



October 23, 2009

## Indonesian Officials Visit USS Cleveland

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JAVA SEA - The amphibious transport dock ship USS Cleveland (LPD-7) hosted 12 Indonesian distinguished visitors Oct. 22, while underway in the Java Sea in support of Marine Exercise (MAREX) 2009.

MAREX is an exercise designed to enhance interoperability and communication between the U.S. and Indonesia militaries through joint training and humanitarian projects.

Indonesian military officials, civic leaders and emergency services personnel spent more than two hours aboard Cleveland touring work spaces, meeting crew members and visiting with the ship's senior officers.

"I was very thankful when I first received the invitation," said Drs. Suroso, the mayor of Situbondo, Indonesia. "To see the way the ship does operations is impressive. I like the spirit and motivation of the crew."

While aboard Cleveland, visitors were treated to refreshments and got a first hand look at how the U.S. Navy conducts operations at sea. For some guests, the visit was their first opportunity on a naval vessel.

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“This is the first military ship I’ve been on,” said Suroso. “I really appreciated the visit and did not realize the amount of training and dedication that goes into a ship operating at sea.”

“It’s always good to have a strong relationship with our neighbors,” said Capt. Kevin Couch, Cleveland’s commanding officer. “I fully respect and admire the Indonesian people for having strength during this difficult time.”

Indonesia continues to recover from a series of recent earthquakes that has impacted thousands of residents and killed hundreds. Relief aid continues to pour in from around the world.

Cleveland is accompanied by USS Rushmore (LSD 47). Both ships are assigned to the Bonhomme Richard Amphibious Ready Group (ARG) currently operating in the U.S. 7<sup>th</sup> Fleet area of operations.

BHR ARG is participating in MAREX as part of U.S. 7<sup>th</sup> Fleet’s Theater Security Cooperation initiative to help build relationships and strengthen existing ties in the region. Navy medical and dental teams from Cleveland and Rushmore are augmenting local healthcare providers on the ground in Indonesia, offering basic services to local residents.

While operating in the U.S. 7<sup>th</sup> Fleet area of operations, Bonhomme Richard ARG reports to the Commander, Amphibious Force 7<sup>th</sup> Fleet, Rear Adm. Richard Landolt, who is headquartered in Okinawa, Japan.

For more news on BHR ARG visit [www.navy.mil](http://www.navy.mil) and [www.cpr7.navy.mil](http://www.cpr7.navy.mil).