U.S. Embassy Tokyo goes mobile to provide passport assistance

Story and photo by MCSN Andrew Smith, Naval Public Affairs Support Element Japan

The Consul for the U.S. Embassy Tokyo, Joseph C. Koen and his staff, visited Commander Fleet Activates Yokosuka where they accepted applications for passports from military service members and their families July 30.

"Periodically we like to get out and offer members of the military community the opportunity to apply for a passport on base," said Koen. "We realize it's quite a trip to come down to Tokyo on the trains and find the embassy. For those stationed out in Yokosuka it's a full-day trip."

The mobile team of embassy staff members worked to help interested service members and their families apply for passports for international travel. Although a military identification card is an acceptable credential for travel between the U.S. and Japan, it is not an adequate form of identification for travel to other countries the U.S. doesn't share a Status of Forces Agreement with. Service members who plan to vacation outside of Japan or need to take emergency leave while deployed outside Japan, a passport may be required for travel.

Spouses and children of service members, regardless of age, also need passports to travel outside of the U.S. To obtain a child's passport, parents must fill out an application on behalf of the minor and provide notarized consent from both parents and proof of parent's marriage.

"If military members or their family members need to apply for passports or need to report a birth, we urge them to go on the U.S. Embassy Web site under U.S. Citizen Services and make an appointment starting in August," added Koen.

Applicants must provide an original birth certificate, their application forms and payment. For full details on what forms and documents are needed for an application, visit the U.S. Embassy Tokyo Web site at: japan.usembassy.gov, under U.S. citizen services.

Once a passport is issued it is good for 10 years, but some countries may not allow citizens to enter their borders if a passport is within six months of its expiration date.

(Left) IC3 James Stokes and IT1 Shawn Keys, both of *USS John S. McCain* (DDG 56) fill out passport applications during a U.S. Embassy staff visit to CFAY July 30. The U.S. Embassy team makes periodic visits to surrounding military installations to assist service members and their families in the passport application process.

According to Koen, the embassy receives a large volume of applications each year, so if travel plans are in your future – plan ahead.

"The embassy produces nearly 11,000 passports per year," Koen said. "Due to the large number of applications submitted and the time it takes to process and mail finished passports, all applications should be submitted well in advance of travel plans."

NSPS review: What does the future hold for system, employees?

By CNFJ Human Resources Office

As our experiences with the National Security Personnel System (NSPS) have grown, so, too, have the questions on whether the new pay system is meeting the desired expectations. Many of you may have heard that the Defense Department of Defense (DoD) and the Office of Personnel Management announced March 16 that they will carry out a review of NSPS.

The focus of this review is to assist the DoD in determining if the underlying design principles and methodology for implementation are reflected in the NSPS program objectives, determine whether the program objectives are being met and determine whether NSPS is operating in a fair, transparent and effective manner. The completion of the review is anticipated to be some point during late summer or early fall of this year.

Additionally, in June 2009, the House Armed Services Committee adopted Congresswoman Carol Shea-Porter's amendment to prohibit new hires from being placed in NSPS. In addition, the amendment proposes to:

• Restore the full nationwide adjustment to those federal employees working under NSPS. Currently, employees under NSPS receive 60 percent verses 100 percent for General Schedule (GS) employees.

• Prohibit any reclassification of positions to NSPS.

• Mandate that within one year of enactment, the Secretary of Defense shall convert all NSPS employees back to the GS.

The amendment was added to the fiscal year 2010 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) and is now with the House of Representatives for a vote.

The future success of NSPS is driven by our ability to develop and maintain a performance management program which treats employees in a fair, transparent and effective manner. It should be noted already that nearly half of the federal workforce – 800,000 out of 2 million federal employees – operate under alternative pay systems. As such, the administration of President Barack Obama plans to propose legislation as part of the 2011 budget request in February that will:

• Create a performance-based pay system that closes the wage gap between feds and private sector employees.

• Set mandatory spending levels for employee training.

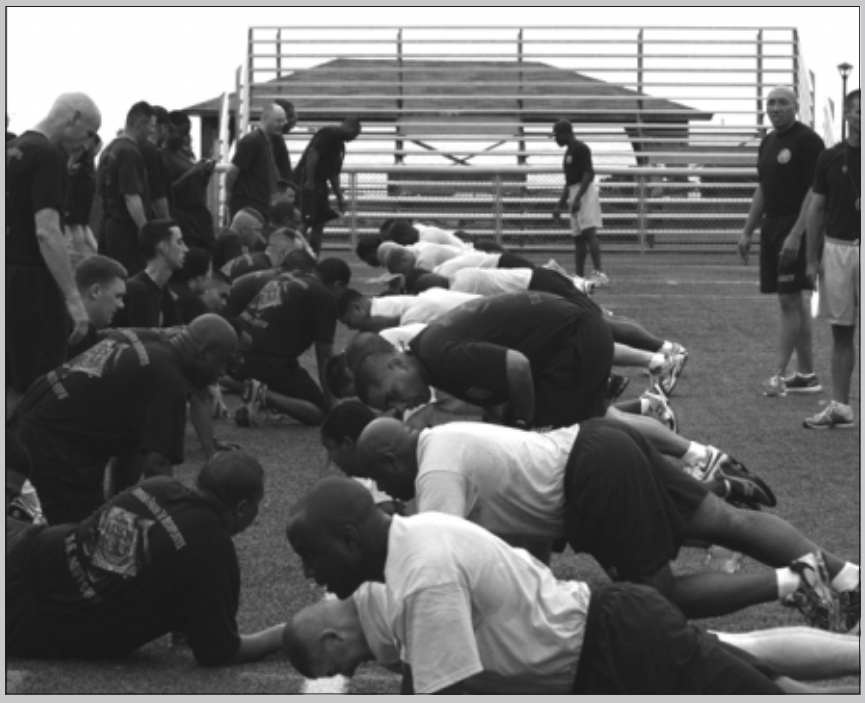
• Retool the performance appraisal process.

According to Office of Personnel Management Director John Berry, the aim is to have a personnel reform bill passed by Congress before the congressional midterm elections in November 2010. Planning will begin in September with a summit to gather input on how to flush out those three initiatives.

Leaders must play a crucial role in the change management process by tending to the technical and behavioral challenges of NSPS and by sending a clear signal to employees about leadership's commitment to NSPS. We must help secure employees trust and confidence that the system is fair and they will be rated and compensated appropriately. Leaders are encouraged to use this opportunity to re-engage their employees and ensure they understand and are ready to carry out their performance management responsibilities. Employee engagement and support is critical to sustain organizational performance.

As we near the end of this year's performance cycle, and with widespread news that NSPS is under review, employee interest and awareness is increasing. Employees should understand that the review will produce findings and recommendations that will help make informed decisions about the future of the program. The Regional HRO will continue to provide updates to all employees as we receive them. Until these decisions on the future of NSPS have been decided and whether changes are appropriate, we will continue to operate under the existing guidelines for NSPS.

"Drop and give me 50!"



A group of chief petty officer (CPO) selectees and their sponsors participate in a mock physical fitness assessment as part of the CPO induction aboard CFAY Aug. 5. CPO induction prepares selectees to preserve the credibility of the CPO community and to lead Sailors on the deckplate.

U.S. Navy photo by MCSN Andrew Smith