

Makin Island ARG, 13th MEU Return to Home Port San Diego



Photo By

[Gunnery Sgt. Chad Pulliam](#)

| PACIFIC OCEAN (Dec. 18, 2022) – A U.S. Marine Corps F-35B Lightning II pilot with Marine Fighter Attack Squadron (VMFA) 122, 13th Marine Expeditionary Unit, performs a vertical landing aboard amphibious assault ship USS Makin Island as Indonesian servicemembers view the landing from Indonesian Navy vessels during Cooperation Afloat Readiness and Training/ Marine Exercise (MAREX) Indonesia 2022, Dec. 18. CARAT/MAREX Indonesia is a bilateral exercise between Indonesia and the United States designed to promote regional security cooperation, maintain and strengthen maritime partnerships, and enhance maritime interoperability. In its 28th year, the CARAT series is comprised of multinational exercises, designed to enhance U.S. and partner navies' and marine corps abilities to operate together in response to traditional and non-traditional maritime security challenges in the Indo-Pacific region. (U.S. Marine Corps photo by Gunnery Sgt. Chad J. Pulliam)

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The Makin Island Amphibious Ready Group, led by commander, Amphibious Squadron 7 and comprised of amphibious assault ship USS Makin Island (LHD 8) and amphibious transport docks USS Anchorage (LPD 23) and USS John P. Murtha (LPD 26), with the

embarked 13th Marine Expeditionary Unit, returns to San Diego this week following a seven-month deployment to the U.S. 3rd and 7th Fleet areas of operations.

“Our goal was to achieve interoperability with our allies and partners and promote a free and open Indo-Pacific. We accomplished that mission and brought every single Sailor and Marine home safely,” said U.S. Navy Capt. Andria Slough, commanding officer of Makin Island. “While the world witnessed our ARG-MEU team strengthening partnerships, I had a front-row seat to the tremendous amount of skill, dedication and hard work of 2,500 people each day of deployment. It’s awe-inspiring to watch Sailors and Marines at their very best!”

The Makin Island ARG and the 13th MEU successfully integrated capabilities of approximately 4,500 Sailors and Marines, supported allied interoperability during seven exercises, and traveled more than 47,000 nautical miles across the Indo-Pacific while deployed. Makin Island embarked all elements of the Marine Air-Ground Task Force, consisting of the 13th MEU Command Element; the Ground Combat Element, Battalion Landing Team 2/4; the Logistics Combat Element, Combat Logistics Battalion 13; the Aviation Combat Element, Marine Medium Tiltrotor Squadron (VMM) 362 (Reinforced), and Marine Fighter Attack Squadron (VMFA) 122, which included a full squadron of 10 F-35B Lightning IIs.

The ARG-MEU team began the deployment with Cooperation Afloat Readiness and Training exercises alongside regional partners and allies. The CARAT 2022 maritime exercise series promoted regional security cooperation, maintained and strengthened maritime partnerships, and enhanced interoperability among participating forces. Makin Island executed CARAT missions with Indonesia in December and Singapore in January, and Anchorage and John P. Murtha spent time training with members of the Sri Lanka and Timor-Leste militaries, respectively.

From February to March 2023, the Makin Island ARG and the 13th

MEU participated in the 42nd iteration of exercise Cobra Gold with the Royal Thai Navy and Marine Corps. Cobra Gold is one of the largest multilateral theater security cooperation exercises in the Indo-Pacific and reflects the U.S. commitment to allies and partners, providing a continuous and reliable platform to train, prepare, and enhance regional stability and interoperability. Participants included Japan, Malaysia, the Republic of Indonesia, the Republic of Korea, and the Republic of Singapore, as well as participants from more than 20 other nations.

“I am so proud of all our Marines and Sailors as we return from this action-packed, seven-month deployment after exceeding all of our goals,” said U.S. Marine Corps Col. Samuel Meyer, commanding officer of the 13th MEU. “Through our Navy and Marine Corps integration, we worked with our partners and allies, creating personal bonds that will last a lifetime. From the CARAT series with Indonesia, Singapore, Timor-Leste, and Sri Lanka to our three large exercises with Thailand, Republic of Korea and the Philippines, we further strengthened these critical relationships that will continue to grow with routine ARG-MEU deployments to the region.”

The ARG-MEU participated in bilateral Exercise Ssang Yong 2023 alongside the ROK Navy and Marine Corps from March to April, reinforcing U.S. commitment. Operational exercises such as SY23 demonstrate the alliance remains ironclad, contributes to regional security, and promotes stability in northeast Asia and the Indo-Pacific region as a whole. During Ssang Yong, the 13th MEU disembarked the entirety of Battalion Landing Team 2/4 to participate in military operations in urban terrain training, close-quarters battle training, and various live-fire ranges with our ROK counterparts.

The Makin Island ARG and the 13th MEU wrapped up the deployment by participating in exercise Balikatan 2023 with the Armed Forces of the Philippines in April. The 17,600

participants made it the largest iteration of the exercise to date. Together, the two militaries trained side-by-side, developing interoperability and improved capability in the areas of maritime security, amphibious operations, live-fire training, urban and aviation operations, cyber defense, counterterrorism, and humanitarian assistance and disaster relief preparedness.

An integral part of U.S. Pacific Fleet, U.S. 3rd Fleet operates naval forces in the Indo-Pacific and provides the realistic, relevant training necessary to flawlessly execute our Navy's role across the full spectrum of military operations that range from combat operations to humanitarian assistance and disaster relief. U.S. 3rd Fleet works together with our allies and partners to advance freedom of navigation, the rule of law, and other principles that underpin security for the Indo-Pacific region.

Marine Expeditionary Units (MEU) embarked on Amphibious Ready Groups (ARG) are characterized by their sea-based forward presence and expeditionary nature. As the Nation's premier crisis response force, the ARG/MEUs provide a flexible and lethal force ready to perform a wide range of military, humanitarian, and diplomatic operations around the globe without the need for access, basing and overflight. Operating in international waters, this Navy-Marine Corps team also provides flexible deterrence options in key sea lines of communication and adjacent littorals near strategic chokepoints and can seize and hold maritime terrain in the defense of national interests.

Expeditionary Strike Group 3 comprises three amphibious squadrons, 15 amphibious warships, and eight naval support elements including approximately 18,000 active-duty and reserve Sailors and Marines. As the deputy commander for amphibious and littoral warfare, U.S. 3rd Fleet, the ESG 3 commander also oversees Mine Countermeasures Group 3 and the

14 littoral combat ships and two subordinate divisions under Littoral Combat Ship Squadron 1. ESG 3 is postured in support of U.S. 3rd Fleet as a globally responsive and scalable naval command element, capable of generating, deploying, and employing naval forces and formations for crisis and contingency response, forward presence, and major combat operations focusing on amphibious operations, humanitarian and disaster relief and support to defense civil authorities, and expeditionary logistics.