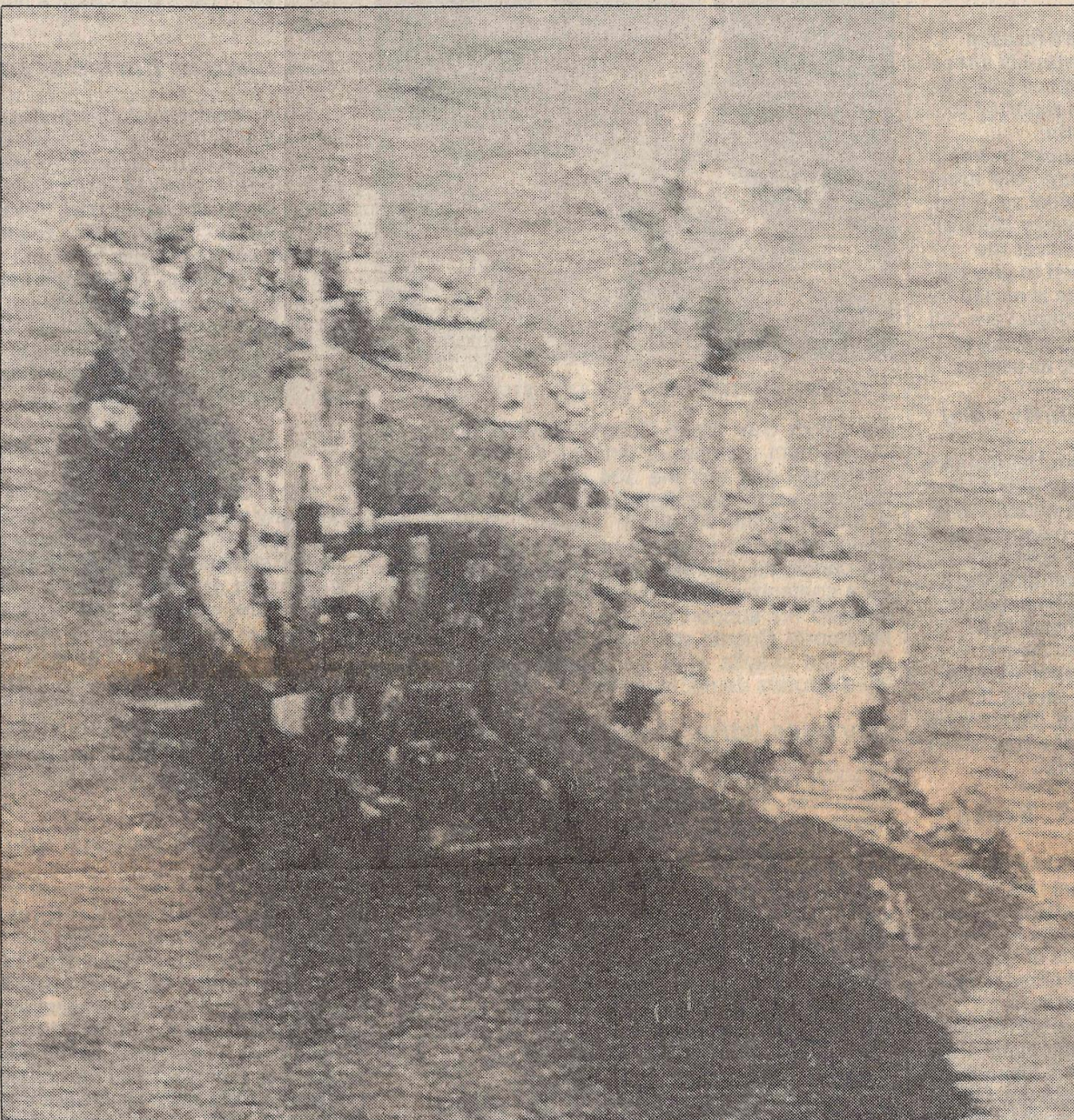




Firepower on Stark not used

*Expert says ship
caught off guard*

By Michael Nyenhuis
Staff writer

One of the the most important questions about Sunday's attack on the USS Stark was why the ship's firepower was not used.

Retired Adm. Joseph Moorer, who lives in Ponte Vedra Beach, speculated yesterday that the ship's crew made no response because it was caught off guard and had no reason to think an Iraqi plane would fire on the ship.

"The commanding officer has to make a decision in a matter of seconds. 'Is this in fact a missile that has been launched to hit us.' He had no reason to believe Iraq would fire at him," Moorer said.

Navy Lt. Thomas Derienzo, a Defense Department spokesman, said the weapon systems on the guided-missile frigate were fully tested and there has been no information that they malfunctioned.

Navy investigators will try to determine why the systems were not used, he said.

The weapons systems on the Mayport-based ship intended to prevent such a disaster include:

- A Vulcan-Phalanx gun that automatically tracks and fires at close-in targets, such as missiles.
- A 76mm gun used to attack more distant targets.
- A missile launcher capable of

(See NAVY, Page A-5)

— Associated Press

The USS Stark, aided by a salvage tug, limps toward Bahrain after it was hit in the port side Sunday by an Exocet missile fired from an Iraqi air-

craft. The Navy said the the guided-missile frigate's captain was too busy trying to save his ship yesterday to answer questions about the attack.

Navy likely to continue Persian Gulf patrols

(From Page A-1)

firing both surface-to-air and surface-to-surface standard missiles.

• An electronic jamming system designed to confuse the guidance systems on incoming missiles.

That system alone should have misdirected the missile that struck the Stark, Derienzo said, but apparently it was not activated.

Moorer said the Phalanx system is well-tested but probably was also not activated on Stark.

"When at peacetime, you don't like to operate with those [weapons

systems] operating" because it could shoot at a friendly aircraft flying near the ship, he said.

Frigates such as the Stark normally sail as part of an aircraft carrier battle group. But occasionally they are asked to perform other functions, Derienzo said.

Moorer said frigates often sail alone in the Persian Gulf because a full battle group is rarely sent there.

The Stark was operating in the Persian Gulf with several other ships in an attempt to protect the shipping lanes, where tankers and other merchant vessels have be-

come targets of both Iran and Iraq during the two countries' seven-year war.

Pentagon officials have said they think the attack resulted from a mistake by Iraq, whose fighter pilots may have mistaken the frigate for an Iranian merchant vessel or warship.

Derienzo said he did not know whether the Stark was escorting another ship, performing some type of anti-submarine warfare exercises or other maneuvers when the attack occurred.