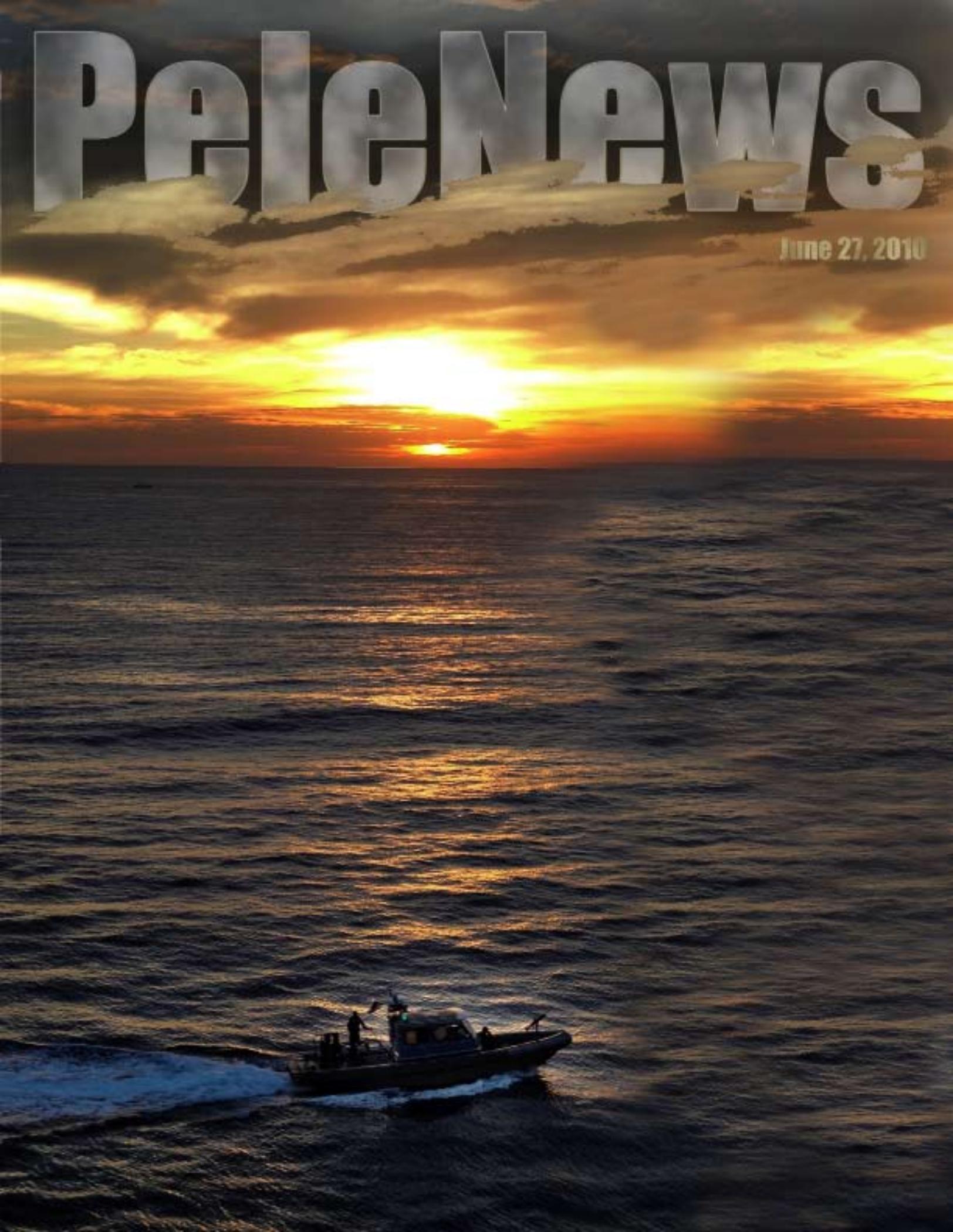


# PELE NEWS

June 27, 2010



# VIEW FROM THE BRIDGE



D.A. SCHNELL, Commanding Officer

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

We are in the final stages of our 6-day visit to Timor-Leste (formerly known as East Timor). The first new country of the 21st Century, Timor-Leste gained its independence from Indonesia in 2002. Since that time, the United States along with Australia and significant forces from the United Nations have sought to maintain peace and stability here. The results are tremendous! Although still a very poor country, hotels, restaurants, and shops are opening along the main beach road of Dili and the people you meet are optimistic about the future.

The Department of the Navy is committing significant resources on an annual basis to conduct military exercises in Timor-Leste and the presence of Sailors and Marines is received very warmly by the populace. This week, in addition to the large Marine exercise occurring in the mountains and jungles behind Dili, other Sailors and Marines participated in

numerous community relations projects. These included visiting schools and orphanages, building community centers, and participating in sporting events. The day of our arrival, Timor-Leste held an international marathon in which 47 of our Sailors and Marines participated. I was fortunate to be invited to meet the President of Timor-Leste at his palace later that afternoon at an awards ceremony to recognize the winners of the race. President Horta told me he was extremely appreciative of our presence in Dili and hoped for many future U.S. Navy visits.

On Tuesday, our shipboard soccer team played the Timor-Leste national soccer team in Dili Stadium. The game was attended by many dignitaries and it was naturally assumed we would be crushed by the competition, just as the U.S. military team was the year before. But when the dust settled, the game ended in a draw, 1-1. Probably a very diplomatic way to end the game, but I have a hunch that if we had played even another 10 minutes, we would have taken home the trophy! I extend a "Job Well Done" to Chief Fernandez who coached our team, and to all the Sailors and Marines who fielded it. The highlight of the game came when we scored our first goal. It was always our intent to conduct a fly-by with several helicopters from the deck of PELELIU at half-time. However, as luck would have it, three Marine CH-46 helicopters roared over the stadium at low level just seconds after we kicked our goal. The timing could not

have been more impressive! The stadium went absolutely wild and there was no convincing the dignitaries present that we had not orchestrated the entire event. I was just glad we did not actually score a second goal and disappoint them when there was not another fly-over!

Thursday evening, we hosted a large reception in the Helo Hangar for 175 dignitaries from the local diplomatic and military communities. There were a lot of moving parts as guests arrived via helicopter and water taxi. Although challenging, Supply Department once again orchestrated a flawless event that permitted us to show our guests some great hospitality. I appreciate all the hard work that went into making it a successful evening.

Yesterday, we sailed from Timor-Leste, enroute Darwin, Australia for a 5-day port visit. The crew is looking forward to the hospitality that every port call "Down Under" provides. More to follow about our visit to Darwin in next week's PeleNews.

To our families and friends back home, thank you for your continued support of our deployment. Be safe and have a great week!



EMFR Disi Zhao receives the Sailor of the Week award from Capt. David A. Schnell



Peleliu's gator dances for school children.

# FROM THE DECK PLATES



By CMDCM  
(SW/AW/SS)  
Brent Williams

Shipmates,

Another week has passed and this crew continues to amaze me with all the hard work, particularly considering the climate in Timor-Leste. With temperatures in the 90s and the high humidity, you've all performed miraculously. While this port call did not meet the traditional definition of a liberty port, we were able to get quite a few Sailors and

Marines to  
the beach  
by water  
taxi. The  
reports  
I've

gotten indicate everyone had a great time exploring Dili, participating in community relations projects and competing in sporting events.

Those that did not make it ashore answered the bell on the ship working the daily routine and ensuring the ship was maintained to a high standard. We hosted several tours while in port, from general tours for school children to local police to many military training tours for our friends wearing the military cloth from Timor-Leste, Australia and New Zealand. The "Aussies" and "Kiwis" are stationed in Dili performing peacekeeping duties in addition to helping revive the infrastructure of this fledgling country. We also hosted a group of U.S. Navy SeaBees who are deployed to Dili helping with civic construction projects. For many of the SeaBees, this was their first time on board a ship and thoroughly enjoyed the experience of meeting their brother "fleet" Sailors and exploring the ship. They were greeted warmly, as

is consistent with the Peleliu spirit of hospitality.

Today, we arrive in Darwin, Australia and look forward to a more traditional liberty port with the many diversions available. Our MWR "Fun Boss" has arranged many sightseeing tours and activities to keep the Sailors and Marines of the Peleliu Amphibious Ready Group entertained.

Don't forget to take advantage of our Video Teleconferencing program. It's a terrific way to stay connected with loved ones at home in San Diego. It's especially important for those with children. Many times, the little ones don't fully understand why Mom or Dad is gone for so long. This truly helps alleviate many anxieties your children may be experiencing by having real-time see and speak communication. Try it, you'll love it!

Until next time, please continue to work hard and take care of each other.

#### Commanding Officer

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*CMDCM(SW/AW/SS)*

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**PEL ARG, 15TH MEU SCORE WITH TIMOR PARTNERSHIP LESTE**

*Story by MC3 Omar Dominquez*

Sailors and Marines from USS Peleliu (LHA 5) played a goodwill soccer match against the Timor Leste Defense Force soccer team at the Dili National Stadium, June 22.

In a packed stadium filled with the president of Timor-Leste, American servicemembers and local Timorese, the teams faced off in the country's most popular sport.

"The game was very surreal," said Chief Information Systems Technician (SW/AW) Joseph Fernandez. "Playing on an international stage against an international team was great to see."

Prior to the game, both teams and the color guards gathered at the center of the field to observe the playing of both national anthems.

"The best part about conducting goodwill engagements like this is being a good ambassador," said Fernandez. "It's also good for our Sailors and Marines to get away from operational work to enjoy a nice friendly competition of soccer."

The game lasted more than two hours and ended in a 1-1 tie.

"The game was very exciting," said Lt. Jose Pinto, an officer in the Timor Leste Defense Force. "This exercise is the best exercise we

have had since we became an independent country. It's good to have events like this to build relationships with each other."

Pinto added that bilateral relationships are built on a variety of events including military exercises, friendly competition and civic programs, where people can meet and exchange ideas.

The PEL ARG and embarked Marines from the

15th Marine Expeditionary Unit are participating in Exercise Crocodilo, a multicultural exercise promoting partnership through civil programs and training with the Timor-Leste and Australian militaries.

*Photo Illustration by MC3 Foster Bamford*



*Photos by MC3 Foster Bamford*

# Reception - June 25, 2010

Photos by MC3 Omar Dominquez



# 15th MEU Helps Community in Timor Leste

Children from the small village in Suco now have a place where they can have fun and learn, thanks to the efforts of Seabees and Marines.

Sailors from Naval Mobile Construction Battalion 11, with the help of Marines from Combat Logistics Battalion 15, 15th Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU) completed construction of a community center here this week.

before,”  
added Ritthaler, the 20-year-old Fraser, Mich. native.

With the Marines finishing all their work at the community center, they found another place they could lend a helping hand.

“The Marines completed all the work they could at the community center, inside and out, and helped lay down some of the concrete,” said Lance Cpl. Ryan Ritthaler, we just helped give them a head m o t o r start,” explained the 23-year-old transport Phoenix, Ariz. native.

Working in extreme temperatures, Marines CLB-15. “We even hammered away at the helped the Seabees finish some of the tiling they had done the day

would not budge, a jackhammer was used to pry it from the ground.

“When we arrived at the school, we had to remove the concrete floor so they could repave it,” explained Ritthaler. “It was hard work and it was really hot, but it felt great to be helping make this school better,” he said with a smile.

When recess broke for the

Story and Photo  
by Cpl. Gabriel  
Velasquez

kids, the Marines rested too. The children stood in awe at the strangers until a soccer ball was brought out and a make shift game ensued.

“It was fun getting out there and playing with the kids,” said Lance Cpl. Juan C. Valencia-Martinez, bulk fuel specialist, CLB-15. “I showed them how to dribble the ball and tried to get all of them involved by having a contest on who could dribble the most,” added Valencia-Martinez, the 19-year-old Wasco, Calif. native.

Though the work was grueling and the heat intense, the Marines knew why they were there.

“It’s all about helping the community and the kids,” said Sgt. Arthur Hardy, combat engineer, CLB-15. “At the end of the day, that’s what makes you feel good about what you’re doing here,” added the 23-year-old Selma, Ala. native.



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# CLB-15 Medical Detachment Provides Care in Timor Leste

Story and photo by  
Cpl. Gabriel Velasquez

The blistering heat did not sway the local villagers of Timor Leste this week as they waited in long lines to receive medical care.

Doctors and corpsmen from Combat Logistics Battalion 15, 15th Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU), provided health care services to local residents at various sites in Timor Leste this week.

The team of doctors and corpsmen were split between three different sites and treated a variety of illnesses.

“We saw 1,173 people between all three sites,” said Chief Petty Officer Troy Moravec, medical detachment chief, CLB-15. “Their ailments ranged from upper respiratory infections to common aches and pains,” added Moravec.

At the main site, a local clinic, the caregivers were greeted with smiles and appreciation.

“The people were very happy and weren’t shy,” said Moravec. “They mingled with us and we felt very welcome,” he added.

For every patient seen, a routine diagnostic procedure was performed by the caregivers.

“I would take their blood pressure, check their respiration, and check

their pulse,” said Petty Officer Third Class Samuel Nickols, corpsmen, CLB-15. “I would then write up a diagnosis and either hand the patient off to one of the doctors or give them some medicine that would ease their symptoms,” he added.

For the ailments the team couldn’t treat, referrals were given so patients could receive care.

“Most of the illnesses we got were not very serious, and we could treat with the medicine on hand,” explained Cmdr. Randy L. Baldwin, MEU surgeon, CLB-15. “The ailments that we didn’t have the equipment for, like cases of tuberculosis and acute hepatitis, we referred the patients to a local hospital,” he said.

Of all the challenges faced during the week, the hardest part wasn’t medically related.

“I think the language barrier was the most difficult aspect of the mission,” said Baldwin. “The Timor Leste military really helped out by providing translators that made everything run much smoother,” he added.

Each new challenge provided the team with opportunities to build cohesion within the unit as they developed ways to accomplish their mission.

“I was impressed with the team,” said Moravec. “I wasn’t finding myself telling them what to do, they pulled together and took the initiative to get the job done.”

Coping with challenges is nothing new to a medical professional. And helping people, especially those in need, makes it all worth while.

“This is what I signed up for,” said Nickols. “Providing health care for the sick and injured, it felt great.”

