

Marines convoy to Yausubetsu Maneuver Area

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YOUSUBETSU MANUEVER AREA, Hokkaido, Japan — Marines with 3rd Battalion, 12th Marine Regiment, transported 12 105 mm howitzers and more than 100 tactical vehicles from Hanasaki Port to the Yausubetsu Maneuver Area here June 8 in preparation for Artillery Relocation Training Program 12-1.

The regiment, part of 3rd Marine Division, III Marine Expeditionary Force, is conducting ARTP 12-1 to sustain unit proficiency and maintain combat readiness. The regularly scheduled training promotes regional stability and security and ensures units stationed on Okinawa can uphold the defense of Japan under the Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security.

“This convoy is crucial to ensuring we have everything necessary for (ARTP 12-1) to take place,” said Master Sgt. Eleno Villegas, the motor transport operations chief for the battalion. “At the same time, safety is paramount in making sure everyone and everything gets to the maneuver area (safely).”

The Marines were given a thorough brief to ensure the overall well-being of equipment and personnel before setting out on the convoy.

“Before our departure, we inspected each vehicle’s tire pressure, transmission fluid and oil,” said Lance Cpl. Oscar R. Zavala, an administrative specialist for the battalion and driver in the convoy. “We also ensured the vehicles had enough fuel to complete the mission.”

The convoy traveled approximately 72 kilometers in 21 separate groups in order to reduce traffic and minimize impact on the local community.

Artillery live-fire training has been conducted on mainland Japan since 1997 when the training was relocated from Okinawa in accordance with the Special Action Committee on Okinawa’s final report. All training sites have been approved by the government of Japan. The agreement between the United States and Japan to move the training exercise from Okinawa to mainland Japan limits the impact of U.S. forces on Okinawa Prefecture.

The live-fire portion of ARTP 12-1 began June 13.

Marines with 3rd Battalion, 12th Marine Regiment, prepare to transport 12 105 mm howitzers and more than 100 tactical vehicles from Hanasaki Port to the Yausubetsu Maneuver Area June 8 in preparation for Artillery Relocation Training Program 12-1. The regularly scheduled training promotes regional stability and security and ensures units stationed on Okinawa can uphold the defense of Japan under the Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security. The battalion is a part of 3rd Marine Division, III Marine Expeditionary Force. *Photo by Lance Cpl. Donald T. Peterson*