

Navy Medicine Drops Anchor During Tampa Bay Navy Week

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TAMPA, Fla. (NNS) -- Medical professionals from around the Navy met with local healthcare providers, civic groups and community leaders to discuss the current state of Navy Medicine as part of Tampa Bay Navy Week 2011, Jan. 22-29.

Rear Adm. Richard Vinci, deputy chief, Logistics and Installations, Bureau of Navy Medicine and Surgery, was the senior officer representing the Navy during Tampa Bay Navy Week 2011.

"We are here to thank the citizens of Tampa for everything they do for our armed forces, especially the Navy and all of our native Floridian Sailors," said Vinci. "We also want everyone to know that we are good stewards of American tax dollars, by showing them some of the things that Sailors are doing around the fleet. As a key component of good stewardship, the Navy is focused on energy efficiency.

"The Navy is leading the way in developing Biofuels and LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design)," Vinci said. "Each of the new facilities that the Bureau of Naval Medicine is building is certified LEED Silver or better. We are committed to the environment."

In a meeting with Dianne Morrison-Beedy, Dean of the College of Nursing at the University of South Florida, Vinci shared how Navy medicine is critical to the chief of naval operation's maritime strategy. Along with traditional roles like deployments and projecting power abroad, Vinci discussed how international partnerships and teaming with non-government organizations supports the Navy's mission.

"The Navy truly is the healthcare tip of the spear," said Vinci. "When the tsunami struck in Indonesia, Navy doctors were the first international assistance to arrive at the scene. Health projection pays benefits in the long term. Now, nations like Indonesia and Haiti are more likely to welcome American service members in the future."

Cmdr. Sherri Santos, Navy Nurse Corps; and Lt. Cmdr. Joseph Ayers, Navy Medical Corps from Naval Hospital Jacksonville, met with trauma surgeons from Tampa General Hospital to discuss new experiences, life saving techniques and procedures currently used in the war in Afghanistan.

Ayers spoke about the people they treated during his recent deployment.

"We treated tons of Afghani children who had been injured by IED's (improvise explosive devices)," said Ayers. "Often times, they were the children of Taliban bomb makers who accidentally set off the explosive prematurely. By treating those wounded children, hopefully we sent the message, at least to some of them, that we aren't the bad guys."

According to Vinci, providing care to civilians in need, in places such as Afghanistan, is an example of smart power.

"There are two sides to Navy medicine's mission," said Vinci. "We provide direct medical support to our warfighters anywhere we operate, whether it be on the deckplate or on the battlefield. Marines don't go into the field, and ships don't go to sea without doctors, nurses or corpsmen.

"Smart power is providing humanitarian assistance and disaster relief alongside our international partners to help bring stability and hope to those in need to the benefit of the global community. Navy medicine is often a cornerstone of these important missions."

Morrison-Beedy said she was excited to meet with the staff from Navy Medicine.

"We treat a lot of veterans here, and we are making great strides in areas like rehabilitation and PTSD (Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder)," Morrison-Beedy said. "The information we learn has tremendous value in treating future, returning veterans as well as civilians who suffer similar traumas."

Vinci spoke about the recent advances in research and treatment the Navy is developing today.

"During World War II, we learned the value of plasma and now it's a common practice," Vinci said. "Today, our surgeons are developing revolutionary vascular and transplant techniques through lessons learned on the battlefield."

Along with Navy Medicine, more than 100 Sailors involved with Tampa Bay Navy Week 2011 participated in outreach events around Tampa Bay, and finished with the Gasparilla Pirate Festival, Jan. 29.

Tampa Bay Navy Week is the first of 21 Navy weeks across the country this year. Navy Weeks are designed to show Americans the investment they make in their Navy and increase awareness in cities that do not have a significant Navy presence.

For more information about Tampa Bay Navy Week, visit www.navyweek.org/tampa.

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