SRF-JRMC provides technical assistance to 7th Fleet ships

Story and photo by Keiichi Adachi, CFAY Public Affairs

The U.S. Naval Ship Repair Facility and Japan Regional Maintenance Center personnel are always ready to provide technical assistance to the ships of the U.S. 7th Fleet.

When a ship experiences a casualty that is beyond the crew's abilities to troubleshoot and repair, SRF-JRMC Fleet Technical Assistance (FTA) personnel spring into action anywhere within the 7th Fleet area of responsibility (AOR).

FTA personnel are Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) from either SRF-JRMC Combat Systems or Hull, Mechanical & Electrical Divisions. They provide support to all ships in the AOR, according to Michael Kawachi, Engineering Technical Support Division head.

In addition to highly trained radar, sonar, navigation, communications and weapons technicians, SRF-JRMC also provides certified Navy steam generating plant inspectors, diesel Inspectors, elevator support unit assessors, oil pollution abatement inspectors and marine gas turbine inspectors. All of SRF-JRMC highly trained SMEs are able to inspect, assess and maintain these critical systems and equipment.

The basis for the FTA concept is to have a group of highly skilled SMEs stationed at Regional Maintenance Centers around the world working to support Navy ships. The SMEs are there to correct technical problems such as equipment or software casualties that are beyond ship's force capability to resolve. The FTA allows for rapid restoration of a casualty to a ship's system in order to support Navy mission requirements.

SRF-JRMC provides two types of FTA, distance support and on-site. SRF-JRMC experts are available around the clock, seven days a week to respond to any request for assistance. Typically, an FTA request is received by message, e-mail, or telephone.

"When an FTA request is received, we initially respond using two-way communication such as telephone or e-mail," said Kawachi. "This is referred to as distance support. If the problem cannot be resolved using distance support, we then move on to providing on-site support. Once the decision is made to provide on-site support, the SME either will meet the ship in a port-of-call or depending on the ship type, will fly by helicopter or airplane to meet the ship while it is underway."

Sailors from *USS Mustin* (DDG 89) ask various questions to FCC(SW) Jonathan Charlson during on-site Fleet Technical Assistance (FTA) training on the Close-In-Weapon-System (CIWS). When a ship experiences a casualty that is beyond the crew's abilities to troubleshoot and repair, SRF-JRMC FTA personnel are called upon to help.
艦上での近接防御火器システムのトレーニングで、USSマスティンの乗組員より様々な質問を受けるFCC(SW)ジョナサン・チャールソンさん。
写真：安達慶一

The ability to resolve casualties via distance support has dramatically reduced the cost and the time associated with on-site tech support. Additionally, distance support allows a SME to assist more than one ship at a time and facilitates the more effective use of limited technical and financial resources.

A Japanese employee of the Combat Systems Division remarked that as recently as 10 years ago, there used to be much more on-sight support, but that it was costly. "As the network centric concept of operations with its ever increasing capabilities has matured, the number of FTAs requiring on-sight assistance has been reduced."

The most important element to a successful FTA is the highly trained and knowledgeable personnel that support the FTA program. SRF-JRMC has a group of dedicated and highly skilled military and civilian technicians. An FTA is successful when a technically correct and timely solution is provided to the ship so that it is able to continue its mission. According to Kawachi, a critical element to providing a successful FTA is to provide training to ship's personnel

According to SRF-JRMC Combat Systems Division Director Thomas Cairney, another key to a successful FTA is good communications and reporting by the ship. "Accurate and timely information is critical to allow the SME conducting distance support to analyze system performance/degradation and provide the ship with the right directions to restore the failed system. All FTAs differ depending on the level of knowledge and the technical abilities of the ship's personnel," he said.

SRF-JRMC、第七艦隊艦船に技術提供を行なう

文：安達慶一、CFAY広報課

艦船修理廠及び日本地区造修統括本部（SRF-JRMC）ではいつでも第七艦隊艦船に艦船修理の技術提供を行える体制を整えている。

艦船の乗組員では手に負えない故障が生じた場合、SRF-JRMCの艦船技術アシスト（FTA）チームは第七艦隊担当地域内であればどこにでも即時、駆けつける。

そのFTAとはコンバットシステム部と艦隊支援部に所属する専門技術者で構成され、第七艦隊担当地域内の全ての艦船の支援を行うと艦隊支援部部長のマイケル・カワチさんは話す。

Members of the SRF-JRMC Rigger Shop and Lifting and Handling Department safely remove and off-load a CIWS from *USS Mustin* for troubleshooting and repair.
Photo courtesy of SRF-JRMC Combat Systems Office
修理整備為に索具工場とクレーン管理デパートメントの従業員がUSSマスティンから近接防御火器システムを安全に取り外し桟橋に降ろす。
写真提供：コンバットシステム部

レーダー、ソナー、ナビゲーション、通信並びに武器の専門技術者に加え、SRF-JRMCには公認の米海軍スチーム発電プラント検査官、ディーゼル検査官、エレベーター支援部門顧問、油汚染緩和検査官、海洋ガスタービン検査官も存在する。彼らは高度な訓練を受けた専門技術者であり艦船の重要なシステムや装置の検査、評価そして整備も可能だ。

FTAの概念の基盤は、米海軍の艦船を支援する為に世界中の造修統括本部に高度な技術を備えた専門技術者グループを配置することにある。専門技術者は艦船の乗組員では修復し難い装置やソフトウェアーの故障の技術的支援を行う。FTAが艦船のシステムの問題を解消してくれれば艦船は海軍の使命達成を遂行できる。

SRF-JRMC では後方と現場での二通りのFTA支援を行なう。米海軍式メッセージ、Eメール、電話による要請に24時間体制で対応している。

「FTAの要請があると、我われはまず電話やEメールなど双方向のコミュニケーション手段で対応します。これが後方支援と呼ばれるものです。この手段で解決できないトラブルは現場支援を行ないます。現場支援をするために、専門技術者は、寄港中の艦船に出向くか、艦船のクラスによってはヘリコプターや飛行機で航海中の艦船に対処に向かいます」とカワチさんは述べた。

後方支援は現場支援にかかる経費と時間を著しく削減するだけではない。専門技術者が一度に二隻以上の艦船の支援でき、限られた技術と経費のより効果的な活用を促すという。

ンバットシステム部の日本人従業員によると10年前は現場支援が多く経費も嵩んだという。「高性能のインターネット使用の増加に伴い現場支援の件数は減少しました。」と経緯を語る。

FTAの成功に最も重要なのは、高度な訓練を受けた豊富な知識を持つ技術者による技術提供ができるかどうかだ。SRF-JRMCには技術力を備えた献身的な従業員がいる。的確な技術提供と適時な解決を艦船に提供できればFTAは成功を収め、艦船も任務を達成できる。艦船の乗組員に十分なトレーニングを提供できるかどうかもFTAの成功を握る重要な一要因であるとカワチさんは話す。

コンバットシステム部部長のトーマス・ケアニーさんは、艦船との密なコミュニケーションとその報告も円滑なFTAには欠かせないと語りこう締めくくった。「艦船のシステムが停止した際は、専門技術者にとって、システム稼動状況の分析を行い的確な指示を乗組員に提供する為に、正確かつ適時な情報の交換が大変重要です。また、乗組員の知識と能力のレベルによって提供する技術支援もその都度異なります。」