

# USS Reuben James conducts exercises with Japanese Maritime Self-Defense Force ships

By Lt. j.g. Scott Kozink  
USS Reuben James

USS Reuben James set sail June 29 from San Diego, Calif. after a two-week training and maintenance availability. The transit back to Pearl Harbor came a month after the ship got underway, and was originally intended to be used solely as an independent training period. These plans quickly changed when USS Reuben James had an opportunity to conduct bilateral exercises with three ships of the Japanese Maritime Self-Defense Force (JMSDF).

Reuben James met the JSD Chokai (DDG-176), JDS Hiei (DDH-142) and the JDS Samidare (DD-106) on the night of June 30. The rendezvous was coupled with an encounter exercise where Reuben James was instructed to find the three Japanese units and conduct simulated engagements.

The Japanese ships were under the same orders, making the exercise three ships against one in Japan's favor. The exercise proved to be an excellent opportunity for each unit to attempt to gain the upper hand on the other through surprise. No true winner was declared, but the event was an outstanding training opportunity.

The following day the task force composed of both Reuben James and the three JMSDF ships began conducting seamanship and combat exercises. Also at this time, Reuben James and Chokai conducted a passenger transfer using an organic helicopter from HSL-37 from the Reuben James and a JMSDF SH-60J.

Reuben James sent Ens. John Barrientos and ET3(SW) Robert Stanley to the JDS Chokai and Lt. j.g. Diasoke Tsutsui and ET3 Hayato Takada came aboard the Reuben James.

"My time on the Chokai was great. It was an outstanding opportunity for me to learn how the Japanese Navy does business. I was able to help them out a lot with communications and clear up any confusion with how the U.S. Navy works," said

Ens. Barrientos. "I could not have been treated any better. Everyone was eager to show me things and ask questions. I hope I have another opportunity to spend time with the Japanese Navy," he added.

"I would not have traded my time on the JDS Chokai for anything. I had a great time. The crew of the Chokai was outstanding and made me feel right at home," said Electronics Technician Second Class Surface Warfare Robert Stanley.

The two Japanese riders were teamed up with a representative from the Reuben James. This allowed them to have access to the entire ship and the crew and to make them feel at home. The primary reason for exchanging personnel was to have a person with each Navy to provide insight on how the other does business.

The group continued to conduct exercises almost non-stop for the entire transit. At night the combat information centers of each ship conducted communication drills and exercises. During that time, the ships exchanged information by asking questions from publications or by solving maneuvering board problems. During the daytime, anti-air warfare and anti-surface warfare combat scenarios were conducted among the entire task force. These were set up to practice conducting the operations as a group.

"Any time you can operate closely with an ally, share tactics and learn from each other - it is a win-win situation for everybody. This was an excellent opportunity for Reuben James to work group operations early in the training cycle and for our Sailors to learn how to operate with a very important ally in the Pacific," stated Cmdr. Carl Cramb, Commanding Officer, USS Reuben James.

"These situations do not happen often and we were glad to have been afforded the opportunity. It was truly a pleasure to operate with the professionals of the Japanese Maritime Self-Defense Force," he said.



Lt. Lane Ogawa photo

JDS Samidare (DD-106) pulls into port at Pearl Harbor.



Lt. Lane Ogawa photo

The sea and anchor detail watch team members keep a vigilant eye during Japanese ships arrival at Pearl Harbor.



OS2 Chris O'Donnell photo

Reuben James and Chokai send the high line transfer chair between the two ships.



Lt. Lane Ogawa photo

The officer of the deck welcomes aboard Sailors from Pearl Harbor.



OS2 Chris O'Donnell photo



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Above: Lt. j.g. Mark Franzen with the JDS Chokai 150 feet in the background during the high line transfer conducted during the transit.

Left: A JMSDF SH-60J hovers next to the USS Reuben James' flight deck during deck landing qualifications.