

Marine Corps News

Elite training sharpens unit's lethal skills

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CENTRAL COMMAND THEATER OF OPERATION

(July 15, 2006) -- It doesn't matter where you hide – they can get you wherever you run. They'll appear like ghosts and fade behind the smoke of their bursts. They'll come from the depths of the sea. They'll fall from the sky. They'll offer the enemy no shelter and extend no mercy.

They're the Marines of the 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable), Maritime Special Purpose Force, 2nd Force Reconnaissance Battalion, and they're coming to a theater of operation near you.

Recently appearing in the Central Command Theater of Operation, MSPF Marines participated in underwater dive and aerial free fall/static line training that helped to enhance and maintain their collection of lethal, all-purpose skills – serving to highlight the unit's role as the lead element in one of America's premier expeditionary rapid-response forces.

The dive training held in the Red Sea was to re-familiarize the Marines with their scuba equipment and to train with the Diver Propulsion Device – an underwater machine that operates like a handheld torpedo, capable of effortlessly transporting two Marines to an insertion point, said Staff Sgt. Chris Williamson, Dive Team leader and a native of Marco Island, Fla.

"The DPD is a means of easier, longer range insertions than finning," said Williamson. "This is definitely a realistic means of inserting into an objective. We rely on the machine to do the propulsion and we'll hit the beach fresh, alert and ready to do the mission. It's a great tool."

The DPD features a compass board and depth gauge that helps the Marines navigate while submerged. The machine is capable of operating for approximately two hours, giving the Marines an "over the horizon" range of attack, said Williamson. Paired with re-breather scuba gear that eliminates tell-tale bubbles, Recon Marines can insert into the battle space with their patented silence, ready to engage the enemy.

The clear water of the Red Sea also helped the Marines to work on sustaining formations as they move on DPDs in six-man dive teams, said Cpl. Isaac Moore, the team's radio operator who hails from Santa Fe, N.M. Moore said that because of the pristine water they were able to "learn a lot of the capabilities of the DPD," something they often don't see in the darker ocean water in Onslow Bay.

"In the dark, you have to pay more attention to what you're doing and focus a lot harder," said Moore. "You have to trust the gauges and learn to read your buddies. Once you dive here, in



Marines assigned to the Maritime Special Purpose Force of the 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable) train with the Diver Propulsion Device while diving in the Red Sea July 14. The MSPF Marines used the training to hone their dive skills while deployed to the Central Command theater of operation.

the clear water, you can see how fast they go. It makes a big difference."

Before deploying in June, the Recon element helped the MEU earn its "Special Operations Capable" designation during its pre-deployment phase, signifying the MEU's proficiency in some two dozen missions spanning the spectrum of conflict. Continuing to work in concert with their MEU counterparts, MSPF Marines have demonstrated a leading-edge mentality and combat readiness that corresponds with their legendary warrior status. With unrelenting diligence, they'll continue to bring the fight to the opposition's doorstep while remaining swift, silent and deadly.

The MEU has returned to CENTCOM for the first time since completing a seven-month combat tour in Iraq in February 2005 and is composed of its Command Element; Battalion Landing Team, 1st Battalion, 8th Marine Regiment; HMM-365 (Rein); and MEU Service Support Group 24.

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