do something successfully or efficiently." Describe how USS Samuel B. Roberts' crew's actions exemplified competence.*

*Communicating is defined as "to share or exchange information, news, or ideas." How did USS Samuel B. Roberts' crew communicate effectively with one another, and how did that communication change the ship's future?*