

Arabian Gulf contingency operations while the Arab League convened in Kuwait. By providing needed fuel and supplies, **LA SALLE** ensured the other ships of Middle East Force were able to remain on station for an extended period during this operation.

In May 1987, **LA SALLE** rushed to the aid of the stricken **U.S. frigate STARK**, which was adrift and still burning following an Iraqi missile attack. Initially, **LA SALLE** provided crucial fire-fighting, damage control, and medical aid. Over the next days, the ship and her crew became home and family for the surviving **STARK** sailors. Until the arrival of the **U.S. tender ACADIA** in June 1987, **LA SALLE** saw to initial repair requirements of **STARK**, provided accommodations to her crew, and served as a central base for all damage assessment, investigation and public relations functions associated with the tragic event.

During the ensuing months **LA SALLE** served as a command platform for the re-flagged Kuwaiti tanker escort operations. Iran resorted to planting mines to counter the escort operations. During the first escort operation, the tanker **BRIDGETON** struck a mine, and the United States resolved to stop these Iranian tactics.

In September 1987, U.S. forces caught the Iranians red-handed. The Iranian minelaying ship **Iran Ajr** or **Rakeesh**, was in the middle of laying mines so U.S. forces permanently decommissioned the ship. **LA SALLE**



sent a prize crew to occupy the ship, and the captured Iranians were brought aboard **AGF-3**. The detainees, as they became known, spent two days in **LA SALLE**'s upper vehicle stowage before being transferred to the Red Crescent. The Iranian ship was the first ship since World War II to be commanded by American forces.

In the following months, many tanker escort operations were successfully completed, and **LA SALLE** continued to play a vital role as **MIDEASTFOR** flagship. Mobility, flexibility, and versatility are as much the trademarks of **LA SALLE** today as they were 23 years ago.

The Middle Eastern and Western

Indian Ocean countries continue to increase in importance as areas of considerable global interest, both economically and politically.

