



For more information contact:

clinton.ramsden@cpr3.navy.mil

www.cpr3.navy.mil

Like us on Facebook:

www.facebook.com/pages/Commander-Amphibious-Squadron-3/105934056106066



Table of Contents

Page 2 - Commander, Essex ARG Bio

Page 3 - 15th Marine Expeditionary Unit Bio

Page 4 - ARG Structure

Page 5 - Commanding Officer, USS Essex Bio

Page 6 - USS Essex Stats

Pages 7 - Commanding Officer, USS Anchorage Bio

Page 8 - USS Anchorage Stats

Pages 9 & 10 - Essex Diagram

Page 11 - Commanding Officer, USS Rushmore Bio

Page 12 - USS Rushmore Stats

Page 13 - MEU Laydown

Page 14 - Essex Crest

Page 15 - Rushmore and Anchorage Crests

Page 16 - Essex History

Page 17 - Anchorage History

Page 18 - Rushmore History

Commander, Essex Amphibious Ready Group Capt. Clinton A. Carroll

Captain Carroll is the son of the late BMCM(SW) Alvin C. Carroll and the late Mrs. Lourdine M. Carroll. A native of Virginia Beach, Virginia, he graduated from Floyd E. Kellam High School and reported to the United States Naval Academy in 1985. He graduated from USNA in May 1989 with a Bachelor of Science in political science. During the summer of 1989, he was a Marshall Cox Fund Scholar at the Université de François Rabelais in Tours, France. Captain Carroll served as Communications Officer and Navigator/Administrative Officer in USS Arthur W. Radford (DD 968) from May 1990 through September 1993. He served in USS Briscoe (DD 977) as Operations Officer from November 1996 to June 1998 and as Operations Officer in USS Bunker Hill (CG 52) from September 1998 to April 2000. Captain Carroll served in USS Nimitz (CVN 68) as Damage Control Assistant from May 2003 through October 2004 and deployed to the Arabian Gulf in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. He commanded USS Robert G. Bradley (FFG 49) from November 2007 to May 2009. The Sailors of Robert G. Bradley earned the 2008 Battle Effectiveness Award, the 2009 Edward F. Ney Memorial Award for Food Service Excellence and the Navy Meritorious Unit Commendation for exceptionally meritorious conduct in the performance of outstanding service as Africa Partnership Station under his command. Ashore, Captain Carroll has served as a Company Officer and Instructor at the French Naval Academy, as an Instructor and Fleet Schedules Officer at Tactical Training Group Pacific, on the staff of the Chief of Naval Operations for the Quadrennial Defense Review 2006, as the Chief of the Nuclear Strike Branch in the Operations Directorate of the Joint Staff and as the Deputy Commandant of Midshipmen at the United States Naval Academy.



Captain Carroll earned a Master of Business Administration from the Executive MBA Program at San Diego State University in 2002 and a Master of Science in National Security Strategy from the National War College in Washington, D.C. in 2007. He is a French linguist. Additionally, Captain Carroll was a Joint Staff Fellow for the Massachusetts Institute of Technology Seminar XXI Program for 2010 – 2011.

His personal decorations include the Legion of Merit, the Defense Meritorious Service Medal, the Meritorious Service Medal (Gold Star in lieu of Fourth Award), the Navy Commendation Medal (Gold Star in lieu of Third Award), the Navy Achievement Medal, the “Médaille de Bronze de la Défense Nationale avec agrafe ‘marine nationale’” from the French government, and numerous unit and campaign awards to include five Battle Effectiveness Awards. Additionally, he was a recipient of the Commander, Naval Surface Force, U.S. Atlantic Fleet Junior Officer Shiphandling Award for 1997 and was awarded the Vice Admiral John D. Bulkeley Distinguished Graduate Award from the Surface Warfare Officers School Command in 2007.

He assumed duties as Deputy Commander, Amphibious Squadron Three on July 8, 2013 and as Commander, Amphibious Squadron Three on June 6, 2014.

15th Marine Expeditionary Unit

Col Vance L. Cryer

Col Vance L. Cryer graduated the University of Texas, Arlington, Texas, May 1991 and was commissioned 11 May 1991. Was designated a Naval Aviator 20 May 1994 in Kingsville, Texas. Completed AV-8B FRS training September 1995 and reported to VMA-211. Deployed with HMM-166, 11th MEU, USS Essex for RIMPAC and WESTPAC deployment to the Persian Gulf to participate in Operation Southern Watch.

In December 1997 Capt Cryer reported to 3rd Bn 5th Marines, Camp Pendleton, San Mateo, California as the Forward Air Controller for the Mechanized Company and the Small Boat Company. Capt Cryer deployed 31st MEU deployment to Camp Hansen, Okinawa with 3rd Bn 5th Marines. Shortly after arriving back at Yuma aboard VMA-214, Capt Cryer attended the MAWTS-1 Weapons and Tactics Instructor course. Capt Cryer served as the Assistant Operations Officer, Pilot Training Officer and Squadron Weapons and Tactics Officer. In the summer of 2000 Capt Cryer deployed to Iwakuni, Japan with VMA-214 squadron minus for a 31st MEU West Pac deployment.



Major Cryer executed orders to the UK to serve the RAF on a pilot exchange tour. Upon completion of F-3 training in March 2002, Major Cryer reported to RAF Leuchars, Fife, Scotland to 111(F) Squadron. Major Cryer participated in OPERATION SOUTHERN WATCH (Op Resinate) in 2002 and OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM (Op Telic) 2003.

March 2004, Major Cryer reported back to MAG-13, VMA-214, MCAS Yuma, Arizona, and embarked VMA-214 squadron minus to Al Asad airbase, Iraq, for participation in OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM – II. During OIF-II Major Cryer served as the Maintenance Officer for the Blacksheep through Jan 2005.

February 2005 Major Cryer reported to VMA-211 as the Executive Officer and detachment Officer In Charge for HMM-163 and the 13th MEU. Upon completing his fifth tour involving combat flight operations in the Persian Gulf in February 2006, Major Cryer redeployed to MAG-13, VMA-214 as the Executive Officer.

In May of 2006 he reported to MAG-13 HQ as the Operations Officer. After one year as the MAG-13 Operations Officer LtCol Cryer executed orders to HQMC, Washington D.C to the Department of Aviation, APP-35 as the Current Operations and Plans Officer.

In the summer of 2008, LtCol Cryer took command of Marine Attack Squadron 211, deployed the squadron to MAG-12, Iwakuni Japan and supported the 31stMEU aboard the USS Essex.

In the Spring of 2010, LtCol Cryer was selected to attend the National War College. Following graduation he reported to USNORTHCOM J3 as the EA for MajGen Robert Walsh and MajGen Lewis Craparotta. Upon completion of the Joint assignment, LtCol Cryer reported to HQMC Dept. of Aviation as the deputy branch head for APW under Col Mike Cederholm. He holds a Bachelor of Science Degree in Economics from the University of Texas at Arlington and a Masters of Science in National Strategic Studies from the National War College, National Defense University.

ESSEX AMPHIBIOUS READY GROUP



USS Essex (LHD 2)

Capt. Brian J. Quin

Captain Quin received his commission in 1991 through the NROTC program at Northwestern University, where he earned a bachelor's of arts degree (with honors) in history. He earned a masters of arts degree in National Security and Strategic Studies and graduated with distinction from the Naval War College in 2007. From 2009 to 2011 he commanded the guided missile destroyer U.S.S. GRIDLEY (DDG 101), homeported in San Diego, California. From 2011 to 2013 he commanded the pre-commissioning unit and then the amphibious transport dock U.S.S. ANCHORAGE (LPD 23). He is currently serving as U.S.S. ESSEX (LHD 2) Commanding Officer.

Afloat, Captain Quin also served in a variety of division officer billets in the U.S.S. CALLAGHAN (DDG 994), as fire control officer in the U.S.S. LAKE ERIE (CG 70), as weapons and combat systems department head in the U.S.S. PHILIPPINE SEA (CG 58), and as executive officer in the U.S.S. SHILOH (CG 70) and the U.S.S. CAPE ST GEORGE (CG 71).

He deployed to the western Pacific, the Indian Ocean and Arabian Gulf, and the Mediterranean Sea. He participated in mid-1990's United Nations sanctions enforcement in the Arabian Gulf, Operation ENDURING FREEDOM's (OEF) opening Tomahawk salvos in 2001, and Operation UNIFIED ASSISTANCE, the 2004-2005 tsunami relief effort in Indonesia. In command, he deployed in support of OEF and again in support of SEVENTH Fleet theater security cooperation (TSC) objectives and other designated missions. He also supported FOURTH Fleet TSC objectives during ANCHORAGE's transit from builder's yard to homeport.

Ashore, Captain Quin served as maritime homeland defense officer in the operations directorate (J-3) of the Joint Staff, as deputy executive assistant and Flag aide to the commander, U.S. THIRD Fleet, and as combat systems officer (N65) on the staff of the commander, Naval Surface Forces. He also participated in the Office of the Secretary of Defense/Joint Staff intern program and served in the Joint Staff's systems integration division (J-6V).

Captain Quin's awards include the Defense Meritorious Service Medal, the Meritorious Service Medal (three awards), the Joint Commendation Medal, the Navy-Marine Corps Commendation Medal (four awards), the Joint Achievement Medal, the Navy-Marine Corps Achievement Medal (two awards), the Sea Service Deployment Ribbon (with three bronze stars), the Expert Rifle Medal, the Expert Pistol Medal, and various other personal and unit decorations.



USS Essex Stats

Complement: 1,200 Navy & 1,800 Marines (embarked)

Length: 844 ft. - Beam: 106 ft.

Max Speed: 24+ knots

Area of Flight Deck: 80,000 sq. ft.



2 Anchors: 40,000 lbs. each

Length of Each Anchor Chain: 1,170 ft.

Well Deck: 13,000 sq. ft.

Displacement: 40,650 tons (full)

USS Anchorage (LPD 23)

Capt. Michael McKenna

Captain J.J. Cummings grew up in Sharon, Massachusetts, graduated from Sharon High School in 1985 and earned a B.A. in physics from Bates College in 1990. In 1986, he enlisted in the Navy Reserves and served as a hospital corpsman attached to Alpha Company, 1st Battalion 25th Marines in Topsham, Maine until 1991.

He completed Aviation Officer Candidate School in November of 1991, earned his pilot wings in October 1993 and completed Fleet Replacement training in the F-14A Tomcat in June 1995.

Capt. Cummings' fleet tours flying the F-14 were with the VF-24 "Fighting Renegades" and VF-211 "Checkmates" on USS NIMITZ (CVN 68). He completed his Training Officer tour in the VF-102 "Diamondbacks" on USS THEODORE ROOSEVELT (CVN 71) and his Department Head tour in the VF-143 "Pukin' Dogs" on USS GEORGE WASHINGTON (CVN 73). After transitioning to the FA-18F Super Hornet in 2007, he served as Executive and Commanding Officer of VFA-11, the "Red Rippers", aboard USS HARRY S. TRUMAN (CVN 75).

Ashore, Capt. Cummings served as an F-14 Instructor Pilot in the VF-101 "Grim Reapers" where he graduated from the Navy Fighter Weapon School (TOPGUN) as a Strike Fighter Tactics Instructor. Additionally, he served in the NATO Logistics Branch at HQ Strategic Allied Command Transformation and as Branch Head for Force Rotation in the Global Force Management Cell at US Joint Forces Command in Norfolk, Virginia.

He was selected for training in the Navy's Nuclear Propulsion Program in 2010 and completed nuclear power training in December 2012. He served as the Executive Officer of USS NIMITZ (CVN 68) from May 2013 to May 2015.

He has a Master of Science in Education from Old Dominion University and a Master of Arts in National Security and Strategic Studies from the Naval War College where he graduated with Distinction as the President's Honor Graduate.

Capt. Cummings has 3,850 total flight hours and 704 carrier landings. His decorations include a two Defense Meritorious Service Medal, two Meritorious Service medals, seven Air Medals, five Navy-Marine Corps Commendation Medals (two with combat distinguishing devices) and three Navy-Marine Corps Achievement Medals.



USS Anchorage Stats

Complement: 396 Navy & 699 Marines (embarked)

Length: 684 ft. - Beam: 105 ft.

Max Speed: 22+ knots

Displacement: 25,000 tons (full)



Cargo Capacity: 5,300 Cubic ft.

Vehicle Capacity: 13,100 Cubic ft.

Namesake: Anchorage, Alaska

Keel Laid: September 24, 2007

USS ESSEX (LHD 2)

The Expeditionary Strike Group's main battle platform is the amphibious assault ship. Homeported in San Diego, Calif., Essex's primary mission is to embark, deploy and land elements of a Marine landing force in amphibious assault operations by helicopter, landing craft, amphibious vehicle or any combination of these methods. Essex embarks the commander of the expeditionary strike group and the commander of the amphibious squadron and their staffs. With the embarked Marine expeditionary unit, USS Essex is equipped to play a key role in combat and humanitarian operations.



AH-1Z Super Cobra
Attack helicopter that is armed with missiles, rockets, cannons and machine guns.



AV-8B Harrier
Can be used as an air to air fighter and light-attack air to ground bomber.



UH-1Y Venom
Twin-engine medium size utility helicopter designed to withstand ballistics up to 23mm.



CH-53E Super Stallion
Military's largest heavy-lift helicopter carries up to 37 troops as well as equipment and supplies.



MV-22B Osprey
Joint-service, multi-mission aircraft with vertical take-off and landing (VTOL) capability.



MH-60S Knight Hawk
Twin-engine helicopter used for anti-surface warfare, search and rescue, anti-piracy operations and humanitarian relief operations.

NATO Sea Sparrow Surface Missile System (NSSMS)
Uses radar-guided Sparrow missiles with high-explosive warheads to counter threats from cruise missiles and aircraft. Essex has two, forward and aft, eight cell missile launchers.



RIM-116 Rolling Airframe Missile (RAM)

A supplement to the Sea Sparrow, it is used for supersonic short ranged missile defense. Launched from two MK-49 RAM launchers, fore and aft.



Phalanx Close-In Weapon System

Provides last ditch defense against cruise missiles and aircraft. Automatic gun control system that tracks and automatically fires up to 3,000 rounds per minute towards surface targets and 4500 rpm towards air targets from a 20mm gatling type gun.



Landing Craft, Utility (LCU)

-Used to transport materials, troops and equipment ashore

Crew: 11
Length: 135 ft.
Military Lift: 125 tons of cargo (2) M1A1 Tanks/400 equipped troops
Displacement:
200 tons (light) / 375 tons (full load)
Speed: 11 knots
Capacity: 170 tons
Armament: (4) .50 cal. MG, (2) M60 MG, (1) M203 Grenade Launcher, (12) M16 Rifle

Essex Medical Capabilities

Medical and Dental facilities on board can provide intensive medical assistance during humanitarian missions

Facilities Include:

4 main operating rooms/2 emergency rooms
X-ray facilities/Blood bank/Laboratories
Patient Wards/3 Triage Stations
Casualty Collection Area/Medical Transport Elevators

Ability to expand to a 600-bed hospital with a 14-bed intensive care unit and 46-bed inpatient ward

Essex Specifications

Class: One of eight ships in the WASP class designation - LHD.
Commissioned: October 17, 1992
Crew: 1,100
Troop carrying capacity: 1934
Cost: 1.1 billion dollars
Dimensions: 844 feet long, 106 feet wide.
Displacement: 40,650 tons
Speed: 20+ knots
Propulsion: Two conventional steam propulsion plants.
Medical: 600 beds including 6 operating rooms.
Homeport: San Diego, Calif.



Amphibious Assault Vehicle (AAV)

Enclosed aluminum hulled craft which carries up to 25 fully equipped Marines on the sea or over land. Equipped with turret mounted 12.7mm machine gun.



Landing Craft Air Cushion

The Landing Craft Air Cushion (LCAC) is a class of air-cushion vehicle (hovercraft) used as landing craft by the United States Navy's Assault Craft Units and the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force (JMSDF). They transport weapons systems, equipment, cargo and personnel of the assault elements of the Marine Air/Ground Task Force both from ship to shore and across the beach.

Hangar Bay Interior

USS Rushmore (LSD 47)

Cmdr. Thomas S. Stephens

CDR Stephens is a native of Jacksonville, Florida. He received his commission through Officer Candidate School (OCS) in 1997.

His sea tours include: Electrical Officer in USS PORTLAND (LSD 37) from 1998-2000; Ordnance Officer in USS DOYLE (FFG 39) from 2000-2001; Combat Systems Officer in USS NASSAU (LHA 4) from 2004-2006; and Combat Systems Officer in USS SAMPSON (DDG 102) from 2006-2008.

He served ashore as Class Officer at OCS, Pensacola, Florida from 2002-2004; as Operational Planner at U.S. Naval Forces Central Command, Bahrain from 2009-2010; and as Policy Advisor at the Defense Prisoner of War/Missing Personnel Office (DPMO) in Arlington, Virginia from 2010-2012.

CDR Stephens holds a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science from the University of West Florida (1996) and a Master of Arts in National Security and Strategic Studies from the U.S. Naval War College (2009). He is a graduate of the Maritime Advanced Warfighting School (MAWS) in Newport, Rhode Island (2009).

His awards include the Meritorious Service Medal, Navy Commendation Medal (three awards), Navy Achievement Medal (2 awards) and various unit and service awards.



USS Rushmore Stats

Complement: 396 Navy & 699 Marines (embarked)

Length: 684 ft. - Beam: 105 ft.

Max Speed: 28 knots

Displacement: 25,000 tons (full)



Cargo Capacity: 35,561 Cubic ft.

Vehicle Capacity: 25,000 Cubic ft.

Namesake: Mount Rushmore Natl. Monument

Keel Laid: November 9, 1987

COMMAND ELEMENT



The CE is comprised of the commanding officer, a Marine Corps colonel, and supporting staff of approximately 260 Marines and sailors. It provides the command and coordination essential for effective planning and execution of operations and synchronizes the actions of each element within the MEU.



The GCE is comprised of about 1,200 Marines and sailors and is built around an infantry battalion that is reinforced with an artillery battery, amphibious assault vehicles, combat engineers, reconnaissance, tanks and light-armored reconnaissance vehicles. 3rd Battalion, 1st Marines, known as the Thundering Third, is commanded by Lt. Col. Edward Greeley.



The ACE is an Osprey squadron consisting of about 500 Marines and sailors. Marine Medium Tiltrotor Squadron 161, also known as the Greyhawks, commanded by Lt. Col. Andreas Lavato, provides MV-22 Ospreys. Detachments from various units provide CH-53E Super Stallions, UH-1Y Hueys and AH-1W Super Cobras, as well as AV-8B Harrier jets. KC-130 transport planes are on standby ashore to support the MEU when needed.



The LCE is comprised of about 300 Marines and sailors. Combat Logistics Battalion 15 provides combat support such as supply, maintenance, transportation, explosive ordnance disposal, military police, water production and distribution, engineering, medical and dental services, fuel storage and distribution and other services to the deployed MEU. Lt. Col. Wilfred Rivera commands the LCE, which gives the MEU the ability to support itself for 15 days in any environment.



Shield

The gold line joining the blue of the Navy and the scarlet of the Marine Corps shows the unity of the two services. The gold border shows the unity required of amphibious operations. The number 2 stands for LHD 2.

Crest

The bald eagle with a shield on its breast is representative of the eagle used in the coat of arms of the fourth ship to bear the name USS Essex. The Marine officer's sword grasped in the eagle's talons shows that the embarked Marine units are Essex's main battery. The red banner stands for the sacrifice and valor required to win the thirteen battle stars in World War II and the four in the Korean War. The black color for the motto is meant to stand out for all to read and heed. The white border on the banner and the white stars symbolize the purity of cause for which the ship serves and the stars were won.

Supporters

The amphibious insignia over the Pacific Ocean symbolizes amphibious operations from the oceans of the world.

Chain

The gold chain surrounded by the five-sided coat of arms represents the five naval ships to bear the name USS Essex.



Shield

The shield is shaped like the patch worn by the crew of the original USS Anchorage. The two colors of the shield, scarlet and navy blue, represent the teamwork demonstrated between Marines and Sailors onboard. The transposed pile symbolizes the ship's ability to transport a landing force of up to 800 combat Marines in support of any operational contingency. The crossed fouled anchors derive from the anchor in the seal of the Municipality of Anchorage and also identify this as the second ship designated USS Anchorage. The entwined rope, which forms the letter "A," represents the families of Anchorage's Sailors and Marines.

Crest

The municipality of Anchorage is represented in the crest by the HMS Resolution (another feature from the municipality's seal) in a pictorial of Cook Inlet. Resolution was commanded by Captain James Cook, for whom the inlet is named, and figures prominently in the heritage of Anchorage, Alaska. The moose antlers framing the pictorial represent the municipality's motto: "Big Wild Life." The six red battle stars recognize the wartime accomplishments of the first ship named to honor Anchorage, LSD 36.

Scroll

The scroll hangs from sprigs from a Sitka Spruce tree, the official tree of Alaska. Red, white, and blue are the national colors and denote the allegiance Marine Corps and Navy servicemen and women have for their country.

Supporters

The crossed Navy officer sword and chief petty officer cutlass and Marine Corps officer and non-commissioned officer swords symbolize the teamwork of the ship's Navy-Marine Corps war fighting team.



Shield

Dark blue and gold are the colors traditionally associated with the Navy and represent the sea and excellence. South Dakota, the location of the Mount Rushmore Memorial for which the ship is named, is referred to by the gold and celeste inescutcheon, recalling the colors of the state flag. The three silver stars represent the World War II battle stars awarded to LSD 14, the first ship to bear the name RUSHMORE. The musket and cutlass symbolize traditional Navy values and the first amphibious operation conducted by the Navy and Marine Corps in Nassau in 1776 during the Revolutionary War. They are shown pointing down to denote nobility of purpose and restraint in the use of power, underscoring the motto. The alligator suggests the ultimate in amphibious power.

Crest

LSD 47 takes its name from the Mount Rushmore Memorial in South Dakota, a monument to the nobility and power of the four great Presidents depicted there. The two Black Hill spruce trees stand for the State of South Dakota where the Mount Rushmore monument is located and represent the old and the new ships to bear the name RUSHMORE. The mountain peak and trees, referring to the land, also recall the mission of USS Rushmore as a landing ship dock. Light blue suggests devotion and integrity; green represents vigilance and continuing service.

Supporters

The crossed Navy officer sword and chief petty officer cutlass and Marine Corps officer and non-commissioned officer swords symbolize the teamwork of the ship's Navy-Marine Corps war fighting team.



USS Essex (LHD 2) History

As the seventh frigate of a young United States Navy, the Essex vision began in 1798 when the ship's builder Enoch Briggs advertised for shipbuilding materials in the Salem Gazette: "Take Notice! Ye sons of freedom! Step forth and give your assistance in building the frigate to oppose French insolence and piracy! Let every man in possession of a white oak tree feel ambitious to be foremost in hurrying down the timber to Salem...where noble structure is to be fabricated and maintain your rights upon the seas and make the name of America respected among the nations of the world!"

The 32-gun frigate was launched on September 30, 1799, before a crowd of 12,000 people. During the war of 1812, Essex compiled a battle record unequalled by any other man-of-war, and by the close of 1813, she was noted in Navy registers as the only vessel of worth to be operating - all others had been damaged, captured or sunk.

The second ship to bear the name Essex was an ironclad steamer that was built in 1856 for use as a ferry. Originally named "New Era," she was renamed Essex following purchase by the War Department on September 20, 1861.

The third Essex, a wooden-screw steamer, was built by the United States at East Boston Massachusetts and was commissioned on October 3, 1876.

The fourth Essex (CV-9) was commissioned in December 1942. Built as the lead ship in the 'Essex' class of 24 World War II aircraft carriers, these aircraft carriers were the backbone of the Pacific Fleet and pivotal in the defeat of Japan.

Decommissioned in 1947, she was modernized and recommissioned in 1951 with a new angle-flight deck and streamlined superstructure and was reclassified 'CVA-9' on October 1, 1952. In 1960, Essex was converted to an antisubmarine warfare support carrier. On October 22, 1968, Essex recovered the Apollo 7 astronauts in the Atlantic and was decommissioned July 30, 1969.

Twenty years later on March 20, 1989, the fifth ship to bear the name Essex (LHD 2) became the second Wasp-class amphibious assault ship in the U.S. Naval fleet. She was commissioned October 17, 1992 in San Diego, California.

Essex completed three successful Western Pacific deployments over the next eight years and in July 2000, left San Diego to replace USS Belleau Wood (LHA 3) in Sasebo, Japan, successfully completing the largest hull swap in U.S. Navy history.

In April 2012, Essex completed a historic hull swap with USS Bonhomme Richard (LHD 6) and returned to her original homeport of San Diego in May 2012. In June 2012, she participated in a two-month Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC) Exercise. This 24-nation naval exercise assembled the largest multi-nation armada in modern history.

In September 2012, Essex began a \$200 million, 18-month Extended Drydock Planned Maintenance Availability (DPMA) - the largest non-carrier maintenance package in surface Navy history. Improvements included upgrades to support the U.S. Marine MV-22 Osprey, IT and computer networks, modernized the fuel oil stability compensation system and conducted a five-year Strength and Integrity Inspection on both boilers. The 1,000-plus officers and enlisted Essex crewmembers represent all 50 states and more than 24 nations. Essex successfully completed sea trials in April 2014 and was certified for flight ops in May 2014. Essex is currently the flag ship for the Essex Amphibious Ready Group deployed in the western Pacific.



USS Anchorage (LPD 23) History

Anchorage's keel was laid down on September 24, 2007, at the Avondale Shipyard in New Orleans, Louisiana, then owned by Northrop Grumman Ship Systems. The ship was launched on February 12, 2011. She was christened two months later, on May 14 — the first ship christened by Huntington Ingalls Industries since Northrop Grumman spun off its shipbuilding divisions as a separate company. The ship's sponsor is Annette Conway, wife of former Marine Corps Commandant General James T. Conway. The ship was formally delivered and accepted by the U.S. Navy on September 17, 2012. Anchorage was commissioned May 4, 2013, in her namesake city.

In 2014, Sailors assigned to Explosive Ordnance Disposal Mobile Unit (EODMU) 1 and divers from New Zealand, the Netherlands, Canada, Japan, Australia and Chile recovered their boats into the well deck of USS Anchorage after conducting night dive exercises off the coast of San Diego during Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC). In early August 2014, Anchorage participated in Underway Recovery Test 2, rehearsing scenarios for recovering an Orion space capsule. On 5 December 5, 2014, Anchorage served as the recovery vessel for Orion's Exploration Flight Test 1.

In May 2015, Anchorage departed on her maiden voyage as part of the Essex Amphibious Ready Group (ARG), which is comprised of Amphibious Squadron (PHIBRON) THREE and 15th Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU).



USS Rushmore (LSD 47) History

The ship's first assignment was to deliver three Air Cushioned Landing Craft (LCAC) to Camp Pendleton, California from Panama City, Florida. Along the way, Rushmore conducted a port visit in Jamaica, traversed the Panama Canal, and visited Rodman, Panama. Camp Pendleton was the last stop before arriving at her homeport of NS San Diego. During her first six-month deployment, Rushmore spearheaded the beach landing on Somalia during Operation Restore Hope. The largest military humanitarian operation in history, Restore Hope was designed to provide food and medical relief to the starving people of Somalia.

Rushmore deployed in 1999 with the Peleliu Amphibious Ready Group and the 11th Marine Expeditionary Unit (11th MEU). During this deployment, Rushmore participated in Exercise Iron Magic with the United Arab Emirates and Exercise Red Reef with Saudi Arabia. Rushmore also had the distinction of becoming the first United States Naval warship to visit Doha, Qatar in 10 years. Other port visits included Japan, Thailand, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Singapore, Guam, Australia and Hawaii. On March 12, 1999, the ship made history when then Commander Michelle J. Howard became its commanding officer and the first African American woman to Command a US Navy ship. Rushmore returned to San Diego in December 1999 and became the first "Smart Ship" to complete a six-month Western Pacific deployment.

With the new millennium, came a year of local operations for Rushmore. The Mighty Rushmore participated in CARAT 2001 in cooperation with allies in the Western Pacific, South China Sea and Southeast Asia. Returning home just days prior to the September 11 attacks, The Rushmore began preparations to deploy to areas of national security interests. After coming out of "the yards" the USS Rushmore participated in RIMPAC 2002 with a host of nations off the shores of Hawaii. The ship set sail in the early month of January 2003 in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom as part of the USS Bonhomme Richard Amphibious Ready Group (ARG).

The ship deployed on December 6, 2004 once again in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom as part of the Bonhomme Richard Expeditionary Strike Group (ESG 5). On the way to the Fifth Fleet Area of Responsibility, a cataclysmic earthquake occurred, which would change the course of Rushmore and begin a massive U.S. military humanitarian operation, dubbed Operation Unified Assistance. The powerful tsunami that caused tidal waves and flooding in Southeast Asia took the lives of more than 100,000 people in a matter of hours. USS Rushmore and the elements of Expeditionary Strike Group FIVE were called into action.

Rushmore certified in ULTRA-C in May 2008 and sailed to Seattle, Washington, to take part in the Centennial Celebration of the Great White Fleet on 22 May. She participated in a parade of ships and later hosted tours to both the general public and guests for the gala. In late September 2008, Rushmore sailed to Esquimalt, British Columbia, Canada, to serve as the test platform for developing ASW systems in the Nanose Firing Range. While there, Rushmore had a three-day port visit and was hosted by HMCS Regina (FFH 334).

On September 17, 2012, the Rushmore set sail with the USS Peleliu (LHA 5), and USS Green Bay (LPD-20) as part of the 15th Marine Expeditionary Unit and Amphibious Ready Group (PHIBRON) Three routine deployment to the Western Pacific and Indian Ocean. This deployment included participation in Exercise Crocodilo in Timor-Leste, Exercise Iron Magic in UAE, Exercise Red Reef in Saudi Arabia and Exercise Eager Mace in Kuwait. It also included a port visit to Pearl Harbor, Hawaii; Darwin, Australia; Naval Support Activity Bahrain and Kahlifa Port near Abu Dhabi, UAE.