U.S., ROK Sailors join forces to bestow goodwill

Story and photo by MC2 Timmy Wakefield, *USS Blue Ridge* Public Affairs

BUSAN, Republic of Korea – Sixty Sailors from *USS Blue Ridge* (LCC 19) U.S. 7th Fleet flagship, embarked 7th Fleet staff, and Republic of Korea (ROK) navy came together as one team participating in a community service (COMSERV) project at a children's home during a scheduled port visit to Busan, Republic of Korea Feb. 25.

Blue Ridge Chaplain Lt. Donald Baker coordinated the visit with Hee-Rak-Won Children's Home Director Park Hyo-il, and ROK navy liaison Kim Jong-Soon.

This community service event was established to strengthen the friendship of both militaries and the children's home while bringing happiness to the residents of the home.

According to Hyo-il, the children enjoyed the interaction with U.S. Navy Sailors because of how interesting and unique this opportunity was for them.

This event builds on the United States' partnership with the Republic of Korea and its people.

The children performed drum cadences, played games with Sailors from both nations and Sailors also lended a hand to help clean up the outside of the children's home.

In despite of the fact participants were challenged with a language barrier they turned the event into a memorable experience for all involved.

"There's a language barrier between us, the children and the ROK navy but our friendship was the universal bond we had with each other," said Aerographer's Mate 1st Class Amy Kellans. "I'm so glad I did this COMSERV today, getting the chance to be with these children."

For Yeoman 3rd Class Jesse Welsh, the experience meant more than just volunteering his time for the children at the home.

"After visiting with the children and realizing how little they have, it helped me put my life into perspective," said Welsh. "It's amazing to realize how we impacted the children positively with our presence."

Blue Ridge is under the command of Commanding Officer Capt. Daniel Grieco and is the flagship of the U.S. 7th Fleet.

Blue Ridge is under the purview of Commander, U.S. 7th Fleet Vice Adm. Scott Swift and Commander, Amphibious Forces 7th Fleet, Rear Adm. Scott Jones.

(Left) YN3 Jesse Welsh and IC2 Sidney Hendrickson of 7th Fleet flagship, *USS Blue Ridge* (LCC 19), play basketball with a Korean child at a community service project while the ship is in Busan, Republic of Korea Feb. 25. While in port, *Blue Ridge* Sailors and embarked 7th Fleet staff will interact with their Republic of Korea navy counterparts and participate in various community service events.

VP-16 War Eagles Sailors build ties in Thailand

By Lt. j.g. Michael Glynn, VP-16 Public Affairs

UTAPAO, Thailand – Sailors from the War Eagles of Patrol Squadron (VP) 16 visited Thailand to build regional cooperation and conduct training Feb 6-12.

"Training and sharing ideas with our partners in Thailand was a great experience," said VP-16 Executive Officer Cmdr. Molly Boron. "It is opportunities like this where U.S. crews practice with our partners, garnering a new perspective and understanding that pays off in the long run with on-station performance when needed."

War Eagles' aircrew and maintainers conducted two symposiums with service members of the Royal Thai Navy, sharing their perspectives and experiences in operating P-3 Orion maritime patrol aircraft.

"We're here to strengthen our ties and enhance our interoperability with the Thai navy," said Lt. Cmdr Frank Loethen, to Royal Thai naval officers during the aircrew symposium.

VP-16 and Thai aviators also discussed capabilities and limitations that appear or happen when conducting joint operations.

Maintenance personnel met with their Thai counterparts in the 102 Squadron of the Royal Thai Navy and exchanged troubleshooting techniques, which help keep the aging airframes in an extremely high state of readiness.

"The chance to meet and work side by side with maintainers of my own background from a different country was an experience I'll always remember," said Aviation Structural Mechanic 1st Class Aaron Roberts.

War Eagles' aircrew flew a training mission with Thai counterparts on board a P-3C Orion that focused on improving maritime domain awareness. The training exercise allowed an opportunity to display capabilities and compare operational experiences, which was beneficial to both parties.

VP-16 operates P-3C Orion maritime patrol aircraft designed as a land-based, long-range, anti-submarine warfare (ASW) patrol aircraft, with missions that include surveillance of the battlespace, either at sea or over land. VP-16 is homeported ashore at Naval Air Station Jacksonville, Fla. and is currently deployed to Kadena Air Base in Okinawa. VP-16 flies reconnaissance and surveillance missions in support of Commander, U.S. 7th Fleet.

Use, distribution of designer drugs unlawful for SOFA sponsored personnel

Compliled from various sources By CFAY Public Affairs

The use and abuse of drugs has been a problem society has been forced to deal with for centuries. Until relatively recently, drugs of abuse have been derived from two sources: plants and pharmaceutical drugs – both of which are regulated in the United States by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and law enforcement agencies. Today, however, there has been a surge in the production of new synthetic drugs created furtively in unregulated laboratories with unique chemical structures that avert control by the FDA and are expertly marketed as safe, legitimate substances under cool or exotic names.

However cool or safe these drugs may seem, the truth of the matter is they present a true danger to not only user; but also, especially in the case of service members, to the mission readiness of the organization that individual works for.

Spice and similar products are essentially an herbal, synthetic form of marijuana, mimicking the chemical compounds found in the drug. These products are banned for Navy personnel, civilian employees and their family members.

"The number of incidents of designer drug usage is rising at an alarming rate in our Navy," said Adm. John C. Harvey, commander, U.S. Fleet Forces Command. "I need each and every one of our Sailors looking out for each other. Talk to your shipmates about Spice and make sure they understand the dangers and serious consequences involved with its use."

However cool or safe these drugs may seem, the truth of the matter is they present a true danger to not only the user; but also, especially in the case of service members, to the mission readiness of the organization that individual works for.

Since the release of Naval Administrative Message (NAVADMIN) 108/10 in March 2010, which reemphasized the Navy's drug policy, the U.S. Navy has been proactively campaigning to reduce the number of incidents related to the use of synthetic marijuana.

"Our Navy has zero tolerance for drug use. If you are considering using Spice or a similar drug, I strongly urge you to reconsider," Harvey said. "If you are caught using it, even once, you will be separated from the Navy. There is no second chance."

Any personnel determined to be unlawfully using, possessing, promoting, manufacturing or distributing drugs and, or drug abuse paraphernalia shall be disciplined, as appropriate and processed for administrative action and, or separation, according to Navy regulations.

In the Navy, drug abuse includes: the wrongful use, possession, manufacture or distribution of a controlled substance. Drug abuse also includes: the unlawful use of controlled substance analogues (designer drugs), natural substances (e.g., fungi, excretions), chemicals (e.g., chemicals wrongfully used as inhalants), propellants and, or prescribed or over-the-counter drugs or pharmaceutical compounds with the intent to induce intoxication, excitement or stupefaction of the central nervous system and will subject the violator to punitive action under the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ) and, or adverse administrative action.

Examples of other substances, the wrongful use of which constitutes drug abuse, includes, but is not limited to the following:

- Products that contain synthetic cannabinoid compounds, such as Spice, Genie, Blaze, Dream, Ex-Ses, Spark, Fusion, Dark Knight, Yukatan Fire and K2.
- Natural substances such as Salvia divinorum and mushrooms.
- Common use items abused by inhaling or huffing, such as Dust-Off, glue, paint thinner and gasoline.
- Over-the-counter products such as Robitussin and Coricidin HBP.
- Prescription medications such as Oxycodone, Vicodin, Adderal and Valium.