

Experiences

attorney and five legalmen – might handle more than 2,000 powers of attorney in a year, he said the ship benefits greatly from having the services of the Reserve JAG units available.

“As a JAG officer, you focus on military justice, international affairs or other specific issues. The Reserve JAG people have a military knowledge, but they also have a wealth of civilian experience in estate planning and other types of legal work that benefits our people,” said Hunt.

The interaction of Reserve and active duty members – in this case JAG officers and legalmen – are helping to ensure Stennis is at her fighting best.

IC1 Joshua O’Meara is one Stennis Sailor that was first in line to take advantage of the special days of legal services aboard Stennis.

“I just want to make sure everything is taken care of, so my wife doesn’t have to worry while I’m gone,” O’Meara said.

O’Meara checked aboard Stennis a couple of months ago after serving aboard USS Constellation (CV 64).

“I’ve known for a long time I should get this done, but never took the time to drive to NLSO,” in San Diego to meet with a JAG, he said.

“The last thing we need is for a young spouse back home to have some kind of a problem that could have been addressed in advance,” said CMDMC Terry Etherton, command master chief aboard Stennis. “And I don’t want a Sailor to be worrying about problems back home that could have been dealt with beforehand.”

For the legal readiness evolution on Stennis, the ship’s legal Department handed out information and scheduled Sailors for appointment during a family night a week before the NRLSO team came aboard.

According to CAPT Matthew Foley, commanding officer of NRLSO 219, the evolution aboard Stennis, and similar evolutions in the past aboard Nimitz, are great examples of the active-duty and Reserve components working together toward one goal.

“This is what we are here for, to help the fleet be ready,” said Foley. “If we can come out here for a couple of days and make it so that a Sailor only has to walk up a couple ladder wells to get any legal concerns taken care of, that’s what we want to do.”

While Stennis Sailors were getting ready to deploy, Reserve legalmen and JAG officers were also benefiting from the experience

according to LNC Loida Morrison, leading chief petty officer of NRLSO 219.

“Our junior people, especially those who were not prior Navy, gain a lot just from being exposed to what being on a ship is all about,” she said.

That includes people like LN2 Class Susan Santiago, who joined The Navy Reserve three years ago with no prior military service.

“This is great experience for me, but it isn’t just practice, we are actually doing something that helps the active duty do their job a little better,” Santiago said. “That’s what I wanted to do when I joined the Reserve.”

Morrison knows first hand the benefits of having a power of attorney. Last year her husband was deployed to Iraq for about a year. Shortly after he left, the roof on their house sprung a leak.

“It just goes to show that whatever you can do in advance to have peace of mind before the ship pulls out, the better it is for everyone,” said Morrison.

To ensure that as many Sailors were reached as possible, the NRLSO detachments offered both day and evening hours during its two days aboard Stennis. In addition, NRLSO personnel staffed the NLSO office in San Diego the following weekend to handle walk-ins. Two weeks later, just before the ship went to sea, CDR Beth Harris, executive officer of NRLSO 219, spent a week aboard Stennis as part of her Annual Training, to service any Sailors who may have been on leave or otherwise missed the earlier dates.

CAPT Mike Quinn, active-duty commander of NLSO Southwest, said his office routinely augments its operations with its assigned Reserve units.

“We provide the equipment and the Reserve units provide the manpower and, in the case of the event on Stennis, the leadership for servicing the fleet,” Quinn said.

Hunt mentioned personal readiness always gets an extra emphasis as a deployment date nears. It is imperative for Sailors to always try to keep themselves as prepared as possible.

“Stennis is on a 96-hour tether,” Hunt said. “So we all think we know the date we are going to ship out, but you never know when an order can come down. You owe it to yourself and your family to plan ahead.” ❖