Afloat Training Group tests *McCampbell* Sailors' skills

Story by MCSN Declan Barnes, Navy Public Affairs Support Element Japan

EAST CHINA SEA – The Afloat Training Group (ATG) Western Pacific (WP) boarded the Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer *USS McCampbell* (DDG 85) from July 18-22 to conduct a series of ship-wide tests, putting the ship's crew in the spot light in order to evaluate their mission readiness.

ATG-WP is in charge of running basic phase training for all nineteen ships in the Navy's Forward Deployed Naval Force, including the *USS George Washington* (CVN 73) strike group, forward deployed to Yokosuka, Japan.

"Maintaining basic training requirements is extremely important out here in FDNF, and our focus is to evaluate and improve *McCampbell*'s core warfare mission areas so she can execute any mission at hand," said Lt. Cmdr. Theodore Mac Quidem, ATG West Pacific's director of training.

During the rigorous five-day evaluation, the crew preformed nearly every training evolution possible. The drills included anti-terrorism training, damage control training, engineering awareness training and medical response training. During the drills, the crew responded to a wide variety of dangerous simulated environments, including flooding, toxic gas atmospheres, hazardous material spills, various fires throughout the spaces, a simulated man-over-board rescue and multiple terrorist situations throughout the ship. *McCampbell* has been holding daily training during its summer deployment in order to prepare for the ATG assessment while also meeting the demanding requirements of 7th Fleet operations with *George Washington* Strike Group.

Logistics Specialist 2nd Class Jerry Wilson, right, assigned to the Damage Control Training Team aboard the Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer *USS McCampbell* (DDG 85), creates artificial smoke as part of a simulated fire July 20. U.S. Navy photo by MC2 Matthew R. Cole

"*McCampbell* is performing extremely well, and I believe that is because they have taken a steady approach to constantly training their Sailors," said Quidem. "They have made training an integral part of what they do day in and day out, and it shows in their success during these evaluations."

The months of training certainly has taken an effect on everyone involved, but many members of the crew appreciate how it has prepared them to perform when they need to.

"We've been preparing for this for a long time, and I really feel like the crew knows how to handle the pressure and get through this," said Boatswain's Mate 3rd Class Gerald Battle. "This has been very challenging for us, but overall a great learning experience for everyone."

McCampbell's dedication impressed the ATG team and lead to strong performances throughout the heavy workdays.

"I've been extremely impressed by the enthusiasm and motivation of the crew. That's evident in the energy that they put into succeeding in these drills, despite the 15-16 hour work days and non-stop pressure they have to face during this," said Quidem. "*McCampbell*'s Sailors treat everything that they do very seriously, whether it's a real world scenario or training. I can clearly see that they take great pride in doing their job well."

DEPSECDEF visits *USS Blue Ridge*, talks Asia-Pacific

By U.S. 7th Fleet Public Affairs

The Deputy Secretary of Defense (DEPSECDEF) Ashton B. Carter visited the U.S. 7th Fleet flagship *USS Blue Ridge* (LCC 19) to speak with Sailors and emphasize the importance of their mission in the Asia-Pacific region during a July 21 visit.

Carter thanked *Blue Ridge* Sailors and embarked 7th Fleet staff for their work throughout the region, which reinforced the United States Navy's reputation as a global force for good.

"As the flagship of the 7th Fleet, you conduct and prepare for some of the most important missions we face," said Carter. "During 'Operation: Tamodachi,' you provided support for Tsunami relief operations, proving yet again what makes our military great."

Carter thanked the Sailors of *Blue Ridge* and the 7th Fleet staff for their hard work, and made a special point to thank their families.

"When you call your family members, I would ask that you tell them, your spouses, children, parents, friends, and loved ones, that you were thanked for supporting the country," said Carter. "Thank you, each of you, for all that you do to keep the United States and our Allies secure and our defenses strong."

Sailors said they felt moved by the visit and appreciated Carter taking the time to thank them for their work.

"It's always great when we get visits like this," said Personnel Specialist Third Class William Baldwin. "Knowing that what we do is important really helps to raise the spirits of the crew."

In addition to his message of thanks, Carter emphasized the role of *Blue Ridge* and other 7th Fleet ships in the United States' "rebalance" to the Asia-Pacific region.

"Our rebalance to the Asia Pacific is a central tenet of our new strategy," said Carter. "The logic of the rebalance is simple: Thanks to the efforts of the men and women that have served here, the Asia Pacific region has enjoyed an environment of peace and prosperity for more than 60 years."