FISC, DDYJ, JMSDF pound in new year with Japanese tradition

By Blake Vives, CFAY Public Affairs

The Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force (JMSDF), Defense Distribution Depot Yokosuka, Japan (DDYJ) and U.S Fleet and Industrial Supply Center (FISC) Yokosuka pounded in the new year with a mochi pounding ceremony (*mochitsuki*) at the JMSDF ship supply depot.

According to FISC interpreter and translator Toshiyuki Ito, the joint celebration served to enhance the relationship between the two organizations and increase understanding between the two cultures.

"For both organizations to enjoy mochi pounding, I think it creates a great opportunity to meet each other and have fun," said Ito.

Mochi is created by pounding glutinous rice into a paste with a wooden mallet while a second person turns and wets it. Originally only eaten during the new year, mochi is now eaten throughout the year in a variety of forms including sweets and even ice cream.

(Left) FISC Commanding Officer Capt. Michael J. Arnold and Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force Director of Logistics Planning and Supplies Division Capt. Masao Hosoya pound glutinous rice at a joint mochi pounding ceremony.

Photo by Yohsuke Onda

"Mochi pounding has a long history," said Ito. It started maybe 1,000 years ago and today it's the biggest part of the celebration of the new year in Japan."

DDYJ Commanding Officer Cmdr. Paul J. Bourgeois, had the privilege of leading the event toast or *kanpai*.

"I have been told that this long established *mochitsuki* tradition has become a valuable and rare experience in today's modern society; so, to be invited to this is truly an honor. I am sure everyone here will remember this as a highlight of their cultural experiences in Japan," said Bourgeois.

FISC Fuel Department Director Lt. Cmdr. Matt Holman anticipated experiencing mochi pounding first hand.

"I had heard about mochi pounding for the last few years since I checked on board and I was curious to see what it was actually like in person. It was very festive and a great exchange of cultures, more than I expected," said Holman.

Holman felt the joint mochi pounding ceremony increased his appreciation for Japanese culture.

"I had a really good time and I just gained an enhanced appreciation of the Japanese culture and the wonderful people and the wonderful traditions that are a part of this great country," said Holman.

FISC customer service representative Ship's Serviceman 1st Class (SW/AW) Showandra Williams, who participated in a demonstration of traditional Mexican dancing at the celebration, said it is important to share our own culture and familiarize ourselves with our host nation's culture.

"I feel it is very important to share our culture because in order for us to know each other we need to know what the things that we do mean. We can't understand each other if we don't share our culture," said Williams.

(Right) Yoshino Fujita, of the FISC command evaluation team asks Lt. j.g. Noboru Hirai of the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force about the type and origin of the wood used to make the bowl or *usu,* which the mochi is pounded in.

Photo by Blake Vives

The ceremony also left a lasting impression with FISC program resource analyst Sherri Thomas.

"Words cannot describe how I feel about being at this ceremony," said Thomas. "This is a first for me and any first time experience in Japan is always enlightening. It's a good experience, one I won't ever forget."

Knowledge key to supporting forward-deployed naval forces

By Blake Vives, CFAY Public Affairs

U.S. Fleet and Industrial Supply Center (FISC) Yokosuka hosted a Yokosuka Logistics Support Conference locally Dec. 11 for forward-deployed naval forces (FDNF) in Japan.

Ships' supply officers, leading chief petty officers and supply petty officers attended the conference to learn how FISC Yokosuka and Naval Supply Systems Command (NAVSUP) support the fleet.

FDNF supply officers also had the opportunity to voice their concerns, ask questions and even orchestrate future supply support planning to ensure their ships' logistics needs are met.

"This conference was an excellent opportunity for me to actually interface with many of the logistics experts from the western pacific area of responsibility under one roof," said *USS Fitzgerald* (DDG 62) Supply Officer Lt. Mark Milius. "We get outstanding support from the FISC Yokosuka enterprise and [at the Yokosuka Logistics Support Conference] we learned just how much they work with the other agencies to provide outstanding support to the fleet."

Conference speaker Ray Denny, FISC logistics support team supervisor, said the purpose of the conference was not only to provide updated information but also to establish a dialogue with the ships' supply community, placing emphasis on new supply officers.

"FISC Yokosuka and the logistics support representatives (LSR) are an extended arm of the ships' supply departments 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. We go wherever the forward-deployed naval forces go," said Denny.

USS Stethem (DDG 63) Supply Officer Lt. Steven Peters said the conference allowed him to put a face to the names he has been in contact with by e-mail while on deployment. "A number of the folks in this room made my deployment a success, no matter where we were operating; now I have the opportunity to say thanks to many of them," said Peters.

The new Navy standard core menu was one of the many topics highlighted at the conference. Jerry Hicks of Coastal Pacific Food Distributors announced that a new menu was implemented on Dec. 1 for FDNF ships in Yokosuka and Sasebo. The new catalog and available inventory of subsistence items carried by Coastal Pacific puts ships homeported in Japan on the same menu plan as state side units.

Marines of Semper Fi Society send 'thanks' to community for generosity

By Blake Vives, CFAY Public Affairs

This holiday season the Semper Fi Society collected more than 2,500 donations of new toys for less-fortunate children, the largest Toys for Tots drive to date on Yokosuka Naval Base.

(Left) Staff Sgt. Allan B. Cayabyab and Gunnery Sgt. Maurice A. Williams deliver toys collected through the Yokosuka Toys for Tots program to the Bahay Puso Apostolate Foundation Inc. children's home in Balanga City, Bataan Philippines, Dec. 16.

Photo by Rey Soriano

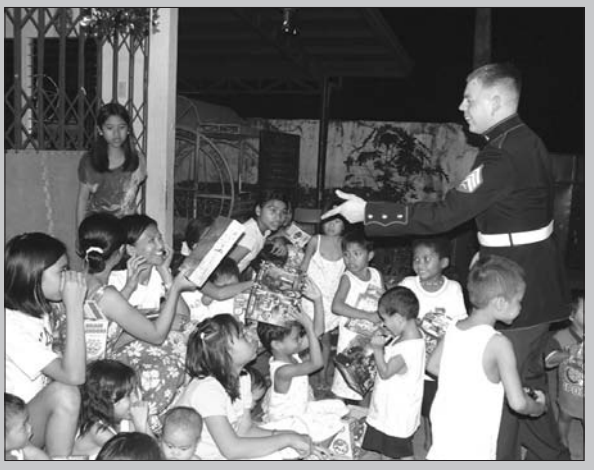
"Christmas is about giving and the Yokosuka Naval Base community gave a lot this year, making Christmas morning a surprising joy for thousands of less-fortunate children in Asia," said Semper Fi Society member Sgt. Jeremy J. Galvan.

The Semper Fi Society delivered the toys to less-fortunate children in the Philippines, Thailand, Korea, Africa, Afghanistan and many local Japanese orphanages and hospitals.

"We exceeded our goal by providing toys to five countries in addition to Japan. We added Africa half way through the toy drive because the community asked if it was possible," said Semper Fi Society President Gunnery Sgt. Maurice A. Williams.

"Delivering the toys in person really put the whole Toys for Tots drive in perspective. The kids really appreciated the idea of having toys they could hold, play with and ask the Marines to play with them in their own way," said Williams.

Semper Fi Society volunteer Staff Sgt. Allan B. Cayabyab was inspired by his interaction with the children while delivering toys this year and says he looks forward to participating in the campaign next year. "This was my first year [participating] in the Toys for Tots campaign.



(Right) Sgt. Jeremy Galvan delivers toys to the Missionaries of Charity children's home in Olongapo City, Zambales Philippines, Dec. 12.

Photo by Rey Soriano

The opportunity to see the smiles on the children's faces made me feel happy and I am ready to go for next year's toy drive," said Cayabyab.

According to Williams, the six Marines of the Semper Fi Society hope to expand community involvement and collect more than 3,000 toys next year.