1.) Davidson Takes Charge of Newly Renamed U.S. Indo-Pacific Command / 30 MAY 18
USNI News, Ben Warner

Commanding the newly-named Indo-Pacific Command is now Adm. Phil Davidson, who formally took the helm during the change of command ceremony Wednesday at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, Hawaii.

2.) U.S. Navy Announces 26th Rim of the Pacific Exercise / 30 MAY 18
U.S. 3rd Fleet Public Affairs

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3.) Navy Observes LGBT Pride Month / 31 MAY 18
Navy Office of Information

Throughout the month of June, the Navy joins the nation in observing Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) Pride Month.

4.) Navy Speeds Up Pace of Sea-Going Apprenticeship Program in Effort to Retain Sailors / 31 MAY 18
USNI News, Ben Werner
https://news.usni.org/2018/05/31/navy-speeds-pace-sea-going-apprenticeship-program

The program, and the changes taking effect on June 1, boil down to finding a better way to match sailor wishes with the needs of the Navy at a time of tight labor market pressure.

5.) Supplemental Articles bi-weekly roll-up:
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(URLs on Last Page)

- Trump Thanks Naval Academy Graduates for Commitment to Serve
- The US Navy just sailed through Chinese-claimed waters again
- Medal of Honor Recipient Master Chief Britt Slabinski Inducted into Pentagon Hall of
- BALTOPS 2018 Begins in Klaipeda

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While in Hawaii celebrating a change of U.S. military leadership in the Pacific, top Pentagon officials stood in the spotlight told other regional powers that U.S. focus on this part of the world hasn’t wavered but sharpened.

“For every state, sovereignty is respected no matter its size, and it’s a region open to investment and free, fair and reciprocal trade not bound by any nation’s predatory economics or threat of coercion. For the Indo-Pacific has many belts, many roads,” Secretary of Defense James Mattis said making reference to China’s One Belt One Road Initiative which seeks to place China at the center of Eurasian trade connectivity and cooperation.

Like the U.S., most nations in the Indo-Pacific region place a high value on stability through reliable trading partners and mutual respect, he said. The recently released 2018 National Defense Strategy is a roadmap for the U.S. military, and Mattis said it takes “a clear-eyed look at the world as it is, not as we wish it to be.”

“Relationships with our Pacific and Indian Ocean allies and partners have proven critical to maintaining regional stability. We stand by our partners and support their sovereign decisions, because all nations large and small are essential to the region if we’re to sustain stability in ocean areas critical to global peace.”

“Further, in recognition of the increasing connectivity, the Indian and Pacific Oceans, today we rename the U.S. Pacific Command to U.S. Indo-Pacific Command. Over many decades, this command has repeatedly adapted to changing circumstance, and today carries that legacy forward as America focuses west,” Mattis said.

Commanding the newly-named Indo-Pacific Command is now Adm. Phil Davidson, who formally took the helm during the change of command ceremony Wednesday at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, Hawaii. Davidson is now the military commander in charge of all U.S. forces in an operational area that covers close to half the planet.

Davidson, a 1982 graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy, arrived at Indo-Pacific Command from having been the commander of U.S. Fleet Forces Command.

Following last year’s spate of fatal collisions between U.S. destroyers and commercial ships, Davidson was tapped by Chief of Naval Operations Adm. John Richardson to conduct a review of the Navy’s surface operations. The resulting Comprehensive Review evaluated the entire surface fleet and focused on the Pacific where the incidents occurred.

“Admiral Davidson is exactly the leader we need in this theater,” Richardson said during the ceremony. “He’s a strategic thinker who knows how to execute at operational and tactical levels.”

During his speech, Davidson said Russia and China are command priorities, but he added North Korea, Iran, and violent extremists also challenge the U.S. and allied interests in the region.

“The National Defense Strategy clearly recognizes the central challenge to our prosperity and security is the reemergence of strategic competition by revisionists powers,” Davidson said. “Four of the five principal challenges in that strategy, are found in this theater and the fifth, Iran, has previously operated in the region in just the last few years.”

Davidson relieves Adm. Harry Harris, a 1978 graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy. Harris is retiring from the Navy but is expected to remain working in the region as an ambassador In February, Harris had been nominated to
become the U.S. ambassador to Australia, but now according to media reports, is set to be Trump’s pick to be U.S. ambassador to the Republic of Korea. Harris has to first be formally nominated and then confirmed by the U.S. Senate before becoming an ambassador.

“North Korea remains our most imminent threat and a nuclear-capable North Korea, with missiles that can reach the United States, is unacceptable,” Harris said in his speech.

China remains the biggest long-term challenge, while Russia still represents an existential threat to the U.S., Harris said. A lot in the world has changed since the end of the Soviet Union, and much of the change has been good, but the threat remains, he said.

“Make no mistake, our 27-year holiday from history is over. Great power competition is back,” Harris said. “Freedom and justice hang in the balance and the scale won’t tip of its own accord simply because we wish it would.”

2.) U.S. Navy Announces 26th Rim of the Pacific Exercise / 30 MAY 18
U.S. 3rd Fleet Public Affairs

SAN DIEGO (NNS) -- Twenty-six nations, 47 surface ships, five submarines, 18 national land forces, and more than 200 aircraft and 25,000 personnel will participate in the biennial Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC) exercise scheduled June 27 to Aug. 2, in and around the Hawaiian Islands and Southern California.

As the world's largest international maritime exercise, RIMPAC provides a unique training opportunity designed to foster and sustain cooperative relationships that are critical to ensuring the safety of sea lanes and security on the world's interconnected oceans. RIMPAC 2018 is the 26th exercise in the series that began in 1971.

The theme of RIMPAC 2018 is "Capable, Adaptive, Partners." Participating nations and forces will exercise a wide range of capabilities and demonstrate the inherent flexibility of maritime forces. These capabilities range from disaster relief and maritime security operations to sea control and complex warfighting. The relevant, realistic training program includes amphibious operations, gunnery, missile, anti-submarine and air defense exercises, as well as counter-piracy operations, mine clearance operations, explosive ordnance disposal, and diving and salvage operations.

This year's exercise includes forces from Australia, Brazil, Brunei, Canada, Chile, Colombia, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Israel, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, Netherlands, New Zealand, Peru, the Republic of Korea, the Republic of the Philippines, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Tonga, the United Kingdom, the United States and Vietnam.

This is the first time Brazil, Israel, Sri Lanka and Vietnam are participating in RIMPAC. Additional firsts include New Zealand serving as sea combat commander and Chile serving as combined force maritime component commander. This is the first time a non-founding RIMPAC nation (Chile) will hold a component commander leadership position. This year will also feature live firing of a Long Range Anti-Ship Missile (LRASM) from a U.S. Air Force aircraft, surface to ship missiles by the Japan Ground Self-Defense Force, and a Naval Strike Missile (NSM) from a launcher on the back of a Palletized Load System (PLS) by the U.S. Army. This marks the first time a land based unit will participate in the live fire event during RIMPAC. RIMPAC 18 will also include international band engagements and highlight fleet innovation during an Innovation Fair.
Additionally, for the first time since RIMPAC 2002, U.S. 3rd Fleet's Command Center will relocate from San Diego to Pearl Harbor to support command and control of all 3rd Fleet forces in 3rd Fleet's area of responsibility to include forces operating forward in the Western Pacific. The Fleet Command Center will be established at a deployable joint command and control on Hospital Point for the first part of the exercise and then transition to USS Portland (LPD 27) for the remainder of the exercise.

Hosted by Commander, U.S. Pacific Fleet, RIMPAC 2018 will be led by Commander, U.S. 3rd Fleet, Vice Adm. John D. Alexander, who will serve as combined task force (CTF) commander. Royal Canadian Navy Rear Adm. Bob Auchterlonie will serve as CTF deputy commander, and Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force Rear Adm. Hideyuki Oban as CTF vice commander. Fleet Marine Force will be led by U.S. Marine Corps Brig. Gen. Mark Hashimoto. Other key leaders of the multinational force will include Commodore Pablo Niemann of Armada de Chile, who will command the maritime component, and Air Commodore Craig Heap of the Royal Australian Air Force, who will command the air component.

This robust constellation of allies and partners support sustained and favorable regional balances of power that safeguard security, prosperity and the free and open international order. RIMPAC 2018 contributes to the increased lethality, resiliency and agility needed by the joint and combined force to deter and defeat aggression by major powers across all domains and levels of conflict.

3.) Navy Observes LGBT Pride Month / 31 MAY 18
Navy Office of Information

WASHINGTON (NNS) -- Throughout the month of June, the Navy joins the nation in observing Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) Pride Month.

The Navy is committed to fostering an actively inclusive environment that values the diversity of its force, and recognizes that service members and civilians achieve optimal performance when each and every member of One Navy Team is treated with dignity and respect.

Initially established as "Gay and Lesbian Month" by Presidential Proclamation in 2000, LGBT Pride Month recognizes the accomplishments of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community, and acknowledges their continued struggle to achieve equality.

The Navy and DoD have demonstrated their commitment to gender equality and inclusion by implementing the repeal of the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy in 2011, enabling gay, lesbian and bisexuals to openly serve in the armed forces, and by instituting a 2016 policy change to enable transgender personnel to serve as their preferred gender.

In support of the Navy's primary mission of deterring and defeating adversaries in all domains across all spectrums of warfare, the Navy is committed to building and maintaining force comprised of the most capable and qualified Sailors regardless of ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, class or background.

In accordance with ALNAV 007/18, Navy commands are encouraged to participate in LGBT Pride Month and all special observances throughout the year in recognition of the service and dedication of the men and women who contribute their diverse skills, perspectives, talents and backgrounds to strengthen One Navy Team.

For more information about LGBT Pride Month, visit:
Getting sea-going sailors into job-specific training sooner is driving tweaks to the Navy’s long-running Professional Apprenticeship Career Track (PACT) program.

“The competition for talent is tremendous,” Katson said. “That, coupled with the fact our Navy is growing, we have to do two things better – we have to be able to really assess high-quality folks and increase our retention of those sailors.”

Retention is vital for the Navy, which has set an aggressive end strength goal for the number of sailors needed to meet mission demands. Currently, about 111,600 of the Navy’s 325,673 sailors are serving at sea, according to Navy sources and a previously reported USNI News analysis of Navy staffing data.

But as the size of the fleet is expected to grow, the Navy anticipates needing about 7,700 more sailors to properly staff ships currently contracted to be built and come online during the next several years.

While not solving this crunch for trained sea-going sailors, the changes to PACT are expected to help alleviate this crunch for sailors trained to fill needed jobs. By providing specific apprenticeship training to sailors when they first join the Navy, the PACT program quickly puts these sailors in jobs at sea where they work alongside sailors designated for ratings in one of three basic career paths – Surface Warfare, Engineering, and Aviation, Katson said.

“It’s a way to give sailors the ability to look at jobs in these tracks and then give them a specific skills training pipeline to become rated sailors and continue on in that path through advancement and a career in the Navy.”

The program has been around for many years – Katson was a part of an earlier iteration of the current PACT program when she first joined the Navy – and has been adjusted as needs of the Navy have shifted. Currently, about 5,500 enlisted sailors are in the program, and all go to sea, Katson said.

The most significant change taking effect June 1 is PACT sailors will now sign a three-year contract, instead of what had been four-year enlistments, Katson said. By giving sailors an idea of the various jobs available and putting them on a career path sooner, they’ll be encouraged to reenlist, Katson said. The new changes to the program speed up this process and provide the Navy with a better way to match current staffing needs of its sea-going fleet.

As for shortening the commitment, Katson said the Navy is not worried about losing many sailors after three years.

“If you like your job, you’re staying,” Katson said.
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