1.) Remaining US-Based Navy College Offices to Close / 27 SEPT 17
Naval Education and Training Command Public Affairs

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PENSACOLA, Fla. (NNS) -- Naval Education and Training Command (NETC) announced that the remaining four Navy College Offices (NCO) in the continental United States will close as scheduled Oct. 1.

Sixteen NCOs closed a year ago, with the modernization of the Navy College Virtual Education Center (NCVEC), which now serves as the Navy College Program's (NCP) central location for tuition assistance processing and education services. The initiative is part of an ongoing effort to increase virtual and self-service options for Sailors.

The four NCOs closing at fleet concentration areas in Norfolk; San Diego; Jacksonville, Florida; and Kitsap, Washington operated for the past year during the transition. Eleven overseas NCOs will continue to remain open in Atsugi, Japan; Guam; Misawa, Japan; Sasebo, Japan; Yokosuka, Japan; Bahrain; Guantanamo Bay, Cuba; Rota, Spain; Sigonella, Sicily; Naples, Italy; and Pearl Harbor.

"Many of today's Sailors have grown up with online tools and are very tech savvy," said Rear Adm. Kyle Cozad, commander, NETC. "This initiative is an example of how we're striving to better provide education services to our Sailors when they choose, wherever they are and with the resources they need at their fingertips, instead of requiring folks to schedule appointments, get off work, jump in the car to accomplish everything that we've demonstrated Sailors can do on a personal device today."

Since Oct. 1, 2016, the NCVEC has fielded more than 300,000 phone calls, help requests, e-tickets, web chats, tuition assistance requests and more.

Part of the NCVEC's new service delivery model has improved the Web Tuition Assistance (TA) approval process. The new process automatically checks/validates:
- the academic institution's course/tuition information,
- validates a Sailor's status, including degree plan,
- counseling,
- no missing grades,
- expiration of active obligated service (EAOS) status,
- TA annual usage, etc.

Through the NCVEC, education counselors are available to answer questions about all Navy College voluntary education programs and provide counseling services to Navy service members stationed throughout the world. The hours of operation are Monday through Friday, 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. in the Eastern time zone.

Options for Sailors through the Assistance Center online at www.navycollege.navy.mil include:

* submitting a help request,
* scheduling an appointment using the NCP Counselors Appointment Scheduler,
* chatting with a counselor through the Assistance Center by clicking the "Chat Now" button and searching frequently asked questions and topics.

Sailors may call the NCVEC at 877-838-1659 during hours of operation.

NCVEC tools can also be accessed through the NCP app, available to download for free through the Google Play and iTunes stores.
NCP is managed through the Naval Education and Training Professional Development Center.

Follow us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/NavyVoluntaryEducation/.

For more information on the Naval Education and Training Command, visit www.netc.navy.mil.

For more news from Naval Education and Training Command, visit www.navy.mil/local/cnet/.

2.) Navy To Give Sailors More Time To Choose Next Jobs / 27 SEPT 17
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Sailors will gain an additional three months to negotiate their next duty station orders, according to a Navy announcement issued earlier this month.

The extension from a maximum of nine months to 12 months gives sailors more time to communicate with their detailers and a broader range of job options.

Additionally, the new policy allows input from the Navy's global theater commands and warfare communities, which the service hopes will create better job fits.

The commands "have a say which orders are filled now with the new system," said Petty Officer 1st class Shaneka Cromartie, a Navy career counselor. "They get to look at what's coming out and who gets to fill the jobs. Before they didn't."

Currently, sailors normally begin to negotiate orders seven to nine months prior to their transfer date. They apply for orders within three one-month time frames, view available billets on a website and then apply for jobs of interest.

Although the new policy makes each negotiation window two months, sailors still receive only three chances to negotiate.

The new policy takes effect Oct. 1.

3.) Hospital ship Comfort heading to Puerto Rico / 27 SEPT 17
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WASHINGTON – Federal and military aid for Puerto Rico increased Tuesday, including news that the hospital ship Comfort would be deployed, as officials got a clearer picture of the obscene destruction Hurricane María wrought on the U.S. territory.

What federal officials visiting the island have found: 42 percent of Puerto Rico’s population is without drinking water. Eighty percent of the island’s electrical transmission system — its substations and transmission lines — and 100 percent of its distribution system was damaged by the storm, said Lt. Col. Jamie Davis, a Pentagon spokesman.

As of late Tuesday, 21 of Puerto Rico’s 69 hospitals had some functionality. The remaining 48 hospitals had an unknown status, Davis said.
The U.S. government is now increasing its response to the storm and naming a commander to lead the military effort.

U.S. Northern Command announced late Tuesday it would identify “and the Joint Staff will source, a larger sustainment force package” to expand aid to the island. In addition, NORTHCOM is going to “establish a Land Component Commander - Forward in Puerto Rico and will have that commander on the ground there within 24 hours.”

On Tuesday, Federal Emergency Management Agency administrator Brock Long told reporters at the White House that it was dispatching the Navy hospital ship Comfort, a converted super tanker with 1,000 beds, 12 operating rooms, a CAT-scan, and radiology capabilities to Puerto Rico.

On Tuesday the Navy said it would have the Comfort underway within the next 96 hours.

The top priorities of deploying the Comfort are “to minimize suffering and protecting the lives and safety of those affected by Hurricane Maria,” Lt. Cmdr. Matthew Allen, a spokesman for U.S. Fleet Forces Command, said Tuesday. “Moving the USNS Comfort is a prudent decision in light of current conditions on ground. We will make best possible speed and anticipate it will take up to five days to transit to the area upon departure from Naval Station Norfolk.”

The Comfort is currently docked in Norfolk, Va.

When it arrives, the ship will join the amphibious assault ship Kearsarge and landing dock ship Oak Hill. Those ships are already supporting search and rescue efforts and helping with route clearance on Puerto Rico, Dominica and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Puerto Rico is home to 3.4 million residents, who are American citizens.

President Donald Trump, who will be traveling to Puerto Rico next week to see the damage first hand, defended the U.S. efforts to date. Trump said he had been praised by local officials for the relief that has gotten through, and suggested additional Navy ships would be sent soon.

“We’ll be deploying Navy ships. And we are going to do far more than anybody else would ever be able to do and it is being recognized as such but it is a tough situation,” Trump said at a White House press conference Tuesday with Spanish Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy Brey.

In the short term, FEMA, U.S. Transportation Command, U.S. Coast Guard, Navy, National Guard troops and other relief workers were working on getting immediate needs addressed on the island. Those needs include establishing communications and medical care and increasing the number of aircraft that can take off and depart from Puerto Rico.

FEMA is delivering 350 satellite phones and DOD “is sourcing FEMA requirements for additional medical support including, for [Puerto Rico] a medical [and] surgical treatment facility with 50-bed inpatient care, ground [and] rotary ambulances, five medical teams and airlift for civilian ambulance,” Davis said.

DOD teams also restored radar and control tower capabilities in Puerto Rico to increase the number of aircraft that can access the island.

NORTHCOM said the number of aircraft that can land in Puerto Rico should rise from three to six aircraft an hour to 10 an hour, and have as many as 240 planes coming in with aid and evacuation options within the next 24 hours.

As of Tuesday FEMA and other U.S. federal agencies have provided more than 4 million meals, 6 million liters of water, 70,000 tarps and 15,000 rolls of roof sheeting to all of the areas affected by Hurricane Maria, according to a Tweet sent out by FEMA’s public affairs office.
Several training ships from the U.S. Maritime Service are also headed to Puerto Rico, some carrying more FEMA employees to the island.

Tara Copp is Pentagon Bureau Chief for the Military Times. Tcopp@mco.com On Twitter:@TaraCopp

4.) USO Guam Top Choice for Fisher Award / 28 SEPT 17
Chief of Naval Personnel Public Affairs

WASHINGTON (NNS) -- The Chief of Naval Personnel announced Sept. 28 that United Service Organization (USO) Guam is the Department of Defense recipient of the calendar year 2016 Zachary and Elizabeth Fisher Distinguished Civilian Humanitarian Award.

USO Guam consists of five staff and 120 volunteers who gave more than 19,000 hours in support of nearly 48,000 visits from service members and their families in 2016. The group conducted more than 100 events, each providing support and assistance to stationary, deployed, and transitioning members of the U.S. Armed Forces.

"We love and appreciate all service members and families who walk through our doors at USO Guam," said Leigh Leilani Graham, Area Director for USO Guam. "They deserve the very best we have to offer in hospitality and appreciation, because the lives they lead in service to our great nation require emotional and physical sacrifices beyond compare. They are the reason we enjoy the freedoms we value as Americans, and are the indomitable force that protects our country. They are the true humanitarians whom it is our privilege to serve."

Located in the Asia-Pacific region, Guam is home to more than 12,000 service members and families. USO Guam opens every day, including holidays, to deliver on its mission of connecting service members with family, home and country throughout their service to the nation.

In 2016, USO Guam provided deployed troop care for nearly 3,000 service members following a six month deployment cycle and conducted four pre deployment events, including 16 "United through Reading" campaigns and 30 "With You all the Way!" kit distributions for children of deploying personnel. Furthermore, USO Guam conducted multiple donation drives, collecting more than 3,800 items valued at nearly $14,000, and hosted seven performances for the USO Show Troupe from New York City for more than 400 service members, their families and military leadership on the island.

For the holiday season, approximately 900 service members and their families took part in USO Guam’s annual Home for the Holidays Thanksgiving dinner. The organization also supported 200 children through a "Memories with Santa" Christmas party and provided two Christmas meals to 200 deployed service members.

USO Guam is known for its 5,000 square foot center in the heart of Guam’s tourism district where up to 2,000 service members stay in local hotels daily. A new center at Andersen Air Force Base opened in September of this year to accommodate the growth in military personnel on the island.

USO Guam was the recipient of the 2016 National Guard Association of the United States Patrick Henry Award for their support of National Guard members, received the Governor’s Award from the Governor of Guam in 2014 was rated the top Pacific Region USO center in 2013, 2014 and 2015.

"USO Guam deeply thanks the Fisher House Foundation for establishing this prestigious award, Joint Region Marianas for nominating USO Guam, the U.S. Navy for selecting us as their nominee, and the Department of Defense for naming us as the recipient, Said Graham. "This honor will live in our hearts from this day forward."

The ceremony is scheduled at the Pentagon on Oct. 20.
The Fisher award was established in 1996 by the Department of Defense in honor of Zachary and Elizabeth Fisher. The award is a service-wide recognition of a private sector individual or organization that demonstrates exceptional patriotism and humanitarian concerns for service members and their families.


For more news from Chief of Naval Personnel, visit http://www.navy.mil/local/cnp/.

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