U.S. 7th Fleet Flagship *USS Blue Ridge* returns to Yokosuka

By MC3 Fidel C. Hart,
***USS Blue Ridge* Public Affairs**

Seventh Fleet flagship *USS Blue Ridge* (LCC 19) returned to her homeport of Yokosuka April 2, completing a six-week underway throughout the Pacific.

The patrol began with a visit to the cities of Busan and Donghae, Republic of Korea (ROK), to participate in the combined forces Exercise Key Resolve 2012. The exercise strengthened the ROK-U.S. alliance; enhanced the combat readiness of ROK and U.S. forces; demonstrated the combined forces' interoperability; and showcased the U.S. commitment to the alliance.

Following the ROK visit, *Blue Ridge* conducted training evolutions at sea along with port visits to Hong Kong and Manila, Republic of the Philippines. While in both ports, crew members volunteered for community service events and participated in a variety of tours during their off time.

"As the flagship, our mission is to support Commander, U.S. 7th Fleet, and to develop and strengthen relationships with our partners in the region," said *Blue Ridge* Commanding Officer, Capt. Daniel Grieco. "This period out to sea was a terrific opportunity to do that and the crew had a great time visiting these fantastic ports of call."

For some Sailors, this was their final underway period with the ship.

"I've been on the ship for three years," said Hospital Corpsman 2nd Class Jenna Bailey. "I'm grateful that I was able to visit a lot of countries. Australia and Thailand were my favorites. Russia was interesting as well. I enjoyed being a part of their Victory Day Parade [WWII defeat over Germany]. The ship had some challenges, it was my first sea duty so I was not sure what to expect. I wanted to make the most of each port and spend time with my friends because in the Navy your friends are like your family. It is going to be sad leaving them."

While it was a final underway for Sailors like Bailey, it was the first underway for many other crew members.

This is my first experience being underway with the ship and in the Navy," said Seaman Adrian Sargent. "It was fun and interesting seeing all the new places. I give my first underway a 10."

***USS Blue Ridge* (LCC 19) is guided in by a Port Operartions tugboat as she prepares to moor pierside at Commander Fleet Activities Yokosuka**
Photo by Jamie Chevalier

Navy announces revised FY13 Enlisted Boards schedule

From Navy Personnel Command Public Affairs

MILLINGTON, Tenn. – Navy announced a revised Fiscal Year 2013 (FY13) enlisted selection board schedule in NAVADMIN (Navy Administrative Message) 108/12, released March 30.

The message announced new selection board convening dates for active duty E-9, active duty E-8 and the FTS/AGR/CANREC (Reserve) E-7 selection boards.

The message also announced new "received by" deadlines for candidates to submit their letter to the board and "received by" deadlines for special requirements for nuclear trained personnel.

Letters to the board previously submitted for FY13 enlisted selection boards have been retained and there is no requirement for candidates to resubmit letters to the board.

No changes were made to the convening or submission dates for the active duty E-7 selection board previously announced in NAVADMIN 349/11.

Impact to the chief petty officer induction season will be minimal if any.

Unless specifically addressed in the new message, candidates should follow all eligibility and submission criteria outlined in NAVADMIN 349/11 and NAVADMIN 369/11 for E7 candidates and NAVADMIN 387/11 for E8 and E9 candidates. Note that the NPC Customer Service Center's e-mail address for sending letters to the board via e-mail is: cscselectionboard@navy.mil.

The FY13 enlisted selection board schedule was revised following the public disclosure of the active duty E9 selection board's convening order, quota plan and membership list. Reserve E9 and Reserve E8 selection boards were not affected by the change.

To check the schedule and for more information read NAVADMIN 108/12, available at www.npc.navy.mil .

USS Shiloh receives flight deck qualification

By MCSN Gregory A. Harden II (SW/AW),
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The Ticonderoga-class guided-missile cruiser *USS Shiloh* (CG-67) became a flight deck qualified cruiser after completing a helicopter evaluation evolution at sea, April 2.

More than eight months has passed since Shiloh was fully flight deck qualified. In order to become flight deck qualified, the ship must undergo three phases of testing.

First, the ship had to participate in an aviation assist visit, complete the aviation requirements qualifications and complete a Helicopter "Helo" Day. During Helo Day, Shiloh hosted Helicopter Anti-submarine Light Squadron (HSL 51) in order to re-qualify and evaluate the ship's flight deck readiness.

The evaluation consisted of routine deck landing qualifications, vertical replenishment exercises, helicopter in-flight replenishment and a helicopter on-deck refuel, also known as a "hot pump."

Safety was the main priority for the crew during the day's evolutions.

"It was a great feeling to be able to conduct the evolutions today, especially since our biggest concern is safety," said Seaman Andrew Giusto, assigned to Shiloh's deck department. "It is key to keep our heads on a swivel at all times and pay attention."

Sailors aboard Shiloh must constantly train and prepare for each evolution to ensure the safety and success of every mission.

"It's the first time in a long time since we have conducted this evolution, so basically it is just getting out there and shaking off the rust," said Boatswain Mate 2nd Class Chris Rickerby, Shiloh's landing specialist enlisted. "All flight deck personnel performed very well, considering the amount of time since our last helicopter operations."

Shiloh 1st Lieutenant, Lt. j.g. Zachary Elkin, was impressed with the crew's role in the success of the evaluation evolution.

"Today was a culmination of four months of training, starting late last Nov., in order to plan and prepare for Helo Day," said Elkin. "The Sailors of USS Shiloh came together and proved that they can successfully conduct helicopter operations."

Due to the joint efforts between HSL 51 and the Shiloh, the ship successfully received her flight deck qualification.

Shiloh's flight deck re-qualification is vital for the cruiser's preparation to deploy and be active in the Navy's Fleet Response Program. This effort was one of many to prepare to support the 7th Fleet's forward-deployed naval forces.