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-Photo by Paige Gnann

Naval Station Mayport Color Guard presents the colors during the USS Stark memorial ceremony held on May 17, the 24th anniversary of the attack on the frigate. On May 17, 1987, two Iraqi missiles struck Stark and killed 37 crewmembers. Stark was homeported at NS Mayport at the time.

USS Stark Sailors Remembered

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Friends, family and fellow Sailors gathered at Mayport's Memorial Park on Tuesday, May 17 to honor the crewmembers whom were killed aboard the guided-missile frigate USS Stark (FFG 31) 24 years ago.

On May 17, 1987, while on patrol in the Arabian Gulf, 37 Sailors died when two Iraqi

missiles struck USS Stark. Damage to the ship was extreme, but could have been much worse if both missiles had exploded. Of the two missiles that struck portside, one failed. Despite the severe damage inflicted, the heroic efforts of Stark's crew saved the ship.

"We are celebrating their lives. We have Sailors who travel all over the world to

come to this ceremony just to remember their fallen shipmates," explained Naval Station Mayport Command Master Chief David Anderson. "We've been doing this for 24 years and it's very important that we keep this going to honor those that have come before us. If we forget where we come from, we're not going to have a way ahead."

Several members of the 1987

crew of Stark attended the service. Capt. David Brangaccio (Ret), the main propulsion assistant aboard Stark at that time, served as guest speaker for the observance.

"Our damage control team knew what they were doing and if not for them, it could have been far worse," stated Brangaccio. "I think we did the best we could. Despite that

belief, I offer my direct apology to everyone that lost a love one, that we who survived didn't do more or do something differently to save just one more life."

The service featured accounts of some of the events that occurred during the attack and also events that followed.

During the somber ceremony, the names of those killed at sea

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