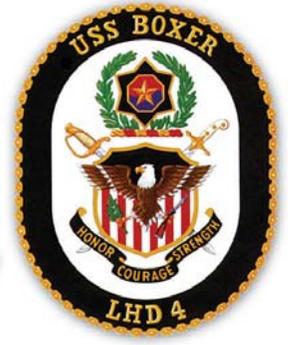




BARK OF THE BOXER

AMERICA'S GOLDEN GATOR



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APRIL 2010

USS Boxer Leaves NASSCO, Returns Home

By MC2 John Siller

The amphibious assault ship USS Boxer (LHD 4) moved out of dry dock at National Steel and Shipbuilding Company (NASSCO) and returned to Naval Base San Diego, April 1.

Boxer spent more than four months in dry dock as part of a Dry Dock Planned Maintenance Availability to complete essential repairs and install upgrades throughout the ship.

"We had some very important work done at NASSCO that could only be done there," said Capt. Frank Michael, Boxer's commanding officer. "I was impressed with the professionalism [of NASSCO's personnel] and their



Official U.S. Navy photo by MC2 John Siller.

commitment to the mission."

The ship's transit out of the dry dock was delayed a day due to foul weather, then further delayed when the ship began listing after floating free of the dock floor while flooding the dry dock. Chief Damage Controlman R.J. Beltowski, ship's fire marshal,

and his engineering team were able to fix the issue by the time the ship was clear of the dry dock. He and his personnel were also busy sounding tanks, checking the fire main and walking spaces to ensure no flooding was occurring.

"Transiting out of the dry
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Meet Boxer's Ombudsmen

By MC3 Anna Kiner

Getting underway can be a stressful experience for any Sailor; there are drills to run, maintenance to perform, qualifications to complete and departmental work to be done; add in worrying about family—it's enough to send one over the edge.

Helping alleviate the stress about life at home is where the command's Ombudsmen come in.

Originating from the Old Norse language with "um" meaning "regarding" and "bodh" equaling "command," an "umbodhman" was a trusty manager of the affairs and interests of a business or company, especially regarding citizens and the government.

Today, that is still an accurate description of an ombudsman. They are appointed by the commanding officer to be the direct contact between Sailors and their families and are available at any time.

Stephanie Perez, a USS Boxer (LHD 4) ombudsman for the past three years, said they can be counted on to provide the connection a family needs if they haven't heard from their loved one and do not know where they are or how they are doing. Ombudsmen can answer questions about when the ship will be hitting a certain port, relay information

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FRG Facts

- What is an FRG?

Family Readiness Groups (formerly family support or spouse support groups) are command sponsored organizations that consist of volunteers such as spouses of service members. The purpose of FRG is to plan and conduct social, informational, and morale building activities to enhance family readiness and enable the Navy family to meet the challenges of the military lifestyle.

- How do I join the Boxer FRG?

To Stay in Touch and Meet Others in the Group please go to our Yahoo Group at <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/USSBoxerFRG/> and request Membership with your Sponsor's Name and Dept.

- Who Should Join the FRG?

Every Sailor should be represented in the FRG by their Spouse, Parent, Sibling or Friend. All Sailors will enjoy the items sent from the FRG during deployment and we don't want anyone left out. We are happy to support those not in San Diego as well as those here at home. Everyone should stay involved through the Yahoo Group to ensure that they are up to date with the Family Activities.

I'm Just Sayin'....

By MCC(SW/AW) Elizabeth Lloyd

Every Sailor that reads this article should be quite familiar with the Sailor's Creed:

I am a United States Sailor.
I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States of America and I will obey the orders of those appointed over me.
I represent the fighting spirit of the Navy and those who have gone before me to defend freedom and democracy around the world.
I proudly serve my country's Navy combat team with Honor, Courage and Commitment.
I am committed to excellence and the fair treatment of all.

Are these just words you memorized in order to get through boot camp or Chief's Initiation? What do they mean to you? Stop and think about it for a minute. As a BOXER Sailor the creed could read like this :

I am a BOXER Sailor.
I will fully support my chain of command and give those junior to me the same common courtesies I expect.
I represent the Commanding Officer of the USS BOXER and will perform my duties in an exemplary manner which will be a model for the entire water front.

I'm proud of my ship and my shipmates. I will do my part to make sure my ship is clean, safe and battle-ready. I will exemplify Honor, Courage and Commitment in my everyday life. I am committed to the success of the USS BOXER and her crew.

I'm just saying if each of us take a personal interest and commit to do our best everyday and not wait until someone tells us to do it, our ship will be an outstanding command. It is time to stand up and be accountable and do the right thing because you are a USS BOXER Sailor.



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Boxer Trains for ATG Certifications

By MC2 Christopher Menzie

Aboard USS Boxer (LHD 4), three departments are charged with answering the million-dollar question of every Sailor during a sea tour: ‘What do I do in case of an emergency?’

Medical, Security and Engineering departments use training to make it possible for every Sailor, regardless of rank or rate to apply themselves in hostile situations. If there is a medical casualty, an undesignated seaman can stabilize and ready that person before the medical team arrives. If there is a fire, repair locker teams can deploy and put out the raging inferno. Through this system of cross training, it becomes possible for the ship to unify in the face of problems.

This level of universal proficiency comes as the result of constant training, retraining and maintaining standards aboard the ship. As Boxer moves from its maintenance period to operational capability, these three departments are working hard to ensure continued levels of excellence in the face of upcoming inspections with Afloat Training Group (ATG) San Diego and a constantly rotating crew.

According to their website, ATG provides dynamic, quality afloat training to Navy and Coast Guard Sailors to ensure a combat ready force capable of performing a broad spectrum of maritime missions.

Medical

During nightly training sessions on the ship’s mess decks, Sailors are greeted with a visceral display of imaginary wounds. One week it’s burns; the next week they learn about puncture wounds. It’s all part of a role-playing session where hospital corpsmen teach on how to treat a wide range of realistic injuries. While one corpsman simulates the victim, the other provides instruction on how to respond, then Sailors practice the routines. While currently ungraded, Sailors are working toward marked evaluations under the watchful eye of ATG.

While medical trains the Sailors, someone has to train medical on proper treatment steps needed to pass future graded evolutions.

“ATG provides sends a brochure that our training is based off of,” said Hospital Corpsman



MA2 (SW) Matthew Kull demonstrates search techniques on YNSN Demerius Souza during a duty section training session. Official U.S. Navy photo by MC2 Christopher Menzie.

3rd Class Mike Laub, a training petty officer for the medical department. “Eventually during the graded cycle, ATG will come by and run drills where we’ll walk into a random space and hit the deck to see how Sailors respond based on their training. Even though we’re graded, I’m more concerned that the Sailor knows what he’s doing.”

Laub goes on to mention two actual situations during the last deployment where care and training played a factor. During both instances, the wounded were hurried down to medical by fellow shipmates before medical team had been alerted. It comforts him to know that in situations like this, Sailors can rely on each other for help.

Security

Most Sailors don’t need training in defining what a watch stander does. He watches over his post. They might however, need training on what to do in the case of an actual event on the quarterdeck. How would the petty officer of the watch react if someone came on board with a dangerous weapon and took a watch stander hostage? This is just one of many scenarios being evaluated by security prior to their certification inspections with ATG.

Like medical, security must pass a series of inspections prior to getting underway. Before that can happen however, security has been planning a series of drills leading up to inspections.

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Boxer Electrical Safety Stand-Down



EMI (SW/AW) Michael Braxton shows a rusted electrical panel to Sailors as an example of a shock hazard during an electrical safety stand-down, March 22. Sailors visited six different stations on Boxer's mess decks during the brief. The stations covered proper procedures for tagging out electrical gear and working on energized equipment, what personal electronic gear is allowed on board and how to get it safety tagged, rules for electrical tool issue and how to apply first aid to someone who has been shocked. Boxer's stand-down was part of a Navy-wide effort to raise awareness about electrical safety for Sailors of all ranks. Official U.S. Navy Photo by MC2 John Siller.

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dock took a little longer than I thought, but the main concern is safety – and it was safe,” said Michael.

Being pier side on Naval Base San Diego brings many benefits to the crew, both professionally and personally. Sailors no longer have to arrive at base early to take busses to the shipyard and parking is nearby so it is easier for Sailors to get around.

“I am very happy to be out of the yards because of the logistical challenge to the crew. The transportation issues were a lot to put the crew through,” said Michael. He added that he is glad to get back to his lunch time running routine.

Beltowski said he is glad to be out of dry dock because during the dry dock period, the ship essentially becomes NASSCO's, so it's nice to be able to take back ownership.

Michael also said there has been an immediate boost in morale and things will get even better when

the crew moves off of the working and living barges and back to the ship.

Michael also acknowledged the fact that there are some negatives to being back at the pier. Base access has become more difficult because the crew gets to base during heavier traffic times. Things will get better when the main gate reopens later this month, which will alleviate some of the traffic, he said.

Beltowski and Michael remind Sailors to refocus their efforts in preparations for upcoming drills, inspections and assessments, including the light-off assessment May 24, to ensure the plant is ready to steam.

“My greatest desire is to keep a steady strain on the work load and not let the timeline become a crisis event that requires weekend work or extended hours,” said Michael. “I'm very pleased with the progress the ship's force is making.”

HONOR · COURAGE · STRENGTH

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According to Master-at-Arms 2nd Class (SW) Derek Vasko, the drills that can include anything from mock riots to ship board intrusion, where an unauthorized visitor gains access to the ship and is running around unsupervised.

“Mainly it’s about the watchstander knowing what to do when a situation happens, identifying the situation, taking the proper steps to save the ship and people on it,” he said.

He stresses that this is a vital measure in other countries where the threat level is heightened and foreign workers may be on board.

Engineering

Lt. j.g. Tim Beach, the assistant damage control assistant, explains more on the role of ATG: “We use them as a meter. ATG will come in and watch our training team and our training team watches us during drills. As long as the

training team evaluates the same as ATG, then we will be qualified to train ourselves.”

To prepare for future inspections, Boxer Sailors run drills and setup packages, which includes sections on presentation, safety walk throughs, how to properly train crew members and how to implement new instructions. Inspection cycles certify that the ship is ready to transform itself into a war fighter.

Actually becoming a war fighter is the ultimate goal, and in order to do that, the ship must maintain a maximum level of readiness as dictated through a crew proficient in several levels, including damage control, combat systems, engineering, navigation and seamanship.

The ultimate test of proficiency is called the Unit Level Assessment-Sustainment (ULTRA-S), held by ATG prior to deployment. Through this review, Boxer sailors prove to ATG and to themselves that they are ready to react under a wide range of situations.

Beach emphasizes that certification is an annual process, letting ATG know the ship meets the same rigorous standards as the previous year.

It’s something that every department involved on Boxer has been quietly working their way toward—most especially engineering and damage control. Throughout the extended maintenance period, much of damage control instruction has been through classroom briefs. Now that the ship has transferred to pier 13, instruction will make way for hands-on training.

“We hope the classroom training is good enough that we don’t have to re teach,” Beach said. “It will just be a question of remembering what was said and applying it when we transition to drills. Baby steps; it’s going to be tough because we get a pressed amount of time to get things done and that happens with a large availability period. We’re on track to do very well.”

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if there is an emergency in the family or for official business. Ombudsmen can also help a Sailor and his/her family with questions about finding housing, childcare or regarding the San Diego area.

“We are here for everybody,” said Perez, “not just wives or kids, but brothers, sisters, mothers, dads, grandparents, even boyfriends or girlfriends...as long as we have their emergency contact information, because they worry too.”

“Sailors benefit from ombudsmen because they provide comfort and a familiar face to families—someone a wife or husband has to contact 24/7 to help in any situation; someone to support the family; someone who cares.”

USS Boxer (LHD 4) Ombudsman

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All four can also be contacted at:

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