USS Blue Ridge departs Fleet Activities Yokosuka

Story and photo by MCSN Ben Larscheid, *USS Blue Ridge* Public Affairs

U.S. 7th Fleet flagship *USS Blue Ridge* (LCC 19) departed Fleet Activities Yokosuka Aug. 7 to patrol the southeast Asian-Pacific region.

With Capt. Will Pennington at the helm for the first time since he assumed command July 27, *Blue Ridge* will continue to strengthen partnerships through exercises with foreign navies and various community engagement opportunities with local aid organizations.

It is manned by more than 700 Sailors, including embarked 7th Fleet staff, Helicopter Anti-submarine Squadron Light 51 "Warlords" and Marines from Fleet Anti-terrorism Security Team Pacific.

"We have got ourselves a great and knowledgeable crew," said Boatswain's Mate 1st Class Terrence Phillips. "I know this patrol is going to be great because we are mission capable and mission ready. We always do whatever it takes to do it right."

USS Blue Ridge will provide 7th Fleet advanced communications capabilities, supporting theater security cooperation, fleet coordination and engagement goals during its patrol.

Blue Ridge has been forward deployed to Yokosuka, Japan for nearly 33 years.

As the flagship for Commander U.S. 7th Fleet Vice Adm. Scott H. Swift, *Blue Ridge* is instrumental in forging partnerships in the region while leading the fleet with its advanced shipboard communications systems.

OSSN Lorraine Cervantes mans a sound-powered telephone aboard U.S. 7th Fleet flagship *USS Blue Ridge* (LCC 19) as the ship leaves its forward-deployed port of Yokosuka, Japan Aug. 6. *Blue Ridge* is continuing patrol in the southeast Asian-Pacific region, strengthening partnerships through exercises with partner navies and various community service opportunities with local aid groups.

Blue Ridge achieves top 3M Score on CFAY waterfront

By MC2 Pedro A. Rodriguez, Naval Air Facility Misawa Public Affairs

U.S. 7th Fleet flagship *USS Blue Ridge* (LCC 19) wrapped up a week-long Maintenance and Material Management (3M) assessment Aug. 3 with an overall score of 92.53 percent.

Afloat Training Group Western Pacific (ATGWP) evaluated *Blue Ridge* Sailors on the 3M system and its compliance with the new instruction COMNAVSURFPAC Instruction 4790.1F.

According to Chief Engineman Tony Doyle, the lead ATGWP 3M inspector, *Blue Ridge* is in the lead across the waterfront after the implementation of the instruction.

"These are phenomenal numbers, Sir, they really are," Doyle said during the inspection out brief with *Blue Ridge*'s Commanding Office Capt. Will Pennington and the ship's officers and chief petty officers.

"Continue to press on with your khaki engagement—there's no way you'd be where you are today without your officers and chiefs," Doyle added.

The inspection included spot checks, Administrative Effectiveness Reviews (AER) and equipment validations and a thorough review of the Consolidated Ship's Maintenance Program (CSMP).

The AER is a review of a division's 3M record-keeping practice while the CSMP review challenges maintenance men and work center supervisors' knowledge on writing work candidates.

"Writing a work candidate the right way is extremely important," explains EA02 Work Center Supervisor, Enginemen 2nd Class David Kirchens. "It's through the work candidate that the big Navy receives material and equipment information from the fleet."

Kirchens added evaluations did not stop with the CSMP review. ATGWP also challenged work center supervisors and 3M assistants in their proficiency of the Navy maintenance scheduling program SKED.

"Being called down and tested by a Master Chief from ATG on how well I know SKED can be kind of scary," Kirchens said. "Luckily, my chain of command gave me all the support I needed to do well."

Through the 3MA, *Blue Ridge* maintained its high standards set by Senior Chief Machinery Repairman Edgardo S. Agustin, *Blue Ridge*'s 3M Coordinator.

The score was the highest of all the ships on Japan's waterfront," said Agustin. "The work and effort by the 3M training team made this 3MA a success. The 3M process is all about intensive preparation and I challenge our Sailors to keep this level of maintenance and high standards."

3M is one of the most important inspections because it directly affects the ship's longevity.

The 3M system is always a top priority for *Blue Ridge* Sailors because they understand how the program affects the crew and the ship.

"*Blue Ridge* was commissioned in 1970 and our goal is to prolong the ships life to the 2039 decommissioning date," said Agustin. "I expected us to pass, but my expectations were definitely exceeded. 3M is not a process, but a way of life for us. Through maintenance, we are able to perform our mission with the upmost efficiency and safety."

Navy ships must re-qualify their 3M program every 18 to 24 months, to ensure equipment is being properly maintained and their programs are effective.