

# Personal Readiness Summit stresses importance of respect

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**Story and photo by MC3 Diana Quinlan**

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Officers and senior enlisted personnel attended the annual combined U.S. Pacific Fleet and Navy Region Hawaii Personal Readiness Summit held Feb. 4-6 in the Ford Island Conference Center at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam.

“Respect” for all Sailors and civilians is this year’s theme. The summit offered coverage of various topics including physical readiness, command climate, fleet stressors and programs, sexual assault prevention and response (SAPR), drug and alcohol prevention, and suicide prevention.

“Events like this summit will help us get ahead of these incidents so we can improve our readiness and allow us to get to the fight tonight,” said Adm. Harry Harris Jr., commander of U.S. Pacific Fleet.

“Readiness to defend our nation is our top concern, and people are an important part of that.”

Harris stressed the importance of involvement at all levels of leadership as well as the power of intervention.

“It requires time and attention from all levels of the chain of command to get to these issues,” said Harris, who also presented positive examples of Sailors stepping up, stepping in, taking charge, and preventing incidents from happening and resolving various issues that would otherwise negatively impact the fleet and individual readiness.

A speaker panel, consisting of experts and representatives for such programs as SAPR, suicide prevention, physical readiness and others, held a question and answer session where leaders could address potential issues, discuss solutions, and receive information, updates and brief counseling.

“This is an interactive training for target groups, leaders, command program advisors and officers and senior enlisted, to provide opportunities to share best practices and lessons learned and ask questions of the OPNAV staff,” said Linda Boswell, alcohol and drug control officer, education liaison officer, U.S. Pacific Fleet, and coordinator of the events.

Rear Adm. Rick Williams, commander of Navy Region Hawaii and Naval Surface Group Middle Pacific, and Lt. Cmdr. Kaarin Coe, suicide prevention coordinator at Military and Family Support Center Navy Region Hawaii, led fleet stressors and programs portion of the summit.

“Even when we’re not forward-deployed, there are stressors in the military. The impact is often hard for our Sailors, but it can be even harder for families who have to cope, adapt and overcome,” Williams said. “How do we cope? We help each other. It’s a pact, a trust. When Sailors know their families are cared for and supported, they are more able to focus on the mission.”

Additionally, Williams strongly encourage communication up and down the chain of command. He stressed the importance of leadership support and need to eliminate any fear that may prevent subordinates to

address stress-related issues to the chain of command and inspire service members and their families to step forth and get help.

Chief Parachute Rigger Jeremy Kelsey shared his personal story of an attempted suicide after facing ongoing depression and exhibiting destructive behavior. Kelsey spoke of possible reasons that may lead Sailors to commit suicide and described types of behavior that may help determine and prevent suicidal tendencies.

Kelsey also used his personal story as an example of a role that leadership plays in lives of Sailors and how caring, understanding and early response can save lives, set an individual on the right track, and encourage to progress and succeed in naval career.

“This is my first seminar and I think it is priceless,” said Cmdr. Ryan D. Collins, commanding officer of the guided-missile destroyer USS Chung-Hoon (DDG 93). “It is definitely worth taking the time out of the day to sit down [with program coordinators] and ask questions, to provide the feedback that they can take back, make adjustments to the Navy policy, and ultimately, provide a better product to the Sailor.”



As part of the Personal Readiness Summit, Sailors stationed in Hawaii attend a program called “Comedy is the Cure” presented by comedian Bernie McGrenahan during an all hands call at Sharkey Theater, Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam.