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Australian and U.S. forces team up to track weather, chart maps

By U.S. Navy Mass Communication Specialist Seaman Andrew D. Brantley

USS ESSEX (LHD 2), at sea – USS Essex Sailors integrated with Australian forces to create a combined meteorological team, providing up-to-date charts and maps for the war fighters during Exercise Talisman Saber 2007.

Sharing space in the ship's Meteorological Office, aerographers mates and Australian 1st Topographical Survey Squadron learned the similarities of each other's jobs.

Members of the Australian squadron arrived on Essex to survey beaches and determine the best place to conduct an amphibious assault landing. In addition, they help pinpoint key structures along the roadside where terrain could be hazardous for the joint ground forces.

"I am really enjoying Essex," said Australian Army Sapper Joshua Heart. "The crew is really top notch, so welcoming, and has helped me with everything. I haven't had any problems finding my way around the ship or getting settled."

During the three-week exercise, aerographers learned about the surveying software Australians used to create topographical maps and to chart the course where beach forces will follow after landing. In turn, the Australians learned about the Doppler radar and weather balloons.

Since the start of the exercise, the aerographers and topographers have produced some 50 maps and dozens of weather forecasts to send to all coalition forces in the exercise.

“It’s not every day we get the privilege to share work spaces with the distinguished Australian military,” said Aerographer’s Mate 3rd Class (AW) Robert King. “They keep the mood in our shop lighthearted and fun. They are very curious about our jobs as we are theirs. I will really miss them when they leave.”

The team charts environmental barriers, such as coral reefs and wildlife preservations, which are in the Talisman Saber amphibious operating area. Pinpointing these protected areas is key to protecting Australia’s environment during the exercise.

The team also charts ocean conditions and forecasts the weather.

“It’s been great getting to experience all the coalition working together as a whole,” said Lt. Richard Bean, an Australian officer on the meteorological team. “The amount of resources the Sailors and Marines provide is great. I have definitely enjoyed working as a team.”

Talisman Saber is a biennial U.S. and Australian led Joint Task Force exercise designed to prepare both nations for crisis action planning and the execution of contingency operations. TS07 will maintain a high level of interoperability between U.S. and Australian forces, demonstrating commitment to regional security and the U.S. and Australian alliance. The exercise also supports increased flexibility and readiness, which are force multipliers in winning the Global War on Terror.

Essex is the only forward-deployed amphibious assault ship and serves Task Force 76, the Navy's only forward-deployed amphibious force. Task Force 76 is headquartered at White Beach Naval Facility, Okinawa, Japan, with an operating detachment in Sasebo, Japan.

PHOTO CUTLINE

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USS ESSEX, at sea – Australian Cpl. Timmy Elliott shows (from left) Midshipman 2nd Class Elizabeth Spangenberg, Aerographer's Mate 2nd Class (AW/SW) Desiree Tetu, and Australian Sapper Joshua Heart topographical software in Essex' Meteorological Office, June 20 as integration training for Exercise Talisman Saber 2007. TS07 is a biennial U.S. and Australian led Joint Task Force exercise designed to prepare both nations for crisis action planning and execution of contingency operations. TS07 maintains a high level of interoperability between both forces, demonstrating commitment to regional security and the U.S. and Australian military alliance. The exercise also supports increased flexibility and readiness, which are force multipliers in winning the Global War on Terror. *(Official Talisman Saber 2007 photo by U.S. Navy Mass Communication Specialist Seaman Andrew Brantley) (Released)*

