

Iraqi government order for flowers surprises florist

By Laura Griffin

Staff writer

In her four years as a florist in Atlantic Beach, Mary Deal has filled orders for many people — including movie stars and other celebrities.

But the Florists Transworld Delivery call she received yesterday afternoon at the Plants n' Things Etc. flower shop beat them all.

Two hours after President Reagan left Mayport after attending a memorial service yesterday for the 37 sailors killed aboard the USS Stark, Ms. Deal began working on the most surprising order she ever had received.

The Iraqi government requested to send a \$140 arrangement to the memorial service to show its regrets.

"I deliver from anywhere in the free world, but this

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Atlantic Beach florist surprised by request

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was a shock — to say the least," she said. "I absolutely could not believe it, I'm telling you."

The arrangement, a wreath of roses, carnations, lilies and gladiolas with a banner spelling out "Iraqi Government" in glitter, was scheduled to be delivered last night, she said.

The card addressed to the memorial service said simply, "With condolences. The Iraqi Government and People," Ms. Deal said.

The order was forwarded from Conklyn's, a florist in Washington, D.C., that received the order directly from the Iraqi government, Ms. Deal said.

For Ms. Deal, Sunday's missile attack on the guided-missile frigate Stark hit too close to home — her son is in the Navy and has been stationed in the Persian Gulf. She was angry and upset about the attack.

She dispelled the Iraqi government's claim that the attack was a mistake, she said, but her beliefs could not interfere with her job.

"The whole thing upset me," she said. "My people [employees] were upset about it because of us making the arrangement for them [Iraqis]."

"But I told them, I don't care if I don't believe them, or the whole country doesn't believe them. We've got to make it [the arrangement] pretty because of those guys who lost their lives. This is for them ..."

"But I thought they [the Iraqi government] could have spent more."



— Will Dickey/staff

Renee Wiggins (left), Elizabeth Phelps (center) and Mary Deal (right) put together a \$140 floral

arrangement requested by the Iraqi government to express its regret for the attack on the Stark.