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VFWNY 20-06

May 26, 2020

Virtual Fleet Week New York comes to a close; City thanks service members for aiding in the fight against COVID-19

NORFOLK, VA (NRMA) – New York City thanked the U.S. Navy, Marine Corps and Coast Guard today for hosting the first Virtual Fleet Week New York, giving the city’s residents a new way to continue to take part in the annual maritime celebration despite the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

Fleet Week New York has been held nearly every year since 1984 to celebrate the sea services, and typically involves public ship tours, band performances and school visits. This year’s Virtual Fleet Week New York was conducted entirely online through a series of live and pre-recorded videos on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

“Fleet Week looked different this year, but our strength and commitment will never waiver,” the city’s official Twitter account said. “Thank you to our service members aiding in the fight against COVID-19.”

New York City’s Mayor Bill de Blasio also echoed this sentiment on Twitter, stating “You can’t help but be inspired when the ships sail in to New York Harbor every May. Fleet Week was different this year. We traded crews on shore leave for military personnel in scrubs, fighting alongside us against COVID-19. We won’t ever forget it.”

Among the dozens of posts, audiences experienced a special live enlistment of future Sailors from the Bronx, Brooklyn and central/northern New Jersey in Times Square, multiple virtual ship tours, and live question-and-answer sessions with service members.

“This was an innovative way for people to connect with our Sailors, Marines and Coast Guardsmen, while also staying safe at home,” said Rear Adm. Charles Rock, Commander, Navy Region Mid-Atlantic. “Our nation’s maritime services always adapt to any challenge we face and Virtual Fleet Week New York is a great example of how we are continuing our mission even in difficult times.”

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Virtual Fleet Week New York 2020 – “A Celebration of the Sea Services”

Virtual Fleet Week New York gave viewers a unique opportunity to participate in photo contests, leave comments, and share content as part of this new interactive experience. Many of the videos demonstrated that measures were in place to ensure the safety of participants, including physical distancing and the use of protective facemasks.

Although ships were not open to the public this year, viewers could still take virtual tours aboard the guided-missile destroyer USS Laboon (DDG 58), as well as go aboard U.S. Coast Guard cutters Coho (WPB-87321), Katherine Walker (WLM-552) and Shrike (WPB-87342). Additionally, viewers got a birds-eye view of the tall ship Barque Eagle (WIX-327) with a drone, which would not be possible as drones are strictly prohibited within the city limits.

Viewers learned about the importance of physical training at home with Marines, heard shout-outs from New York natives aboard the amphibious assault ship USS Wasp (LHD 1), learned about New York's naval history from Navy History and Heritage Command, and received messages from Navy and Marine Corps leadership.

The USO Show Troupe, who perform each year during Fleet Week New York, provided an inspiring message of hope for the future by singing "America The Beautiful" to the service members they missed during this year's event.

Additionally, Navy bands created two virtual concerts for the viewing audiences who generally see them perform live each year from Times Square, and Marine bands provided a tribute to the nation's first-responders called "One Call Away."

Viewers were shown the unmanned MQ-8 Fire Scout helicopter, were introduced to a helicopter pilot with Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron FIVE "Nightdippers," listened to a narrated Coast Guard search and rescue demonstration, and were taken inside a hangar where an E-2D Advanced Hawkeye pilot, naval flight officer and maintainer answered questions live on Facebook.

As the nation paused to honor and remember those who paid the ultimate sacrifice for their country on Memorial Day, Naval Station Norfolk started the day with morning colors. Other tributes included a livestreamed ceremony aboard the World War II-era aircraft carrier USS Intrepid in Manhattan, a highlight of previous Memorial Day parades in New York featuring Sailors, Marines and Coast Guardsmen marching to patriotic music, and a moving performance by the Marine Corps of "Taps" filmed from various locations in California.

Additional content included military working dog handlers, Navy divers and explosive ordnance disposal, environmental stewardship from U.S. Fleet Forces, the Navy Leap Frogs parachute demonstration team, Coast Guard Silent Drill Team, and a Marine Corps air show and Marine Air-Ground Task Force (MAGTF) demonstration, among others.

All videos posted to Fleet Week New York social media accounts will remain online and available at www.fleetweeknewyork.com.