

**USS DENVER (LPD 9) Public Affairs**

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**PRESS RELEASE**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **USS Denver Completes Search and Rescue Certification**

*Story by Seaman Paul Kelly*

SASEBO, Japan -- Sailors from USS Denver (LPD 9) had their skills tested by a team of inspectors from Afloat Training Group, Detachment Western Pacific (ATG WESTPAC) who conducted a search and rescue (SAR) Limited Training Team (LTT) visit on May 11-13.

Denver's deck department and SAR swimmers completed the LTT training and earned their SAR certification along the way. According to Boatswain's Mate Chief Petty Officer Marreco Clay, Denver is the first Forward Deployed Naval Forces ship to complete the LTT visit and SAR certification simultaneously.

"There is always more to do", said Clay. "Perfection is the key. In real life when you are dealing with saving people's lives you have no margin for error."

The first day of the assessment dealt with man overboard scenarios where Denver's deck department deployed SAR swimmers from a davit on the forecastle 30 feet above the water to recover a man overboard while fighting off heavy winds and rain.

"SAR certification is sort of a double inspection," said Damage Controlman 3rd Class Petty Officer Johan Olarte, a Denver SAR swimmer. "The inspectors want to see how well deck department and the SAR swimmers work together as one. It's all about communication, and making sure everyone is on the same page."

The second day of the assessment was held in the pool at Fleet Activities Sasebo where ATG focused on the fitness and competency of the ship's five SAR swimmers. The day began with a physical fitness test consisting of pull-ups, a 500-meter freestyle swim in SAR gear, and a 400-meter buddy tow.

"It's not just about looking like you are physically fit," said Operations Specialist 3rd Class Petty Officer Brady Allen, a Denver SAR swimmer. "You have to be able to pass the physical evolutions."

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The physical fitness test was just the beginning of the second day. Between 8:30 and 11 a.m. these Sailors were also evaluated on rescuing downed pilots, saving unconscious victims, fighting off combative survivors in the water, and performing first aid on medical casualties.

“The instructors are making sure that we are confident, have proper communication, and are competent in our procedures,” Olarte said.

ATG is responsible for the training, testing, and certifying of SAR swimmers for 19 ships stationed in Yokosuka and Sasebo, Japan. Denver's SAR certification is valid for 18 months.

Denver, commanded by Capt. Mario Mifsud, is part of the Essex Amphibious Ready Group and is currently in port conducting a ship's restricted availability (SRA).