

Ship's Landing Party . .

Just in case



Crewmembers of the destroyer escort Paul and the destroyer Mullinnix found that getting into some of the gear took more hands than they had. Here, a Marine instructor assists a Navyman get into his life preserver.

Story and Photos

by JO3 Mark Wilson

The ramp of the landing craft crashed down at the water's edge. Two dozen men in jungle greens, backpacks, rifles and various other pieces of equipment stormed out of the craft and took positions on the beach.

This wasn't a scene from one of the many "John Wayne as the World War II Marine war hero" movies, but rather training for Navyman who make up the Landing Parties from two destroyers.

These destroyers are getting ready for deployment to the Middle East where they will operate as units of the Middle East Force. Prior to their deployment, they must train their landing party and send this team to the Little Creek Naval Amphibious Base in Virginia for a two-week course.

The course provides training in such fields as operation and maintenance of the .45 cal. pistol and M-60 machine gun and M14 rifle; helicopter orientation and practice descending debarkation nets, simulating going from an amphibious ship to a landing craft. The training also includes hand grenade practice; familiarization with the compass and mapping; use of camouflage; offensive and defensive tactics; tear gas familiarization; riot control tactics and physical fitness tests. In addition, at the end of each day, the landing parties undergoing the training go through an obstacle course. In other words, the training given the landing parties prepares them for their mission, if the occasion presents itself.

Their mission is to conduct independent operations in a non-Eng-

lish-speaking and hostile environment for not more than one week in duration, employing, when directed, military force ranging from a show of force to small unit defensive operations. Instances that may require the use of a landing party may be the need to provide security for non-combatant evacuees and United States property, mob or crowd control, aiding the port liaison officer in orderly movement of United States evacuees and property from the staging area and evacuation shipping. In addition, the landing parties may be used in drills and ceremonies in support of the U.S. Navy's peacetime mission.

The training of the landing parties is paying off. In the case of Middle East deploying ships, the readiness of the landing parties is determined by an inspection by a CoMidEastFor Staff Marine officer. Recent inspections show an increase in readiness, both in training and equipment.

So even though the landing parties haven't had to use their combat training, they are well-trained, well-equipped and standing by.



Each step of the way, members of the ship's landing party learn something new. Did this man think he'd be doing this in the Navy?



Different offensive and defensive tactics are taught to the landing parties. The two-week course barely resembles anything the Navy usually does, but then the landing party is something else.