Strategic Weapons Facility Pacific Celebrates 60 Years of Supporting the Nation's Nuclear Deterrence Mission



Vice Adm. Johnny Wolfe Jr., left, director of U.S. Navy Strategic Systems Programs, presents the fiscal year 2023 Chief of Naval Operations Shore Safety Award to Capt. Keith Fahlenkamp, Strategic Weapons Facility Pacific commanding officer, at a gala held at Naval Base Kitsap-Bangor Plaza in Silverdale, Washington July 20, 2024. (U.S. Navy photo by MC2 Victoria Galbraith)

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From Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Victoria Galbraith

SILVERDALE, Wash. – Strategic Weapons Facility Pacific

(SWFPAC) celebrated 60 years of service to its country and people by hosting a gala at Naval Base Kitsap-Bangor Plaza July 20, 2024.

Originally designated Polaris Missile Facility Pacific in 1964—and renamed SWFPAC in 1980—the field site was established to support the nation's sea-based nuclear deterrence program.

"It's the people that have really made SWFPAC a success throughout these years," said Vice Adm. Johnny Wolfe Jr., director of U.S. Navy Strategic Systems Programs (SSP).

"The foundation that they laid back in the 1960s to assemble the facility, this mission and the first generation of trained people who executed the development, oversight, and surety of the nation's inaugural sea-based strategic weapon system, cultivated a culture that has carried throughout the last 60 years and will stand strong for the next 60 years."

SWPAC—SSP's naval shore facility in the Pacific—assembles and deploys Trident II D5 missiles aboard Fleet Ballistic Missile submarines (SSBNs) while safeguarding the nation's strategic assets. SWFPAC's strategic deterrence mission has been a vital lynchpin to the nation's Warfighting Navy in the Pacific—a region where the Navy's maritime mission is critical to defending against near-peer competitors and adversaries, supporting U.S. strategy and acting as a guarantor for the security of its citizens.

During the gala, Vice Adm. Wolfe presented two awards to Capt. Keith Fahlenkamp, SWFPAC commanding officer, including the fiscal year 2023 Admiral Raborn Award and the fiscal year 2023 Chief of Naval Operations Shore Safety Award—an honor that has now been awarded three times to the command.

"I want to impart a heartfelt congratulations to the incredible team here at SWFPAC that has been directly

responsible for the continued security of the Nation for 60 years," said Capt. Fahlenkamp.

"These awards represent just a fraction of the dedication of this workforce to the mission, our organization and the Nation."

Against the backdrop of an extremely complex global environment, the Navy must be equipped to operate in challenging conditions, and SWFPAC is at the forefront of ensuring sailors have the right platforms, the right capabilities and weapons, and the right people for the job, today and in the future.

"One example of SWFPAC's tremendous support to the fleet and the warfighter was the expedited load-out of USS Kentucky (SSBN 737)," Vice Adm. Wolfe recalled during his speech.

"The excellent foresight of the staff enabled Kentucky crucial flexibility to execute a port call in South Korea in July 2023—a reassurance to our Nation's allies that we are committed to strategic deterrence in the region and for the world."

The last six decades have paved the way for the next 60 years as SWFPAC focuses forward to supporting SSP's efforts to sustain and develop weapon systems in support of the Sea-Based Strategic Deterrence mission through the year 2084 (SBSD 2084). Providing the Navy's warfighters the ability to preserve the peace, respond in crisis, and win decisively in war will be at the forefront of SWFPAC's responsibilities in the coming years. As the Columbia-class SSBNs begin operational patrols in the next decade, SWFPAC will not only sustain the strategic weapons system (SWS) for the current Ohio-class SSBNs but provide our Navy advanced weapon capabilities with the Trident D5 Life Extension (D5LE) II SWS and the W93/Mk7 warhead and reentry body assembly.

“What you do has broad influence nationally and internationally,” said Vice Adm. Wolfe, who highlighted the critical nature of the Navy’s charge in the Pacific.

“As we move away from the last 60 years and into the next 60, we must think, act, and operate outside of the traditional sources of strength our military has relied on for the last six decades in order to be prepared for tomorrow’s complex battlefield, especially in here in the Pacific.”

SSP provides training, systems, equipment, facilities and personnel responsible for ensuring the safety, security, and effectiveness of the nation’s Submarine Launched Ballistic Missile (SLBM) Trident II (D5LE) Strategic Weapon System