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COMCARSTRKGRU FIVE

6/24/2014

Regional Security Experts Educate George Washington Carrier Strike Group Sailors

By Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Trevor Welsh, Commander, Task Force 70 Public Affairs

Instructors and regional subject matter experts from Naval Post Graduate School (NPS) embarked ships from the George Washington Strike Group to provide Regional Security Education Program (RSEP) briefs to the crew and embarked staffs, June 20-25.

The RSEP team, headed by director Rear Adm. (ret.) Steve Loeffler, provided in-depth, instructor and discussion based briefs targeted at building the crews' knowledge base on topics and issues specific to the Indo-Asia-Pacific region.

"RSEP is a program developed by the [Chief of Naval Operations] to provide leaders and crew of deploying ships and squadrons a better understanding of their regional security environment," said Rear Adm. Mark Montgomery, commander, Battle Force 7th Fleet. "These individuals are our nation's leading thinkers in geopolitics for the Asian-Pacific region. I am happy that we are able to provide the chance for our Sailors to further their knowledge level, specifically through courses that focus on our current area of operations."

The program is designed to help U.S. forces understand the threat environment in which they will operate as well as help them complete missions and achieve objectives by enhancing their situational awareness and understanding of the history of conflict in each region.

"It doesn't matter whether you are going to be a Marine with boots on ground in Afghanistan or you are just visiting China, the idea is that you go ashore knowing what the cultural sensitivities of the region are," said Loeffler.

Following the Chief of Naval Operation's decisions on the investigation of the terrorist bombing of USS Cole (DDG 67), the superintendent of NPS and Commander, U.S. 3rd Fleet looked for new ways to better prepare operating forces for the regional security threats they face while deployed. As a result RSEP was formed and the first RSEP team embarked USS Constellation in April 2000. NPS demonstrated to numbered fleet and task force staffs, and aboard all

deploying Groups and ships, the strength and advantage of RSEP is face-to-face graduate lectures and interaction of the team with all levels from command teams.

"We put together a series of briefs for every country in which, as an active duty Sailor or Marine, you were required to be briefed and acknowledge you understood the importance of cultural sensitivities in the area," said Loeffler. "The value is having subject matter and regional experts face-to-face, being able to do Q and A and have discussions talking about issues pertaining to the region."

Not only does being embarked with a strike group staff allow the RSEP integration for unprecedented access in order to educate Sailors, it allows the instructors exposure to operating forces which helps the faculty take their experiences at sea, and understanding of life at sea for Sailors and Marines, back into the classroom.

"One of our objectives is to integrate NPS, other post-graduate faculty and subject matter experts to let them learn about you and what you do to exchange ideas," said Loeffler. "We are here to learn from you all as well."

According to Loeffler, as the U.S. has pulled back more and more continental forces to the continental U.S. following the end of the Cold War, the burden of U.S. strategic engagement, now termed security cooperation, has fallen on naval forces.

"Our vital interests in national security objectives like maintaining world stability so that trade can flourish, and specific strategic objectives can be better served if our forces understand regions, peoples and their cultures, and why they need to be diplomats as well as war fighters," said Loeffler.

According to the NPS website, the mission of NPS is to provide relevant and unique advanced education and research programs to increase the combat effectiveness of commissioned officers of the naval service to enhance the security of the U.S. In support of the foregoing, and to sustain academic excellence, foster and encourage a program of relevant and meritorious research which both supports the needs of Navy and Department of Defense while building the intellectual capital of Naval Postgraduate School faculty.

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