

## FORTY YEARS LATER-Part 6, Large Ships and Twin Screws—an Update

On November 8<sup>th</sup>, 2008, I had the distinct privilege of attending the Commissioning of the USS Freedom at Veteran's Park in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. I was the guest of a former AFMIC agent who served his country in the United States Air Force and is now an Independent Agent.

This ship is the first in its class (LCS 1), Littoral Combat Ship, of a proposed fleet of fifty. What I found impressive were the statistics! You may remember me stating that a naval vessel could literally turn on a dime, with the help of twin screws and a rudder. The USS Freedom takes that to a whole new level.

- This ship can rotate 360 degrees, while standing still, in just 3 minutes.
- It can accelerate from 0 to 40+ knots in under 2 minutes.
- It can decelerate from 40+ to 0 knots in approximately 3 ship lengths, about 3 football fields.
- And get this, IT CAN MOVE DIRECTLY SIDEWAYS at 1 knot.
- It has the ability to change mission packages in less than 24 hours, (morph to a different type ship).
- It has 9,000 networked components instead of the 200-300 that are typical for a ship this size.
- It no longer has "Twin Screws"! It is propelled by 4 water-jets.
- It has a shallow draft to enable it to travel into waters not previously possible.
- Nine (9) Sailors operate the ship while underway in "Normal" conditions instead of the typical 40 Sailors.
- The crew total is only 40 Sailors, instead of the traditional 250 Sailors that would normally man a ship of this size. This is accomplished by cross-training the sailors, with a wide spectrum of skill sets!

Has American Family management kept pace with this? Does the home office staff get bigger while requiring the agent to take on greater responsibility? Does the expense ratio keep increasing? Maybe its time to join the modern Navy!

[Editor's note: Why is it that some organizations can show tremendous improvement over the years and others just seem to stagnate? Is it decision-makers who have a vision? Or is it decision-makers with a dream in addition to an ability to make it happen? This ship got leaner and meaner as it developed, and probably on a limited budget at that; but it seems American Family manages to get more sluggish, their IS system is a total disaster, and their lack of a realistic vision are all factors causing 'their ship to flounder in deep seas.']