SRF-JRMC hosts JMSDF Officer Exchange Program

Story and photo by Keiichi Adachi, CFAY Public Affairs

Engineering Duty Officers (EDO) from the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force (JMSDF) commenced the JMSDF Exchange Training Officer program at U.S. Naval Ship Repair Facility and Japan Regional Maintenance Center (SRF-JRMC) Sept. 8. For more than 22 years, this program has fostered professional relationships and camaraderie between the two navies.

Every year, two JMSDF EDOs are selected to participate in the program. This year's participants are Lt. Tomonori Matsuoka, an electrical specialist and Lt. Yusuke Sato, a weapons engineering specialist.

Both officers will complete two and a half months of training at SRF-JRMC. As part of the exchange program, the two officers will study U.S. Navy ship maintenance processes and will participate in a technical research project.

While at SRF-JRMC, the officers will also be able to enhance their English language skills.

"I think our higher command selected candidates like us for the program to learn about good processes, procedures and systems that JMSDF does not have, and how we can adapt them into JMSDF operations and effectively utilize them," said Matsuoka.

Upon reporting to SRF-JRMC, both Matsuoka and Sato indicated they were concerned that they might not be able to communicate as effectively as they would like with SRF-JRMC officers and civilians due to differences in life styles between Japan and America, and no past interaction with the Americans. Since reporting on board, however, both officers have fit right in as welcomed members of the U.S. Navy ship maintenance team.

Lt. Cmdr. Njuguna Macaria, a U.S. Navy EDO, is the sponsor for Sato and Matsuoka during the training period.

"Lt. Cmdr. Macaria has been very patient with us," said Matsuoka. "We are not very good at English listening comprehension, but he explains a concept to us as many times as necessary to ensure we fully understand."

Sato agreed with that assessment and added, "He has given us a very good impression of U.S. Navy officers."

Several of SRF-JRMC's Japanese department and division heads have provided the JMSDF EDOs with overviews of the organization and functions of their departments during the orientation portion of the program.

Matsuoka said that he thinks every working area at SRF-JRMC has an atmosphere conducive to the free flow of information.

"Before I joined the program, I thought most of the employees at SRF-JRMC consisted of U.S. Navy Sailors and U.S. civilians, in fact, there are a lot of Japanese employees working at SRF-JRMC, which makes me feel comfortable and have a feeling of affinity with the employees," he said.

(Left) Engineering Technician Hiroshi Masago of the Combat Systems Office of SRF-JRMC provides Lts. Tomonori Matsuoka and Yusuke Sato with detailed explanations of a display console at the Electronics Shop (X67).
無線工場で戦闘システム部の概要説明でSRF-JRMCコンバットシステム部のエンジニアリング専門職の真砂宏さんが、松岡友則一等海尉と佐藤勇輔一等海尉に、コンソールの詳細な情報を提供する。

Sato said, "I felt that employees of SRF-JRMC make all possible efforts to conduct every single operation or project safely, correctly and in accordance with maintenance work orders. Since coming to work here, I have had many opportunities to see and hear briefings and operations of individual shops and offices."

Sato's graduation topic will be a study of the differences in sonar system maintenance between the U.S. Navy and the JMSDF. Because the periodicity and number of dry-dockings for USN ships is shorter and fewer than for those of the JMSDF, he wants to study how the U.S. Navy conducts sonar maintenance operations and he will compare JMSDF's operations to them.

"I will be able to determine the best maintenance practices for both navies and also I will be able to improve my English capabilities through the language classes and on-the-job training that the Exchange Program offers," Sato said.

"I am in charge of electrical maintenance systems. My main focus is on differences between electrical systems and maintenance of electrical equipment on board the ships of both navies," Matsuoka said. "Also, because the language instructors conduct the language training in standard everyday English, I feel my English ability is getting better and better each day."

According to Matsuoka, the facilities, equipment and robust logistics support for ship repair at SRF-JRMC are at full capability and individual technical skills are at high levels, and that the JMSDF wants to understand and develop similar capabilities and facilities.

Additionally, Matsuoka added that, ship repair, maintenance and modernization for JMSDF ships are conducted by Japanese private shipyards and contractors.

"The fact that SRF-JRMC can do just about anything without outside assistance is very impressive to me," he said.

海上自衛隊交換士官プログラムが開始される

文・写真:安達慶一、CFAY広報課

２名の海上自衛隊(JMSDF)の技術士官が米海軍艦船修理廠及び日本地区造修統括本部(SRF-JRMC)主催による『海上自衛隊交換士官プログラム』に９月８日から参加している。２２年以上続くこのプログラムはSRF-JRMCとJMSDFの友好関係を育んできた。

横須賀造修補給所艦船部電気科の松岡友則一等海尉と超音波武器科の佐藤勇輔一等海尉の２名の技術士官は、SRF-JRMCで約２ヵ月半の研修を受ける。技術研究プロジェクトの実行を目的にSRF-JRMCに配属され、研修とその実践を通して英語力を磨く。

研修の間、彼らは米海軍が管理する艦船修理の体系、手段や方法を学ぶ。SRF-JRMCに配属されるまで、生活習慣の違いや、米国人との接点が無きに等しいことから、松岡一等海尉と佐藤一等海尉は英語でSRF-JRMCの将校や軍属の人たちと上手くコミュニケーションが出来るかどうか不安だったと語った。

最初の数週間、SRF-JRMCの主要な部署の日本人責任者から２名に各部署の組織と機能の大まかな説明があった。

松岡一等海尉は、どの職場も雰囲気が明るく活気があって意見交換も活発と話した。「研修前は、SRF-JRMCの従業員のほとんどが兵士と軍属だと思っていましたが、実際は多くの日本人が勤務していて親近感を持ちました。」

「研修期間中、オフィスでの説明や現場での作業を見学する様々な機会を通じ、SRF-JRMCの従業員は仕事を安全、且、着実に進めているという印象を受けました」と佐藤一等海尉と感想を語った。

この制度の主な目的は、第１にSRF-JRMCと海上自衛隊の間で艦船整備についてのアイデア・知識を共有すること。第２に米海軍（SRF-JRMC）と日本人の友情や仲間意識をより強く高めることである。

松岡一等海尉が話すには、艦船修理用の設備や物流が充実しており、個々の技術レベルが高い。海上自衛隊も将来的にこのような施設の所有を切に望んでいる。

佐藤一等海尉のプログラム卒業論文の題材は米海軍と自衛隊のソナーシステム整備方法の相違点だ。ドックに入渠する期間や回数が海上自衛隊より少なく、どのように米海軍がソナーシステム整備作業を行なっているか勉強したいと言う。「論文で両海軍間の利点と類似点をまとめるつもりです。また、プログラムの卒業生の多くが語学研修や実地トレーニングを通じて、英語の能力を向上させたと聞いていますので、私も研修中に英語力を上げたいです。」

「電気関連システムを担当しているので、日米の艦艇の電源システムや電気機器の整備方法の違いに着目しています。それから、言語研修では全てが英語で話されます。先生が分かり易く英会話をしてくれていますが、私自身の英語力も日々上達していると感じています」と松岡一等海尉は述べた。

松岡一等海尉によると、海上自衛隊においては、機器の整備は造船所や市中業者に任せている。「それに比べ、SRF-JRMCでは殆ど他へ委託してない点が一番印象的でした。」

毎年、海上自衛隊内の異なる部隊から２名の研修生がプログラムの研修への参加を許可されている。彼らは米海軍の業務やそのシステムを学び、その中から卒業論文のテーマを決める。

「上層部がこの研修で私達に求めているのは、米海軍にあり我々にないものが何か、また、それをどのように適用し導入することで運営の効率を高めることが出来るかを見出すことと理解しています」と松岡一等海尉は研修の目的を語った。

先頃、ドッキングオフィサーの資格を取得したUSSシャイロ(CG 67)を担当する修理監督者のジョゴナ・マシャリア少佐が、２名の研修生のスポンサーだ。

「マシャリア少佐はとても良くしてくれます。私達は英語の聞き取りが特に苦手ですが、彼は私達が十分に理解出来ない一つのことにも、根気よく親切に繰り返して説明してくれます。印象がとても良い方です。」と松岡一等海尉と佐藤一等海尉は口をそろえる。