



**HMAS ARUNTA
COMMANDING OFFICER'S LETTER OF APPRECIATION**

30 November 2002

ABMED3 Rebecca. Russell

Dear Bec,

The purpose of this letter is to acknowledge your individual contribution to the outstanding success of HMAS ARUNTA's deployment to the Persian Gulf in support of Operation SLIPPER between June and December 2002.

ARUNTA's mission as part of the third rotation of RAN units to Operation SLIPPER was to enforce United Nations sanctions against Iraq. The task was to prevent illegal goods from entering or leaving Iraq and ensuring that only approved cargo was able to pass. By the ship's presence the RAN was also contributing as a member of the International Coalition against Terrorism. To achieve the mission ARUNTA was required to operate close to the Iraqi coast, closer than any coalition warship in the eleven year history of sanctions enforcement.

In concert with HMAS MELBOURNE, ARUNTA formed the RAN Task Group for the third rotation and effectively and vigorously maintained the blockade of Iraqi ports and waterways and prevented the smuggling of valuable cargoes such as oil and dates out of Iraq and the unauthorised importation of a range of goods including narcotics. In maintaining that blockade the two ships queried some 1398 vessels and boarded 692 of them, this figure represents close to a quarter of all ships boarded by the Maritime Interception Forces in 2002. ARUNTA's own contribution was significant conducting 825 queries and 377 boardings.

During the deployment there was the constant risk of terrorist attack, both at sea and when alongside during port visits. The ship was particularly vulnerable at sea due to the proximity to the Iraqi coast, the large number of dhows and other craft in our vicinity, the constrained waters within which we operated and the inherent risks involved in boardings; particularly at night. The ship also continued to operate undaunted by conventional military threats such as that posed by the Seersucker missile sites on the Al Faw peninsula.

Your effort during Operation Slipper was an integral part in the success of our mission. The contribution you made in helping to maintain the fitness of the ship's company during this physically and mentally demanding deployment was vital. In addition to the individual management of our personnel, your many long hours of being closed up during boarding and flying operations is noteworthy. We all had security in the knowledge that there was always a rapid medical response to any adverse event. At no stage did you waiver in the execution of your duties, and your efforts are something you should always be proud of.

I have struggled to find a way that I can fittingly recognise each member the ship's company, this letter is my attempt to do so. I offer my most heartfelt thanks for what you have done and hope that in years to come you look back at the hard yards that we travelled together that you remember with pride that you were part of this magnificent ARUNTA team that conquered countless challenges and made a difference by what we did.

Remember too that you are about to become returned servicewoman and join a special group of Australians who have gone before us; you have every right to proudly join their ranks.

It has been an honour to serve with you, I wish you all the best for your future career and again thank you for your contribution to our task.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ray Griggs" followed by three dots. The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

R.J. GRIGGS
Commander, CSC, RAN
Commanding Officer