

Essex ARG, 11th MEU Return from Indo-Pac Deployment



Amphibious assault ship USS Essex (LHD 2) arrives pierside at Naval Base San Diego. Essex, a part of the Essex Amphibious Ready Group, returned to Naval Base San Diego, March 4, after a deployment to U.S. 3rd, 5th, and 7th in support of regional stability and a free and open Indo-Pacific. *U.S. NAVY / Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Melvin Fatimehin*

SAN DIEGO – The Essex Amphibious Ready Group returned to port at Naval Base San Diego March 4, concluding a seven-month deployment to U.S. 3rd, 5th, and 7th Fleet areas of operation, U.S. 3rd Fleet said in a release.

Essex ARG is comprised of the multi-purpose amphibious assault carrier USS Essex (LHD 2), amphibious transport dock USS Portland (LPD 27), and dock landing ship USS Pearl Harbor (LSD 52) led by Amphibious Squadron (PHIBRON) 1.

Marines with the 11th MEU, embarked aboard the ships of the ready group, arrived off the coast of Southern California March 2 to disembark to Camp Pendleton, California, with a small contingent of MEU personnel remaining aboard the ships for the pierside arrival.

“It is a great honor to welcome the Essex ARG and the 11th MEU back to San Diego,” said Rear Adm. Wayne Baze, commander of Expeditionary Strike Group (ESG) 3. “I’m excited to have them home after a successful deployment. Their integrated operations while at sea are a testament to the Navy-Marine Corps team’s ability to face any challenge to accomplish the mission. I could not be more proud of the Sailors and Marines and am incredibly thankful for the families and friends they rejoin today who supported them.”

The Essex ARG and 11th MEU provided numbered fleet and

combatant commanders with a responsive, flexible and forward-deployed asset capable of maritime power projection, contingency operations, and crisis response. Their capabilities enabled shaping of the operational environment to protect the United States and allied interests in any threat environment.

“Throughout the ARG-MEU’s 212-day deployment, I have been most humbled to have served alongside a highly skilled team of Sailors and Marines,” said Capt. Karrey Sanders, commander, PHIBRON 1. “Our integration as a combined blue-green team was nothing short of exceptional, and I am thankful to have not only showcased our amphibious capabilities throughout three Navy fleets together but to have created and shared countless memories that will last a lifetime.”

During deployment, Sailors and Marines supported Operation Freedom Sentinel and Operation Inherent Resolve. The ARG-MEU team also supported Large Scale Exercise 21, Exercise Indigo Defender 21, Red Sea Maritime Security Operations, Marine Exercise Philippines 22, and Noble Fusion 22.

In U.S. 5th Fleet, from September 2021 to January 2022, the ARG-MEU team operated in the Gulf of Aden, Arabian Gulf, Red Sea, Arabian Sea, Gulf of Oman, and Indian Ocean. The team conducted theater amphibious combat rehearsals in Kuwait, sustaining their readiness and proficiency in multiple full mission profiles. During Exercise Indigo Defender, the Marines and Sailors spent two weeks with Saudi Naval Forces Western Fleet conducting bilateral training in amphibious operations, a mass casualty drill and integrated fires training to enhance proficiency and readiness while maintaining a tiered crisis response posture in the U.S. Central Command area of responsibility.

While operating in U.S. 7th Fleet supporting U.S. Indo-Pacific Command from January to February 2022, the ARG conducted expeditionary strike force operations with the Carl Vinson

Carrier Strike Group in the South China Sea. ESF operations demonstrate U.S. capability to quickly aggregate an integrated naval force to operate all-domain warfare anywhere international law allows.