Warrior-diplomat Commodore Perry honored, remembered

By Bill Doughty,
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In conjunction with the Aug. 16 launching of the Navy's newest underway replenishment ship, USNS Matthew Perry (T-AKE 9), the U.S. Pacific Fleet Commander used his weekly Rat-Pac Report podcast to speak about the achievements of the ship's namesake, Commodore Matthew C. Perry.

Adm. Robert F. Willard recognized Perry in his podcast and blog as a warrior-diplomat who influenced world history in the 19th century.

"Commodore Perry fought in the War of 1812," Willard said. "He commanded our first steam warship, the USS Fulton, and he's also credited with organizing our first Naval Engineer Corps. Those alone would have, I think, caused us to revere him in naval history, but he went on to do much more.

"In 1822, Commodore Perry was credited for suppressing piracy and slave trade in the West Indies. He went on to command USS Mississippi in the Mexican-American War, and in 1853, he sailed to Japan, arrived in a small fishing village port named Kurihama, very near Yokosuka Naval Base.

"Every year in Kurihama, they celebrate the arrival of Commodore Perry and his ships, and they credit Commodore Perry for opening Japan to western trade, something that the Japanese believe was a turning point in their history, to take them out of a very internalized society and many, many centuries of internal war and allow them to focus on trade with the outside."

Perry returned to Japan in 1854 and signed the Treaty of Kanagawa.

Several Japanese cities in addition to Kurihama, most notably Tokyo and Shimoda, commemorate the opening of Japan to international trade. Each year, U.S. Sailors and their families are invited to participate in parades and reenactment ceremonies that celebrate friendship and cooperation in honor of Perry.

Commander Fleet Activities Yokosuka Sailors dressed like the official party of Commodore Matthew C. Perry's arrival to Japan, march in the Tokyo Jidai Matsuri Parade in Asakusa, Tokyo. The Tokyo Jidai Matsuri celebrates the history of Tokyo, starting from the beginning of the Edo period to the westernization of Japan following the arrival of Commodore Matthew C. Perry and his fleet of black ships.
U.S. Navy file photo by MCSN Charles Oki

At Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni, Japan, M.C. Perry School has educated children of service members stationed in Japan since 1955, starting as the "American Dependents School," but taking its present name in 1957.

At Commander Fleet Activities Yokosuka, the Commodore Matthew C. Perry General Mess dining facility recently won five-star accreditation from the Naval Supply Systems Command for the 11th straight year.

USNS Matthew Perry, launched in San Diego, is a combat logistics force ship that will help the Navy maintain global forward presence. She will deliver fuel, ammunition, food and other dry cargo to U.S. and allied ships at sea and can support multi-mission capabilities.

Hester Evans broke a bottle of champagne in a traditional christening ceremony as the ship was launched. Evans is the great-great-great-granddaughter of Commodore Perry.

"We will remember him in the Pacific forever," said Willard, regarding Perry. "I would suggest that our Navy should have Commodore Perry in its thoughts, in a place of honor, for his many contributions."

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"Secondly, the secondary attacks are an SOP (standard operating procedure) for terrorists aimed to lure and kill more first responders and civilians. I am very concerned that as first responders we are not prepared to respond to and operate at these terrorist attacks and the new combat-like arena, furthering the catastrophic damage. It also brings home 9/11 to me all over again.

Additionally, he worked in Puerto Rico during Hurricane Hugo relief in 1989, the Humberto Vidal collapse in 1997, in the Dominican Republic during Hurricane George relief in 1989, and other emergencies and disasters, domestically and internationally.

Fuentes, a proud American citizen who was originally born in Guayaquil, Ecuador, currently consults for Oak Ridge National Laboratory (Department of Energy) and Homeland Security.

He has been awarded a United States Patent for a camera and computer based monitoring system that monitors a building wall and triggers an alarm if there is a discrepancy.

He has written for various emergency magazines as well as his first book "*American By Choice.*"

Fuentes also served as an instructor for the FDNY and the United States Fire Academy in Emmitsburg, Md.

"I have been given many accolades after 9/11. However, to stand before what I believe is the best that America has to offer, our military men and women, that this is one of the greatest honors I have received," he said. "Their love of country, commitment, sacrifices and their pledge to humanity makes me understand that we are a 'brotherhood' along with the uniformed first responders that gave so much of themselves on Sept. 11, 2001 in order to assist their fellow citizens in need. We wear a similar uniform for our beloved country."

According to Fuentes, paying homage to those who died during the events of Sept. 11 is an extremely important thing to do.

"We must never forget 9/11 or any other terrorist acts that have occurred," said Fuentes. "We must always remember the tremendous sacrifices that were made for our freedom, and our American way of life. Not forgetting would keep us better informed and more importantly better prepared to deal with the next terrorist event. Emergency response is a product of preparedness, thereby minimizing mass casualties not only in lives saved, but in economic damage caused to America and globally as well.

"By remembering and being better prepared we are doing justice to the sacrifices that have been made by our first responders and our military personnel."

The CFAY Sept. 11 Remembrance Day ceremony will be held at 10 a.m. at the Chapel of Hope. Contact RPC(SW) Lisa Wimbush at 243-6773 for more information.

Safety manager receives award

CFAY Commanding Officer Capt. Daniel Weed poses with CFAY Safety Manager Kristin Hamon after presenting the Civilian Meritorious Service Award to her during a farewell luncheon held in her honor at the Safety Office Aug. 19.
Photo by Kevin McDonald