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 INDIAN OCEAN (Dec. 3, 2008) The Military Sealift Command fleet replenishment oiler USNS Laramie (T-AO 203), left, conducts a replenishment at sea with the French multi-mission stealth frigate Courbet (F-712). (U.S. Navy photo by Naval Aircrewman 2nd Class William S. Stevens/Released)

Expingo express

Matters of Style

The following style guide represents the most common mistakes seen in captions, according to both the new DoD and the Navy style guides. These apply to both still photos and video.

- ✦ **aboard/on board** aboard a ship; on board (or at) a naval station.
- ✦ **Persian Gulf** Use "Persian Gulf" rather than "Arabian Gulf."
- ✦ **area of responsibility** vice area of operations.
- ✦ **battalion and squadron** Spell out on first reference and use numerals for the battalion and squadron's number. Hyphenate on second reference: NMCB-4, not NMCB FOUR.
- ✦ **civilian titles** Use full name and title or job description on first reference. Capitalize the title or job description, and do not use a comma to separate it from the individual's name when it precedes the name. Lower case titles when they follow the name. Use last names only on second reference
- ✦ **commanding officer** Do not capitalize unless used as title preceding name. Commanding Officer Capt. Tom Jones welcomed the distinguished visitors to the base. Capt. Mary Smith, the commanding officer of the cruiser, announced the ship would make a port visit to Key West.
- ✦ **detachment** Spell out on first reference. Abbreviate as "Det." in all other references.
- ✦ **general quarters** Lower case when spelled out: The crew stayed at general quarters for 18 hours. "GQ" is acceptable on second reference: The staff stayed at "GQ" for days to come up with an eight-page story on deck-swabbing.
- ✦ **global war on terrorism** all lower case.
- ✦ **high speed vessels** The correct way to identify a high speed vessel in a caption is as follows: high speed vessel Swift (HSV-2). In subsequent references, HSV-2 is appropriate. (Note: this is the only type of vessel for which a hyphen is appropriate in the ship designator.)
- ✦ **indicating position in a caption** Use a comma, not parentheses. (Example: "Builder 1st Class John Brown, left, and Carl Anderson participate in a training exercise.")
- ✦ **individual augmentees (IA)** Lower case.
- ✦ **Internet** Capitalize.
- ✦ **LCAC** The correct term is landing craft, air cushion. Use lower case unless identifying an individual, numbered LCAC (e.g., Landing Craft, Air Cushion 8).
- ✦ **maritime security operations** all lower case.
- ✦ **MH-60S Sea Hawk** MH-60S Sea Hawk is correct. Knighthawk was the proposed name, but it was declined as it was too similar to the Air Force's F-117 Nighthawk. All H-60 series helicopters are Sea Hawk helicopters.
- ✦ **numbers** Never start a sentence with a number; all ranks and units should use a number.
- ✦ **over vs. more than** "Over" refers to physical placement (above). "More than" is used with quantities. This is the same for "under vs. less than."
 - The flag flies over the capitol building.
 - More than 50,000 troops are stationed in the area.
- ✦ **replenishment at sea** Do not hyphenate; use all lower case.
- ✦ **rigid hull inflatable boat** lower case.
- ✦ **Sailor** Capitalize when referencing U.S. Navy Sailors; lowercase other countries' sailors.
- ✦ **ship names** For first reference, always include the type of ship (e.g., aircraft carrier, destroyer), USS, the ship's name and the hull number: the aircraft carrier USS George Washington (CVN 73). On second reference, drop the designator and the "USS." Do not abbreviate the ship name on second reference. (George Washington, not GW). It is permitted to refer to a ship using the pronoun "her." All ship names appear in regular type, not in all caps.
- ✦ **under way** Two words unless it is used as an adjective.
- ✦ **United States** Abbreviate only when used as an adjective. Spell out when used as a noun. She is a U.S. citizen. She lived in the United States.

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The Expingo Express is a product from Navy Visual News Service aimed at providing editing tips to help write better Navy captions. Expingo is Latin for "to write or to describe." In each issue, we will discuss a different caption issue as described in the new DoD Style Guide for Captions. The new guide formally adopts most of the AP Stylebook requirements.