Tours, COMREL events on Sailors agenda during Manila port visit

By MC2 Steven Khor,
***USS Blue Ridge* Public Affairs**

The 7th Fleet command ship *USS Blue Ridge* (LCC 19) made a port visit to Manila, Philippines, Aug. 4.

While in port, the ship plans on strengthening ties between the United States and Philippines through shipboard tours, activities and community relations projects.

Blue Ridge Commanding Officer Capt. Rudy Lupton believes that the visit to Manila will be a rewarding experience.

"Manila is an exciting port of call for the crew," said Lupton. "Our Sailors are looking forward to relaxing, participating in community service projects, enjoying the local culture and experiencing the best that Manila has to offer."

The Sailors will also have the opportunity to go on Morale, Welfare and Recreation tours and rest and relax in the city dubbed "The Pearl of the Orient."

For some, the port visit will be the first time that they have the opportunity to immerse themselves in such a rich, diverse culture and tradition.

"This port visit is pretty exciting," said Information Systems Technician 3rd Class Chris Silk. "I will get to do a little golfing, sightseeing, try the local food and maybe even meet Manny Paquiao."

For others, a port visit to Manila gives them the chance to see family and friends. Many of *Blue Ridge* and embarked 7th Fleet staff Sailor's roots stem from Filipino heritage and the visit lets them feel at home again.

"It's a mix of feelings when I get to see my family because, like many other times I've seen them while in the Navy, it was unplanned, but exciting," said Culinary Specialist 2nd Class Edgar Tandoy.

One of the ship's planned community relations projects in Manila will be a Habitat for Humanity project, where *Blue Ridge* and embarked 7th Fleet staff Sailors will be able to help build a daycare and learning center.

"I am excited that I will be able to help others clean up the environment," said Ship Serviceman Seaman Quinton Lewis. "If I am able to help others by making a learning environment possible, then that is the best feeling in the world."

Blue Ridge serves under Commander Expeditionary Strike Group 7/Task Force (CTF) 76, the Navy's only forward-deployed amphibious force. *Blue Ridge* is the flagship for Commander U.S. 7th Fleet

YN2 Marvin Craft and SHSN Krista Stelzner, both assigned to the U.S. 7th Fleet command ship *USS Blue Ridge* (LCC 19), present a wreath during a remembrance ceremony at the Manila American Cemetery and Memorial Aug. 6. *Blue Ridge* is in Manila conducting humanitarian assistance projects and strengthening ties with the Filipino people.
U.S. Navy photo by MC2 Aaron Pineda

New payment plan for chief selectees

By Kristine M. Sturkie, NEX Service Command Public Affairs

Navy Exchange (NEX) announced July 21 the establishment of the CPO (Select) Uniform Payment Plan through the Military Star Card to allow chief petty officer (CPO) selectees to charge their new uniforms to their Military Star Card.

CPO selectees will have an additional deferred payment plan option when purchasing new uniforms at their NEX. NEX created the plan so CPO selectees could charge new uniforms to their Military Star Card.

"We were looking for a way to make purchasing new chief uniforms easier for our CPO selectees," said Capt. Ed Spillman, NEX Service Command deputy commander, Military Services.

The new plan provides zero percent interest for 12 months with no minimum purchase amount. Minimum monthly payments are required. Customers who open a Military Star Card account will receive 10 percent off their first day's purchases, including a uniform purchase. The discount is applied to the customer's card statement.

Navy's Crime Reduction Campaign focuses on gang awareness

By NCIS Resident Agency Yokosuka

Military personnel, their family members and civilian employees often face tremendous stress in their lives, and potential threats to their safety. Unchecked, this environment can impact military readiness and overall quality of life. To counter these stressors and threats, the Naval Criminal Investigative Service (NCIS) has implemented a collaborative Crime Reduction Program to proactively fight crime within the military community.

NCIS has partnered with the Judge Advocate General (JAG), Public Affairs Office, Family Advocacy Program (FAP), Chaplain Corps and other Department of Navy (DoN) entities, to facilitate a cross-cutting effort to help military communities reduce crime. The Crime Reduction Program organizes multiple crime reduction campaigns throughout the year, with each campaign focused on a singular theme; such as, domestic violence, narcotics or identity theft. These campaigns will highlight the precursors of crime and victimization, while providing an outlet for reporting such acts. The focus of the Crime Reduction Campaign from July through September 2010 is targeted at gang awareness.

Criminal gangs have existed for centuries and have a long history in major metropolitan areas of the United States. Criminal street gangs as we know them today first emerged in the 1960s. There is no single, accepted definition of a gang, however, most jurisdictions accept the FBI definition and denote a gang as a group, organization or association of three or more persons with a common interest and, or activity characterized by the commission of, or involvement in a pattern of criminal activity or delinquent conduct. Gangs will "represent" by wearing an identifying symbol, such as a bandana of a specific color or a hat tilted to one side or the other, thus indicating which gang they belong to. Additionally, gangs utilize specific "hand signs" that also indicate their gang affiliation.

Youth may be attracted to and influenced by local gang members. Since the 1980s, juvenile gang membership and activity has increased in the United States. In 2006, the National Youth Gang Center estimated the number of youth gangs to be approximately 24,000 with approximately 760,000 members. Studies indicate that the single most cited reason for joining a gang by young gang members is the need for protection. However, the growth of youth gangs in the suburbs suggests other motives for membership, such as those seeking a sense of belonging, power or respect, money and drugs.

The U.S. military population is representative of the United States civilian population; therefore, it should come as no surprise that members of every major street gang have been discovered on military installations both domestically and internationally.

To schedule a Gang Awareness Briefing for your command, contact NCIS Resident Agency Yokosuka, Japan at 243-7535.