

BATARG BEACON

Issue 3

February 7, 2020



BATARG and 26 MEU
Train in Jordan

CENTCOM Visits
USS Bataan

Mother and Son Enjoy
Chance Reunion



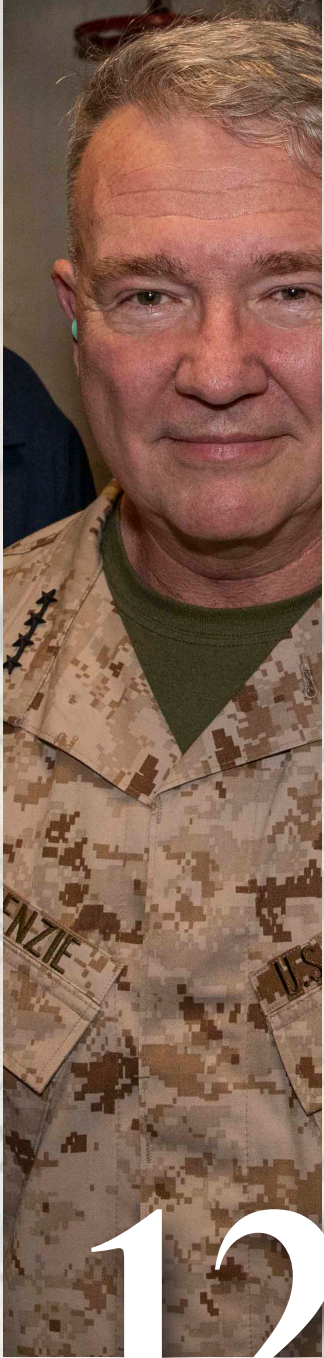
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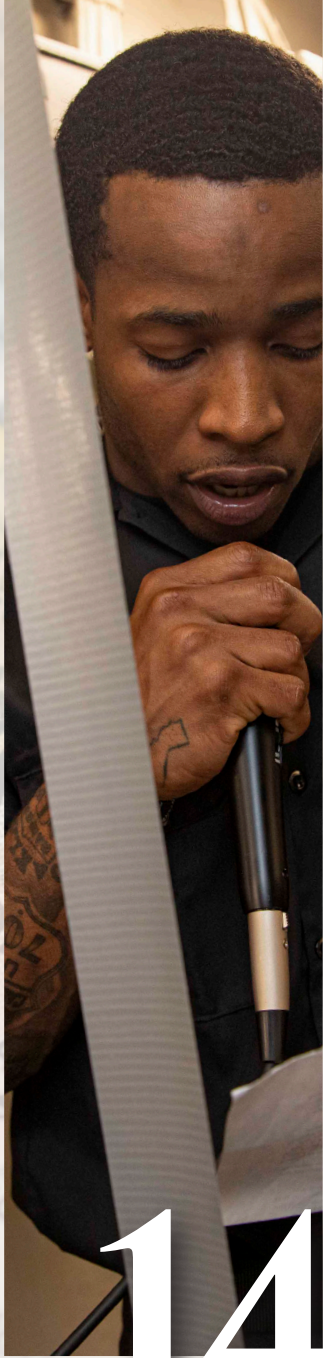
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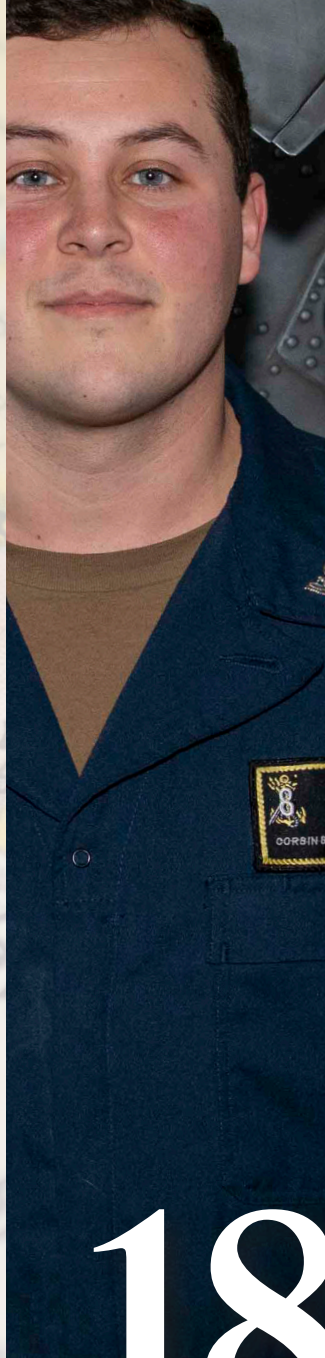
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The official magazine for the Bataan Amphibious Ready Group

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Cover photo: Marines assigned to Echo Company, BLT 2/8, 26th MEU train Marines assigned to CLB 26, 26th MEU, on the M2A1 machine gun. Photo by SSgt. Patricia Morris



BATARG and 26 MEU Conduct Bilateral Training in Jordan

Story by MC1 Kathryn Macdonald

The Sailors and Marines of Bataan Amphibious Ready Group (ARG) and 26th Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU) spent 10 days building relationships and training alongside Jordanian partners in the Aqaba area.

The Marine Expeditionary Unit's Maritime Raid Force (MRF) conducted bilateral training with members of the Royal Jordanian Navy, including visit, board, search, and seizure and diving exercises.

"Having the opportunity to conduct bilateral training with our partner nation of Jordan not only strengthens our commitment on the strategic level," said U.S. Marine Corps Capt. Cory Moyer, officer in charge of the 26th MEU MRF, "but it also gives the Marines the experience of interacting on a personal level."

During stops pierside in Aqaba, leaders from the MEU and amphibious ready group (ARG) ships USS Bataan (LHD 5), USS New York (LPD 21) and USS Oak Hill (LSD 51) visited with local Jordanian military officials, including Head of the Royal Jordanian Navy Col. Omar Al-Bahkeet, and organized important relationship-building activities, including a series of soccer games.

"The Marines and Sailors of the 26th Marine Expeditionary Unit thank our Jordanian partners for the opportunity to train

cont.



Marines assigned to Echo Company, BLT 2/8, 26th MEU train Marines assigned to CLB 26, 26th MEU, on the M2A1 machine gun. Photo by SSgt. Patricia Morris

together in order to enhance our partnership,” said Col. Trevor Hall, 26th MEU commanding officer.

“Spending time training together was just as important as the personal relationships we were able to develop. These bilateral engagements help build mutual trust and respect as we work together to support maritime security operations and preserve freedom of navigation and stability in the region.”

Navy chaplains from the MEU and Bataan also met with local religious leaders, and medical personnel from Bataan toured a nearby Jordanian navy medical facility.

“The Sailors and Marines of the Bataan Amphibious Ready Group and 26th Marine Expeditionary Unit were able

to train alongside our Jordanian partners and continue building crucial interoperability between our forces,” said Capt. Lance Leshner, commodore of the ARG.

“Just as important, we were able to spend time together as people, playing sports and building personal relationships. These types of engagements enhance trust, cooperation and mutual respect. We are a unified international team with shared goals and a longstanding tradition of working together toward a secure, stable region.”

In addition to the flagship amphibious assault ship Bataan, the amphibious transport dock New York and dock landing ship Oak Hill, the ARG includes elements of Naval Beach Group 2, Tactical

Air Control Squadron 22, Fleet Surgical Team 4 and Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron 28.

The Bataan ARG and 26th MEU are operating in the U.S. 5th Fleet area of operations, which encompasses about 2.5 million square miles of water area and includes the Arabian Gulf, Red Sea, Gulf of Oman, Gulf of Aden, Arabian Sea and parts of the Indian Ocean. The expanse includes 20 nations and three critical choke points for global commerce, at the Strait of Hormuz, the Suez Canal and strait of Bab al Mandeb at the southern tip of Yemen.

The 26th MEU is a Marine Air-Ground Task Force comprised of approximately 2,500 Marines and Sailors supported by three



major subordinate elements with the ability to provide agility in a dynamic security environment.

Those subordinate elements include the Ground Combat Element, the Aviation Combat Element and the Logistics Support Element.

The Bataan ARG and 26th MEU are operating in support of maritime security operations to reassure allies and partners and preserve the freedom of navigation and the free flow of commerce in the region.



Cmdr. Jessica Parker (top photo), the air boss assigned to Bataan, and Chief Aviation Machinist's Mate Chris Hilger (bottom photo), assigned to ACU 4, give tours of the Bataan to Jordanian service members. Photos by MC2 Anna Van Nuys.



Clockwise from top left:

Sailors assigned to the Oak Hill give a tour of the ship to sailors from the Royal Jordanian Navy. Photo by MC3 Griffin Kersting.

Gunner's Mate 2nd Class Brent Kerrigan, assigned to Beach Master Unit (BMU) 2, signals to a landing craft, air cushion (LCAC), assigned to Assault Craft Unit (ACU) 4, where to land on the shore of Aqaba, Jordan. Photo by MC2 Lyle Wilkie.

The Bataan approaches Aqaba, Jordan for a port visit. Photo by MC3 Leonard Weston.

Sailors and Marines assigned to the BATARG play basketball. Photo by MC1 Zachary Anderson.

Jordanian service members look at a fireman's jacket worn by FDNY firefighter Bill Butler, from Ladder Company 6, who survived the collapse of the North Tower on 9/11 along with 12 other firefighters, during a tour on the bridge aboard the New York. Photo by SN Katelyn McClain

Sailors and Marines assigned to the BATARG participate in a swim call. Photo by MC1 Zachary Anderson.

From left to right, Lt. Col. Hisham Al-Jarrah, of the 77th Royal Jordanian Marine Battalion, Capt. Greg Leland, commanding officer of the Bataan, Col. Omar Al-Bahkeet, Head of the Royal Jordanian Navy, Lt. Cmdr. David Bruce and Capt. Lance Leshner, commander, Amphibious Squadron 8 meet for an office call. Photo by MC3 Alan Robertson.

BATARG, 26 MEU AND JORDANIAN SAILORS PLAY SOCCER

Story by: MC3 Griffin Kersting

Sailors assigned to the amphibious dock landing ship USS Oak Hill (LSD 51) and Sailors from the Royal Jordanian Navy competed in a soccer game in Aqaba, Jan. 13. Oak Hill and Jordanian Sailors competed in the game to continue to build relationships between the two countries and to have the opportunity to break away from the normal work day and have some fun.

Oak Hill's soccer game with the Jordanian hosts were part of an approximately weeklong visit to Jordan by the Bataan Amphibious Ready Group and embarked 26 Marine Expeditionary Unit. Sailors and Marines from the flagship amphibious assault ship USS Bataan (LHD 5) and amphibious transport dock ship USS New York (LPD 21) also participated in soccer games with the host Jordanians.

"It was a once-in-a-lifetime experience," said Hospital Corpsman 2nd Class Samuel Mensah, a Sailor assigned to Oak Hill who participated in the soccer game. "Getting to play against the Jordanian Navy in a soccer game is something I won't forget about my time in the Navy."

More than 20 Sailors from the Oak Hill participated in the game while enjoying liberty. It's always great to have the opportunity to play against other countries while on deployment," said Personnel Specialist 3rd Class Juan Flores. "It's a time to have a break from work and do something that you enjoy."

Oak Hill, with the Bataan Amphibious Ready Group and with embarked 26th Marine Expeditionary Unit, is conducting bilateral training in partnership with the Royal Jordanian Marines and Navy in support of maritime security operations to reassure allies and partners and preserve freedom of navigation and the free flow of commerce in the region.



Photos by: MC1 Kathryn Macdonald, MC2 Lyle Wilkie, and MC3 Griffin Kersting



CENTCOM Commander Gen. McKenzie Visits USS Bataan

Written by: Bataan Amphibious Ready Group Public Affairs, Photos by MC3 Alan Robertson

Gen. Kenneth F. McKenzie, Jr., commanding general of U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM), told Sailors and Marines aboard USS Bataan (LHD 5) that “I feel better knowing that I have you in this theater.”

McKenzie visited Bataan, the flagship of the Bataan Amphibious Ready Group (ARG), on Jan. 23 in the Red Sea. The 26th Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU) is embarked on the ARG ships,

which also include the amphibious transport dock USS New York (LPD 21) and the dock landing ship USS Oak Hill (LSD 51).

“We’re at a very delicate time in the Central Command theater,” he told Sailors and Marines on Bataan. “Nothing says ‘deterrence’ better than an ARG and a MEU. The unique flexibilities that come with a MEU/ARG provide a lot of options.”

McKenzie told the personnel onboard Bataan they “need to be

ready” for anything.

“We could employ you on very short notice and on some very difficult missions,” he said. “And I know I can count on the Navy-Marine team to be ready when that time comes.”

During his visit to Bataan, McKenzie toured the ship’s engine rooms and, after addressing the crew over the intercom system, personally met with dozens of Sailors and Marines.

“Nothing says ‘deterrence’ better than an ARG and a MEU.”

- Gen. Kenneth F. McKenzie, Jr.

“It was a great experience to have the CENTCOM Commander aboard Big 5,” said Capt. Greg Leland, commanding officer of Bataan. “Gen. McKenzie engaged our blue and green team and reinforced the importance of our highly-trained presence in this region of the world.”

Operations Specialist 3rd Class Kapeka Pereda of Amphibious Squadron 8, which is embarked on Bataan, sat across the table from McKenzie at lunch on the mess decks and was given a command coin by the general.

“It was an honor to be able to sit down and have lunch with the general. It was nice to have that insight into our role in this theater,” she said. “It meant a lot that he took us into consideration. It made us feel really important, because he let us have a say and ask questions. He provided us with an opportunity to have a voice in the conversation about our deployment.”

The Bataan ARG and 26th MEU are operating in the U.S. 5th Fleet area of operations, which encompasses about 2.5 million square miles of water area and includes the Arabian Gulf, Red Sea, Gulf of Oman, Gulf of Aden, Arabian Sea and parts of the Indian Ocean. The expanse includes 20 nations and three critical choke points for global commerce, at the Strait of Hormuz, the Suez Canal and strait of Bab al Mandeb at the southern tip of Yemen.

“Gen. McKenzie made it a point to visit the engineering spaces on the ship and eat lunch on the

mess decks with Sailors and Marines while on Bataan, showing he truly cares about the men, women and ships under his command,” said Capt. Lance Leshner, Commodore of the Bataan ARG. “The Bataan Amphibious Ready Group and 26th Marine Expeditionary Unit are trained, postured and ready to serve as Central Command’s crisis response team – a flexible, adaptive and persistent force that can maneuver throughout the theater to defend U.S. forces and support partners and allies throughout the region.”

The 26th MEU is a Marine Air-Ground Task Force comprised of approximately 2,500 Marines and

Sailors supported by three major subordinate elements with the ability to provide agility in a dynamic security environment.

Those subordinate elements include the Ground Combat Element, the Aviation Combat Element and the Logistics Support Element.

“The Marines and Sailors of the 26th Marine Expeditionary Unit were honored to host the CENTCOM Commander, Gen. McKenzie,” said Col. Trevor Hall, commanding officer of the 26th MEU. “Marine Expeditionary Units have a unique mission of providing the combatant commander with a flexible and responsive sea-based Marine Air-Ground Task Force. Being able to interact with our combatant commander aboard the USS Bataan was an enriching experience for all Marines and Sailors.”





Clockwise from top left:

Aviation Boatswain's Mate (Fueling) 3rd Class Damian Bates, assigned to the Bataan, portrays Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. reading a letter from the Birmingham, Ala., jail in a play on the mess decks. Photo by MC3 Levi Decker.

Cmdr. Kathryn Wijnaldum, the executive officer of the Oak Hill, speaks to the crew during a Martin Luther King Jr. Day observance in the mess decks. Photo by MC3 Griffin Kersting.

Lt. Cmdr. John Mabus, chaplain, assigned to the 26th Marine Expeditionary Unit, gives a prayer on the mess decks of the Bataan during a Martin Luther King Jr. Day observance. Photo by MC3 Levi Decker.

Culinary Specialist 2nd Class Myisha Washington, assigned to the Oak Hill, cuts a cake during a Martin Luther King Jr. Day observance in the mess decks. Photo by MC3 Griffin Kersting.

Sailors assigned to the Bataan participate in a Martin Luther King Jr. Day observance on the ship's mess decks. Photo by MC3 Levi Decker.



Farragut Sailors Complete OC Certification Course

Story and photos by: MC3 Jack Aistrup

Twenty Sailors assigned to the guided-missile destroyer USS Farragut (DDG 99) completed the Oleoresin Capsicum (OC) certification course on the ship's flight deck to qualify for shipboard watches, Jan. 18.

Sailors conducted the OC certification course after completing a two-week long Navy Security Force-Sentry (NSF-S) training. OC is a spray similar to mace, which is painful, although not life-threatening. During the course, Sailors are sprayed in the face with OC and must fight through a gauntlet that includes a large adversary in a padded suit, called the "red man."

"A lot of the videos and slides during the NSF-S training were

really eye opening to learn what it means to stand out there, armed up, with everything you have to know to protect yourself, your shipmates, and your ship," said Culinary Specialist 2nd Class Nathalie Scott, a Sailor who completed the course.

The course, taught by Master at Arms 1st Class Janice Benally and Chief Gunner's Mate Adam Gleason, instructed Sailors on basic watch-standing, the escalation of force continuum, the use of force and deadly force, and the employment of non-lethal weapons and small arms.

"This course is one way I can ensure the security of our ship," said Benally, "It's by making sure I'm

training vigilant and professional watchstanders that can recognize threats and know how to deal with them."

To graduate the course, Sailors had to complete a five-station fight-through drill, which included the employment of the baton, threat assessment, mechanical advantage control holds and the OC contamination and decontamination. Benally expressed the importance of physically using OC spray, saying that the Sailor needs to know the effects it would cause during an incident or situation where OC spray may be employed.

"The OC course itself is no punk, it's hard," said Scott. "It was

like nothing I've ever experienced, I've never felt pain like that before. By the time you get to the red man, your face is scorching, it feels like a million degrees, and everyone is yelling at you and telling you to open your eyes. I learned that I'm stronger than I thought I was and that was the part that was so rewarding about completing the course."

Farragut is currently deployed to the U.S. 5th Fleet area of operations in support of maritime security operations to reassure allies and partners and preserve the freedom of navigation and the free flow of commerce.





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Mother and Son Enjoy Chance Reunion aboard Bataan

Written by: Bataan Amphibious Ready Group Public Affairs

For Cryptologic Technician (Technical) 3rd Class Corbin Bassingthwaite, the recent visit by Gen. Kenneth F. McKenzie, Jr., to amphibious assault ship USS Bataan (LHD 5) was extra special.

Bassingthwaite’s mother, Senior Chief Yeoman Karen Bassingthwaite, is part of McKenzie’s staff and was traveling with the general. Corbin Bassingthwaite is embarked on Bataan as part of Amphibious Squadron 8, and was able to spend about 90 minutes catching up with his mother while McKenzie, the commanding general of U.S. Central Command, toured parts of the ship, spoke with Sailors and Marines, and met with Navy and Marine Corps leaders onboard.

“It was a relief to see her,” Corbin Bassingthwaite said. “I do miss my family. We’re out here supporting a mission, and it’s good to be reminded about what we’re working so hard for.”

The mother and son had last seen each other before Thanksgiving.

Karen Bassingthwaite said she brought her son some snacks, a Christmas card and family photographs. She also brought him a flag with the logo of their hometown Tampa Bay Lightning professional hockey team and an application for admission to The Citadel military college, which had been mailed to the family home.

“I’m glad Petty Officer Bassingthwaite had this opportunity to spend some time with his mother during Gen. McKenzie’s visit to Bataan,” said Capt. Lance Leshner, Commodore of the Bataan Amphibious Ready Group (ARG). “Our Navy has the size and reach to span the globe, but this chance family reunion at sea is another sign that it can be a small world. I think this visit was a nice morale boost not only for Petty Officer Bassingthwaite, but for his shipmates, who benefited from this warm reminder of the family relationships back home we all cherish. Everyone on this ship has a mother, father, sibling, spouse or other loved ones they work to make proud every day serving our country.”



FEBRUARY 2020

NATIONAL

AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY MONTH

Established in 1926 as Negro History Week, President Gerald R. Ford expanded the celebration in 1976 to include the entire month of February. This year, Navy commands are encouraged to celebrate and reflect on the theme "A Century of Black Life, History, and Culture."

THE GOLDEN THIRTEEN



AFRICAN-AMERICAN SAILORS



fought on every every kind of Union warship, accounting for

10 TO 20% of each ship's crew

and included

8 MEDAL OF HONOR RECIPIENTS

CIVIL WAR 1861 - 1865

MAR 1864

12 prior-enlisted black servicemen were commissioned as ensigns

AND A

13TH was made a warrant officer

1ST group of black servicemen to complete officer training in the Navy and led the way for future African-Americans.

BY THE END OF THE WAR

64 African-Americans had become officers in the Navy

WORLD WAR II 1939 - 1945

DORIS MILLER



The **1ST** African American

to receive the



Navy Cross for his act of bravery during Pearl Harbor (December 7, 1941)

1942



EDNA YOUNG

The **FIRST** Black woman

- ★ to enlist in the regular Navy
- ★ to achieve the rank of petty officer

1948

WESLEY A. BROWN



The **FIRST** Black Graduate of the **UNITED STATES NAVAL ACADEMY**

CLASS OF 1949

1949

ADMIRAL J. PAUL REASON

The **1ST** Black Naval Officer to wear **4 Stars**



AND

assumed command of the **Atlantic Fleet**

- ★ 200 warships
- ★ 1,500 aircraft
- ★ 122,000 men & women based at 18 major shore facilities



DECEMBER 1996

CARL BRASHEAR

The **FIRST** African American

to become a

U.S. Navy Master Diver



1970



The **FIRST** African American

to command a

NAVY SHIP USS Theodore E. Chandler (DD 717)

NAVY WARSHIP USS Falgout (DE 324)

NAVY WARSHIP UNDER COMBAT CONDITIONS USS Taussig (DD 746)

NAVY MAJOR COMMAND WARSHIP USS Jouett (CG29)

NUMBERED NAVY FLEET (Third Fleet)

VICE ADMIRAL SAMUEL GRAVELY JR.

34 YEARS OF SERVICE (1965 - 1999)

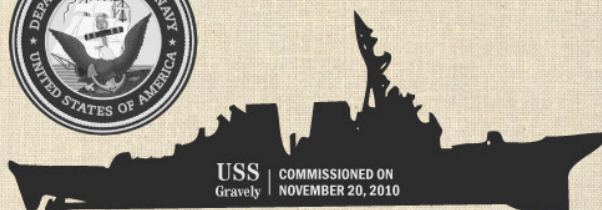
ADMIRAL MICHELLE HOWARD

The **FIRST** African American Woman

- ★ to command a U.S. Navy ship
- ★ promoted to two-star and three-star admiral
- ★ to serve as Vice Chief of Naval Operations
- ★ to be a four-star admiral



1982 - PRESENT



USS Gravely COMMISSIONED ON NOVEMBER 20, 2010

AFRICAN AMERICANS

continue to serve with distinction

now comprising more than **17%**

of our active duty Navy total force end-strength

PRESENT DAY