Fleet Activities, Yokosuka, Japan

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New citizens honored during Constitution Week ceremony

Story and photo by Ben Avey, USNH Yokosuka Public Affairs

Heeding the call of President Barack Obama to recognize Constitution Day, Citizenship Day and Constitution Week, U.S. Naval Hospital (USNH) Yokosuka held a ceremony Sept. 23, honoring two Sailors who took the oath of citizenship becoming United States citizens this year.

The ceremony, held in conjunction with an awards ceremony, was prompted by a presidential proclamation signed by the commander in chief Sept. 16 that declared Sept. 17 Citizenship Day and Constitution Day, and Sept. 17 – 23 as Constitution Week. In the proclamation, he called upon governmental bodies, civic leaders and educational organizations to "reaffirm our rights and obligations as citizens of this great nation."

"Today was about reminding our Sailors the importance of our constitution and to highlight two of our Sailors who recently took the Oath of Citizenship," said USNH Yokosuka Commanding Officer Capt. Stephen Pachuta. "'We the people', the beginning words of the preamble of the constitution, focuses on the true strength of our nation, our people."

Hospitalman Charnele Punongbayan and Hospitalman Francine Pique were both recognized with a certificate of achievement as well as a command coin presented by Pachuta.

"I feel honored to have the command recognize my citizenship; it feels great" said Pique. "Being a citizen has opened so many opportunities for me like someday being commissioned as an officer."

Pique followed her mother in becoming a naturalized citizen and hopes that her story will be an inspiration to others.

"I think this will encourage others to become a citizen. It will open up their eyes to the opportunities that citizenship offers," said Pique.

USNH Yokosuka Commanding Officer Capt. Stephen Pachuta addresses Sailors and civilians attending a ceremony to honor Constitution Day, Citizenship Day and Constitution Week Sept. 23. HN Charnele Punongbayan and HN Francine Pique were recognized at the ceremony after becoming naturalized citizens earlier this year.

According to the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), each year approximately 680,000 citizens are naturalized in ceremonies across the United States and around the world. Since September 2001, more than 62,763 members of the military have become citizens, including those forward-deployed or serving in overseas contingency operations.

Hospital Corpsman 1st Class (FMF) Huu Tran, who became a naturalized citizen in September 2008, read excerpts from the proclamation during the ceremony.

"I know how hard it is to get your citizenship and it was an honor, as a citizen of the United States, to be able to read the president's proclamation at the ceremony," said Tran. "I've really come full circle, from taking my citizenship oath while on deployment in Iraq to honoring my shipmates here in Yokosuka, it's a great feeling. I'm really proud of them."

To read the presidential proclamation on Constitution Day, Citizenship Day and Constitution week, visit the website www.whitehouse.gov. For more information about becoming a citizen, visit the USCIS website at www.uscis.gov.

Michigan visits Yokosuka during Western Pacific deployment

Story and photo by Lt. Lara Bollinger, Commander Submarine Group 7 Public Affairs

The Ohio-class guided-missile submarine *USS Michigan* (SSGN 727) arrived here, Sept. 28, for a visit as part of its deployment to the Western Pacific.

With a crew of approximately 170, *Michigan* will conduct a multitude of missions and showcase the latest capabilities of the submarine fleet.

The Ohio-class guided-missile submarine *USS Michigan* (SSGN 727) is moored at Commander Fleet Activities Yokosuka Sept. 28 for a scheduled port visit during a deployment to the western Pacific Ocean.

"Combining classical submarine stealth with strike and special forces missions, *Michigan* brings the full spectrum of operational capabilities to our leaders," said Capt. Phil McLaughlin, *Michigan* commanding officer.

Michigan is one of four highly specialized former ballistic missile submarines that were modified to carry tomahawk missiles and support special operations missions.

"The crew has been working very hard, and this port visit to Yokosuka will allow some much deserved rest for our crew before our boat heads back to sea," said Command Master Chief (SS) David Smith.

For many of the crew members, this is their very first time visiting Japan.

"I am very excited to have the chance to visit a foreign country," said Lt. j.g. Frank Carnaby, *Michigan's* electrical officer.

"Japan is a country I have heard and read a lot about, so I am eager to actually see and experience the sights and cuisine of this country firsthand," Carnaby said.

Measuring more than 560 feet long and weighing more than 18,000 tons when submerged, *Michigan* is one of the largest submarines in the world. This submarine is capable of supporting a multitude of missions, including anti-submarine warfare, anti-surface ship warfare, strike, naval special warfare involving special operations forces, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance, irregular warfare and mine warfare.

In 2003, *Michigan* entered the Puget Sound Naval Shipyard in Bremerton, Wash., for conversion from a fleet ballistic-missile submarine into a guided-missile submarine (SSGN). In June 2007, the new *Michigan* was returned to service as one of only four SSGNs in the submarine fleet.

SSGNs provide the Navy with an unprecedented combination of strike and special operation mission capability within a stealthy, clandestine platform. Armed with tactical missiles and equipped with superior communications capabilities, SSGNs are capable of directly supporting dozens of special operation forces in America's global war on terrorism.

INSIDE

John S. McCain, *Fitzgerald* take part in anti-submarine exercises

The United States and Republic of Korea navies kicked off anti-submarine warfare exercises Sept. 27 in the waters off the Korean peninsula.

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Hispanic Heritage Month celebrated with Salsa Block Party

Yokosuka base community members got to experience a little latin culture during the MWR sponsored Salsa Block Party Sept. 27, celebrating Hispanic Heritage Month.

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