Fleet Activities, Yokosuka, Japan

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CFAY honors Native American Heritage Month

Photo and story by
MC2 (SW/AW) John Smolinski,
CFAY Public Affairs

Commander Fleet Activities Yokosuka's (CFAY) multi-cultural committee honored Native American Heritage Month with a ceremony in the C-2 auditorium Nov. 18.

During the ceremony, Chief Master-at-Arms Pamela Almozon, CFAY's multi-cultural committee member, presented a history of the Native America people and described the courage, determination and fighting spirit.

CFAY Chief Staff Officer Capt. Donna M. Kasper introduced the event's special guest speaker Chief Boatswain's Mate Michael Sparkman, leading chief petty officer and tug master, USS Muskegon (YTB 763), and one-quarter Cherokee.

An emotional Sparkman recounted his family's history and the pain and hardship that his ancestors had to endure.

Sparkman spoke about his ancestor, Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation, John Ross who was forced to lead 18,000 of his people from their homeland in Georgia to Oklahoma along what is now called the trail of tears, on which approximately 4,000 Cherokees died.

Sparkman also spoke about fellow Boatswain's Mate James E. Williams, Medal of Honor recipient and the Navy's most highly decorated enlisted man in history, namesake of USS James E. Williams (DDG 95) and a Cherokee from South Carolina.

"At the time, BM1 Williams was in Vietnam, and he was in charge of River Patrol Boat 105. He was searching out Viet Cong and navigating through rivers and channels where it was difficult for larger boats to get through. That is when he was ambushed by 64 Viet Cong small boats and fought them for three hours under heavy gunfire. He called for support from helicopters, and when help arrived he positioned himself to help illuminate the enemy's forces. As a result, over 50 Viet Cong boats were destroyed and a major enemy logistic operation was disrupted."

BMC Michael Sparkman addresses attendees at a Native American Heritage Month celebration hosted by CFAY's multi-cultural committee in the C-2 auditorium Nov. 18.

President Barack Obama stated in a presidential proclamation that this month, we celebrate the rich heritage and myriad contributions of American Indians and Alaska Natives, and we rededicate ourselves to supporting tribal sovereignty, tribal self-determination and prosperity for all Native Americans.

Obama also said that American Indians and Alaska Natives bravely fought to protect this legacy as members of our Armed Forces.

As service members, they have shown exceptional valor and heroism on battlefields from the American Revolution to Iraq and Afghanistan.

According to the Bureau of Indian Affairs, U.S. Department of the Interior, the path to Native American Heritage Month started with Dr. Arthur C. Parker, who was a proponent of American Indian Day. Parker persuaded the Boy Scouts of America to set aside a day for the "First Americans."

In 1915, the annual Congress of the American Indian formally approved a plan concerning American Indian Day and Rev. Sherman Coolidge, an Arapahoe, issued a proclamation on Sept. 28, 1915, which declared the second Saturday of each May as an American Indian Day and contained the first formal appeal for recognition of Indians as citizens.

Eventually, in 1990 President George H. W. Bush approved a joint resolution designating November 1990 National American Indian Heritage Month.

USS Fitzgerald hosts Manila Declaration signing

By MC3 Andrew Ryan Smith and Lt. j.g. Matthew Kleine,
***USS Fitzgerald* Public Affairs**

MANILA – The Guided-Missile Destroyer *USS Fitzgerald* (DDG 62) hosted the signing of the Manila Declaration Nov. 16 in commemoration of the 60th Anniversary of the Philippines-U.S. Mutual Defense Treaty.

Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, Ambassador Harry Thomas, Philippine Secretary of Foreign Affairs Albert del Rosario and Philippine Secretary of National Defense Voltaire Gazmin signed the joint declaration onboard *Fitzgerald* while docked in Manila Bay. The signing was witnessed by a U.S. delegation of senior State and Defense Department officials along with numerous Philippine elected officials, military leadership and community leaders.

The declaration states "The Republic of the Philippines and the United States of America today commemorate the 60th anniversary of the Philippines-U.S. Mutual Defense Treaty. On this historic occasion, we reflect on the rich history of our alliance and the continuing relevance of the treaty for peace, security, and prosperity in the Asia-Pacific region. We also reaffirm the treaty as the foundation of our relationship for the next 60 years and beyond."

Fitzgerald was specially selected for this momentous occasion due to her recent experience working with the Philippine Navy. Over the past summer, *Fitzgerald* transited with BRP Gregorio del Pilar, the flagship of the Philippine Navy, on her maiden voyage across the Pacific. The two ships cross-decked personnel and held training sessions for 16 days on joint maritime operations. By the end of the transit, the officers and crews of both ships achieved new levels of proficiency and partnership.

After the signing of the declaration, Secretary Clinton addressed the attendees and crew, praising the long standing alliance between the two countries and suggested that the bond between the two nations will only continue to increase in importance as Asia continues its rapid growth.

Thanking the ship for hosting the event and their efforts to strengthen the US-Philippine alliance, Secretary Clinton stated "it is great to be aboard a fine ship like the *Fitzgerald*. I would like to say thank you on behalf of all Americans. The greatest honor of my life has been to work with those who defend our freedom."

Fitzgerald is one of seven destroyers assigned to Destroyer Squadron 15, forward-deployed to Yokosuka Japan and has patrolled the entire western Pacific region this year, sailing to Australia, the Marshall Islands, Guam, Russia, and then Saipan before arriving in Manila.

U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton is greeted by *USS Fitzgerald* (DDG 62) Commanding Officer Cmdr. Brian T. Mutty, as she arrives aboard the ship docked in Manila Bay Nov. 16. Secretary Clinton and Philippine Secretary for Foreign Affairs Albert del Rosario signed the Manila Declaration, a joint declaration commemorating the 60th Anniversary of the Philippine-U.S. Mutual Defense Treaty, onboard Fitzgerald on Nov. 16.

U.S. Navy photo by MC3 Andrew Ryan Smith

INSIDE

Lassen Sailors participate in Thailand flood relief efforts

Sailors from *USS Lassen* (DDG 82) assisted in flood relief assistance efforts at the Thai Red Cross Central Distribution Center in Bangkok.

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Had one too many? Taxi voucher gets you home safely

The Taxi Voucher Program on board Commander Fleet Activities Yokosuka (CFAY) has restarted and will run from now through Jan. 15.

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