

Essex Group departs Burmese coast

Commander, U.S. Pacific Command Public Affairs

The USS Essex group has been positioned off the coast of Burma since May 13, ready and able to deliver urgently needed humanitarian assistance to the victims of Cyclone Nargis, but Burma's ruling military junta has repeatedly rebuffed our offers to help.

Therefore, the commander of U.S. Pacific Command, Adm. Timothy J. Keating, recommended to the U.S. Secretary of Defense that the USS Essex group and U.S. Marine Corps 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU) should continue with their previously scheduled operational commitments June 5. The Secretary of Defense approved this recommendation.

"Over the past three weeks we have made at least 15 attempts to convince the Burmese government to allow our ships, helicopters, and landing craft to provide additional disaster relief for the people of Burma, but they have refused us each and every time. It is time for the USS Essex group to move on to its next mission. However, we will leave several heavy lift aircraft in place in Thailand so as to continue to support international community efforts to deliver aid," Keating said.

The Essex ships will now head to the coast of Thailand to backload their remaining helicopters and personnel on June 11.

"However", said Keating, "should the Burmese rulers have a change of heart and request our full assistance for their suffering people we



U.S. Navy photo by MCI Michael D. Kennedy
Seaman Kristen A. Frutiger, left, and Seaman Rhoda O. Fantone prepare lines for a replenishment at sea aboard the amphibious dock landing ship USS Harpers Ferry (LSD 49). Harpers Ferry is part of the Essex Amphibious Ready Group standing by in international waters off the coast of Burma supporting Joint Task Force Caring Response, a humanitarian assistance operation developed in the wake of Cyclone Nargis.

more than two million pounds of emergency relief supplies, benefiting at least 417,000 people.

Keating flew to Rangoon, Burma on the first U.S. military relief flight May 12, along with director of U.S. Foreign Assistance and USAID administrator, Henrietta Fore. While there, Keating hand-delivered a letter to Burma's leaders offering additional humanitarian assistance with heavy lift helicopters and landing craft capable of reaching areas inaccessible by road, as well as water-making and purification capability and medical assistance.

He also extended an offer to the military junta to visit U.S. ships in international waters and to fly on U.S. military relief flights in an effort to help ease any concerns they might have regarding U.S. humanitarian assistance and intentions.

But to date, the forces and assets of Joint Task Force Caring Response, including the four-ship Essex Group, 22 medium and heavy lift helicopters, four landing craft and more than 5,000 U.S. military personnel remain idle as the military junta in Burma ignores diplomatic offers of expanded humanitarian assistance to its people.

"I am both saddened and frustrated to know that we have been in a position to help ease the suffering of hundreds of thousands of people and help mitigate further loss of life, but have been unable to do so because of the unrelenting position of the Burma military junta," Keating said.

are prepared to help."

The United States government quickly responded after Nargis hit

Burma on May 2. Since then, USAID and the Department of Defense, working closely with ASEAN, the

United Nations and other non-governmental organizations, have completed a total of 106 airlifts carrying

All aboard for Pacific Partnership's Mercy blog

Commander, U.S. Pacific Fleet Public Affairs

As the Navy's humanitarian mission Pacific Partnership 2008 begins in Mindanao, Republic of the Philippines, people around the world can now follow the action in "Skipper's Scrivenings," a blog by the ship's Military Sealift Command captain, Bob Wiley.

"Today, the USNS Mercy is finally a true hospital," Wiley wrote in his blog posting of May 30. "For the last several weeks, we have had most of the makings of a hospital - doctors, nurses, operating rooms, X-ray machines, etc. However, we have been missing one important item: patients. After all the work, training, planning, and preparations...finally, we are doing what we came to do. We are, at last, treating patients."

The Mercy blog, linked to the Pacific Partnership page on www.cpf.navy.mil, follows in the footsteps of another popular blog in the Pacific area of operations, "The Destroyermen" of USS Russell (DDG 59), www.destroyermen.blogspot.com, which has had nearly 35,000 hits to date. Russell is homeported at



U.S. Navy photo by MCI Brien Aho
Hospital Corpsman Apprentice Stephanie Gomez and Hospital Corpsman Amanda Vasquez, working as flight deck handlers aboard the Military Sealift Command hospital ship USNS Mercy (T-AH 19) in the Pacific Ocean, run clear after removing the chains from an MH-60S Seahawk helicopter on May 14.

Pearl Harbor, Hawai'i.

"Like the Destroyermen blog, Mercy's 'Skipper's Scrivenings' takes visitors behind the scenes, brings them aboard, and makes them feel like part of the mission," said Capt. Scott Gureck, Pacific Fleet public affairs officer.

From Wiley's blog: "The city of Cotabato is 10 miles to the south of us as the crow flies. This is a beautiful little harbor. The southern part of Mindanao is close enough to the equator it seldom gets the

typhoons which are common in the northern islands like Luzon. The vegetation along the coastline is lush and very dense. Looking through the binoculars, you can see dozens of Nipa huts lining the beach."

"Capt. Wiley paints pictures with his words," Gureck said. "He's doing a huge favor to family, friends and shipmates who want to follow the mission."

Among those responding to

See MERCY BLOG, A-2

Keating meets with ROK CNO



U.S. Navy photo by MC2 Elisia V. Gonzales
Adm. Timothy J. Keating, commander of U.S. Pacific Command, presents a gift to Adm. Jung, Ok Keun, the Republic of Korea Chief of Naval Operations, during an office call in Seoul.



USS Minneapolis-Saint Paul submariners go back to school See page A-2



2008 Hawai'i Diversity Symposium set for June 9-11 See page A-4



Solar window film saves money at Pearl Harbor See page A-4



Dive into fun at Hawaiian Waters Adventure Park See page B-1

USS Minneapolis-Saint Paul submariners go back to school

Story and photo by
MCSA Luciano Marano

Commander Submarine Force U.S.
Pacific Fleet Public Affairs Office

Sailors stationed on USS Minneapolis-Saint Paul (SSN 708), facing decommissioning next year, are shifting the emphasis of their shipyard mission away from preparing the submarine for underway time. They are providing opportunities for its Sailors to seek productive endeavors outside of their everyday shipyard tasks.

One such endeavor is the Big Brother/Big Sister program at the local Aiea Elementary School, which several of the Minneapolis-Saint Paul Sailors have been participating in since arriving at Pearl Harbor in October.

"Our captain really emphasizes community service to the crew," said Lt. Jo Guzman, Minneapolis-Saint Paul community service officer. "He's committed not only to providing the rest of the fleet with quality parts, but also competent and well rounded Sailors as well."

According to Guzman, volunteers work with the program and, after an extensive background check and interview process, are paired with a child based on their compatibility. The teams of "big" and "littles" (as the adults and children are referred to) get together once a week and play



Machinist's Mate 3rd Class (SS) Jerod Powell joins in a game of two-hand touch football at the local Aiea Elementary School Big Brother/Big Sister end of school pizza party on May 22. "This is my first chance to really work with kids," said Powell, one of the regular volunteers from USS Minneapolis-Saint Paul (SSN 708).

games, work on homework, or just hang out together.

"I guess it's really just the Big Brother program for the sub guys," joked Guzman.

Although the Aiea Elementary

School has had the program since the beginning of the school year, Big Brother/Sister School-based case manager, Ashley Kemmler, noticed a surge in enthusiasm following Navy vol-

unteer participation.

"The program has become much more successful," said Kemmler. "I haven't seen any specific grades, but the teachers have said they have noticed an

improvement in the performance of those kids in the program," she said.

Academics are only one aspect of the program's overall goals. The weekly meetings also give everyone a chance to relax and just have fun.

"I've been coming for a long time, it's really fun, and everybody is so nice," said one enthusiastic student.

Sailors agree. "I'd really like to become a teacher after I get out of the Navy," said Machinist Mate 3rd Class (SS) Jerod Powell, one of the regular volunteers. "I had never really worked with kids before this, but I have a lot of fun with it and I think this is a good experience for me."

Guzman also pointed out that it doesn't have to be only Minneapolis-Saint Paul Sailors involved. "Everybody took an oath, when they joined the service, to defend the country against enemies both foreign and domestic," he explained. "Illiteracy and crime are domestic enemies and one of the ways to fight them is through community service. By impacting these kids today, we can help make them productive and successful," said Guzman.

The Navy has a long and rich history of community service. Wherever they happen to be, Sailors are known for going above and beyond the call of duty to truly connect with, and help, those in the surrounding areas.

New Navy PT uniform now at NEXCOM

The new Navy physical training uniform, consisting of a gold T-shirt and blue shorts, is now available at the Navy Exchange Service Command (NEXCOM). Also available are jackets and sweatsuits in blue and gold and gold long sleeve shirts for training in inclement weather.

U.S. Navy photo



Mercy blog reaches out to families, friends

Continued from A-1

Pacific Partnership's Mercy blog are these posted comments:

• "I appreciate your blog and the information it's providing for the families. My son Lamar is aboard on his first cruise since joining the Navy. I am so proud of him and of the opportunity he has to serve aboard your ship on this very important mission. Bless you and your crew of such fine diversity."

• "Thank you so much for writing these blogs!!! My boyfriend...is aboard and it gives me peace of mind knowing what's going on and where you guys are at. Thank you again and keep up the great work!"

• "I look forward to reading your blog. It makes me feel

closer to my son Anthony. This is his first assignment on a ship. If you see him on May 30th, please wish him Happy Birthday for me."

Pacific Partnership 2008 is a Navy humanitarian and civic assistance mission that is working with partners in the Republic of the Philippines, Vietnam, Timor Leste, Papua New Guinea and the Federated States of Micronesia throughout the summer.

Partner nations participating in the mission include Australia, Canada, Chile, Japan, the Republic of Korea and New Zealand.

To see the "Skipper's Scrivenings" Mercy blog, visit www.mercycaptain.blogspot.com.

For more news about Pacific Partnership 2008, visit www.navy.mil/local/PP08.

Hawaii'i Navy News Editorial

Safety a priority for Sailors, operational readiness

Lt. Jennifer Cragg

New Media Directorate,
Defense Media Activity

Safety is a "24/7" concern for the U.S. Navy and its operational readiness, the commander of the Naval Safety Center said in a May 23 teleconference with online journalists and bloggers.

"Our safety helps us derive our readiness," Rear Adm. Arthur Johnson said. "So, we are concerned about our personnel's conduct 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days of the year, because if someone fails to show up on Monday morning, then we have a mission impact. If someone's not able to make that mission, we will suffer."

Toward that end, the Navy has implemented several initiatives to increase the situational awareness. One is the Travel Risk Management Program (TRiPS). This system allows an individual to enter planning factors for an upcoming road trip online and receive a risk assessment.



U.S. Navy photo

Enjoy summer and your off-duty time, but practice good safety habits while participating in leisure activities such as swimming, surfing and hiking. The Navy reminds service members and their families about safety and operational readiness through its "101 Critical Days of Summer" safety campaign. The safety initiative kicked off Memorial Day and runs through Labor Day.

"It also kicks out a notification e-mail to that individual's first line leadership to [apprise] them of this upcoming trip," Johnson

noted. "And now that allows the leadership to kick in, engage and have that kneecap-to-kneecap counseling to help an individual

optimize his upcoming trip." The Navy has been using the TRiPS system, which was purchased from the Army, for more than two

years and so far, Johnson said, it has been a valuable tool in risk management.

"We have better than 58,000 assessments done since we've been involved with the program," Johnson said. "And to the best of our recollection, the best of our data, the Navy has experienced no class 'A' mishaps, no class 'A' fatalities of an individual who is on a TRiPS-assessed trip."

Military safety officials define a class "A" accident as one that involves at least \$1 million in damage or that results in death or disabling injury.

Another way the Navy is reminding the fleet about safety and operational readiness is the "101 Critical Days of Summer" safety campaign, which officially kicked off Memorial Day and runs through Labor Day.

Johnson added that the Navy has gone to great efforts to raise situational awareness so each Sailor can "know the stats so you don't become a stat."

Other initiatives include the "Sailor-to-Sailor Safety" seminar, which uses peer mentorship to communicate

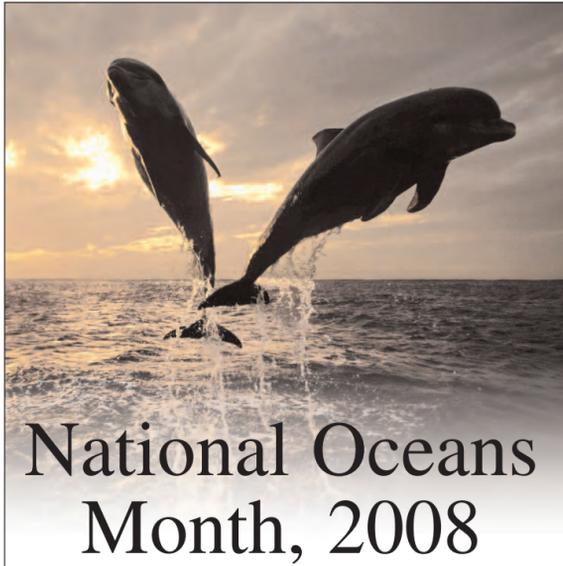
safety messages. The Navy has held the first seminar and now plans to offer them twice a year.

"We had eight Sailors from the fleet, around the world, and they came back to the safety center to learn the ins and outs of the safety center, then also to communicate to us on how we can communicate to them better," Johnson said. "And, one of the projects that came out of it was the eight Sailors did testimonials about the things that [were] near and dear to their hearts. Some of them had experienced some things firsthand; others had experienced it through their friends."

The video testimonials turned out so well, Johnson added, that officials sent them to all commands in the Navy for their training programs.

Johnson said that while the Navy encourages Sailors to enjoy their off-duty summer activities, officials want each Sailor to perform the requisite training first.

"I want to encourage folks just to plan for success and hurry back to [their] commands, because we need them all back," Johnson said.



National Oceans Month, 2008

A proclamation by the President of the United States of America

Oceans have provided an important part of our heritage, economy and recreation, and they are a vital resource for our country and the world. During National Oceans Month, we reaffirm our commitment to protect and wisely use these precious waters and the habitat beneath them.

We have a solemn responsibility to care for our seas and show concern for the plant and animal life that inhabit them. Oceans bring enjoyment and prosperity to countless people, from boating and fishing, to transporting goods, to traveling the waterways. By being good stewards of the oceans, we can ensure that future generations are able to enjoy the great blessings of our natural heritage.

My administration is committed to safeguarding the oceans and ensuring effective conservation. Since the release of my Ocean Action Plan in 2004, we have taken steps to prevent pollution and improve the health of marine wildlife by working with state, tribal, and local governments, as well as private sector and international partners.

We are working to end overfishing in U.S. waters and to stop destructive fishing practices on the high seas.

We are also supporting ocean programs to educate

the public on the need to prevent marine debris and improve the quality of the marine environment, as well as other projects such as the International Coral Reef Initiative that can help conserve and restore delicate and essential ecosystems. By working to protect our oceans, we ensure that natural wonders like the Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument in the northwestern Hawaiian Islands will be enjoyed for generations to come.

This month is an opportunity to show our gratitude toward all those who work to protect the oceans, to learn more about the vital role oceans play in the life of our country, and to discover ways we can conserve their many natural treasures.

Now, therefore, I, George W. Bush, president of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim June 2008 as National Oceans Month. I encourage all our citizens to observe this month with appropriate ceremonies and activities.

In witness whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this second day of June, in the year of our Lord two thousand eight, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and thirty-second.

George W. Bush



U.S. Naval Historical Center photograph

Survivors of Midway, Coral Sea battles meet President Roosevelt

President Franklin D. Roosevelt shakes hands with a Navy chief petty officer during a visit to the San Diego Naval Hospital in 1942. Men in wheelchairs (background) are recovering from injuries received during the Battles of Coral Sea and Midway in May and June 1942.

Hawaii'i Navy News

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Solar window film saves money at Pearl Harbor

Story and photo by
Krista Stehn

Naval Facilities Engineering
Command Hawai'i Energy
Team

Hawai'i's sunshine is known around the world for its beneficial warmth and comfort. Excessive amounts of it, however, can bring unwanted heat and discomfort to Navy Region Hawai'i personnel working indoors.

To retain only the benefits of it, the Naval Facilities Engineering Command (NAVFAC) Hawai'i Energy Team recently completed a solar window film project that allows the region to improve indoor comfort levels, while also meeting energy reduction goals.

"With the increasing cost of energy, the NAVFAC Hawai'i Energy Team is constantly pursuing ways to reduce energy use throughout Navy Region Hawai'i," said Greg Gebhardt, energy and utilities service manager, NAVFAC Hawai'i. "The solar window film project is an easy way to reduce the region's energy consumption while helping to create an even, comfortable temperature throughout a building."

Completed in early May, the solar window film project was implemented in 11 region buildings, including its own headquarters. The \$280,000 project has a two-year return on investment and is estimated to save \$130,000 annually. Approximately 43,500 square feet of window space in office buildings, several bachelor



Eddie Lee from M. Shiroma Construction Company installs solar window film onto many small panes of glass in a building at Naval Station Pearl Harbor.

enlisted and officer quarters, and the base police station at Pearl Harbor received the film.

"Using solar window film on building windows is a simple solution that will really make a difference," said Gebhardt. "It's just like putting tint on your car

windows. It makes the vehicle's interior much more comfortable and the air conditioning doesn't have to work as hard."

According to the U.S. Department of Energy, approximately one-third of an average building's cooling load is due to

solar heat gain through windows. When sunlight hits a window, small amounts of solar heat is absorbed and reflected. However, most of it is transmitted through the glass. As a result, additional cooling is often needed to reduce the increased building temperatures created by solar heat gain. To keep occupants comfortable, additional cooling is required and energy costs rise.

One proven way to reduce solar heat gain is with solar window film. In its simplest form, window films are composed of an optically clear, micro-layered polyester film. A mounting adhesive layer and a protective release liner are applied to the other side of the film. When the release liner is removed, the side of the film with the adhesive is applied to the interior surface of the window.

"The manufacturer estimates that its solar window film rejects as much as 80 percent of the sun's heat," said Gebhardt. "In addition to the energy benefits, solar window film can eliminate up to 99.9 percent of ultraviolet rays, provide a uniform look to a building, and minimize damage from shattered or broken glass."

With air conditioning consuming approximately 35 percent of a building's energy costs in Hawai'i, it is important for Navy Region Hawai'i to find ways to improve its energy efficiency. Solar window film has been used in Hawai'i for decades in cars and is now providing the region with a simple solution to a current energy efficiency problem.

2008 Hawai'i Diversity Symposium set for June 9-11

Commander, Pacific Fleet Public Affairs

Commander, Pacific Fleet, Commander, Submarine Force Pacific and Commander, Navy Region Hawai'i are jointly sponsoring the 2008 Hawai'i Diversity Symposium from June 9-11. Training sessions will be held at the Ford Island Conference Center and at Sharkey Theater at Naval Station Pearl Harbor.

Marilyn Loden, author of the book "Implementing Diversity" and a member of the Navy's diversity senior advisory group and Chief of Naval Operations' civilian executive panel, will present the training.

Full leadership participation (officer, enlisted and civilian) is essential to achieve the following desired effects:

- Acknowledgement that diversity is a strategic imperative and managing diversity effectively is a leadership imperative.
- An understanding that every individual is encouraged and enabled to reach his or her full potential.
- A belief that empowerment is cultivated by leadership, mentorship and an active commitment to attracting and recruiting the very best.

Training sessions are as follows:

- June 9: 8-11 a.m., Ford Island Conference Center, for command leadership.
- June 10: 8-11 a.m., Ford Island Conference Center, for command leadership.
- June 10: 12:30-3:30 p.m., Ford Island Conference Center, for command leadership.
- June 11: 8-11 a.m., Sharkey Theater, for command leadership.
- June 11: 12:30-3:30 p.m., Sharkey Theater, for all hands.

To register for one of the sessions, access <https://seat2.nmci.navy.mil/era>. If you do not have an account on the secured enterprise access tool (seat) portal, apply for an account at <https://seat1.nmci.navy.mil>, then access the event registration application (era) link listed above. If you have problems or do not have a valid PKI certificate, please contact the POCs or use the seat help at https://seat2.nmci.navy.mil/help/index.php?title=main_page.

Attendance satisfies the annual EEO training requirement for managers and supervisors and supports performance management objectives for both military and civilian participants.

Navy Exchange will hold emergency preparedness event

Pearl Harbor Navy Exchange Marketing

Are you prepared for a natural disaster? Do you know how to prepare you and your family or where to go for help and

information in the event of a hurricane or other natural disaster or emergency?

The Navy Exchange Pearl Harbor will host an emergency preparedness event from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. June 14 at the front of the main exchange.

Emergency-related information that will help you to prepare in the event of an emergency will be provided. There will be demonstrations and useful information and resources to help keep you safe.

For more information, call 423-3330.

Pearl Harbor Highlights



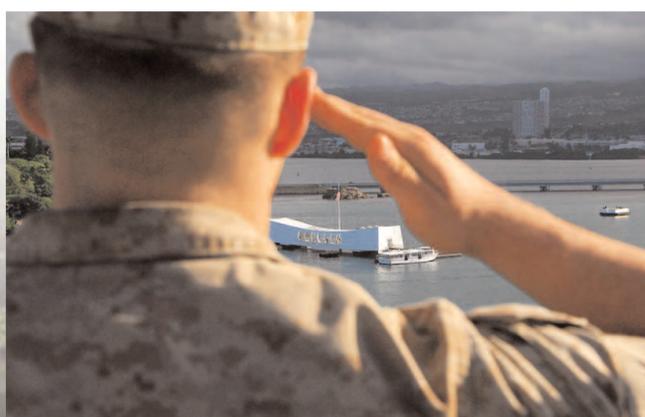
(Above & top right) Geared up and ready to go; members of a distinguished visitors group head toward a C-2A Greyhound assigned to Carrier Logistics Support Squadron (VRC) 30. The group departed Pearl Harbor for an overnight visit aboard the USS Ronald Reagan (CVN 76). Distinguished visitors tours give local community and civic leaders the opportunity to visit a U.S. Navy aircraft carrier while at sea.

U.S. Navy photo by MC1 Luke J. Perry



Korean submarine Lee Sun Shin arrived at Naval Station Pearl Harbor on May 28. It is the first foreign vessel to arrive to take part in the Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC) Exercise. Commander, Submarine Squadron Seven is hosting the submarine during their stay as part of RIMPAC 2008.

U.S. Navy photo by MCSA Luciano Marano



(Above) A Marine assigned to the 11th Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU) renders honors to the USS Arizona Memorial from the observation deck of the amphibious assault ship USS Tarawa (LHA 1).

U.S. Navy photo by MC3 Daniel Barker

(Below) Sailors and Marines man the rails of the amphibious assault ship USS Tarawa (LHA 1) as she passes the USS Arizona Memorial enroute to Pearl Harbor.

U.S. Navy photo by MC3 Daniel Barker



USS Pearl Harbor celebrates 10 years of active service in the fleet

Ensign Frank Golbeck

USS Pearl Harbor (LSD 52)
Public Affairs

Sailors and Marines aboard the Harpers Ferry-class, amphibious dock landing ship USS Pearl Harbor (LSD 52) observed the 10th anniversary of the ship's commissioning May 30 with a day of special activities.

"The ship continues today what she started 10 years ago - good work through the efforts of her crew," said Cmdr. Xavier Valverde, Pearl Harbor's commanding officer.

"Pearl Harbor has aged gracefully," said Valverde, who has special ties to Pearl Harbor because he was the ship's first lieutenant when it was commissioned in 1998.

To commemorate the 10th birthday, the ship's crew, embarked Marines and the Sailors of the embarked Assault Craft Unit 5 assembled on the flight deck in

their dress whites and desert camouflage uniforms, spelling out "Happy 10th" for an aerial photograph.

The formation took up half of the ship's flight deck that was already loaded down with gear of the embarked Combat Logistics Battalion of the 15th Marine Expeditionary Unit.

Following the aerial photo, everyone on board enjoyed a meal of beef chateaubriand and lobster. A cake-cutting ceremony held on the mess decks followed the meal.

Pearl Harbor was commissioned May 30, 1998 as the last LSD-class ship in the U.S. Navy. More than 10,000 guests attended the commissioning ceremony at Naval Air Station North Island, Calif., including numerous survivors from the Dec. 7, 1941 Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor.

Today, Pearl Harbor is operating as part of the Peleliu Expeditionary Strike Group (PELESG)

that left its homeport of San Diego on May 4 on a regularly scheduled deployment.

The day had special significance to the crew as earlier in the day it was a lookout from Pearl Harbor who first spotted a sinking vessel in the Baalbek Strait near the Republic of the Philippines. Six mariners were later rescued by another ship in the PELESG.

"It was an awesome day on board the mighty warship Pearl Harbor," said Seaman Jonathan Dirst, the lookout who spotted the sinking vessel.

The PELESG is led by Commander, Amphibious Squadron 3 and includes the flag ship, USS Peleliu (LHA 5), amphibious ships Pearl Harbor and USS Dubuque (LPD 8), the guided-missile cruiser USS Cape St. George (CG 71) and the guided-missile destroyers USS Halsey (DDG 97) and USS Benfold (DDG 65).



U.S. Navy photo by MC2 Scott Webb

The Harpers Ferry-class amphibious dock landing ship USS Pearl Harbor (LSD 52) steams through the South China Sea on May 30 on her 10th anniversary of being commissioned. Pearl Harbor is part of the Peleliu Expeditionary Strike Group and is on a scheduled deployment.

Carrier Strike Group 7 hones anti-submarine warfare skills in USWEX

Lt. Ron Flanders

Carrier Strike Group 7
Public Affairs

The ships of Carrier Strike Group (CSG) 7 commenced an undersea warfare exercise (USWEX) in the waters of the Hawai'i operating area on May 28.

Participating in the exercise are the strike group's flagship, the Nimitz-class aircraft carrier USS Ronald Reagan (CVN 76); the guided-missile cruiser USS Chancellorsville (CG 62), and the ships of Destroyer Squadron (DESRON) 7, the guided-missile destroyers USS Decatur (DDG 73), USS Gridley (DDG 101) and USS Howard (DDG 83) and the guided-missile frigate USS Thach (FFG 43). Also participating are two nuclear-powered fast attack submarines.

The exercise is the final test for the Ronald Reagan Carrier Strike Group, which deployed May 19, before it heads to the Western Pacific and U.S. 7th Fleet area of responsibility. USWEXs are held around Hawai'i several times a year for commanders to assess the undersea warfare capabilities of deploying strike groups.

"This is a great opportunity to train on our own 'home field' before we head west," said Rear Adm. James P. Wisecup, commander, Carrier Strike Group 7. "Several nations in the areas [where] we're headed have very quiet, diesel-electric submarines that could potentially be adversaries, and it is my responsibility to prepare these Sailors to deal with that threat. The American people expect nothing less than the best-trained Navy in the world."

Capt. William Nault, commodore of DESRON 7, explained the USWEX pro-



Seaman Recruit Ian Robichaud steers through the Pacific Ocean aboard the Nimitz-class aircraft carrier USS Ronald Reagan (CVN 76) on May 24. Ronald Reagan Carrier Strike Group is on a scheduled deployment.

U.S. Navy photo by MCSA Aaron Holt

vides an invaluable opportunity to train his ships' crews to in a realistic, war-like scenario. "We're trying to catch, track and prosecute multiple submarines and they're trying to find us. We also have to maintain our protection of the carrier. It is a very challenging scenario."

Mid-frequency active sonar remains the Navy's best tool for finding and tracking these very quiet, diesel-electric submarines.

The Navy, in conjunction with regulators, has developed 29 protective measures, including marine mammal monitoring and safety zones where the units either power down or shut down active sonar to minimize potential harm to marine mammals.

The exercise includes the use of mid-frequency active sonar, under restrictions imposed by the federal district court in Honolulu. Those restrictions differ

from the 29 protective measures the Navy and regulators developed and from the ones imposed by California federal courts for the strike group's recent certification exercise in southern California.

Adm. Robert F. Willard, U.S. Pacific Fleet commander, said the 29 protective measures "apply good margins of safety against any potential for harming any animal. Anything in excess of that is unnecessary and

imposes unacceptable limits on our training."

Nonetheless, the exercise is a welcome opportunity for the strike group because anti-submarine warfare (ASW) is the top warfighting priority for the U.S. Pacific Fleet and is a very perishable skill that is not easily mastered.

"Great sonar operators are trained over many years and their abilities are as much about art as science," said Wisecup. "Trainers

ashore and simulators will only get you so far; the rest is based on experience. And to get that experience, you just have to go out there and practice it against a tough adversary."

"Only in a real ocean environment against a thinking enemy can we improve our proficiency to fight submarines," said Cmdr. David Haas, Thach commanding officer.

"USWEX is absolutely critical for my crew," said Cmdr. Gregory Gombert, Gridley commanding officer. "It places my sonar operators and anti-submarine tacticians in an environment that mirrors the tough conditions in the 7th Fleet and 5th Fleet operating areas. Once USWEX is over, the Gridley team will be prepared for just about anything," added Gombert.

Confidence also prevails among the strike group's watchstanders who relish the prospect of squaring off against two of the world's most sophisticated submarines.

"I'm excited," said Sonar Technician (Surface) 3rd Class Alexander Avila, a sonar operator aboard Thach. "I want to see where our sonar capabilities stand against them as a team. I would also like to test myself to see where my strengths and weaknesses are."

Joining the six ships in their battle against the submarines will be the helicopters of Helicopter Anti-Submarine Squadron four of Carrier Air Wing 14, embarked aboard Ronald Reagan; helicopters from Helicopter Anti-Submarine Squadron Light (HSL) 49, embarked aboard Chancellorsville and Thach; HSL 43, embarked aboard Howard; and HSL 37, embarked aboard Gridley.

ESGs: Delivering presence and security

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The maritime environment throughout the world is constantly changing and evolving. With advances in technology, and changes in the geo-political environment, it is important for U.S. naval forces to project forward presence and foster regional cooperation.

One tool used by the U.S. Navy to project its presence are expeditionary strike groups (ESG). These ESGs, such as the Nassau Expeditionary Strike Group currently operating in the U.S. 5th Fleet, are deployed worldwide and can project sea power ashore by landing amphibious forces via helicopter, amphibious track vehicles, air cushion landing craft and assault craft wherever the need arises. Their capabilities center on flexibility and readiness to conduct expeditionary operations ashore and afloat.

While in 5th Fleet, amphibious ships and squadrons operate as part of ESG 3 which serves as a command element that plans and executes a wide array of missions.

"My job is to deepen the capabilities of the unit as well as lead the staff in training and integration of forces," said Rear Adm. Kendall Card, commander, ESG 3. "We are



The amphibious assault ship USS Nassau (LHA 4) leads a formation of coalition ships, including the guided missile cruiser USS Philippine Sea (CG 58), the Bahraini Navy frigate RBNS Al Manama (FPBGH 50), the Royal New Zealand Navy frigate HMNZS Te Mana (F 111) and the United Arab Emirates Navy missile boat UAENS Mubarraz (P4401) during Exercise Goalkeeper III in the Persian Gulf on May 14.

ready to operate either at sea or ashore and can assume duties as a warfare commander at a moment's notice."

Vice Adm. Kevin Cosgriff, commander U.S. Naval Central Command, said that ESGs are vital to executing missions in 5th Fleet.

"The principle role of an ESG is to be a command element, to be an

extension of my headquarters at sea or ashore," he said. "They work things at the tactical level that require the skills of an ESG, including ships, marine expeditionary unit, (MEU) and other combatants. It's the tactical application of the decisions we make in the headquarters that are accomplished out here."

The units of an ESG can operate either together or disaggregated and execute a wide variety of missions, including humanitarian assistance, non-combatant evacuation operations, over-the-horizon strike, visit, board, search and seizure operations, and amphibious raids. In 5th Fleet, the diverse make-up and broad deployability of an ESG have made it a critical combat force in the effort to deliver security in theater.

"Elements of an ESG have been actively involved in anti-smuggling operations," said Cosgriff. "We've had an ESG command a multi-lateral effort to actively counter piracy which we believe led to the release of six pirated vessels last fall once we became more actively involved. It also gave us a chance to team with the legitimate government of Somalia."

The makeup of an ESG fluctuates as the mission changes. But they typically consist of one or two amphibious ships capable of launching landing craft from their well decks, as well as surface ships including cruisers or destroyers that provide anti-air, anti-surface ship and anti-submarine capabilities. ESGs are also augmented by a MEU, which includes a ground and air combat element, that provide aerial support for the strike group.

These robust capabilities give the commander a wide variety of options and enables sustained inde-

pendent operations in more dynamic or asymmetric environments.

Another important mission of the ESG is to provide humanitarian assistance in a time of crisis. ESGs are always ready to provide support when natural disasters occur, such as in Indonesia in 2004 and in Bangladesh in 2007.

According to Cosgriff, ESGs not only provide security, but they also serve a diplomatic role.

"The idea for U.S. naval forces in Central Command is to be a force that helps provide security in order to let the local citizens harvest the benefits of prosperity for themselves," he said. "We have an opportunity to continue to deepen our relations out here with the friendly countries. We want them to know that we are a nation that commits for the long run - we've been here for several decades and we intend to be here for decades to come. We want to contribute to the well-being of the citizens in this region."

Nassau ESG is deployed to the region in support of maritime security operations (MSO). MSO help develop security in the maritime environment, which promotes stability and global prosperity. These operations complement the counterterrorism and security efforts of regional nations and seek to disrupt violent extremists' use of the maritime environment as a venue for attack or to transport personnel, weapons or other material.