Fire Department recognizes "Friendship, collaboration"

Story and photo by MC1 Brock A. Taylor, Navy Region Japan Public Affairs

TOKYO - Commander Navy Region Japan's (CNRJ) Regional Fire Department hosted its 14th annual friendship dinner at the New Sanno Hotel Oct. 21.

Each year the Regional Fire Department hosts the dinner to recognize and thank its staff and mutual aid partners for their continued support to Navy installations throughout Japan.

This year's theme was "Friendship and Collaboration". Event coordinator and CNRJ Deputy Fire Chief Gifton Lawrence says the theme was fitting especially in light of the combined efforts following the March 11 Japan disaster.

The dinner, this year, brought in 240 emergency service professionals, which included the Commissioner of the Japan Federal Disaster Management Agency Nobuyasu Kubo.

Kubo's position is similar to that of the United State's director of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, or FEMA.

Kubo says he was honored to have so many heroes at one gathering and was inspired by the actions of emergency responders during the events following the March 11 earthquake and subsequent tsunami.

He was also added that the incredible actions taken by the U.S. military during Operation Tomodachi gave him hope that Japan would prevail.

"The Japanese people will never forget the existence and the efforts and the cooperation and the hard work of the United States military," Kubo said.

The dinner's keynote speaker, Commander, U.S. Naval Forces Japan/Navy Region Japan Rear Adm. Dan Cloyd, expressed his gratitude of the importance of the service emergency response professionals provide to both on and off installation communities all over Japan.

"What you all share, in what I humbly and respectfully believe makes all of you so very special, is your close teamwork and your shared passion for what you do- which is save precious lives," Cloyd said.

During the dinner, special presentation awards were given to Department of Defense Firefighter of the Year Takashi Innami, and Department of Defense Fire Service Instructor of the Year Yujiro Iwata.

During a speech at the 14th annual Regional Fire Department Friendship Dinner, Commissioner of the Japan's Federal Disaster Management Agency Nobuyasu Kubo, thanks emergency service responders and U.S. military and civilian partners for their actions following the March 11 Japan disaster. CNRJ Fire Department hosted the event at the New Sanno Hotel. During the dinner, CNRJ recognized the efforts of fire districts throughout Japan and their continuied support to Navy Region Japan installations.

Defense Department reminds troops of member-designated benefits

From American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON – In their ongoing review of military benefits in connection with the repeal of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell," Defense Department officials have now identified a total of 14 benefits where members may designate beneficiaries of their choosing, regardless of sexual orientation.

"We listed eight member-designated benefits in our original Quick Reference Guide, released Sept. 20. We've now validated an additional six," said Defense Department spokeswoman Eileen Lainez. "While these are not 'new,' now that we've confirmed these additional benefits, we're updating the Quick Reference Guide to ensure all are aware of their beneficiary options."

The 14 benefits identified for members to designate whomever they wish as beneficiaries are:

- Service Members Group Life Insurance beneficiary;
- Post Vietnam-era Veterans Assistance Program beneficiary;
- All-volunteer Force Educational Assistance Program
- Active Duty Death Benefit beneficiary;
- Death Gratuity beneficiary;
- Final Settlement of Accounts;
- Wounded Warrior Designated Caregiver;
- Thrift Savings Plan beneficiary;
- Survivor Benefit for retirees;
- Casualty Notification;
- Escorts for Dependents of Deceased or Missing;
- Designation of Persons Having Interest in Status of a Missing Member;
- Veterans' Group Life Insurance beneficiary;
- Person Eligible to Receive Effects of Deceased Persons; and Travel and Transportation Allowance: attendance at Yellow Ribbon Reintegration events.

Eligibility for a number of other benefits is restricted by applicable statutes, including the Defense of Marriage Act.

Finally, in connection with the repeal of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell," Lainez said, "the Defense Department is engaged in a careful and deliberate review of the possibility of revising the eligibility for additional benefits, if legally permitted." Service members are encouraged to contact their personnel offices for more information.

For more information regarding teh "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" repeal, visit www.defense.gov/dadt_repeal.

White House to display holiday cards from military children

By MC1 Monique K. Hilley, Commander, Navy Installations Command Public Affairs

WASHINGTON – The first lady has requested that military children from around the globe create holiday cards supporting their parent and send them to the White House to be displayed with the holiday decorations no later than Nov. 16.

White House officials are honoring American heroes this holiday season and want to include the personal contributions in their finishing touches on the decorations.

"We are asking kids like you, from military installations around the world, to create a holiday card that represents your parent who is serving our nation," said first lady Michelle Obama in a personal letter to military children. "I encourage you to use your imagination, and include words, pictures, and drawings to create a holiday card that honors your brave mom or dad."

Military children should submit 5" by 8" handmade holiday cards with words of appreciation for their military parents, as well as pictures and drawings.

The child should be sure to include their mother or father's name, branch of service and command in the card.

Participants are asked to send holiday cards to the following address, along with information from where they are sending it:

Reservation 1, Attn: Social Office,
P.O. Box 8070,
Washington, DC, 20032.

"Thank you for helping with this fun project, and most of all for your family's courageous service to our nation," added Obama. "I look forward to seeing the results of your creativity!"

The White House staff will display as many of the cards as possible.