Selective reenlistment bonus award levels changed

By MC2(AW) La Tunya Howard,
Navy Personnel Command Public Affairs

The Navy announced revised selective reenlistment bonus (SRB) rates Feb. 18 in NAVADMIN 050/09.

"We adjust SRBs as a retention incentive to provide the critical skills needed in the fleet," said Vice Adm. Mark Ferguson, chief of naval personnel. "We're experiencing great retention in nearly all zones and NECs (Navy Enlisted Classifications) and we've adjusted SRB levels in response to this change in behavior.

"While not every Sailor qualifies for a SRB, all Sailors are important to the successful execution of Navy missions," added Ferguson.

The new message approves 35 increases in SRBs, many in the nuclear field, and 412 decreases.

The increased award levels are effective immediately and decreased levels are effective March 11. These award levels are continually reviewed and evaluated. This NAVADMIN supersedes NAVADMIN 240/08.

The SRB program enhances the Navy's ability to size, shape and stabilize the force by using a monetary incentive to encourage Sailors with critical skills the Navy needs most to reenlist. SRB is a market-based incentive allowing the Navy to strategically adjust award levels as retention needs dictate.

The Navy announced changes to the SRB policy earlier this year which allows Sailors to reenlist early for SRB as long as they are within 90 days prior to their expiration of active obligated service (EAOS) and within the current fiscal year of their EAOS. A Sailor whose SRB award level decreases or is removed is eligible to reenlist in the first 30 days following release of a new SRB award plan only if their hard EAOS is within 90 days of the effective date of the message. In the case of NAVADMIN 050/09 this date is calculated to be May 9, 2009.

"By reducing the time frame for SRB reenlistment, the Navy can better project and manage end strength while continuing to provide incentive to Sailors with critical skills and valuable experience to stay Navy," said Jeri Busch, head, military pay and compensation policy branch for the chief of naval personnel.

The policy change is part of an overall effort to stabilize the force at about 329,000 active duty Sailors year.

Some other requirements under the SRB policy include:

• All SRB reenlistment requests must be submitted 35 to 120 days prior to the requested reenlistment date.

• SRB requests submitted less than 35 days in advance of the requested date of reenlistment may be rejected.

• Sailors who are eligible for combat zone tax exclusion (CZTE) and have an EAOS that falls in the current fiscal year are exempt from the 90 day policy and may reenlist early for SRB outside of the 90 day window as long as they are eligible for CZTE at the time of reenlistment. These Sailors along with command career counselors must annotate in the remarks section of the pre-certification request whether they are currently CZTE eligible.

"All rates and NECs were extensively analyzed for bonus levels, and the corresponding increases and reductions were not taken lightly," concluded Ferguson.

GW Rugby football club falls to defending champs in debut match

Story and photo by MC2 James Kimber,
***USS George Washington* Public Affairs**

The *George Washington* Rugby Football Club (GWRFC) faced the 2008 undefeated Shuto League champion Tokyo Gaijin Rugby Football Club Feb. 8 at River Fields in Tokyo's Shinshimabata district.

The much-anticipated match was a first for GWRFC.

The *GW* squad formed just four months ago and has been practicing twice a week. Practices included instruction on the fundamentals of the game, offensive and defensive drills, passing and scoring and physical fitness training.

The team was led onto the field by club president Cryptologic Technician (Collection) 1st Class (SW/AW) Jason Buchanan and club captain Machinist's Mate 3rd Class Jon Wilbanks.

"The immediate test was to focus on defense, and that was the challenge laid out to the team at the beginning of the match," said Cmdr. Greg McGuire, *GW* navigator and a forward for the upstart squad.

The *GW* ruggers started the first half aggressively, seemingly taking the Gaijin by surprise with their size, strength and tackling abilities. Despite giving up a pair of tries, GWRFC was quick to react to the ball on the field to create several turnovers.

"*GW*s experienced players provided a base for the rest of the team to build around, and there were some impressive and determined drives that foretold great chances for increasing scoring efficiency," said McGuire. "For their part and in the spirit of rugby, the Gaijin also provided advice and coaching throughout the match, so by the end of the day, we were able to piece together their drills and practices into an effective team effort."

Cmdr. Greg McGuire, a center for the aircraft carrier *USS George Washington* (CVN 73) Rugby Football Club, pushes into a maul, Feb. 8, during a game against the Tokyo Gaijin, a team comprised of Japan residents from New Zealand, Australia, France, the United States, England and Japan.

The second half started much like the first, with the GWRFC creating several turnovers with some devastating tackles while the experienced Gaijin defense continued to swarm any efforts made by the GWRFC's attackers. GWRFC gave up a couple more tries before driving toward their first try on their second promising drive of the game.

Unfortunately, time expired as the Gaijins' stout defensive line held off the GWRFC speed attack just long enough to prevent the debut squad from scoring their first ever goal.

"The goal for this match was learning. You really can't get a feel for the game until you've actually played a match," said Buchanan. "The game can also be very dangerous if it isn't played correctly. There was a lot of instruction on the field to ensure players were 'scrumming,' 'rucking,' and tackling correctly, in a manner that wouldn't put themselves or others in danger. The second goal was to have some fun. We accomplished both."

"All told, the team performed magnificently, considering that 95 percent had no rugby experience prior to the match and the team they faced was established in the 1980s," said McGuire. "It was an absolutely impressive team effort, and the team is fired up to get back to practice and perfect their offensive line."

The match was mostly defensive on both sides of the pitch, GWRFC fly-half Operations Specialist Seaman Ruben Gomez was nominated as "Man of the Match" for his incredible drive, spirit and superb tackling skills.

Still, GWRFC lost the match 27-0. Despite the loss, the match lifted the team's spirit and determination to come back for their next rugby match against the All-France team, said McGuire.

USS Blue Ridge arrives in Manila

By MC1 Todd Macdonald,
***USS Blue Ridge* Public Affairs**

USS Blue Ridge (LCC 19) pulled into Manila Feb. 19, beginning the crew's routine port visit to one of South East Asia's major seaports to interact with the community and demonstrate the United States' growing relationship with the Republic of the Philippines.

Blue Ridge Sailors rolled up their sleeves and unloaded 10 pallets of books as part of 'Project Handclasp' supporting Taguig National High School and donating first aid and hygiene supplies to the Department of Social Welfare and Development.

Blue Ridge also hosted more than 500 international and national diplomats, military officials and civic leaders during a reception held on the ship's main deck with food prepared by the ship's award winning food services division and ship's tours given by *Blue Ridge* Sailors.

Blue Ridge and U.S. 7th Fleet staff Sailors also took part in a variety of community service projects in Manila, strengthening established ties and creating new friendships.

Projects planned for the upcoming days include sports games at Fort Bonifacio with the Philippine Navy, assisting in the construction of a housing unit, and the construction of a children's playground project in a camp housing area in Taguig.

The U.S. 7th Fleet Band is also scheduled to perform numerous public concerts in Manila.