



## Commander, Expeditionary Strike Group 2

2600 Tarawa Ct.  
Bldg. 1062, Ste. 260  
Norfolk, VA 23521  
[.esg2.surfor.navy.](http://esg2.surfor.navy)

**For Immediate Release**

February 19, 2008

### **ESG 2 Returns, Focuses on Readiness**

By Lieutenant John Fage, Expeditionary Strike Group 2 Public Affairs

NORFOLK, Va. – Members of Expeditionary Strike Group 2 returned recently following a one year deployment to the Fifth Fleet area of operations where they supported the Chief of Naval Operations' new maritime strategy.

The ESG's forward command element, a 40-plus person strong operational staff comprised of Sailors, Marines and one coalition officer from Naval Amphibious Base Little Creek, worked to meet several maritime strategy objectives, including maintaining forward presence, deterrence, power projection and maritime security while deployed to Naval Support Activity Bahrain.

“The young men and women of ESG 2 really deserve a pat on the back,” said Rear Admiral Terence McKnight, commander, ESG 2. “We were conducting several extremely important missions simultaneously, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, it was incredibly demanding.”

In addition to supporting the maritime strategy, ESG 2 worked to increase familiarity and foster relations with other nations through theater security cooperation activities. Those activities seek to enhance global security and remove conditions that breed conflict.

“In this day and age, fighting against the types of enemies we face, we know that we need to support and have the support of our friends in that region,” said McKnight. “Building those lasting partnerships and friendships is an absolute must when it comes to Maritime Security Operations. We can't do it alone.”

ESG 2 performed their missions by sharing responsibilities among four task forces, two of which were combined – CTFs 158, 59, 58 and 51. CTFs 158 and 58 consisted of U.S. and international military members working side by side.

Composed of U.S. Navy, Marine Corps, Coast Guard, coalition and Iraqi forces, CTF 158 is responsible for several missions, including overall protection of the oil terminals, providing sea control and maritime security in the North Arabian Gulf, surrounding the Iraqi Al Basrah and Khawr Al Amaya oil terminals.

“Providing security to those oil terminals was one of the most vital and demanding missions assigned to us,” said Capt. John Bryant, ESG 2’s operations officer. “The oil that comes from those terminals is absolutely essential to the success of Iraq – both economically and politically.”

Another important mission CTF 158 performs is training Iraqi marines to ensure they have the necessary skills and experience to safeguard those oil terminals and surrounding waters.

“We want them to be able to defend what is rightfully theirs and to feel confident doing so,” said Bryant. “They want to be able to do their part for their country and to make sure violent extremists or other entities can’t disrupt their nation’s economy or rebuilding efforts.”

CTF 58, whose role focuses on anti-piracy operations off the coast of Somalia, furthered the objective of maritime security.

“We kept a watchful eye on ships transiting off the coast since pirates frequented the area,” McKnight said. “Keeping those waters free of piracy is paramount to international trade.”

The task force also provides medical and humanitarian assistance to the crews of ships freed from pirate control.

Another maritime strategy component that is becoming a larger part of the Navy mission is humanitarian assistance and disaster relief. CTF 59 exemplified that, dispatching the amphibious assault ship USS Kearsarge along with members of the 22nd Marine Expeditionary Unit to aid those affected by a hurricane in Bangladesh.

The task force also conducted a crisis response exercise involving several military, nongovernment and civilian agencies. The exercise tested ESG 2's capabilities to respond to a humanitarian assistance and disaster relief situations.

"Part of our job, not just as Sailors and Marines, but as Americans, is to reach out to those in need, to help those who need it most," said McKnight. "Our capabilities allow us to respond quickly to lend a hand when and where needed."

Lastly, CTF 51's responsibilities focused on the control of expeditionary forces in the U.S. Naval Forces Central Command AOR. As Navy/USMC ESGs entered that area, they were placed under the control of ESG 2.

Four different ESGs fell under ESG 2's command during the last year: the USS Boxer (LHD 4), USS Bataan (LHD 5), USS Bonhomme Richard (LHD 6), and the USS Kearsarge (LHD 3).

Now that ESG 2 has returned home and reconstituted with the CONUS element, the staff is poised to conduct a number of diverse requirements as a flexible, scaleable battle staff for Commander, Second Fleet. Moreover, ESG 2 will provide leadership and advocacy in support of the four East Coast amphibious squadrons and their respective ships. They'll also participate in several exercises focusing on fleet readiness.

- 30 -

*For further questions, please contact Commander, Expeditionary Strike Group 2 Public Affairs Office at 757-462-7403 x140 or [fage@navy](mailto:fage@navy).*