McCain returns briefly to resupply for Operation *Tomodachi*

Story and photo by Joe Schmitt, CFAY Public Affairs

USS John S. McCain (DDG 56) returned Commander Fleet Activities Yokosuka (CFAY) March 29 for a few days to resupply before heading back out to participate in relief efforts near Sendai, Japan.

"We were underway for a certification period and as we were pulling back in [March 11] when the earthquake struck, we could just barely feel the earthquake when it happened and we were told to go [back out] to waters just outside Tokyo that night," said Ensign James Stokes, the ship's information security officer and public affairs officer. "The next day we were off the coast of Sendai in support of Operation *Tomodachi*."

When the ship arrived to the area off the coast, the crew started search and rescue operations. They were looking for survivors that might need help and assisting if they found any casualties.

"We were coordinating with the Japan Self-Defense Force and they were providing us with search grids that every ship was assigned to a specific longitude-latitude type grid," said Stokes. "Originally, we were just finding a lot of small craft. We marked them and catalogued them to help out the Japan Coast Guard and the Japan Self-Defense Force."

Once the *McCain* crew found a ship that needed to be searched, they would launch a rigid hull inflatable boat (RHIB). A RHIB is a small boat that can carry a small crew that boards or searches the other ships they find.

"We saw a lot of devastation just in the water," said Lt. j.g. Jon Volkle, *McCain* fire control officer. "The first day we got there we found one derelict fishing boat and they called me to the pilot house right away because I speak Japanese. We launched the RHIB and we found that there was no one there. It had just been ripped free from its mooring lines. While we were out there, they discovered another one, we went over to that one, then discovered another one, and went on to that one. So, that first day we spend eight hours just doing boat [operations]."

After assisting in search and rescue operations, the crew performed other missions in support of Operation *Tomodachi*. Then they traveled back to Yokosuka base to pick up supplies they needed to continue their efforts in the area.

***USS John S. McCain* (DDG 56) Sailors finish tightening mooring lines as the ship returns to Commander Fleet Activities Yokosuka March 29, after participating in Humanitarian and Disaster Relief (HADR) missions off the coast of Sendai, Japan. The HADR efforts are part of the U.S. Navy's response to assist Japan after the 2011 Tohoku earthquake and tsunami that hit northern Japan March 11.**

"It's always good to do something real and operational, that's what we're here for, I just wish we could have done more," said Volkle.

McCain was one of the first ships to return to CFAY and their schedule is the example for other similar ships in the region that will be pier side for only a few days before rejoining the humanitarian and disaster relief efforts in northern Japan.

GW Sailors advance careers while at sea

By MC3 Juan Manuel Pinalez, *USS George Washington* Public Affairs

For Machinist's Mate 2nd Class Alden Addor, a Sailor aboard the aircraft carrier *USS George Washington* (CVN 73) (*GW*), time at sea and away from his new bride allows for a renewed focus on his career.

"Once we pulled out of Yokosuka and got underway, I knew I could get myself in high gear to finish my education and get my shipboard [qualifications]," said Addor, a nuclear mechanic assigned to the *GW* Reactor Department.

Addor isn't alone in his desire to take his naval career to the next level. On Monday, March 28, more than 1,500 enlisted Sailors filled the *GW* hangar bay to participate in the ship's first warfare qualification day of 2011. Participants traveled the ship with their qualification books in hand, seeking training and signatures from their more senior and experienced Sailors.

"Pulling out and leaving my family behind was rough." said Addor. "All you want is to know that loved ones are safe, especially when you can't be there, so having something else to focus on makes sea-going life more bearable; it strengthens me."

Warfare qualification days are just one of the many career enrichment programs *GW* provides its Sailors. Many others use their free time underway to focus on their education.

The ship's "Education Boss," Atzel Santiago, a self-described "one stop Navy college office at sea," makes sure Sailors who want to work toward a college degree have everything necessary to earn their diploma.

"Our office has made it easy for Sailors to get an education. We've minimized the paperwork so more of them can take advantage of our programs," said Santiago.

"We have droves of Sailors filling up classrooms to learn basic and intermediate Japanese; we also are looking forward to offering History, English and other courses in the near future," Santiago added.

The courses are free of charge for Sailors and provide college level instruction in many academic disciplines.

"I just recently completed a writing and psychology course onboard. I took the class to meet my college core requirements," said Yeoman 3rd Class (SW/AW) Kyle Bowles from Albany, N.Y. "I want to earn a degree in criminal justice to become a guidance counselor so I can help young children stay on the right path and have a bright future."

***USS George Washington* (CVN 73) Sailors look through their personal qualification standard (PQS) books while waiting in line during a warfare day aboard the aircraft carrier March 27. Warfare days provide Sailors with the training to become enlisted surface and aviation surface warfare specialists.**

U.S. Navy photo by MCSN Cheng S. Yang

Earning an associate's or bachelor's degree can often add the crucial points necessary for a Sailor to be promoted to the next rank.

When the crew of *GW* aren't working or studying, they're working their muscles in one of the ship's six gyms. Physical fitness plays a significant role in remaining competitive within the Navy. Twice a year, physical readiness tests are conducted for all Navy personnel to demonstrate their commitment to a healthy lifestyle.

"I work out a lot at sea and in port. I hit the treadmill, upright bike and rowing machine to stay in shape. It helps me look better for foreign port visits and makes sure my uniforms fit right," said Seaman Patrick Jackson from Brentwood, Calif. Who is also working on a pre-law degree. "I would like to pursue a law degree and return as a judge advocate general officer someday."

Stop movement order to Japan clarified

From NPC Public Affairs

In the wake of an immediate stop movement order, Navy Personnel Command (NPC) has provided clarification for Sailors with orders to Japan in NAVADMIN 100/11 released March 23.

As directed, the Navy has issued a temporary stop movement order for all personnel scheduled to report to Japan as either an ultimate duty station or an intermediate duty station in conjunction with a permanent change of station (PCS) move.

Under the new guidance, commanding officers and officers-in-charge in the affected areas are now able to request waivers and operational holds to fill critical billets. Further, the new message adds clarity regarding Sailors who have orders to Japan, including adding Immediate Superior-in-Commands (ISIC) and Navy Operations Support Commands (NOSC) as places where Sailors can report. The message also includes information about intermediate duty stations, guidance regarding placing Sailors on temporary additional duty (TAD) and changes the accounting code receiving commands should use to classify those Sailors on orders to Japan.

Commanding officers and officers in charge who want a waiver to the stop movement for critical billets should request one through their chain of command. Commander U.S. Pacific Fleet is authorized to approve or disapprove waiver requests.

Approvals will be sent through record message traffic and will specify whether the member is authorized to bring family members. Upon approval, Personnel Support Detachments (PSD) will process Sailors to transfer.

Personnel with orders to commands in Japan who have not yet detached from their current command are directed to remain in place unless their orders direct them to report to intermediate duty stations en route. Those Sailors should execute their orders and will stop at their final intermediate station.

Ships and embarked units getting underway and that cannot retain detaching Sailors should put those service members on TAD orders to the beach detachment or the ISIC until further notice. Commands who gain these Sailors should notify NPC immediately.

For more information, members or commands should contact the NPC Emergency Coordination Center at 1-877-414-5358 or by e-mail to NPC.CAT.CAPTAIN@navy.mil.