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Navy Staffs Support Exercise Talisman Sabre 2011 Around the Clock

By Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Matthew Cole

SASEBO, Japan (July 14, 2011) – Commander, Task Force 76 (CTF 76) and Commander, Amphibious Squadron 11 (CPR 11) began the first phase of exercise Talisman Sabre 2011(TS11) this week by standing 24-hour command-and-control watches aboard the forward-deployed amphibious assault ship USS Essex (LHD 2).

TS11 is a joint-sponsored exercise by U.S. Pacific Command and Australian Defence Force (ADF). Forces from both nations will conduct various types of training at sea, ashore and in the air off the Australian coast. The complexity and scale of the exercise demand around-the-clock coordination and real-time responses for every scenario.

“The watches we stand are important since we are the supervisory authority for the ships that are participating in the exercise,” said Lt. Cmdr. Johanna G. Schumacher, the material and maintenance manager for CPR 11. “We’re trying to make the crews’ lives easier by establishing a schedule, completing the planning and coordinating across various task forces and commands. We set up these watches to keep our commanders informed as things change throughout the training, while providing the supervisory oversight to the ships that are conducting the exercise so they can concentrate on the mission.”

The beginning of the 24-hour watch, called force tactical action officer, is stood by members of CTF 76 and CPR-11 simultaneously at six-hour intervals to fill the role of the composite warfare commander (CWC) for the exercise.

“As the composite warfare commander we are in charge of all the warfare commanders in the exercise, which includes surface warfare commander, air warfare commander, information warfare commander, and the entire CWC structure,” said Lt. Benjamin McCarty, the scheduling officer for CTF 76. “CPR 11 stands the watch of warfare commander in charge of amphibious warfare. Constant communication is crucial, which is why we stand the watch together.”

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TS11 also focuses on contingency response drills that will enhance U.S. and Australian capabilities when dealing with foreign and domestic threats, while practicing their ability to conduct joint humanitarian assistance and disaster relief operations. CTF 76 participation in similar exercises have aided in the preparation for TS11.

“This experience, not only with CPR 11, but the entire force is very valuable because we actually get to exercise the naval doctrine that we study and train for,” said McCarty. “This is what the ships all prepare for--to train to be ready in any instance.”

The two commands will maintain the 24-hour watch schedule through the duration of TS11, which is scheduled to last until near the end of July.

“The coordination with CTF 76 allows us to keep up on our situation awareness for the on the spot changes expected to occur,” said Schumacher. “The CTF 76 staff might hear something directly from another task force that we may not hear through our sources, so it’s really good that we are in the same space and to be able to talk to each other to share information.”

CPR 11 reports to CTF 76, which is the Navy's only forward-deployed amphibious force commander. CTF 76 is led by Rear Adm. Scott Jones and is headquartered at White Beach Naval Facility in Okinawa, Japan.