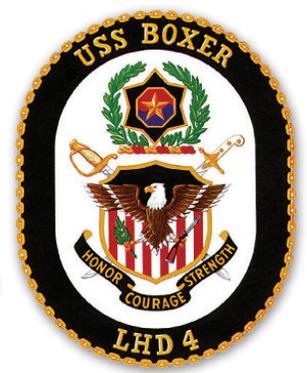




BARK OF THE BOXER

AMERICA'S GOLDEN GATOR



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Boxer group, 13th MEU meet final certification

By MC1(SW) Fletcher Gibson

The 13th Marine Expeditionary unit, along with the amphibious assault ship USS Boxer (LHD 4) and the Boxer Amphibious Readiness Group, completed its Certification Exercise today off the coast of Southern California.

The 12-day period of amphibious actions demonstrated the unit's ability to perform a wide-variety of missions and was the final check mark making the 13th MEU/Amphibious Squadron 1 team ready for deployment.

Alongside Boxer, the dock landing ship USS Comstock (LSD 45) and the amphibious transport dock ship USS Green Bay (LPD 20), the Marines of the 13th MEU completed simulated missions ranging from maritime boarding to amphibious land raids to civilian evacuation drills.

"We've been able to evaluate our full set of missions," said Maj. Ryan Coughlin, the 13th MEU's operations officer. "Since the first day we formed up, this is what our entire training has built up to."

While the focus of the evaluation was on mission completion for the Marines, their ability to integrate with their Naval partners and deploy to their assignments was a key part of the evaluation. Launching Harrier jets from Boxer's flight deck or equipping landing craft from Green Bay plays a large part in their ongoing success.

Lay leaders answer the call

By MC2(AW) Oscar Espinoza

Religious lay leaders serve an essential and important role as part of the command religious programs aboard Navy ships such as USS Boxer.

Lay leaders are active members of their faiths with a desire to serve and lead members of those faiths.

The responsibility for leading regular worship falls to dedicated crewmembers appointed by their commanding officer to provide religious leadership for shipmates who share their faith when there isn't a chaplain of that faith on board, explained Cmdr. Kevin Deeley, Boxer's command chaplain.

"With the command religious program, the bottom line is to support your constitutional right to freedom of religion," said Deeley. "Lay leaders answer

the call when there is a spiritual need".

The Chaplain Department, however, can't support the command religious program alone. Although Boxer has chaplains for some faith groups, there is not a chaplain for every faith background, he explained.

Because of this, they seek interested crewmembers to help by becoming lay leaders.

"I saw an opportunity as a lay leader to allow other Boxer crewmembers of my faith a chance to practice and have a positive impact to my command and others," said Personnel Specialist 3rd class Christina Park, a lay leader for the Buddhist faith group. "I've been studying Buddhism from an early age and my command was very supportive when I made my decision

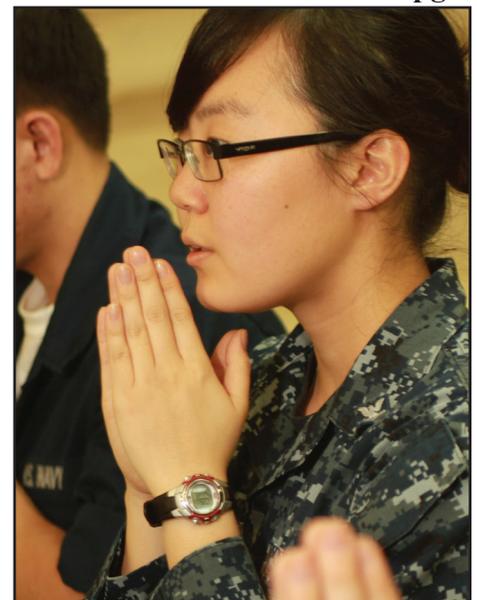
See 'PRAYER' pg 4



An M1A1 Abrams tank assigned to the 13th MEU deploys from a landing craft near Camp Pendleton. The amphibious landing was one of the events evaluated during the unit's CERTEX. Photo by MC2(SW) Trevor Welsh.

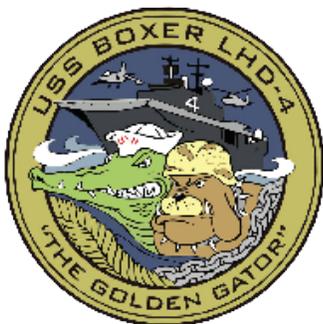
"There's no such thing as a pure Navy or Marine Corps show when you're an amphibious force," said Col. David Coffman, the 13th MEU's commanding officer.

The all-amphibious operations of CERTEX also marked a See 'MARINES' pg 4



PS3 Christina Park leads a service as Boxer's Buddhist lay leader. Photo by MC2(AW) Oscar Espinoza.





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This newspaper is an authorized publication for military members on board USS Boxer (LHD 4). Contents of Bark of the Boxer are not the official views of, or endorsed by the U.S. Government, the Department of Defense or the United States Navy.

FIND GATOR!



We've hidden GATOR somewhere in this issue. The first three readers who find him and send an e-mail to the editor with the page number and location win a prize from MWR.

Boxer Amphibious Readiness Group completes COMPTUEX

By Lt. Chad A. Dulac

The amphibious assault ship USS Boxer (LHD 4), as part of the Boxer Amphibious Readiness Group (ARG), completed its Composite Training Unit Exercise (COMPTUEX) after two weeks of evolutions while operating off the coast of Southern California, November 4-19.

Boxer, along with the amphibious dock ship USS Green Bay (LPD 20), the amphibious dock landing ship USS Comstock (LSD 45), the Marines of the 13th Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU), Marine Medium Helicopter Squadron (HMM) 163, Assault Craft Unit (ACU) Detachments 1 and 5 and Combat Logistic Battalion 13, participated in multiple evolutions that tested Boxer ARG's ability to integrate with all of its assets while reacting to various simulated sea, air and subsurface warfare situations.

"COMPTUEX is an intense exercise that tested our Navy and Marine Corps team's ability to operate in diverse multi-mission platforms over a series of days using multiple assets and strengthening our ability to support the Navy's Maritime Strategy," said Commander, Amphibious Squadron ONE, Capt. Curtis Shaub. COMPTUEX assessed over 30 different aspects of joint operations between participating units. During the underway period, Boxer ARG was measured on its performance during numerous scripted and free-play scenarios to include air defense, surface information and amphibious warfare.

With Marine forces embarked aboard all ships, the ARG was able to continue working together to hone its war fighting effectiveness.

"By having our Marine Corps counter-



USS Greenbay and USS Comstock line up with USS Boxer for a simulated straits transit during Composite Training Unit Exercise. The three ships are all part of the Boxer Amphibious Readiness Group. Photo by MC3(SW) Trevor Welsh.

parts integrated aboard all elements of the Boxer Amphibious Readiness Group, we established and refined planning processes, logistics movements and solid lines of communications that are becoming second nature to execute," Shaub said.

"Effectively, we are mentoring and assessing Boxer ARG's ability to integrate with the 13th MEU, with their full complement of assets to ensure they are prepared to perform the full range of Navy and Marine Corps mission skill sets while deployed," said Lt Cmdr. Bob Jones, Amphibious Operations Officer from Strike Force Training Pacific.

Within the training environment the ARG groomed its ability to perform at a higher operational tempo in preparation for missions it intends to encounter on its deployment in early 2011.

Upon completion of all basic phase and integrated training requirements, Boxer ARG will be certified ready to deploy by Commander, U.S. THIRD Fleet.

Have a Safe and Happy Holiday
from the
Bark of the Boxer
Staff



Calling for backup for your financial security

By MC2 Christopher Menzie

Do you have a sound financial plan for deployment? If not, or if you're looking to make it better, the Boxer's new command financial specialists may be your answer.

Chief Aviation Boatswain's Mate Marion Cortez and Chief Fire Controlman David Rosenfield offer services ranging from simple tips to smart budgeting; everything to keep the war-fighter focused on his upcoming mission.

"Some Sailors think life at home freezes when they go away on deployment," said Cortez. "We're here to tell them it does not and they need to plan accordingly."

Common expenses to think about include fixed expenses like rent and car loans and variable expenses which change month-to-month like credit card payments for holiday gifts.

"You want to look at what you have right now," Rosenfield said. "You also want to look at your previous spending habits and what is coming up when it comes to financial planning."

When planning for the future, also take into account lifestyle changes such as the addition of children, or a marriage date scheduled after returning.

According to Cortez, setting up allotments to pay for fixed expenses makes worrying about money easier.

"When we went through the last

deployment, we were in river city for a month and so paying for bills became a huge issue," said Cortez, referencing the limited communications the deployed Sailor may find himself under. "With allotments, the payments are already set up so you don't have to worry when the internet is down."

What also eases financial tension is having a spare fund in the bank. According to Chief Rosenfield, saving even ten percent of your paycheck toward an emergency fund in case of car troubles at home or pay issues can make all the difference. The ultimate goal is to keep at least two to three months worth of pay in a savings account for unexpected expenses, he said.

While every Sailor has different financial issues, we all have issues. Command financial specialists and their departmental representatives are just one more service offered to make lives and journeys in the Navy as smooth as possible.

What a CFS can do for you:

- Provide junior Sailors with information regarding situations to avoid.
- Help them to get out of debt.
- Assist them in identifying problems which will help save money.

What a CFS can NOT do:

- Provide financial representation.

Ten Tips to help save during the holidays

1 Create a budget. Make sure your budget includes everything you normally buy during the holidays, such as decorations, cards, and postage.

2 Make a list. Ask yourself two questions before you go to the mall: Who am I shopping for? and How much can I spend on each person?

3 Organize a gift exchange. If you have a big family, you don't have to buy presents for everyone. Organize a gift exchange where each family member buys only one gift for someone else.

4 Plan ahead. If you start early, you can take advantage of the best sales and have a better chance of finding exactly what you're looking for.

5 Just say no. Don't buy things on impulse. Also, set boundaries for your children's wish lists so they don't expect more than you can reasonably accomplish.

6 Give priceless gifts. Get creative. There's nothing wrong with making present on your own. Remember it's the thought that counts.

7 Stick to cash. If you have trouble with budgeting, only spend cash. Once it's gone, your shopping is done.

8 Stay away from credit cards. Credit cards may be easier, but it is easy to lose track of spending.

9 Start planning for next year. Take advantage of the after-Christmas sales to get things for next year.

10 Don't forget the true meaning of the holiday. This time hasn't always been about buying lots of presents and racking up debt.



HONOR · COURAGE · STRENGTH

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shift for most of the Marines involved who had until now only been involved in land operations and training. Nearly 60% of the MEU had never done a ship deployment, and Coffman said he was excited to be able to turn them into sea-going Marines.

“The funnest part to me is watching the Marines learn what it is to be a Marine,” he said, “to not just ride around on a ship, but operate from a ship and do our mission.”

CERTEX was the third and final group exercise for the 13th MEU and Boxer ARG.

‘PRAYER’ cont. from pg 1

to become a lay leader”.

“It’s very important to give other crewmembers of your faith the opportunity for spiritual growth and share the faith,” said Lt. Cmdr. Haski Beher, a lay leader for the ship’s Latter Day Saints faith group. “I want to support the command and help the ministry on the ship.”

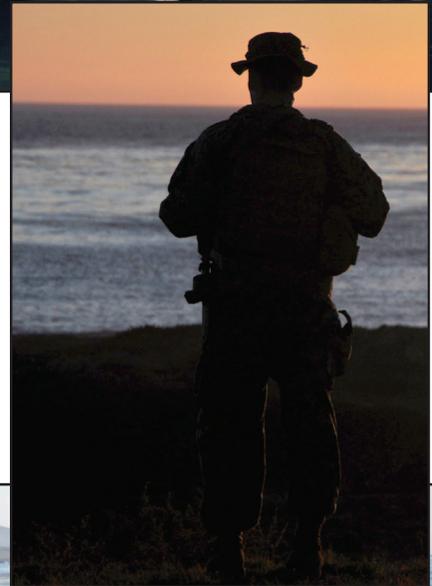
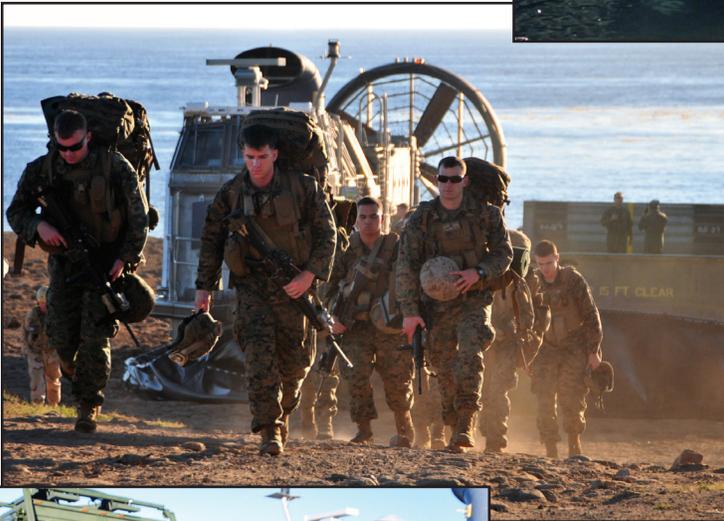
Currently, there are only two lay leaders and two chaplains aboard Boxer, and the Chaplain Department is always willing to work with any Sailor should they be-

long to a faith group that not yet covered.

In this way, the command religious program can provide support for all faith groups aboard Boxer.

“We have 23 worship services per week,” said Deeley. “These offer Sailors opportunities for devotion and spiritual growth.”

“We’re able to keep worshipping on board, even though we don’t have a minister,” added Beher. “Even out at sea, we’re able to practice our own beliefs. It keeps us unified in our beliefs.”



Photos by MC3(SW) Trevor Welsh

