FISC Yokosuka 'first on Earth' celebrating new LS rate

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U.S. Fleet and Industrial Supply Center (FISC) Yokosuka became the first FISC among seven around the world to officially welcome and celebrate the new logistics specialist (LS) enlisted rating Oct. 1.

Because of its location west of the international dateline, the new LS rating – which merges the former postal clerk (PC) and storekeeper (SK) ratings – dawned first for those serving in the Western Pacific.

FISC Yokosuka celebrated the day with a formal LS rate launching ceremony at its headquarters in Yokosuka, Japan, while FISC Yokosuka sites and detachments celebrated from such distant locations as Diego Garcia, Okinawa, Singapore and Jakarta.

"This merger is a step in our efforts to define the supply enlisted workforce that will support the Navy in the 21st century," said Commander Naval Supply Systems Command (NAVSUP) and Chief of Supply Corps Rear Adm. Mike Lyden.

FISC Yokosuka Commanding Officer Capt. Mike Arnold agreed, telling an assembly of headquarters staff that the rating merger was historic.

"Let me tell you why this is a historic occasion," said Arnold. "It's historic not only because we in Yokosuka are fortunate enough to be the first to celebrate this new merger but because it represents a step toward a more effective and efficient military logistics workforce."

Arnold told the assembled FISC Yokosuka audience that the merger of the PC and SK rating presented opportunities for a new generation of enlisted logisticians who could take advantage of new skills and experiences that were once all but unavailable to some in the SK and PC ratings.

He emphasized that the "new generation" of logistics specialist did not preclude but, in fact, required the experience and commitment of senior enlisted Sailors who were career SK or PC.

(Right) SK1 (SW) Shannah Joseph teaches basic supply and inventory skills to a group of postal clerks at the FISC Yokosuka Military Post Office Sept. 24. These weekly classes, lead by storekeepers, are designed to equip the postal clerks with the knowledge needed to pass the new logistics specialist advancement exams after the storekeeper and postal clerk rates merge. The merger to logistics specialist became official Oct. 1.

Photo by Blake Vives

"You now represent the leaders and the mentors of our young LSs, and are the primary mentors of this modern new rate," Arnold told his local enlisted leadership. "Your seasoned expertise will be fundamental to the success of the new LS rating."

During the FISC Yokosuka celebration ceremony, Arnold outlined a number of advantages for those who were converted to the LS rating, including anticipation of better advancement opportunities, more varied assignments and increased experience in a variety of logistics roles and responsibilities. He also focused on support to the fleet.

"The new LS rating tells our fleet customers that the Navy Supply Corps is not just a passenger in the 21st century, we're leading the charge with them in moving with a faster, leaner, smarter and more efficient Navy. This tells our customers we're 'on board with you' in this more technically advanced, faster moving world."

NAVSUP recently outlined a number of opportunities for those converted to the LS rating, including: greater opportunities for the once more limited PC rating, granting PCs equal advancement opportunities and more diverse shore and afloat assignments; providing expanded training opportunities for both former PCs and SKs; granting more flexibility in career development opportunities, expanding the job pool and greater worldwide assignments; the likelihood of a reduction in gapped billets and the anticipation of no increase in sea tours.

The new rating will provide far more enriching education, training and experience leading to greater marketable skills that are more readily transferrable to a civilian market, according to NAVSUP.

Finally, Sailors in the LS rating may directly contribute to the warfighter mission as they play a key role in supporting new navy platforms such as the littoral combat ship.

"It's an initiative whose time has come," Arnold said.

National Hispanic Heritage Month festively observed at FISC

Story and photo by Blake Vives, CFAY Public Affairs

A diverse audience gathered at the U.S. Fleet and Industrial Supply Center (FISC) Yokosuka patio to recognize the achievements and reflect on the culture and history of Hispanics in America during the annual FISC Hispanic Heritage Month celebration by the FISC Hispanic-American Heritage Committee Sept. 25.

FISC Yokosuka Commanding Officer Capt. Mike Arnold gave the opening remarks for the celebration by speaking to the audience about the integral part diversity plays in accomplishing the mission of FISC Yokosuka.

"We all know collectively how vital diversity is in the Navy, in Navy supply and here at FISC Yokosuka," he said. "Ceremonies such as this event give us another great opportunity not just to celebrate Hispanic-Americans and their historically important contributions to our Navy and our country; they allow us to recognize our overall diversity as well."

Arnold also spoke about this year's Hispanic Heritage Month theme and how it relates to FISC Yokosuka.

"I am impressed by this year's theme: 'Embracing the Fierce Urgency of Now.' I'm not sure you could find a more perfect slogan that characterizes not just this year's Hispanic Heritage theme but 'fierce urgency' often describes how we do business supporting our customers in our area of responsibility," said Arnold. "This ceremony really provides us a continuing sense of the value of benefitting from the ingenuity that cultural diversity provides us to complete our mission and serve our customers. It helps us remain true to ourselves, our families and our country."

Arnold concluded his speech by praising the benefits of a culturally diverse Navy and thanking his employees for their hard work.

"So, today to our Hispanic employees and to all our employees, let me thank you for helping us remember the very best of what diversity brings to the Navy and for what you bring to our command as Hispanic-Americans," said Arnold.

Guest speaker Defense Distribution Depot Yokosuka Japan employee Lt. j.g. Juan A. Espiritusanto shared a few Hispanic-American heritage historical highlights.

"We continue to benefit from a rich Hispanic culture because of the talent and creativity of many Hispanic-Americans who have shaped our society; for example, Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor is the first Hispanic person to hold that position, Edward Hidalgo was the first Hispanic Secretary of the Navy [. . .] and I could continue all day about everything Hispanics have contributed to this country and the world," said Espiritusanto. "Also, throughout America's history, Hispanics have shown a devotion to our country by fighting in the military services."

A group of volunteers from the FISC Hispanic-American Heritage Committee perform a traditional Mexican dance for the large, diverse crowd gathered at the FISC main building to celebrate National Hispanic Heritage Month Sept. 25. The program included tributes to Hispanic-Americans who have contributed to America's history and military; traditional dances from various nations and a wide array of Hispanic cuisine.

The entertainment included lively, colorful performances of traditional salsa, samba, bachata and Mexican dances and a large sampling of Hispanic cuisine was served to the guests.

FISC Multicultural Committee Adviser Chief Storekeeper (SW/AW) Marco Martinez concluded the program.

"Our goal as a cultural committee was to make it known how each heritage that we celebrate plays a big role in our Navy and our nation," said Martinez. "At FISC we make our heritage celebrations a big deal because we believe they are a big deal for our command, the Navy and the nation. The president has set aside this month to recognize the contributions of Hispanic-Americans and that is what we are doing today – embracing all the contributions of Hispanic-Americans."