USS McClusky takes part in PASSEX, hosts JMSDF

Story and photo by MC3 Dominique Pineiro, Navy Public Affairs Support Element West

USS MCCLUSKY, At Sea (NNS) -- The guided-missile frigate *USS McClusky* (FFG 41) participated in a joint forces passing exercise (PASSEX) with the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force (JMSDF) June 26.

The exercise involved the Military Sealift Command fleet replenishment oiler *USNS Yukon* (T-AO 202), guided-missile destroyer *USS Sampson* (DDG 102), destroyer *JS Mineyuki* (DD 124), training vessel *JS Asagiri* (TV 3516) and the training vessel *JS Kashima* (TV 3508).

The evolution required the ships to line up in diamond formation and perform various evasive maneuvers, flight operations and mock underway replenishments with the *Yukon*.

"It was a fantastic opportunity working with the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force," said Cmdr. Darren Glaser, commanding officer of the *McClusky*. "Through the many day and night evolutions of the exercise, the crew was able to share the training and experience alongside of the Japanese crew, to better prepare for future maritime missions. *McClusky* looks forward to more exercises to help strengthen our ties with the Japanese. I look forward to conducting future exercises."

During the exercise, ships from both nations took part in an officer exchange program in order to get a better understanding of how each navy operates.

McClusky hosted two JMSDF junior officers from the *Mineyuki* and the *Asagiri*.

Ens. Shohei Yamaguchi, assigned to the *Asagiri*, said it was his first experience on an American ship and was impressed with what he saw.

"I've never experienced this type of ship and it was interesting to see the differences between (U.S. Navy) and (JMSDF)," Yamaguchi said. "In (the) U.S. there are lots of back up systems and everyone is well educated in case of an emergency."

Yamaguchi also stressed the importance of PASSEX and the U.S. – Japan alliance.

"In the future we will work together in other exercises," he said. "If we don't know what's going on in the U.S. Navy then we can't act together. This training is good experience for co-operational training with the United States."

Ensigns Haruhisa Kosuge, left, and Shohei Yamaguchi, assigned to the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force, test the back-up steering of the guided-missile frigate *USS McClusky* (FFG 41) during a joint forces passing exercise. The exercise included six ships from the U.S. and Japan and required the ships to line up in diamond formation and perform various evasive maneuvers, flight operations and mock underway replenishments.

McClusky was forward deployed to Commander Fleet Activities Yokouska from 1991-1996, after which she shifted her homeport to Naval Base San Diego.

E-Leave eases leave routing

By MC3 Andrea Smithluedke, Navy Personnel Command Public Affairs

MILLINGTON, Tenn. (NNS) -- With the July 4 holiday right around the corner and summer travel season underway, Navy officials reminded Sailors June 28 about the ease of using the electronic leave (E-Leave) system.

"The best thing about E-leave is that you can track it easily," said Personnel Specialist 1st Class Lacey Burns, career progression department, Navy Personnel Command (NPC). "I've had a lot of paper leave chits lost at previous commands, or had trouble finding out where they were in the approval process, and then had to route a new one. With E-leave, you don't have to worry about any of that."

E-Leave allows Sailors to electronically submit leave requests through their chain-of-command for approval, replacing the traditional paper leave form, and has significantly reduced the timeframe for routing a leave request.

"It's a much faster process," said Personnel Specialist 2nd Class LeAnne Millious, full-time support and Selected Reserves conversion desk case worker at NPC. "I had to take emergency leave when a family member passed away and I was able to get the request routed in less than an hour through E-leave."

As directed by NAVADMIN 252/10, shore commands and submarine forces began using E-Leave to process leave requests by Aug. 1 and Oct. 1, 2010, respectively.

"E-Leave ensures pay and entitlements are properly accounted for with the Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS)," said John Courtney, Navy electronic leave program manager. "Commands have full visibility in the system to identify the status of any Sailor's request and can easily track and account for all Sailors on leave."

Sailors, reviewers, and approvers have access to E-Leave through common access card (CAC) log-in on the Navy Standard Integrated Personnel System (NSIPS) website at https://nsips.nmci.navy.mil.

For more information on E-leave, or using any of the NSIPS related tools, read NAVADMIN 252/10, call the NSIPS help desk toll-free at (877) 589-5991, or email nisipshelpdesk@navy.mil. Sailors can also call NPC's Customer Service Center at 1-866-U-ASK-NPC.

George Washington MWR helps keep Sailors' spirits up

By MCSN Justin E. Yarborough, USS George Washington Public Affairs

With the Navy's only fulltime forward-deployed aircraft carrier *USS George Washington* (*GW*) (CVN73) now back on patrol in the western Pacific Ocean, the ship's crew is hard at work day and night. But during their brief moments of free time, many are finding opportunities for some fun thanks to the ship's Morale Welfare and Recreation (MWR) team.

"We provide recreational services to the ship's crew," said Rebekah McKoy, the ship's Fun Boss. "We set up nightly events and offer a variety of activities for the crew to unwind while they're off."

From to Madden football tournaments to Friday night karaoke on the mess decks, MWR has something for everybody said McKoy.

"We host *GW*'s Cinema at Sea where we pop popcorn and show a movie for the crew to watch every Saturday night," said McKoy. "We're trying to start up a singing contest that we're calling *GW* Idol. We're still trying to work that one out."

Whenever the ship makes port calls, MWR works with the local hotels and tourist attractions in the area to offer Sailors these services at discounted prices.

"Last year when we went to Thailand, I took an elephant riding tour and it was pretty awesome," said Aviation Machinist's Mate Airman Monique Isaac who works in the MWR booth on the mess decks. "I can't wait to see what they have lined up for this year's port visits."

Every week, MWR sends out an e-mail informing the crew of that week's events. The goal isn't just to keep Sailor's entertained, MWR events help make the time at sea move by a little faster.

"With some of the events they offer, it makes the time fly by and sometimes it doesn't even feel like we're underway," said Isaac. "It kind of gives the crew something to look forward to."

"I like to think that we give people a sense of reality," said McKoy. "For someone playing poker on the mess decks, that could give them the same feeling as playing poker back home with their friends and family."

McKoy is open to all ideas for family-friendly entertainment aboard *George Washington* and has placed a suggestion box next to her MWR booth; from playing Risk on the flight deck to putt-putt and bowling on the mess decks, she's heard it all.

"Just let us know your idea and if it's doable, we'll make it a reality, said McKoy."

George Washington returned to patrolling the waters of the Western Pacific ocean on June 12, 2011, departing her forward operating base of Commander, Fleet Activities Yokosuka.

On board are more than 5,500 Sailors from *George Washington* and CAG-5. *George Washington*'s mission is to ensure security and stability in the Western Pacific and to be in position to work with our allies and regional partners to respond to any crisis across the operational spectrum as directed.