20 OCT 00 [redacted]

From: LT [redacted] USN [redacted]

Subj: STATEMENT REGARDING THE EVENTS SURROUNDING THE EXPLOSION ON BOARD USS COLE (DDG 67) INPORT ADEN, YEMEN, ON 12 OCT 00

1. My name is LT [redacted]. I am the Operations Officer in USS COLE (DDG 67). I was commissioned on [redacted], after graduating from the United States Naval Academy. I reported to COLE in March of 2000.

2. COLE deployed from her homeport of Norfolk, Virginia on 8 August 2000. We CHOPed to COMSIXTHFLT on 18 August, and proceeded to a series of port visits. From 21-25 August, the ship was pierside in Barcelona, Spain. From 28 August until 1 September, the ship was moored to a buoy in Villefranche-Sur-Mer, France. From 4-8 September, the ship was pierside in Valletta, Malta. From 11-15 September, the ship was pierside in Koper, Slovenia. After leaving Koper, the ship conducted operations with the rest of Task Force 60 in the southern Adriatic Sea. COLE left the Adriatic on or about 6 October en route the Suez Canal. The ship transited the Suez Canal on 8-9 October, CHOPing to COMFIFTHFLT at 0001Z on 9 October. After an uneventful southerly transit through the Red Sea, we pulled into Aden for our scheduled brief stop for fuel (BSF).

3. We stationed the Special Sea and Anchor Detail for entering Aden at 0530C on 12 October. I was not specifically assigned a station on this particular detail. When this occurs, I station myself on the forecastle as an overall safety observer. I was in communication with the Officer of the Deck, LT [redacted] and the Commanding Officer via my WICS radio. The anchor detail lowered the anchor until it was free of the hawsepipe, as is our standard practice, and awaited a signal from the pilot to proceed. We did not receive this signal until quite a while after we wanted to proceed. We finally began entering the harbor at or around 0730C. The approach through the harbor seemed uneventful from my perspective on the forecastle, with the exception of the "Iraqi Line" merchants anchored in the outer harbor, and the sunken ships littering the harbor. Our approach to the fueling dolphin was complicated, I later learned, by the pilot's steadfast resistance to twisting or spinning the ship. At the navigation brief the night before, the Commanding Officer stated his intention to twist the ship so that her bow was pointed out the harbor. We realized this would take more time while mooring, but would afford us an opportunity to leave the harbor more expeditiously should circumstances warrant. The pilot finally agreed to twist the ship, and our two tugs assisted the pilot in turning us around. We moored starboard side to fuel dolphin seven on the north side of the east channel. The mooring itself took a longer time than most evolutions due to the nature of the dolphin. The dolphin is substantially shorter than the ship. We put our spring lines (lines 2,3,4, and 5) to the dolphin, but small boats took our breast lines (line 1 and 6) to mooring buoys. The mooring evolution was complete at approximately 1000C.

4. I was assigned duty as Command Duty Officer (CDO) on 12 October. While still observing the mooring evolution on the forecastle, the enlisted duty section leader, OSCS(SW) [redacted] approached me. He told me that he was mustering all of the day's security forces for briefing as soon as we secured from the Special Sea and Anchor Detail. In accordance with the Weapons Officer's Force Protection Plan (FPP) for Aden and the prevailing THREATCON (B), we were to have three armed security personnel on watch at any given

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time: two armed topside rovers, one armed internal rover. We did not station an armed sentry on the fueling dolphin because we did not have a brow across. I am unsure of the specific armament carried by these personnel. This FPP was executed as planned. Upon securing the Sea and Anchor Detail, I assumed the duties and responsibilities of CDO over the 1MC. I spoke with the CO for a few minutes to ask if he had any issues for me in my capacity as CDO, and we discussed the mooring evolution in some detail. He expressed to me the resistance he encountered from the pilot regarding the orientation of the ship on the dolphin. Following this discussion, I spoke with a couple other officers for a few minutes, then I sat down in the wardroom for lunch. Also in the wardroom at the time were LT [redacted], the Weapons Officer; LTJG [redacted], the Strike Officer; and ENS [redacted], the Anti-Submarine Warfare Officer.

5. At approximately 1122, we felt a powerful explosion. Small objects were thrown about the wardroom, and dust filled the air. We were moved up, to starboard, down, and then to port. I remember the sound and motion going on for what felt like quite some time. LT [redacted] and I immediately left the wardroom to go topside and investigate the explosion. He used the starboard side ladder down from officers' country; I used the port side ladder. My first impression was that we had suffered an explosion related to the refueling, which was in progress. Upon emerging topside, I smelled a gunpowder-like scent that, together with the large amount of debris topside and the absence of fuel oil fires led me to believe we had been attacked by a boat-borne bomb. I left the quarterdeck area and proceeded below decks in an attempt to reach the Combat Information Center (CIC). My path was obstructed by white smoke, so I assisted a wounded sailor in the vicinity of the mess deck. I returned topside, acquired a 9mm pistol from a Sailor who was assisting wounded personnel. I proceeded to the bridge, where the Commanding Officer was talking on a handheld VHF radio. He handed me the radio, told me I was in charge of the bridge, and left to walk around topside.

6. While on the bridge, I made several attempts to send a distress signal to higher authority. After about an hour, the CO called me on WICS to tell me that he reached COMFIFTHFLT via cellular telephone and reported the attack. I continued to attempt to contact any U.S. military unit on 243.0 MHz and 277.8 MHz, but was relieved that the initial report had been made.

7. I spent much of the rest of the day on the bridge, coordinating between various stations on board and liaising with Aden Port Control to ensure no vessels approached COLE. Due to security concerns, after conferring with the CO, I forbade Aden Port Control from moving ships out of the harbor.

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LT USN [redacted]