George Washington Sailors complete security training course

Story and photo by MC3 Juan Pinalez, *USS George Washington* Public Affairs

More than 30 *USS George Washington* (CVN 73) Sailors completed a Security Reaction Force Basic (SRFB) course aboard the ship, April 7.

The three-week course trains Sailors to work in the Security Department and is mandatory for all *George Washington* E-6 and below Sailors.

The course includes classroom instruction and hands-on training in anti-terrorism/force protection followed by a final challenge of fighting their way through a gauntlet of obstacles, barriers and attackers after receiving pepper spray directly into the eyes.

"The Oleoresin Capsicum spray is liquid pain, but it's imperative these Sailors undergo a direct spraying to pass and complete the SRFB course," said Chief Master-at-Arms (EXW) Darren Price, SRFB instructor. "The commanding officer requested all *George Washington* Sailors E-6 and below participate and obtain their qualification, so having the students do this in front of the crew really helps put the crew at ease; especially since they'll be next."

Hundreds showed up in the ship's hangar bay for the opportunity to watch their friends and co-workers get sprayed with highly concentrated pepper spray and to cheer them on as the 33 students fought their way through the gauntlet.

"I've participated in this course once before and watched many of them before too," said Intelligence Specialist 3rd Class Kaylie Gordon from King's Bay, Ga. "This group was the most prepared I've ever seen. They had a motivator always by their side to help guide them through the stations and ensure they would be able to complete the course."

ADAN Jesse Kirk, from Anoka, Minn., recovers from directly receiving pepper spray to the face as part of a basic security training course aboard the aircraft carrier *USS George Washington* (CVN 73) (*GW*) April 7. The three-week course trains Sailors to work in the Security Department and is mandatory for all *GW* Sailors E-6 and below.

Inside the 50-foot, cone-lined ring, Sailors were required to complete various tasks at multiple stations.

Some of the tasks required Sailors to take down an adversary, perform forward-reverse strikes with a baton, demonstrate defensive blocking techniques and the ability to retain a weapon while fighting against a mock attacker in a red, padded suit.

"It's good to see what I have to go through in the near future," said Aviation Ordnanceman Desiree Brown from Milwaukee. "I do feel safer knowing everyone has to go through this. It'll make sure someone thinks twice before reaching for the pepper spray bottle."

While being pepper sprayed is something many of the students may never forget, they have also learned a number of important lessons throughout the course.

The training in basic law enforcement, security watch standing and weapons proficiency means they are trained and can help ensure everyone is safer.

With the SRFB course over, the Sailors will return to their original departments and will remain on standby until recalled.

Recalled Sailors will work in the Security Department for a period of six to 12 months where they will help the *USS George Washington* master-at-arms maintain a safe ship.

MCPON West testifies before Senate on quality of life issues

By MCC(SW/AW) Sonya Ansarov, Office of the Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy Public Affairs

The master chief petty officer of the Navy (MCPON) testified for the first time before the Personnel Subcommittee of the Senate Armed Services Committee April 13.

MCPON(SS/SW) Rick D. West, along with other top enlisted leaders from the Marines, Army and Air Force, appeared before the committee to discuss the health of their forces, quality of life programs, family readiness, continuum of care, reserve force and family housing.

"Current operational demands and high operating tempo have placed added stress on the force," said West. "Our many personnel and family readiness programs remain one of our Navy's highest priorities."

Navy's Homeport Ashore program, bachelor and Navy family housing, childcare and Continuum of Care were important issues that were brought up to the congressional subcommittee.

"One area that has had recent significant impact on quality of life for our families that I feel the need to highlight is the Continuing Resolution (CR) for Fiscal Year 2011," said West.

West detailed for the committee how the spending restrictions under the CR resulted in considerable delays in permanent-change-of-station (PCS) orders and more than 20,000 sets of orders that were deferred. He said under the CR, the Navy has not had sufficient manpower funding to allow for normal lead times for Sailors to receive PCS orders, and the result is the average lead times have been reduced from four to six months to two months or less.

"While relief is on the way, lingering effects of the CR will continue to place emotional and economic strain on our Sailors and their families as they attempt to sell homes, seek follow on employment for family members, enroll children in schools, and complete necessary screening and training requirements prior to transfer," said West.

West continued to explain that though our leadership continues to be resourceful in mitigating the impact, the CR has affected funding for new construction and facility sustainment in barracks and base operating support.

West gave the committee a global snapshot of the Navy's current operations with approximately 60 percent of the Navy's ships underway, 40 percent being on deployment worldwide, and more than 28,000 Sailors on the ground and at sea in the U.S. Central Command area of responsibility in support of operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. Naval forces are providing direct support of ongoing operations in the Mediterranean Sea, executing counter-piracy missions off the coast of Africa, and continuing to provide humanitarian assistance and disaster relief to the people of Japan.

Greater demand on Navy forces has lead to longer deployments and shorter dwell, or turnaround times, which increases strain on Sailors, Navy civilians and their families, West explained. West said he firmly believes that how the Sailors sent to war, the families they leave behind and those wounded and retired shipmates are supported, truly defines us as a Navy and a nation.

"Despite these challenges, our leadership remains focused on providing support to our Sailors and their families to foster resiliency as well as family readiness," said West.

In closing, West thanked the subcommittee for their steadfast support of our men and women in uniform.

(Center) Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy (MCPON) Rick West testifies before the House Committee Subcommittee, Veterans Affairs and related agencies to discuss quality of life issues March 30.

U.S. Navy photo by MC1 Abraham Essenmacher