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CNO, MCPON Tour Expeditionary Combat Skills course

GULFPORT, Miss. – Chief of Naval Operations (CNO) Adm. John Richardson and Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy (MCPON) Mike Stevens were greeted with the clatter of automatic weapons, spurting blood, and screams of wounded Sailors Jan. 8.

The simulated battlefield conditions were part of a Basic Expeditionary First Aid practical evaluation conducted during the Navy's Expeditionary Combat Skills (ECS) course at the Center for Security Forces (CENSECFOR) Learning Site (LS) Gulfport, Mississippi.

The visit to CENSECFOR LS Gulfport was part of a larger visit to the Naval Construction Battalion Center (NCBC) that provided the senior leaders an overview of Seabee training and readiness. The mission of ECS is to provide standardized common core combat skills to Sailors prior to their first Naval Expeditionary Combat Command or Naval Special Warfare Combat Support unit tour of duty.

"This course is outstanding because it provides the expeditionary combat skills mindset and dynamic training necessary for the Navy's Expeditionary Force. It is common to see senior officers and junior enlisted training side-by-side," said Lt. Cmdr. Preston Roland, CENSECFOR LS Gulfport's Site

Director. "ECS embodies the core attribute of Toughness by providing the first stage of rigorous training for combat."

The high-risk training course is four weeks long and provides training on land navigation, combat first aid, rifle and pistol marksmanship as well as combat shooting, basic communications, convoy fundamentals, and Improvised Explosive Device recognition. One section is the Judgment-based Engagement Training which is designed to sharpen decision-making in deadly force or life threatening situations. It introduces and sensitizes Sailors to the psycho/physiological effects they will experience and gives them an understanding of how to mitigate and overcome those natural/reflexive responses.

Roland also noted that the first aid exercise is not the only field work that takes place at ECS.

"The majority of our training occurs away from the classroom, either conducting practical labs, using simulators, or on the small arms range," he said.

The Center for Security Forces provides specialized training to more than 28,000 students each year. It has 14 training locations across the United States and around the world.

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