



LEARN

ENGAGE

SUPPORT

INFORM

DOCA

Defense Orientation Conference Association



65th Annual Meeting Program Executive Summary September 2016



DOCA celebrated its milestone 65th Annual Meeting in style with a patriotic performance by eighteen members of the U.S. Navy Band Southwest and an inspiring presentation by Brigadier General Paul Lebidine, Commanding General, 4th Marine Division, on September 9th, 2016. More than one hundred DOCA members, spouses, prospective members and guests registered for the three-day program in San Diego, CA, which included briefings and tours by the Navy and Marine Corps. Although DOCA has visited various places in the southern California area well over a dozen times in its history, installations, units, missions and technology are

constantly evolving. It was therefore very fitting that we return to the region to learn about the latest capabilities available to our Navy-Marine Corps team. And indeed, new technology and organizational structures were key features of our program, from submarines to the new Littoral Combat Ship to modern explosive ordnance detection and disposal techniques. Much of what we saw and learned would have seemed like science fiction to the founders of DOCA in 1952. But that only serves to emphasize the continuing importance of DOCA's mission to provide opportunities to keep its members informed about our national defense.



The program began with a visit to San Diego's only submarine squadron. Commissioned just over 30 years ago, the squadron is home to five Los Angeles class nuclear powered attack submarines, as well as the floating dry dock USS Arco. Breaking into smaller groups, some had the opportunity to experience the operation of a Los Angeles class attack submarine control room, actually "driving" the boat on hydraulic lifts that tilted, dipped and rose in response to movements of the dive and steering control wheels. Others toured the damage control trainer where submarine sailors are challenged to deal with realistic flooding and fire situations so that they are prepared for the real thing should it ever occur. We also visited USS ARCO, a Medium Auxiliary Repair Dock employed primarily to repair and maintain the Navy's submarine fleet.



After a lunch overlooking San Diego bay at the venerable Tom Ham's Lighthouse restaurant, we again split into two groups to visit Naval Air Station North Island and one of the Navy's Explosive Ordnance Disposal Units. NAS North Island was commissioned a naval air station in 1917. The station was granted official recognition as the "Birthplace of Naval Aviation" by a resolution of the House Armed Services Committee on August 15, 1963. The Navy's first aviator, Lieutenant Ellyson, and many of his colleagues were trained at North Island starting in 1911. At that time, North Island was an uninhabited sand flat, and had been used in the late 19th century for horseback riding and hunting by guests of J. D.

Spreckles' resort hotel, the now famous Hotel Del Coronado. The station is now the home of four major flag staffs, over 230 aircraft, and its quay wall is homeport to two aircraft carriers: USS Carl Vinson and USS Theodore Roosevelt. The Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) Unit at Point Loma trains at the historic Battery Whistler, once part of the old coastal defense fortifications. Although all of the services have their own EOD units, this one is unique in that its members are trained as divers so that they can deal with underwater mines. They also routinely deploy with the U.S. Navy SEALs, the Navy's elite special forces operators. As one of them stated proudly: "No SEAL platoon would go anywhere without its EOD contingent."



That evening, members and guests were enthralled by former Army Ranger Kris "Tanto" Paronto who described his experience as one of the handful of defenders of our consulate in Benghazi, Libya during the 2012 attack. Following his presentation, Kris signed copies of his book and graciously chatted with each of our attendees while we enjoyed a reception at the Marriott Marquis hotel.



The next day, after our Annual Business Meeting, we made the short drive to Naval Base San Diego, most often referred to by the locals as simply "32nd Street" because the main gate lies just at the end of that thoroughfare. There we were given a tour of the Navy surface fleet's firefighting and damage control training facility. The training that all sailors go through is a graduated program, starting with the basics of terminology and how to don or employ their equipment, then on to basic firefighting techniques and methods to control shipboard flooding, and finally the test of battling full conflagrations and performing flooding repair. We then moved across the street to the Littoral Combat Ship (LCS) Training Facility. The LCS is the Navy's newest class of combatant ship. Relatively small and with a very shallow draft, it can easily operate in the coastal areas of the world conducting mine hunting, anti-submarine warfare and anti-surface warfare. It was specifically designed to take on the roles previously performed by three different classes of Navy ships: the high-speed coastal patrol craft, the mine hunters and the frigates – all of which were nearing the end of their active service lives when the LCS was conceived. A luncheon at the Navy's "Anchors" conference center and a briefing by the Naval Base San Diego Executive Officer rounded out our day. NAVBASE San Diego is home to about 20,000 Navy personnel and about 6,000 civilians. With 13 piers, 50 ships and more than 120 tenant commands, it is one of the Navy's largest bases. Founded in 1921 as the U.S. Navy Destroyer Base, San Diego, it has been officially renamed almost a half dozen times over the years.



Friday morning brought an early reveille so that we could arrive at the Marine Corps Recruit Depot in time for morning colors. It was an inspiring ceremony, rivaled only by the pomp and circumstance of the recruit graduation ceremony later that morning. We watched as 518 men of Kilo Company completed their basic training and proudly claimed the title of United States Marine. The Bayview Club at MCRD, with its beautiful view of a marina, was our venue for lunch with drill instructors and other MCRD Marines. Brigadier General Journey, Commander, Marine Corps Recruit Depot San Diego, made a surprise appearance. Despite his busy schedule that day he carved out time to speak with us, shake hands and answer questions one-on-one from our

participants. The Marines who joined us at lunch were equally impressive and reinforced in all of us the conviction that our nation's security is in good hands.

The program concluded with our 65th Annual Banquet. Brigadier General Paul Lebidine, Commanding General, 4th Marine Division provided the keynote address while the Navy Band Southwest offered a patriotic program and a Marine color guard inspired us all by parading the colors for the national anthem. Vicki Churchward thanked the members for their support and participation during her two years as DOCA president and passed the gavel to Michael Shyne, DOCA's 38th president.

