

Palmyra: Navy, Army EOD experts team with Coast Guard for Palmyra demolition operation

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The joint EOD team that was assembled consisted of team leader, Damage Controlman Master Chief (EOD) Tom Bourque and Hull Technician 1st Class (EOD) Scott Vlcek from Detachment MidPac, and Staff Sgt. Bryan Mills and Sgt. Mike Brady from the Army EOD unit at Schofield.

The remote location of the island and the lack of local medical support necessitated bringing a physician who could stabilize a casualty until medical evacuation (MEDEVAC) could be arranged to Oahu. So, Lt. Geoffrey Keenan, a Navy physician from the Makalapa Clinic at Pearl Harbor, also joined the team.

The joint team departed by Coast Guard C-130 transport plane from Barbers Point and arrived on Palmyra on March 18 and quickly got to work. After a thorough inspection of the magazine, the team decided to attempt a burn of the explosives and residue inside, which appeared to be a mix of sand and corroded explosives, including TNT.

Less than three hours after arriving on the island, the joint EOD team evacuated the island's seven residents - all TNC employees - and remotely initiated a burn of the magazine with time fuse, caps, thermite grenades and diesel fuel. The magazine was left to burn through the night and into the next day.

The next day, the team traveled 45 minutes by boat to neighboring Barren Island, to dispose of the seven land mines. All seven mines were transported to the northeastern tip of the island for disposal, the farthest location from any bird nesting sites that could be reached on the island. The team detonated the mines and avoided any damage to wildlife.

After the disposal of the mines, the team returned to Palmyra to dispose of explosives which re-

mained in the magazine. The following day, after transporting the leftover explosives to a site on the beach, the team again evacuated the island residents, then destroyed the residual explosives.

"We learned a lot from each other," said Bourque about working with his Army EOD counterparts. "They were very knowledgeable and professional. They were a pleasure to work with."

Although, fortunately, Lt. Keenan did not have to treat any Navy or Army casualties, he did render assistance to a couple of the island residents. Keenan treated one resident whose finger was cut off while operating machinery, and he treated another resident for a chronic ear infection.

"He was definitely an important asset," said Bourque referring to the team's only medical member. "The island residents were certainly glad to have him, and we had a peace of mind because of his presence."

Just under a week later, a Coast Guard C-130 returned to the island and transported the team back to Oahu after a successful mission.

"Right now we are ramping up for several other operations," said Bourque. "One involves flying to Kwajalein to safely dispose of a 16-inch, and 5-inch WWII projectile. According to Bourque, the ordnance, which was discovered on the reef, will be remotely moved to an environmentally safe location, then blown up underwater.

"The operational tempo at the detachment keeps life interesting. Where else but the Navy could you be challenged to this degree and have fun at the same time," he added.

Bourque added that EOD is actively recruiting. All personnel who feel they meet the criteria should contact EODMU-3 Det. MidPac in Pearl Harbor at (808) 474-3614.

Chapel Pennant

Dealing with life's challenges

Lt. Daniel E. McKay

District 14 USCG

In his insightful book, "Lead On! A Practical Approach to Leadership," Rear Adm. Dave Oliver Jr. shares how Adm. Rickover's fearlessness during a new submarine's initial sea trial served to inspire calm and courage in the crew.

For example, Adm. Oliver asks, "What did Rickover do when something did not operate correctly on sea trials?" His answer: Nothing. He would just walk to wherever on the ship appeared to be the most dangerous and sit down to watch the crew work. If the reduction gear sounded a little odd, he would go and sit down on the reduction gear and ask the commanding officer to run the ship up to full power while the crew made a recording of the noise for analysis.

"How could you be afraid," Adm. Oliver concluded, "when that little old man obviously was not?" (pp. 17-18).

Similarly, our reflection upon

the Lord's example during this year's Easter observance should leave us asking, "How can we remain perplexed by life's challenges when God has shown us how to handle them?" For example, in the hour of temptation Jesus relied upon prayer, fasting, the counsel of God's Word and the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

In the midst of life's storms He did not get rattled, rather He stayed cool, calm and collected through the conscious, deliberate choice to exercise faith over fear. And when it came time to meet His ultimate demise, He did not recoil or retreat from it, rather He met it head on by praying, "Father, not my will but Yours be done."

How then should we deal with life's challenges if not in the same manner? After all, whether or not we face difficult times in life is not a choice: they are a natural consequence of the world in which we live. The only choice given to us, therefore, is how well we handle them when they come our way.

And we should not miss this all-

important observation: the choices we make in dealing with life's challenges have consequences for both ourselves and others.

In short, we do not live our lives in a vacuum. For instance, Adm. Rickover's decision to exercise fearlessness in the midst of a potentially dangerous situation caused others to follow his calm and courageous example. And, likewise, Jesus' example has led millions to follow Him in living their lives out of love for God and devotion to His eternal values, principles, and morals.

Yes, life throws many challenges our way - both expected and unexpected, but, with God's help, we can make the wisest and best decisions for all concerned: Him, ourselves and others. This is why the Apostle Paul exhorts us as he does in Romans Chapter Twelve: "Therefore, I urge you. . . Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is - His good, pleasing and perfect will."

Worship Services at Oahu Navy Chapels

Pearl Harbor Memorial Chapel

Saturday

5 p.m. - Roman Catholic Mass

Sunday

8 a.m. - Roman Catholic Mass

11 a.m. - Protestant Service

NCTAMS Pacific Memorial Chapel

Sunday

8:30 - Roman Catholic Mass

10:00 a.m. - Protestant Worship Service

11:30 a.m. - Protestant Gospel

Submarine Memorial Chapel

Sunday

8:30 a.m. - Protestant Communion Service

11 a.m. - Roman Catholic Mass

Monday-Friday

11:30 a.m. - Roman Catholic Mass

Aloha Jewish Chapel

Friday

7:30 p.m. - Kabbalat Shabbat

Saturday

9:15 a.m. - Shabbat Morning Service

Navy Chapel at Kapolei

(Barbers Point)

Sunday

8:15 a.m. & 11:30 a.m. - Roman Catholic Mass

9:45 a.m. - Protestant Worship Service

For more information on chapel services call: 473-3971