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U.S. Marine Corps Major Ricardo Moreira, (left), intelligence deputy director with U.S. Marine Corps Forces, South, delivers a brief on maritime intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) on Brazilian Fleet Marine Forces Base, November 4, 2021. Marines and sailors conducted multiple engagements with the Brazilian Navy and Marines Corps in support of the Brazilian Joint Exercise DRAGÃO, October 29–November 5, 2021. (Photo: U.S. Marine Corps Lieutenant Colonel Michael Aubry)

By Major Thomas Perna/U.S. Marine Corps Forces, South
 December 02, 2021

Marines and sailors from U.S. Marine Corps Forces, South and U.S. Naval Forces Southern Command/U.S. 4th Fleet conducted multiple engagements with the Brazilian Navy and Marine Corps in support of the Brazilian Joint Exercise DRAGÃO October 29–November 5.

DRAGÃO is a bi-annual joint Brazilian exercise focused on maritime security and sea control. The exercise involves planning and missions across the range of military operations focused on expeditionary employment from ship-to-shore.

"DRAGÃO is a key event to integrate our naval forces and expand our ability to synchronize operations and intelligence in the maritime domain," said Commander Thiago Lopes de Silva, Brazilian liaison officer to U.S. Marine Corps Forces, South. "Having U.S. Marines integrated into this exercise goes to show how deep our partnership is and how we both teach each other new approaches to be successful in today's operating environment."

This exchange focused on expeditionary operations and provided a venue to expand key professional relationships and subject matter expert exchanges that support concepts for maritime interoperability and seek to build a coalition of allies and partners with similar standard operating procedures, and who can effectively come together to address maritime security during a crisis or contingency in the South Atlantic.

The event began with a series of key leader engagements at the Brazilian Marine Amphibious Division base in Rio de Janeiro. The U.S. briefed topics to include the current U.S. Marine Corps Force Design plans and the concept of expeditionary advance base operations (EABO). Force Design is the commandant's strategic direction and vision of the Marine Corps as a naval expeditionary force trained, organized, and equipped to deter malign behavior, fight inside a near-peer adversary's weapons engagement zone, and facilitate maritime freedom of movement and sea control in support of fleet operations and the joint force.

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The Brazilian Navy and Marine Corps briefed topics such as the modernization of their expeditionary forces, future maritime ISR (intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance) employment, and Brazil's "Blue Amazon" concept, which is designed to ensure security and stability in the South Atlantic.

Following the period ashore, exchange planners embarked aboard the Multipurpose ship (NAM, in Portuguese) Atlântico, the Brazilian Navy's flagship vessel. Aboard this ship, which is similar to the U.S. America class amphibious assault ships, they conducted integrated exercise planning alongside their Brazilian Navy and Marine counterparts. In addition to conducting information preparation of the battlespace, integrated amphibious planning, ISR, and simulated precision strikes from a maritime platform, they continued to develop key professional relationships.

"This maritime interoperability has significant implications for threat actors in the regions," said Lieutenant Colonel Michael Aubry, the lead U.S. Marine participant for the engagement. "Not only do these threat actors have to worry about an incredibly capable and proficient Brazilian force, they also have to address what allies and partners are aboard and what capabilities are integrated into the multinational team."

Exchanges between U.S. and Brazilian forces aboard ship are not uncommon. This exchange expanded on relationships and concepts built a year ago when U.S. Marines participated in a Brazilian Navy maritime planning engagement aboard a Brazilian ship to exchange best practices, increase interoperability, and develop enduring touchpoints to grow the professional knowledge of both forces. Most recently, Brazilian allies embarked on the USS Hershel "Woody" Williams off the coast of Africa in August 2021. In 2019 Brazilians integrated into maritime operations aboard the USS Wasp to develop multinational standard operating procedures for humanitarian assistance and disaster response efforts.

"Although COVID-19 has limited the exchanges over the last two years, there is a clear desire and plan to increase these exchange opportunities," said U.S. Marine Corps Major Ricardo Moreira, exchange participant. "The value of embarking forces on each other's ships cannot be overstated and the impact on overall maritime security and strategic competition is significant."

As Brazil spearheads maritime security in the South Atlantic, exercises such as DRAGÃO serve a fundamental role in building the sea control and maritime security capabilities of the professional naval force.



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