

Community Central offers a wealth of opportunities for the whole family... B-1



HAWAII'S NAVY NEWS



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ZULU**

Area commands recognize Sailors... A-5

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USS Buffalo returns from deployment

JO2 Cori Rhea
COMSUBPAC Public Affairs

USS Buffalo (SSN 715), a Pearl Harbor-based attack submarine, returned Jan. 16 from a successful six-month deployment to the Western Pacific (WESTPAC).

USS Buffalo, a Los Angeles class nuclear submarine with a crew of 130 men, conducted many missions vital to national security including becoming the first submarine to load a dry deck shelter in forward-deployed locations.

During the deployment, notification of the tragic events of Sept. 11 was delivered to the crew over the ship's intercom by Buffalo commanding officer, Cmdr. Ralph C. Ward. Ward said the crew reacted in much the

same way as Americans everywhere.

"Shock and disbelief were the immediate reactions," he said. "But then the crew became focused and galvanized into wanting to support national security and do their part."

The fact that none of the crew's families were directly affected was quickly established.

According to Ward, it was especially difficult for the families of the crew.

"Our ombudsman did an outstanding job, answering 30 to 40 phone calls a day from worried family members. She went beyond normal deployment challenges for ombudsmen," credited Ward.

Although liberty was not as frequent as first expected, the crew

was still able to enjoy some time off in Guam, Yokosuka and Okinawa.

"Returning to Pearl Harbor was the best part of the experience," said Machinist Mate Third Class Michael Sotomayor. "I was filled with pride when I saw my family and families of the crew waiting on the pier."

While on deployment, Buffalo was selected as the 2001 Battle Efficiency "E" award winner for Commander Submarine Squadron One.

"The number one characteristic leading to the selection for this award is USS Buffalo's ability to work as an efficient team," said Ward. "Each person knows their jobs and they work well together."



JO2 Cori Rhea photo

A USS Buffalo sailor holds his daughter for the first time in six months after returning from his deployment.

JMSDF awards MDSU-1 commendation for salvage efforts

EMC(SW/DV) Andrew P. Alexander
MDSU-1 Public Affairs

Operations to recover the missing crew members of the Ehime Maru was a watershed event for the crew of Mobile Diving and Salvage Unit One (MDSU-1).

Performing their duties under national and international scrutiny, the men and women of MDSU-1 provided the finest examples of the U.S. Navy's honor, courage and commitment core values.

In response to that effort, Adm. Toru Ishikawa, the Chief of Staff, Japanese Maritime Self-Defense Force (JMSDF), presented MDSU-1 with the JMSDF equivalent of the U.S. Navy's Meritorious Unit Commendation.

As the point command for all diving during the Ehime Maru salvage evolutions, MDSU-1 was responsible for the planning, coordination and safe performance of all diving operations.

To facilitate flawless operations and demonstrate strict adherence to Japanese traditions, the entire MDSU-1 command received intensive training on Japanese cultural sensitivities and traditional religious practices from numerous Oahu-community experts.

Additionally, CINCPACFLT's JMSDF liaison officer, Cmdr. Hideki Hayashi, provided the invaluable services of interpreter, customs advisor and liaison coordination between U.S. and Japanese divers.

Prior to the commencement of

▼ See SALVAGE, A-2

Surf challenge



JO2 Jim Williams photo

An Air Force captain from Hickam AFB catches a wave at the 2002 Military Surfing Championship in Waianae. Despite the low wave conditions, there was a high turnout for the event. In addition to numerous local military members and their families taking part, surfers from all five branches of military service traveled from Japan, California, Maryland, Virginia and Florida to compete.

Career sea pay, basic housing allowances up for new year

Chief of Naval Personnel
Public Affairs

January 15 paychecks brought good news for Sailors and their families, thanks to several pay and compensation initiatives which will make a tangible difference in take-home pay.

"Our Secretary and CNO have made manpower their top priority; pay hikes are another return on this investment," said Vice Adm. Norb Ryan Jr., Chief of Naval Personnel.

The entire pay and compensation package for 2002 includes hikes in career sea pay (CSP), basic allowance-housing (BAH) for single shipboard E4 Sailors with over four years of service and a reduction in BAH out-of-pocket expenses to 11.3 percent.

Additionally, the arrival of the Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) provides Sailors a convenient way to invest for their future.

"I've been thinking about buying a house instead of just paying rent," said recently promoted Gunner's Mate First Class Matthew Carlo, a member of the weapons department on USS John Paul Jones (DDG 53), homeported in San Diego, Calif. "The increase in BAH will allow me that opportunity. Most Sailors just look at the money, but if they'd look at all the total benefits, including medical, they'd see we've made a decent amount of gains."

The pay tables for this year re-

▼ See PAY, A-2

A NATION AT WAR



Air Force Staff Sgt. Cecilio Ricardo photo

An Afghan woman waits by her share of grain and oil.

U.S. military continues to aid international humanitarian effort in Afghanistan

Jim Garamone
American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON— At the same time U.S. and anti-Taliban forces were liberating Afghanistan, an unprecedented humanitarian operation was also underway.

The chief of U.S. Central Command, Army Gen. Tommy Franks, said Americans should be proud of that effort. Franks spoke Jan. 18 at a "cyber news conference" from Tampa, Fla. He said the humanitarian effort has saved thousands of lives and points to the fact that the operation against the Taliban and Al Qaeda has been successful.

He said 11,000 metric tons of food and medical supplies have moved into the country so far this month. This follows 116,000 metric tons delivered in December. He said officials are hoping to move in 45,000 tons by the end of January. The supplies are moving into

the country via all 11 major convoy routes. He also said nine airfields are open in Afghanistan to receive humanitarian supplies.

He said the United Nations' international humanitarian relief staff has moved back into the country.

Nongovernmental relief agencies are also moving back in. More than 35,000 refugees have returned to their homes, but this still leaves millions of Afghans in refugee camps outside the country and internally displaced, he said.

Coalition members are also helping with the medical problems of the country. "One of our coalition partners, Jordan, has established a state-of-the-art hospital in Mazar-e Sharif with more than 20 surgeons and a full medical capability," Franks said. "They've treated more than 8,000 Afghans since Jan. 8." Russia has also established a hospital and Spain, South Korea are

preparing to send more medical assets to the theater.

Franks said another hopeful sign is that schools are reopening. "In one case, 80 female staff have returned to Kabul University and 200 females are registered for classes," he said. This development was "unthinkable" under the Taliban.

He said Afghanistan has one of the largest concentrations of land mines in the world. There are between 10 million and 11 million mines believed to be planted throughout the country. "As of today, some 4,400 United Nations Afghan deminers are operating in the country," he said.

He said the International Security Assistance Force, headed by the United Kingdom, is up and running in the Afghan capital. The force will ultimately have 2,500 to 5,000 soldiers depending on the needs of the interim government.