

THE SURFRIDER

NEWS FROM THE LCU COMMUNITY
JANUARY 2010





The Surfrider January 2010

Welcome to the second edition of *The Surfrider*, news from the LCU Community!

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Contributors:

PMS377: Captain Jeff Riedel
PMS377J: Brooks Farnsworth
PMS377J3 LCU Life Cycle Manager: Montrell Smith
ACU 1: CDR Michael Lockwood
ACU 2: CDR Robert Chatham
On-site Representative: Glenn Long, Stephen Tobias
Editor and Layout Design: Emily MacDonnell

Unless otherwise stated, all stories and photographs were submitted by sailors and representatives at ACU 1 and 2 or supplied by Navy Newsstand.

Please submit stories and photographs for future issues to Brooks Farnsworth, PMS377J, at Brooks.Farnsworth@navy.mil or to Montrell Smith, PMS377J3, at Montrell.Smith@navy.mil.

The views expressed herein are not necessarily those of the Department of the Navy. Articles, letters, queries, and comments should be directed to: Department of the Navy, Program Executive Office Ships, Attn: Code PMS377J, 1333 Issac Hull Avenue, SE, Washington Navy Yard, DC 20376-2101.

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ACU 1 Greetings

Greetings from ACU 1!

I have now served in command for a little over a year and the period has been the most challenging and rewarding in my career. I recognize more than ever the unique and critical capability that the LCU brings to the fleet.

Without the pride of ownership of the craft crews, outstanding support of our shoreside engineering department, our superb civilian maintenance team, our on-site representative, and program office and planning yard experts, our LCUs would not be able to maintain the extremely high OPTEMPO they do.

Throughout the past year ACU 1 craft remained deployed and busy supporting worldwide operations. Accomplishing a total of 14 craft deployments with PELELIU, BOXER, ESSEX, and BON HOMME RICHARD Amphibious Ready Groups, ACU 1 Sailors provided continuous, flexible, reliable, support to Operational Commanders in the THIRD, FIFTH, and SEVENTH Fleets.

Deployed ACU 1 Sailors supported both Operations IRAQI FREEDOM and ENDURING FREEDOM. Sailors and craft also participated in exercises throughout SEVENTH Fleet, including Fall Patrol 2008, Spring Patrol 2009, Fall Patrol 2009, Exercises COBRA GOLD 2009, BALIKATAN 2009, TALISMAN SABRE 2009, CARAT 2009, and MAREX 2009.

Over the last year, the ACU 1 LCUs that have not been deployed steamed over 2,300 hours providing service to the fleet, supporting initial training, certification, and proficiency events for all Pacific Fleet Amphibious ships, I MEF, Naval Special Warfare, Explosive Ordnance Disposal, Expeditionary Training Group Pacific, and Maritime Expeditionary Security Group ONE. This service often goes unnoticed, but is a vital contribution to the combat readiness of the units involved.

As I mentioned before, the ACU 1 maintenance team, both uniformed and

civilians, are the real key to the unmatched material readiness of our craft and our ability to maintain the very heavy OPTEMPO we consistently do.

Over the last year, this team of peerless professionals managed six major shipyard drydocking overhauls, and seventeen pierside continuous maintenance availabilities (in two homeports) totaling over \$16 million.

ACU 1 took possession of two LCUs from the Navy Reserve, to bring the unit up to its full strength of 16 craft. The first "new" LCUs to join ACU 1 in 38 years, LCU 1680 and 1681, both built in 1987, spent their entire service as training craft for Navy Reserve Sailors.

ACU 1 Sailors took ownership of LCU 1680 in Little Creek, Virginia, and completed a historic 1,283 nautical mile independent transit to Tampa, Florida, where she joined LCU 1681. Both craft subsequently embarked aboard the USS MAKIN ISLAND for the transit to San Diego, and arrived at NAB Coronado in September 2009.

In May, ACU 1 hosted 53 Assault Craft Veterans at the 40th Annual Memorial Service in remembrance of the crew of LCU 1500, who were lost to enemy fire on 27 February 1968 at Cua-Viet, Vietnam. This is an important event at ACU 1 as it is the one day we set aside to reflect on the sacrifice of those who went before us and to rededicate ourselves to living up to the heritage they left us.

During the course of the ceremony three LCU 1500 survivors presented the command with a memorial painting in honor of the fallen. I also had the distinct honor to announce that five LCU and nine LCM crews from ACU 1 had been awarded the Presidential Unit Citation for their important part in retaking Hue City, Vietnam during the 1968 Tet Offensive.

In August ACU 1 received the first installations of two very important alterations: Centralized Machinery Monitoring and Control System



CDR Michael Lockwood

(CMMCS) and Electronic Navigation. These systems replaced obsolete, unsupported legacy equipment and significantly increase our craft's reliability and ability to operate independently.

Through superb teamwork by the planning yard, installations team, craft crew, and our maintenance team, these were completed ahead of schedule. We look forward to the installation of these systems in all of our craft over the next couple of years.

ACU 1 remains ready to answer new challenges, whether deployed or in homeport.

LCUs remain in high demand for amphibious and non-traditional roles and missions.

As we continue to work these craft we will need the great support of our uniformed experts and their civilian technical support teams.

I wish all the Officers, Chief Petty Officers, and crewmembers in the LCU world, and the many civilians who help us on a daily basis, my sincerest thanks for your support and commitment to this unique community. We simply couldn't do it without you! ●



ACU 2 Greetings

Welcome to another edition of *The Surfrider*.

Although I have been at ACU 2 for over a year as the XO, I just recently took Command this past May following a memorable change of Command with CDR Eric Anderson. Needless to say I continue to be impressed with the sailors of this Command. Every day these individuals are executing the missions assigned with pride and professionalism. This Command could not succeed without their efforts.

My vision and objectives for 2009 are to build on the momentum and successes the command has achieved over the past year. ACU 2 is a unique and dynamic Command with almost 300 officers and Sailors operating 16 Utility Landing Craft (LCU) vessels, 4 Mechanized Landing Craft (LCM-8), 2 Maritime Pre-positioning Force Utility Boats (MPF UB) and assorted small boats.

The versatility of both the LCU and Mike-8 boats are best seen in their sustainability and heavy lift capability. The LCU is capable of conducting prolonged operations alone and away from a support platform and both are capable of delivering very large payloads to areas that are not accessible by other sea based methods. ACU 2 craft have operated in the waters of the Atlantic Ocean, the

Pacific Ocean, the Mediterranean Sea, the Indian Ocean, the Black Sea and the Baltic Sea, supporting virtually every amphibious exercise or contingency operation that has occurred in those waters since the late 1940s.

Recently, the LCU sustainability was demonstrated by the successful transit of U80 from Norfolk, VA to Tampa, Florida without incident.

Over the past several years we have seen the missions for these craft evolve beyond the ship to shore role. In addition to supplying landing craft detachments, ACU 2 provides trained personnel to support the Maritime Pre-positioning Force (MPF) operations. The concept of the MPF mission centers around merchant ships pre-loaded with equipment which are offloaded at port or at anchor and then married with their units to provide a combat force anywhere in the world.

ACU 2 trains and provides active duty and reserve personnel to operate the LCM-8 and MPF UB used to offload these ships.

So you can see why the ACU 1 and 2 Commands are known as "The Workhorses of the Amphibious Fleet". Within the past year, ACU 2 alone has successfully completed over 10 LCU deployments and four MPF exercises.



CDR Robert Chatham

Since JAN 09, we have had over 4000 visitors to the Command or onboard craft; all wanting to see this unique capability.

We are continuing to make great strides in ensuring these craft are properly manned, trained and equipped. Vital LCU modernization and sustainment programs continue to gain momentum. We have recently even completed development of the first LCU Craftmaster course of instruction. Staying on top of these efforts will ensure the LCUs remain active for many years to come and continue to be a vital part of the fleet. ●

Commander Rob Chatham attended the University of South Carolina in Columbia, South Carolina where he earned his BA in History and was commissioned through the Naval ROTC program in May 1991. He also holds an MA in National Security Affairs and Strategic Affairs from the Naval Post graduate school.

Commander Chatham served aboard a number of sea commands, including division officer tours aboard USS NIMITZ (CVN 68), as Communications, and Deck Officer, on USS CUSHING (DD 985) as the Main Propulsion Assistant, aboard USS DECATUR (DDG 73) as Chief Engineer and

aboard USS McCAMPBELL (DDG 85) as Executive Officer. Commander Chatham has served at the Afloat Training Group as an Engineering Gas Turbine Assessor, on the COMNAVSURFOR staff as AFTP/SORTS/DC and Engineering Training and Readiness Monitor, on the staff of the Commander, Naval Surface Force, U.S. Atlantic Fleet as Flag Secretary and most recently at Assault Craft Unit 2 as the Executive Officer and Perspective Commanding Officer. Commander Chatham's personal decorations include the Meritorious Service Medal (two awards), Navy Commendation Medal (three awards), the Navy Achievement Medal, and various unit, campaign, and service medals. ●



Fleet Looking Forward to New Steering and Propulsion Systems



Artie Ray, Electronics Technician for CDI Marine, works on the Steering and Propulsion Systems upgrade.

The Landing Craft Utility (LCU) fleet is getting an alteration that will upgrade the steering and propulsion systems of each boat.

“We are adding 21st century technology to the LCU fleet,” Frank Hughes, CDI Industrial Services Manager and a former LCU sailor from the early 1980’s said.

The new alteration is named the Central Machinery Monitoring and Control System (CMMCS) since it combines two separate systems, steering and engine alarms, and also adds a third, electronic throttles. There are many attributes included in the system including monitoring and data logging of engine parameters, network monitoring and alerting users of failures, accurate and fast control, and many more.

The CMMCS design capitalized on the

auto industry’s SAE J1939 standard by adding several layers of redundancy into the programming for increased reliability.

“It is very easy to understand and use,” Electrical Engineer Andy Morrison, who wrote the software and was lead on the system design, said. “CMMCS is very similar to your car. If an O2 sensor goes bad, you get a check engine light, and the car produces a code that a technician reads that tells them which one to replace. The CMMCS does the same thing except it tells the exact location of the failed sensor and has pages with replacement parts without the code reader.”

The steering and throttle controls are easy to use and have a very fast response.

As soon as the user makes a change, the rudders are moving or the throttles are changing.

“This was a very well-conceived and well-executed alteration,” CDR Michael Lockwood, CO, ACU 1, said.

“The alteration improved the handling characteristic of the boat,” Sr. Chief Lardie said. “There’s an instant response with no lag time.”

If the controls fail at either the conning station or pilot house, there is an emergency screen with soft keys that can steer the boat. If that fails, the operator can pass control to the other station. If the electronic throttles fail, they have a mechanical throttle back-up. If both pilot house and conning stations fail, the sailors can steer with the soft keys from the aft steering station. There is also an emergency take-over in the event of an injury to personnel at the conning station.

Another great feature of the system is helpful in the highly unlikely event that the station in control loses power or communication. The rudders will automatically default to center and throttles return to neutral after three seconds of trying to re-establish communications, thereby allowing the user to take control at another station. The system is thorough and has numerous ideas integrated from users’ feedback about the system.

The CMMCS constantly monitors the engine RPM, oil pressure, and water jacket temperature of the main propulsion diesel engines and the ship’s service diesel generators. It records the data every hour and saves it to a spreadsheet format on an SD card for the users’ records. This feature could help reduce watches and engineering logs. Any time an alarm event occurs the system records that data in a separate log. It will also warn the user if the engine parameters are approaching critical limits by the text turning yellow

from white in order to allow them to alleviate any problems before alarms start going off. If the text is red the alarm is sounding telling the user it has now past the limit of normal operation.

The system also monitors itself. Each module sends out a “heartbeat” signal every 50 milliseconds letting the others know it is still there and functioning correctly. The CMMCS also monitors the input voltage to each module, the reference voltage for the analog inputs, and the processor temperature. It will alert the user if any of these parameters are outside of normal limits or if communication is lost to any module. It is also looking for the sensors on the network and will sound an alarm if they fail or if the signal conditioners fail. The users would then simply get a new one and replace it, bringing the system back to full functionality.

“Engineers and designers have worked hard to make CMMCS a superb product, but Fleet input – positive and negative – is crucial to ensuring the system meets the Fleets needs,” David Dwyer, the LCU Project Engineer said.

“Information that is familiar and understandable to an engineer is often times not as easily understood by operators, and honestly, one or two people are not going to think of every angle and aspect of operation,” he said.

Lessons learned from the prototype efforts on LCU 1644 and LCU 1660 in the spring of 2009 will make installation activities both smooth and successful. Over the summer, the In-Service Engineering Agent team, comprised of CDI Marine, Combatant Craft Division (CCD), and the Assault Craft Units, was busy resolving the developmental growing pains that are common in such endeavors, while always minimizing schedule impacts and containing costs.

Andy Morrison summarized the new CMMCS system when he said, “This has been one of the most technically challenging, frustrating, yet rewarding projects in which I have had the pleasure to participate. My hope is to deliver a top notch, state of the art system for the war fighter that will perform cost effectively and with reliability, while



being easy to use, understand, and maintain.”

The CMMCS alteration team began installations on two ACU 1 craft, LCU 1633 and LCU 1666, in August 2009. ACU 1 pre-installation efforts paid great dividends in speeding up this first set of installations on the West Coast. Look for the installation team coming soon to a LCU near you! ●



Above: Andy Morrison displays elements of the new steering system.
Left: The new steering and propulsion system of the LCU.

Story and photographs by Barbara Bodenstein and Andy Morrison.
For more information on the new steering system, contact Andy Morrison at michael.a.morrison@navy.mil, or Dave Dwyer at john.d.dwyer@navy.mil.



Navy Reserve Top Brass Visits ACU 1 Sailors

The Chief of the Navy Reserve and Commander, Navy Reserve Forces Command visited Sailors from ACU 1 aboard NAB Coronado, CA.

Vice Adm. Dirk J. Debbink and Rear Adm. John Messerschmidt joined the crew of ACU 1's newest Maritime Prepositioning Force (MPF) Utility Boat during training and operations in San Diego Bay. ACU 1 took delivery of the 40-foot high speed landing craft, manufactured by Kvichak Marine Industries of Seattle just last month.

The boat is the latest addition for providing high speed personnel transport, medical evacuation, and waterborne security force capabilities to the Naval Beach Group. They have a fully loaded cruise speed of about 27 knots and a flank speed of around 43 knots and are capable of carrying up to 30 Sailors and their gear or 10 tons of cargo, direct to the beach.

"I continue to be in awe of the tremendous contributions that are being made by our Reserve Component Sailors," Debbink said. "Every time I visit a unit, every time I talk with Sailors, I see how much value-added the Reserve Component brings to the Navy as a whole."

Messerschmidt agree with the commander.

"It's actually fun to come out here, to participate and be with the Sailors as they do what they do best. They are the best at what they do, and they enjoy doing what they do," he said. ACU 1 Commanding Officer, Cmdr. Mike Lockwood of Rochester, N.Y., recognizes the contributions of Reserve Component Sailors to his command.

"My command needs fully qualified, fully trained boat crews right from the time of their arrival to complete our mission," Lockwood said. "The Reserve boat

detachments allow us to be always ready."

Most of the crewmembers aboard were Reserve Component Sailors from Navy Operational Support Activity Port Hueneme, Calif., attached to ACU 1 Detachment 1819. Detachment 1819 Senior Enlisted Leader Chief Machinist's Mate Brian Rodela of Lancaster, Calif., was equally impressed.

"I think this was a great opportunity to show how the Reserve Component and Active Component can not only train together, but we can work together side-by-side to achieve full integration, stepping in to do the job without any potential problems or delays."

ACU 1's mission is to train, equip, and deploy assault craft and crews to support Expeditionary Strike Group and Maritime Prepositioning Force Operations. ●

MCPON Visits ACU 2, Meets with Sailors, Tours LCU



The Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy, MCPON(SS/SW) Rick West paid a visit to ACU 2 on January 8th 2009. He was accompanied on his tour by Surface Forces Atlantic Fleet FORCE Master Chief Jerry Haueter.

During his visit, he addressed the CPO and First Class Petty Officer's Messes. He discussed force shaping and personnel initiatives like advancements, Perform to Serve and the CPO Continuation Board. He also talked about the wear of the Navy Working Uniform (NWU) and when wear restrictions may possibly be lifted. He fielded question and answer sessions with both groups.

He was given a tour of the waterfront area, led by ACU 2's Commanding Officer, CDR Eric Anderson and Executive Officer, CDR Robert Chatham, first stopping onboard LCU 1643 where crew members explained the mission and load capacities of the craft. He was given a guided tour of the craft and came away highly impressed with the wide ranging missions and capabilities of the LCU.

The next stop was the Maintenance Shop where HT2 Michiah wolfskin explained

the different areas of the shop and the vast amount of maintenance that can be Performed at the organizational level, greatly adding to the command's repair self sufficiency.

The mcewen visit was capped off when he presented a Navy and Marine Corps Achievement medal to EM3(SW) Joseph hassle for his superior performance of duties while conducting a comprehensive electrical groom on all layup.

Before he departed, CDR Anderson And ACU 2 CMDR, Master Chief Kevin Morgan presented a command plaque to the MCPON.

He genuinely enjoyed his command tour and was grateful for his opportunity to see what the Sailors of ACU 2 do on a daily basis. He stated he would like to Return during warmer weather for an Underway demonstration on a LCU. ●



LCUs Deploy to Uruguay and Chile



Above: LCU 1643 offloads supplies during Southern Exchange 2009. Below: Sailors from ACU 2 participate with Marines in Southern Exchange 2009 and Amphibious Southern Partnership Station 2009.

ACU 2 deployed one LCU and Beachmaster Unit 2's Beach Party Team No. 1 onboard USS Oak Hill (LSD 51) to South America from June-August 2009 in direct support of Amphibious Southern Partnership Station 2009 (SPY). The USS Oak Hill has been deployed off the Atlantic coast of South America to conduct combined naval and amphibious operations with maritime forces from Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Peru, and Uruguay. The ship also took part in the U.S. Marine Corps Forces South multinational amphibious exercise, Southern Exchange 2009, from 13-31 July.

The deployment was designed to strengthen partnerships and maritime security in Latin America through training and cooperation activities. Specifically, this multinational training event enhanced proficiency and interoperability between the U.S. and partner nations in the areas of peacekeeping, disaster relief, and humanitarian assistance, while demonstrating flexibility.

The crew of LCU 1643 was provided the opportunity to engage Sailors and Marines from various countries to exchange information. They had the opportunity to visit Uruguay, Argentina, and Brazil. The

LCU was tasked with transporting vehicles and personnel during two amphibious operations. During their transit south, new Sailors were transformed from Slimy wots into Trusty Shellbacks during the "Crossing-the-Line" ceremonies.

Community involvement included some of the most memorable moments for the crew of LCU 1643. While in Uruguay, the crew was able to help clean up and paint an elementary school. After the cleaning and painting was complete the crew

handed out toys, child friendly supplies, and essential toiletries. SNY (SW) Lopez from Beach Party Team 1, was interviewed about the Beachmaster and ACU 2's missions, equipment and capabilities. The interview was televised live by "Good Morning Uruguay." Friendships were formed with foreign militaries and communities through training and interaction.

LCU 1643 returned home for a short amount of time, and turned right back around to support PARANEMA 09. ●





LCU 1500 Heroism Honored on Memorial Day

The 40th annual memorial service in remembrance of the crew of LCU 1500, part of ACU 1, took place at Naval Amphibious Base Coronado, May 22.

During the Vietnam War, LCU 1500 was hit by an enemy rocket which killed the crew along with several nearby Sailors and damaged the craft. Every year on Memorial Day weekend, a memorial service is held at ACU 1 to honor the sacrifice and commitment of those ACU 1 Sailors who lost their lives.

This Memorial Day weekend, the current crew of LCU 1500 accepted a Presidential Unit Citation on behalf of the Vietnam-era crew for extraordinary heroism and outstanding performance of duty against enemy forces during Operation Hue City.

"By their effective teamwork, aggressive fighting spirit and individual acts of heroism, they soundly defeated a numerically superior enemy force, contributing significantly to the U.S. drive to reclaim Hue City from the attacking forces," reads the citation. Thanks to diligent research by four LCU 1500 crewmembers, the long-lost presidential citation was discovered in March 2009.

"One of the things we talked about earlier this week was that this was the first time we knew that they had received a Presidential Unit Citation," said CMDM (SW/AW) Billy Ward, ACU 1's command master chief. "We've done this ceremony now for a number of years and this is the first time that we've been able to present a Presidential Unit Citation to the various LCUs."

The memorial service included remarks from guest speakers including ACU 1's commanding officer and several former crewmembers.

"There are times I've been asked what a hero is," said Christian Peetz, former LCU 1500 crewmember. "I came up with my own definition; To me, a hero is a man or a woman that steps into a situation to help



preserve human life and our freedom without the thought of losing their own life. Men and women of ACU 1, thank you for being my heroes."

"I think the best crew was the guys on the 1500, and I miss them a lot," said Paul Eagle, another former LCU 1500 crewmember.

The service continued with a reading of the names of members of LCU 1500 who lost their lives, followed by a wreath

laying prior to the ceremony's conclusion.

"I think it's a spectacular opportunity," said Cmdr. Michael Lockwood, ACU 1 commanding officer. "It allows me and my crew to pause one day a year and remember those who have gone before us, the sacrifices they've made and to recommit ourselves to upholding the same standards of service and sacrifice." ●

Top: Sailors from ACU 1 participate in the LCU 1500 ceremony. Bottom: Retired sailors present ACU 1 with a painting for the LCU 1500 Memorial site.



USS Makin Island Launches First Landing Craft

USS Makin Island's (LHD 8) deck and combat cargo departments completed their first well deck operation July 12 with the recovery and launch of two landing craft utility (LCU) boats.

The multi-purpose amphibious assault ship Makin Island is designed to transport and land Marine expeditionary strike groups ashore via helicopters, amphibious assault vehicles and landing craft.

Makin Island is carrying the LCUs to San Diego and will then turn over the landing craft to Assault Craft Unit 1.

"Ninety percent of my crew has never participated in well deck operations," said Boatswain's Mate 1st Class (SW) Mark Powers. "That's why it's so important we have these certifications, so we can gain the knowledge and trust within our crew to launch and recover [an] LCU

successfully." Makin Island's transit to San Diego is important to the ship becoming well deck certified.

"[One thing that] makes Makin Island different is the Machinery Control System (MCS), a computer that controls all the ballasting from a central console, which is one less thing we have to worry about when conducting well deck operations," Powers added.

There are two different phases to the well deck certification. The first is the administration phase, which must be passed before continuing on to the second phase. During this first phase, publications were verified, and the personnel qualification standards program was inspected.

During the second phase, Naval Beach Group 1 assessors evaluated the ship

performing real-time operations with LCUs.

"We always knew we were going to have to do this," said Boatswain's Mate Seaman Eric Flom. "Once we completed the evolution, the crew, as a whole, had a new level of confidence and was ready to do it again."

Makin Island performed well deck operations with LCUs four more times off the coast of Pensacola, Fla., before heading home.

Makin Island departed Pascagoula, Miss., July 10 and is sailing around South America to its new homeport of San Diego. During its transit, the ship is scheduled to make port calls in Brazil, Chile and Peru to support U.S. Southern Command's objective for enhanced maritime security. ●

LCUs Participate in COMPUTEX 2009

As part of its Composite Unit Training Exercise (COMPTUEX) 10-2 from Oct. 23-Nov. 17, the Nassau Amphibious Ready Group (NAS ARG), comprised of three ships, one LCU, and the 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit, have been hard at work training Sailors and Marines for its upcoming deployment.

NAS ARG is comprised of Commander, Amphibious Squadron 8, 24th MEU, the amphibious assault ship USS Nassau (LHA 4), the amphibious transport dock ship USS Mesa Verde (LPD 19) and the amphibious dock landing ship USS Ashland (LSD 48). LCU 1655 transited aboard the USS Nassau to help transport Marines in support of COMPUTEX. LCU 1655 assisted in replenishment and real-time exercises for the marines.

The exercise will serve as a deployment certification for ships, as well as offering

Sailors the opportunity to execute maritime strategy. The training scenarios will be realistic and challenging to enhance U.S. capabilities for maritime security. Exercise scenarios will be divided into phases and will challenge the NAS ARG Navy and Marine Corps team.

"It's important that our assessors certify us as deployable, not just as an amphibious strike group, but also as individual ships," said Lt. Cmdr. John Erickson, Amphibious Squadron 8 training officer.

Planned scenarios will test the group's ability to perform Maritime Security Operations (MSO), such as counterpiracy operations, and Maritime Interdiction Operations (MIO), which will enhance both global and theater maritime security.

Additionally, ships will simulate strait transits and conduct real world operations

such as replenishments at sea and boardings. In port, the NAS ARG maintained an aggressive training program, said Capt. Mark Scovill, deputy commander, Amphibious Squadron Eight. At sea, Sailors are building on their in port training and putting their surface warfare knowledge to the test.

The guided-missile cruiser USS San Jacinto (CG 56), the guided-missile destroyer USS Forrest Sherman (DDG 98), the amphibious dock landing ship USS Gunston Hall (LSD 44), the frigate USS Boone (FFG 28) are also participating in the exercise.

COMPTUEX, a routine training exercise taking place off the East Coast of the United States, from Virginia to Florida, was scheduled by Commander, U.S 2nd Fleet and is being conducted by a training team led by Commander, Strike Force Training Atlantic. ●



Africa Partnership Station Hosts LCUs

ACU 2's LCU 1658 returned from a six month humanitarian deployment embarked onboard USS Nashville (LPD 13) to Naval Amphibious Base Little Creek on June 8.

ACU 2 deployed one LCU onboard USS Nashville from January-June 2009, to assist with Africa Partnership Station (APS). APS is an international initiative developed by Naval Forces Europe (NFE) and Naval Forces Africa, under the auspices of the newly operational theatre command, AFRICOM, which aims to work cooperatively with U.S. and international partners to enhance maritime safety and security for the continent of Africa. Nashville's APS mission was focused on operations in West and Central Africa.

The LCU was the second craft ACU 2 deployed to join APS, following the deployment of USS Fort McHenry in late 2007; however, the mission of this crew was very different to its predecessor as it provided advanced training in a select number of countries. The focus of the deployment was to provide sustained training and multinational and organizational collaboration on a regional scale.

During the deployment, the LCU crew completed missions in Senegal, Ghana, Nigeria, Cameroon and Gabon, and assisted by transiting/hosting training teams who gave lessons in basic seamanship, small boat handling, visit,

board, search and seizure techniques, search and rescue, data management and how to run an operations center.

While in the Gulf of Guinea, the LCU was sent to Liberia with Seabees (USN construction battalions) and Marine Corps training teams on board to facilitate training and development. Daily classes and training for Ghanaian maritime forces were offered, whose primary focus was on developing and maintaining maritime

opener for everyone. It was our chance to set the example on the importance of a clean environment".

SNY Stearn's thoughts on the deployment as a whole were, "I felt like we really took part in the humanitarian relief, we transferred cargo that was needed".

As far as what the crew learned; many received qualifications such as their Enlisted Surface Warfare (ESWS) pin, and other



LCU 1658 participate in APS 2009.

rating experiences. "I learned more about myself and my rate. I also accomplished and earned my ESWS pin," added ENFN Delrio. BMCS Sherrod, summarized the overall operations, "I want to first express my appreciation for allowing me to lead this fine crew into such a unique type of deployment.

There have been many goals set and accomplished by the crew and myself. As a craft we will return to ACU 2 with 100 percent Enlisted Surface Warfare Specialist Qualified, a silver star above my anchors and with the times changing in the Navy the crew has lost a combined total of 175 lbs and everyone meets all physical readiness standards.

security and safety. In addition to the training, humanitarian, medical, dental and outreach programs, Community Relations projects (COMRELS) happened on a constant basis.

By the end of deployment, the LCU had logged 12 stern gate marriages, moved over 1,000 personnel, safely navigated 200 NM of independent steaming and saved the Navy \$25,000 in liberty boat fees.

There were several emotions that were experienced by the sailors on deployment. Many areas visited in Africa provided opportunities for COMRELS. During Beach Clean-Up in Sekondi, Ghana, EM1 Damico stated, "It was a real eye

Though there were long working hours and not enough days of liberty, it was understood what the bigger picture was; the essential mission at hand was paramount. Overall, when the sailors were asked if they would do this deployment again, the accord was yes! ACU 2 was quite pleased to have this opportunity and looks forward to future participation. ●



LCUs Travel to Philippines for Balikatan 09

Forward-deployed amphibious assault ship USS Essex (LEED 2) and LCU 1627 arrived in Subic Bay, Republic of the Philippines, April 15 at the request of the government of the Philippines to take part in exercise Balikatan 2009.

Balikatan is an annual Republic of the Philippines and U.S. bilateral military humanitarian assistance and training exercise.

"It's an honor to be part of Balikatan; I look forward to furthering our relationship with this year's exercise," Capt. Brent Canady, Essex' commanding officer said. "For 25 years now, our countries have worked together to accomplish great things during Balikatan, not just militarily, but in terms of humanitarian assistance and disaster relief as well."

During the exercise, Essex Sailors will participate in a series of community relations projects and support the 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU), which will conduct various cross-training and field training exercises with the Armed Forces of the Philippines.

On April 14, Essex sailors and sailors from ACU 1 off-loaded support personnel assigned to the 31st MEU's Aviation Combat Element (ACE) and dozens of vehicles and ground troops. In addition, Essex' Sailors hosted a small group of Filipino marines during the week leading up to the exercise, and welcomed dozens more aboard April 14 to familiarize them with the ship. Many of those marines took advantage of the opportunity to learn from, and with, their U.S. counterparts.

"Over the past five days, we've learned a lot about the way the U.S. Marines operate," Philippine marine Capt. Hermolino Etusi Jr. said. "We've worked together on a variety of combat training scenarios and it's been quite an experience."

While Etusi Jr. said both countries' marines learned a lot about each other in



LCU 1627 in the Philippines.

terms of combat, he said the most surprising aspect of his stay was the respect shown by Essex Sailors.

"Even though we are a foreign contingent, the crew has treated us as equals," he said. "They've truly shown us tremendous respect and I'm very thankful for that."

During the exercise, Sailors are scheduled to participate in four community relations projects.

"The projects are a tremendous opportunity to reach out to those in need," said Cmdr. Chin Dang, Essex's chaplain.

"The main goal is to be ambassadors of good will and friendship," said Dang. "That goodwill works both ways. When a Sailor goes out and does something good for someone in need, it makes them feel good about themselves, too."

For many Essex Sailors, like Aviation Boatswain's Mate (Handling) Airman Ezekiel Graham, of Rose Hill, S.C., this will be their first community relations project in the Philippines.

"I grew up in Philadelphia and had a

chance to see a lot of very unfortunate people," Graham said. "There are so many people out there who don't have a chance and I want to do whatever I can to help them. Participating in projects like these are great opportunities to help."

In addition to the community relations projects, Sailors will also have an opportunity to experience local customs and scenery through 15 different tours offered by the ship's Morale, Welfare and Recreation department. Tours range from half-day to full-day expeditions and feature everything from metropolitan shopping sprees to safaris in the jungles of Olongapo.

"We always try to get the Sailors out to experience the culture in every port we visit," Mick Hultz, Essex's afloat recreation specialist said. "Hopefully our tours give them an opportunity to get off the ship and do some things they wouldn't normally have a chance to do."

Essex is commanded by Capt. Brent Canady and is the lead ship of the only forward-deployed U.S. Amphibious Ready Group and serves as the flagship for CTF 76. ●



ACU 2 Hosts French Tonnerre's LCUs

This spring ACU 2 had the privilege of playing host to two French LCM-8 crafts. While onboard, MPF department welcomed the French sailors with open arms. Both MPF department and French sailors learned from each other.

They studied the differences in both the actual craft and the way in which the crew operates them. The interviews and walkthroughs gave the sailors the opportunity to explore the crafts. The major differences between the ACU 2 LCUs and the French LCUs were that the French LCUs lacked a galley, head and shower, and racks. They resembled ACU 2's LCMs more than the LCUs. They only have four personnel assigned per craft; one driver, one engineer and two deck seaman to help with the line handling. Also, there are no female crewmembers aboard unlike a few of ACU 2's crafts. The French crew members were able to get underway onboard a LCU and experienced how an LCU operates in and out of an amphibious ship's welldeck, as well as how an LCU hits/retracts a typical beach, with a regular load out.

A normal day aboard a French LCM begins at 0730 Tuesday through Friday and the work day ends at 1600. Every Monday morning at 0745 a flag ceremony is conducted much like the way colors are announced every morning. When you're stationed aboard a French LCM the days are long and tiring and it usually ends up



French LCU sailors with ACU 2 crew.

being a fourteen hour work day, they do not require a need for someone to stand a watch onboard afterwards. Since there aren't any racks aboard to sleep they usually pull down a couple of life jackets and catch a quick nap, if need be. Between the hours of 1200 and 1400, its time to break for lunch and/or get some down-rest, before returning to work.

Overall, the French sailors expressed their gratitude towards ACU 2. They were very appreciative for all the help they received from people around the command. If there was a question that was asked, the French sailors always got an answer. The French

felt extremely welcome here and they especially liked having the duty driver at their disposal. The FS Tonnerre sailors were very pleased with their berthing accommodations; the barracks room they got to stay in and even the American cuisine they received at the galley were enticing to them.

Although the French sailors stay at ACU 2 was brief, their overall experience was a great one and they hope to bring more of their shipmates the next time so they can train and learn more about how ACU 2 and the United States Navy operates. ●





ACU 1 Engineering Keeps LCUs Afloat

Engraving Services:

ACU 1's Engineering Engraving Shop manufactured name tags, valve and gauge label plates, official title plates, plaque plates of various sizes, shapes and configurations for spaces, official command functions and retirement ceremonies. For Fiscal Year (FY) 2008, ACU 1 completed over 4,000 items, at a cost savings to ACU 1 and NBG 1 of over \$45,000.

Hose Manufacturing Services:

ACU 1 has the ability to manufacture and test various hose types, from simple low pressure (50 psi) quarter inch air hoses up to 1¼ inch high pressure (7,500 psi) hydraulic flexible hoses. In the past, ACU 1 used training from TifCo. While still relying primarily on TifCo. for fittings and hoses, ACU 1 has taken over this training mantle, by providing our own training to personnel in both hands on and theoretical standards in accordance with the Joint Fleet Maintenance Manual, achieving a savings of \$2,500. ACU 1 has more than 20 qualified personnel, from three departments, who manufactured and replaced over 350 defective flex hoses saving the command an average price of \$200 per hose. This is a cost savings greater than \$70,000 in FY 2008.

Small Boat Inspections:

ACU 1 conducted small boat inspections and repairs for NBG-1 prior to commencement of ULTRA "C" on USS RUSHMORE, USS DUBUQUE, USS NEW ORLEANS and USS COMSTOCK. The inspections consisted of a complete safety walk-through of the craft, visual inspections of engines, electrical systems, navigation lights, navigation equipment, and gage calibration. These inspections concluded with a full power demonstration, ensuring the craft were operationally safe prior to deployment. Estimated cost for a civilian contractor to accomplish this inspection is \$3,000 per craft, a savings to the Navy of \$39,000 contractor fees.

Electrical Repair Services:

While conducting a Final Evaluation Problem (FEP) aboard LCU 1665, a hydraulic start system overheated and fused several internal components together due to an incorrectly wired transformer. Deployment was less than a week away; command electricians replaced the transformer, ensuring it was able to withstand the temperatures associated with the engine room. Outsourcing would have been a convenient alternative; however, Command Electricians proved they have the expertise, completed the repairs in a timely manner. The electricians were able to save over \$5,000 in estimated repair costs.

During Beaching and Retraction Operations, LCU 1627 had a Class "C" fire in their steering electrical system. With limited documentation for this obsolete system, command Electricians were able to diagnose the problem and acquire replacement parts. Command Electricians volunteered their services, repaired the electrical system with a significant savings to the government of over \$50,000 in estimated contractor fees.

During electrical trouble-shooting of a Reverse Osmosis Demineralizer Unit and Salt Water Pump Controller on LCU 1632, command Electricians identified the failed circuit cards, then researched, procured, and replaced them resulting in an approximate cost savings of \$3,000.

Hull Repair Services:

While conducting Beach Landing and Retraction operations, LCU 1633 became broached. Efforts to get the craft waterborne again were successful but resulted in a large gash in the starboard aft bulkhead above the water line. Upon return to ACU 1, command Hull Maintenance Technicians were called to evaluate and repair the casualty. ACU 1 technicians completing this repair, drawing upon their training and experience with respect to safety and Quality Assurance procedures.

During operations at Camp Pendleton Marine Corps base for Joint Logistics Over-the-Shore (JLOTS) 08, ACU 1 command welders repaired a total of five hull penetrations aboard three Amphibious Construction Battalion ONE Improved Navy Lighterage System (INLS) craft. These vital repairs kept the craft in service during the operation and helped save an estimated \$20,000 in contractor repair costs.

Command Hull Technicians manufactured and installed numerous components in support of craft operations including: shelving units aboard eight craft, 12 brows, 25 lifeline stanchions, nine Lube Oil overboard valve guards, four potable water hose lockers, and an anchor winch drum cover. The weld shop also replaced over 20 feet of jacket water piping aboard LCU 1648 and manufactured a new Command Watch Tower to support Force Protection of all command craft.

ACU 1's DCA coordinated and supervised the procurement of various damage control equipments from decommissioned assets, resulting in a command savings of over \$10,000 in consumable funds.

ACU 1 Hull Technicians repaired holes in the superstructure and ballast tanks of several craft during the ongoing maintenance availabilities, keeping these 38 to 50 year old craft fully mission capable.

In summary, the hard work of ACU 1 Hull Technicians yielded an approximate savings of \$105,000 in estimated contractor labor and supply costs for FY 2008.

Diesel Engine Inspection Support:

The Diesel Engine Inspection Support team planned and conducted 68 diesel engine inspections on 12 LCU and four Landing Craft Mechanized, discovering over 1750 discrepancies and preventing major diesel engine failure at cost savings of \$140,000. ●



LCU 1680 Transits from VA to FL

LCU 1680, crewed by Sailors from San Diego based ACU 1, completed a 1,283 nautical mile, six day, independent transit from Norfolk, VA to Tampa, FL on 27 May, 2009.

LCU 1680 was part of the Reserve Fleet until earlier this year. It left the Reserve Fleet in Buffalo, NY and transited through NY Harbor, in front of the statue of liberty, en route to Norfolk. Once it arrived in Norfolk, LCU 1680 went into the shipyards for work to become well deck capable.

In the past, LCUs would transit in groups when departing toward a long distant location.

“No LCU has ever done this transit solo,” Chief Operations Specialist Timothy Walther, LCU-1680 Craftmaster said.

“This transit showcased the unique LCU capabilities for sustained independent operations. With the dedicated and detailed preparations by the Operations, Repair, and Landing Craft Departments from both ACU 1 and 2 and the superb seamanship of the LCU 1680 crew from ACU 1, I had no doubt the transit would be a great success,” said CDR Rob Chatham, Commanding Officer, ACU 2.

LCU 1680, formerly of ACU 2’s Reserve Detachment in Buffalo, NY, and it’s sister craft LCU 1681, from ACU 1’s Tampa Reserve Detachment, are being brought into the Active Fleet to bring ACU1 up to its full strength of 16 LCU. The craft are scheduled to embark on the USS Makin Island (LEED 8) for further transport to San Diego, CA.

“My San Diego based LCU are deploying at more than twice the rate they did prior to 9/11. The arrival of these two, almost brand new craft, will greatly increase my command’s capability to meet the high demand for landing craft in the Pacific Fleet,” stated CDR Mike Lockwood,

Commanding Officer, ACU 1.

The transit was a joint venture by ACU 1 and 2. ACU 2 prepared LCU 1680 for the transit, first drydocking the vessel to verify hull and propulsion integrity, then installing a GPS tracking device to allow instantaneous position reporting. ACU 2 developed a very detailed transit plan, including identifying safe havens, and the ACU 2 Landing Craft Department provided an experienced Craftmaster to augment the ACU 1 crew for the Intercoastal Waterway (ICW) portion of the transit. The ACU 1 crew arrived in Norfolk to take custody of LCU 1680, and prepared it for the long transit.

“We hand picked an engineering team to restore the craft from an inactive status to a fully operational craft,” LCU 1680’s Chief Engineer, Engineman 1st Class Marques Drain said.

All LCU Commands were involved in the transit. OPS handled the overall planning, the Repair Department ordered the additional commercial GPS tracking device, and LCU Dept handled the Craft Master knowledge by providing their most experienced Craft Master during the Intracoastal Waterway (ICW) transit, a choppy, hard to navigate waterway that the West Coast does not have.

LCU 1680 operated at peak performance during transit thru the Intracoastal waterway, Atlantic Ocean, and Gulf of Mexico, due to the dedicated effort of her crew of 14.

“Our crew worked around the clock with minimal relief. Preparing meals was extremely difficult due to heavy seas,” Culinary Specialist 1st Class Richard Valentine said.

In Norfolk, LCU 1680 met up with LCU 1681, and both embarked aboard the USS MAKIN ISLAND for the final leg of their trip to ACU 1. ●



and Through New York Harbor



LCU 1680 passes in front of the Statue of Liberty.



ACU 2 Partners with Independence Middle School

Sailors attached to ACU 2 have always enjoyed giving back to the community. One of the most popular ways to volunteer is through ACU 2's relationship with its Adopt-a-School partner, Independence Middle School. As one of the key partnership activities under the Navy's Community Service Personal Excellence Partnership (PEP) program, Adopt-a-School helps develop neighborhood youth to their full potential, encourages education, and helps develop the lifestyle and civil responsibilities necessary to be an asset to society. ACU 2 sailors from all ranks have assisted the school in various events ranging from SOL testing, the Run for Independence 5K, and an end of year awards presentation and celebration.

ACU 2's First Class Petty Officer Association has taken the lead in managing the partnership with Independence Middle School. QM1(SW) Charles Heflin and CS1 Jason Lowry have been very active in soliciting for command volunteers and organizing events and programs. The First Class Petty Officer

Association recently took up a collection among their members and raised enough money to purchase and donate a new mountain bike and extra equipment to present to one lucky student at the end of year awards presentation.

Mrs. Cheryl Woodhouse, the Principal of Independence Middle School said "on behalf of the faculty and staff of Independence Middle School, we would like to thank our partners from ACU 2 for the generous donation of the 10 speed mountain bike with helmet, tire pump and bicycle lock which is to be presented to an 8th grade student who has maintained perfect attendance throughout the 2008-09 school year. We are truly fortunate to have partners like you that continuously support our efforts to promote student



achievement."

The generous efforts of the ACU 2 team have not gone unnoticed at Independence Middle School, where many of the students look up to our Sailors as role models. This partnership is going to continue for a long time and only grow stronger. It's a great experience for the Sailors and helps the unit give back to the community!●

LCU 1654 Transits to Baltimore's 2009 Harbor Fest

ACU 2 deployed LCU 1654 on 21 May for a solo transit to support the Navy Operational Support Center Baltimore (NOSC) and Sail Baltimore for their Harbor Fest. This trip provided a great opportunity for the Active and Reserve components to work together and show Navy presence. Sail Baltimore is a nonprofit organization which brings a variety of international vessels to Baltimore's Inner Harbor and places them on public display. Laura Stevenson from Sail Baltimore was the lead civilian liaison who reached out to the Navy for support.

LCU 1654's crew had a busy couple days. On May 21, 2009, they left from Naval Amphibious Base Little Creek in Norfolk, VA. and transited to Annapolis, MD. On Friday morning they arrived at NOSC Baltimore after a 286 nautical mile transit. The rest of the day they settled in and conducted some integrated craft and crew training. On Saturday morning the craft

arrived in downtown Baltimore Harbor and commenced giving their tours. Many civilians as well as some retired veterans came aboard LCU 1654; the crew lost count after 3,500 visitors. There was a never-ending-line of people who could not wait to go aboard. Many visitors asked the crew of the LCU if they would be returning and the were very excited by the layup presence. Many people did not know what type of craft this was, if it was still active or not, and even those that knew what an LCU was, had no idea about the characteristics and capabilities of what it can truly do.

Several civilians referred to it as a "mini ship", they were amazed by how many people and equipment it can hold, how 12 crewmembers can live onboard and sustain themselves for 10 days at a time, and even though it's been in existence for so many years, it hasn't been that known to the public. After a long couple days,

LCU 1654's crew spent some well deserved time off in the inner harbor, and were able to enjoy some of the courtesies Sail Baltimore provided. They began their transit back on May 24, 2009.

The craft received an overwhelmingly positive response throughout the two day event. There was no port cost associated to this trip, unlike a regular USS, because the LCU remained on its own power the entire trip. As far as fuel consumption to operate an LCU underway, it is approximately \$52 per hour. It's pretty hard to beat those numbers!

This trip was another example of how this same type of support can be used to provide a fleet presence where current operational requirements may prohibit USS participation. Yet another opportunity that profits crew training, important recruiting, networking, and an educational opportunity for our amphibious forces. ●



LCUs: The Navy's Best Kept Secret

Ten Sailors attached to ACU 1 and 13 Underwater Construction Team (UCT) 2 members have teamed up for a training exercise off the Southern California coast.

ACU 1 provided a dive platform, navigation charts, surface supply tanks, a launch recovery ramp and ample space for UCT 2 on their 135 ft long Landing Craft Utility Boat (LCU) 1630. LCUs were built in the 1970s for landing and retrieving personnel and equipment (tanks, artillery-equipment, and motor vehicles) during amphibious operations.

“This is an untraditional mission that’s made possible because of the unique capabilities of this vessel,” said Cmdr. Michael Lockwood, ACU 1 commanding officer. “My boat is doing something above and beyond what her normal mission entails. This mission is a lot easier because of the size of the LCU platform and the divers are able to stay on station for longer periods of time.”

LCU Craftmaster, Boatswain’s Mate 1st Class (SW/AW) Anthony Lopez explained what his crew and vessel’s role in this exercise and that this is first time he has partaken in and exercise like this.

“I think it is really cool that we get to test the limits of this platform,” added Lopez. “This is the first time in my 12 years of Naval experience I have seen an LCU used as a dive platform, it show us how diverse these boats really are.”

“She is a mother ship and can provide divers a larger; platform, to carry all their equipment and supplies and surface supply tank, which, allow the divers to stay under the water longer periods of time. With a navigator aboard they are able to provide the divers with charting areas, and an 11 ton launch and recovery bow ramp to launch a 19ft Zodiac boat,” said Lopez.

An UCT 2 Sailor elaborated on his part in the exercise and how much easier it is

being on a Navy vessel.

“I help plan, supervise dives and dive myself,” said Builder 1st Class (SCW/DV) Michael Reece. “By being on a military craft it makes everything a lot easier because we all speak the same language. Using this platform is also a great experience and training for our guys.”

Lockwood went on to explain why his LCUs are so versatile and spoke of how they are self-sustaining in their role of supporting the fleet.

“My LCUs are the best kept secret in the fleet, because they can carry enough food for 10 days, steam for 1200 miles and are able to make their own water on board for a crew size up to 12 Sailors,” said Lockwood. “Everything is mini, but it has the all the things that are associated with the larger ships such as galleys, berthing, a lounge, heads, firefighting capabilities, training teams, and an armory.”●

