

MAY 30, 2010

PEIENews



VIEW FROM THE BRIDGE

D. A. SCHNELL
Commanding Officer
USS PELELIU (LHA 5)



Hello to the Sailors and Marines of PELELIU, as well as to all our friends and families ashore!

I want to thank all of you who came down to the pier last Saturday and provided us with a wonderful send-off. It was a bittersweet day for many of us. Although it is always hard to say goodbye to our loved ones, we know we are embarking on an adventure that is unique to Sailors in the Navy.

The first day was extremely busy as we exercised nearly every capability this ship possesses. Once we cleared San Diego Harbor, we ballasted down and retrieved four large Utility Landing Craft that will accompany us in our Well Deck on this deployment. Following that evolution, we headed further out to sea and recovered the remainder of our aircraft that were unable to embark the week prior while in port. These aircraft included a CH-53 helicopter, our two search & rescue helicopters, and our squadron of Harrier jets. We then conducted deck landing qualifications (DLQs) with our jets as we proceeded out to rendezvous with the USNS Guadalupe, an oiler assigned to support us that evening. Given

the lengthy transit ahead of us, it was important to top off our tanks with fuel before we departed Southern California. The region was experiencing a low pressure system at the time which made for a demanding underway replenishment evolution with Guadalupe. Not only was it dark as we sailed alongside her, but the seas were 8-10 feet with very high winds. The crew did a tremendous job, however, and after three hours alongside, we had full tanks and were ready to head west. We capped off the night with additional Harrier jet DLQs to ensure pilot proficiency. All in all, it was a demanding day for all hands.

We are four days into our overseas deployment now and making good progress as we cross the mighty Pacific. While I can't tell you our destination in advance, I will be sure to let you know of our stops in future newsletters. For now, we are acclimating ourselves to being at sea again for an extended period of time. We are also acclimating ourselves to being at sea with over 1,200 Marines embarked. That means longer lines for the store, longer lines for the gym, and longer lines for chow. But we're all one team and the integration with our Marine Corps brethren has never been better.

As always, our days onboard Peleliu are full of exercises, drills, and training to ensure we maintain peak operational readiness. But we are also taking time to ensure the welfare of our Marines and Sailors. This

past month, I hired a civilian, Mr. Jude DesNoyer, to be in charge of our Morale, Welfare, and Recreation (MWR). Jude (known as the Fun Boss) brings a wealth of experience and is working closely with my MWR committee to ensure we keep the crew busy, both at sea and in port, with recreational activities. Some events coming up include an Asian Pacific Islander Heritage celebration this weekend that entails a barbecue & Luau, as well as an authentic island dancing program. This will be combined with a salute to Memorial Day. We also treated all Sailors and Marines who celebrate a birthday in the month of May with a special steak & lobster dinner. They had a chance to win prizes and best of all, it was served restaurant-style with no standing in line!

I know this deployment has just started and seven months is a long time to be away from home and our loved ones. I thank you for all your support, however, and ask that you stay strong during our absence. While deployed, these newsletters will be issued weekly vice monthly so you can keep abreast of our high tempo of operations. Be safe and have a great month!

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FROM THE DECK PLATES

By CMDM(SW/AW/SS)
Brent Williams
Command Master Chief

Hello and congratulations on a very successful work up cycle, POM period, and yes the underway!!! As odd as it seems; it is nice to be on deployment..... Maybe I have been doing this way too long, but after working so hard to get the ship prepared and ensuring all is ready at home, the time for the all that hard work to pay off is finally here.

I think all of our Sailors and Marines have performed admirably during the entire process of deployment preparations. It still amazes me that so much has to happen to

get this ship, not to mention the entire Amphibious Readiness Group, ready to deploy. Seeing the coordination between the departments and the Blue-Green Team was fantastic.

So now that we are on deployment, what better time to dig in and ensure that we maintain this great ship and ourselves. We have so much to take care of on a daily basis; watches, PMS, admin, you name it. What we need to do now is look ahead and figure out some goals. I know a lot of you are interested in getting that ESWS device. Now is the time to start, the same goes for the EAWS. Maybe there is the next level of PQS that you will now have time for, a college course,

or just a good book ... you name it. Have something that can take your mind off the daily routine. Underway, we are all always at the ready. Having something else to accomplish will allow you to better organize and make time for the other things you want to get done.

I look forward to seeing all of you on the deck plates. Please stop by and meet the new Fun Boss, Jude Desnoyer. His office is just off the Mess Decks, port side. He is working hard to keep our time together as pleasurable as possible.

So with that, I wish all of new petty officers my congratulations for achieving a great milestone in each of their careers. Take care and be safe.



Photo Illustration by MC2 Michael Russell



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EYES IN THE SKY

By MC2 (EXW) Andrew Dunlap

Please stow all electronic devices, put your seats and tray tables in the upright positions as we prepare for takeoff inside the OC division.

Air traffic controllers, or ACs, of the OC division handle the movement of all aircraft on the flight deck, plot the number of aircraft in the sky, or relay the time a pilot needs to be on deck.

Pilots on board have to trust the AC's like a blind man relies on his seeing eye dog to guide him through traffic. With generations of experience, Iron Nickel's AC's bring a passion and commitment to their job.



Photo by MC2 Michael Russell



Photo by MC2 (EXW) Andrew Dunlap

"I've been an air traffic controller for over 22 years, and I absolutely love my job - you have to love this job - if you don't, you won't succeed," said ACC(AW) Susan Cumpton, LCPO of OC Division.

The experience can come from saying call signs for over two decades, or it could be a job that was a part of the family tradition.

AC2(AW) Matthew "Funsized" Dean, one of two supervisors in OC, is a third-generation air traffic controller. His grandfather, father, and he have been pilots' eyes in the skies.

"It's exciting to me, knowing that I'm their lifeline to bring them back to the ship safely," said Funsized.

Controlling the constant movement of aircraft landing and launching may seem like a stressful and daunting task. It's no mistake the word "controller" is in their title. AC1(select)(AW) John Burmeoh explains how the calm, cool, collected crew of OC division thrive on the stress.

"People say air traffic control is stressful, it can become a burden on you, but instead of stressing out, me and the people I work with take it as it comes, cause we know our job, it's exciting and a thrill."

Who would have thought you could get such thrill and excitement from sitting on a padded chair, inside an air conditioned dark room with only a headset and radar screen in front of you?

"The adrenaline rush is why I

stayed an AC for so long," said Burmeoh, "I could have picked up 1st class sooner if I cross-rated, but there's nothing like being an air traffic controller and experiencing that adrenaline rush."

A lifeline from the ship to aircraft consists of more than just an AC talking to the pilot. Inside Air Traffic Control there are several different positions in order to efficiently land, launch and switch communications for the pilot to identify friend or foe joining them in the skies.

The positions are: plotter on the stat board keeps information on every aircraft from Peleliu in the air and tracks the ship's position to keep a visual reference. The radar final controller talks to the pilot when they approach ten miles out and guides them through their landing. A martial controller is in charge of initial contact with air traffic coming back to the ship and will put the pilot in a holding pattern until it's their time to land. Departure controller is in charge of all aircraft departing the ship and getting them to their destination. Finally, a supervisor, who oversees everything and makes sure the operations are running safely.

The next time you fly, remember as you walk down the flight deck, with the aroma of jet fuel and heat blasting in your face, sit on the lawn-chair style seats, you're not only trusting the two pilots, but also a man they call Funsized.



IRON NICKEL CELEBRATES MAY BIRTHDAYS

*Photos and story by MCSA
Destiny Cheek*

Sailors and Marines on board amphibious assault ship USS Peleliu (LHA 5) celebrated their May birthdays at their 'home away from home' May 28, for some their first birthday without loved ones.

However, according to Master Chief Culinary Specialist Russell Paje, the celebration was meant to increase morale during deployment and provide something unique for the Iron Nickel crew to make them feel at home on their special day.

The aroma of steak, lobster, corn on the cob, baked potato, sautéed mushroom and onions filled the mess decks as participants filed in one by one. The First and Second Class Petty Officer Associations (FCPOA and SCPOA), greeted the attendees and served the dinner restaurant-style.

"The ordinary mess deck tables were set up five-star style including table cloths, china, glass and place settings," says Paje.

Nearly 160 people attended the dinner, with each served individually and waited on for anything they needed.

Sgt. Justin Williams, a radio operator, attended the event to celebrate his May 30 birthday.

"The event was awesome. It was very thoughtful that they organized this and served our plates for us," said

Williams. "It made me feel special, even though by crossing the dateline, my birthday was skipped."

Along with the meal, the Fun Boss Jude Desnoyer and MWR (Morale Recreation and Welfare), provided five \$25 ship's store gift certificates as a present. The gift cards were distributed randomly underneath cups and plates.

The hour-long celebration ended with dessert. The oldest and youngest birthday attendees had the opportunity of cutting the cake with Commanding Officer Captain David Schnell and Command Master Chief Brent Williams.

The oldest, Machinist's Mate 1st Class Genesis Salazar, and youngest, Lance Corporal Alejandro Plascencia cut the first piece of birthday cake.

Birthdays are still recognized and enjoyed even while underway.

"I know I cannot be at home for my birthday, but celebrating it this way still made it special, even without my family," said Machinist's Mate 3rd Class Benjamin Gicheru.

Since the 2008 deployment, long hours and planning were devoted to making this event happen. Paje, CMC Williams, the food service divisions, MWR, FCPOA, and SCPOA all played a role.

Culinary Specialist Seaman Recruit Reggie Jones helped prepare the meal.

"The job is hard work with long hours, but seeing all the birthday people with smiles on their faces made me happy and made the work load worth it."

CMC Williams noted the event inspired anticipation for the next dinner.

"People look forward to the upcoming event," he said. "As the deployment goes on, the occasion will only get bigger and better."

Sailors and Marines with June birthdays can look forward to this fine-dining experience June 11.



PELELIU AMPHIBIOUS READY GROUP ENTERS 7TH FLEET

By MC3 Foster Bamford

USS PELELIU, At Sea – Amphibious assault ship USS Peleliu (LHA 5), flagship of the Peleliu Amphibious Ready Group (PELARG), entered the U.S. 7th Fleet Area of Operations May 29 as part of its regularly scheduled Western Pacific deployment.

The Peleliu arrived in 7th Fleet with the ability to accomplish any mission outlined in the Navy's maritime strategy, up to and including combat missions, humanitarian assistance and promoting peace and stability in the region.

The ready group consists of three ships -- the Peleliu, amphibious transport dock ship USS Dubuque (LPD 8) and amphibious dock landing ship USS Pearl Harbor (LSD 52) and is lead by Capt. Dale Fuller.

"Our Navy, Marine Corps team can offer a full range of operational capabilities, including theater security and cooperation," said Fuller. "We are fully ready to meet any tasking required by 7th Fleet."

The ready group's over 3,000 personnel include nearly 1,800 Sailors and around 1,400 embarked Marines from the 15th Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU), led by Col. Roy Osborn.

The Peleliu's commanding officer, Capt. David Schnell is pleased with his team and ready to enter 7th Fleet.

"The Peleliu and our embarked Marine Expeditionary Unit are fully integrated, fully certified and are fully capable of carrying out the Navy's maritime strategy," said Schnell. "We are looking forward to transiting through 7th Fleet and to operating in 7th Fleet, to demonstrate those capabilities both operationally as

well as in exercises with other countries and other US forces in the region."

Other elements of the PELARG include the command element, Commander, Amphibious Squadron 3; Fleet Surgical Team 1; Tactical Air Control Squadron 11; Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron 23, detachment 5; Assault Craft Unit 1, detachment F; Assault Craft Unit 5, detachment B and Beachmast Unit 1, detachment D.

The 7th Fleet Area of Operations includes more than 52 million square miles of the Pacific Ocean, running from the International Date Line all the way to the eastern coast of Africa, and from the Antarctic to the Kuril Islands, northeast of Japan. It contains, more than half of the world's population.

USS Peleliu is on a regularly scheduled Western Pacific deployment. While in 7th Fleet PELARG reports to Commander, Amphibious Force 7th Fleet, Rear Adm. Richard Landolt, who is headquartered in Okinawa, Japan.



IRON NICKEL. ENGINEERS KEEP THE RIGHT FIRES BURNING

By MC1 (SW/AW) R. David Valdez

ON BOARD USS PELELIU, At Sea – Fourteen hours after USS Peleliu got underway, boiler fires unexpectedly went out, threatening to delay the amphibious assault vessel from arriving at its next destination on time.

However, Peleliu had already steamed for over half a day at 20 knots and completed an underway replenishment (UNREP) earlier that night. California was nowhere in sight, and the nearest ship was steaming to the next point on its schedule.

Machinist's Mate 1st Class Enrique Garcia was on watch in the forward main machinery room (MMR) that night while most of the crew was sleeping, unaware of what was happening in the bowels of the ship.

"First, we had a casualty with the fuel service pump," he said. "There was some water in the fuel, and we lost the burners to the boiler."

Without the burners, there would be no steam to push the turbines which generate electricity and turn the shaft which propels the ship forward.

Machinist's Mate 1st Class George Iova said the next several minutes got more exciting.

"We started the forward diesel, which is the emergency diesel generator," Iova said. "Then the electricians paralleled power to the bus, and we cross-connected steam from the aft plant to restart the Number 1 ship's service turbine generator (SSTG) to keep power going."

At this point, the 11-man watch section started Number 2 SSTG and tried to restore the forward plant.

"That's when the automatic bus tie (ABT) started freaking out," Garcia explained. "By freaking out, I mean caught fire."

Iova described the ABT as an automatic switch which normally finds an appropriate source of electricity to power the equipment in the MMR.

"When the ABT didn't switch to get the power right away, it caught fire," Iova said.

While the electricians secured the ABT, the machinist's mates on watch had to maintain the cross-connection to steam from the aft plant and continue trying to light off the boiler.

"The electricians had to secure power to control center Number 34," Garcia continued. "That means we lost power to all of our alpha equipment, which is half of the plant."

The watch section still had to stabilize the plant and light the fires to the boiler from the cross-connected steam supply from the

aft MMR. Garcia explained that they had to change the atomizer, which allows steam and fuel to mix at an ideal ratio for combustion, so they could light off the boiler from one of the aft blowers.

"We got the fires lit," Iova said. "But then we got high water warnings from the boiler steam drum. That could cause water to get into the turbines, and water kills turbines. So we had to secure the fires again, drain the boiler, make preparations to light the fires again, and lit the fires."

After draining the boiler and lighting fires, the engineers noticed irregularities in the levels of the de-aerating feed tanks, which could cause interruptions in the flow of atomized steam to the burners, resulting in a loss of fire for the boiler.

Garcia explained that the irregularities in the DFT levels came from splitting the aft plant, and the ship had to reduce speed to ten knots, but the ship didn't stop through the entire series of events.

"We couldn't afford to sit dead in the water," Iova said. "We went from hell to heaven in that time."

CWO3 Frank Rodas expressed satisfaction with the manner in which the watch section handled the situation.

"They used their training, experience and teamwork to get the job done," he said. "They ensured the ship kept moving by working together and communicating effectively."

On May 23, just after midnight, eleven Sailors kept the ship running. They stood a six-hour watch and faced a series of problems without interrupting the ship's operations. Their efforts may have remained completely unnoticed if the CO hadn't brought it to the attention of the crew and embarked personnel. They kept the fires burning, the lights on, and the ship moving to its next destination.

**"And thus they'll fight for ages on
till warships sail no more,
amid the boiler's mighty heat and
the turbine's hellish roar.
So when you see a ship pull out
to meet a war-like foe,
remember faintly if you can,
'The Men Who Sail Below.'"
-- The Snipes Lament**



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