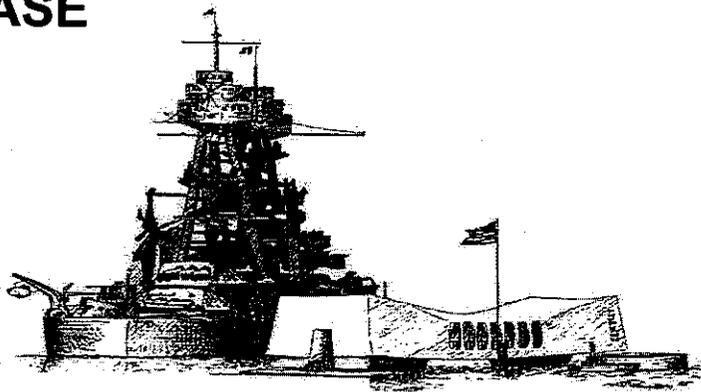


NAVY NEWS RELEASE

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NAVY SHIPS, AIRCRAFT, AND ARMY PERSONNEL RESPONDING TO MEDICAL EMERGENCY ON THE HIGH SEAS

Two Pearl Harbor-based ships, the Aegis cruiser, USS Lake Erie (CG 70) and the Aegis destroyer USS O'Kane (DDG 77), are responding to a medical evacuation of an injured man aboard Motor Vessel Pequen nearly 700 miles west of Oahu.

The MV Pequen, an ocean-going tug, contacted a rescue center in the Netherlands requesting emergency medical support for a crewmember suffering from a serious head injury. Dutch officials contacted the Joint Rescue Command Center in Honolulu, who in turn contacted the Navy to assist since Lake Erie and O'Kane were the closest ships to Pequen.

Just hours ago, USS Lake Erie crewmembers successfully transferred the injured man from Pequen to Lake Erie. The ship's corpsmen began stabilizing the patient, but requested additional medical support.

Navy SH-60B, Seahawk helicopters assigned to HSL-37 at Marine Corps Base Hawaii, Kaneohe Bay were launched with Army medical personnel – a neurosurgeon and an anesthesiologist from Tripler Army Medical Center. Due to the extreme distances involved, the helicopters will fly to USS O'Kane to refuel, and then continue out to USS Lake Erie. A U.S. Coast Guard C-130 will fly overhead throughout the mission, providing additional support as necessary.

Upon arrival, medical personnel will determine whether or not the patient will be flown back to Oahu or remain on Lake Erie as she makes a high speed transit back to Pearl Harbor.

The emergency call to USS Lake Erie came within hours of the ship's successful launch of an SM-3 missile, a critical milestone in the Missile Defense Agency's Sea-Based Midcourse Defense System. The crew quickly shifted gears from missile testing to emergency humanitarian support, proving that the crew is not only at the forefront of testing and evaluation, but they are a fully deployable combat vessel.

If the medical evacuation takes place via helicopter, the patient could arrive in Oahu early this evening. Updates on the rescue mission will be provided as they become available.

Media questions pertaining to the rescue should contact Navy Region Hawaii Public Affairs Office at 473-2888 or 864-2452. CNRH Public Affairs is in close coordination with the Public Affairs teams at the 14th Coast Guard District and Tripler Army Medical Center, and will refer any questions that are more appropriately directed at another agency.