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## USS Jacksonville Returns to Pearl Harbor

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The Los Angeles-class submarine USS Jacksonville (SSN 699) returned to Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam after completing a scheduled deployment to the Western Pacific region Dec. 2.

Jacksonville originally left Pearl Harbor June 2, with 135 Sailors on board, many of which were experiencing their first Navy deployment.

Jacksonville Sailors returned with a wealth of submarine experience and advanced qualifications - 34 enlisted and two officers completed their submarine warfare qualifications. The crew showed off their new dolphins and ribbons as they reunited with families and friends that had gathered on the pier.

"Jacksonville Sailors exceeded expectations for every mission we were assigned, whether it was fostering maritime partnerships with regional allies, participating in exercises that supported theater security cooperation, or simply representing the U.S. Navy while on liberty, the crew was spectacular," said Cmdr. Tyler Meador, commanding officer of Jacksonville.

During the deployment, Jacksonville conducted independent operations, participated in Exercise Cooperation Afloat Readiness and Training (CARAT) 2010, and the crew enjoyed port visits to Singapore, Japan, Malaysia and Guam.

"Jacksonville is approaching 30 years of commissioned service, but this crew takes pride in maintaining the boat mission ready," said Senior Chief Fire Control Technician (SS) Joseph Bransfield, who has been on several Western Pacific deployments throughout his career. "We achieved an 85 percent operational tempo, meaning when we were needed, we were ready."

During CARAT 2010 Singapore, a bilateral exercise with the Republic of Singapore Navy,

involving surface combatants, marine patrol aircraft, diesel and nuclear submarines, Jacksonville participated in an unprecedented number of diverse and complex activities which vastly improved the ability of both navies to operate together.

A port visit to Yokosuka, Japan, provided unique opportunities for the crew. Jacksonville was hosted by the Japanese submarine JS Yaeshio, who sponsored a picnic and several wildly entertaining games of softball between the two crews. Many Sailors took the train up to Tokyo to experience a day in one of the largest cities in the world and several participated in a Moral, Welfare and Recreation day-trip to climb Mount Fuji.

"We started early in the morning and the hiking was hard, but the scenery and the view from the summit was incredible," said Culinary Specialist Seaman (SS) Daniel Stiller, about his day on Mount Fuji. "You wouldn't expect it, but at the top was a small stand that everyone bought Ramen noodles from; they tasted great after climbing most of the day."

While in Yokosuka, a special visit by Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy (SS/SW) Rick West ended with one crew member, Electronic Technician 3rd Class (SS) Derrick Zulick, being presented his submarine qualification pin, or "dolphins."

"Getting my dolphins from the top enlisted man in the Navy was really special," Zulick remarked. "And once the pictures were posted on his Facebook page the next day, everyone knew about it."

Jacksonville was privileged to conduct a four-day visit to the Kota Kinabalu Naval Base in Malaysia, being only the third U.S. submarine to visit the rapidly growing city on the coast of Borneo. While moored at Kota Kinabalu Naval Base, Jacksonville hosted the Royal Malaysian Navy (RMN) staff and provided tours for more than 200 RMN personnel, local officials, business owners and their families. Also while there, Sailors repainted the Bukit Harapan-Therapeutic Community Center and entertained more than 40 children living at the orphanage. Moved by their experience, the crew took a collection and donated more than \$1,000 to support the care and education of the children.

As Jacksonville departed Malaysia, an underway orientation was conducted for two admirals and senior staff members from the RMN submarine force. This event provided the first U.S. submarine experience for the RMN submarine force that is in its infancy with their first two diesel submarines based at Kota Kinabalu.

"Our Sailors took their roles as ambassadors very seriously," said Lt. Cmdr. Homer Ring, executive officer of Jacksonville. "Giving hundreds of tours of Jacksonville, hosting distinguished visitors, participating in athletic events with host country submarine crews, or simply enjoying liberty overseas, this crew set the standard. Everyone can take pride in how Jacksonville represented the submarine force and the U.S. Navy to our partners around the Pacific."

For Jacksonville, the pace on the homefront was as exciting as being overseas. While deployed the Jacksonville family grew by six, with the birth of three boys and three girls. One Sailor became engaged and another is getting married just days after deployment.

"The success of Jacksonville could not have been possible without the support of our families and friends," said Meador. "I cannot thank enough the efforts of our ombudsman and our Family Readiness Group president. Their incredible hard work and sacrifice helped the deployment go smoother for the families at home and for the Sailors at sea."

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