

SAVING ARIES

PRESERVING THE LAST PEGASUS-CLASS PHM
HAS NOT BEEN AN EASY TASK
BY ADAM STANTON



Jacket patch for USS Aries.



A Kormar-class missile boat launches a Styx missile. The Soviets built hundreds of such boats and the first of 15 was transferred to Egypt in 1962. Such a missile was fired at the Israeli destroyer *Eilat* and a direct hit was made. It was then hit by a second Styx, then a third before sinking. The incident sent shockwaves through the naval world and this was the seed that would lead to the *Pegasus*-class warships.

USS Aries (PHM-5) was the fifth ship of the *Pegasus*-class hydrofoils operated by the US Navy. Aries was laid down on 7 January 1980 at the Boeing Integrated Defense Systems yard in Renton, Washington. Powered by two Mercedes-Benz marine diesels of 1600-hp each and one General Electric LM2500 gas turbine (foilborne), her 18,000-hp could generate 48-knots

while foilborne. Hullborne, she could do 12-knots. With a length of 133-ft, beam of 28-ft, and displacement of 259-tons, her normal crew would consist of four officers and 17 enlisted men. Armament comprised eight RGM-54 Harpoon missiles and a 76mm OTO Melara gun.

The concept for the *Pegasus*-class goes back to 1967 when Egyptian small patrol boats were deployed with great success against the Israeli Navy destroyer *Eilat*. At the time, Adm. Horacio Rivero was C-in-C Allied Forces Southern Europe and he became convinced that the US Navy needed similar capabilities (along with NATO Allies) to defeat what he viewed as a significant threat. He started a pre-feasibility study on such a vessel.

Boeing received the contract for the development of a "patrol hydrofoil" in November 1971. To keep costs down (which did not happen), Boeing used technology from various existing platforms. The Harpoon was adapted from the system used on the Lockheed P-3 Orion while the lightweight Mk.92 control system came from the USS *Talbot* (DEG-4). The 76mm gun came from the Italian *Swordfish*-class patrol vessel. Boeing used its own considerable experience