RIMPAC 2012 Is BIG

By Dr. Richard Kelley

Mildred Courtney and our ‘ohana in the Military Liaison Office are working nearly around the clock trying to find accommodations and provide services for the servicemen and -women who will be visiting Hawai‘i in connection with the biggest ever RIMPAC (Rim of the Pacific) exercise, scheduled to start this Friday (June 29) and continue for five weeks through August 3 in the waters and the skies off and above Hawai‘i.

RIMPAC is the world’s largest international naval exercise, held in July and August of even-numbered years. It is hosted and administered by the U.S. Pacific Fleet and will be led by Vice Adm. Gerald Beaman, commander of the U.S. Third Fleet (one of the Pacific Fleet’s major commands). The goal is to “foster and sustain cooperative relationships that are critical to ensuring the safety of sea lanes and security on the world's oceans.” According to the Third Fleet Public Affairs office, the theme of RIMPAC 2012 is “Capable, Adaptive, Partners.” The participants will conduct a series of exercises ranging from war games to humanitarian relief operations.

This year’s RIMPAC exercise, the 23rd in the series that began in 1971 during the Vietnam War, is setting records in several ways.

• It is the largest ever, with 22 nations involved, as compared to 14 nations in 2010 and only five nations in 1971.

• For the first time, Russia will participate, with three ships; a large anti-submarine ship, Admiral Panteleyev, a marine rescue ship, Fotiy Krylov, and a tanker, Boris Butoma, according to Ilya Kramnik writing for The Voice of Russia.

• Non-U.S. officers will command components of the combined task force during the exercise for the first time. Commodore Stuart Mayer of the Royal Australian Navy will command the Maritime Component and Brig. Gen. Michael Hood of the Royal Canadian Air Force will command the Air Component.

• The exercise will feature the first large-scale demonstration and evaluation of cross-platform use of biofuels in U.S. surface units and carrier-based aircraft. Algae-based biofuels and fuels developed from used cooking oil and non-food-grade animal fats will be combined in a 50/50 blend with petroleum-based diesel and aviation fuel. This demonstration is part of an overall Navy program called the “Great, Green Fleet,” whose purpose is to conserve energy resources and focus on fuels available within the United States rather than imports.

RIMPAC’s economic impact on Hawai‘i will be significant and widespread but difficult to accurately measure. In the area of tourism, Outrigger CEO David Carey – who is also chairman of the Military Affairs Council of the Chamber of Commerce of Hawai‘i – said, “RIMPAC sailors like to spend shore leave in Waikiki or check out a neighbor island. It’s great exposure, and they’re mostly first-time visitors, which is a very positive thing, since some of them will be back again someday, perhaps with family.”

To learn more about RIMPAC activities and participants, visit www.cpf.navy.mil/rimpac/2012.

So, for the next five weeks, the lights in our Military Liaison Office in Waikiki will be burning brightly late at night and again early in the morning while Mildred Courtney and her staff try to accommodate the needs of our servicemen and -women, as well as those visiting from 21 other countries. And in our lobbies, restaurants, shops and corridors you may hear some visitors speaking with accents and languages that are unfamiliar to your ears – perhaps even Russian. If you do, just smile and say, “Aloha.” They'll understand perfectly for that is the international language of welcome and hospitality understood all around the Pacific Rim!
RIMPAC 2012 By The Numbers

25 nations
6 submarines
42 surface ships
200 aircraft
25,000 personnel

RIMPAC 2012 Countries

Units from:
Australia
Canada
Chile
Colombia
France
Japan
Mexico
New Zealand
Republic of Korea
Russia
Singapore
United States

Personnel from:
India
Indonesia
Malaysia
Netherlands
Norway
Peru
Philippines
Thailand
Tonga
United Kingdom

Observers from:
Bangladesh
Brazil
Brunei
Cambodia
Papua New Guinea
Sri Lanka
Vietnam