



CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WASHINGTON, DC 20515

ANDER CRENSHAW

May 17, 2009

FOURTH DISTRICT, FLORIDA

To the Families and Friends of the *USS Stark*:

I regret that I am unable to join you today at the Memorial Service to honor those whose lives were lost aboard the *USS Stark* on May 17, 1987. The loss and suffering of the families will never be forgotten here at Naval Station Mayport.

On this 22nd anniversary we remember the 37 American Navy crewmen who were killed when their frigate was hit by Iraqi missiles. The mission of the *USS Stark* was to maintain peace in the hostile environment of the Persian Gulf, to help keep essential sea lanes open, to show the American flag in an area of vital interest, and to provide U.S. Navy protection to those entitled to it. And for the cause of peace in a troubled world these 37 brave Americans lost their lives. They came to Naval Station Mayport to ship out on the *Stark* from 18 states – as far away as Hawaii and as close as our Jacksonville community. And because their ship was *our* ship, they will always be remembered here in Jacksonville as our lost sons, husbands, and fathers.

The *Stark* and its crew were not involved in a war, but on routine deployment. The crew understood the risks. But, in a strike of madness, their world was transformed into chaos and only through the determination and heroic actions of the crew were the ship and other lives saved. Today, the Persian Gulf remains crucial to our national security and to the security of our friends throughout the world. And today, like in 1987, the hazards to our men and women in uniform in the defense of freedom remain high as they continue to safeguard the interests of the United States and its allies in the Middle East. The crew of the *USS Stark* embodied the strength of our commitment to peace and to the principle of freedom of navigation.

May 17 will always be a day not measured in hours and minutes but in our collective loss. Thank you for continuing to remember those people who gave their lives 22 years ago and for those who continue to make the ultimate sacrifice in the heat of battle today. God bless you and God bless America.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Ander Crenshaw".

ANDER CRENSHAW
Member of Congress