Japanese *Shirobai* conduct advanced motorcycle training

(Right) A Japanese motorcycle police officer directs local motorcyclists to line up in preparation for a slow-speed balance and control exercise during the annual *Shirobai* training held at U.S. Army Garrison Yokohama North Dock July 2.

Story and photo by Mark Elrod, CFAY Public Affairs

Japanese *Shirobai* (motorcycle police) White Angels and White Knights teamed up with Cape Fox professional services instructors to hold advanced motorcycle training at U.S. Army Garrison Yokomama North Dock July 2.

The White Angels and White Knights are a group of Japanese motorcycle police who, in addition to serving as law enforcement officers, travel throughout Japan teaching, or giving demonstrations of, advanced motorcycle riding techniques that they sometimes are required to use in the performance of their jobs.

Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) sponsored personnel are required to complete basic rider course (BRC), experienced rider course (ERC) motorcycle courses prior to being permitted to ride a motorcyclein Japan.

However, according to Motorcycle Safety Foundation RiderCoach Randy Mills, who works for Cape Fox corporation and teaches the BRC, ERC and sport-bike rider courses to SOFA status personnel, the techniques the Shirobai teach are a little different from the courses they teach to SOFA personnel.

"What we teach is governed by MSF, the Motorcycle Safety Foundation, that's the curriculum that we use," said Mills.

According to the MSF website, the "foundation is the internationally recognized developer of the comprehensive, research-based, Rider Education and Training System (MSF RETS). RETS curricula promotes lifelong-learning for motorcyclists and continuous professional development for certified "RiderCoaches" and other trainers."

The techniques that the *Shirobai* teach help promote the "lifelong-learning" that "RiderCoaches" and motorcyclists undergo.

"We do [the course] to enhance some skills, said Mills, "They have some different techniques that they teach [from what] we teach in our BRC."

According to Mills, the *Shirobai* employ different techniques for swerving, weaving and emergency stops.

"They do braking differently. When they need to do an emergency stop, they don't pull the clutch in... they use both brakes and the engine to slow down and at the last second [before the engine dies] they pull the clutch in. That's the technique that they use and you can stop a lot quicker [with that technique]," he said.

"It's one of the techniques that they teach, but we don't," Mills added. "It's something that doesn't come easy because you're used to doing it the other way and it takes a little bit of practice [to get it right]."

Another technique the *Shirobai* taught was "trail breaking," which involves the use of the rear break to help control the bike in turns.

"Trail breaking really stabilizes the bike," said MSF RiderCoach Wendel Dunn. "Using the rear brake, trail breaking, when you are going into a curve, leans the bike over more and puts it tighter into the curve."

Participants also learned, highly important, cornering skills during the event.

"The cornering exercises help folks to develop their corner skills," said Dunn. "That's one of the biggest skills that riders need... with a lot of people involved in crashes, that's one of the lacking skills."

In addition to the cornering skills, participants learned to balance and control their bikes while navigating obstacle courses at extremely low speeds.

"The slow speed exercises help them in [stop-and-go] traffic, because you are not always going 30, 40 or 50 clicks (kilometers per hour), and you are just kind of putting along," said Dunn.

The *Shirobai* training for military personnel and Department of Defense civilians is held annually. Contact Cape Fox Professional Services at 243-2370 for more information about future Shirobai courses.

Boy Scout Troop 35 selected best of 2010 following camping trip

By Dan Bowen, CFAY Public Affairs

Yokosuka Boy Scouts Troop 35 spent the week of June 19 – 26 camping at the Boy Scout Summer Camp at the Tama Hills Recreation Area and came home selected as the Honor Troop – the best out of the 17 Boy Scout troops based in the Japan Region. This year was especially meaningful to the scouts involved as this year marks the 100th anniversary of the establishment of the Boy Scouts of America.

The camp, organized by the Boy Scouts' Far East Council Japan District, brings Scouts from all over the Far East together to meet one another, learn and compete in a variety of areas in true scouting tradition.

Scouts were able to participate and earn merit badges in a multitude of activities including hiking, rifle shooting, archery, wilderness survival, orienteering, bugling, environmental science, horsemanship and more.

"During summer camp, I'd say the coolest thing was shooting rifles," said 14 year-old Joey Marino, who was also selected as Troop 35 honor scout. "It's a lot of fun. Some people might not think its cool, but it helps out a lot. At first it's tough but you learn a lot from it and after a while it gets to be a lot of fun. I would definitely recommend people to join scouts."

It wasn't all fun and games for the boys though. The scouts had to work hard to earn the best troop in Japan moniker. In addition to meeting basic requirements, such as bringing more than half of their troop members to the event and earning new qualifications, the troop had to show their mettle and discipline they had developed throughout the year setting up and maintaining their campsite and identifying and completing a community service project during the week.

"We did a community service project which was at our campsite. We were located in a place that was always muddy and we wondered why it was always that way," said Troop 35 Scout Master Rome De Las Alas. "It turned out that the drainage it was supposed to have was a ditch. But the ditch was about 50 yards long, a foot deep and a foot wide - all filled in with mud."

The boys joined forces with Troop 13 from Ikego to dig out all the mud from the ditch helping to restore the drainage system. The restored site not only benefitted the scouts during their trip, it will benefit every other camper that visits the site for years to come. The real lessons of the camp, however, were the team-work and unity that brought the Scouts together to achieve success.

"One of the requirements to make honor troop was to have other troops assist you or for you to assist other troops. We had outstanding help from Troop 13 from Ikego and Okinawa," said De Las Alas.

The deeds of Troop 35 were enough to make everyone involved proud, but according to De Las Alas the true measure of a good scout is determined by the way they handle themselves in everyday situations.

"We have a program where you're going to learn something and people are going to be there for you," said De Las Alas. "Most of it is attitude, an ability to learn and an ability to give back – to help other people at all times."

Scouts from Troop 35 Yokosuka gather near their campsite during Boy Scout Summer Camp at the Tama Hills Recreation Area June 26. The troop was selected as the best of the 17 Boy Scout troops in Japan after the week-long trip. This year was especially meaningful to the scouts involved as this year marks the 100th anniversary of the establishment of the Boy Scouts of America.

Photo by Troop 35 Scout Master Rome De Las Alas