



## Rim of the Pacific 2004

# RIMPAC!

Tarawa joins largest international maritime exercise in Pacific



*Dorothy and Meredith O'Dell, mother and daughter, respectively, watch as USS Tarawa transits the channel into Pearl Harbor. Tarawa made the port visit to the Pacific Fleet's crown jewel during the Rim of the Pacific exercises. Photo by JO2 A. Quiroga.*

With coalitions strengthened and training operations completed, Tarawa returned to San Diego Aug. 2, after participating in the multinational maritime exercise Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC) 2004.

“The Big ‘T’ had the privilege to work with a wide variety of military units from both the U.S. and the other countries involved in this year’s RIMPAC. These exercises definitely helped us build good relations with our allies,” said Tarawa’s Commanding Officer Capt. John Riley. “Our operations produced positive results, mak-

ing this year’s exercise very productive.”

Tarawa, with a crew of approximately 1,100 Sailors and Marines, participated in the amphibious phase of RIMPAC, most of which was conducted off the Hawaiian island of Kauai. The broad scope of RIMPAC operations, which included more than 35 ships, 7 submarines, and 90 aircraft from seven countries, began June 29 and continued through to July 27.

This year’s exercise included more than 11,000 Sailors, Airmen, Marines, Soldiers and Coastguardsmen. The participating countries included: Australia, Canada, Chile, Japan, the United Kingdom, the Republic of Korea and the United States.

Seizing the RIMPAC limelight in mid July, Tarawa crewmembers and the embarked Marines conducted a non-combatant evacuation operation, extracting 160 role players dressed as civilians from a mock embassy July 14. Six days later, Tarawa’s crew participated in a major amphibious assault exercise, helping to launch a Marine landing force ashore on Bellows Beach in Kauai July 20.

Tarawa also played a key role in the initial testing of the Navy’s new Shipboard Surgical System, or the “Triple S”, July 10. The new rapid response system is designed to provide fast medical support for Sailors and Marines in-

**Continued on Page 11**

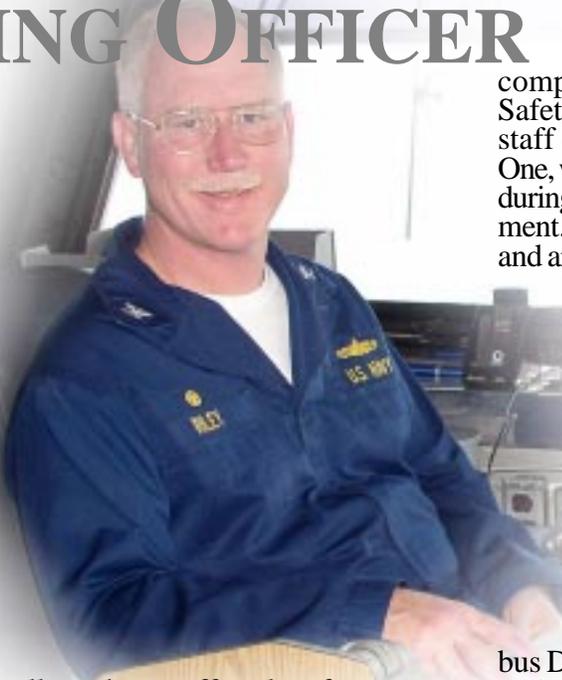


# A personal letter from the COMMANDING OFFICER

**G**reetings Tarawa families and friends: Summer has passed so quickly, but it's time again for our ship's news. In our last letter, we were working through the core of the ship's basic training phase, and since then we have come together as a team. We had to temporarily stop in mid June to participate in the Rim of the Pacific exercises — which I'll get to in a moment — but after returning to San Diego we'll take our "final exam" in preparation for our next major deployment.

We have a lot of stories in this edition, so I'll skip the details, but Rim of the Pacific 2004 — which we call RIMPAC — has been a fantastic experience. We excelled and fulfilled some of our major goals. The crew became more proficient in tactical naval warfare. We operated with the navies from at least six other countries. We also gave a "Big T" welcome to our embarked elements, which include the aircraft and landing craft units. In Pearl Harbor, we brought the Marines onboard, worked well with them, and enabled them to perform their missions. The crew did a great job in helping the Marines from Kaneohe Bay, Hawaii embark *Tarawa* for approximately three weeks. They did so well that the Marines' Commanding Officer complimented their efforts. Even those of us with a lot of experience in the Navy amphibious community are saying that we have never seen such energy and synergy before.

RIMPAC was more than just work and mission accomplishment. It also meant two wonderful port visits to Pearl Harbor, where young new Sailors who have never been out of the continental United States had an opportunity to enjoy Hawaii. The initiatives by our Morale, Welfare and Recreation office



allowed us to offer a lot of great tours and to participate in a host of athletic competitions. On July 25<sup>th</sup>, we wrapped up RIMPAC in a friendly social setting during our final port visit to Pearl Harbor, said goodbye to our coalition partners, and set sail for San Diego.

After our return to San Diego, we'll have a few more underway weeks in August and September to complete our basic training phase. The crew is going to rise to that occasion, and that will require hard underway training in the Southern California operating area to ensure that we are able to fight fires and defend our ship against damage. We'll have what equates to a final exam for the basic training phase, called the Final Evaluation Problem, or FEP, in late September.

Along the way, we'll cross several major milestones. Shortly after we return, we'll have a safety survey, where outside observers will review *Tarawa* top to bottom to ensure that your Sailors work in a safe environment that

complies with Navy Occupational Safety procedures. We'll embark the staff of Expeditionary Strike Group One, which will be our senior command during our next Western Pacific deployment. We're proud to be their flagship and are looking forward to welcoming them aboard. Also, in September, new computer and communication installations aboard *Tarawa* will be tested in a major exercise, called *Trident Warrior*. This experiment will increase our capability to communicate with other ships in our strike group, as well as develop a common operational picture. In conjunction with *Trident Warrior*, we will head north to San Francisco for the Columbus Day weekend to participate in the major community event, Fleet Week. On the return trip to San Diego, we'll host a "Tiger Cruise," where friends and relatives of crewmembers ride the ship for the three-day transit. If you don't know about this opportunity, talk to your *Tarawa* Sailor so your application screening sheets can be submitted in time.

Before I wrap up, I'd like to say that the crew's performance continues to be outstanding, just like our saying, "Number One on the Hull, Number One in the heart, Second to none."

Between our command triad -- the Commanding Officer, the Executive Officer and the Command Master Chief -- we have over 60 years of Navy experience in aviation, surface and major systems commands. This is the best energy, the best synergy, the best attitude, and the best group of people that we've ever been associated with, and we're honored and proud to be on the "Big T."

I'll have more in our next newsletter. Until then, take care.

## The Talon

This newsletter is an authorized publication intended for families and friends of *USS Tarawa (LHA 1)* crewmembers. Its contents do not necessarily reflect the official views of the U.S. Government, Department of Defense, nor the U.S.

Navy, and does not imply endorsement thereof.

The editorial content of this newsletter was prepared and edited by the public affairs staff of *USS Tarawa (LHA 1)*. The editor can be reached by email at:

[polsonw@tarawa.navy.mil](mailto:polsonw@tarawa.navy.mil)

### Commanding Officer

CAPT John W. Riley III

### Executive Officer

CAPT Peter D. Murphy

### Media Division

LTJG Erin Durnan

JOC(SW) William Polson

PH1 Julie Whitney

PH2 Larry Carlson

PH2 Ryan Child

LI2 Richard Perez

DM2 Bryan Wolfe

JO3 Crystal Landes

PHAN Matthew Clayborne

PHAN Rayma Cooley

JOSN David Perea

JOSN Adam Stapleton

LISR Elena Velazquez

**Ship's Ombudsmen**

Lynda Bonnette

# Community Project

## Sailors Help Local Food Shelter

By  
JO3  
Crystal Landes

Tarawa Sailors recently devoted time and energy during a community relations project at St. Vincent De Paul Village in San Diego.

In a period of two hours, over thirty volunteers helped prepare and serve meals to approximately 1,600 people. Some Sailors cut and cleaned vegetables, some walked around the tables to hand out bread while others showed their support by cleaning.

Tarawa's Catholic Chaplain, Lieutenant Peter Freemont-Smith, also known to most Tarawa Sailors as "Father Pete," arranged the community relations project. He said they were so busy during lunch that they couldn't tell how well they had done until the staff at St. Vincent De Paul told them.

"We knew it was a success not only by what the St. Vincent De Paul people said, but you could tell afterward by looking at the faces of the Sailors," said Freemont-Smith. "At first everyone



Lorie Williams (second from right) instructs Tarawa Sailors about serving meals at the St. Vincent de Paul Village in downtown San Diego recently. The volunteers (from left) are: Tarawa Command Master Chief Michael Schanche, Aviation Boatswain's Mate 3rd Class Ivan Soto and Chaplain Lt. Pete Freemont-Smith. Photo by PHAN Rayma Cooley

was apprehensive, but when it was time to go you could tell that the Sailors didn't want to leave. They could see that what they were doing was affecting people in a good way."

Master at Arms 1st Class Arcolia Rains has volunteered in the past and knows that helping those in need is a slow process that entails one small step at a time. "I hope I made a difference," said Rains. "You can't really touch ev-

erybody but the way I feel is if you've touched at least one person, then you've done your job. If I've touched someone's life I feel like I've made a difference."

"The project was really successful," said Freemont-Smith. "They wanted us to come back."

Since St. Vincent De Paul relies heavily on the help of volunteers to help them complete their mission, Freemont-Smith

plans to establish a relationship with St. Vincent De Paul that would enable more Tarawa members to volunteer on a more regular basis.

"I think it makes us better people when we show compassion and concern," said Freemont-Smith. "We shouldn't allow ourselves to be selfish when it comes to the needs of other people."

### What are your plans for liberty during Fleet Week?



**BM3 John Domil**  
"I'll definitely check out Fisherman's Wharf, see Alcatraz one more time, and after that, visit my father."



**ABH3(AW) Erica Ryan**  
"I want to see a Giants game, because the last three times that I went there, I didn't see one."



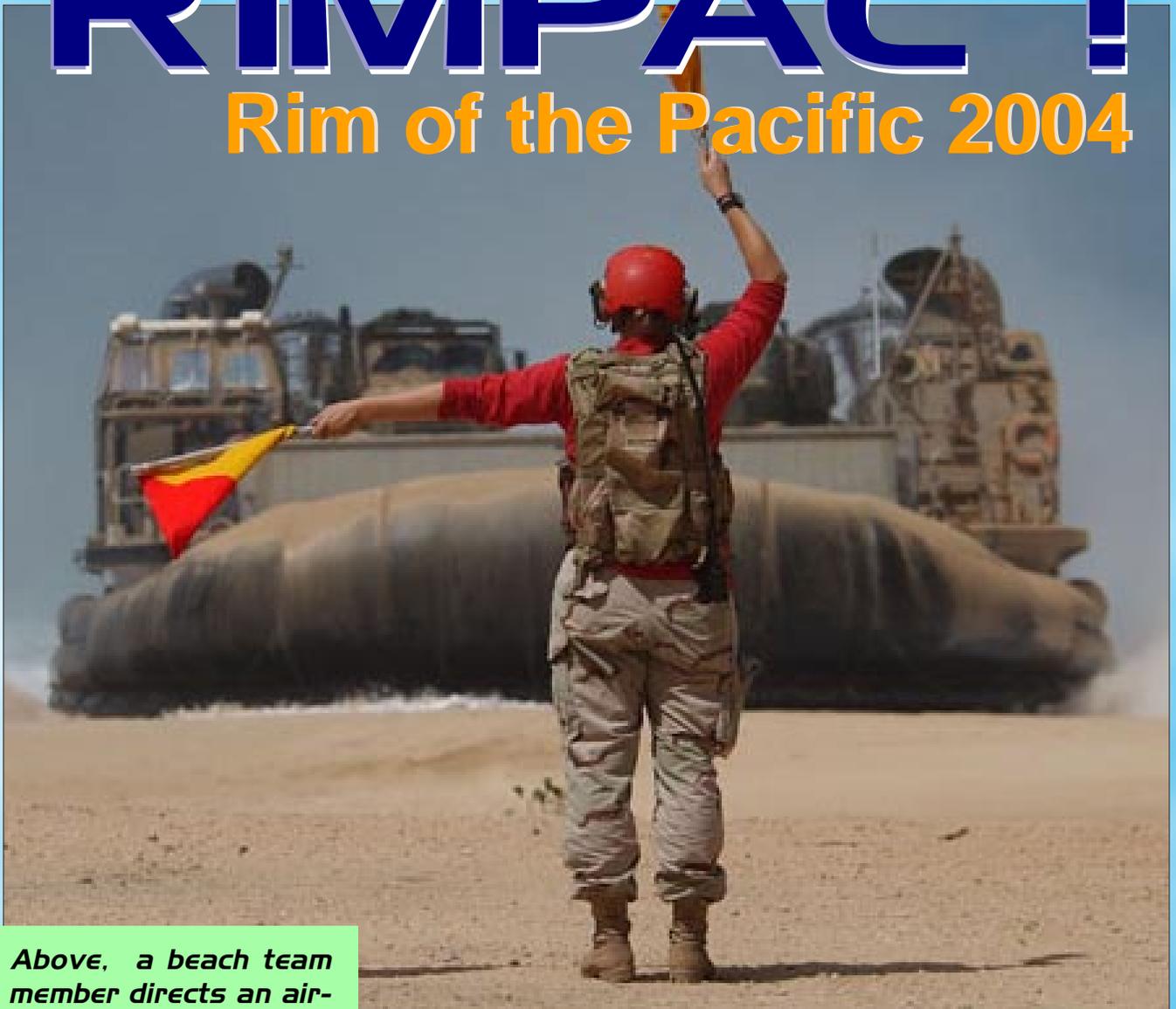
**AOAN Earl Baskin**  
"I've got a basketball tournament I'm going to play in. And, like everyone else, I'm going to have a good time!"



**SN Jamie Rentz**  
"I'd like to see a lot of the sights that I missed. The last time saw China Town, but there's a lot more to do there."

# RIMPAC!

## Rim of the Pacific 2004



*Above, a beach team member directs an air-cushion assault landing craft (LCAC) as it moves ashore on the Hawaiian island of Kauai.*

*Photo by PH1 Jane West Right, Medical Department representatives help check in evacuee role players during the Non-Combatant Evacuation Operation July 14.*

*Photo by PH2 Ryan Child*





Photo by PH2 Bradley Sapp



Photo by PHI(AW/SW) David Levy



Photo by PH2 Bradley Sapp

**Top, (from left) the dock landing ship USS Rushmore, the Australian oiler HMS Success and USS Tarawa conduct a refueling at sea operation July 11 near Hawaii. Above right, Airman Tony Pavlich waits on Tarawa's flight deck to launch another helo during flight quarters in the South Pacific. Above left, a Marine embarked on USS Tarawa during RIMPAC prepares to load his gear aboard in Pearl Harbor during the first week of the multinational exercise.**

# *Hawaii: The Land of Aloha*



*Above, Joining the ranks of 40,000 volunteers, Tarawa Sailors help refurbish the battleship known as "Mighty Mo," USS Missouri (BB-39). Photo by PHI Julie Whitney*

With the bright lights and tall skylines of San Diego behind them, USS Tarawa's crew headed for the swaying palms and sunny beaches of Hawaii for a month and a half. Starting June 28, they enjoyed two separate port visits to Pearl Harbor for a total of 11 days in the "Land of Aloha."

"Pearl Harbor is always a welcome stop when we're operating in this part of the Pacific," said Capt. Riley, who made his first port visit as *Tarawa's* Commanding Officer.

The two port visits (the first since the 2003 Western Pacific deploy-



*File photo*

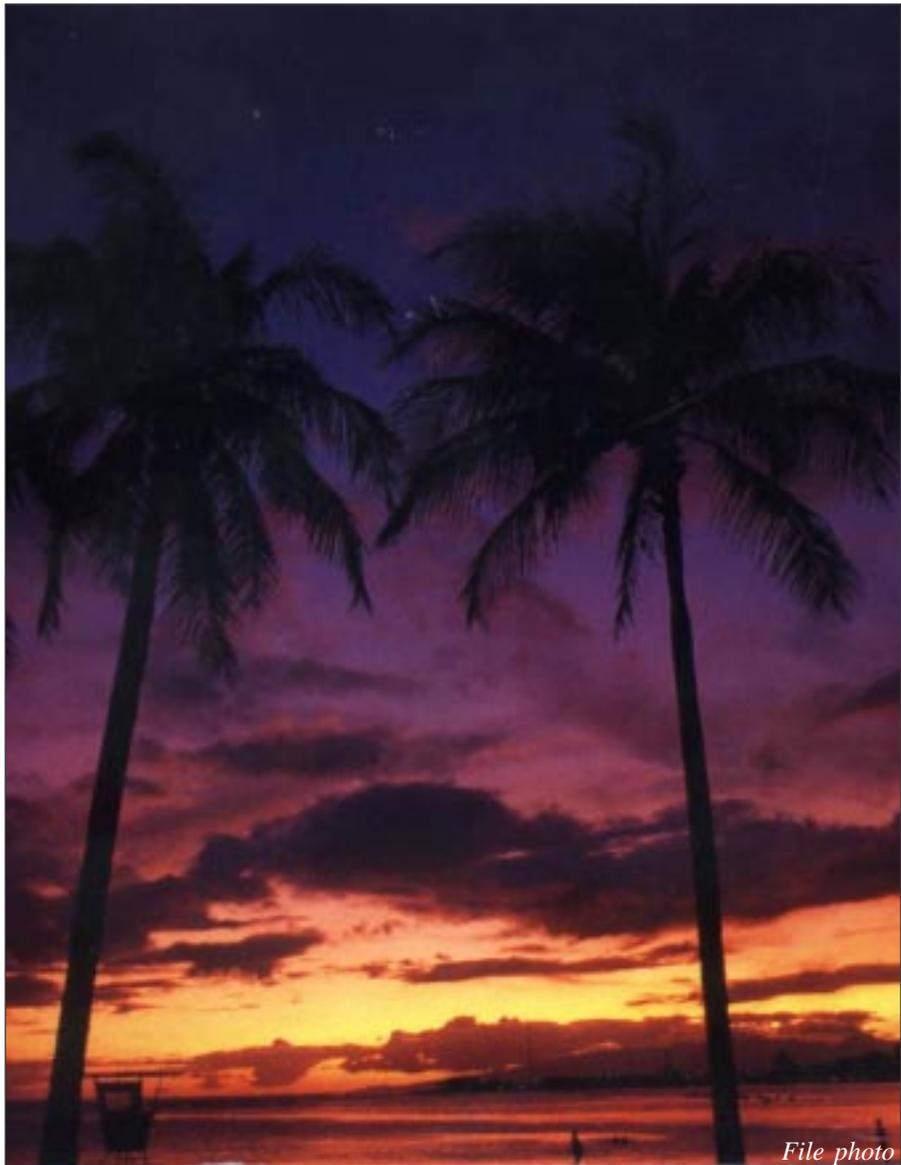
*Moored at Ford Island in Pearl Harbor, USS Missouri (BB-63) sits majestically among the various monuments dedicated to ships sunk Dec. 7, 1941. The famed battleship saw the last act of World War II as the Japanese surrendered on her decks in Tokyo Harbor.*

ment) offered a treasure trove for World War II history buffs. During the first stop June 28 - July 5, *Tarawa* moored across the harbor from Ford Island, the site of Battleship Row where many of the U.S. ships were sunk or damaged during the Japanese attack that brought the United States into World War II. Symbols of the Navy's role during the war surrounded USS *Tarawa's* berth: on the other side of the harbor was the Battleship Missouri (BB-63) and the USS Arizona Memorial (which was a short walk to the Arizona Memorial's park entrance).

Besides history, there was something for everyone. Pearl Harbor Naval Station's support activities lined up a host of tours and tournaments, including a sports tourney for the seven countries participating in Rim of the Pacific 2004. Crewmembers took top honors in several of the events, including racquetball, golf and weightlifting.

Tours offered trips of all kinds. Evening luaus feted Sailors with the traditional Hawaiian dancers, roast pig and beautiful sunsets. Some Sailors took hikes to the top of Diamond Head volcano where they took in a spectacular view of Honolulu. Some just enjoyed sitting on the same Waikiki beach where Hawaiian icon Duke Kahanamoku made surfing an internationally popular sport.

"My favorite part was shopping," said Petty Officer 1st Class Jeri Wenino about the international marketplace in Waikiki. "Hawaii has been a lot of fun and we've had a really good time, but it will be great to finally get back home."



*File photo*

*Above, many Sailors enjoyed the bright explosion of color that announced another Hawaiian sunset on Oahu. Below, a bronze statue of a traditional Hawaiian dancer graces the front of the Hilton Hawaii Hotel in downtown Honolulu.*



*Photo by ENCS Randy Stark*

# SAN DIEGO LEADERS VISIT SHIP

**L**orenzo Neal, who makes his living running the ground attack for the National Football League's San Diego Chargers, had the opportunity earlier this summer to see how Sailors and Marines make their living running a different kind of attack onboard the United States Navy's amphibious assault ship USS Tarawa.

Neal, along with Chargers wide receiver Kassim Osgood and a group of 11 educators from the Capistrano Unified School District, flew out to *Tarawa* May 19 for a daylong tour of the ship. At the time, *Tarawa* was conducting routine training operations off the coast of Southern California.

Invited by Commander, Naval Surface Force U.S. Pacific Fleet, the group made the visit as part of the "Leaders to Sea" community relations program. The "Leaders to Sea" tours are designed to send business executives, political and religious leaders, media representatives, and other community leaders to sea on surface ships.

"It's fascinating to see how well orchestrated everything is, how each person does their job and what successes they can have," said Neal, who has had successes of his own as an NFL all-star that has paved the way for seven straight 1,000-yard rushers. "It's unbelievable to see how things work with the chain of command and the discipline of the crew."

"Teamwork, one common goal, how everyone knows one another, and the cohesion – these are the things that caught my attention," said Neal's teammate, Osgood, who caught the attention of the Chargers' coaches and local San Diego fans last year with clutch pass receptions late in the season.

Among the areas on the ship they toured: the combat information center, where the operations specialists treated them to a rare view of their state-of-the-art computers, the flight deck, with its 820 feet of the most challenging work environment in the country, and the newly refurbished mess decks, where more than 9,000 meals a day are served during deployment. Tour guides also gave them a first-hand look at the crew in action during general quarters and firefighting drills.

"I really enjoyed taking them around the ship," said *Tarawa* crewmember Aviation Machinists' Mate 1<sup>st</sup> Class Nazairus Lao. "You could see how impressed they were to see things that they normally don't get to see or experience. It was interesting to share with them how we live and work out here."

Along with the tour May 19, two similar



daylong tours, the day before and the day after, brought a total of more than 30 San Diego community representatives out to the "Eagle of the Sea" to experience first-hand Navy operations at sea. Representing a wide slice of Southern California society, the participating organizations included: the City of Poway, the Lawrence Family Jewish Community Center, the California Department of Justice and the San Diego Padres.

"I'm a long-time San Diego resident but this was my first time on a Navy ship, so this has been something I've wanted to do for a long time," said Erik Judson, vice president of development for the San Diego Padres. "It's inspiring, it's unbelievable, what an awesome ship. It's great to see the people and how they all work together."

"I had a great time talking to everyone," said Aviation Boatswain's Mate 1<sup>st</sup> Class Luke Willdigg. "I wanted to show them another view of life in the military beside the ones covered in the media."

Said Capt. Riley, "We wanted to show our community leaders that they can be proud of these young men and women who represent them around the world. They are the best!"



*Capt. Riley and BM2 Chris Haywood pose for a picture with San Diego Chargers Kassim Osgood (far left) and Lorenzo Neal. Photo by PH2 Ryan Child*



*Above, ABH1(AW/SW) Luke Willdigg (right) explains the flight deck and air operations to the Leaders to Sea guests who came aboard May 18. Far left, QMSN Christopher Kirkwood shows guest Jeanne Hitchman, an educator from the Capistrano Unified School District, how to plot courses on the bridge. Photos by PHAN Rayma Cooley*

# USS Arizona Reenlistments

By JOSHUA David Perea

Aviation Boatswain's Mate 1st Class Rickey Woods has a new-found appreciation for Naval history since his recent reenlistment ceremony at the USS Arizona Memorial in Pearl Harbor, Hawaii.

"Re-enlisting at this site made me want to find out more about some of the Sailors that perished that day," said Woods. "It gave me a great feeling knowing the spirits of my fallen shipmates are with me."

Along with four *Tarawa* shipmates, Woods re-upped in the early morning hours of June 30 at the site where more than 1,100 Sailors aboard USS Arizona (BB-39) died during the attack on Pearl Harbor. The reenlistments took place during *Tarawa's* port visit to Pearl Harbor June 28- July 5 as part of Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC) 2004.

As the five *Tarawa* Sailors took the quiet ferryboat ride across the same harbor that had been engulfed in flames almost 63 years earlier, their conversations dropped to a whisper as they approached the memorial near Ford Island.

"As you approach the memorial, you can feel the sense of pride in the Sailors who are reenlisting," said *Tarawa* Career Counselor 1st Class Sean Palmer, who coordinated the *Arizona* reenlistments. "Once they get

inside and start reading the names on the memorial's inner chamber, you can feel the overwhelming sense of awe."

While fellow *Tarawa* shipmates gathered around, the re-enlistees poised themselves in front of the memorial wall bearing the names of the *Arizona* Sailors that died in the attack. With several friends present to witness a new step in their Navy career, the Sailors received the oath from Capt. Riley. When the brief ceremony was over, the memorial chamber echoed with applause.

"It was a real honor to re-enlist here. It just feels really good," said Hospital Corpsman 1st Class Eugene Penabella, after thanking those present for the ceremony.

Reflecting on his historic reenlistment location, Woods added, "I have taken much for granted throughout my life, such as, waking up in the morning, kissing my wife, or saluting the ensign. The men on the *Arizona* never had a chance to do that after Dec. 7, 1941, and re-enlisting at the memorial gave me understanding on how to appreciate my life everyday."



Above, the USS Arizona Memorial is a popular place for reenlistments during port visits to Pearl Harbor. Inset, Capt. Riley reenlists three *Tarawa* Sailors June 30. Photos by PHAN Matthew Clayborne

## December 7, 1941 ...

At 7:55 a.m. on Sunday, Dec. 7, 1941, a Japanese force of 183 airplanes attacked U.S. military and naval facilities on Oahu in the Hawaiian Islands without warning. For 30 minutes, dive bombers, and torpedo planes struck airfields and naval vessels.

After a 15-minute lull, a second wave of 170 planes launched another attack at 8:40 that lasted 1 hour. Casualties to U.S. service personnel: 2,343 killed, 960 missing, and 1,272 wounded; 151 U.S. planes destroyed and all eight U.S. battleships, including USS *Arizona*, at anchor in Pearl Harbor were either sunk or damaged.



# RIMPAC!

Continued from Page 1

jured during maritime interdictions at sea. A team of six medical specialists deployed to the Chilean frigate Lynch, where the team practiced a pre-staging of a small-scale trauma ward on the messdecks.

While on liberty, "Big T" crewmembers took advantage of the recreational opportunities RIMPAC 2004 brought. Whether it was lying on the beaches, experiencing the nightlife in downtown Waikiki or riding the waves, they had a total of 12 days to experience the sights and sounds of Hawaii.

"The best thing I did on liberty was surf the south shore," said Photographer's Mate 2nd Class Larry Carlson, who took a surf tour to Barber's Point. "During the summer, the surfing is better there than on the north shore."

Oahu-native and resident of the island's north shore for 14 years, Airman Thipsuda Wilkinson said, "I had a great time when I went back. I saw a

lot of old friends and spent time with them."

Volunteering opportunities were also an option while in Hawaii. On several occasions, groups of crewmembers volunteered to preserve the Navy's past by helping restore the battleship USS Missouri.

"During the second port visit to Pearl, we took our whole division over to work on the 'Mighty Mo,'" said Damage Controlman Chief Michael Ledwedge. "It was a great chance for our guys to get together and do something in honor of those who went before us."

While some volunteered, others reenlisted at the USS Arizona Memorial.

"It's not every day that we get to go to Hawaii, and to be able to reenlist at the Arizona was a great honor for me," said Aviation Boatswain's Mate 1st Class Rickey Woods.

"I had a nice time and I liked taking in the scenery while riding my bicycle around the island," said five-time RIMPAC veteran Engineman Senior Chief Randall Stark. "RIMPAC has been a great experience, but it's going to be great to get back home."



An enlisted landing signalman directs an inbound helicopter as it approaches the flight deck during Rim of the Pacific operations off the coast of Hawaii in mid July. Photo by PH2 Bradley Sapp

## PROUD EAGLES OF THE SEA

Congratulations to the following crewmembers for awards during the past quarter!

### ENLISTED AVIATION WARFARE SPECIALIST (EAWs)

SH2(SW/AW) Jeffrey Espinosa  
AS2(AW) Gregrick Turner  
AS3(AW) Janelle Card  
CS3(SW/AW) Glendee O'Choa

### NAVY COMMENDATION MEDALS

LCDR Tom Muldoon  
LCDR Werner Rauchenstein  
ABHC (AW/SW) Bernard Dizon  
MACS (SW) Victor Macias

### GOOD CONDUCT MEDAL

PNSN Brendan Maher

### NAVY ACHIEVEMENT MEDALS

LT Anthony Velasquez  
LTJG Jun Diaz  
DTC(SW/AW/FMF) Ervin Borja  
CSC Jaime Magno  
AEC (AW) Ariel Nabas  
ABH1 Robin Calcaterra  
ABH1 Kenneth Confer  
IT1 Kevin Cooper  
AS1 Daniel Daen  
AO1 Jon Farmer  
OS1(AW) Timothy Griggs  
ABF1 Eric Hodge  
ABH1 Eric Liskey  
AM1 (AW) Michael Mayfield  
FC2 John Bacas  
ABH2 George Gonzalez

### NAVY ACHIEVEMENT MEDALS

MM2 Michael Kane  
ET2 Jeffrey Saenz

### FROCKEES

CTM1 Daniel Abeyta  
IS2 John Bennett  
MM2 Tyson Davis  
IS2 Johnathan Johnston  
AM2 Michael Sleet  
IS3 Ryan Martin  
IT3 Matthew Trojan  
IS3 Rebecca Winkleman  
LI3 Elena Velasquez

### NASO

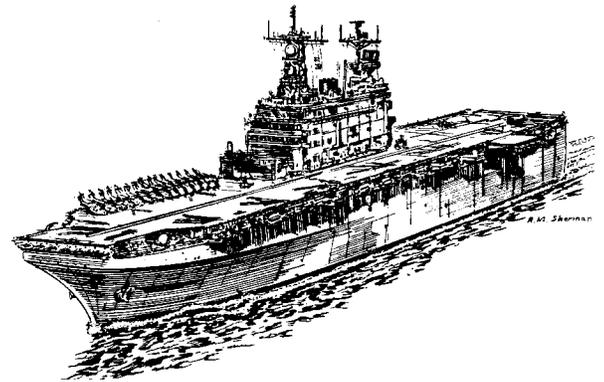
LTJG Jun Diaz

**DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY**

COMMANDING OFFICER  
USS TARAWA (LHA 1)  
FPO AP 96622-1600

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**OFFICIAL BUSINESS**



*USS Tarawa (LHA-1) transits the channel into Pearl Harbor Naval Station for the Rim of the Pacific 2004 multinational maritime exercises. The San Diego-based amphibious assault ship arrived in Hawaii June 28. Photo by JO2 A. Quiroga.*