

MERLION STAR

Serving the Sembawang Community

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- ✦ Sundown Marathon, May 26
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MCPON VISITS SINGAPORE



SINGAPORE (April 27, 2012) - Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy (MCPON) Rick West addresses Sailors assigned to various commands in Singapore during an all-hands call. US Navy photo by Chief Operations Specialist Shane Smith.

MCPON Completes Visits to Japan and Singapore

SINGAPORE -- Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy (MCPON) returned April 30, from a 14-day visit to Japan and Singapore, where he engaged the fleet and updated them on the status of the Navy.

MCPON(SS/SW) Rick D. West spoke to Sailors and Navy civilians throughout the trip, asking questions and more importantly, answering them.

"Ask me anything," said West, to a crew of Sailors aboard USS McCampbell (DDG 85) in Yokosuka, Japan. "I am here for

you, and I want my trip report to the CNO to be a complete one."

Many questions continued to focus on manning concerns, namely Perform-To-Serve (PTS) and the Enlisted Retention Board (ERB).

"If you would have asked me six months ago, I would have told you PTS wasn't doing what we needed it to do, only four or five requests out of 10 were being approved," said West, during an all hands call in Okinawa, Japan. "Now, as painful as ERB was, PTS is working with eight or nine out of 10 being approved. I hope it stays the way it is currently."

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Financial Preparedness Critical Component to Military Readiness

MILLINGTON, Tenn. – Federal

BY NAVY PERSONNEL
COMMAND,
PUBLIC AFFAIRS

and Navy programs can help Sailors and their families navigate potential financial pitfalls, officials said April 4.

"We're here to let [service members] know what we can do, so we can help them make wise consumer decisions and help them avoid scams," said Holly Petraeus, assistant director, Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB), Office of Service Member Affairs.

CFPB is a new federal agency focused on protecting consumers. Petraeus' division is dedicated to seeing that military personnel and their families get financial information to make informed consumer decisions. The agency also monitors their complaints against financial organizations and works with other federal and state agencies on consumer protection measures for military personnel and their families.

Financial matters such as failure to pay bills, bad credit, bankruptcy and foreclosures can negatively impact a Sailor's career, affect mission readiness and the Navy's ability to transfer or retain Sailors.



Petraeus is also working to raise awareness about high-interest loans and scams that take advantage of service members. The idea is to educate members against being taken advantage of - before they sign a contract.

Petraeus, Covell and other Millington leaders discussed ways the Navy can help Sailors be proactive to protect their assets and their careers.

Command financial specialists (CFS) provide financial education and training, counseling, and information referral at the command level at no cost to Sailors and their families. Fleet and Family Support Centers (FFSC) located worldwide provide financial education and counseling for Sailors and families as well. Petraeus suggests starting with these organizations first when looking for financial guidance before taking on new debt and to determine if military service qualifies the member for lower interest rates on existing loans and credit. As a rule, any loan with an interest rate higher than 36 percent should raise the alarm and is worth review by the CFS or FFSC, according to Petraeus. "In some cases Sailors may qualify for interest-free loans from military relief societies," said Petraeus.

Sailors experiencing financial challenges should notify their chain of command and work with their CFS to development a budget and explore additional options such as military relief societies, eligibility for interest rate reductions and other relief. Additionally, being upfront and trying to address the issue openly can work to a Sailor's advantage if financial difficulties threaten a member's security clearance.

Mosquito Study Shows Promising Results

Naval Medical Research

By: Ms. ALICE WILSON,
ENVIRONMENTAL,
NAVY REGION CENTER SINGAPORE

Unit Two
(NAMRU-2),
with support

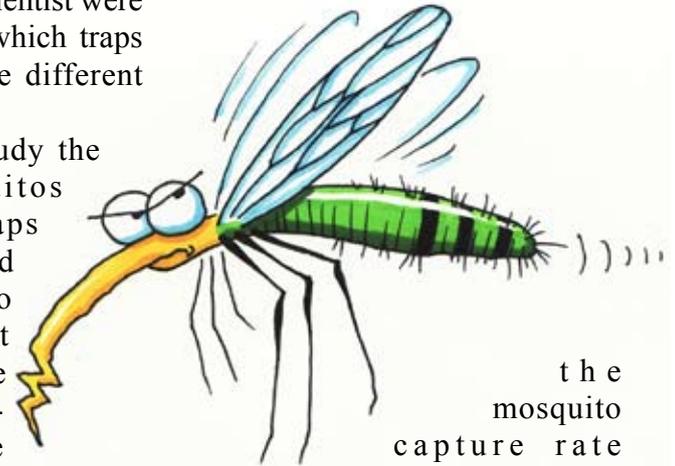
from Duke-National University of Singapore (Duke-NUS) and Navy Region Center Singapore (NRCS), recently completed a 10-week mosquito trapping study in the Sembawang Naval Base housing area. Results stated there was a 65 percent decrease in the number of mosquitoes trapped from the beginning to the end of the survey period. The study was also able to identify potential hotspots for the breeding of mosquitoes.

Three environmentally friendly traps were deployed to determine the best type of trap for the different species of mosquitoes. All three traps were effective in capturing the

mosquitoes, and the scientist were also able to identify which traps were preferred by the different species of mosquitoes.

Throughout the study the number of mosquitos captured in the traps significantly decreased and the mosquito populations did not indicate resurgence in numbers. Duke-NUS scientists are identifying the types of mosquitos attracted to the traps, and investigating the possible reasons for the population decline despite two heavy rainfalls during the study period.

A new study may be warranted in the future. Future studies may include a longer study period to see if



the
mosquito
capture rate

decrease is due to an interruption of the breeding cycle or if other environmental factors depressed the population numbers.

For more information on the study, you can contact Ms. Alice Wilson at 6750-2052 or email her at alice.wilson@fe.navy.mil.

MCPON WEST VISITS SOUTHEAST ASIA

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The questions were not all business though, as many Sailors had two new questions for MCPON concerning his retirement and the new MCPON.

"I've always wanted to learn how to fly fish," said West, in response to a Sailor aboard USS Essex (LHD 2) in Sasebo, Japan. "I'd also like to stay engaged with Sailors in the Navy in some way, shape or form; I love this stuff."

A group of first class and chief petty officers huddled around MCPON, school circle style, following a CPO365 run in Yokosuka, Japan. They all wanted to know how the search for the new MCPON was progressing.

"I am keeping out of the process in the beginning," said West. "Here very soon I expect to have three to five names on my desk. I hope to have a name for you in June or July."

Despite not knowing who his relief will be, MCPON is already prepared with a bit of pass-down information.

"One piece of advice I have for my successor is, listen to the Sailors," said West, on board USS Bonhomme Richard (LHD 6) in Sasebo, Japan. "We have the best Sailors the Navy [has] ever had, right here, right now."

If there was one message MCPON had for Sailors stationed in this region it was carpe diem, or seize the day.

"My biggest regret was that I was never stationed in Japan," said West, while in Sasebo, Japan. "I've been here (Japan) about 70 or 80 times, but I was never stationed here. You are so lucky to have this chance, take advantage of it every chance you have."

He reiterated that sentiment to Sailors in Singapore.

"Look around you shipmates," said West. "You are 84 miles from the equator, and within one hour you could be in Malaysia, Indonesia, or Thailand. It doesn't get any better than this."

MCPON finished the journey by touring the Singapore Discovery Center, Singapore Army Museum, and Singapore's version of the Hale Koa Resort, The Chevrons, with the Singapore Navy MCPON, Phui Peng Sim, the former Singapore MCPON, Roger Seow, and several other Singapore navy chiefs.

"Our Navy's are bonded together by the fierce teeth of the ocean," said West. "Our friendship grew stronger here today, and I truly thank you."

Fleet engagements are intended to provide senior leadership with a frontline assessment of Sailors and what they are doing in the Fleet.

U.S. Navy Participated in Naval Exchange Activities with Vietnam

DANANG, Vietnam -- The U.S. Navy participated naval exchange activities with the Vietnamese People's Navy 23-27 in various locations throughout Vietnam, continuing a series of naval activities between the U.S. and Vietnam that last occurred in July 2011.

By: U.S. 7TH FLEET,
PUBLIC AFFAIRS

This five-day collaboration focused on non-combatant events and skills exchanges in areas such as diving medicine, navigation, and firefighting. Ship visits, band concerts, community service events, and U.S.-Vietnamese navy sporting events are also planned. These activities underscored the closer ties between the U.S. and Vietnam.

"This exchange enhances cooperation, and promotes understanding between our navies," said Rear Adm. Tom Carney, commander, Task Force 73.

U.S. units that participated in the naval exchange activities included the 7th Fleet's flagship USS Blue Ridge (LCC 19); guided missile destroyer USS Chafee (DDG 90); the rescue and salvage ship USNS Safeguard (T-ARS-50); Sailors from Task Force 73; and a Mobile Diving and Salvage Detachment.

The U.S. Navy has had several successful port visits to Vietnam in recent years. In 2009, USS John C. Stennis (CVN 74) hosted the first-ever underway embark of visitors from Vietnam aboard a U.S. aircraft carrier, and the 7th Fleet flagship USS Blue Ridge (LCC 19) and the destroyer USS Lassen (DDG 82), commanded by Commander H.B. Le, a Vietnamese-American, visited in November 2009.

In 2010, another underway embark occurred as USS George



DA NANG, Vietnam (April 24, 2012) Hospital Corpsman 2nd Class Adam Martin, left, assigned to the 3rd Marine Expeditionary Force Tactical Medical Simulations Center, observes a medical officer from the Vietnamese People's Navy insert a needle into a mannequin during a basic lifesaving course. U.S. Marine Corps photo by Cpl. Patricia D. Lockhart.



120424-N-XG305-798 DA NANG, Vietnam (April 24, 2012) Sailors assigned to the U.S. 7th Fleet flagship USS Blue Ridge (LCC 19) and the guided-missile destroyer USS Chafee (DDG 90) congratulate Vietnamese navy sailors on a good game of volleyball during a sporting event. U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Mel Orr.

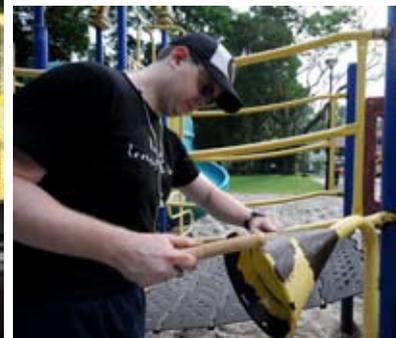
Washington (CVN 73) and USS John S. McCain (DDG 56) visited Da Nang as part of naval exchange activities. USNS Mercy (T-AH 19) also visited Vietnam in May 2010 as part of a large-scale humanitarian assistance mission, Pacific Partnership.

In 2011, destroyers USS Howard (DDG 83) and USS Chung-Hoon (DDG 93) visited Da Nang as part of the 2011 naval exchange activities

while USNS Bowditch (T-AGS 62) supported Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command missions with survey support.

In addition to port visits, five U.S. Navy military sealift command ships have undergone voyage repairs at Vietnamese shipyards. Most recently, in 2012, USNS Rappahannock (T-AO-204) had voyage repairs at Cam Ranh Bay Shipyard.

Community Playground Clean up Project



Sailors assigned to various commands of Singapore joined members of the Sembawang community in a playground clean up on Lagos Circle, 3 May. In total about 40 volunteers came together to improve this community playground and create a safe place for our children to play. A special thanks goes out to all who participated in this event.

Lt. Cmdr. Morley retires after 23 years of service

