

## **Symposium Helps Returning IA Sailors**

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TOKYO (NNS) -- Yokosuka's Fleet and Family Support Center (FFSC) held its third post-individual augmentee (IA) symposium Jan. 24-27 at the U.S. Naval Joint Service Activity, New Sanno Hotel in Tokyo.

The four-day Commander, Naval Forces Japan sponsored event featured classes designed to help ease the transition process for returning IA Sailors to reintegrate into family and Navy life.

According to Lorraine Bacon, the Work, Family, Life and Education Services coordinator at Yokosuka's FFSC, IA assignments can create issues that Navy families are not used to dealing with.

"Our Sailors are used to going to sea and we've done a great job as a Navy of training our families how to handle sea duty," she said. "But we ask these Sailors to go away and serve outside of their normal job with the Army or the Marine Corps in places they normally would not serve."

Bacon said that reuniting a family following this kind of duty can present unique challenges for the Sailor, the spouse or children.

Lt. Bill Stewart, a chaplain from Yokosuka's Chapel of Hope and a speaker at the symposium, said he can relate to the complications faced by returning IAs after deploying to Iraq with Seabees.

"I've been through a lot of this, so there's a special place in my heart for helping these folks because I realize the challenges they're facing," Stewart said. "The biggest problem is when people can't identify those challenges and don't know what resources are available for them to get help. We also see that many times people can't see the forest through the trees; they're so involved in the issues they're dealing with, that it takes people outside of them to identify the problems and help them get to help."

Bacon added that it is much more essential overseas and in the forward-deployed naval forces.

"We are asking our Sailors to do a lot of things, and it's not like shore duty or sea duty in the States. We are on a much, much faster operational tempo," said Bacon.

She added that the goal is to help returning IAs and their families accept the changes and deal with the challenges that arise.

"We want them to be able to fully reintegrate back into their life, but we're not looking to make them who they were before," Bacon said. "Our Sailors are always going to be different; they're always going to have changed. We want to help them to reintegrate into their lives, but we're not asking them to go into pre-IA Sailor mode. What we're asking them to do is to be able to function in the reality that they have."

"There are a lot of things that have changed and they've got to learn how to readjust to that," said Stewart. "So that if challenges do come along, they'll know how to better handle those in a healthy manner."