

Rivex helps enhance riverine combat capabilities

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USS WASP – Guerilla forces have taken control of the New River in the “country of Onslow.” These revolutionaries are using the waterway to transport illegal cargo through the port of Swansboro in an attempt to overthrow the government of this developing nation. All attempts to counterattack the enemy have been unsuccessful, and the government has requested assistance from the United States.

That's the scenario behind Riverine Exercise 2001 here, a joint-force exercise comprised of assets from the Marine Corps, Navy, Army and Coast Guard.

Joint Mobile Riverine Force (JMRF), a unique combination of command elements from 2nd Marine Division, Camp Lejeune, N.C., and Naval Amphibious Group-2, Norfolk, Va. is commanding the attack against these guerilla forces. Heading the JMRF is Maj. Gen. Robert R. Blackman Jr. and his Deputy Commander Rear Adm. James K. Moran.

“We are here to command and control the forces to shore,” said JMRF's Assistant Operations Officer Marine Maj. Mike Cuccio, including Lejeune-based Regimental Landing Team, 8th Marine Regiment, 2nd Division, Riverine Assault Group, Combat Service Support Detachment-22 and the Coast Guard's Port Security Unit, air combat elements from Marine Corps Air Station New River, the Navy's Mobile Inshore Undersea Warfare Unit 203, Bronx, N.Y., the Army's 24th Transportation Battalion, Fort Eustis, Va.

With the partnership of these various elements, he added, the military hopes to enhance its overall riverine capabilities. “In order to put together enough capabilities to have an effective force, all the services have to work together.”

But what exactly does riverine mean and why is it important?

“Riverine is an environment where the main line of communication is a waterway. We assume there are limited roads and the terrain is mostly jungle. It forces us to use the river, in this case, New River, as our main line of communication for transporting troops, equipment and supplies to defeat the enemy,” said Cuccio, a Mahopac, N.Y. native.

Practicing and enhancing riverine capabilities is important because “this type of thing could happen in the real world, and we need to be prepared,” said Cmdr. Daniel J. Hurley. “It is important we stay innovative in the way we do amphibious operations.”

Cuccio explained the last time 2nd Division did an exercise of this scope “was three years ago. This exercise builds on the last one because before we worked off land, now we are working from ship. Overall, it gives the 2nd Marine Division staff the chance to exercise command and control from ship and work together with our Navy counterparts.”

Hurley agreed, adding the opportunity to have a joint Navy and Marine Corps command staff is a great benefit to everyone involved. “It is always time well spent when the Navy and Marine Corps team can work closely to improve coordination and planning.”