

1981



USS SAIPAN (LHA-2) FPO NEW YORK 09549

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[REDACTED] --- (Unclassified upon removal of enclosures 2, 8 & 11)

From: COMMANDING OFFICER, USS SAIPAN (LHA-2)
To: CHIEF OF NAVAL OPERATIONS (OP-05D2)
Subj: COMMAND HISTORY, 1981 (OPNAV Report 5750-1)
Ref: (a) OPNAVINST 5750.12C

- Encl:
- (1) Command History, 1981, USS SAIPAN (LHA-2)
 - (2) Exercise Phiblex 11-80A Narrative (Classified)
 - (3) Operational Propulsion Plant Examination Narrative
 - (4) Amphibious Warfare Type Training
 - (5) Marg 3-81 Forward Deployment
 - (6) Exercise Ocean Venture Phase VII Narrative
 - (7) Exercise Display Determination Narrative
 - (8) Contingency and Special Operations Narrative (Classified)
 - (9) Exercise Crisex 81 Narrative
 - (10) Enroute to/from Indian Ocean Operations Narrative
 - (11) Exercise Bright Star 82 Narrative (Classified)
 - (12) Exercise Phiblex 12-81 Narrative
 - (13) Change of Command Brochure

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1. In accordance with reference (a), enclosures (1) through (13) are submitted.

J.W. Renard
J.W. RENARD

Copy To:
Director Naval History (OP-09BH)
COMPHEBGEN TWO (w/o enclosures)
COMPHEBRON TWO (w/o enclosures)

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COMMAND HISTORY
USS SAIPAN (LHA-2)
1 JAN 81 - 31 DEC 81

1. COMMAND ORGANIZATION

A. COMMANDING OFFICER

CAPTAIN R.G. MURPHY, USN 1 JAN 81 - 20 JUN 81
CAPTAIN J.W. RENARD, USN 20 JUN 81 - 31 DEC 81

B. MISSION

(1) TO EMBARK, DEPLOY AND LAND ELEMENTS OF A MARINE AMPHIBIOUS LANDING FORCE IN AN ASSAULT BY HELICOPTER, LANDING CRAFT, AMPHIBIOUS VEHICLES OR A COMBINATION OF ALL THREE.

(2) EVACUATION AND DISASTER RELIEF

C. COMPOSITION OF COMMAND. THE CREW OF USS SAIPAN CONSISTS OF 61 OFFICERS AND 794 ENLISTED MEN. ADDITIONAL EMBARKED UNITS INCLUDE A MARINE AMPHIBIOUS UNIT CONSISTING OF A HEADQUARTERS STAFF, BATTALION LANDING TEAM AND COMPOSITE HELICOPTER SQUADRON OF 118 OFFICERS AND 1,169 COMBAT TROOPS.

D. UNITS EMBARKED

(1) MARG 3-80

(A) COMMANDER AMPHIBIOUS SQUADRON EIGHT

(B) 34 MAU

(C) BATTALION LANDING TEAM 1/8

(D) MARINE MEDIUM HELICOPTER SQUADRON 162

(E) ASSAULT CRAFT UNIT TWO

(F) TACTICAL AIR CONTROL SQUADRON TWO ONE DETACHMENT MIKE

(2) MARG 3-81

(A) COMMANDER AMPHIBIOUS SQUADRON TWO (19 SEP-31 DEC 1981)

(B) 32 MAU

(C) BATTALION LANDING TEAM 2/6

(D) MARINE MEDIUM HELICOPTER SQUADRON 264

(E) ASSAULT CRAFT UNIT TWO

(F) TACTICAL AIR CONTROL SQUADRON TWO TWO DETACHMENT MIKE

(G) COMMANDER AMPHIBIOUS GROUP TWO (18 AUG 81- 19 SEP 81)

E. HOMEPORT: NAVAL STATION NORFOLK, VIRGINIA

2. SUMMARY OF OPERATIONS

A. 1-4 JAN INPORT BARCELONA, SPAIN
B. 5-6 JAN UNDERWAY ENROUTE NAPLES, ITALY
C. 7-18 JAN RESTRICTED AVAILABILITY, NAPLES, ITALY
D. 19-22 JAN UNDERWAY ENROUTE "PHIBLEX 11-80A" (ENCL 2)
E. 23-29 JAN "PHIBLEX 11-80A" (ENCL 2)
F. 30 JAN-2FEB UNDERWAY ENROUTE ROTA, SPAIN
G. 3-11 FEB DESNAIL OPERATIONS, TURNOVER WITH MARG 1-81, ROTA, SPAIN
H. 12-23 FEB UNDERWAY ENROUTE MOREHEAD CITY, NC, OFFLOAD 34 MAU, HMM-162, BLT 1/8

J. 24-25 FEB UNDERWAY ENROUTE NAVAL STATION, NORFOLK, VA

K. 25 FEB ARRIVE NAVAL STATION, NORFOLK, VA, COMLETING
A 27 AUG 80 - 25 FEB 81 FORWARD DEPLOYMENT

L. 26 FEB-31 MAR INPORT NAVAL STATION, NORFOLK, VA
(1) 2-27 MAR RESTRICTED AVAILABILITY
(2) 27 MAR COMPHIBRON TWO DEBARK, COMPHIBGRU TWO EMBARK
(3) 29 MAR-20 APR INTERMEDIATE MAINTENANCE AVAILABILITY-USS
PIEDMONT

M. 1 APR UNDERWAY ENGINEERING TRAINING AND MOBILE
TRAINING TEAM PRE-OPERATIONAL PROPULSION
PLANT EXAMINATION (OPPE), VIRGINIA CAPES

N. 13-19 APR INPORT NAVAL STATION, NORFOLK, VA
(1) 16 APR COMPHIBGRU TWO DEBARK

O. 20-22 APR WHISKEY ANCHORAGE, HAMPTON ROADS, AMMUNITION
OFFLOAD

P. 22-30 APR INPORT NAVAL STATION, NORFOLK, VA

Q. 30 APR-3 MAY UNDERWAY FOR OPERATIONAL PROPULSION PLANT
EXAMINATION (OPPE) (ENCL 3)

R. 4 MAY INPORT NAVAL STATION, NORFOLK, VA

S. 5 MAY UNDERWAY FOR NORFOLK NAVAL SHIPYARD, PORTS-
MOUTH, VA

T. 5 MAY-22JUN DRYDOCK NORFOLK NAVAL SHIPYARD, PORTSMOUTH,
VA
(1) 20 JUN CHANGE OF COMMAND

U. 22 JUN-2 JUL BERTH 42 NORFOLK NAVAL SHIPYARD, PORTSMOUTH,
VA

V. 2 JUL UNDERWAY FOR NAVAL STATION, NORFOLK, VA

W. 2-6 JUL INPORT NAVAL STATION, NORFOLK, VA

X. 6-10 JUL WHISKEY -ANCHORAGE, HAMPTON ROADS, AMMUNITION
RELOAD

Y. 10-12 JUL INPORT NAVAL STATION, NORFOLK, VA
(1) 13-16 JUL COMPHIBRON TWO EMBARK

Z. 13-30 JUL TYPE TRAINING (ENCL 4)
(1) 13-16 JUL UNDERWAY MEDITERRANEAN AMPHIBIOUS READY GROUP
(MARG 3-81) BLUE WATER WEEK
(2) 17-19 JUL INPORT NAVAL STATION, NORFOLK, VA
(3) 19-31 JUL UNDERWAY MARG 3-81 WORKUPS
(4) 20 JUL EMBARK 32 MAU, HMM 264, BLT 2/6, MOREHEAD CITY,
NC
(5) 21-29 JUL AMPHIBIOUS OPERATIONS, ONSLOW BEACH, NC
(6) 29 JUL DEBARK 32 MAU, HMM 264, BLT 2/6, MOREHEAD CITY,
NC
(7) 30-31 JUL UNDERWAY ENROUTE NAVAL STATION, NORFOLK, VA

AA. 31 JUL-3 SEP INPORT NAVAL STATION, NORFOLK, VA
(1) 5-28 AUG INTERMEDIATE AVAILABILITY-USS VULCAN
(2) 10 AUG COMPHIBRON TWO DEBARK
(3) 18 AUG COMPHIBGRU TWO EMBARK

BB. 3 SEP MARG 3-81 UNDERWAY ENROUTE MOREHEAD CITY, NC

	AND FORWARD DEPLOYMENT (ENCL 5) MEDIA EMBARK
(1) 3 SEP	
CC. 4 SEP	EMBARK 32 MAU, HMM 264, BLT 2/6 MOREHEAD CITY, NC
DD. 5-14 SEP	UNDERWAY ENROUTE TO EXERCISE OCEAN VENTURE 81 PHASE VII
EE. 15-18 SEP (1)	EXERCISE OCEAN VENTURE PHASE VII (ENCL 6) MEDIA EMBARK
FF. 19 SEP (1) (2) (3)	ANCHOR ROTA, SPAIN COMPHIBGRU TWO DEBARK COMPHIBRON TWO EMBARK INCHOP SIXTH FLEET
GG. 20-21 SEP	UNDERWAY ENROUTE EXERCISE DISPLAY DETERMINATION 81
HH. 20 SEP	TRANSIT STRAIT OF GIBRALTAR
II. 22-26 SEP	EXERCISE DISPLAY DETERMINATION 81 WESTERN MEDITERRANEAN (ENCL 7)
(1) 23-24 SEP	MEDIA EMBARK
(2) 24 SEP	12,000TH LANDING (BY HMM-264 CH-46)
JJ. 27-28 SEP	UNDERWAY ENROUTE NAPLES, ITALY
KK. 29 SEP-3 OCT	INPORT ANCHORAGE NAPLES, ITALY
LL. 3 OCT	UNDERWAY ENROUTE SOUDA BAY, CRETE FOR CTF 61 TURNOVER
MM. 6 OCT	ANCHOR SOUDA BAY, CRETE
NN. 7 OCT	UNDERWAY ENROUTE SPECIAL CONTINGENCY OPERATIONS EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN, MODLOC
OO. 8-9 OCT	AT SEA EASTERN MED CONTINGENCY MODLOC (ENCL 8)
PP. 10 OCT	UNDERWAY ENROUTE SPECIAL OPERATIONS SEA OF MARMARA
QQ. 11-15 OCT	AT SEA SPECIAL OPERATIONS SEA OF MARMARA (ENCL 8)
(1) 14 OCT	13,000TH LANDING (BY USS SAIPAN UH-1N)
RR. 16 OCT	UNDERWAY ENROUTE EASTERN MED CONTINGENCY MODLOC
SS. 17-18 OCT	AT SEA EASTERN MED CONTINGENCY MODLOC (ENCL 8)
TT. 19-21 OCT	UNDERWAY ENROUTE VALENCIA, SPAIN
UU. 22-26 OCT (1) 23-24 OCT	INPORT VALENCIA, SPAIN VADM ROWDEN, COMSIXTHFLT EMBARK
VV. 26 OCT	UNDERWAY ENROUTE EXERCISE CRISEX 81
WW. 27 OCT-3 NOV (1) 1-3 NOV	EXERCISE CRISEX 81 GARRUCHA, SPAIN (ENCL 9) COMCRUDESGRU EIGHT RADM MCCAULEY EMBARK
XX. 4-7 NOV	UNDERWAY ENROUTE ATHENS, GREECE
YY. 8-21 NOV	RESTRICTED AVAILABILITY, ATHENS, GREECE
ZZ. 22 NOV-30 NOV (1) 23 NOV (2) 24 NOV (3) 25 NOV	UNDERWAY ENROUTE INDIAN OCEAN OPERATIONS (ENCL 11) 14,000TH LANDING (BY HMM-264 CH-46) ANCHOR PORT SAID, EGYPT UNDERWAY TRANSIT SUEZ CANAL

(4) 26-28 NOV	TRANSIT RED SEA
(5) 29 NOV	TRANSIT BAB-EL-MANDEB STRAITS INTO GULF OF ADEN
(6) 30 NOV-3 DEC	TRANSIT ENROUTE AMPHIBIOUS OPS OFF OMAN
AAA. 4-7 DEC	EXERCISE BRIGHT STAR 82 (ENCL 11)
BBB. 8-18 DEC	UNDERWAY ENROUTE PHIBLEX 12-81
(1) 8-9 DEC	TRANSIT ARABIAN SEA/GULF OF ADEN
(2) 9 DEC	TRANSIT BAB-EL-MANDEB STRAITS; 15000TH LANDING (BY HMM-264 CH-46)
(3) 10-13 DEC	TRANSIT RED SEA
(4) 13 DEC	ANCHOR PORT SUEZ, EGYPT
(5) 14 DEC	TRANSIT SUEZ CANAL
(6) 15-18 DEC	TRANSIT EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN ENROUTE PHIBLEX 12-81
CCC. 19-21 DEC	EXERCISE PHIBLEX 12-81 CAPO TEULADA, SARDINIA (ENCL 12)
DDD. 22 DEC	UNDERWAY ENROUTE BARCELONA, SPAIN
EEE. 23-31 DEC	INPORT BARCELONA, SPAIN
(1) 24 DEC	UNDERWAY; ANCHORED BARCELONA DUE TO WINDS
(2) 26 DEC	REMOOR INPORT BARCELONA, SPAIN

3. SPECIAL TOPICS

A. USS SAIPAN WAS FORWARD DEPLOYED SIX MONTHS DURING 1981 AND PARTICIPATED IN SIX MAJOR EXERCISES--OCEAN VENTURE, DISPLAY DETERMINATION 81, CRISEX 81, BRIGHT STAR 82 AND TWO PHIBLEX'S--AND TWO SPECIAL OPERATIONS.

B. STATISTICAL INFORMATION

- (1) MILES STEAMED:
- (2) AIRCRAFT LANDINGS: 5,691 HELICOPTER/5 AV-8
- (3) AIRCRAFT EMBARKED

(A) MARG 3-80

- 8 CH-53
- 12 CH-46
- 4 AH-1T
- 3 UH-1N

(B) MARG 3-81

- 4 CH-53
- 12 CH-46
- 4 AH-1T
- 3 UH-1N

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Exercise PHIBLEX 11-80A Narrative

(C) From 23-29 January 1981, MARG 3-80 units including USS SAIPAN, USS EL PASO (LKA-117) and USS NEWPORT (LST-1179) conducted a joint landing with elements of the Tunisian Armed Forces at Bizerte, Tunisia. Live fire was held during the Amphibious landing and several days were spent "cross training". The "cross training" consisted primarily of weapons orientation for both U.S. and Tunisian Marines. Tunisian Marines were brought to the three amphibious ships prior to D-day and participated in initial operations, landing by both sea and air.

ENCLOSURE 2

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OPERATIONAL PROPULSION PLANT EXAMINATION

On 3 May 1981, SAIPAN successfully completed the very demanding and arduous Operational Propulsion Plant Examination (OPPE) with an overall Satisfactory grade in all areas. This was a significant accomplishment considering the complexity of the engineering plant. Most significantly, SAIPAN was the first LHA to successfully pass an OPPE to the level I boiler flex test with the Automated Propulsion System (APS) installed. This major achievement is of particular interest because SAIPAN had just completed a major repair period after a standown following and extended forward deployment.

AMPHIBIOUS WARFARE TYPE TRAINING

From 13 to 16 July 81, SAIPAN conducted a post shipyard restricted availability shakedown and initial pre-deployment workups. This included general shipboard drills such as General Quarters and Man-overboard, maneuvering, engineering, damage control and gun firing exercises to check out all shipboard systems. One of the most strenuous and impressive exercises was the towing of another ship. While towing exercises or TOWEX's are common place for smaller combatants, it is highly unusual to see a ship the size of SAIPAN tow another ship. SAIPAN set a precedent for Atlantic Fleet LHA's and probably all ships of her class, when she took USS BARNSTABLE COUNTY (LST-1197) under tow.

Between 20 and 30 July SAIPAN conducted predeployment workups including boat operations and a practice surface assault at Camp Pendleton, VA. This was followed by a transit to Morehead City, NC to embark the 32nd Marine Amphibious Unit, including Battalion Landing Team 2/6 and Marine Composite Helicopter Squadron (HMM) 264. SAIPAN then set to sea to conduct joint Navy/Marine Corps underway training and an amphibious assault on Onslow Beach, NC. The amphibious operations were highlighted by a practice Non-Combatant Evacuation Operation (NEO) during which personnel from Camp Lejeune were "evacuated" to SAIPAN, given medical care, fed and processed for temporary berthing and subsequent transfer. The NEO operations even included a simulated foreign national seeking political asylum.

MARG 3-81 FORWARD DEPLOYMENT

On 3 September 1981, USS SAIPAN, with RADM W.A. KEARNS, Commander Amphibious Group Two embarked, departed Norfolk, Va and joined with USS RALEIGH (LPD-1) and USS BARNSTABLE COUNTY (LST-1197) enroute Morehead City, NC. In Morehead City the three ships embarked the 32nd Marine Amphibious Unit (MAU) including a headquarters staff, Marine Helicopter Squadron (HMM)-264 and Battalion Landing Team 2/6 to form Mediterranean Amphibious Ready Group (MARG) 3-81 and subsequently forward deploy. The Norfolk to Morehead City transit was observed by the following media representatives:

DIDIER FAUQUEUZ, AGENCE FRANCE PRESS
JENS ECKHARDT, ANDLSBLATT, HAMBURG, GERMANY
JOHN STEVENSON, VIRGINIAN PILOT, NORFOLK, VA
PHIL BUDAHN, DAILY PRESS, NEWPORT NEWS, VA
CAPTAIN JOHN PETERS, USA, CINCLANT PAO ESCORT

Exercise OCEAN VENTURE PHASE VII 81

After departing Morehead City, N.C. on 5 Sep 82, USS SAIPAN and MARG 3-81 commenced and easterly transit of the Atlantic enroute the Exercise OCEAN VENTURE PHASE VII oparea in the vicinity of the Canary Islands. The MARG was joined by USS GUAM (LPH-9), USS WAINWRIGHT (CG-28), USS JOHN ROGERS (DD-983), USS COONTZ (DDG-40), USS CONYNGHAM (DDG-17), USS McCloy (FF-1078) and USS KALAMAZOO (AOR-6) to form Task Force Two Two under the command of RADM Kearns. On 15 and 16 Sep TF22 conducted a simulated opposed transit of the Eastern Atlantic with the Spanish carrier DEDALO (PA-11), Spanish Naval Ships DESCUBIERTA (F-731), DIANA (F-34), BALEARES (F-71), ANDALUCIA (F-72), CATALUNA (F-73), three submarines and two patrol boats providing the opposition. After two days of "War at Sea" the US and Spanish forces joined for two days of combined exercises, while they transited enroute Rota, Spain.

The following media personnel were aboard on 17 Sep 82 to cover the exercise activity:

Mr. John Stevenson	Virginian Pilot, Norfolk, VA
Mr. Tim Hardinge	ABC News, Madrid, Spain
Capt John Peters, USAF	CINCLANT PAO Escort

Enclosure (6)

Exercise DISPLAY DETERMINATION 81

Exercise DISPLAY DETERMINATION 81 was a major NATO Southern region exercise involving ground, naval, and air forces from seven Allied nations. The objective of the exercise was to demonstrate NATO's capability to defend and reinforce the Southern region and was designed to enhance the effectiveness, readiness, cross-training, and coordination between participating forces. MARG 3-81 participated in Phase I of the exercise. Screened by USS BIDDLE (CG-34), ITS INTREPIDO (D571), ITS LUPO (F564), and ITS ARDITO (D550); the amphibious task group conducted an opposed transit of the western Mediterranean in order to conduct an amphibious landing in Southern Sardinia. The Task Group successfully defended itself from air, surface, and submarine attack; and on 24 September a combined surface and heliborne assault was conducted at Capo Teulada. Ashore the marines conducted cross-training with Italian forces, while the naval forces conducted live naval gunfire and fixed wing aircraft from USS NIMITZ (CVN-68) flew close air support sorties.

On 23-24 SEP 82 the following media representatives were aboard SAIPAN to observe the amphibious operations:

Mark Meyer	TIME LIFE
Drew Middleton	New York Times
Hal Walker	ABC News
Paul Tilsley	ABC News - Producer
Ron Headford	ABC News - Cameraman
Alan Lewis	ABC News - Soundman
Rick Maze	Navy Times
Bob Dudney	U.S. News and World Report

Mary Lord	Newsweek
Bob Trautman	Reuters
Frank Greve	Knight Ridder
Ed O'brien	Newhouse
Michael Klare	The Nation
Bill Shipp	Atlanta Constitution
Larry Levy	Tulsa Tribune
Gary Truman	Photo Comm (Photographer)
Kauli Virtanen	UUSI SUOMI (Finnish Newspaper)
CDR Doug McCurrach	USCINCEUR Public Arrairs Escort
LT J.P. Smallwood	COMSIXTHFLT Assistant PAO
PH1 D.P. Tesner	COMSIXTHFLT Staff Photographer

The media tour was very successful and the SECDEF after action report for the DOD Sponsored Media Tour of REFORGER 81 said: "Media highly praised the appreciative welcome, high level briefings, cooperation of escorts, and sincere assistance rendered them while on board SAIPAN."

(SECDEF WASHINGTON DC//ASD:PA/DDI//201911Z NOV 81)

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CONTINGENCY and SPECIAL OPERATIONS

(C) On 6 OCT 82 MARG 3-81 units conducted turnover and relieved MARG 2-81 at anchor in Souda Bay, Crete. Only hours after the turnover MARG 3-81 under the command of Commander Task Force SIX ONE (COMPHIBRON TWO - CAPT BURNHAM C. McCAFFREE) was ordered to sortie from Souda Bay and proceed to a contingency station off the coast of Egypt in reaction to the assassination of Egyptian President Anwar Sadat. SAIPAN was the first to arrive on station and Capt. McCaffree became the officer in tactical command. SAIPAN remained on the contingency station through late 9 OCT 82 when she was directed to proceed to the Sea of Marmara for previous planned special operations after being relieved by CTF 60.

(C) SAIPAN operated in the Sea of Marmara from 11 through 15 OCT 82, while embarked helicopters from HMM-264 assisted the U.S. Army in the movement of weapons in Turkey.

(C) After the Sea of Marmara Special Operations, SAIPAN again returned to the Eastern Mediterranean Contingency station where she remained until MARG 3-81 was detached on 20 OCT 82.

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Enclosure (8)

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Exercise CRISEX 81

In late October and early November MARG 3-81 participated in CRISEX 1-81, a bilateral exercise with Spain. On 27 October the MARG joined a Spanish Amphibious Task Force, off the southern coast of Spain. The joint task forces defended itself against attacks by Spanish aircraft, submarines, and patrol boats while enroute to Garrucha, Spain. A rehearsal landing was conducted on 29 October, with D-day following on the morning of 30 October. During the days after the landing joint US/Spanish operations ashore, defense of the AOA, and simulated Naval Gunfire Support highlighted operations. While amphibious forces conducted operations at Garrucha, a Spanish Carrier Task Group and a U.S. carrier Task Force centered around SN DEDALO(PA11) and USS AMERICA (CV-66) conducted joint operations off the eastern coast of Spain and provided fighter and close air support for the amphibious task force.

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Exercise BRIGHT STAR 82

(C) While enroute Exercise BRIGHT STAR 82 the MARG conducted joint operations with CORAL SEA (CV-43) Battle Group. On 4 DEC, SAIPAN began its participation in BRIGHT STAR as a component of the task group of the naval forces assigned to the Rapid Deployment Task Force. The culmination of the participation in the exercise was a landing in Oman. Under the observation of the Sultan of Oman's forces, 1,000 marines were landed, remained ashore for 24 hours, and were returned to the ships of the MARG.

Enclosure (11)

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Exercise PHIBLEX 12-81

After completing the northbound transit of the Suez Canal on 14 December, USS SAIPAN and MARG 3-81 began a direct transit to Capo Tuelada and PHIBLEX 12-81. The PHIBLEX, scheduled for 19-21 December, was reduced in scope due to adverse weather conditions. Live firing exercises of Marine Cobra helicopters highlighted operations at Capo Tuelada.