

ESG-1 stops in Hawai'i



Farewell

La Jolla leaves on latest deployment
See story on page A-5.



Learn about places to stop on the Big Island.
See story on page B-1.

Lt. Christopher Davis
ESG-1/USS Peleliu
Public Affairs

Expeditionary Strike Group (ESG) 1 will have completed the final major mission in the Chief of Naval Operations-sanctioned ESG proof of concept when it stops in Pearl Harbor for a port visit.

ESG-1 will make the port visit in Hawai'i before returning to San Diego from a six-and-a-half month deployment in support of the global war on terrorism.

The strike group is centered around flagship USS Peleliu (LHA 5) and combines the Navy amphibious squadron and Marine expeditionary unit with the proven strike, anti-air, anti-surface and anti-submarine capabilities of a cruiser, a destroyer, a frigate and a fast attack submarine.

"It's good to be back after achieving what we set out to do - provide persistent combat power to regional and combat-

ant commanders in the war on terrorism," said Rear Adm. Bob Conway, commander of the ESG.

ESG 1's deployment consisted of operations in Iraq, North Arabian Gulf, Red Sea and the Horn of Africa. The group conducted humanitarian assistance and security and stabilization missions in Iraq, as well as Operation Iraqi Freedom maritime interception operations on land in southern Iraq and at sea in the Arabian Gulf during Operations Sweeney and Power Crude.

It patrolled international waters in the Red Sea and Horn of Africa to deter the transport of terrorist personnel and equipment.

The patrols yielded success when ESG-1 units were involved in two separate interception operations in the North Arabian Sea in December 2003. The first came Dec. 15 when USS Decatur (DDG 73) detained a dhow and its 12 crewmembers and seized upward of \$10 million in hashish.

Two weeks later, Peleliu and elements of the 13th Marine Expeditionary Unit (special operations capable), along with USS Port Royal (CG 73) and USS Germantown (LSD 42), worked with Australian patrol aircraft in the detention of another dhow and its 15 crewmembers, and seized another 2,800 tons of hashish with an estimated street value of \$11 million.

"This mission was perfectly suited to our capabilities," Conway said, following the take-down. "We are designed to provide combatant commanders the flexibility to conduct operations across the spectrum of conflict. The immediate nature of this tasking challenged our ability to locate and take down the dhow on short notice. It really demonstrates the kind of speed to execution vital for missions of this kind."

The drug seizure would not be the last time the strike group would be challenged with coalition operations. ESG 1 conducted combined operations in the



Photo by PH2 James K. McNeil

Ships assigned to Expeditionary Strike Group (ESG) 1 and Japan's Escort Flotilla (EF) 4 conduct a replenishment at sea. From bottom to top, the amphibious assault ship USS Peleliu (LHA 5), Japanese Maritime Self Defense Force (JMSDF) support ship JDS Tokiwa (AOE 423), USS Port Royal (CG 73) and the Japanese Haruna-class destroyer JDS Hiei (DDH 142). ESG-1 pulled into Pearl Harbor after conducting missions in support of Operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom.

Horn of Africa, Gulf of Aden and the Red Sea, both in support of coalition commanders, and in command and control of coalition forces in support

of theater objectives. ESG-1's most complex coalition mission came in January

▼ See ESG-1, A-3

Appointment system in affect at PSD Pearl Harbor

According to the Personnel Support Activity Detachment Pearl Harbor (PSD), PSD has an automated appointment system in place to assist customers across Oahu in getting identification cards. The online appointment registration system, located at <http://www.psdph.navy.mil/mainpage.htm>, is available 24 hours a day.

The system is designed to eliminate the long lines formerly associated with obtaining a new ID card.

PSD gives priority to customers who have made appointments over those who simply walk in to apply for a replacement ID card.

Customers who choose not to make an appointment through the automated systems may have to wait even longer than they did in the past.

Sailor's daughter vies for 'American Idol'

JO2 Luke D. Johnson
USS Blue Ridge Public Affairs

A Hawai'i resident and daughter of a Sailor assigned to the amphibious command and control ship USS Blue Ridge (LCC 19) performed on "American Idol" Feb. 18.

Machinist's Mate 1st Class (SW) William Velasco, assigned to the ship's engineering department, found out his daughter, Camile Velasco, would appear on FOX Network's popular talent search program as one of 32 finalists on the show's Feb. 17 telecast.

"I never told anyone that my daughter was going to be on 'American Idol,'" said Velasco, 43, "until they put it on the night engineering orders, and everyone came to congratulate me on my daughter's success."

Velasco said his daughter's singing career began at age 16. Her first performances were at the Philippine community centers in Hawai'i.

Now Camile, an 18-year-old waitress from Haiku, Maui, had the opportunity of a lifetime to boost her singing career on "American Idol." The winner from each season gets a recording contract.

His daughter currently lives in Hawai'i, while he is stationed aboard Blue Ridge, forward deployed to Yokosuka, Japan.

"American Idol" came to Hawai'i, and



Photo by PHAA Tucker M. Yates

MM1(SW) William Velasco, from Batanes, Philippines, is surrounded by shipmates aboard USS Blue Ridge (LCC 19) as he anxiously watches his daughter, Camile Velasco, 18, of Maui, Hawai'i, as she performs on the nationally televised show, "American Idol" on Feb. 18. "American Idol" is a national talent search television show that awards its winning performer a singing contract.

she participated in the tryouts," said Velasco.

The Batanes, Philippines, native waited nervously on the mess decks for his daughter to make her appearance.

He sat quietly by himself as Sailors around him erupted in a loud ovation when Camile appeared on screen to perform Brian McKnight's song "One Last

Cry." "I think that this is truly fantastic that Velasco's daughter is on 'American Idol.' It almost makes me cry," said Personnelman 2nd Class (SW) Christopher Hydrone.

The television appearance was also the first time Velasco had seen his daughter sing, he said.

Sailing through wet roads on Pearl Harbor



U.S. Navy Photo

Drivers on Naval Station Pearl Harbor slowly splash through the road near the parking lot outside Bloch Arena during Thursday afternoon's rain storm. Storms are expected to cover the area throughout the weekend.

Plan ahead: Diving safely saves lives

Lt. j.g. Nicole Zamora
Navy Region Hawai'i Public Affairs

Twice during the week of Feb. 9, active duty recreational divers were treated at Mobile Diving and Salvage Unit (MDSU) 1's fleet treatment recompression chamber (FTRC) for diving-related illnesses related to unsafe diving practices.

According to MDSU officials, the practices which led to these emergencies included poor preparation, inadequate planning and inexperience. Specifically, the divers neither evaluated the risk involved in repetitive deep diving nor knew the location of the nearest recompression treatment facility prior to diving. "Indeed, knowledge of the location of a recompression chamber and a tentative plan on how to get there in case of a diving injury are essential to any dive plan," according to Lt. Todd Ochsner, MDSU-1's dive medical officer (DMO).

The first service member was knowledgeable prepared to dive with whales, but was ultimately accosted by a pod of humpbacks which caused the dive to become much deeper than originally planned. The preparation for this dive did not include an emergency action plan discussed before the dive, but "the divers should have been prepared to encounter the unpredictability that can be involved when diving around marine mammals," said MDSU officials.

In addition to poor planning, the same diver was unaware of the effect that residual nitrogen will have on a diver's body and how it will affect flying after diving.

Shortly after take-off, the diver experienced pain in both shoulders, elbows, knees and hips and lost simple coordination ability.

"These are dead ringers for decompression sickness, what is commonly known as the 'bends,' said Ochsner. This chain of events can and did result in the diver suffering from decompression sickness and requiring treatment. Simple planning ahead would have circumvented this medical problem.

The second active duty service member was caught off guard in the surf zone. This diver found himself rapidly ascending from 33 feet of seawater. He tried to correct the situation by venting air from his buoyancy compensator, but despite this the diver suffered an arterial gas embolism and had to be towed ashore by his buddy.

This diver reported shortness of breath, an altered mental state and a severe headache that left the dive partner concerned for his shipmate's health and safety. His buddy was alert to the condition and transported him to the hospital. Furthermore, this service member had been aware that the proper procedure was to contact MDSU's recompression chamber.

Mobile Diving and Salvage Unit 1 maintains and operates the regional recompression treatment facility for military divers throughout Navy Region Hawai'i. This chamber is always available to military divers and military personnel who are recreational divers. Any military

▼ See DIVE, A-3

Navy Times seeks 'Sailor of the Year'

Navy Region Hawai'i
Public Affairs

The Navy Times has announced its fourth annual "Navy Times Sailor of the Year Award." The award is intended to honor the Sailor who best embodies the "finest qualities of the men and women serving in today's Navy," according to the Navy Times.

Unlike many awards, this award will come from Sailors throughout the Navy.

The Navy Times said the criteria are simple – the awardee will be someone who is considered a "Sailor's Sailor."

It can be someone who lends a hand in a tight spot or gives unselfishly of himself or herself in community or command volunteer efforts.

More information can be found on the official Navy Times site at www.navytimes.com/sailor.

Nominations can come from any Sailor at any command in the Navy. The deadline for submitting nominations is April 7. Nominations must include:

- Name, address, commercial phone number and e-mail address of the nominator.
- Name, address and commercial phone number of nominee.
- Nominee's current unit commander's name, address and commercial phone number.



Photo by J0SN Ryan C. McGinley
Operations Specialist 3rd Class Marc Mabalot prepares and sets out food for the crew of the USS Russell (DDG 59).

•Short essay on why nominator feels the nominee should win the award. Essay should be 300 words or less and should be simple and straightforward.

•Include names and contact information of three people who can verify the nominee's achievements.

•Nominees must be on active duty, in the guard or in the reserves through Aug. 31.

There are four ways to submit nominations. The first is online at www.navytimes.com/sailor <<http://www.navytimes.com/sailor>>. The second is via e-mail at sailor@navytimes.com. The third is by fax at (703) 642-7325 and the final way is through "snail mail" at: Navy Times "Sailor of the Year" Award, Navy Times, 6883 Commercial Drive, Springfield, VA. 22159.

Rank is irrelevant in this award's process, according to the Navy Times. Their only criteria is that the award goes to a Sailor who inspires other Sailors. The winner and honorable mention recipients will be named in the July 5 issue of Navy Times. Senator Daniel K. Inouye will host an awards ceremony to honor the winner on July 8.

Commentary

Your Money Matters Beware of identity theft

Frank Tomaszewski
Fleet and Family
Support Center

In 2002, there were approximately 500,000 identity theft victims. Here are 10 steps to help prevent identify theft:

1. Guard that social security number: The most important step is to guard your social security number — it is the key to your credit report and banking accounts and is the prime target of criminals. Do not print your social security number on your checks. After applying for a loan, credit card, rental or anything else that requires a credit report, request that your SSN on the application be truncated or completely obliterated and your original credit report be shredded before your eyes or returned to you.

2. Monitor your credit report: Credit reports can alert you to activity in your financial records. A monitoring service, such as Privacy Guard, will notify you whenever someone applies for credit in your name or checks your credit history. You then can be proactive; call the person and ask, "Why are you checking my credit?"

3. Buy a shredder and use it: Identity thieves may use your garbage to obtain personal information. Shred all old bank and credit statements, as well as "junk mail" credit-card offers, before trashing them. Use a crosscut shredder — they cost more than regular shredders but are superior.

4. Remove your name from marketing lists: The three credit-reporting bureaus — Experian, Trans Union and Equifax — all maintain marketing lists that may contain your information. Contact the agencies to remove your name

from the lists. You also should add your name to the name-deletion lists of the Direct Marketing Association's Mail Preference Service and Telephone Preference Service used by banks and other marketers.

5. Watch what you carry in your wallet: Do not keep your social security card in your wallet or carry extra credit cards or other important identity documents except when needed. These documents can give thieves ready access to your accounts.

6. Keep duplicate records: Place the contents of your wallet on a photocopy machine. Copy both sides of your license and credit cards so you have all the account numbers, expiration dates and phone numbers if your wallet or purse is stolen.

7. Mail payments from a safe location: Do not mail bill payments and checks from home. They can be stolen from your mailbox and washed clean in chemicals. Take them to the post office.

8. Monitor your social security activity: Order your Social Security Earnings and Benefits statement once a year to check for fraud.

9. Monitor your credit-card activity: Carefully examine your credit-card statements for fraudulent charges before paying them. If you don't need or use department store or bank-issued credit cards, close the accounts.

10. Know whom you are talking to: Never give your credit-card number or personal information over the phone unless you have initiated the call and trust that business.

For more information on identify theft, contact your command financial specialist or the financial counselors at the Fleet and Family Support Center.

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ESG-1: Sailors, Marines now 'plankowners' in ESG

Continued from A-1

when the group served as command and control for Exercise Sea Saber, a coalition maritime interdiction training exercise as part of the president's proliferation security initiative (PSI). President Bush announced PSI in May 2003 in Krakow, Poland in an effort to build meaningful international support to an initiative that would prevent the movement of weapons of mass destruction or their component parts by land, sea or air.

Thirteen of the 16 PSI coalition countries provided military and law enforcement assets to Sea Saber, and the exercise concluded with international media coverage of the maritime interdiction events onboard USNS Saturn (T-AFS 10).

"We have hosted many of their commanders and commanding officers aboard the flagship, and when they can see first hand the robust capabilities and flexibility that we provide the combatant commander, I believe it leaves no doubt

in their minds how the ESG exemplifies U.S. commitment to the war on terror," Conway said.

The 5,000 Sailors and Marines assigned to ESG-1 will return to San Diego for time with family after leaving Hawai'i and eventually to prepare their units for the next operation.

For Conway and the subordinate commanders assigned to the group, however, it could be only the beginning of the next phase in the ESG proof of concept.

"The jury's still out on this concept, but I think Navy and Marine Corps leadership have invested enough interest in collecting all the facts and conducting a meaningful experiment," Conway said.

Conway intends to present his benchmarking metrics to Navy leadership in Washington, D.C. in order to provide a basis for the structure and employment of future expeditionary strike groups.

"My job now is to take what

we have observed and brief it to Navy leadership," said Conway. "No emotions, no sugarcoating - I intend to present leadership with the realities of what ESG 1 could and could not realistically accomplish with the mix of personnel and equipment we had available to us."

Conway is realistic about the challenges of building and leading the strike group.

"This was hard. Every Sailor and Marine in this strike group is a plankowner in our service's transformation. That title has come with tremendous sacrifice in time, in energy and in our individual preferences," Conway said.

"Breaking with paradigms is a difficult prospect to consider, let alone execute. But did they do it? You bet they did! They made it happen the way they always make it happen, and I am very proud of all our Sailors and Marines. And that, above all, is what I intend to tell our leadership."



Photo by Ryan C. McGinley

Lt. Cmdr. Doug Phelan, officer in charge of Afloat Planning System, Pacific (APSPAC) talks with the students of Pearl City Highlands Elementary School. The school and APSPAC have been partners in education since 1998.

Navy continues community service

JOSN Ryan C. McGinley

Staff Writer

Afloat Planning System, Pacific (APSPAC) and Pearl City Highlands Elementary School reaffirmed their partnership in education Feb. 20 with a ceremony held at the school.

The ceremony included a reconfirmation of services the Navy would provide to the school and a speech by Lt. Cmdr. Doug Phelan, officer in charge of APSPAC, about the Navy's dedication to the school. The school also participated in "Drug Free Week," which was incorporated into Phelan's speech.

APSPAC has been helping the elementary school since 1998 and has provided approximately 600 man-hours of tutoring and facilities improvements, said Phelan.

Sailors from APSPAC make weekly visits to the school to help educate kids, but also incorporate some fun into the

learning process.

"One of [the] things that has been really beneficial is that not only have they (Sailors) come and tutored them academically, but there have been times where they have taken on a more of a mentor type situation..." said Vickie Kam, parent community networking coordinator for Pearl City Highlands Elementary.

APSPAC also organized working parties to help maintain the school's appearance and upkeep.

Facility projects APSPAC has completed for the school include painting, installing shutters and installing a new phone communication system, said Fire Controlman 1st Class (SW/AW) James Graham, coordinator of the partnership. Upcoming projects for the school include repainting the cafeteria and remodeling the sidewalks.

The resources come from Department of Defense funds appropriated for the improvement

of schools which service dependents of locally-stationed military, said Phelan.

"The school is very grateful that the Navy is willing to come out and volunteer," said Leroy Ching, principal of Pearl City Highlands Elementary School.

APSPAC also won the Points of Light Foundation Presidential Service Award in 1999 for its contributions to community service in the school.

"I'm glad we're able to do it," said Phelan. "I think it's enriching for my personnel to have the experience of working with children and to make a civic impact outside of what they do in the office."

The most beneficial part of the program is the impact it makes on the students of Pearl City Highlands Elementary School.

"To me, the biggest thing is when I walk into the class and I see the smiles on the kids," said Graham. "That is a good feeling."

Dive: Checklist could prevent injuries

Continued from A-1

person or group planning a diving trip should make themselves aware of the location and activation steps for their own safety according to MDSU officials.

Personnel in the military community referred these divers to the correct place for treatment. By undergoing hyperbaric treatment in MDSU-1's recompression chamber, both individuals' symptoms were significantly relieved.

Neither Sailor used the appropriate actions for medical help after their symptoms surfaced, but most importantly, neither reviewed recompression chamber availability prior to their dive.

In the last month, there has been a significant increase in recompression treatments at MDSU. This past month alone, MDSU has conducted three treatments.

Ochsner said, "It should be said that although both treatments were successful, they could have resulted in very fatal outcomes. Both cases could have been avoided with simple pre-dive checks and planning that either Sailor could have done."

He provided the following guidance to recreational divers to ensure a safe dive. He said the list is not all-inclusive, but is a good guide for divers:

What can go wrong? Build a checklist based on this question.

- What is your planned depth and what is your plan for exceeded depth?
- Always make your deepest dive first.
- Review symptoms and emergency actions for decompression sickness and arterial gas embolism.
- Review symptoms and actions for bad air and toxic gas.



Photo by Lt. Todd Ochsner

Diver safety includes checking equipment before hitting the water.

- Survey boat traffic.
 - Review surf action and surge.
 - Cover procedures for loss of air and buddy signals.
 - Review actions for shark or eel bites.
 - Ask: How can we get help if necessary?
 - Know the phone numbers for: Coast Guard, recompression chamber and fire department/ambulance.
- Prevention of incident.
- Don't drink alcohol and get plenty of rest the night before diving.
 - Do not fly the day of a dive, even in a pressurized aircraft.
 - Good physical conditioning reduces the risk of decompression sickness.
 - Talk the dive over and ensure all divers understand contingency plans.

SmartWebMove

Web-based program to make PCS moves easier

JO1 Katherine Sanchez
Naval Support Activity Naples
Public Affairs

The SmartWebMove (SWM) program is a Web-based program that allows transferring families and single service members to arrange their household goods move via the Internet.

The program is currently available to Sailors and families stationed in Hawai'i. Since its initial launch in 2001, the program has served stations in the continental United States. Pearl Harbor was the prototype for the overseas launch.

Beginning Feb. 16, the household goods application and customized entitlement counseling included in SWM will be available to Sailors and their families stationed in Naples.

According to Lt. Cmdr. Craig

Powell, Naval Support Activity Naples supply department material officer, the program brings convenience and flexibility to its users because families can access it 24 hours a day, seven days a week, from any computer with Internet connectivity.

"They can do it at home or at work. All they need is a computer," Powell said. "They can complete the entire process all in one session or in more than one session, if they choose. It provides a good deal of freedom, but individual counseling is still available if the customer has questions about their entitlements or would just rather speak to a counselor individually."

SWM is the first interactive DoD program that provides tailored entitlements counseling and household goods move applications all online. Naples is the first overseas location in the European theater to

have the program.

According to Richard McIntire, SWM program manager, the menus are simple to understand and most customers can complete the process in about one to two hours.

A move under the original process requires the customer to schedule an appointment, make a visit to the personal property office to receive household goods counseling, and complete the move application. This process takes an average of four hours for the customers to complete.

"Moving can be a very stressful and time-consuming experience," said McIntire. "SmartWeb Move can help improve the quality of life of our Sailors and their families and is the least stressful way to arrange a move."

"With SmartWeb Move, moves are now much easier to set up than having to find the personal property office and go in person. Furthermore, peak moving season and school rotations will no longer affect a Sailor's ability to schedule an appointment for counseling,"

McIntire added.

Eligibility is based on the service member's orders and the type of property to be moved. SWM is designed for use by those who are making routine moves and are eligible for simple entitlements based on their PCS [permanent change of station] orders.

Currently, SWM serves Sailors and their families who have PCS orders to a new duty station, homeport, home of selection or home of record within the continental United States and to some overseas locations. Those who are retiring or separating can also use SWM.

More than 18,000 service members have used the program since it was launched in June 2001.

To find out more about the program, visit the Web site at www.smartwebmove.navy.mil. SWM meets stringent federal and DoD security standards.

As information is transmitted over the Internet, passwords are protected and personal information is encrypted. Customer information is protected and stored on secure servers.

Sailors could get the 'boot'

JO3 Devin Wright
Staff Writer

Navy Region Hawai'i established a "Road-Master" program in early February to help increase awareness and shun the misuse of government-owned vehicles (GOV).

"The Road-Master will be on the lookout for individuals that are abusing the privilege of operating a government vehicle," said Ensign Jobe Galli. "Government-owned vehicles found parked in unauthorized locations will be disabled with a tire boot. The vehicle will not be released until the operator's chain-of-command has the opportunity to discuss the inappropriate use with the regional transportation program manager."

Military and DoD civilian personnel who are authorized to use government vehicles may do so to conduct official government business only, Galli added.

"Abuse of this policy includes stopping for personal reasons at the mini-mart, NEX, barbershop, restaurants and other such establishments, even if doing so while en route to an official function" said Galli.

The push for awareness is due in large part to the increase in GOV incidents on Naval Station Pearl Harbor.

"The right people have noticed service members and DoD personnel abusing their GOV privilege and decided it was time to do something about it," said Galli.

The ramifications for misusing a government vehicle can be steep.

"The use of a government vehicle to travel from home to work is considered a serious violation and has cost people their careers," said Galli. "The abuse of government transportation can result in non-judicial punishment for military and a suspension, or even removal, for civilians."

Galli said on the occasion personnel use a government vehicle for command-sponsored events, proper credentials need to be presented.

"A command may authorize the use of a government vehicle for duties such as shopping or MWR functions," said Galli. "In this case, documentation verifying such a requirement should be displayed on the dash of the GOV."

According to Galli, the tax-payer is the one who suffers when government vehicles are misused.

"This program is important because it protects the taxpayer," said Galli. "When government assets are used for purposes other than official business, we drive up the cost to do government business and the taxpayer foots the bill. It's just not fair to have to allow government employees to conduct personal business on the taxpayer's dime."

Navy News asks: *What woman in history do you admire most?*



LNC(SW) Kim Buchanan
Naval Station Pearl Harbor

Gail Sines, a retired master chief, because she held her own back when it was a man's world in the Navy. She just inspired me by being strong but fair.



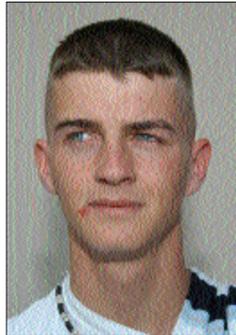
CS3 Shana Brown
Naval Station Pearl Harbor

Harriet Tubman because she risked so much for equality.



Ensign Latisha Robinson
Naval Surface Group
Middle Pacific

My mother, because if I've achieved any success in my life, it's because she helped keep me focused.



ENFA Kiel Barnott
USS Paul Hamilton (DDG 60)

My mom because of all the things she did to make sure we had all we needed as children and giving me such a happy childhood.



CS1(SW) Jojo Cambana
Naval Station Pearl Harbor

My sister, because when I was younger and refused to do my schoolwork, she always kept me in line.



Photo by JO3 Corwin Colbert

A tug gently guides the nuclear-powered Los Angeles-class attack submarine, USS La Jolla (SSN 701) away from its pier as it heads out for a Western Pacific deployment. The submarine is equipped with the special operations capable Dry Deck Shelter (DDS), which allows special operation forces, including Navy SEALs, to deploy on clandestine missions.

La Jolla deploys

JOC(SW/AW) David Rush
COMSUBPAC Public Affairs

USS La Jolla (SSN 701) departed on a Western Pacific deployment from its homeport of Pearl Harbor on Monday.

According to Cmdr. Brian Howes, USS La Jolla's commanding officer, his crew and the submarine are ready. "The crew's excited. This is the culmination of a lot of effort and hard work and they're looking forward to going out and supporting our mission."

Howes explained that because they are multi-mission capable, they have to be ready for anything. "We get ready for every contingency and we ensure we're good at every submarine mission because we don't know what our next mission will be."

As for fighting the global war on terrorism, more than 30 additional Sailors are brought onboard USS La Jolla as part of Seal Delivery Vehicle Team One.

"We have pushed the enve-

lope at sea in our different mission areas, specifically getting Seal Delivery Vehicle Team One ready for deployment because they have to be certified for deployment as well."

According to Howes, his Sailors are fired up for deployment. "Everyone that comes onboard our ship has said that we're enthusiastic and the morale is sky high and the crew is excited and ready to go on deployment. I think that's what sets us apart. We're ready to go," Howes concluded.

Commissioned Oct. 24, 1981, Los Angeles-class, nuclear-powered attack submarine USS La Jolla is 360 feet long and displaces 6,900 tons.

It is equipped with highly accurate sensors and weapon control systems and serves as a platform for special operations forces with its dry deck shelter (DDS) capability.

The submarine can be armed with sophisticated Mark 48 AOD-CAP anti-submarine torpedoes and Tomahawk-guided cruise missiles.

Navy's top JAG visits Pearl Harbor

JO1 Jim Williams
Feature Editor

The Navy Judge Advocate General (JAG), Rear Adm. Michael Lohr, and the Navy's Command Master Chief Legalman, Renee Scheetz, visited Pearl Harbor's Trial Service Office Feb. 23.

Progress and improvement were on the minds of both Lohr and Scheetz during their visit.

"The Navy is going through a tremendous amount of transformation right now," Lohr said, addressing a group of Sailors who work in Hawai'i's legal offices. "We are looking at new ways to provide better legal services, while perhaps consolidating functions."

The Navy's senior enlisted legal member also touched on the subject by discussing the possible merge of the legalman (LN) rating with the religious programs specialist (RP), cryptologic technician - administrative (CTA) and yeoman (YN) communities.

"It's going to be a long process and will be studied much more before any decisions are made," said Scheetz. "But while it is not a done deal yet, there is a good potential that it may happen."

"But if it does happen, it is going to be really exciting," she continued. "The training and vision of these new merged rates will far exceed what we have been able to do in the past. Our Sailors will all be more qualified, better trained and better educated."



Photo by JO1 Jim Williams

The Navy Judge Advocate General, Rear Adm. Michael Lohr, talks to LN1(SW) Renate Williams at the Pearl Harbor's Trial Service Office Feb. 23, shortly after she received the command's Sailor of the Year award.

She also congratulated the local legal community on the job they have been doing.

"This is an outstanding command with outstanding Sailors," Scheetz said. "I've never heard anyone say anything negative about the services provided here. I couldn't be more proud of the Sailors stationed in Hawai'i."

Lohr also praised the Sailors at the local JAG offices.

"One thing that always strikes me is the quality of service I find here," he said. "It's

a great practice you have, and while I realize how busy it is, I also know it really is a great place to live and work."

During the visit, the admiral and master chief took time to recognize a few Sailors by presenting Lt. Myounghee Lee with an end of tour award.

Legalman(LN) 1st Class (SW) William Hickok, from the Naval Legal Service Office Detachment, and LN1(SW) Renate Williams, from the Trial Service Office Pacific, were presented with the command Sailor of the Year awards. Williams will soon be going to Washington, D.C. to compete for the Navy-wide legalman Sailor of the Year board.

"One thing I would ask you to do," said Lohr, offering some advice to the Sailors, "is to become the subject matter expert in whatever job you're assigned. And while I don't think it's ever been more challenging to be in this profession, I want to thank each and every one of you for keeping this organization running as smoothly as it does."

Today the judge advocate general directs a worldwide organization of more than 730 judge advocates, 30 limited duty officers (law), 630 enlisted and nearly 275 civilian personnel.

The JAG provides legal and policy advice to the Secretary of the Navy in all legal matters concerning military justice, administrative law, environmental law, ethics, claims, admiralty, operational and international law, litigation and legal assistance.



Photo courtesy of Naval Media Center, Diego Garcia

Aerial view of Diego Garcia, a British Territory in the Indian Ocean

Swordsmen save a life on midnight mission

Lt. Adam Johnston
VP-47 Public Affairs Officer

The Golden Swordsmen of Patrol Squadron 47 provided invaluable life-saving services in a late-night medical evacuation (MEDEVAC) mission on Jan. 24.

A passenger bus struck a local mariner late at night on Jan. 23, causing the victim severe lacerations, extensive hip injuries and lower extremity trauma. Due to severely limited medical capabilities on Diego Garcia, medical personnel made the decision to commence MEDEVAC procedures to Singapore.

"We didn't have the assessment tools to truly identify the nature of his injuries," noted Lt. Jamie Salazar of the Naval Medical Clinic, Diego Garcia. "In these situations, where you can't accurately identify the injuries, it's critical to get the patient to an advanced treatment facility immediately." Salazar described the nature of the patient's wounds as "critical," noting that the victim spent roughly 10 days in intensive care after receiving treatment.

After consulting available options, the island command staff placed a request for MEDEVAC services with VP-47. The Golden Swordsmen, as part of their mission in Diego Garcia, are required to post a crew on "ready alert" at all times to assist in island defense as well as the execution of MEDEVAC scenarios.

U.S. Air Force tenant commands routinely play a valuable role in this mission and are the designated MEDEVAC providers worldwide, but were unable to provide as timely a response as VP-47's ready alert crew in this instance.

Members of the Golden Swordsmen said they were proud to be a part of this operation. Combat Aircrew 2, headed by Mission Commander Lt. Doug Leavengood, received the notification call at

approximately 2 a.m. local time.

Crew members arrived at the squadron, completed a preflight and flight planning routine, and stood by to assist in loading the patient and medical support personnel onboard their P-3C Orion aircraft.

While the standard "ready alert" procedure is designed to provide a four-hour window between notification and takeoff, CAC-2 and the maintenance team prepared their plane for flight less than two hours after initial notification and commenced their flight to Singapore in less than three hours.

Such a rapid response for this time-critical mission was key to the successful delivery of the patient to advanced treatment facilities in Singapore. MEDEVAC procedures require close coordination between the island medical staff, tenant aviation commands and the Tactical Support Center (TSC). Unlike medical emergencies in the United States, overseas MEDEVACs require a wide array of diplomatic clearances and close adherence to international law - creating hurdles that must be cleared in order to complete this life-saving mission.

For the Golden Swordsmen, this served as a real "wake-up call." In their previous deployment to Diego Garcia, VP-47 fielded 15 evacuations over the six-month period, yet this was the first such mission for the Swordsmen in this deployment. While they stand ready to provide their services, all hands continue to hope that the tragic emergencies that create the demand will remain at a minimum.

The victim of the accident was released from medical treatment in Singapore in mid-February and returned to his home in the United States for extensive rehabilitation and continuation of treatment.

Awareness: Upcoming LES changes designed to reduce identity theft

From Defense Finance and Accounting Service
Public Affairs

Leave and Earning Statements (LES) for all service members and Defense Department civilians, and paychecks for military retirees will soon have more protection against identity theft.

Over the next several weeks, the Defense Finance and Ac-

counting Service will drop the first five digits of a person's social security number from all hard copy pay statements and checks to guard against identity theft.

"The changes apply to everyone," said Patrick T. Shine, acting director, Defense Finance and Accounting Service. The proposal "originated internally and will be phased in over the next couple of pay periods."

This change will be accom-

plished for all hard copy leave and earning statements. This does not apply to electronic copies of statements found on myPay, the online system for access and control of customers' personal pay information (<https://mypay.dfas.mil>).

Reports of identity theft have substantially increased in recent years, according to the Federal Trade Commission (FTC), which monitors the issue.

Five years ago, the number of complaints to the FTC was roughly 23,400. By 2001, the rate had more than tripled to about 86,200. Based on figures released in January 2004, the number of complaints of identity theft nearly topped 215,000 for 2003. The Social Security Administration also has taken the same step of eliminating the first five social security numbers on the millions of checks it issues.

McCullough addresses CMEO brief at Pearl Harbor

Rear Adm. Barry McCullough, commander Navy Region Hawai'i and commander Naval Surface Group Middle Pacific, addresses an audience of Oahu-area command managed equal opportunity advisors. The quarterly training session, entitled "Optimizing the Navy's Diverse Force," was held on Feb. 20 at Naval Station Pearl Harbor. Equal opportunity advisors from Commander Pacific Fleet and from other commands on the west coast were on hand to share information about how commands could enhance their equal opportunity atmospheres.

Photo by JO1 Daniel J. Calderon



Tugboats christened by Hawai'i congressional delegator



Congressman Neil Abercrombie and Eugene Takemoto, brother of the late Hawai'i Congresswoman Patsy Mink, christen ASD Patsy Mink tug boat at Sierra 19 Pier Feb. 21 during a blessing and christening ceremony of three new tug boats owned by P&R Water Taxi, Ltd. Mink was the first woman of Asian descent to serve in the U.S. Congress. During her career, she served 12 terms in the House of Representatives. In the early 1970s, Mink played a key role in the enactment of Title IX of the Higher Education Act Amendments. Title IX prohibited gender discrimination by federally-funded institutions. Mink passed away in September 2002. The dedication of the tug boat bearing Mink's name comes just before Women's History Month is recognized in March. Along with ASD Patsy Mink, ASD Kaimana Hila and ASD Daniel Akaka were christened at the ceremony.

Photo by JO3 Devin Wright

Sailors from USS Blue Ridge, U.S. 7th Fleet visit Shanghai, China

U.S. 7th Fleet Public Affairs

USS Blue Ridge (LCC 19) arrived in Shanghai, China for a regularly scheduled port visit on Tuesday.

Vice Adm. Robert F. Willard, Commander, U.S. 7th Fleet, and Capt. J. Stephen Maynard, Blue Ridge commanding officer, met with senior People's Liberation Army (PLA) (Navy) officials during a welcoming ceremony on Gaoyang Pier.

"It's been three years since Blue Ridge has visited mainland China," said Willard. "I can think of no port of call as historic and with such a world-renowned reputation for hospitality than Shanghai."

Blue Ridge last visited Shanghai in March 2001.

Willard said he and Maynard plan to formally meet with their colleagues in the PLA Navy and the city of Shanghai over the next several days and exchange tours of the

U.S. 7th Fleet command and control ship Blue Ridge and a PLA (Navy) frigate.

In remarks made before the press, military personnel and others, Willard expressed his regard for the continuing relationship the U.S. Navy shares with the PLA Navy.

"The 7th Fleet has had a very successful 2003, and we hope we will have an equally successful 2004 in exchanging port visits between ourselves and the PLA Navy," said Willard. "This opportunity for Blue Ridge to visit China, much like the other opportunities for 7th Fleet ships to visit mainland China, is intended to continue what is evolving as a regular military-to-military contact opportunity between us and our PLA colleagues."

Willard emphasized the magnitude of the visit for Blue Ridge and 7th Fleet Sailors and Marines, and the unique experience they have before them.



U.S. Navy photo by PH1 Michael R. McCormick
Vice Adm. Robert Willard, commander, U.S. Seventh Fleet, receives a traditional greeting of flowers from a representative of the People's Liberation Army.

"We look forward to this very much, not only for the opportunity for senior level military-to-military contact, but also for the opportunities the Sailors will have to get to know the Chinese and Shanghai better," he said.

Blue Ridge is forward deployed to the western Pacific and operates out of Yokosuka, Japan.

Public Notice of Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO) Survey

The Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO) and the Naval Medical Inspector General (MEDINSGEN) will conduct a joint accreditation survey of Naval Medical Clinic Pearl Harbor from March 9, 2004 to March 18, 2004.

The purpose of the survey will be to evaluate the organization's compliance with nationally established Joint Commission and United States Navy standards. The survey results will be used to determine whether, and the conditions under which, accreditation should be awarded the organization.

Joint Commission standards deal with organizational quality of care issues and the safety of the environment in which care is provided. Anyone believing that he or she has pertinent and valid information about such matters may request a public information interview with the Joint Commission's field representatives. Information presented at the interview will be carefully evaluated for relevance to the accreditation process. Requests for a public information interview with JCAHO must be made in writing and should be sent to the Joint Commission no later than five working days before the survey begins March 4, 2004. The request must also indicate the nature of the information to be provided at the interview. Such requests should be addressed to:

Division of Accreditation Operations
Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations
One Renaissance Boulevard
Oakbrook Terrace, IL 60181

The Joint Commission will acknowledge such requests in writing or by telephone and will inform the organization of the request for any interview. The organization will, in turn, notify the interviewee of the date, time, and place of the meeting.

Concerns may also be brought to the attention of the Medical Inspector General by calling 1-800-637-6175.

This notice is posted in accordance with the Joint Commission's requirements and may not be removed before the survey is completed.

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