



**NAVAL BASE POINT LOMA
Public Affairs Office**



PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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BATTLE OF SAN DIEGO BAY ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

SAN DIEGO, CA (March 22, 2009) - Naval Base Point Loma (NBPL) partnered with the Fort Guijarros Museum foundation and the Case de España en San Diego to host the 206th anniversary commemoration ceremony on the occasion of the "Battle of San Diego Bay" where the American brig "Lelia Byrd" exchanged cannon fire with the Spanish at Fort Guijarros (located on NBPL). Spanish and City of San Diego officials attended the ceremony including Ambassador Inocencio Arias, Cónsul General of Spain in Los Angeles and General Fernando Lopez de Castro, Spanish Army. Captain Paul Marconi, Commanding Officer Naval Base Point Loma, delivered opening remarks for the event and Ronald V. May, Chairman and Director Fort Guijarros Museum Foundation provided the keynote address.

Following the ceremony at the original Fort Guijarros site on Naval Base Point Loma, a fiesta was held featuring Spanish music and dancing and traditional Spanish food including Paella and Chorizo. The history and culture rich event attracted over 400 members from the San Diego community as well as many Sailors and their families. The Battle of San Diego bay was a fun event for the entire family.

This celebration commemorates the battle between the Spanish and Americans on San Diego Bay, over the purchase of sea otter pelts. In 1803, the American brig, Lelia Byrd, anchored in San Diego Bay, off the coast of, then Spanish-controlled, California, to request permission to buy provisions for its crew, in which Spanish Commandant, Don Manuel Rodriguez, granted permission.

During this visit, Captain William Shaler sent a boat crew, from the Lelia Byrd, to shore to purchase illegal black-market pelts. During the crew's second trip for pelts, they were captured and arrested by the Spanish. Captain William Shaler and armed crewmen rescued their captured men the next morning, along with Spanish guards to be used as hostages, and returned to the Lelia Byrd. Upon attempting to exit San Diego Bay, the Lelia Byrd came under heavy fire from the mighty cannons of Fort Guijarros. Though

damaged, Lelia Byrd managed to escape. But prior to departing, Captain William Shaler released the Spanish guards that were being held as hostages, at what is now known as Point Loma. This was the only Spanish and American ship to shore battle in California.

Captain Paul Marconi noted, “The event was a wonderful celebration of our common history and heritage with Spain, an outstanding opportunity for cultural exchange and enrichment, and a just plain and simple great way to enjoy an afternoon of fine food and music with the San Diego community.”

NBPL