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# Riverine Sailors Complete Final Phase of Unit Level Training

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FORT KNOX, Ky. (NNS) -- Riverine Squadron (RIVRON) 1, Detachment 2, completed its final phase of unit-level training to include category IV live-fire exercises on the Salt River at Fort Knox, Ky., May 8-11.

Category IV live-fire drills are designed to challenge the squadron by presenting real-world scenarios that might occur during maritime security operations and global deployments.

Throughout the training 55 Sailors, donned in full-body armor, practiced around-the-clock with one to four Riverine patrol boat (RPB) formations concentrating on effective patrolling techniques to defend against enemy attacks. Four-boat formation is used by Riverines on the river ways when they are extracting Riverine Sailors from hostile fire or inserting a Riverine Security Team (RST) ashore.

The three-day evolution was led by the Maritime Land and Warfare Training Cell from Riverine Group (RIVGRU) 1.

Before training began the training cell gave a safety brief to the Riverines including daily weather forecast, that might affect visibility or restrict mobility like fog or rain, and wild-life in the area that might be aggressive or may cause illness from bites. The training cell also gave instruction on properly handling each weapon because of the high risks of a possible mishap or a Sailor firing weapons too close to each other.

The training cell pushed scenarios out to the detachment that forced the team to react to land and waterborne activities. After each evolution the boat crews and training cell debriefed and discussed discrepancies and strategies that related to positioning boats, using effective fire power and proper communications.

"We have to crawl before we walk," said Lt. Gordan Van Hook RIVRON 1, Det. 2, officer in charge. "This training prepared us to be able to transition to the final mission problem (FMP) phase before we qualify as a deployable unit ready to answer the call when needed."

Van Hook explained the goal is to assure every Riverine Sailor is trained in all areas of operation, and to build trust and confidence within the unit.

The coxswain was instructed to navigate the boat like a normal patrol until the exercise built up to the scenario phase.

Riverines navigated the RPBs slowly down river at five to 10 knots, not one Riverine onboard knew what would happen next. Once the scenarios kicked into action, the sky was filled with smoke bombs and flares, the sounds of live-fire ammunition shooting from multiple boats side-by-side as the Sailors were brought deeper into the scenario.

"It was a challenge to maneuver the boats with all the smoke and loud guns firing all round us," said Electronics Technician 2nd Class Alexander Hoover, RIVRON 1, Det 2. "You really had to keep your focus so our crews could stay safe."

RPB crews are manned with five gunners, the coxswain and the boat captain. The gunners have a specific area of responsibility and sector of fire to protect the crew and take down enemy targets; the coxswain navigates the boat and positions the boat in formations away from the danger areas; the boat captain assesses every aspect of his boat from functions and capabilities to communicating formation orders and proper firing direction and target points to the gunners.

"Communication is single point of success," said Chief Quartermaster Joshua Orbich, RIVRON 1, Det. 2, boat captain. "Accurate information being communicated from boat to boat or to the Riverine Security Team (RST) on land is essential to every evolution."

Riverines are able to operate 24 hours a day. Training days were usually 16 to 18 hours long. Sailors ate Meals Ready-to-Eat for sustainment and used night vision see. Without night vision, the Riverines would not be able to locate targets or navigate the boats and operations would have to stop.

During the live-fire training, the detachment practiced various scenarios including recovery of an inoperable RPB using line ropes to secure and drag the downed boat out of danger and rescue and recover Riverine Sailors.

"The training was stressful but amazing," said Hoover. "It was an eye opener driving a boat 40 knots under night vision and seeing boats in front of you shooting at their 9 o'clock and a boat

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behind you shooting at their 9 o'clock, knowing that if you mess up at any given time you could drive your entire craft and crew into harm's way."

Riverines are the combat arms force of NECC and will merge with Maritime Expeditionary Security Force to establish Coastal Riverine Force June 1.

CORIVFOR will perform core maritime expeditionary security missions in the green and brown waters bridging the gap between traditional Navy blue water operations and land-based forces, spanning the capabilities that currently reside with the riverine and expeditionary security force.

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