



U.S. Navy photo by MC1 (AW/SW) James E. Foehl

RUSSELL RETURNS

QM1 C. K. Hughes

USS Russell Public Affairs (DDG 59)

After a six-month deployment in the Western Pacific, South China Sea and Indian Ocean, USS Russell (DDG 59) returned home Tuesday to a rousing 'komo mai hale' [welcome home] from proud, flag-waving family and friends who waited anxiously on the pier at Naval Station Pearl Harbor.

Russell Sailors awoke that final morning to the distinct, familiar sounds of Hawai'i on the gentle tradewinds and the one-of-a-kind view of Pearl Harbor's channel entrance.

Hundreds of family members and friends of Sailors aboard Russell applauded, laughed and cried on the Bravo piers at the sight of the proud greyhound of the seas rounding the turn at Ford Island and their Sailors' long-awaited return.

Russell proved her most-capable versatility and mission readiness during the deployment by integrating not only into USS Abraham Lincoln Strike Group, as scheduled, but also into the USS Kitty Hawk Strike Group when another escort was required for

their mission.

Before departing Hawai'i, Russell set the stage for the deployment by participating in several warfare exercises, preparing for what was to be a challenging, rewarding and successful deployment.

On March 10, the ship slipped out of the Pearl Harbor channel and off the west coast of the Big Island and took her place as a member of the Lincoln Strike Group.

During what most Sailors would consider to be the "seventh inning stretch" of the deployment, Russell was tasked to shift gears, leave the homeward-bound track and become a member of the USS Kitty Hawk Strike Group where she served in keeping Japanese coastal airspace secure for more than 200 aircraft missions.

After its first port visit to Singapore in May, Russell ventured south of the equator where her stalwart 'shellbacks' welcomed more than 100 'wogs' into "King Neptune's Order of the Raging Main" after a fun-filled, crossing the line ceremony.

During the deployment, the crew enjoyed liberty in Hong Kong, Thailand, Singapore, Japan and Australia. One particularly

memorable visit was to Sukumo on the Japanese island of Shikoku, a quaint hamlet on the southern tip of the Kochi province that had not seen a U.S. Navy ship in decades. Nakanishi Seiji, mayor of Sukumo, his council and residents of the town welcomed Russell and her crew. The crew was treated to a lion dance, native singing and dancing in traditional Japanese garb, karaoke and smiles of welcome. Many members of the crew also participated in community-relations projects.

Russell and her crew endeared themselves and the U.S. Navy to the people of Sukumo and were, in every respect, ambassadors of America. One day of the port visit during heavy rains, residents stopped their cars in the rain and gave their umbrellas to Russell Sailors who were walking, uncovered, down the street - a gesture that was indicative of the outreach of Sukumo to the U.S. Navy. When the ship departed early on a stormy day, the pier was filled with the mayor, his council and many locals who were not only bidding farewell, but also asking that the Russell return again soon.

Russell participated in several rewarding community-relations

projects in Hong Kong, Thailand, Singapore and Perth, Australia. The port visits provided time for some rest and relaxation during a schedule that included Exercise Foal Eagle, Valiant Shield and several Japan Maritime Self Defense Forces' exercises.

After leaving Singapore for a second time, Russell transited the Sunda Strait, between the Indonesian island of Sumatra and Java, and ploughed into the churning waters of the Indian Ocean for a visit to Fremantle and Perth in Western Australia.

During that leg of the deployment, Cmdr. Charles B. "Brad" Cooper II embarked Russell and a week later, in the Northern Australian port of Darwin, relieved Cmdr. James W. Kilby as the eighth commanding officer.

After a trip through many small seas and the Indonesian archipelago, the ship once again found herself north of the equator and bound for a gas stop in the American territory of Guam. After leaving there, the transit home to Pearl Harbor was filled with exercising watch stations, running drills, giving the ship a much-deserved homecoming makeover, and studying for the September Navy-wide exam cycle.

Russell steamed over 20,000 miles of ocean, operating as part of two carrier strike groups and working with four carrier strike groups. Other accomplishments included attaining three surface warfare officers' qualifications, one surface warfare supply corps officer's qualification, nine underway officer-of-the-deck qualifications and 37 enlisted surface warfare qualifications. After 10 port visits, working around three major storms and engaging in more than 200 training exercises, Russell's warriors were officially home.

Eight Sailors who became fathers during the deployment were able to meet their newborn children for the first time when the ship pulled pier side.

Quarter Master 3rd Class Brett Carns, a first-timer deployer, said, "It was a strenuous and demanding deployment, but we all made it back safely and everyone is happy to be home again."

The crew finished the deployment with a sense of accomplishment and understanding of forward-deployed presence. However, on this day, many of Russell's Sailors agreed with Dorothy's sentiments in "The Wizard of Oz," - "There's no place like home!"

Ceremony at Missouri commemorates the end of World War II



A ceremony aboard the Battleship Missouri Memorial on Sept. 2 commemorated the signing of the treaty ending World War II. The photo at left shows a Navy honor guard detail as it prepares to fire a gun salute.

The program coincided with the time of day that representatives from 10 nations signed the formal Instrument of Surrender 61 years ago on the USS Missouri, bringing history's most devastating war to a close.

Lt. Gen. Daniel P. Leaf, deputy commander, U.S. Pacific Command, Camp H.M. Smith, Hawai'i, was the keynote speaker for this year's program, titled "A Legacy of Honor." Vice Adm. Robert K.U. Kihune, chairman of the USS Missouri Memorial Association, was also a featured speaker.

The ceremony included patriotic music, color guard, and a traditional military salute to honor those veterans who paid the ultimate sacrifice.

U.S. Navy photo by MC1 Dennis Cantrell

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Two ships representing China's navy, the destroyer Qingdao (DDG 113) and the oiler Hongzhehu (AOR 881), arrived at Pearl Harbor on Wednesday for a routine port visit. During their visit, China's sailors will have the opportunity to interact with their U.S. counterparts and experience the unique culture of Hawai'i.

U.S. Navy photo by MCC (SW) Joseph Kane

Pearl Harbor hosts two Chinese navy ships

Navy Region Hawai'i Public Affairs Office

Two ships representing China's navy, the destroyer Qingdao (DDG 113) and the oiler Hongzhehu (AOR 881), arrived at Pearl Harbor on Wednesday for a routine port visit. During their visit, China's sailors will have the opportunity to interact with their U.S. counterparts and experience the unique culture of Hawai'i.

Right: As part of the welcoming ceremony, a Chinese lion dance was performed for the crew members of the Chinese navy aboard Qingdao and Hongzhehu.

U.S. Navy photo by MC3 Ben A. Gonzales

Far right: Local spectators wave aloha to the Chinese navy destroyer Qingdao (DDG 113) as the ship moors to a pier.

U.S. Navy photo by MC3 Ben A. Gonzales



Hawai'i Navy News Editorial

The best leaders know how to communicate

Pacific Fleet Master Chief (SS/SW) R. D. West

Hoo-yah, Warriors! While I've been out pounding the deckplates, I've had the privilege of watching many of our prospective chief petty officers (CPO) prepare themselves to be members of the chief petty officer mess.

I can't help but be impressed about the quality of these future leaders and how the mix of tradition and training is helping them become chiefs.

So with that in mind, I'm going to use this column to address these new young firebrands with a few thoughts on what I consider to be one of the fundamentals of CPO leadership. And if it rubs off on anyone else, then all the better!

So how do you lead? There are as many styles and tactics as there are leaders. Some work really well, others not so much.

But I think that there's one element in virtually all successful leadership styles that we not only as a chiefs' mess, but as a Navy, need to take a hard look at.

And that is communication. Folks, after all my years of working with Sailors and junior officers, there's no doubt in my mind that the cornerstone of good leadership is communication.

If you are a leader, you are ALWAYS talking with your chain of command - up and down. Communication and leadership



FLTCM (SS/SW) R.D. West

are so tightly intertwined, they are inseparable.

A good chief is going to be making sure his or her [leading petty officer] LPO is clued in on just about everything. That LPO will know the "whats" and "why fors" and should be making sure the word gets passed down to the division. The chief is also making sure the division officer is getting the word passed, too.

Poor communication is a killer to both morale and mission accomplishment and here's how I know.

As the Pacific Fleet Master Chief, I get the results of quality of life, retention and a host of other surveys. They all say our Sailors want us to communicate better.

The most recent ARGUS survey coming from BUPERS listed the top 10 reasons our Sailors use when leaving the service. Reason number six for this year was communication within the command.

This is completely within our control, yet it has moved steadily up the list over time. Morale and command climate were reasons four and five - things that communication profoundly affects.

So our Navy is losing some great talent because we are not using

the simple and time-proven tactic of talking to the folks who work for us.

It's a fact that people who don't know or understand what or why they are doing something will get frustrated and move on.

Because Sailors don't understand the mission, they don't have any ownership in it and they don't get the plan behind the mission. This means our people have no stake in it. Without buy-in from the people we lead, we have trouble meeting the mission.

We've all served at commands where it seemed that the only time we heard about anything was at quarters. After that, scuttlebutt was the communicator and we all know how well that works.

If this is your situation, you need to take action now or your Sailors and junior officers will stay disillusioned and confused. And your next leadership challenge will be disciplinary problems.

"That's all fine and dandy, Fleet, but how do I fix this?" Is that the next question? Fair enough.

I could try and dazzle you with a lot of communication theory, message and feedback diagrams, etc., but I don't think that would get my point across very well.

The first thing I can tell you is to become a great listener. It's critical that you know your folks understand what you are telling them.

You have to ensure the commu-

nication is two-way and the message is clear. Anything less and communication is stalled from the get-go. People would be amazed at what they could learn if they just shut up for a few minutes and listened. Listen, learn and lead!

So start listening more. Ask questions to make sure the message is getting through. Be nosy and inject yourself into things so that your folks know you are involved and willing to listen.

The next thing I can tell you is to never stop learning. Navy policies, command mission, changes in the personnel system, all of it.

There's a reason "ask the chief" is a Navy credo. We chiefs have to know our stuff and communicate it up and down the chain. The more you know, the more you can put things into context for your Sailors.

And that's a great word, "context." Great communicators put things into context so understanding is easier. The goal is seeing something from another perspective. You help them get "outside the box."

My last bit of Communication 101 is to be interested. Watch your body language and project interest. It's easy for people to pick up on the signs that you're not interested, and then communication stops. That, my friends, will just take practice and awareness.

Now the best way I know to formally polish communication skills

would be to take a few of the online courses on [Navy Knowledge Online] NKO.

There are at least 24 courses designed to help with communication on some level. Check out the "professional effectiveness" collection under Skillssoft Business and Simulation Courses. This goes back to what I said about always keep learning.

So there you have it - my two cents worth on a key ingredient of leadership.

For our new chief selectees, you'll go over this again in the leadership course. But I challenge you to look at it more than just as a required section of a required class.

Take it to heart. Listen to your Sailors. Listen to your junior officers. Talk to them and look them in the eyes daily. One of our many jobs is to train the officer corps and our replacements. With active and effective communication, we can make sure we create the best possible generation of Navy leaders. Hoo-yah!

FLEET TIP: Do you know who the command voting assistance officer is? Do you know how to register to vote? Have you received a SF-76 Federal Post Card Application? Voting is a right we are here to protect and preserve. Make sure your vote counts by registering to vote today. The following Web site provides some great insight on voting: www.fvap.gov.

Surrender of Japan, Tokyo Bay, Sept. 2, 1945



Photograph from the Army Signal Corps Collection in the U.S. National Archives

General of the Army Douglas MacArthur reading his speech to open the surrender ceremonies, on board USS Missouri (BB 63). The representatives of the Allied Powers are behind him, including (from left to right): Adm. Sir Bruce Fraser, RN, United Kingdom; Lt. General Kuzma Derevyanko, Soviet Union; Gen. Sir Thomas Blamey, Australia; Col. Lawrence Moore Cosgrave, Canada; Gen. Jacques LeClerc, France; Adm. Conrad E.L. Helfrich, The Netherlands and Air Vice Marshall Leonard M. Isitt, New Zealand. Lt. Gen. Richard K. Sutherland, U.S. Army, is just to the right of Air Vice Marshall Isitt. Off camera, to left, are the representative of China, General Hsu Yung-chang, and the U.S. representative, Fleet Admiral Chester W. Nimitz, USN. Framed flag in upper left is that flown by Commodore Matthew C. Perry's flagship when she entered Tokyo Bay in 1853.



CNO Adm. Mike Mullen

"We hope for the future and emulate the World War II generation. We look to their courage, to their determination, and to their commitment. Today, our brave young men and women are doing just that. You see it in Iraq, you see it in Afghanistan, and you see it in other places around the world. I have visited them in the field and in the Fleet, and in our hospitals. And I can tell you that this generation of fighting women and men are up to the challenge. Their eyes sparkle. Their resolve is steel. They know there is no substitute for the power that comes from a vision of freedom."

From the 64th Annual Pearl Harbor Day Commemoration, Pearl Harbor, Hawai'i, Dec. 7, 2005

STORY IDEAS?

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Hawai'i Navy News

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Hurricane preparation: Ready, set, disaster kit

(part 5)

Karen S. Spangler

Editor

Although it is now well into hurricane season here in Hawai'i, it isn't time to let down your guard and stop worrying. There is still plenty of time for a visit from one of the dangerous storms.

You have formulated a disaster plan and by now, you and your family are quite familiar with it. You know exactly what to do in the event of an emergency. Your family will cope best if they are prepared for disaster before it strikes.

If you haven't already gathered what you need for your Disaster Kit (to take with you if you need to evacuate), do it – now.

Remember, there are six basics that you should stock for your home hurricane survival kit: water, food, first aid supplies, clothing and bedding, tools and emergency supplies, and special items. Keep enough supplies in your home to meet your family's needs for at least three days. You should also assemble supplies that you will need if you have to evacuate. A complete list of essential supplies can be viewed on Commander Navy Region (COMNAVREG) Hawai'i's Web site at www.hawaii.navy.mil.

When a hurricane threatens, you will have to decide whether you should evacuate or whether you can ride out the storm at home in safety. The ultimate decision to stay or leave will be yours. Usually, only residents who live in low-lying coastal areas will be asked to evacuate. You can usually stay home if your residence is sturdy and located away from the coast.

Many Navy housing residents will not need to evacuate their homes due to the structural integrity of the home and its geographic location. However, residents of the following areas may need to evacuate: Ford Island, Hale Alii, Halsey Terrace, Hospital Point, Maloelap, Manana, McGrew Point and Red Hill. If evacuation is called for, security patrols will go

through neighborhoods alerting residents.

These are some general guidelines when determining whether or not to evacuate:

- If you live on the coastline, plan to leave.
- If you live near a stream or in a flood plain, plan to leave.
- If you live in a sturdy structure and away from coastal and rainfall flooding, consider staying at home.

Stay tuned to radio, television and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) weather radio for official bulletins.

Leave early, in daylight if possible. If you need to evacuate, wear protective clothing and sturdy shoes. Leave food and water for pets; you cannot take them to the shelter with you. Lock up your house. Drive carefully to the nearest designated shelter using recommended evacuation routes. Don't try to take short cuts or secondary routes as they may become impassable or dangerous.

If you have time, shut off your water and electricity at the main shutoffs.

Take small valuables, important papers and your Disaster Kit, but travel light. Your Disaster Kit should include basic supplies, stored in sturdy, easy-to-carry containers such as backpacks, duffle bags or covered trash containers. These items are

not provided at the shelters.

In your Disaster Kit, include the following:

- A three-day supply of water (one gallon per person per day) and food that won't spoil.
- One change of clothing and footwear per person and one blanket or sleeping bag per person.
- A first aid kit that includes your family's prescription medicines.
- Emergency tools including a battery-powered, radio, flashlight and plenty of extra batteries.
- An extra set of car keys and a credit card, cash or travelers' checks.
- Sanitation supplies.
- Special items for infant, elderly or disabled family members.
- An extra pair of glasses.
- Important family documents in a waterproof container.

If it is necessary to evacuate, evacuation shelters will be opened selectively, depending on the severity of the storm. Listen to radio and television for shelter designations and opening schedule. A complete listing of Oahu shelters can be viewed on the COMNAVREG Hawai'i Web page www.hawaii.navy.mil under hurricane information.

Don't wait until a hurricane is approaching to find out which shelters are closest to you. Know where they are and how to reach them. The accompanying table lists important telephone num-

bers for emergencies, utility outages, etc.

In the upcoming weeks, additional hurricane articles will be published in Hawai'i Navy News. Some of the topics covered will include how to make provisions for family pets and what to do after a hurricane.

The information is intended to provide interesting and helpful information about hurricanes that will help to prepare you in the event that a hurricane moves toward the Hawaiian Islands.

More information about hurricanes and guidelines on hurricane preparedness may be found on Navy Channel 2 and on the COMNAVREG Hawai'i Web page. The Web page includes links to other sites that give helpful information about hurricane preparation.

The family housing Resident Handbook also provides guidelines on disaster preparedness and evacuation. The front pages of your Oahu telephone directory are another valuable resource for information on hurricane preparation.

You may also obtain up-to-date information by calling: Oahu Civil Defense recorded information at 527-5372 and National Weather Service recorded advisories at 973-4381. Listen to the weather advisories on local radio and television stations.

Important telephone numbers

Emergency police, fire, ambulance
911

Oahu Civil Defense
(recorded information)
527-5372

Oahu Civil Defense
523-4121

State Civil Defense
733-4300

National Weather Service
(weather advisories)
973-4381

American Red Cross
734-2101

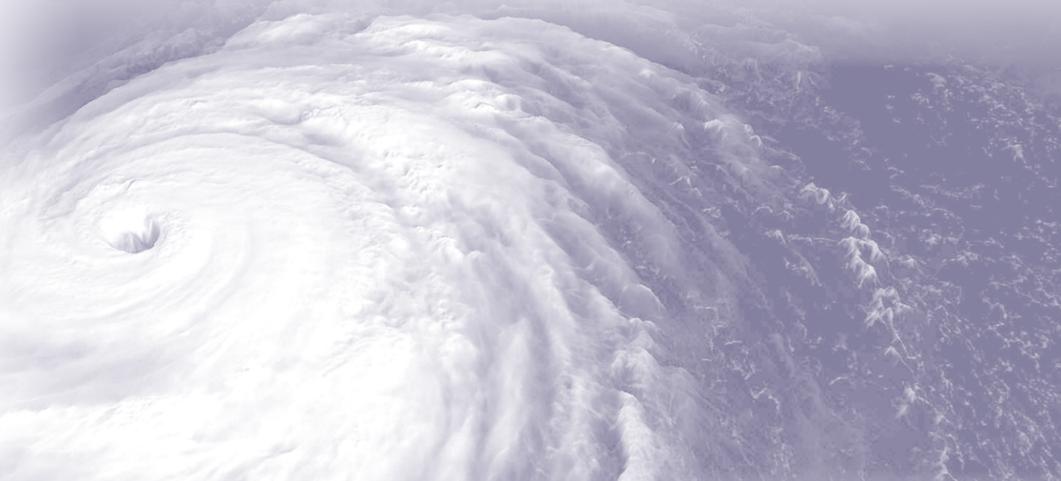
HECO Service Center
548-7961
(to report power outages,
downed power lines, trees on
power lines)

Board of Water supply
troubleline
normal hours
527-5207
after hours
527-5200

Hawaiian Telcom telephone
repair service
611

The Gas Company
emergency service
526-0066

Streetlights out
city - 564-6113
state - 831-6714



Pearl Harbor Highlights



U.S. Navy photo by MCI Dennis Cantrell

A member of the Navy honor guard plays the bugle during the 61st anniversary ceremony commemorating the end of World War II. The event was held Sept. 2 aboard the Battleship Missouri Memorial.



U.S. Navy photo by MCC David Rush

Sailors aboard the Chinese destroyer Qingdao (DDG 113) stand at attention as visitors tour the ship. The Qingdao and the oiler Hongzhehu (AOR 881) arrived at Pearl Harbor for a port visit on Wednesday.



U.S. Navy photo by MCI (AW/SW) James E. Foehl

A Polynesian dancer welcomes home Sailors from the guided missile destroyer USS Russell (DDG 59) after returning from a six-month deployment. Russell departed in March as part of USS Abraham Lincoln Carrier Strike Group in support of the global war on terrorism and later joined USS Kitty Hawk Carrier Strike Group before returning to its homeport of Pearl Harbor.



U.S. Navy photo by MCI (AW/SW) James E. Foehl

Sailors assigned to guided missile destroyer USS Russell (DDG 59) re-unite with friends and family members after returning from a six-month deployment.

Mail-order pharmacy service saves customer, DoD dollars

Gerry J. Gilmore

American Forces Press Service

More military health system beneficiaries are opting to have prescriptions mailed to their homes, rather than picking up medications at installation or commercial-sector pharmacies, a military health care official said Aug. 31.

Defense Department officials welcome this development as part of ongoing efforts to control rising health care costs and as a means to save beneficiaries' hard-earned dollars, said Capt. Thomas J. McGinnis, chief of pharmacy at the office of the assistant secretary of defense for health affairs.

"Our big issue here is our rising drug costs," said McGinnis, a U.S. Public Health Service officer. DoD spent \$5.4 billion last year to provide pharmaceuticals to beneficiaries, he said.

"This year, in fiscal year '06, we're predicting we're going to spend \$6 billion" on pharmaceuticals, McGinnis said.

"We're trying to do everything we can to save money," McGinnis explained, "to sustain this great prescription drug benefit our beneficiaries have."

The Congressional Budget Office estimates that DoD will

save \$1.5 billion from 2007-2016 by transferring prescription delivery from retail pharmacies to mail-order service, according to a Tricare Management Activity news release. The TMA manages health care plans for military members, retirees and their families.

The number of mail order prescriptions delivered to beneficiaries in July topped June's total, the release said, moving mail order prescriptions to 7.4 percent of the total number of prescriptions that Tricare fills, the highest level in two years. In the same period, the number of prescriptions filled at military treatment facilities and retail pharmacies dropped.

DoD gets discounted purchase-price rates on pharmaceuticals that are dispensed at military treatment facilities or by mail order, McGinnis pointed out.

"We don't get federal pricing at the retail pharmacy, so DoD saves about 40 percent on all medications dispensed from the mail-order pharmacy," he said.

Mail-order prescription delivery also makes economic sense for Tricare beneficiaries, McGinnis said, noting they pay a \$9 co-payment for each brand-name prescription and \$3 for each generic drug pre-

scription.

The kicker, he said, is that retail pharmacies dispense 30-day prescriptions, while mail order prescriptions are filled in 90-day supplies.

Accordingly, customers taking long-term administered drugs need to obtain more prescriptions via the over-the-counter method. As a result, Tricare customers can save as much as \$72 each year, per brand-name prescription, McGinnis explained, by using the mail order service. The number of a customer's prescriptions, he said, multiplies such savings.

Some customers would want to obtain certain prescriptions, such as pain relievers, more quickly over the counter, McGinnis acknowledged. But, overall, it's more convenient for beneficiaries to have most of their prescriptions mailed to them, he said, noting they wouldn't have to use up time to go to the pharmacy.

"It's delivered right to your home," McGinnis said. "You don't have to get into the car and go downtown to the pharmacy."

Plus, mail-order prescription customers can access a 24-hours-a-day, seven-days-a-week pharmacist's advice phone line, McGinnis said, by calling 1-866-DOD-TMOP (1-866-363-8667).

Hopper's CBR stoppers



U.S. Navy photo by MC2 John L. Beeman

Hull Technician 3rd Class Marc Brandes wears an advanced chemical protective garment (ACPG) while leading an external survey team around the weather decks of Arleigh Burke-class guided missile destroyer USS Hopper (DDG 70). The crew of the Hopper was conducting a chemical, biological and radiological (CBR) drill, part of standard shipboard training held frequently while deployed at sea.

Hawaii Navy News Online
www.hawaii.navy.mil

USNS Mercy finishes 72 days of humanitarian aid

MCSN (SW) Joseph Caballero

U.S. Pacific Fleet

The last of USNS Mercy's (T-AH 20) patients returned to shore Sept. 1 as the ship prepared to make its journey home after completing 72 days of humanitarian aid to Southeast Asia.

The U.S. naval hospital ship Mercy began its five-month humanitarian and civic assistance deployment more than four months ago and has since reached thousands of people in the Philippines, Bangladesh, Indonesia and East Timor.

Mercy's crew not only treated an unprecedented number of patients during a single deployment, but it also brought medical education, civil engineering, culture exchange and, most of all, friendship to the people of the region, according to Capt. Bradley Martin, Mercy's mission commander.

"We've achieved a tremendous amount," said Martin. "We've delivered care to almost 200,000 people. We've done lifesaving surgeries for people and we've altered people's lives in a lot of positive ways."

"Another thing that has been very important with this mission is that we have achieved a high level of interoperability with the NGOs (non-governmental organizations) and allied militaries," continued Martin. "We've gotten a lot done and I hope to foster and continue relationships with all these countries and their people."

To carry out the medical side of its mission, Mercy tied together the skills of U.S. and foreign military medical specialists with doctors and nurses of nonprofit, charitable medical organizations, most of which operate independently in the region.

The organizations working aboard Mercy included Project HOPE, Operation Smile, Aloha Medical



U.S. Navy photo by MCC Don Bray

The Navy's Military Sealift Command hospital ship USNS Mercy (T-AH 19) completed its last day of humanitarian, medical and civic assistance mission to the region in southeast Asia. Mercy is scheduled to return to her homeport of San Diego, Calif.

Mission, Tzu Chi Foundation, International Relief Teams, the UCSD Pre-Dental Society and a number of host nation NGOs. Mercy's military medical team consisted of U.S. Navy, Air Force and Army members, along with foreign military medical personnel from Canada, India, Australia, Singapore, Indonesia, Malaysia, Bangladesh and the Philippines.

"We have all learned a lot from each other," said Project HOPE volunteer Michele Okamoto, a certified emergency nurse. "As for Project HOPE, we were the first NGO to work this closely with the Navy and that's a real source of pride for all of us. We're really grateful for the opportunity to serve in this way because what Mercy has done is a great thing, and there should be a lot more of these (deployments) in the future."

Mercy conducted a few operations each day at every location where teams conducted medical and dental civil action projects (MEDCAPs) and provided health care at local hospitals. The MEDCAPs, usually set up in remote villages, were used to treat minor illnesses and tooth decay ashore. When serious problems were encountered, the patients would be brought to the ship either by helicopter or small boat for further medical treatment or for surgery in one of Mercy's operating rooms.

Following treatment aboard the ship, patients would be monitored in a recovery room and then be moved to one of the intensive care units aboard. Patients and their escorts would wait to depart the ship in one of Mercy's wards until they were fully recovered. One of Mercy's last patients, Melina Barreto, expressed her thanks to those who helped her

before she went home.

"It's very lucky (for us) because you come here and it's free treatment for my baby," said Barreto, an East Timorese who brought her 15-month-old child, Algira, to Mercy for surgery. "It's very expensive for this surgery (at home). In our hospitals, our equipment is not complete. I would hope this ship could stay for a long time. I hope that you would come back here again."

At each port where the medical teams disembarked to treat the sick, teams of public health workers followed close behind to test each area's water sanitation and examine the level of insect-borne diseases. In addition, the crew held classes to help improve current sanitation conditions, as well as exchange ideas on topics such as basic life support and neonatal resuscitation.

In complement to the health-based services, Mercy's crew of Seabees also helped out local communities by building and repairing infrastructure and hospital facilities, as well as installing various pieces of equipment. Mercy's 15 Seabees are from Naval Mobile Construction Battalion 40, based at Port Hueneme, Calif.

The Military Sealift Command's (MSC) civil service mariners (CIVMARs) who operate and navigate the ship worked closely with the Seabees on many community relations projects ashore. According to Chief Construction Electrician Mike Gallagher, the assistant officer in charge of Mercy's team of Seabees, he and the other Seabees benefited tremendously from the expertise of the CIVMARs.

"Together with the CIVMARs, we have built a lot of things here and improved the quality of living for the people in the places we've visited," said Gallagher. "But the most important thing we've built was friendship

with the people we helped."

The U.S. Navy Showband, which deployed with Mercy, brought music to each of the countries Mercy visited. They played sets that included songs from classic to current to appeal to all ages of the audience. The band also held clinics and master classes for local aspiring musicians.

Mercy's size made it much too large to moor pierside at many of the locations. In response, Mercy embarked Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron (HCS) 25, which operated two helicopters that shuttled personnel and patients to and from shore sites. The vast majority of people were transported between ship and shore by two boats, called the 'band-aids,' run by Mercy's CIVMARs. These boats transported more than 6,000 patients and personnel plus cargo.

Mercy's crew was also host to numerous guests and distinguished visitors, including the presidents of the Philippines and East Timor, U.S. ambassadors, the Chief of Naval Operations, the Surgeon General of the Navy, the U.S. Pacific Command commander and the Pacific Fleet commander.

Mercy will return to her homeport of San Diego in late September where most of its military crew will return to the shore-side hospitals where they worked before the deployment and the civilian volunteers will return to home.

"It has been a once-in-a-lifetime experience," said Hospitalman Melisa Espinosa, who worked in Mercy's casualty receiving department, which is roughly equivalent to an emergency room. "I feel really lucky to be able to see all these parts of the world and be able to make new friends there. It has been one of the best things I've ever done and I'd definitely do this again in a heartbeat."

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Hawaii Navy News
Online



Online program unveiled to reduce traffic risks

Dan Steber

Naval Safety Center Public Affairs

The Naval Safety Center announced Aug. 31 that the Travel Risk Planning System (TRiPS) is available for fleetwide use.

TRiPS is an online system that will help Sailors plan their travel, do a risk assessment of that trip, and receive automated suggestions to improve traffic safety.

TRiPS originated as an Army program called ASMIS. A year's worth of testing and upgrades led to the new Navy and Marine Corps version.

"We believe it will make a difference in traffic-related mishaps and will help Sailors make the right decisions when driving home on holidays or on other trips," said Capt. Bill Glenn, head of the Shore Safety programs at the Naval Safety Center.

The system allows users to get a risk assessment of their trip after answering a few straightforward questions about travel plans: type of vehicle, their age, and the start and end points of their trip. The survey continues with questions about the amount of sleep expected before a trip, medications

that the driver might be taking, seatbelt use, rest stops planned, and a series of other questions. Each of these elements figures into the calculation of risk. Once the survey is completed, the level of risk is presented on a risk matrix ranging from extremely high to extremely low.

"This part of the assessment is critical in establishing the actions that can be changed to lower risk," said Dale Wisnieski, traffic-safety specialist and the Naval Safety Center's lead on TRiPS implementation. "The user receives an initial review of driving risks and a list of actions to reduce the risk. The driver then reviews the results and has a chance to acknowledge the suggested changes and recalculate the risk. This process reinforces the steps for good planning and execution of a safe trip."

TRiPS also offers a mapping product similar to the popular Mapquest program, including a link that will inform Sailors of areas undergoing road construction — another risk factor that should be considered when traveling.

Once the assessment is complete, the program will

even print a leave form for the user. Links also exist for the driver's supervisor, who will sign off on the trip planner and can review the results of the risk assessment and suggested changes, offering another opportunity to make sure Sailors have the best plan to reduce risk and survive a long trip.

Army experience has shown that their users are much less likely to be killed in wrecks when they use the online system. Soldiers have completed 1.3 million trip assessments to date, with five deaths during the ensuing trips. Compared to Soldiers who didn't use the system, users are five times less likely to be involved in fatal mishaps.

For more information on TRiPS and to access the program, visit the Naval Safety Center Web site at www.safetycenter.navy.mil. Click on the TRiPS link and register to use the program. An e-mail verification will be received, and the user then can access the program and start planning trips. The Web site also has links to a video message from the Commander, Naval Safety Center, Rear Adm. George Mayer, and a link to ALSAFE 52/06, which announces the program.

Lawmakers, DoD take aim at payday loan sharks

Donna Miles

American Forces Press Service

Interest is building on Capitol Hill in putting a nationwide cap on the interest rates lenders can charge service members for loans, a measure the Defense Department is pushing to protect its force.

A General Accountability Office (GAO) study released last month offers insight into how payday-lending businesses frequently gouge troops short of cash by charging exorbitant interest rates on loans borrowed against their next paychecks.

"The Report On Predatory Lending Practices Directed at Members of the Armed Forces and Their Dependents" noted that as many as one in five service members are falling prey to loan centers near military bases.

It estimated that 13 to 19 percent of military people took out high-interest, short-term loans last year — typically borrowing about \$350 a pop at interest rates of 390 percent to 780 percent.

These loan centers have sprung up like dandelions around military bases. According to the report, they target young, financially inexperienced borrowers who have bank accounts and steady jobs, but also have little in savings and credit problems or maxed-out credit balances.

The report cited an Airman at Maxwell Air Force Base, Ala., as an example of the troops who enter into these loan agreements to begin a cycle of debt that's nearly impossible for many to reverse. She initially bor-

rowed \$500 through a payday loan with an agreement to pay back \$600 in two weeks. She then took out other payday loans to cover that bill and ended up doing multiple rollovers on each loan.

Ultimately, the Airman contacted an installation loan company that gave her a \$10,000 loan at a 50 percent annual percentage interest rate. The total cost to pay off the payday loans came to \$12,750, and her total obligation to the installment loan company rose to \$15,000.

The Defense Department noted that the Airman is far from alone and it is exerting a major effort to educate troops about the potential dangers of predatory loans and better ways to manage their finances, the GAO report notes.

The expanded education effort, launched last year, reached more than 400,000 service members and their family members in 2005. In announcing the program, John M. Molino, then the deputy undersecretary of defense for military community and family policy, noted that the wide use of payday loans within the military has the potential to impact on mission accomplishment.

"If you're in debt, you have other things in mind," he said. "You're doing things other than concentrating on the mission; maybe you're taking on other employment. The effects are long-lasting and go deep into a person's performance. It affects unit readiness."

In addition to educating military members about the dangers of payday loans and familiarizing them with ways to put themselves on a sound financial footing, the military is seeking better protections for its members,

and Congress is taking heed. Among measures DoD wants to see instituted are:

- A requirement that lenders disclose information regarding the extension of credit in a uniform, unambiguous way.

- A federal ceiling on the cost of credit to all military borrowers, capping the annual percentage rate.

- A ban on lenders extending credit to service members and family members without regard for their ability to repay the debt.

- A prohibition on loan contracts that require service members and their families to waive their rights to take legal action and on contract causes that require them to waive any special legal protections afforded to them; and

- A ban on states discriminating against service members and families stationed within their borders, and on lenders from making loans to service members that violate the state's consumer protections.

The U.S. Senate passed an amendment in June that establishes a 36-percent cap on annual percentage rates on loan to military members and their families. The bill is now in conference committee with the House of Representatives.

In addition to DoD and members of Congress, Paul Leonard from the Center for Responsible Lending expressed hopes that the amendment will pass.

"We're hoping Congress will stand up to the payday industry," he said. "Our service people deserve far better than financial ruin — or trying to survive in a war zone while they're fretting about how they'll pay next month's bills."