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SDV Team One salutes fallen heroes

MC3 Paul D. Honnick

Fleet Public Affairs Center Detachment Hawai'i

Members of SEAL Delivery Vehicle Team (SDVT) 1 saluted five of their fallen teammates on the second anniversary of their sacrifice in a commemoration ceremony aboard Battleship Missouri Memorial Missouri (BB 63) on June 28.

Five members of SVDT-1 were killed two years ago while conducting counter-terrorism operations in the Korangal Valley of Afghanistan during Operation Redwing.

The team donated 50 state flags to the battleship in honor of their teammates to be used during all ceremonies held aboard the ship.

Retired Vice Adm. Robert K.U. Kihune, chairman of the Battleship Missouri Memorial, accepted the flags on behalf of the ship.

"Although Missouri's guns are silent today and our new crew no longer can sail this ship in harm's way, we are proud and privileged that besides being a memorial for fallen warriors of years past, we could still provide a platform for the recognition of the honor and commemoration of today's warriors," said Kihune. "The 50 state flags are flown at every memorial ceremony at the Battleship Missouri Memorial to commemorate the outstanding military men and women of all 50 states who have served our nation with valor, honor and distinction," he added.

U.S. Navy photo by IS1 (SW/AW) Scott Deitrich

Retired Vice Adm. Robert K.U. Kihune, chairman of the USS Missouri Memorial, addresses the crowd in front of the 50 state flags dedicated to the World War II battleship during a commemoration ceremony held June 28 for five members of SEAL Delivery Vehicle Team One. The SEALs were killed two years ago while conducting counter-terrorism operations in the Korangal Valley of Afghanistan during Operation Redwing. "The 50 state flags are flown at every memorial ceremony at the Battleship Missouri Memorial to commemorate the outstanding military men and women of all 50 states who have served our nation with valor, honor and distinction," said Kihune of the significance of the dedication.

Lt. Michael P. Murphy of Patchogue, N.Y.; Senior Chief Information Systems Technician (SEAL) Daniel R. Healy of Exeter, N.H.; Quartermaster 2nd Class (SEAL) James E. Suh of Deerfield Beach, Fla.; Sonar Technician Surface 2nd Class (SEAL) Matthew G. Axelson of Cupertino, Calif.; and Machinist's Mate 2nd Class (SEAL) Shane E. Patton of Boulder City, Nev., selflessly gave their lives in service of their country June 28, 2005.

A total of 11 U.S. Navy SEALs, including the five members of SVDT-1 and eight U.S. Army special operations aviators, lost their lives in the engagement.

The deaths of the 11 SEALS represents the single greatest loss during combat to the special operations force since their inception in 1962.

The team's task unit commander of alpha platoon during the mission delivered a powerful and emotional speech of the men who lost their lives to an audience of friends, family and teammates.

"I count myself blessed to have worked with a company of warriors such as these men that we remember today," said the task unit commander, who spoke of the special bond that SEAL teammates have for one another.

"For us, love for one another is true and unconditional. It's not based on friendships or personal relationships; it's simply based on the fact that you are a teammate. Nothing else is required," he said. "Love is what motivated these men to lay down their lives for one another and in return ensure none of them were left behind."

The task unit commander wrapped up his speech by reciting the U.S. Navy SEALs Creed.

"Brave men have fought and died building the proud tradition and feared reputation that I am bound to uphold. In the worst of conditions, the legacy of my teammates steadies my resolve and silently guides my every deed. I will not fail," said the commander.

Hawai'i NEX receives Bingham Award

Story and photo by Scheherezade Roundtree

Navy Exchange Pearl Harbor Marketing

The Hawai'i District Navy Exchange (NEX) at Pearl Harbor was awarded the highest honor among its competitors in the Navy Exchange System when it was named the 2006 Bingham Award winner in the Superstores category, exceeding sales of approximately $200 million.

NEX Pearl Harbor surpassed its initial 2006 sales plan by 3.8 percent ($10.5M) and as of 2005, the Navy Exchange has exceeded the plan by 7.8 percent (20.6M).

First-time Bingham Award recipients, Pacific Missile Range Facility (PMRF) Barking Sands, Kauai also received this honor in the overseas sales category ($3M to $11M). Patricia Huber, branch exchange manager, has been with the Barking Sands exchange for 18 months and in that time, said that she has witnessed the most remarkable effort to come from such a small activity.

Huber attributed the teamwork and camaraderie among her staff, as well as the support of the command, as the driving force in their success. She said, "With winning the Bingham, they [PMRF staff] realize that all their hard work, the stress and struggles they have gone through, the issues they had with customer service - all that has paid off for them. They understand what the Navy Exchange teamwork and assistance is all about and by winning this award, they are winners all the time."

"The command supported us in making sure they assisted with getting products into our store. They also supported our decision on the operations of the PMRF Navy Exchange. Our activity has grown because our customer service has improved in how we try to assist the customer in getting merchandise from a sales flyer or at the special order and that has grown in great leaps and bounds," added Huber.

Michael Cottrell, NEX Hawai'i region district manager, said that he is proud of the teamwork exemplified by all of the Navy Exchange's activities in making this win possible. He said, "The Bingham Award recognizes the results of a lot of effort by a lot of people because people in the Navy Exchange work for this the entire year and it's very competitive. We always have to beat last year's performance and that's always hard to do because our performance has been very good so each year we do better and better."

Cottrell believes that fortitude in fulfilling their mission is the keystone to NEX Pearl Harbor's continued success. "Probably what's really important is that the patrons really benefit because if we pursue excellence and compete for the Bingham Award each year, it really enhances the value of the Navy Exchange. The criteria for winning is providing service to patrons and that's measured by the customer service index and also meeting sales and profit goals. When we meet or exceed all those, then MWR benefits because they get more dividends."

Tess Paquette (far right), senior vice president and chief merchandising officer of Navy Exchange Service Command, congratulates Beverly Hudgins (left), general manager of Hawai'i District Navy Exchange (NEX), and Michael Cottrell (center), NEX Hawai'i region district manager, on winning the 2006 Bingham Award.

"I do think it's a great honor and it does send the message that in the different critical factors, which are really all of the major metrics [on which] you judge a retail and service organization, we are the best. I think it's really important that we celebrate that," noted Beverly Hudgins, general manager of Hawai'i District Navy Exchange. "One comment that we hear over and over, especially from visiting people that go to a lot of exchanges, is how friendly the people are here and how they speak to them when they walk through the store…that is an area that makes us a cut above," she said.

Although NEX Pearl Harbor has won the Bingham Award six times, Hudgins said that she intends to further exceed that record and achieve what she calls a "three-peat" Bingham Award recipient before she retires. "We have won the Bingham two years in a row at different times, but we've never done it three years in a row. The one goal I'd like to make for us is to be a "three-peat" Bingham Award winner."

The Bingham Award program, named after the late Capt. W. H. Bingham, SC, USNR, chief executive officer of the R. H. Macy's Company, was established to recognize excellence in customer service, operations and management at Navy Exchange activities, and to promote friendly competition among Navy Exchange activities striving to promote superior service to Sailors and their families.

U.S. Navy photo by Boatswains Mate 1st Class Chet Mowrey

Family, friends and Littleton city officials view the larger-than-life bronze statue of Gunner"s Mate 2nd Class (SEAL) Danny P. Dietz, who was honored by his hometown of Littleton, Colo. on July 4, by dedicating the statue and park near his childhood family home.

Colorado honors Navy SEAL

Naval Special Warfare Command

Gunner"s Mate 2nd Class (SEAL) Danny P. Dietz was honored July 4, by his hometown of Littleton, Colo., with the dedication of a larger-than-life bronze statue in a park near his childhood family home. Dietz was killed by enemy forces during a combat mission in Afghanistan on June 28, 2005, as part of Operation Red Wing.

The dedication ceremony speakers included the Secretary of the Navy, the Honorable Donald C. Winter; Rear Adm. Joseph Kernan, Commander, Naval Special Warfare Command; United States Congressman Tom Tancredo; Medal of Honor recipient, Petty Officer (SEAL) Mike Thornton; and Tiffany Bitz, Dietz sister. The master of ceremonies was Littleton Mayor Jim Taylor.

"(Danny)…leaves behind a legacy that inspires us today and serves as a shining example of heroism and courage for future generations," said Winter during his remarks. "Years from now, people will look upon this statue and be reminded of the heroism of a son of Colorado whose country he was proud to serve."

An estimated 3,000 people crowded into the new park to honor Dietz under a warm morning sun which raised temperatures to near 90 degrees, but even the heat could not deter the people of Littleton.

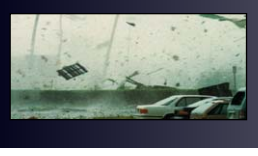
"I am so proud of the people of Littleton for the way they have supported the Dietz family and this sculpture," said Taylor.

Through private donations, the people of Littleton raised more the $42,000 to pay for the sculpture while the city provided the land and surrounding landscaping.

"As a boy, Danny used to play right here in this neighborhood," said Cindy Dietz, Danny"s mother. "When people come down to this park, I want them to remember Danny and all our service men and women who give so

▼ See DIETZ, A-6

USS Reuben James hosts reception for Kauai community See page A-2



Navy emphasizes hurricane preparedness for Navy families See page A-3

SDVT 1 remembers at 'Never Forget' hoolaukanaka See page A-6

Operation Lightning Rescue brings aid to 'victims' See page B-1

Rear Adm. T.G. Alexander, Commander, Navy Region Hawai'i and Commander, Naval Surface Group Middle Pacific, flanked by Cmdr. Rich Haidvogel, commanding officer Reuben James, and Capt. Aaron Cudnohufsky, commanding officer of Pacific Missile Range Facility (PMRF), Barking Sands, Kaua'i, speaks at a reception held on Reuben James' flight deck when the ship visited Kaua'i on June 23.

USS Reuben James hosts reception for Kaua'i community

Story and photo by Ensign Fallon Rossi

USS Reuben James (FFG 57) Public Affairs

On an underway to Kaua'i on June 23, USS Reuben James (FFG 57) hosted a reception for nearly 100 members of the local community. Among the distinguished guests were Rear Adm. T. G. Alexander, Commander, Navy Region Hawai'i and Commander, Naval Surface Group, Middle Pacific, and Capt. Aaron Cudnohufsky, the commanding officer of Pacific Missile Range Facility (PMRF), Barking Sands, Kaua'i.

Other notable guests included the Robinson family, owners of the island of Ni'ihau, and several members of the Kaua'i County Council, Kaua'i Chamber of Commerce and Navy League. Alexander spoke of the reception as a great opportunity for civilians to meet with Sailors in the Navy and learn about what they do. Crew members of the Reuben James stood by to provide tours to the guests who were impressed at the cleanliness of the ship and professionalism of the crew.

Cmdr. Rich Haidvogel, commanding officer of Reuben James, said, "Serving as the reception platform for Commander, Navy Region Hawai'i gave Reuben James Sailors an important opportunity to help tell the 'Navy story' to business and community leaders on Kaua'i. The officers and crew enjoyed showing off their ship and getting a chance to meet new people. It also gave the civilian population a chance to gain increased exposure to the Navy, see what life is like on a warship, and be impressed by just how special our Sailors are."

The reception wasn't the only way that Reuben James reached out to the community. Earlier the same day, Sailors took part in a community relations project to help the county of Kaua'i refurbish a wooden bike path. Information Systems Technician 2nd Class Linh Nguyen, who helped put a sealant on the wooden panels, said it was "good to be able to keep [the path] up and running for the kids."

The trip helped build upon Navy public affairs on Kaua'i and the community and crew had fun doing so. Overall, Haidvogel counted the trip to Kaua'i as "a great success."

Aloha USS Buffalo

Story and photo by MC3 Paul D. Honnick

Fleet Public Affairs Center Detachment Hawai'i

Cmdr. Brian N. Humn, commanding officer of USS Buffalo (SSN 715), addresses the crew of the Los Angeles-class attack submarine during an all-hands call on the pier at Naval Station Pearl Harbor. The submarine and her crew departed Naval Station Pearl Harbor on July 9 permanently for their new homeport in Guam.

Los Angeles-class attack submarine USS Buffalo (SSN 715) and her crew departed Naval Station Pearl Harbor permanently July 9 for her new homeport at Naval Base Guam.

Buffalo will join USS Houston (SSN 713) and USS City of Corpus Christi (SSN 705) as the forward-deployed submarine force in the Pacific.

"We want to have three submarines forward-deployed in Guam. We're a lot closer to areas of concern in the Western Pacific and it gives the commanders in the Pacific another forward-deployed asset that's readily deployable," said Cdr. Brian N. Humm, Buffalo's commanding officer.

"There's a lot of action going on in the Pacific right now and it's important that we have forward-deployed forces that can respond to anything that may come up," said Lt. Cmdr. Caleb Kerr, Buffalo's executive officer.

USS Buffalo was commissioned Nov. 5, 1983 in Norfolk, Va. and was transferred to the Pacific Fleet Submarine Force in 1984. The submarine has been homeported at Naval Station Pearl Harbor ever since.

The crew of approximately 130 participated in an all-hands call followed by a farewell ceremony pier side before depature.

"Some of the families are a little concerned because you're a long way from home, but there are a lot of things to do in Guam. There are good outdoor activities and the Guam communities are very welcoming," said Humm.

Overall, the crew was excited about the move and the opportunities that it provides to see different parts of the world.

"It's going to be a great time out there. Being on the tip of the spear and being in a position to respond to anything that may come up in the western Pacific is a great opportunity," said Kerr.

"I'm actually kind of happy about it. I'll get to meet new people and see different places," said Electronics Technician 3rd Class (SS) Matthew Stober.

"I'm really new to the Buffalo so going to Guam has just given me a lot more to see. I'm looking forward to the move," said Electronics Technician 3rd Class Peter McKeown.

"Right now there's a little fear of the unknown, but less then you think since we were in Guam on deployment and most of the guys have been there," said Humm.

As the submarine made its final preparations for getting underway, the crew took time to say goodbye to their families and friends in Pearl Harbor.

"I'm going to miss [Hawai'i]. I have family here so it's a good reason to be here," said McKeown.

Navy personnel encouraged to take NAVINSGEN survey

Naval Inspector General

A Naval Inspector General (NAVINSGEN) team will be traveling to Hawai'i from Sept. 12-26 to conduct a visit to various naval commands in Hawai'i.

The area visit will commence with two Internet-based personnel surveys that will evaluate command climate and quality of work life.

One survey will target all military and civilian personnel assigned to naval commands located in Hawai'i and the other survey will only address active duty spouses. Each survey takes approximately 10 minutes to complete and must be completed in one session. The "save" and "return later" function will not be available for this survey.

The surveys will be available online beginning for three weeks (July 16-Aug. 3) and can be accessed at: www.ig.navy.mil/nrh.htm. Additionally, all active duty spouses are invited and encouraged to participate in a survey created specifically to obtain the family's perspective. The spouse survey will also be available online from July 16-Aug. 3 and can be accessed at: www.ig.navy.mil/nrhspouse.htm

Participation in this survey is voluntary and responses will be kept anonymous. Because information gathered from this survey is critical in order to accurately capture the concerns of Department of the Navy personnel and facilitate the successful completion of the area visit, all personnel are highly encouraged to participate in this survey.

Hawai'i Navy News Editorial

Navy emphasizes hurricane preparedness for Navy families

Navy Office of Information

Hurricane preparedness should be a continual effort throughout the hurricane season which runs from June 1 to Nov. 30. This year emphasizes family preparedness to include commands accounting for family members.

Preparedness is a continual effort – a prepared Navy is a ready Navy

• To ensure readiness, Sailors and their families should make hurricane preparations now and review those preparations periodically throughout the season.

• Being prepared ensures the Navy is ready to respond to weather threats to U.S. coastal regions and maintain the ability to deploy forces even under the most adverse weather conditions.

• The Navy trains for the hurricane season. The objective of the annual hurricane exercise (HURREX) is to provide a focused training event in exercising sortie, evacuation, emergency preparedness, personnel accountability, recovery, and consequence management procedures.

A Sailor's responsibility – a Sailor is only as prepared as the rest of his family

• During a hurricane, communication is vital between Navy members and their chain of command, as well as between Sailors and their family members.

• Prepare an evacuation plan for spouses and those left behind if units are required to sortie and aircraft have to evacuate.

• Have emergency supplies and materials on hand in advance. Waiting until the last minute can result in shortages. Make arrangements for pets ahead of time.

• Check homes throughout the hurricane season for damage: gutters, storm shutters, roof leaks and missing shingles.

• Monitor radio and television reports as hurricanes can drastically change course and intensity.

• Move indoors or otherwise secure objects to prevent strong winds from creating airborne projectiles.

• Have cash on hand, as well as fuel for a car if needed for evacuation.

• In order to speed up the personnel accountability process, sharing individual evacuation plans with the chain of command is strongly recommended.

• If ordered to evacuate, do so immediately.

The command's responsibility – a commitment to safety, security and accountability of our families

• As partners of the community, the Navy will inform local authorities of actions taken to improve readiness and responsiveness in the event of a hurricane.

• All commands are responsible for implementing, administering and providing training to families on procedures for personnel accountability following a catastrophic event. Timeliness is crucial in personnel accounting, especially in cases with geographically separated families.

• All commands will conduct personnel accountability and family assessments according to geographic areas of interest (GAOI), which are set based on storm tracks. GAOIs will be established a minimum of 48 hours prior to landfall if storm intensity and location warrant execution of personnel accountability procedures.

• As storms approach, OPNAV N1 will release a NAVADMIN order to account for personnel based on the GAOI.

• Information packets on how to prepare families will be strategically located at personnel support detachments, commissaries, base housing offices, and fleet and family service Centers.

• The Navy family and accountability and assessment system is located at https://www.navyfamily.navy.mil.

Letter to the Editor

The Navy Exchange at Pearl Harbor wishes to express its sincere apology to those who patronized the Navy Exchange on Saturday, July 7, for any inconvenience customers may have experienced. The Navy Exchange recognizes that its customer service level on the "Lucky 7 Scratch Card" day was not what customers expect and not to its own standards. The lines were too long and the merchandise was depleted. The Navy Exchange did not have enough staff to handle the large volume of business experienced and, quite frankly, was taken by complete surprise.

For the first time, the scratch card event lasted for one day only. The Navy Exchange anticipated a high volume of business, but did not expect over 21,000 customers to respond. Furthermore, NEX Pearl Harbor did not expect its business to be greater than a Saturday in mid-December, which it was. In fact, the Navy Exchange did not have the staff of sufficient size at this time of year to efficiently process such a large crowd.

The Navy Exchange at Pearl Harbor shares this with patrons because this organization hates to disappoint. The NEX always values customer feedback and encourages customers to complete comment cards when they shop the NEX and share their experience. The Navy Exchange strives to exceed patron's expectations whenever they shop the Navy Exchange and will continue to work very hard to do this in the future. One lesson learned from this experience is that a scratch card event should cover at least three shopping days. This would allow customers greater latitude and allow to better serve its patrons. NEX Pearl Harbor thanks customers for their understanding and support.

Michael Cottrell
Navy Exchange Hawai'i Region, district manager

This week in History at Pearl Harbor

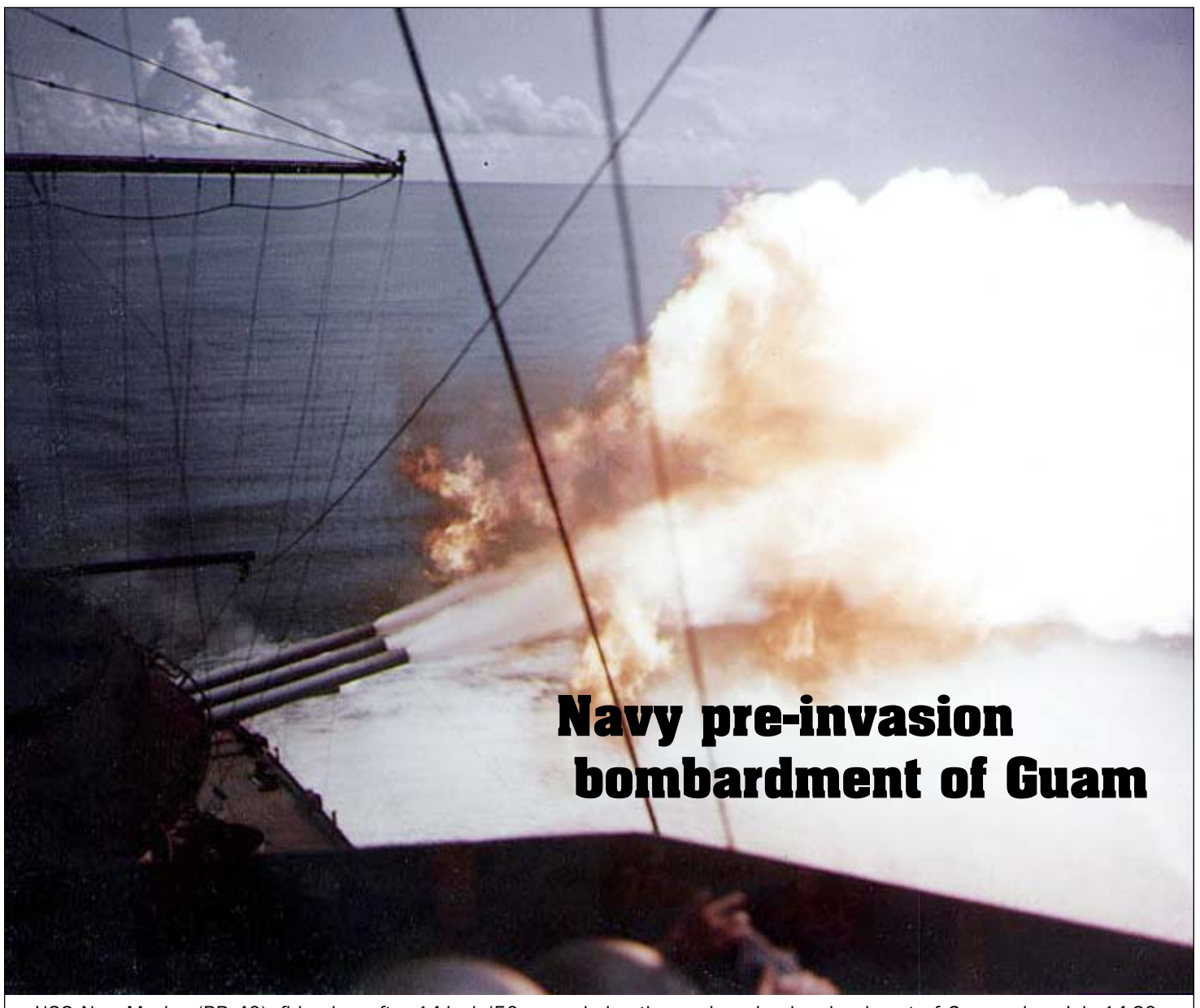
From the Pearl Harbor Banner – July 14, 1944:

• The bus fare for CHA3's Roger Paine type buses was cut from 10 cents to five cents one way. The buses, in operation for two years, furnished mass transportation for workers to and from the Navy Yard. At the time, the buses carried approximately 300,000 passengers a month –according to the article, "as many passengers as there are residents on the island of Oahu." The article also noted, "In all the thousands of miles that the buses have traveled, there has never been a serious accident and not a single life has been lost."

• "This Land Is Mine," starring Charles Laughton and Maureen O'Hara, was showing at the outdoor theater on July 13. The film was a 1943 war drama set in Nazi-occupied France. It won the 1944 Academy Award for Best Sound, Recording and set a record for gross opening receipts when it opened on May 7, 1943.

• Civilian war workers of the Pearl Harbor area and all Seabees in the district were invited to enter the first dual amateur boxing tournament sponsored in one ring by the Navy Athletic Association. The article said that the competition would be held in "two divisions, one of which will include civilians and the other only Seabees. The story continued: "Each entry will be awarded a pair of jockey satin, monogrammed boxing trunks and the winners will receive the official Navy boxing robe."

William Franklin Draper art courtesy of Naval Historical Center



USS New Mexico (BB 40), firing her after 14-inch/50 guns during the pre-invasion bombardment of Guam, circa July 14-20, 1944. Taken by a Combat Photo Unit Two (CPU-2) photographer, looking aft along the port side from the forward sky lookout position.

Official U.S. Navy photograph, now in the collections of the National Archives

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Commander, Navy Region Hawai'i
Rear Adm. T. G. Alexander
Chief of Staff, Navy Region Hawai'i
Capt. Taylor Skardon
Director, Public Affairs - Agnes Tauyan
Deputy Public Affairs officer - Terri Kojima
Managing Editor - MCC (SW/AW) David Rush
Leading Petty Officer -
MC1 (AW/SW) James Foehl
Editor - Karen Spangler
Staff Writer - MC3 Michael A. Lantron
Technical Adviser - Joe Novotny
Layout/Design - Tony Verceluz

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USS Russell trains Sea Cadets

Story and photo by Ensign Theresa Donnelly

USS Russell (DDG 59) Public Affairs

The Navy League Sea Cadets Corp and the Naval Sea Cadet Corp from the Battleship Missouri Memorial chapter recently celebrated an important milestone in their young lives by successfully completing recruit training with a little assistance from USS Russell (DDG 59) Sailors June 22.

The Russell has been the "sister ship" to the Missouri chapter since February. "It really means a lot to have a front line destroyer for sponsorship," said Capt. Bob Kennedy, commanding officer of recruit training.

The Sea Cadet program, founded in 1958, works with the Department of the Navy to train and mold young cadets, teaching them the Navy Corp values and fostering within them a sense of pride and responsibility. Children ages 11-13 join the Navy League cadet program while those ages 13-17 enter the Naval Sea Cadet Corps.

Throughout the program, children gain valuable leadership skills and learn the basics of ship handling that is similar to the training that enlisted recruits and freshman in the Naval Academy must learn. The guidance that they receive in the Sea Cadet program is invaluable as it can accelerate their initial recruit advancement or can also be a stepping-stone to entrance into the military service academies and the Recruit Officer Training Corp (ROTC).

The program enjoys recognition on a national level with endorsements by many high ranking Navy officials, including Deputy Secretary of Defense and former Secretary of the Navy Gordon England and former Master Chief Petty Officer of the Coast Guard Vince Patton, a former Sea Cadet.

Boatswain's Mate 1st Class Morrice Compton teaches Navy League Sea Cadets about deck equipment onboard the Battleship Missouri Memorial as part of the recruits' 12-day training June 22.

The 12-day boot camp gave the children a crash course in military training that will augment their twice-monthly training that takes place on the Battleship Missouri Memorial. The 21 cadets split into two companies with leading and assistant leading petty officers (LPO) in charge of the respective Alpha and Bravo companies. The LPOs were senior cadets that helped to train and mentor the junior cadets. Additionally, a staff of 10 parents and staff instructors lived with and taught the cadets throughout the program. Russell's Chief Electronics Technician Rick Davis spent a week at the Ford Island barracks instructing the students.

"The program really gives them a great introduction to the Navy," said Davis. "It gives them structure, discipline and organization."

The cadets had unprecedented access to many different organizations and commands throughout the training. A typical day started with an early morning wakeup followed by mandatory physical training. Barracks rooms were inspection ready each day.

After a morning run with calisthenics, cadets immersed themselves into a wide variety of different types of training including a fire-fighting trainer, shooting the 9mm with dummy ammunition, and even going through an actual gas chamber. Cadets also visited the Navy SEAL (sea, air, land) compound, located at Pearl Harbor, where they learned about communications equipment.

Chief Warrant Officer Mark Spahn, the electronics material officer from Russell, taught the children military customs and courtesies. The lessons took place at the Ford Island barracks where its lobby doubled as a classroom with power point presentations that covered various lesson topics.

Cadet Jason Smith, the assistant leading petty officer from Bravo Company, said, "Chief Warrant Officer Spahn's class was really fun to listen to. I learned that admirals had their own flag."

Rounding out Russell's training team was assistance from deck division as two Russell Sailors gave cadets lessons on ground tackle equipment onboard Battleship Missouri Memorial. Walking from bow to stern of the battleship, Boatswain's Mate 1st Class Morrice Compton and Chief Boatswain's Mate Shawn Salazar showed the students Missouri's deck equipment, explaining how the ship ties up to a pier and detailed the various evolutions boatswain's mates perform on a daily basis. The children were very attentive and impressed the instructors with their training.

"In all honesty, it was one of the best volunteer opportunities that I have been able to take part in," said Salazar. "At one point, we were standing where the treaty ending World War Two was signed and the Sea Cadets were telling me what happened that day instead of me telling them. I think it is an excellent program with unlimited benefits."

Cmdr. Brad Cooper, Russell commanding officer, was the guest speaker on graduation day which took place at the Pacific Aviation Museum. Cooper congratulated the students on their hard work and said, "Looking back on this day, you won't remember me or the other officers present; you will only remember how you felt. You have accomplished something wonderful and you should feel very proud."

For more information on the Sea Cadet program, log onto www.seacadets.org.

U.S. Navy photo by MC Daniel Sanford

Airman Stephanie Artea, a native of King City, Calif., mans the gun turret of a humvee while maintaining perimeter security in Al-Shuíllah, Iraq. Artea is an individual augmentee attached to the 414th Civil Affairs Battalion's Headquarters Company. Sailors from all over the Navy, including Pearl Harbor-Based ships, serve in Iraq and Afghanistan under th IA program

Port Royal Sailors serve in Iraq

Ensign Rachael Pitchford

USS Port Royal (CG 73) Public Affairs

For 22 years, Chief Cryptologic Technician (collection) Erik Mezzacapo has served in a wide variety of Navy communities, including ships, submarines, aircraft and with special warfare units. Now Mezzacapo has decided to add yet another experience to his sea-going repertoire.

On July 29, Mezzacapo will depart USS Port Royal (CG-73) and join more than 140,000 Soldiers, Marines, Airmen and Sailors on the ground in Iraq. The individual augmentation (IA) program is a joint-service operation between the Army and the Navy where the Army trains Sailors to augment their troops on the ground in Afghanistan and Iraq.

For 316 days, Mezzacapo will serve in this capacity. Prior to reporting in Baghdad as an electronics warfare officer, he will spend three weeks at Fort Jackson, S.C. for Army combat training, after which he will receive Navy explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) training at Indian Head, Md.

Since October 2005, Mezzacapo has served aboard Port Royal as ships special exploitations systems officer. The chief petty officer earned his enlisted surface warfare specialist pin while aboard Port Royal and also made many contributions to the command through various collateral duties.

Although reluctant to leave his Sailors, Mezzacapo said, "I am looking forward to this [opportunity] tremendously. I am a very patriotic person and happy to be part of all that the IA concept represents. After completing this, I can say that I have done everything that the Navy has to offer."

Mezzacapo joins a growing list of Port Royal Sailors who have volunteered for IA duty. Lt. Cmdr. Jennifer Blakeslee and Yeoman Seaman Marlon Villatoro recently departed for IA assignments. Ship's Serviceman 1st Class Albert Washington and Sonar Technician (surface) 2nd Class Jose Acevedo will also soon depart Port Royal for their IA assignments.

Pearl Harbor *Highlights*

U.S. Navy photo by MC2 Leeanna Taylor

Explosive Ordnance Disposal Technician 1st Class Larry Polendy and U.S. Army Major Gabriel Zinni present the tools that an Explosive Ordnance Disposal technician uses to dispose of unexploded ordnance to the Pacific Command commander's spouses during a tour of the Joint POW/MIA accounting command (JPAC) on board Hickam Air Force Base. JPAC's worldwide mission is to search for, recover, and identify missing Americans lost as a result of service to their nation.

US Navy photo by MCSN (AW) Eric J. Cutright

Cdr. Joseph M. Vitelli passes on the Defense Distribution colors to Brig. Gen. Lynn A. Collyar, Commander, Defense Distribution Command, at Defense Distribution Depot Pearl Harbor on July 3 during a change of command. The act of passing on the colors signifies a "passing of the torch" to new commanding officer, Cmdr. Scott C. Smith.

U.S. Navy photo by MC3 Paul D. Honnick

Capt. Lindsay Hankins, Commander, Submarine Squadron One, addresses the crew of Los Angeles-class attack submarine USS Buffalo (SSN 715) during an all-hands call on the pier. The submarine and her crew departed Naval Station Pearl Harbor on July 9 permanently for their new homeport in Guam. Buffalo will join USS Houston (SSN 713) and USS City of Corpus Christi (SSN 705) as the forward deployed submarine force in the Pacific.

U.S. Navy photo by MC3 Paul D. Honnick

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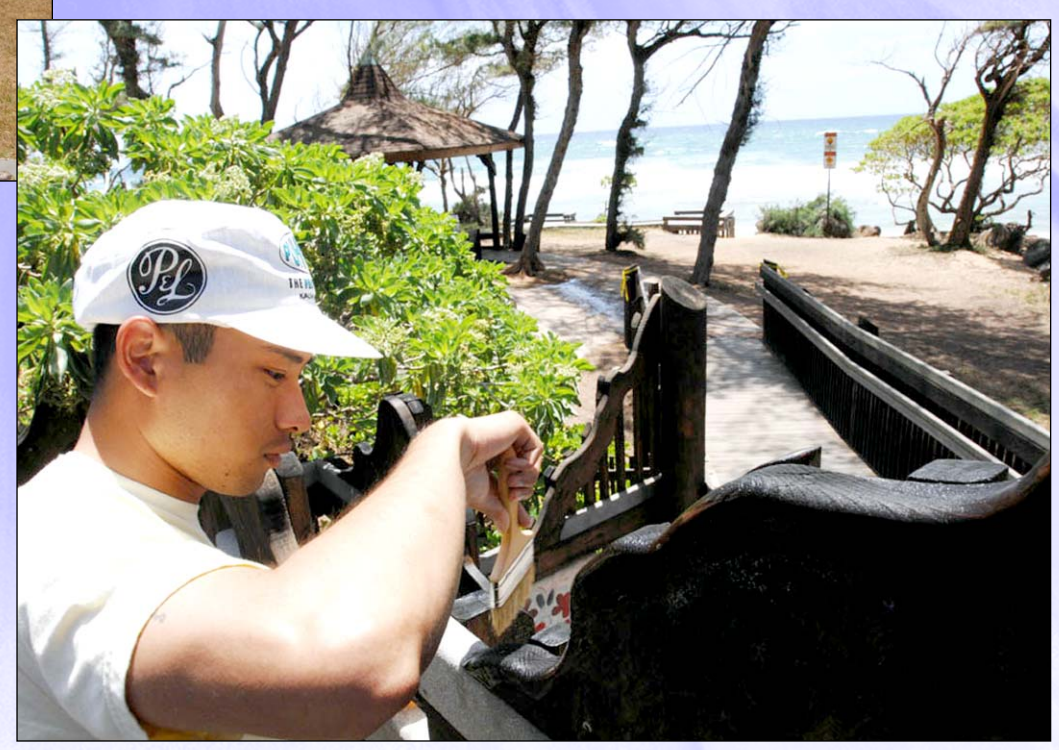
U.S. Navy photo by MC2 (SW/AW) Johnny Michael

Chief Aviation Support Equipment Technician Rizalito Belisario of Pacific Missile Range Facility at Barking Sands, Kaua'i cooks french fries during an Operation Military Appreciation event held July 1 on Kaua'i. More than 200 bikers convened to say thank you to the military community.



U.S. Navy photo by Ensign Fallon Rossi

Information Systems Technician 2nd Class Linh Nguyen of USS Reuben James (FFG 57) helps apply a sealant to a wooden bike path during a community relations project for the county of Kaua'i when the ship visited June 23.

SDVT 1 remembers at 'Never Forget' hoolaukanaka

MCSN Terrence Siren

Commander, Naval Special Warfare Group Three Public Affairs

U.S. Navy photo by AG2 Christopher Steele

Members of SEAL Delivery Team (SDVT) 1 place a small American flag next to a milo tree sapling during the annual Never Forget Hoolaukanaka in the Hawai'i Kai area on Oahu on June 29. The milo tree is one of five trees planted during last year's event to commemorate the lives of five Navy SEALs killed in action in Afghanistan in 2005. The SEALs were part of SDVT-1 based at Pearl Harbor, Hawai'i. The milo tree, a native tree to Hawai'i, is symbolic of the versatility of the Navy SEALs as it can thrive both near the ocean and in the high, rocky mountains of the islands.

Hoolaukanaka…it's a mouthful for the untrained tongue, but for Hawaiian natives, it is "a gathering of people to help chase away loneliness," according to Al Schafer, who, with his wife Patty, helped organize the annual "Never Forget" Hoolaukanaka held in Hawai'i Kai, Oahu on June 29.

The "Never Forget" Hoolaukanaka (pronounced 'ho-o-low-kanaka') commemorates the lives of five SEALs (sea, air, land), members of SEAL Delivery Vehicle Team One killed in action in Afghanistan on June 28, 2005. The SEALs were killed while conducting counter-terrorism operations in the Korangal Valley of Afghanistan during Operation Redwing, the single most loss of SEALs during combat since their inception in 1962.

The hoolaukanaka event included a competitive obstacle course, a barbecue picnic lunch served by members of the SEAL community, a free drawing for donated prizes, and a hike up Mariner's Ridge, a popular trail overlooking the Kalama Valley.

"One of our main purposes in doing this is to make sure that those guys [of SDVT-1] who sacrificed everything - gave their lives - that they are not forgotten," said Schafer, an extended family member of Petty Officer 2nd Class James Suh, one of the SEAL team members lost in 2005. "We also want to celebrate and to thank the SEALs for all that they do for us."

Five trees – one for each of the fallen SEALs – were planted on Mariner's Ridge during last year's event. Each tree is meant to symbolize a different aspect of the SEAL team members' lives, from their warrior spirit to their love for family and friends.

Two benches were brought to the top of the ridge this year so that visitors can relax and contemplate the lives of the heroes lost June 28, 2005, said Schafer.

A large part of the day, however, is giving the community an opportunity to give back to the service members that keep them free, Schafer said, and, of course, to have fun.

"We enjoy seeing the guys run [the obstacle course]," said Schafer. "And that's part of it – for them to have fun, too. And whenever you get a bunch of SEALs together, you know they're going to be competitive."

Dietz honored for heroism and courage

Continued from A-1

much and ask so little. I hope his statue reminds people of the sacrifices our military makes everyday."

The bronze 1.3:1 scale statue of the Heritage High School graduate was cast at a foundry in Loveland, Colo. by sculptor Robert Henderson. The statue is based on one of the last photos taken of Dietz just before his fatal mission, showing him in a crouched position, dressed in full combat gear and holding his M-4 rifle on one knee.

"Petty Officer Dietz gave his life selflessly serving our nation. On behalf of the United States Navy SEALs, we are proud to call him brother and will forever honor his warrior spirit and sacrifice." said Kernan. "This statue is more than a tribute to one man, it is a lasting reminder of the honor, courage and commitment Danny and all of his teammates embody."

Dietz was born on Jan. 26, 1980 in Aurora, Colo. He enlisted in the Navy in 1999, earned his SEAL trident in 2001, and was subsequently assigned to SEAL Delivery Vehicle Team Two. In April 2005, Dietz deployed with his special reconnaissance element to Afghanistan to support Naval Special Warfare Squadron Ten and the global war on terrorism.

In June 2005, deep behind enemy lines east of Asadabad in the Hindu Kush of Afghanistan, his four-man Navy SEAL team was conducting a reconnaissance mission at the altitude of approximately 10,000 feet. These SEALs, Lt. Michael Murphy, Petty Officer Matthew Axelson, Petty Officer Marcus Luttrell and Dietz, had a vital task. Their mission objective was to capture or kill a key militia leader. The mission was compromised when they were spotted by anti-coalition sympathizers, who reported their presence and location to the Taliban.

A fierce gun battle erupted between the four SEALs and a much larger enemy force of anti-coalition militia. The enemy had the SEALs outnumbered. They also had terrain advantage. They launched a well-organized, three-sided attack on the SEALs. Three of the four SEALs were wounded. The fight relentlessly continued as the overwhelming militia forced them deeper into a ravine.

Approximately 45 minutes into the fight, Murphy, the officer in charge of the element, made contact with the quick reaction force at Bagram Air Base for fire support and assistance. An MH-47 Chinook helicopter, with eight additional SEALs and eight Army NightStalkers aboard, was sent in as part of an extraction mission to pull out the four embattled SEALs. The MH-47 was escorted by heavily-armored, Army attack helicopters. As the Chinook raced to the battle, a rocket-propelled grenade struck the helicopter, killing all 16 men aboard.

Despite this terrible loss, the four SEALs remaining on the ground continued to fight. Under a withering assault of machine gunfire and rocket propelled grenades, the SEALs maneuvered for position and fought for the lives of their teammates. Their heroic actions cost three of them their lives and Luttrell was blasted unconscious down into a ravine by a rocket propelled grenade. Luttrell regained consciousness and was able to evade the enemy, was befriended by a local villager, and recovered by American forces a few days later.

This was the worst single-day U.S Forces death toll since Operation Enduring Freedom began over five years ago. It was the single largest loss of life for Naval Special Warfare since the World War II Normandy invasion.

Dietz was awarded the Navy Cross for "extraordinary heroism in actions against the enemy."

According to the award citation, "Operating in the middle of an enemy controlled area, in extremely rugged terrain…Petty Officer Dietz fought valiantly against a numerically superior and positionally advantaged enemy force… defending his teammates and himself in a harrowing gunfight, until he was mortally wounded."

Dietz"s wife, Maria Dietz, accepted the posthumously awarded Navy Cross from the Navy Secretary during a ceremony in Washington, D.C. in September 2006. The Navy Cross is second only to the Congressional Medal of Honor in terms of military award precedence.

U.S. Navy SEALS are the maritime component of U.S. Special Operations Command and the Navy"s special operations force. The SEALs take their name from the elements in which they operate – sea, air and land. In addition to being experts in special reconnaissance and direct action missions - the key skill sets needed to combat terrorism - their unique stealth and clandestine methods of operation enable them to conduct multiple missions against enemy forces, ashore or afloat, that larger forces cannot approach undetected.