Both primary Pax River runways repaired and reopened

**NAVFAC meets important construction deadline**

By Donna Cipolloni
NAS Patuxent River Public Affairs

It has been a while in the making, but both primary runways at NAS Patuxent River’s Trapnell Airfield were recently repaired and reopened for business Jan. 6 – meeting Naval Facilities Engineering Command’s (NAVFAC) scheduled completion date.

“The Runway Repairs Project started in December 2015,” said Lt. Christina Milone, the NAVFAC construction manager on the project. “Runway 14/32 was closed intermittently in phases from December 2015 to June 2018, then we closed Runway 6/24 from June 2018 to August 2019 before going back to 14/32, which was closed again from September 2019 to January 2020.”

Both runways and supporting infrastructure and facilities were deteriorating, necessitating the need for repairs, which included rehabilitating the runways to meet current standards and extending the serviceable life of the runways and infrastructure by at least 20 years.

Runway 14/32 is 9,000-feet long and Runway 6/24 is 11,000-feet long; both are 200-feet wide. The entire length of the runways was repaired, over 4 million square feet.

“Frequent communications between all parties, including Air Operations and NAS Patuxent River Commanding Officer Capt. Christopher Cox, helped [Public Works] understand the airfield coordination requirements,” Milone explained. “We then worked with the contractors on adjusting their schedule to ensure we were not disrupting airfield operations. Our Engineering Techs Eddie Bowles, Larry Dong and George Erskine had daily oversight of all the construction operations and kept the contractors on schedule.”

Another important component in reopening the runways on time was the completion of the Triton Taxiway and Apron Replacement Project, which was separate from the runway repairs.

“That started in February 2019 and had to be completed in phases in coordination with the Runway Repairs Project,” Milone said. “The existing asphalt taxiway and concrete apron were demolished and 10 inches of concrete was placed on the entire area, totaling over 6,000 cubic yards. The completion of this taxiway was critical to the opening of Runway 14/32 by Jan. 6 to support air operations.”

Being landlocked with a hole the size of two football fields outside their hangar doors presented many challenges for the Triton team when receiving parts for the two aircraft undergoing extensive modifications in the hangar.

“We were granted space at Hangar 306 for the reconstruction period, which turned out to be longer than anyone anticipated due to unforeseen issues, such as weather and a great deal of the taxiway having to be undercut and built back up,” said Barry Keffer, facility operations specialist for Triton. “Our maintenance crew

**Clinic personnel reflect on service aboard hospital ship Comfort**

By Donna Cipolloni
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On Nov. 15, hospital ship USNS Comfort (T-AH-20) returned to homeport in Norfolk, Virginia, following a five-month deployment to South America, Central America and the Caribbean, and 11 Sailors from Naval Health Clinic Patuxent River (NHCPR) returned home with her.

Health clinic medical and flight deck personnel had accompanied Comfort as she embarked June 14 on a humanitarian assistance mission along with multinational personnel from across our partner nations as well as allied personnel, non-governmental organizations, and other U.S. Navy personnel.

Comfort medical teams worked alongside medical professionals from host nations absorbing thousands of Venezuelan migrants and refugees, according to an article released by U.S. Southern Command, which oversaw the deployment. The medical services provided included basic medical evaluation and treatment, preventive medicine, dental screenings and treatment, optometry screenings, eyewear distribution, general surgery, ophthalmologic surgery, public health training, and additional specialties as required.

Chief Hospital Corpsman Daniel Bobic led the Medical Services group by joining 121 multi-national service members and civilians into a fully functioning team, which completed thousands of medical encounters. He ensured personnel at each mission were accounted for while also coordinating with host nation entities for the crucial facility, security, water, and other necessities required to ensure mission success.

“As a multinational medical force, we brought the best of the best from multiple countries and provided care to those in the most need,” said Bobic, who works out of NHCPR. “We had subject matter experts in each field of care, and not one person we provided care to left not feeling the love and compassion from Comfort’s crew.”

Nearly 70,000 patients from 12 countries were served in 154 days, with just more than 9,500 of them taking advantage of dental procedures.

“As a general dentist, I provided examinations, fillings and extractions to my patients,” said Capt. Benjamin Young, Dental Corps, with NHCPR. “We’d typically leave the ship by 6:30 a.m. or so and arrive [at remote facilities] around 7:30 to get ready to begin seeing patients. We’d continue until 3 or 4 p.m. and then we’d return to the ship.”

Young said the day of arrival in each country involved setting up the clinics.

“When we visited a country, the first day we arrived was spent unloading equipment, supplies and instruments from ship to shore, typically by helicopter, to two different locations,” he explained. “We didn’t usually set up in a hospital or clinic, we set up in elementary