

Know the Risks And

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While there are degrees of uncertainty and risk inherent in peacetime military operations, they are compounded during battle. Navy successes are based on balancing those risks with taking decisive action to complete a mission, whether routine or during combat. There is no such thing as a totally risk-free operation.

Well-deck operations are no different. Whether taking place while pierside, at anchor, or underway, wet-well operations are dangerous for Sailors and Marines involved, and to the amphibious craft and equipment associated with the evolution. Well-deck ballasting, craft-launching, and retrieval all require precise coordination, allowing for virtually no human error or equipment failure.

Operational risk management—dealing with risks associated with specific operations, hazard assessment, risk decision-making, and implementing risk controls—therefore plays a critical role in successful, mishap-free well-deck ops.

It therefore is imperative that during Condition 1A—flooding the well deck with sea water for well-deck loading or unloading and the moving of amphibious vehicles in the well deck—all involved Sailors and Marines must be aware of the people, equipment, and activity around them. They immediately must report to the chain of command any unsafe action or malfunctioning gear. It's called situational awareness and includes all Condition 1A personnel wearing required battle dress and PPE. Familiarity with key well-deck operational terms is also a must—the terms are listed below.

➤ Ballast - Adding water to ballast tanks to increase a ship's draft (lowering the stern to flood the well deck).

➤ Alive - The movement of a craft when the minimum depth required for floating a craft is reached; the craft is no longer grounded on the bottom of the well deck.

Photo by PHAN(AW) Clover B. Christensen

of Well Deck Ops, Manage Them

- Depth at the sill - Depth of water at extreme aft section of the well deck.
- Dry well - A condition where there is no water in the well deck.
- Grounded - When a craft's hull comes to rest on the well deck.
- Sill - The extreme aft portion of the well deck.
- Green well - When preparations in the well deck are completed and craft entry or exit is authorized.
- Red well - When conditions in the well are not conducive to safe operation or craft are prohibited from entering or departing the well.

A thorough brief should be given to all Condition 1A participants before well-deck operations begin. The brief must establish beyond a doubt that

all crew members who will be involved in any manner with Condition 1A fully understand their specific watch stations and individual responsibilities. The brief also should make sure all involved understand the risks of Condition 1A operations and how those risks are going to be controlled. By adhering to those established risk controls, Sailors conducting well-deck operations will complete their mission successfully and protect Navy people and equipment—Navy leaders' goals in both war and peace. Ⓢ

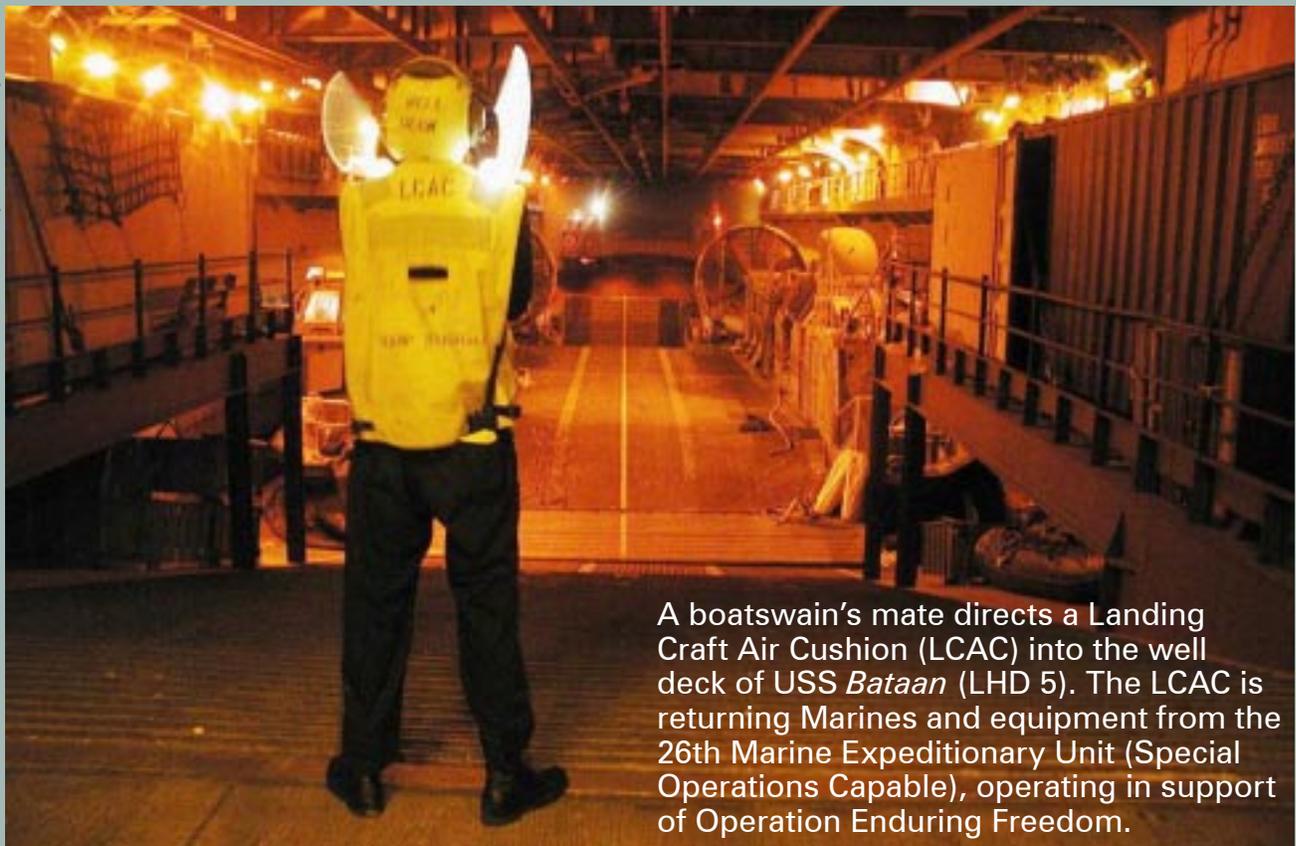
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For More Info...

Refer to the Wet Well Manual, ComNavSurfLant and ComNavSurfPac Instruction 3340.3C.

Photo by PHC Johnny Bivera



A boatswain's mate directs a Landing Craft Air Cushion (LCAC) into the well deck of USS *Bataan* (LHD 5). The LCAC is returning Marines and equipment from the 26th Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable), operating in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.