

USS Boxer and 15th Marine Expeditionary Unit Return Home After Indo-Pacific Deployment



An F-35B Lightning II attached to VMFA-225 taxis before take-off from USS Boxer (LHD 4) in the Pacific Ocean. (Sgt. Amelia Kang)

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SAN DIEGO – Sailors assigned to the Wasp-class amphibious assault ship USS Boxer (LHD 4) and embarked elements of the 15th Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU) returned to homeport in San Diego and Camp Pendleton, this week after a deployment to the U.S. 7th and 3rd Fleet areas of operations.

As part of the Boxer Amphibious Ready Group and the 15th MEU (ARG-MEU), more than 2,500 Sailors and Marines participated in a wide range of joint and combined exercises and provided foreign disaster support, showcasing the ready and responsive combined-arms team of the Navy and Marine Corps.

“The tactical expertise, professionalism, and stealth of the Sailors and Marines who make up our amphibious force team is unmatched, and that was proven time and time again throughout our deployment to the 7th Fleet area of operations,” said U.S. Navy Capt. Tate Robinson, commodore of Amphibious Squadron (PHIBRON) 5. “From exercising and training alongside our allies and partners to supporting foreign disaster response missions, our Navy and Marine Corps team demonstrated the true flexibility and maneuverability of the ARG-MEU construct, and I could not be more honored to serve alongside each and every member of this team.”

During deployment, Boxer and the 15th MEU participated in exercise Ssang Yong. The exercise strengthened the Republic of Korea-U.S. alliance through bilateral, joint training, contributing toward combined amphibious capability in defense of the Korean Peninsula.

In September, Boxer also sailed alongside and participated in a personnel exchange with the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force Kongo-class guided-missile destroyer JS Kongo (DDG 173) and conducted three replenishments-at-sea with the Royal New Zealand Navy's Polar-class sustainment vessel HMNZS Aotearoa (A11) before returning to the Republic of Korea to participate in the Republic of Korea Armed Forces Day celebration. As part of the celebration, Boxer and the 15th MEU welcomed more than 245 visitors to the ship for tours, giving the Sailors and Marines an opportunity to showcase their equipment, expertise, and professionalism while building relationships with the local community.

Later in September, the H-1 Helicopter detachment from Marine Medium Tiltrotor Squadron (VMM) 165, Reinforced temporarily transferred to the expeditionary sea base USS Miguel Keith (ESB 5), marking the first time a full H-1 detachment operated from this class of ship. The detachment, consisting of UH-1Y Venom and AH-1Z Viper helicopters, conducted day and night close-air support training missions with live ordnance, enhancing the capability and capacity of the MEU's Marine Air Ground Task Force.

After departing the Republic of Korea, Boxer and the 15th MEU rapidly shifted course to head to the Philippines at the direction of U.S. Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin and U.S. Indo-Pacific Command to support U.S. Agency for International Development's (USAID) efforts in foreign disaster response operations following Typhoon Krathon (locally known as Julian) at the request of the Philippine government. The Boxer ARG-MEU provided critical logistics support, transporting much-needed

foreign disaster response supplies to remote locations in the Philippines alongside USAID, the Armed Forces of the Philippines, and personnel from I Marine Expeditionary Force's Marine Rotational Force-Southeast Asia (MRF-SEA). The foreign disaster response mission exemplified the benefits of the unique construct of the ARG-MEU, providing commanders the flexibility to respond to crises with air and sea-based connectors, ultimately enhancing maneuverability and ability to respond whenever and wherever called upon.

Following foreign disaster response in the provinces of Cagayan and Batanes, Philippines, the BOX ARG-MEU remained in the region to participate in Exercise KAMANDAG 8, an annual Philippine and U.S. Marine Corps-led exercise aimed at enhancing shared defense and humanitarian capabilities through realistic training scenarios and information exchanges. This year's iteration included participants from Australia, France, Indonesia, Japan, Republic of Korea, Thailand, and the United Kingdom.

"Together, the entire 15th MEU and the three ships of the Boxer Amphibious Ready Group have demonstrated an exceptional level of versatility, resilience, and operational capability," said Col. Sean Dynan, commanding officer, 15th MEU. "From crisis response during foreign disaster relief to supporting 10 theater exercises, the accomplishments of our amphibious force reflect the skill, resilience, dedication and professionalism of every Marine and Sailor. I'm incredibly proud of what we've achieved together and the lasting impact this deployment will have on future operations in the Indo-Pacific working with our allies and partners."

Boxer is the flagship of the Boxer Amphibious Ready Group. In addition to Boxer and the 15th MEU Command Element, units assigned to the ARG-MEU during the deployment included the San Antonio-class amphibious transport dock ship USS Somerset (LPD 25), Harpers Ferry-class dock landing ship USS Harpers Ferry

(LSD 49), Amphibious Squadron (PHIBRON) 5, Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron (HSC) 23, Tactical Air Control Squadron (TACRON) 11, Fleet Surgical Team (FST) 5, Assault Craft Units (ACU) 1 and 5, Beachmaster Unit (BMU) 1, Battalion Landing Team (BLT) 1/5, Combat Logistics Battalion (CLB) 15, Marine Medium Tiltrotor Squadron (VMM) (reinforced) 165, and Marine Fighter Attack Squadron (VMFA) 225 with embarked F-35B Lightning II aircraft. Harpers Ferry and Somerset returned to San Diego, Aug. 13 and Oct. 18, 2024, respectively.

Throughout the deployment, Boxer executed more than 3,500 launches and recoveries of U.S. Navy and Marine Corps aircraft, completing more than 2,100 flight hours in support of the 15th MEU Air Combat Element, VMM-165 (REIN), VMFA-225, and the HSC-23 detachment. Embarked aircraft on Boxer include MH-60S Nighthawk helicopters, MV-22 Osprey tiltrotor aircraft, AH-1Z Viper helicopters, UH-1Y Venom helicopters, and F-35B Lightning II vertical and/or short take-off and landing aircraft.

Boxer's air department team received more than 350 pallets of food, stores, and equipment via vertical replenishment (VERTREP) and over 1 million gallons of JP-5 via underway replenishment (UNREP) and in port replenishment. Additionally, the Amphibious Air Traffic Control Center (AATCC) conducted more than 500 instrument approaches, both day and night, while the flight deck and hangar deck conducted more than 2,100 aircraft movement evolutions and 240 aircraft elevator movements in direct support of daily operations.

Boxer completed eight underway replenishments in the Indo-Pacific region with the Henry J. Kaiser-class underway replenishment oilers USNS Pecos (T-AO 197) and USNS Yukon (T-AO 202), the Lewis and Clark-class dry cargo ships USNS Carl Brashear (T-AKE 7), USNS Charles Drew (T-AKE 10) USNS Cesar Chavez (T-AKE 14) and HMNZS Aotearoa, , and USNS Yukon, transferring more than 5 million gallons of fuel over the

deployment period.

Boxer and the 15th MEU transited over 3,200 nautical miles in support of deterring aggression, crisis response, presence operations, and promoting a free and open Indo-Pacific. Boxer conducted routine port visits to Guam, Japan, and the Republic of Korea.

The 15th MEU is based at Camp Pendleton and is part of I Marine Expeditionary Force. As a premiere global crisis response force, 15th MEU is trained and ready to operate within the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command area of responsibility with the Navy's U.S. 3rd Fleet.

Boxer is a Wasp-class amphibious assault ship homeported in San Diego. Commissioned Feb. 11, 1995, Boxer is the sixth ship to bear the name. Boxer's crew is made up of approximately 1,200 officers and enlisted personnel and can accommodate up to 1,800 Marines.

As an integral part of U.S. Pacific Fleet, Commander, U.S. 3rd Fleet operates naval forces in the Indo-Pacific and provides the realistic and relevant training necessary to execute the U.S. Navy's timeless role across the full spectrum of military operations—from combat missions 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.