Port Operations support ships providing fresh water to Fukushima

Story and photo by Joe Schmitt, CFAY Public Affairs

Commander Fleet Activities Yokosuka Port Operations Department has provided support to ships participating in Operation *Tomodachi* and barges that have taken fresh water from local sources and brought to the Fukushima Dai-ichi nuclear reactor plant, which was crippled from the March 11 9.0 earthquake and following tsunami, to help with cooling down efforts.

Port Operations first took part in responding to a request for one million gallons of water. They brought in "risers" and hoses that pumped in 500,000 gallons of water into two barges that were towed by the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force (JMSDF) to the damaged nuclear reactors the weekend of March 25.

The next step in the mission supported the supply ships that brought more water to the area of the coast of the reactors.

"Since the fresh water barges left Yokosuka, we're also supporting the JMSDF effort to bring in their oilers and supply them with fresh water for the continuing operations up by the Fukushima nuclear reactor plants," said CFAY Operations Officer Lt. Cdr. Michael Weatherford. "The ultimate goal is that the oilers will go up with the fresh water and they are going to use our barges to ferry the water from the oiler to the nuclear power plant."

Weatherford said that by developing the plan to use ships to transport the water greatly increased how much water can be carried to the area.

Japanese supply ship *JS Oumi* (AOE 426) pulls into Commander Fleet Activities Yokosuka (CFAY) March 25 to onload supplies and fresh water before sailing on to Sendai and Fukushima as part of the ongoing Humanitarian and Disaster Relief (HADR) efforts. CFAY Port Operations Department has played a major role in providing support to the many ships participating in HADR.

"Right now, talking roughly in gallons, we are looking at more than 500,000 gallons of water per ship." That means that each ship that leaves with water will carry more water than the first two barges that left combined."

Port Operations is also providing support to the U.S. Navy ships that have returned while participating in Humanitarian and Disaster Relief (HADR) efforts.

"The [forward-deployed] ships here have started a process of returning to Yokosuka for a three-day reset where they will be able to get some rest and relaxation along with a fill up for supplies for the HADR efforts," said Weatherford. "I have two [Military Sealift Command] ships here, [*USNS Rappahannock* (T-AO 204)] and [*USNS Pecos* (T-AO 197)], they are both gathering food and fuel for the HADR effort, which they will be using to supply our U.S. Navy assets that are out there on station."

Most of the ships were deployed while Port Operations helped fill the supply ships with water. Weatherford commented that it had been a while since he had seen so many of the ships deployed and most of them to help with the HADR missions.

"Just like Japan is home for the Japanese people, this is also our home," said Weatherford. "We are all one family here and we are doing everything we can do to help in these efforts."

Navy accepting Seaman-to-Admiral commissioning applications

From Naval Service Training Command Public Affairs

The Seaman-to-Admiral (STA-21) commissioning program, which provides an opportunity for qualified Sailors to receive college educations and Navy commissions, is soliciting applications for fiscal year 2012, as announced April 1 in Naval Administrative Message NAVADMIN 114/11. The deadline for submitting application packages is July 1.

"STA-21 is a full-time, undergraduate education and commissioning program open to enlisted personnel of all pay grades and ratings to receive a top-notch college education and become commissioned officers," said Cathy Kempf, head of Naval Reserve Officers Training Corps (NROTC) program selection and placement, and STA-21, at Naval Service Training Command (NSTC) Officer Development directorate in Pensacola, Fla.

According to NROTC Program Director Dr. C. Jill Stein, the STA-21 program is one of the best officer commissioning programs the Navy has to offer.

"STA-21 pays up to $10,000 per year for college costs such as tuition, books and fees," said Stein. "All the while, Sailors draw their full pay and allowances for their current pay grade. Under the STA-21 program, Sailors have 36 months, including summer semesters, to complete their Bachelor's degree requirements."

All STA-21 officer candidates attend the Naval Science Institute (NSI) course at Officer Training Command (OTC), Naval Station Newport, R.I., prior to beginning college studies at an NROTC affiliated college or university.

NSI is an eight-week course of intense officer preparation and indoctrination. Course enrollment is timed to allow college entrance during summer or fall semesters/quarters after selection.

The STA-21 program benefits Sailors as well as the Navy. The average candidate has at least two years and in most cases more than four years of observed performance, which assists in the process of selecting the most qualified Sailors to receive a commission.

Additionally, STA-21 candidates are on average older than most midshipmen, bringing a maturity directly reflected in the more than 90 percent completion rate STA-21 program candidates boast.

Additionally, many Sailors involved in the STA-21 program already have some college credit and some candidates finish ahead of the three years allotted to earn a degree.

All of these factors - proven performance for better selection, maturity for higher completion rates and previous college credit - save the Navy money while producing top-quality experienced naval officers.

In the STA-21 program, as it is in many competitive selection processes, it is often a candidate's extra efforts which can result in selection.

"With so many great Sailors to choose from, selection boards often look for the tie breakers or the indicators of extra effort, potential and desire; in this regard the STA-21 program is no exception," Stein said. "As always, performance is the number one criteria. When given the chance to lead, take it. No matter how small the opportunity, step up and lead people, and lead them well. Also attend to your physical, as well as your professional, preparedness."

Reporting seniors who feel they have a Sailor with the potential to be selected by STA-21 should comment on their leadership skills and potential in their performance evaluations early in their career. These comments are highly regarded by the boards, even in junior Sailors who's time on board, time in grade or peer ranking will not allow their evaluations to be fully consistent with the comments.

Application packages must be postmarked on or before the July 1 deadline date. The deadline for submission of additional documentation to an applicant's package is August 1.

Questions concerning this program should be directed to command career counselors or to the NSTC Officer Development directorate at (850) 452-9563.

For more information about the STA-21 program, visit https://www.sta-21.navy.mil or read NAVADMIN 114/11.