George Washington Sailors celebrate Hispanic Heritage Month

By MCSN Michelle N. Rasmusson, *USS George Washingto*n Public Affairs

USS GEORGE WASHINGTON, At Sea – Sailors aboard the forward-deployed aircraft carrier *USS George Washington* (CVN 73) participated in a Hispanic Heritage Month ceremony Oct. 6.

The U.S. Navy is strengthened by the diversity of its Sailors, and the Navy encourages every individual to embrace their heritage to allow them to reach their full potential. Hispanic Americans have served with honor and merit in almost every at-sea conflict in American history dating as far back as the War of 1812.

Senior Chief Aviation Boatswain's Mate (Equipment) David Jimenez, one of the ceremony's guest speakers, stressed the important contributions that Sailors of Hispanic descent bring to the ship and the unique culture that they share.

"Our culture is alive and is vibrant; whether it is the smile of a child in Argentina, the sweat of a football player in Mexico, the beautiful smile of a Caribbean woman or anywhere in-between, we are always present with our distinct fiestas, food and music, welcoming everyone to join us as family," said Jimenez.

Aviation Electronics Technician Airman Yaralis DeJesus, who has roots from Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic, when asked why celebrating Hispanic heritage is important, said, "It means that it's a day where everyone from my culture can get together to talk about our similarities."

During the ceremony, several Sailors of Hispanic heritage participated in a cake-cutting with Capt. G. J. Fenton, *George Washington*'s commanding officer. After the cake-cutting, Sailors were treated to a wide variety of Latin music.

(Center) Capt. G.J. Fenton, commanding officer aboard the U.S. Navy's forward-deployed aircraft carrier *USS George Washington* (CVN 73), and Sailors of Hispanic descent cut a cake during a Hispanic Heritage Month ceremony aboard the Nimitz-class aircraft carrier Oct. 6.

"It's important to acknowledge the different racial backgrounds that we have to develop understanding," said Machinist's Mate 2nd Class Vanessa Chacon. "These events allow us to learn from each other and become a stronger team."

Hispanic Heritage Month is celebrated from Sept. 15 to Oct. 15.

The dates were chosen to encompass the Independence Day anniversaries of Chile, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico and Nicaragua.

Navy civilians: Working together in support of the #Warfighter

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Navy civilians are employed all over the world, assisting the Navy's #Warfighters to complete the mission.

We asked Juan M. Garcia, III, Assistant Secretary of the Navy (Manpower and Reserve Affairs) to discuss how they accomplish that.

As we take time during the month of October to reflect on our naval heritage, it's important that we recognize a core component of the team—our civilian workforce.

Today, there are more than 200,000 civilians serving within the Department of the Navy (DON).

To put that number in perspective, the DON, which is one of the largest and most complex organizations in the federal government, has a civilian workforce the size of General Motors or Verizon.

Service comes in many forms, and our Navy civilians contribute each day to the success of this department.

Just take a moment to read the examples.

Navy civilians support the mission first and foremost, improve our capabilities and develop our people, helping to make us the strongest Navy the world has ever seen.

The chance to serve and support the warfighter attracts some of the most diverse, talented and highly skilled individuals this country has to offer, which is why the Navy consistently leads the way in research and development.

Our largest career fields are in science, technology, engineering and logistics.

From counter-IED technology and GPS, to unmanned aerial vehicles and alternative energy, Navy civilians lay the foundation for many of the revolutionary technologies we see and use every day.

Of the more than 200,000 civilians comprising our branch, 60 percent are veterans. Civilian careers offer the opportunity for veterans to continue serving their country while also using and building upon the valuable skills they acquired while in uniform.

Not only is it important for us to recognize the support civilians provide to the war fighter, we must also acknowledge the sacrifice civilians have made for our country.

Most notably, Department of the Navy civilians were among the 125 men and women who lost their lives at the Pentagon on Sept. 11, 2001.

Since then, many more have made the ultimate sacrifice in our fight against terror.

Civilians will continue to play a critical role in our smarter and leaner force, even in the face of unprecedented uncertainty and change.

The Navy will continue to be on the front line of our nation's warfighting efforts, in war and in peace, with a proud heritage of success in battle, on, above, and below the sea.

Thank you for the incredible work you do each and every day, and for carrying forward our more than two-century tradition of warfighting excellence, adaptation and resilience.