



News Release

Public Affairs Office

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**NDSTC holds recognition for USCG new Diver rating
Story by: Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Fred Gray IV**

Panama City Beach, Fla. - The United States Coast Guard (USCG) is having a ceremony to officially recognize their 22nd rating, Diver, among their brothers in arms at the Naval Diving and Salvage Training Center (NDSTC) located at Naval Support Activity Panama City (NSA PC) May 5, 2015.

While the official announcement of the rating came Jan. 31, 2014, it wasn't until April 1, 2015 that the first group of Coast Guardsmen were established as Divers.

For the past 75 years we have always had collateral duty divers, and with this new rating we have established a platform for a proficient professional that was able to stay within their job rating, said USCG Capt. Tim Espinoza, commanding officer of the Maritime Safety and Security Team out of San Diego. "Our mission has always been validated."

The USGC has been undergoing diving operation as early as the 1940s, but has never been a sole job title for the men and women of the Coast Guard.

“To have our rate recognized at this venue feels pretty awesome,” said Coast Guard Diver 2nd Class Jason Fields, attached to the Coast Guard Dunker out of Elizabeth City, N.C., from Fort Wayne, Ind. While training here the USCG students were always told that the idea of a diver rating is far-fetched but it could happen, and when it did, I didn’t look back, said Fields.

Throughout the past the USCG has played important roles in diving, by providing intelligence gathering and subsurface activities supporting the Office of Strategic Services, a predecessor of the Central Intelligence Agency. They were also assigned to the Navy Yard at Washington, D.C., to support salvage operations.

“Most people don’t know what Coast Guard divers do,” said Cmdr. Hung Cao, commanding officer for NDSTC. Among all the other divers within the military the Coast Guard has particular skill sets and geographical locations that are an incredible asset to our nation, Cao said.

The home for all Military Divers from every branch of service is located at NDSTC on NSA PC, and is currently in the middle of a week-long celebration known as the Year of the Military Diver (YOTMD). YOTMD encompasses such milestones as: the 100th anniversary of the Mark V dive helmet, the 35th anniversary of NDSTC, the 40th anniversary of women divers and the 70th anniversary of the U.S. Navy presence in Bay County.

For more information about the YOTMD please visit www.yotmd.com, and like the Naval Support Activity Panama City and Naval Diving and Salvage Training Center Facebook pages for the most up to date information about the commands.