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## Naval Special Warfare Assists In Building Kenyan Special Boat Unit

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MOMBASA, Kenya (NNS) -- A brand new Kenyan naval unit reached a milestone March 26 when 27 members of the Kenyan Special Boat Unit (KSBU) graduated from the second of three joint combined exchange training (JCET) exercises facilitated by a U.S. Navy Special Warfare Combatant-craft Crewman (SWCC) team.

During the six-week course, the students strengthened a variety of skill sets, including combat medicine, prisoner handling, navigation, boat handling, maintenance, basic weapons proficiency, communications and ship boardings.

"Our efforts to train with and establish a special boat unit is important to Kenya and the region," said Army Brig. Gen. Christopher Haas, commanding general, Special Operations Command Africa (SOCAFRICA). "Kenya is an integral part of the counterpiracy effort in the region, and they have also shown their willingness to support important missions in the region, including Sudan and Darfur. Our efforts here help reinforce that by helping to build a special capability in the Kenyan Navy that will help contribute to the overall safety and security in the region."

The responsibility for instructing this unit falls primarily on a SWCC team belonging to a Naval Special Warfare task unit operating in Kenya, at the request of the Kenyan government.

"We primarily deploy to conduct Security Force Assistance (SFA) and capacity building for the Kenyan navy and our focus is to build a partner force, which is the Kenyan Special Boat Unit," said the task unit commander. "If you look at one student - where he started out and where he is now - it's exceptional growth within six months. And this is just JCET two of three that they will complete before being deemed a Kenyan Special Boat Unit operator."

JCET three is scheduled for later this year and students will continue to build more complicated skill sets, to be tested in more complex scenario-based exercises.

"We've invested training and equipment into this program, and we've built a force from a group of students that had some experience in maritime operations now to a very versatile, well qualified force," said the task unit commander. "This is part of the Navy's maritime security strategy to build and maintain coastal security in East Africa. We're doing that by, through, and with the Kenyan Navy by building a partner force."

By completing this portion of the training, KSBU members have proven they are dedicated and determined to be Kenya's master mariners.

"You have done us proudly. The training was not easy, but you have managed to do it," said Brig. Gen. Ngewa Mukala, deputy commander of the Kenyan Navy. "It was good for you and good for Kenya. I want you to train others, and encourage others to join you. The freedom of the sea will be maintained by you."

This JCET is designed solely for the new KSBU, but fits into the larger maritime training plan for Kenya. Naval Special Warfare has been working on the Combined Maritime Security Initiative (CMSI) since 2004. Although it has had multiple names over the years, including Maritime Operations Course and the Anti-Terrorism Assistance Course, the evolving goal of this joint Department of State and Department of Defense class has been the same: bring together personnel from all of Kenya's units with maritime security taskings. The creation of a KSBU is another form of capacity building through partner nation training.

"In five years, our vision is that this KSBU will be a matured, capable unit that is well integrated into the larger navy, has a relationship with other aspects of the Kenyan Ministry of Defense, and has established itself as the most professional and capable unit in the Kenyan Navy," said Haas. "This revered and respected unit will have established the systems to conduct training with its own boats, an esprit de corps that is special to this unit. This unit will be the pride of the Kenyan Navy -- and the model for the rest of the region to emulate as other nations seek to build their own naval special warfare capability."

This force is now adept at executing relatively complex mission sets, which has real world implications. Through the two JCETs completed, more than 40 boardings have been conducted, two of which resulted in narcotics seizures.

"For these students, real world operational missions are always available," said the task unit commander. "Kenya is unique in its position in Africa and in the world. The east African coast is among the most traveled waterways worldwide. Kenya provides strategic location and a stable government to work with."

Training the Kenyans didn't always come easy for the SWCC deployed here for six months, whose usual mission sets revolve around their role as U.S. Special Operations Command maritime mobility experts.

"As a SWCC, you are a really aggressive shooter with these aggressive mission sets, and then you come to Kenya and you're more of a teacher and mentor. It's a challenge to really dial it down and step back for a minute and be really patient," said one of the SWCC instructors, who spent a lot of time not just training the physical skills, but also building the friendships that go far to strengthen relationships with partner nations. "We have a lot of interaction. I think the best story I ever heard was from a student from Voight, which is out where all the safaris are. He had never driven a car in his life and we asked him if he was scared of driving a boat. He told us he wasn't scared of anything because before he was in the Navy he was killing wild animals with spears. That's when I realized how different our cultures are."

For these SWCC team members, it was gratifying to watch their students absorb the training and then use their acquired skills during operations.

"These guys had no formal training in navigation, hadn't had any boat handling training, and about 80 percent of them hadn't been on small boats at all. To go from nothing to planning and conducting a mission is a huge improvement," said another SWCC instructor, who also noticed the vast differences in the Kenyan and U.S. navies. "It's a whole different world. I can't even fathom how these guys think just because our backgrounds are so different. I've come up in a country and a community that you had pretty much everything you needed to get the job done and to train for mission success, and these guys have almost none of that."

A fellow instructor agreed.

"These guys are identifying the craft, in the middle of the night, safely navigating to it, taking it down, securing all the people, and safely turning the craft over to the authorities," said another SWCC. "But the part that I personally enjoyed the most was after everything was done and sitting around talking to the guys, seeing where each other comes from. "

That communication is something that isn't taught to the SWCC in a classroom.

"The majority of the places that we deploy to now, we conduct foreign internal defense (FID) in support

of SFA, like we did here in Kenya. Currently, FID is a major mission for SWCC. This deployment was important for us because our junior personnel don't get the opportunity to build up a FID skill set. It's not taught in the workups. They're not taught how to relate with partner nation forces," said the task unit senior enlisted advisor. He referenced language barrier and logistics limitations as specific challenges similar to his four SFA deployments in the Pacific theater. Even with these hurdles, he sees the KSBU succeeding. "The force has motivation, initiative, and is willing to learn. They want to keep their country safe and are willing and able to protect their borders."

The students definitely appreciated the training and the chance to learn the Naval Special Warfare mindset.

When asked what was so important about the training he received, one of the KSBU graduates responded, "Some of the things that we have learned here happened in real life. I feel very prepared now."

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