15th MEU Supports Operation Inherent Resolve from Makin Island ARG



A Marine Corps F35B Lightning II assigned to Marine Medium Tiltrotor Squadron 164 (Reinforced), 15th Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU), launches from the flight deck of the amphibious assault ship USS Makin Island (LHD 8) during flight operations in support of Operation Inherent Resolve, Feb. 13. U.S. Marine Corps / Sgt. Sarah Stegall

PERSIAN GULF – The Makin Island Amphibious Ready Group (ARG) and the 15th Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU) began air operations in support of Operation Inherent Resolve (OIR), Feb. 13, the 15th MEU Public Affairs said in a Feb. 16 release.

Close air support operations and defensive counter air support operations were carried out by Marine Medium Tiltrotor Squadron (VMM) 164 (Reinforced), the aviation combat element

of the 15th MEU, as part of broader U.S. Central Command counterterrorism operations in the region.

U.S. Marine Corps F-35B Lightning II aircraft departed from the amphibious assault ship USS Makin Island (LHD 8), flagship of the Makin Island Amphibious Ready Group, to execute the long-range strike.

“Long range F-35B Lightning II strike operations demonstrate the ARG/MEU’s ability to project air power well beyond the shore,” said U.S. Marine Corps Col. Christopher J. Bronzi, the 15th MEU commanding officer. “We look forward to exercising the capabilities in our arsenal while in theater and remain ready to deliver those capabilities at any time if called upon.”

The Makin Island ARG transited through the Strait of Hormuz and into the Arabian Gulf on Feb. 8. The Makin Island ARG and 15th MEU’s presence in the U.S. 5th Fleet area of operations demonstrates the U.S. and its regional partners’ commitment to the free flow of commerce, regional maritime security and freedom of navigation.

“This mission is a strong example of the value a deployed naval expeditionary force brings to combatant commanders and joint partners in the region,” said U.S. Navy Capt. Stewart Bateshansky, Makin Island ARG commodore. “The MEU’s ability to source combat sorties from the Makin Island, while simultaneously supporting training and operations, is a testament to the flexibility and responsiveness of our Navy and Marine Corps team.”

The Makin Island ARG and embarked 15th MEU provide the combatant commander with a responsive, flexible and forward-deployed asset capable of maritime power projection, contingency operations and crisis response, shaping the operational environment to protect the United States and

allied interests in any threat environment.

“We are proud and excited to be able to support missions in areas of the world where we are most needed,” said U.S. Marine Corps Lt. Col. Christopher Kelly, VMM-164 (Rein.) executive officer. “Conducting a long range strike mission with fifth generation F-35B fighters from amphibious assault ships demonstrates the versatility this platform brings to the joint force.”

The U.S. 5th Fleet AOO encompasses about 2.5 million square miles of water and includes the Persian Gulf, Gulf of Oman, Red Sea and parts of the Indian Ocean. The expanse is comprised of 20 countries and includes three critical choke points at the Strait of Hormuz, the Suez Canal and the Strait of Bab al Mandeb at the southern tip of Yemen.