

# UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS

COMMAND ELEMENT  
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8 Mar 09

From: Commanding Officer

Subj: PHONE MESSAGE #3 (3 minutes)

Hello again to all the extended family and friends of 13<sup>th</sup> Marine Expeditionary Unit. My name is Colonel David Coffman and I am the Commanding Officer of the 13<sup>th</sup> MEU.

Well, it's been two months now since we left San Diego aboard the ships of the Boxer Expeditionary Strike Group. Today is March 8<sup>th</sup>. Since my last message, we have completed our trip across the Pacific Ocean and are now established in the United States Central Command Area of Responsibility in the Middle East. Better get out your atlas, I'm sure you will want to find the interesting ports of call and exercise locations your Marines have experienced in the Western Pacific and Indian Ocean, including Penang, Malaysia; Phuket, Thailand; the city-state of Singapore; and a terrific exercise with our friends in the Maldives. I will leave it to YOUR Marine to describe the particular stops they experienced, as each of our three ships took different routes to our final working area over here. Suffice to say, it was an interesting and rewarding transit. We met all our objectives and arrived here in CENTCOM physically, mentally, and spiritually prepared for combat on the 27<sup>th</sup> of February.

This is it! This is why we formed and trained and deployed: to get to CENTCOM, the decisive theater of operations for our time. And we are already being put to work! On the 3<sup>rd</sup> of March, the CH-53E heavy lift helicopter Detachment from our squadron flew off USS Boxer enroute to Al Anbar Province in Iraq. These Marines are the first from 13<sup>th</sup> MEU to get called into the fight and I am confident they will serve with honor and distinction during their time in Iraq. Meanwhile, part of the MEU is conducting training exercises ashore with our partners in the region, and those of us embarked on Boxer are moving towards the Gulf of Aden where we will be supporting counter-piracy operations to improve the maritime security in this key shipping lane. We will continue doing multiple tasks like this throughout our time in CENTCOM: support to OIF or OEF when tasked, exercises with friendly countries, counter-piracy or other work in support of the Naval Component out here, and of course continued sustainment training ashore and afloat so that we will remain ready for any contingencies that may require our services.

I want to reassure you again that your Marine will not be asked to do anything over here that we are not trained and equipped to do. I know it's difficult back at home wondering what we're up to and what may be next. But please remain confident in

your Marine and in our cohesive, well-led, well-trained, team. We are ready to serve and ready for the challenges ahead. As always, if you have specific concerns or questions about this deployment or your Marine's personal or family readiness, our full-time Family Readiness Officer Mr. Bryan Vaughn is a good starting point to get answers or assistance.

Thank you for supporting your Marine and what he is doing in this critical period in history. And, as we tell our bosses out here at the forward edge, remember to "THINK THIRTEENTH!" I know you are proud of your Marine and what they are doing to protect our country, and so am I!