U.S. 7th Fleet completes Fleet Synthetic Training-Joint exercise

From Commander U.S. 7th Fleet Public Affairs

U.S. 7th Fleet, Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force (JMSDF) and various other commands throughout Japan, the Pacific and continental United States completed Fleet Synthetic Training-Joint exercise 11-71 March 3.

The ballistic missile defense (BMD) training exercise held by U.S. Pacific Fleet, is a four-day exercise designed to enhance the joint, bilateral and interagency training in BMD against threats to regional and homeland installations and units.

"This Fleet Synthetic Training [FST] event provides a great opportunity to exercise with our JMSDF allies and U.S. Joint Forces in Hawaii and Japan in a fast-paced, realistic environment," said Capt. Matthew E. Loughlin, *USS Shiloh* (CG 67) commanding officer and commander for 7th Fleet Ballistic Missile Defense Warfare.

"To watch standers on the ship, it seems as realistic as any at-sea exercise, but with the added benefit of a very robust threat sustained for an entire week," Loughlin added.

The 7th Fleet command flagship *USS Blue Ridge* (LCC 19) served as the central hub for the computer-based simulated training, networking with ships at sea and pier side.

Loughlin also noted the important role Japanese partners in the training exercise played, particularly the integration of Japanese destroyer *JS Chokai* (DDG 176) to the Fleet Synthetic Training scenario network.

"The JMSDF ability to integrate fully into the architecture this year makes for an even better training event and is a tribute to our enduring friendship, cooperation and willingness to improve interoperability," Loughlin said.

Lt. Cmdr. Michael Weber, a mentor supporting Tactical Training Group Pacific (TTGP), which is headquartered in San Diego, said the engineering and training communities were grateful to have the opportunity to train with the crew from *Chokai*.

"Early on it was evident that the integration of *JS Chokai* into the FST was going to be a huge success," Weber said. "The crew is highly capable and extremely well trained. At every opportunity, the crew met challenges head on, completed their tasking in an outstanding fashion, and demonstrated themselves as a highly professional and capable team."

Chokai Commanding Officer Capt. Tsutomu Okawa, highly complimented on the exercise as being beneficial in strengthening Japan-U.S. alliance's ability to maintain combat readiness.

U.S. 7th Fleet command flagship *USS Blue Ridge* (LCC 19) conducts a passing exercise with JMSDF destroyers *JDS Hatakaze* (DDG 171), *JDS Isoyuki* (DD 127) and *JDS Setoyuki* (DD 131) (not shown) March 3. U.S. 7th Fleet, JMSDF and various other commands throughout Japan, the Pacific and continental United States participated in Fleet Synthetic Training-Joint exercise Feb. 28 - March 3.
U.S. Navy photo by Cmdr. Ronald W. Thornton

"JMSDF, through this Japan-U.S. Joint BMD simulation exercise, improved tactical skills and procedures of bilateral BMD mission, and acquired significant lessons," said Okawa. "On behalf of JMSDF, we sincerely appreciate all the kind support and cooperation of 7th Fleet, *USS Shiloh*, TTGP and staffs of the U.S. Navy."

2010 Enlisted Education Quickpoll outlines Navy education trends

By Lt. Cmdr. Walter Rogers, Center for Personal and Professional Development Public Affairs

The Center for Personal and Professional Development (CPPD) received the 2010 Enlisted Education Quickpoll results from the Navy Personnel Research, Studies, and Technology (NPRST) group Feb. 22. The poll was designed to assess educational levels in the fleet and elicit Sailors' views on education-related issues.

"We are very pleased with the response rate," said Capt. Chuck Hollingsworth, CPPD commanding officer. "The large number of responses by itself indicates how important education is to our Sailors."

The poll included responses from more than 3,600 enlisted Sailors from all pay grades and warfare communities. The poll reflected several notable trends, including a significant increase in the number of Sailors who either "agreed" or "strongly agreed" they could complete college courses compared to the last poll conducted in 2008.

The 2010 poll also revealed several trends consistent with the previous poll taken in 2008. Many Sailors continue to report that high operational tempo and conflicts between work and education remain a barrier to obtaining a college degree.

"This is the nature of our work," said Hollingsworth. "Military operations are our priority, so these responses are not surprising. However, the increase in the number of respondents who felt confident they could complete college courses tells me that Sailors have been increasingly able to utilize education programs and resources to overcome the challenges they encounter. [The] CPPD goal is to continue that trend in a positive direction."

New to the 2010 poll were questions regarding the Post-9/11 G.I. Bill and perceptions of aggressive marketing from schools. Both of these topics have been getting attention at high levels, and were included to determine if Sailors would exit the Navy at their earliest convenience to use the new G.I. Bill benefits and whether the new program enabled more aggressive marketing.

"We found that the poll results generally reflected Navy normal retention-attrition numbers," said Hollingsworth. "From what we can see, there is no abnormal exodus from the Navy to use the Post-9/11 G.I. Bill benefits. Responses to a question regarding marketing practices produced encouraging results as well, with only a small percentage citing aggressive e-mails or phone calls in relatively isolated cases.

"The key is to ensure no financial decision is made with regard to off-duty education without first talking to a counselor from a Navy College Office or the Virtual Education Center," said Hollingsworth.

Hollingsworth also said CPPD expects to continue Enlisted Education Quickpolls in the future to continue to maintain visibility on the importance of education and to gain insight into how Sailors view the Voluntary Education (VOLED) programs.

"The polls are valuable tools for assessing the efficacy of CPPD's efforts to bring educational services to the Navy," explained Hollingsworth. "The responses we receive grant us insight into Sailors' educational concerns and show us where we can improve our programs and services to keep the trends illustrated in the 2010 poll headed in a positive direction."

15th International Friendship Half Marathon - Half marathon, 5K, 10K and 2K Parent/Child runs will be held at Sagami General Depot, April 17 starting at 9 a.m. This event is free for all SOFA sponsored personnel and their family members. The cutoff date for registration is March 16. Call 263-7980/5995 to sign up or for more information.

Yokosuka Pink Ribbon Support Group - The Yokosuka Pink Ribbon Support Group for breast cancer survivors, meets at the Fleet and Family Support Center every Tuesday from 9:30 to 11 a.m. Call 243-7878 for more information.

TRICARE University Online Education - TRICARE offers free online courses at www.tricare.mil/tricareu. The courses range from basic TRICARE information to the premium-based health care plan, TRICARE Reserve Select. Visit www.tricare.mil for more information.