

In This Issue

Coalition Forces Complete Goalkeeper III page 1

Commodore's Corner page 2

Ombudsman's Corner page 2

U.S., Pakistan Complete Exercise Inspired Union page 4

USS Nashville Holds Nashville Idol Competition page 5

Bulkeley Conducts COMREL Projects in Seychelles page 5

Ashland Hosts Iron Chef Competition page 7

Fire! Fire! Fire! Phil-Sea Emphasizes DCTraining page 8

Any Day in the NASSG page 9

Ashland Supports CTF 158 in Northern Arabian Gulf page 10

May 11; Happy Mother's Day page 11

Phil-Sea Emphasizes ESWs Program page 12



COMMODORE'S CORNER

Dear Families and Friends,

The team has achieved another major milestone by exceeding 90 days of deployment, each Sailor and Marine will receive a Sea Service Deployment ribbon. We are also over two-thirds complete on the scheduled deployment and beginning to make final preparations for our return trip to Norfolk. We have two quality ports scheduled in the Mediterranean and the NASSAU plans on conducting a Tiger Cruise for dependents and friends 10-11 July from Onslow Bay.



We are currently in the Persian Gulf conducting Maritime Security Operations for the FIFTH Fleet Commander. We have participated in several Operations and Exercises in with our regional and coalition partners to provide security and build capacity within the gulf region. Our Sailors and Marines have been absolutely committed to safe and effective operations, each evolution has been carefully planning and executed with precision. Their dedication and professionalism during these numerous challenging evolutions has been truly inspiring!

During the course of this deployment we have made many new friends, "Great Americans" that have not been shy about the fact that they love and support their Sailors and Marines. A shout out to Don and Kathy Miller of Bakersfield, CA, they have provided the team with an abundance of encouragement and appreciation. We thank everyone for your enthusiastic support!!!

*Respectfully,
CAPT Bob Lineberry*

OMBUDSMAN'S CORNER

Hello Everyone,

I just wanted to thank everyone who came out and participated in our halfway parties. The kids had a great time at Chilled Ponds, skating and eating pizza. The wives that went on the Spirit of Norfolk cruise had a great time also, it was a nice get-a-way for a few hours.



I hope everyone is doing great, and hanging in there. It won't be much longer now. We have been having some crazy weather over the last couple of months, so please keep an eye on the storms. Please let me know if you have any problems, or received any damage.

I am here if you need anything, and we will try to plan a night out some time in June. I hope all is well, and keep up the great work here at home :)

*Sincerely,
Ashley Lawrence*

Nassau Strike Group(NASSG) Times

This is an unofficial US Navy newsletter approved for release by the Commander, Nassau Strike Group. News and information within are intended solely for its crew and family members. Any questions regarding its content may be directed to NASSG Public Affairs Office at nassgpao@lha4.navy.mil.



Capt. Robert Lineberry
Commander, Nassau Strike Group

Cmdr. Bradley Borden
NASSG Chief Staff Officer

MMCM(SW) Herbert Broughton
NASSG Senior Enlisted Advisor

Lt.j.g. Anthony Falvo
NASSG Public Affairs Officer

NASSG Public Affairs Staff
MC1(SW/AW) Rustum Rivera
MC3 David Wyssaver
MC3 Coleman Thompson
MC3 Mandy Hunsucker
MC3 Cory Rose
MCSN Ryan Steinhour

MCC(SW/AW) Christopher Hoffpauir
USS Nassau Public Affairs Officer

USS Nassau Public Affairs Staff
MC1(SW) Charmin Covington
MC2(SW) Michael Cortez
MC2 Sean Stafford
MC2 Amanda Clayton
MCSN Jonathan Pankau

Coalition Goalkeeper III...

Continued from page 1

58), the fleet ocean tug USNS Catawba (T-ATF 168), members of Commander, Destroyer Squadron 9 and various U.S. maritime patrol aircraft.

Capt. Jim Loeblein, commander, Task Group 152.0, explained the exercise's key event was coalition team members handling command and control of a specific vessel of interest that could pose a threat to one of the coalition nations in the gulf region. The exercise allowed coalition boarding teams to board the vessel of interest, locate and take control of a person of interest and practice the procedures for turning them over to Coast Guard ships.

Loeblein said that building security is not the only advantage of these exercises.

"While helping to build regional security, exercises like GK III also allow us to maintain our open sea lanes," Loeblein said. "This is a very important area of the world for merchant traffic and regional Navy traffic, and exercises like this allow us build confidence in our regional partners and provides a combined opportunity to provide security."

Loeblein said the exercise was a tremendous success noting GK III was the most complicated exercise CTF 152 has conducted to date.

"I'd like to see more coalition member states participating," said Loeblein. "I think the more you get involved with bilateral and multinational exercises, the more it improves the ability of the Coalition and regional partners to work together towards a common security objective." ■

ARABIAN GULF (May 13, 2008) – A member from aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln's (CVN 72) helicopter visit, board, search and seizure team and a member of Royal New Zealand ship HMNZS Te Mana's (F111) maritime interdiction team stand watch on the flight deck of fleet ocean tug USNS Catawba (T-ATF 168) during a training exercise designed to improve interoperability. (RELEASED)



ARABIAN GULF (May 13, 2008) – Members from aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln's (CVN 72) helicopter visit, board, search and seizure team and members of Royal New Zealand ship HMNZS Te Mana's (F111) maritime interdiction team communicate during a training exercise aboard fleet ocean tug USNS Catawba (T-ATF 168). All three ships are cooperating with amphibious assault ship USS Nassau (LHA 4) to conduct maritime security operations (MSO) in the Navy's 5th Fleet area of operations. (RELEASED)

*U.S. Navy photos by
MC3 Coleman Thompson.*

U.S., Pakistan Forces Complete Exercise Inspired Union 2008

By Mass Communication Specialist Seaman Cory Rose

USS ROSS, At Sea – Pakistan and U.S. Naval forces completed Exercise Inspired Union 2008 in the North Arabian Sea May 21, which focused on air, surface and anti-submarine training, as part of regional Maritime Security Operations (MSO).

Pakistani forces including PNS Badr (D 184), PNS Shahjahan (D 186), PNS Nasr (A-47) and Pakistan Air Force Explosive Ordnance Disposal participated in the bilateral exercise along with Sailors from USS Curts (FFG 38) and USS Ross (DDG 71). Other U.S. forces participating included Destroyer Squadron 50 and Combined Task Forces 54, 55 and 57.

"This exercise allowed the U.S. and the Pakistani Navy to demonstrate and improve our interoperability in a variety of warfare areas," explained Capt. Paul Severs, commander, Destroyer Squadron 50. "Inspired Union focused on surface warfare, air defense, visit, board, search and seizure operations and ended with a final event using all warfare areas."

Pakistan is an integral member of the coalition and has commanded Combined Task Force 150 twice, most

recently from November 2007 through February 2008. Coalition Maritime Forces (CMF) regularly operate throughout international waters in the North Arabian Sea to conduct MSO.

"It was a very successful exercise," said Severs. "From the planning conferences to the pre-sail seminars and the at sea-events, the exercise was well coordinated. Inspired Union also allowed Sailors from both navies to participate in professional exchanges to understand how different Coalition ships operate at sea."

Severs noted it was the bilateral cooperation that was key to the exercise's success.

The exercise also provided an opportunity for Curts to visit Karachi during a three-day port visit. The visit offered the crew an opportunity to plan for Inspired Union, conduct cultural exchanges and engage in sporting events with their Pakistani Navy counterparts.

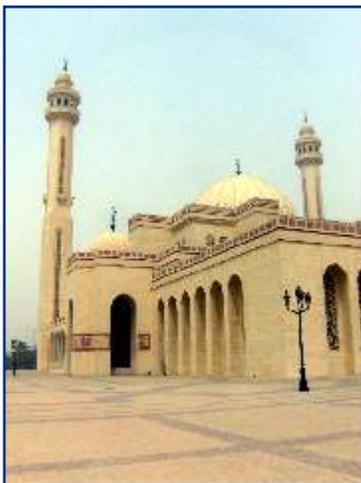
"This is the first visit by a U.S. ship to Karachi since September 2006 and we are grateful for the opportunity to visit Pakistan," said Cmdr. Yvette Davids,

Curts' commanding officer. "Visits by U.S. Navy ships symbolize the continued friendship and partnerships between countries and military services - it allows us to increase our cooperative engagement and exemplifies our commitment to building trust and confidence among friends worldwide."

MSO help develop security in the maritime environment, which promotes stability and global prosperity. These operations complement the counterterrorism and security efforts of regional nations and seek to disrupt violent extremists' use of the maritime environment as a venue for attack or to transport personnel, weapons or other material.

Curts, homeported in San Diego, Calif., is part of the USS Abraham Lincoln Carrier Strike Group. USS Ross, homeported in Norfolk, Va., is part of the USS Nassau Expeditionary Strike Group. Both are deployed to the U.S. 5th Fleet area of operations supporting operations that are focused on reassuring regional partners of the United States' commitment to security, which promotes stability and global prosperity. 📷

The Bahrain Grand Mosque *also known as the Ahme Al-Fateh Islamic Center*



MANAMA, Bahrain (May 20, 2008) – Sailors from Nassau Strike Group's amphibious assault ship USS Nassau (LHA 4) took the opportunity to visit the Bahrain Grand Mosque during their port visit on May 17-20. The mosque is the biggest in Bahrain with maximum occupancy of 7,000 people, and was completed in 1988 costing \$20 Million. "This is the only mosque in Bahrain that allows non-Muslims visitors," said Farahat Al-Kindy, a mosque imam and a prayer leader of the mosque. "We entertain all religious dominations here everyday except Friday; we pray five times a day, but we celebrate our major prayer on Fridays." U.S. Navy photos by Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class (SW/AW) Rustum Rivera. (RELEASED)

USS Nashville Holds Nashville Idol Competition Talent Competition a Hit for MWR

By Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Charles L. Ludwig
USS Nashville (LPD 13) Public Affairs Office

USS NASHVILLE, At Sea – USS Nashville (LPD 13) Sailors packed into the ship's upper vehicle stowage space May 22 to watch as shipmates displayed their various talents during 'Nashville Idol,' a Morale, Welfare and Recreation (MWR)-sponsored talent show.

The event featured 14 acts, including singers, dancers and comedians.

According to Ens. Laura Thornton, the amphibious transport dock's MWR officer, the event was designed to boost morale and give the crew a chance to relax from the hectic schedule of the deployment.

"Life underway can get monotonous, so we look to offer diverse opportunities for the crew to relax and have fun," said Thornton. "Nashville

Idol' provided a great chance for our Sailors and Marines to showcase their talents and support each other."

Cash prizes were awarded to the top three acts chosen by the event's three judges and then an audience poll.

Taking home first place in the competition was Machinist's Mate Fireman Steven Ball, who sang a country song near the closing of the show. The judges and the crowd wildly approved, and he was awarded a \$100 for his efforts.

After Ball, honors were split between song and dance routines by Culinary Specialist Seaman Andrae Smith and Seaman Santino Morales. After the judging, the contestants were tied, so they split the \$50 and \$75 prizes for second and third place.

According to Thornton, the turnout for the event was better than expected.

"We knew the event would be entertaining, but we had no idea of what caliber of talent we had onboard, or how many people would come out to support it," she said. "It was a great surprise to see so many people enjoying the show."

With the show's success, Thornton added that another 'Nashville Idol' competition could be in the works. "It's something we definitely want to continue, and if the support is anything like it was for this one, we will look at doing another before we get home," she said.

USS Nashville is a part of the Nassau Strike Group currently operating in the 6th Fleet area of operation in support of maritime security operations and theater security cooperation efforts. 

USS Bulkeley Conducts COMREL Project in Seychelles

By Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class David Wycaver

VICTORIA, Seychelles – Sailors stationed aboard the guided missile destroyer USS Bulkeley (DDG 84) conducted a two-day community relations (COMREL) project May 19 and 20 at the Seychelles Rehabilitation Center during their port visit on the island.

"We conducted a community relations program between USS Bulkeley and the Rehab Center of Seychelles. This the only facility of its kind on the entire island and it supports over 78,000 people," said Master Gunnery Sgt. Christopher Hill, COMREL project coordinator, Horn of Africa. "Some of the things we're doing are overhauling the facilities pool, cleaning it out, sanding and painting it. We're taking care of all the rehab equipment as well as sanding and refinishing all of the floors,"

When conducting COMREL projects Sailors get chances to not only offer their services to the community but also interact with those who they are helping.

"I really like this island and all of the people here. They really need this equipment and it's nice to know I'm making a difference," said Fire Controlman 3rd Class Carlos Castillo, Tomahawk missile technician onboard USS Bulkeley.

Hill added, "It's a great feeling to give back especially when you see the smiling faces of the children around here and how much they enjoy us bettering their facility."

While port visits are often a time for Sailors to break away from their everyday duties and enjoy the sights, many can also benefit from the Sailors' personal interaction and kindness, such as the kindness demonstrated during this COMREL project in Seychelles.

"When I leave here today I'm going to leave with a sense of accomplishment and gratitude knowing I helped make the Seychelles a better place for its citizens to live," said Culinary Specialist 3rd Class Charles Davis, Search and

Rescue Swimmer (SARS) onboard USS Bulkeley.

Castillo added, "Seychelles isn't just a tourist attraction. There are many people who live here and rely on these types of facilities to accommodate their everyday lives." 



VICTORIA, Seychelles (May 20, 2008) -- Ens. Peter Ditchett and Culinary Specialist 3rd Class Charles Davis paint a piece of gym equipment during a community relations project (COMREL) with the guided missile destroyer USS Bulkeley (DDG 84) at the Seychelles Rehabilitation Center. U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class David Wycaver. (RELEASED)

Nassau's Search and Rescue (SAR) Swimmers Conducted Training Exercise

U.S. Navy photos by Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Coleman Thompson



ARABIAN GULF (May 12, 2008) Seaman (AW/NAC) Erick Sotelo, Aviation Warfare Systems Operator 3rd Class James Simpson, Aviation Warfare Systems Operator 3rd Class (AW/NAC) George Dodd, and Aviation Systems Warfare Operator 2nd Class (AW/NAC) Marcus Monreal, Search and Rescue (SAR) swimmers from amphibious assault ship USS Nassau (LHA 4), conducted jumps and hoisting exercises from an MH-60 Knighthawk helicopter. (RELEASED)

Lincoln's Helicopter Visit, Board, Search, and Seizure (VBSS) Team Secures LCU 1659

U.S. Navy photos by Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class (SW/AW) Rustum Rivera



ARABIAN GULF (May 7, 2008) – Members of aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln (CVN 72) Helicopter Visit, Board, Search and Seizure (VBSS) Team from the Maritime Expeditionary Squadron (MESRON) TWO conducts Maritime Security Operations (MSO) training onboard Landing Craft Utility (LCU) 1659 from Assault Craft Unit (ACU) TWO embarked onboard the amphibious assault ship USS Nassau (LHA 4). USS Abraham Lincoln's Helicopter VBSS team trains with USS Nassau's VBSS team conducting boarding exercises, fast rope training, self-defense exercises, and small arms gun shoot onboard USS Nassau in support of MSO. (RELEASED)

Ashland Hosts Iron Chef Competition

By Seaman Melrose Afaese, USS Ashland Public Affairs Office

USS ASHLAND, At Sea — The Culinary Specialists aboard Whidbey Island-class amphibious dock landing ship, USS Ashland (LSD 48) held their first annual Iron Chef competition, May 16.

Inspired by the Food Network's show, Iron Chef is a television culinary game show where a new chefs battle one of the resident "Iron Chefs" in a one-hour cooking competition based on a secret ingredient.

Seven teams competed for the title of Ashland's "Iron Chef," using chicken as their main ingredient. A four-judge panel, including a mystery judge, critiqued the teams on presentation, eye appeal, taste, flavor, showmanship, and for amusement a category for bribes, favors, and pay-offs.

Mystery guest Senior Chief Boatswain's Mate (SW/AW) Todd Mangin was chosen for his entertaining personality and unapologetic honesty which added flare to the contest.

"The bribes worked and the winners won because they asked my opinion before they knew I was the secret judge," joked Mangin. "Seriously, I

didn't expect all the effort that went into their dishes. I was very impressed and it's really hard to impress me."

During preparation, all the chefs scurried around the galley gathering ingredients. The sizzle of peppers being sautéed, and the aroma of seasoned chicken being baked excited an eager spectator.

"The competition is stiff, they are taking a lot of pride in what they're doing," said Senior Chief Culinary Specialist (SW/AW) Kenneth Stallard. "This just tickles me, they rarely get this opportunity to show off their talents and I am so proud of all of them."

As time quickly passed, the anticipation brewed in the galley as the teams made last minute touches to their unique dishes. While others scrambled to place garnish in their designated areas and create costumes, others made certain their appetizers, desserts, and beverages were displayed.

The teams amazed the judges and the crowd with their innovative entrées. Team 'Experiment 626's' island flavor won third place for their Pineapple Chicken with Mango Sauce served on

slabs of pineapple. Team 'The Dream Girls' were awarded second place for their Creamy Chicken Alfredo. It was team 'Los Concineros y Ajuda' ('The Cooks and the Help') who won first place for their 'Arroz con Pollo' (Rice and Chicken). Though they didn't place, teams 'Southern Belles', 'Caribbean Phillies', 'Shake and Bake' and 'Ren and Stimpy's' creative names and dishes were also crowd favorites.

"I was so surprised we won, there was a lot of competition," said Culinary Specialist Seaman Angelica Huerta of Team 'Los Concineros y Ajuda.' "We made everything from scratch and authenticity is what I believe impressed the judges."

The judges awarded first, second and third place teams with special liberty at their respective department head's discretion. First place won 96 hours, second place 48 hours and third place 24 hours.

"The presentations and the energy and excitement they put into the competition made it worth it, and I was blown away," said Lt. Cmdr. Nathan York, Ashland's executive officer and one of the judges. "This shows all of the pride the kitchen staff has and the faith the leadership has in them." 📷

The Camel Farm



MANAMA, Bahrain (May 20, 2008) – Through the Bahrain Cultural Guided Tour, sponsored by the Nassau's Morale, Welfare, and Recreation (MWR) committee, Sailors took the opportunity to visit a camel farm during a port visit on May 17-20. At right, Culinary Specialist 2nd Class Eddie Harden rides a camel as the guides take him around the corral.

U.S. Navy photos by Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class (SW/AW) Rustum Rivera. (RELEASED)

Fire! Fire! Fire!

USS Philippine Sea Emphasizes Damage Control Training

Story and Photos by Mass Communication Specialist Seaman Ryan Steinhour

USS PHILIPPINE SEA, At Sea – Preparing for fires or a casualty-at-sea requires a rapid and accurate response, and the Damage Control Training Team (DCTT) aboard the guided-missile cruiser USS Philippine Sea (CG-58) stands ready and prepared to respond.

Walking down a passageway, there is visible white smoke emanating from the door you were about to enter. Over the ship's 1MC system sounds a barrage of bells, followed by a voice letting everyone know that there is a fire on the ship. Luckily it is a simulated fire used to help prepare Philippine Sea's DCTT who, in case of an actual event, would rapidly respond to the casualty.

"The crew keeps the ship afloat. We're by ourselves out here," said Machinery Repairman 1st Class (SW/AW) Franco Nora. "We have to do our best to train the personnel so we can combat the casualties along with completing our mission as a ship."

The exercises are set up to be as realistic as possible so that those who would be charged with tackling an actual shipboard fire will be prepared for the many possible situations that could arise.

"In a real environment with heavy smoke you won't be able to see, and because we're able to smoke out a space with a smoke generator, it makes it a lot more realistic," said Damage Controlman 3rd Class (SW) David Orozco, 21, of Long Beach, Calif. "It helps us rely more on our instincts and the knowledge of our ship to figure out where we are, and where we need to be."

"The drills are as close to the real thing as we can get," said Nora. We can't setup a real fire, so we make it realistic so when it comes time for the real deal, we're ready."

One important point of this training is to give those taking part in it a more accurate knowledge of what to do if a situation changes, and the tools they'll need to get the job done.

"DCTT is a good refresher for the at-sea fire party. It keeps us familiar with the different types of casualties and the equipment we'll need," said Damage Controlman 3rd Class James Campbell, 26, of Hiram, Ga.

"Situational awareness is very important. If you don't know what's going on around you, you could injure yourself or others," said Nora. "If there

is an ammunitions locker close to the location of a fire, you need to know that and keep that room cool to avoid explosions."

Along with the actual physical work involved in the training, the drills give the Sailors the proper scenarios to practice the correct relaying of messages. During a casualty not getting certain information to those who need it can lead to confusion, and also a lack of support to those working on the situation.

"Relaying the message from the scene to the repair locker is very important. Repair lockers don't have the visual capabilities to know what's going on in the space," explained Nora. "We always stress that the repeat back is loud, clear, and correct so they know exactly what is being passed down the line to the repair locker."

Along with fire fighting training, there are several other casualties that DCTT trains for. Whether the event is a rupture in the steel walls, or a busted pipe causing flooding, DCTT makes sure that these Sailors are prepared.

"Running these drills helps me trust everyone that works along side me," said Orozco. "I'm confident that in a real situation we'll be able to take care of a casualty, and take care of it fast and safely." ■



ARABIAN GULF (May 23, 2008) – Machinery Repairman 1st Class (SW/AW) Franco Nora waves flags to simulate a main engine room fire during an Engineering Training Team (ETT) drill. (RELEASED)



ARABIAN GULF (May 23, 2008) – Gas Turbine System Technician (Mechanical) 3rd Class Michael Miller reads from the engineering operation systems sequencing diagram during an Engineering Training Team (ETT) drill on board guided-missile cruiser USS Philippine Sea (CG-58). (RELEASED)

Any Day in the NASSG



◀ **ARABIAN SEA (May 5, 2008)** – Capt. Robert Lineberry, Commander, Nassau Strike Group, grills hotdogs during the Cinco De Mayo steel beach picnic on the flight deck of the amphibious assault ship USS Nassau (LHA 4). U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Coleman Thompson (RELEASED)



▲ **ARABIAN GULF (May 5, 2008)** – Aviation Warfare Systems Operator 3rd Class George Dodd works on the rear propeller of an MH-60 Knighthawk helicopter on the flight deck of the amphibious assault ship USS Nassau (LHA 4) while transiting Arabian Gulf. U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Coleman Thompson (RELEASED)

▶ **ARABIAN SEA (May 9, 2008)** – Cmdr. Neil Karnes, executive officer, USS Nassau (LHA 4), and members of the aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln's (CVN 72) helicopter visit, board, search and seizure team prepare to perform a helicopter rope suspension maneuver out of an MH-60 Knighthawk helicopter over the flight deck of the amphibious assault ship during a training exercise while transiting the Arabian Gulf. U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Coleman Thompson (RELEASED)



◀ **INDIAN OCEAN (May 6, 2008)** -- Sailors stationed aboard guided missile destroyer USS Bulkeley (DDG 84) demonstrate essential self defense tactics during armed sentry course training. U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class David Wycaver. (RELEASED)



▲ **ARABIAN GULF (May 9, 2008)** – Boatswain's Mate 1st Class (SW) Brandley Sinoc signals to an SH-60 Seahawk from the flight deck of the guided missile destroyer USS Ross (DDG 71) as it prepares to drop off food and supplies during a vertical replenishment (VERTREP). U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist Seaman Cory Rose (RELEASED).

▶ **ARABIAN GULF (May 7, 2008)** – A member of the aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln's (CVN 72) helicopter visit, board, search and seizure (VBSS) team looks down-range during a small arms shoot on the flight deck of the amphibious assault ship USS Nassau (LHA 4) while transiting the Arabian Gulf. U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Coleman Thompson (RELEASED)



Ashland Supports CTF 158 in Northern Arabian Gulf

By Mass Communication Specialist Seaman Mandy Hunsucker

USS ASHLAND, At Sea – Amphibious dock landing ship, USS Ashland (LSD 48) is currently working with Combined Task Force (CTF) 158 in support of maritime security operations (MSO) and oil platform (OPLAT) defense in the Northern Arabian Gulf (NAG).

CTF 158's mission objectives are to defend the Al Basra Oil Terminal (ABOT) and the Khawr Al Amaya Oil Terminal (KAAOT) located in the NAG and to ensure the uninterrupted flow of oil from the Al Faw Peninsula.

"These oil platforms, which produce about 85% of Iraq's annual revenue, are critical assets for the economy and for the future of Iraq," said Lt. John Erickson, Ashland's operations officer. "The coalition's commitment to the future of Iraq is evident by our commitment to ensuring the safety and security of ABOT and KAAOT now and into the future."

Ashland was called on-station to relieve the land dock ship (auxiliary) Royal British Fleet Auxiliary Cardigan Bay (L3009) as the CTF-158 Afloat Staging Base (AFSB) due to Cardigan Bay's scheduled off-station maintenance. Ashland's availability to relieve Cardigan Bay for AFSB duties resulted in an uninterrupted three-

week training period for Iraqi Navy visit, board, search, and seizure (VBSS) teams.

"Our main mission here is to train the Iraqi Marines' VBSS teams. We teach them boarding tactics, self-defense and boarding procedures," said Machinery Technician 2nd Class Victor Natiuidad, attached to the Naval Training Team (NaTT), CTF 158. "The Ashland is giving us a training platform in order to do these operations and gives us the opportunity to correct any discrepancies during those operations here on site."

Part of the training consists of the Iraqi VBSS teams performing actual security missions. Several times a week, the teams leave Ashland via Iraqi fast aluminum boats (FABs) and proceed to large oil tankers that are waiting to come along side ABOT or KAAOT to receive oil. Part of defending the OPLATs is to ensure that oil tankers are not allowed to come alongside the platforms without first being security swept by an Iraqi or coalition VBSS team.

The ultimate coalition goal for ABOT and KAAOT is to turn all security responsibilities over to the Iraq Navy and Marines. Ashland's role in

providing a temporary training platform is significant in helping to accomplish this objective.

"This training is a success story in Iraq. Now, the Iraqi Navy is increasing their ability to provide security for the oil platforms 24 hours a day, 365 days a year," said Royal British Navy Lt. James Walton, officer in charge (OIC) of the embarked NaTT team.

Ashland's diverse capabilities make it an ideal choice for the AFSB mission. With its 440 ft. well deck, it is able to easily dock the three embarked U.S. patrol boats and three Iraqi FAB's in the well, safely securing the small boats from adverse seas and weather while at the same time having them in the water ready to perform assigned missions.

With the ability to land helicopters, Ashland is also able to easily fulfill AFSB responsibilities of a logistical hub, servicing coalition forces operating in the NAG with passenger, mail, and cargo routing and transfer in and out of Bahrain via periodic Desert Hawk landings. At any given time, each of the two OPLATs has three surface ships assigned to provide buffer zone security, and there are also coalition ships on station that provide routine patrols. 📷

Dubai, United Arab Emirates. During the amphibious assault ship USS Nassau (LHA 4)'s port visit in Jebel Ali on May 27-31, Sailors toured the city of Dubai where they admired the only seven-star hotel in the world, Burj Al Arab, and the world's tallest building Burj Dubai. Photos by Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class (SW/AW) Rustum Rivera (RELEASED)



May 11; *Happy Mother's Day* to You, Mom!



"I want my mother to know I love her.

I'm thankful for all the morals and values she has instilled in me."

Navy Counselor 1st Class (SW)
Catrina Goodman
USS Bulkeley (DDG 84)



"My mom is a great mother; she loves me no matter what.

She wears more Navy clothing than I do. She is very supportive of what we do out here."

Electronics Technician 3rd Class (SW)
Joshua Healey
USS Nassau (LHA 4)



"I have to let my mother know she is the greatest mom in the world. It took a lot for her to put up with me. All the love she showed, and everything she taught us, acting as mom and dad. Thank you for everything...

I love you, Mom!!!"

Air Traffic Controller 2nd Class(AW)
Charles Harper
TACRON TWO ONE



"Words could never explain how much my mother has influenced my life.

She's been one of my biggest support to allow me to be where I am today. I love her with all my heart."

Operations Specialist 1st Class (AW/SW)
Velvet Parker
COMPHIBRON SIX (CPR-6)



"Mothers are great because motherhood's never-ending.

My mother is an amazing mother and grandmother. Her loving and caring ways has carried over to my daughters, and I love her for that. I try to show her all year how much I appreciate her."

Culinary Specialist 1st Class (SW/AW)
Tanya Johnson
COMPHIBRON SIX (CPR-6)



"My mom's the greatest. She works hard; educated herself while working and raised four kids.

Moms deserve everything for they sacrifice everything for their kids. I salute them, and Happy mother's day."

Storekeeper 1st Class (AW/SW)
Gulseren Canak
USS Nassau (LHA 4)



"I am grateful for my mother's hard work and dedication to her children, and her patience and sacrifices that she has made to make me who I am today.

Thank you, Mom, and I salute you!"

Air Traffic Controller 2nd Class(AW)
Michael Hooten
TACRON TWO ONE



"I couldn't have asked for a better mother.

Thanks for being so strong and supportive.

Happy Mother's Day!"

Operations Specialist 3rd Class (SW)
Daniel Figueroa
USS Bulkeley (DDG 84)

Philippine Sea Emphasizes ESWS Program Basic Knowledge a Top Priority On USS Philippine Sea

By Mass Communication Specialist Seaman Ryan Steinhour

USS PHILIPPINE SEA, At Sea – Since departing their homeport of Mayport, Fla. on Feb. 19th, 10 Sailors aboard the guided-missile cruiser USS Philippine Sea (CG-58) have earned the right to wear the Enlisted Surface Warfare Specialist (ESWS) breast insignia through the Philippine Sea's robust ESWS program and many more are in the process of obtaining this goal.

The rigorous ESWS program consists of many challenging steps, beginning with a daunting set of personal qualifications (PQS). The ESWS PQS has sections for all of the departments on the ship. To get the signatures you must set up a time to go over the training material associated with the section, or attend a scheduled ESWS training class.

Once signatures fill the vast amount of pages in the PQS, the next step is to exercise your knowledge through a test, which, if passed, qualifies you for the First Class Petty Officer oral board. Oral boards, sometimes referred to as "murder boards," seem to be the most difficult part of the ESWS process.

"They refer to oral boards as murder boards because it can feel like murder," said Damage Controlman 3rd Class (SW) David Orozco, 21, of Long Beach, Calif. "They ask a lot of questions until your head hurts, and they just keep on going."

The First Class Petty Officer board is only another step to becoming ESWS qualified. Once you pass, you'll get to sit with the departmental Chief Petty Officers for another round of questions.

"The Chief's board was a lot more difficult. They were asking a lot of questions that went pretty in-depth," said Orozco. "It wasn't what I expected."

The reason for all these tests of knowledge is to make sure an individual retains the important information they have learned. "Everybody needs to know everyone else's job and have a basic knowledge of the ship so that we function well as a team," said Chief Master-At-Arms (SW/AW) Teri Zehnacker, Philippine Sea's ESWS coordinator. "Everybody needs to know not only what other people do, but who to go to in order to get something done."

"It's good to have a basic understanding so you understand how the ship works, and the necessities of certain departments," said Gas Turbine Systems Technician (Mechanical) 3rd Class Caleb Parker, 22, of Edwardsville, Ill.

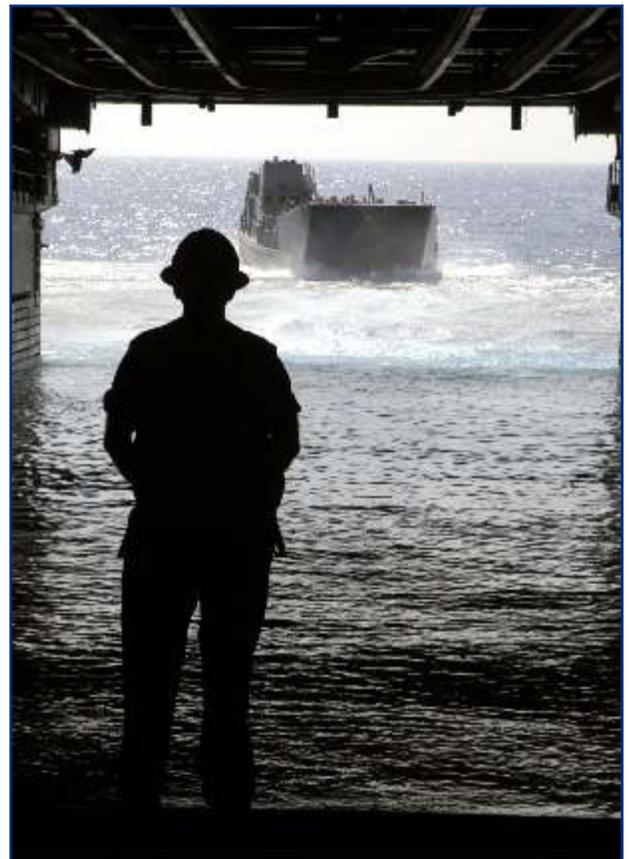
Discipline and dedication are key to getting through the ESWS program and according to Orozco, it is a rigorous and time-consuming process, but with perseverance, the personal and professional rewards are worthwhile.

"ESWS has helped me professionally because it helps me stand out more against my peers, and shows that I'm willing to go that extra mile in my career to accomplish something that's important," said Orozco. "Personally it showed me that I can achieve the goals I set for myself with a little dedication." ■

A Day Aboard USS Nashville



MEDITERRANEAN SEA (May 18, 2008) – Sailors and Marines aboard amphibious transport dock ship USS Nashville (LPD 13) load Meals Ready to Eat (MREs) aboard the ship during a vertical replenishment with USS Mount Whitney (LCC 20). U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Charles L. Ludwig. (RELEASED)



MEDITERRANEAN SEA (May 18, 2008) – Chief Boatswain's Mate (SW/AW/SCW) William White looks on as Landing Craft Unit (LCU) 1657 embarks aboard amphibious transport dock ship USS Nashville (LPD 13). U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Charles L. Ludwig. (RELEASED)