

BATAFP BEACON

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New York remembers the fallen in
Memorial Day Murph Challenge

ARG/MEU and Saudi forces
conduct training on KSA Islands

ARG/MEU conducts training
with AC-130w Gunship

BATARG BEACON

The official magazine for the Bataan Amphibious Ready Group

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Lance Cpl. Jacob Weber, mortarman, assigned to Golf Company, Battalion Landing Team 2/8, 26th Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU), prepares to drop a 60 mm mortar round during a Fire Support Coordination Exercise May 13, 2020. Photo by Cpl. Gary Jayne.



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The MURPH

Sailors and Marines remember the fallen through Memorial Day challenge

Story and photos by MC2 Lyle Wilkie

Above:

Seaman Sean Lesane, assigned to the amphibious transport dock ship USS New York (LPD 21), performs a pull-up during the Memorial Day Murph Challenge, a fitness challenge in honor of Medal of Honor recipient Lt. Michael Murphy, who was killed in action in Afghanistan in 2005, held aboard New York, May 25, 2020.

Sailors and Marines aboard the amphibious transport dock ship USS New York (LPD 21) started their Memorial Day by participating in the Murph Challenge, May 25.

The Murph Challenge was created to honor Lt. Michael Murphy, a fallen Navy SEAL from Patchogue, New York, who posthumously received a Medal of Honor for his courageous efforts leading a four-man

SEAL reconnaissance unit against Taliban forces in Afghanistan. He was killed in action June 28, 2005.

“Murph is a way to bring Sailors and Marines together to honor the men and women who have made the ultimate sacrifice for our country,” said Lt. Nicholas Driscoll, the New York’s Murph Challenge coordinator. “This workout specifically gives us the opportunity to recognize Lt. Michael Murphy, who in 2005 was killed in action while

deliberately opening himself up to enemy fire in order to gain better positioning to radio back to a Quick Reaction Force requesting immediate support for his team.”

The Murph Challenge consists of a one-mile run, 100 pull-ups, 200 push-ups, and 300 squats, followed by an additional mile. The workout can include a 20- or 14-pound weight vest or kit, but was not mandatory.

“I did the Murph to

build good memories with some of friends I made out here and to remember the courageous act that Michael Murphy did,” said Boatswain’s Mate 2nd Class Andrew Gonzalez, a Murph Challenge competitor.

In addition to remembering the sacrifice made by Lt. Michael Murphy and countless others by completing the event on Memorial Day, Sailors and Marines felt a sense of camaraderie and teamwork by completing the challenge together while deployed to the U.S. Fifth fleet area of operations.

“The camaraderie you get out of it is really something,” said Boatswain’s Mate 3rd Class Austin Burns, a Murph competitor. “To do it on a ship out on deployment is something not a lot of people can say [they have done].”

One Sailor enjoyed how hard his fellow Sailors and Marines pushed themselves for this competition.

“I appreciate everyone pushing themselves to the limit,” said Boatswain’s Mate 3rd Class Austin Riley,

a Murph Challenge competitor. “It showed the fortitude built in to people who are willing to sacrifice everything for their country. It is a symbol for what we do and for what Michael Murphy did.”

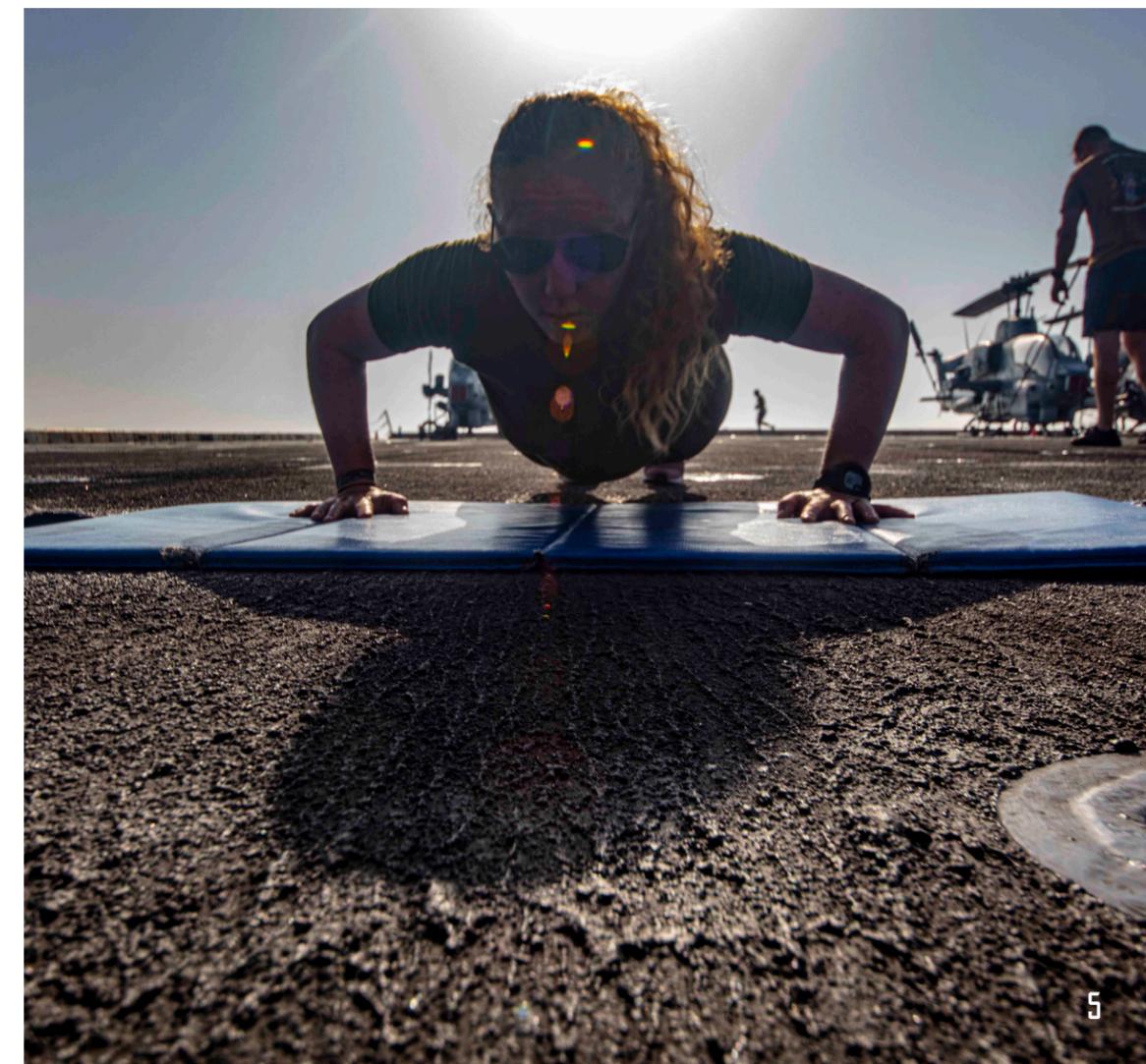
New York’s Sailors and Marines participated in the workout for various reasons, and took pause to remember the sacrifice made by those honored on Memorial Day.

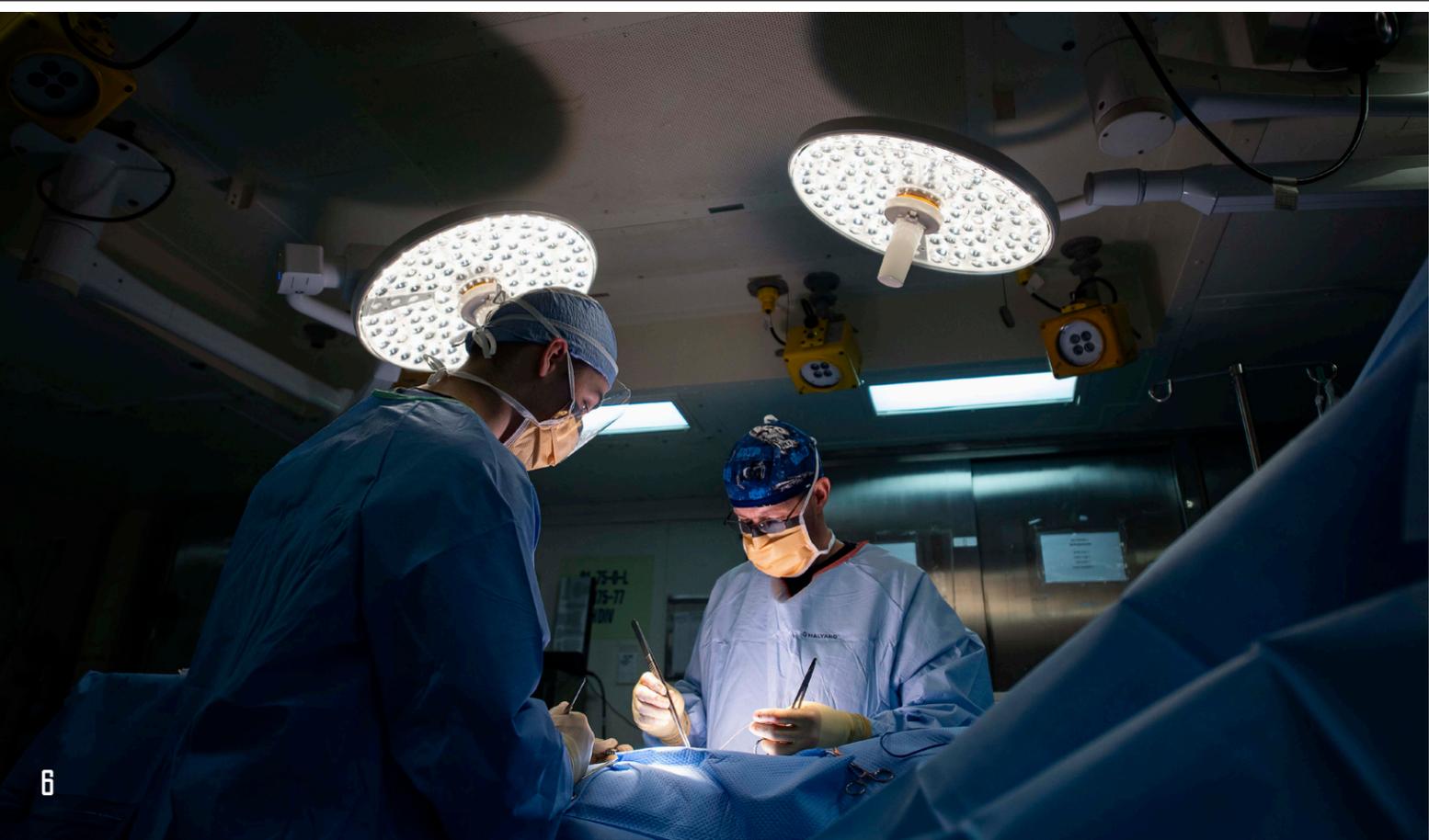
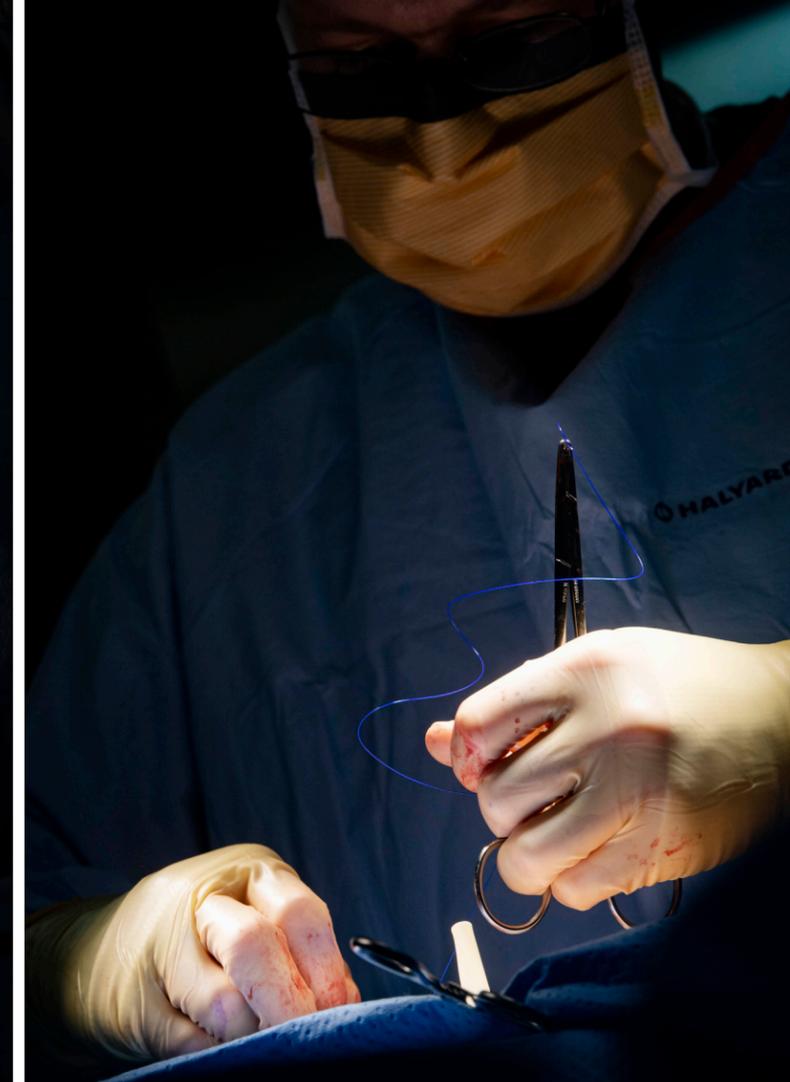
“Being deployed, especially in the area of responsibility that we are in, gives Memorial

Day and the workout a little extra meaning,” said Driscoll. “Everybody on this ship volunteered to be here, and signed up knowing one day they might be asked to put their lives on the line to defend freedom and democracy around the world. Doing the workout on our flight deck where we are in the world, I believe the Sailors and Marines know what’s being asked of them, and they are more aware and thankful for those who made the ultimate sacrifice.”

Below:

Staff Sgt. Patricia Morris, assigned to the 26th Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU), performs a push up during the Memorial Day Murph Challenge, a fitness challenge in honor of Medal of Honor recipient Lt. Michael Murphy, who was killed in action in Afghanistan in 2005, held on the flight deck of the amphibious transport dock ship USS New York (LPD 21), May 25, 2020.





*Clockwise from top left:
Photos by MC2 Anna Van Nuys*

Lt. Cmdr. Robert McLendon, a surgeon assigned to Fleet Surgical Team (FST) 4, performs a surgery in an operating room aboard the amphibious assault ship USS Bataan (LHD 5), May 25, 2020.

Lt. Cmdr. Robert McLendon, a surgeon assigned to Fleet Surgical Team (FST) 4, performs a surgery in an operating room aboard the amphibious assault ship USS Bataan (LHD 5), May 25, 2020.

Lt. Cmdr. Robert McLendon, a surgeon assigned to Fleet Surgical Team (FST) 4, performs a surgery in an operating room aboard the amphibious assault ship USS Bataan (LHD 5), May 25, 2020.

Hospitalman Nicholas Hostler, a surgical technician assigned to the amphibious assault ship USS Bataan (LHD 5), checks for air in a syringe during a surgery in an operating room aboard Bataan, May 25, 2020.

Lt. Cmdr. Robert McLendon, right, a surgeon assigned to Fleet Surgical Team (FST) 4, performs a surgery, while Hospitalman Nicholas Hostler, a surgical technician assigned to the amphibious assault ship USS Bataan (LHD 5), assists in an operating room aboard Bataan, May 25, 2020.

Hospitalman Nicholas Hostler, a surgical technician assigned to the amphibious assault ship USS Bataan (LHD 5), assists during a surgery in an operating room aboard Bataan (LHD 5), May 25, 2020.

KSA 2.0

US and Saudi Forces

Conduct Joint Military Exercises on Saudi Islands

Story by Bataan Amphibious Ready Group Public Affairs

The U.S. and Saudi forces are conducting routine and joint sustainment training on and around Karan and Kurayn islands, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, May 24-30, 2020.

The second phase of the training follows the successful completion of the training on April 20-22, and provides the Bataan Amphibious Ready Group (BATARG) with the embarked 26th Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU) an opportunity to continue mission-essential training and planning with our Saudi partners.

“We appreciate the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia allowing the BATARG and 26th MEU another training opportunity on these islands,” said Col. Trevor Hall, commanding officer of the 26th MEU. “Being able to train on these islands allows our team to expand upon our previous training by adding capabilities and assets

cont.



A reconnaissance Marine assigned to the Maritime Raid Force, 26th Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU), patrols Karan Island, Saudi Arabia during routine sustainment training, May 27, 2020. Photos by Cpl. Gary Jayne.



Above, a reconnaissance Marine assigned to the Maritime Raid Force, 26th Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU), prepares to submerge for a reconnaissance dive insert and below, U.S. Navy MH-60S Sea Hawks attached to the Dragon Whales of Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron (HSC) 28, operate over Karan Island, Saudi Arabia during routine sustainment training May 27, 2020. Photos by Cpl. Gary Jayne.

from our partners in the region. The ability to plan and operate with other forces supports our ability to rapidly deploy aviation, maritime, and ground combat elements – all from over the horizon – at a moment’s notice in order to support maritime security, freedom of navigation, and the free flow of commerce.”

In close coordination

with our Saudi partners, U.S. Naval Forces Central Command (NAVCENT) Task Force (TF) 52 and TF 56, the BATARG and 26th MEU are conducting well deck operations, underwater beach surveys, maritime patrolling, boat lane security operations, and will establish a forward arming and refueling point for aviation assets to refuel in an austere environment – which increases the aviation combat radius and enables them to conduct follow-on operations.

“These islands in the Arabian Gulf provide our Navy-Marine Corps team an ideal setting to prepare for a wide range of operations, while exercising seamless integration with our highly qualified partners,” said Capt. Lance Lesher, commodore of Amphibious Squadron 8. “This return training on Karan and Kurayn islands allows us to exercise our full mission readiness as a premier crisis-response option for our nation, as we also work alongside our

Saudi partners for security and stability in the region.”

ARG/MEUs operate continuously across the globe and provide the geographic combatant commanders with a forward-deployed, flexible and responsive sea-based Marine Air-Ground Task Force (MAGTF). The blue-green team is fully capable of conducting operations across a full spectrum of conventional, unconventional and hybrid warfare.



UAE

Clockwise from top left:

A reconnaissance Marine assigned to the Maritime Raid Force, 26th Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU), fires an M4 carbine during a live-fire training range May 12, 2020. Photo by Cpl. Gary Jayne.

A reconnaissance Marine assigned to the Maritime Raid Force, 26th Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU), sprints to a barricade during a live-fire training range May 13, 2020. Photo by Cpl. Gary Jayne.

Fire Support Marines assigned to Fox Company, Battalion Landing Team 2/8, 26th Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU), observes 81 mm mortar illumination during a Fire Support Coordination Exercise May 14, 2020. Photo by Staff Sgt. Patricia Morris.

Marines assigned to combat engineers platoon, Combat Logistics Battalion 26, 26th Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU), perform route and zone reconnaissance during sustainment training May 10, 2020. Photo by Staff Sgt. Pablo Morrison.

Cpl. Daniel Flaschmann, mortarman, assigned to Weapons Company, Battalion Landing Team 2/8, 26th Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU), shouts commands to the firing line during a Fire Support Coordination Exercise May 13, 2020. Photo by Cpl. Gary Jayne.

Fire Support Marines assigned to Golf Company, Battalion Landing Team 2/8, 26th Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU), communicate with aircraft during a Fire Support Coordination Exercise May 14, 2020. Photo by Staff Sgt. Patricia Morris.





BATARG/26 MEU train with AC-130W Gunship in Arabian Gulf

Story by Bataan Amphibious Ready Group Public Affairs

Above:

An Air Force AC-130W assigned to Joint Special Operations Air Component engages a target utilizing aviation-delivered fires during an aviation operation in support of sea control training evolution, May 21, 2020. Photo by Staff Sgt. Patricia Morris.

Bottom right:

An Air Force AC-130W assigned to Joint Special Operations Air Component passes over the amphibious transport dock USS New York (LPD 21) during an aviation operation in support of sea control training evolution May 19, 2020. Photo by Staff Sgt. Patricia Morris.

The USS Bataan Amphibious Ready Group (ARG) and embarked 26th Marine Expeditionary Unit conducted joint integration training with a Special Operations Command Central (SOCCENT) AC-130W Stinger II aircraft in the Arabian Gulf, May 19-21.

During the training, SOCCENT and 26th MEU Joint Terminal Attack Controller (JTAC) teams, stationed aboard the amphibious transport dock ship USS New York (LPD 21) and at locations ashore, directed command and control (C2) for

simulated defensive strikes on surface targets from the AC-130W gunship.

“This was a great opportunity to incorporate the awesome firepower of the AC-130W into our Navy-Marine Corps live-fire training, rehearsing swift and lethal strikes with pinpoint accuracy against surface targets representing notional threats to the ARG/MEU,” said Capt. Lance Leshner, commander of the Bataan ARG. “This complex coordination involving SOCCENT, Marine Corps and Navy forces further

expands our capability to defend ourselves against any threats we might encounter while operating lawfully in support of maritime security and our regional partners in the Arabian Gulf.”

The training confirmed the Navy-Marine Corps team’s capability to integrate with SOCCENT aviation assets to verify their joint-targeting processes and C2 procedures in the maritime domain. The ability to execute strike coordination and reconnaissance while controlling joint aviation assets from either the land or sea



Above: Capt. Richard Webb, fire support officer, left, and Cpl. Alexander Vogel, fire support Marine, assigned to Headquarters Company, Battalion Landing Team 2/8, 26th Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU), discuss communications during an aviation operation in support of sea control training evolution aboard the amphibious transport dock USS New York (LPD 21). Photo by Staff Sgt. Patricia Morris.

allows the ARG/MEU to successfully defend itself when operating in a contested maritime environment.

The AC-130W also trained alongside Marine Corps AH-1W Super Cobras and UH-1Y Venoms embarked aboard the New York. JTAC controllers also employed an AGM-

176 Griffin missile, a lightweight, precision-guided munition that can be launched from the air to target surface threats.

“Integrating joint aviation assets and fires into a composite warfare construct with surface warfare assets is an effective approach to operating in a contested

maritime environment,” said Col. Trevor Hall, commanding officer of the 26th MEU. “During this dynamic training evolution, the 26th MEU and Bataan ARG successfully integrated with SOCCENT forces to control aviation-delivered fires against maritime threats.”





MARK VI

Clockwise from top left:
Photos by MC3 Griffin Kersting

The amphibious dock landing ship USS Oak Hill (LSD 51) refuels a Mark VI patrol boat, attached to Commander, Task Force 56, while transiting the Arabian Gulf during a replenishment-at-sea, May 27, 2020.

Two Mark VI patrol boats approach the well deck of the amphibious dock landing ship USS Oak Hill (LSD 51) during well deck operations, May 27, 2020.

A Mark VI patrol boat, attached to Commander, Task Force 56, approaches the amphibious dock landing ship USS Oak Hill (LSD 51), during well deck operations, May 27, 2020.

Boatswain's Mate 3rd Class Armando Jacuinde, assigned to the amphibious dock landing ship USS Oak Hill (LSD 51), heaves a fuel line connected to a Mark VI patrol boat, assigned to Commander, Task Force 56, while conducting a replenishment-at-sea, May 27, 2020.

A Mark VI patrol boat, attached to Commander, Task Force 56, enters the well deck of the amphibious dock landing ship USS Oak Hill (LSD 51), during well deck operations, May 27, 2020.

Boatswain's Mate 3rd Class Jayson Powell, assigned to the amphibious dock landing ship USS Oak Hill (LSD 51), throws a messenger line to a Mark VI patrol boat, attached to Commander, Task Force 56, while conducting a replenishment-at-sea, May 27, 2020.



26th MEU Marine presented with leadership award while deployed

Story by Cpl. Nathan Reyes

The Marines and Sailors of the 26th Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU) continue to set the standard. While forward deployed in the U.S. Fifth Fleet area of operations, Sgt. Timothy T. Johnson, a data Marine, was presented the 13th Annual Armed Forces Communications and Electronics Association (AFCEA) Washington, D.C. Military Information Technology (IT) Leadership Award for significant contribution to the warfighter through the use of IT.

Johnson is one of ten service members from across all Department of Defense branches to be acknowledged for their superior effort by AFCEA, a non-profit professional association, which brings together military, industry and academia to advance knowledge in the fields of communications and IT.

He was nominated for the award after his ingenuity and leadership directly supported the success of a training mission prior to deployment. With the help of his Marines, Johnson created a data center in the back of a Humvee when the ashore detachment did not have the proper gear to establish a Combat Operations Center. The data center allowed forces to relay vital information

LAND

to and from the ground element conducting the mission.

“Sgt. Johnson’s initiative and adaptive mindset allowed the ashore detachment to test and validate its network services without jeopardizing the mission,” said Gunnery Sgt. Bartolome Reyna, Joint Task Force Enabler’s (JTFE) data staff non-commissioned officer in charge. “This action is just one of the many examples in which Sgt. Johnson embodies a ‘can-do’ attitude and leadership traits for others to emulate.”

As an active-duty Marine with over a decade of experience, Johnson has continued his pursuit year after year of not only personal success but also the success of the Marines under his charge. Through mentorship and leading by example, he has crafted a communication section that is capable of accomplishing anything placed in its way.

“In a very short period of time he took a group of new data systems Marines and built a team that would support over 1,000 users spread across three Navy ships for the 26th MEU deployment,” said Reyna. “Within said team, he has taught and managed two Rapid Response Kit teams to support ship-to-

shore movements, infantry tactical movements and medical evacuation movements.”

While deployed, Johnson also immersed himself into the air communications field by installing and configuring a data package called Network On The Move-Air in an MV-22B Osprey. This capability enabled the 26th MEU to use both secure and non-secure network and voice services while conducting air missions essential to the MEU.

“There is always something new we can learn as a team to help the success of our mission,” said Johnson. “I could not have won this award without the help of my Marines and the support of my command.”

Along with being recognized for his unmatched work ethic before and during deployment, Johnson was also selected to be promoted to the rank of staff sergeant. This promotion will give him the opportunity to train and lead even more Marines in the future.

“I am grateful for this award, and I am taking it in stride,” said Johnson. “It is motivating to be recognized for the work my team has put in this far, but it does not distract me from the fact that we still have work to do.”

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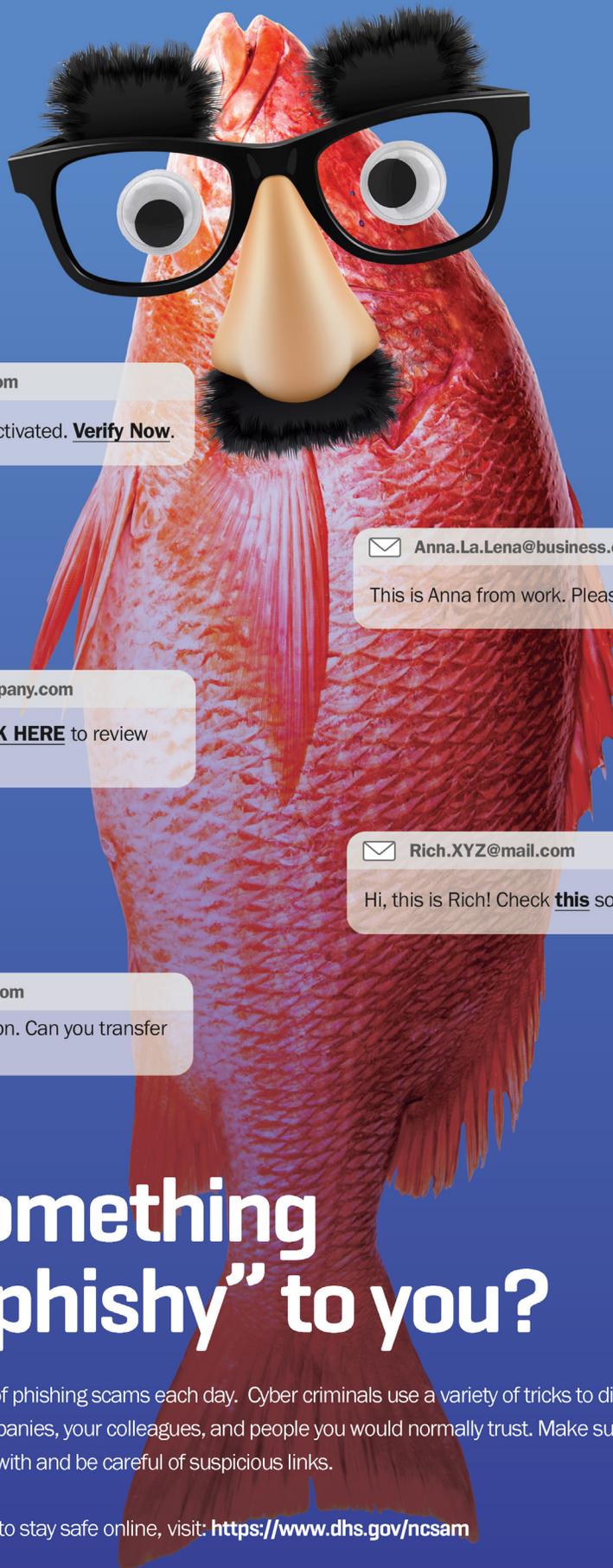
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Graphic by MCC Michael Dimestico for Blue Angels' demonstration.



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