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USNS Mercy and USNS Millinocket To Depart Hawaii for Pacific Partnership Deployment

By U.S. Pacific Fleet Public Affairs

PEARL HARBOR (NNS) - The hospital ship USNS Mercy (T-AH 19) and the Joint High Speed Vessel USNS Millinocket (JHSV 3) are scheduled to depart May 27 for a four-month deployment in support of the Navy's Pacific Partnership 2015.

The tenth iteration of the U.S. Pacific Fleet's annual Pacific Partnership mission will take place in the Southeast Asia and Oceania regions over a four-month period beginning in late May.

Host nations will include Fiji, Kiribati, Papua New Guinea, Federated States of Micronesia, Republic of the Philippines, Solomon Islands and Vietnam.

Working at the invitation of each host nation, U.S. Naval forces will be joined by U.S. Army, U.S. Marine Corps, and U.S. Air Force personnel as well as non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and regional partners including Australia, New Zealand, Japan, Republic of Korea, Malaysia, Canada, Timor Leste, Fiji and France to improve maritime security, conduct humanitarian assistance, and strengthen disaster response preparedness.

Born out of the devastation wrought by the 2004 tsunami that swept through parts of Southeast Asia, Pacific Partnership began as a military-led humanitarian response to one of the world's most catastrophic natural disasters. Building on the success and goodwill of this operation, the hospital ship USNS Mercy returned to the region in 2006 for the inaugural Pacific Partnership mission. The mission staff expanded to include partner nation militaries and NGOs working to increase the disaster relief capabilities of Bangladesh, Indonesia, the Philippines and East Timor. Since then, Pacific Partnership has grown in scope and size.

U.S. Navy Capt. Christopher Engdahl, commander of Destroyer Squadron 9, based in Everett, Washington, will lead this year's mission from Mercy. USNS Millinocket will be deploying on

the Pacific Partnership mission for the first time, with embarked elements of the 30th Naval Construction Regiment.

Partner nation militaries and government agencies, NGOs and host nation planning efforts have focused on collaborative efforts with professionals in the fields of medicine, dentistry, veterinary, public health services, engineering and disaster response.

For more information on Pacific Partnership, visit the official Pacific Partnership website at: <http://www.cpf.navy.mil/pacific-partnership/2015/>

*News media are invited to attend a press conference with senior leaders of the Pacific Partnership 2015 mission and participate in ship tours of the hospital ship USNS Mercy (T-AH 19) and the Joint High Speed Vessel USNS Millinocket (JHSV 3) on Tuesday, May 26. RSVP with LT Paul Fylstra at paul.fylstra@navy.mil, 808-473-1173 or 808-590-8363. News media will be met at the Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam Nimitz Gate Pass & ID parking lot at **9:45 a.m.** on May 26 to gain access to the base. All reporters and photographers must have valid government-issued press credentials to attend. Media representatives are invited to tour both ships and have lunch onboard USNS Millinocket (\$5.50 per person).*

*Additionally, media interested in covering the departure of the USNS Mercy and USNS Millinocket on the Pacific Partnership 2015 mission should also RSVP with the point of contacts above. Plan to meet at the Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam Nimitz Gate Pass & ID parking lot at **6 a.m.** on Wednesday, May 27 to gain access to the base.*

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