



ACCORDING to the US Military website, the Naval Support Activity (NSA) Bahrain covers the busiest 60 acres in the world. NSA Bahrain is a United States Navy base, situated in the Kingdom of Bahrain and is home to U.S. Naval Forces Central Command and United States Fifth Fleet. It is located in the middle of the Middle East and provides services and support to ships at sea, remote sites throughout the region, and military and civilian personnel living in Bahrain. In the ongoing war on terror, NSA Bahrain plays a crucial role as the primary base in the region which supports and enables the war fighters, providing logistical, supply and protection needs to the naval and marine activities of Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) and Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF). A few months ago, a Filipino American was tasked to be the Commanding Officer of this vital US Navy base, Capt. Rick Sadsad. One the highest-ranking Filipino Americans in the US Navy, Capt. Rick Sadsad is no stranger to being Commanding Officer (CO) of a major US Naval installation. Prior to being assigned to head NSA Bahrain, he was the CO of Naval Air Station Whiting Field in Milton, Florida, the US Navy's premier basic flight school. A sign on the entrance of a classroom building says it all – “Through these doors pass the future of naval aviation. At Whiting Field we train navy, air force, Coast Guard and Marine Corps to be pilots, naval aviators,” Capt. Sadsad explained. Students include those sent by America’s allies, including a few from the Philippine Navy and Air Force. Whiting Field also hosts 120 planes and 150 helicopters of the US Navy, and Capt. Enrique “Rick” Sadsad was the man charged with keeping this large community and everything in it from 2007-2009.

Enrique Sadsad was raised in Olongapo City, Philippines, near Subic Bay Naval Base. Three of his uncles who were already in the US Navy influenced him to follow the same path. He was already working as a helicopter technician at the Philippine Aerospace Dev’t Corp. in Pasay City when he passed the entrance tests and joined the US Navy at age 21. “This was when there was still this agreement for the US to recruit so many Filipinos for the US Navy,” he said. Sadsad was referring to the U.S.-Philippine Military Bases Agreement of 1947. “Under the agreement, there were a

certain amount of sailors to be recruited in Subic,” said Sadsad. “I was lucky enough to be selected.”

Capt. Sadsad started his career as an Aviation Machinist’s Mate, qualifying as a Search and Rescue Naval Aircrewman. After earning a Bachelor of Science Degree in Aviation Management from Southern Illinois University, he transferred to Aviation Officer Candidate School in July 1983. He was designated a Naval Flight Officer in December 1984. He served as a Naval Officer at more than a dozen commands, each with their own challenges. Capt. Sadsad flew aboard P-3 Orion “submarine hunters” and later qualified as an instructor. In between missions, he was able to earn a Masters degree in Business Organizational Management from the University of La Verne. In 1992, he served aboard the aircraft carrier USS Constellation, occupying various positions, including as anti-air/anti-surface warfare weapons coordinator and tactical action officer. He was designated Commander Patrol Wings of the U S Pacific Fleet and OIC of Naval Air Station North Island in California.

In 1996, Capt. Sadsad became aircraft maintenance officer for Patrol Squadron 47 in Hawaii, and later became Head Enlisted Community Manager under the Chief of Naval Operations Military Personnel Plans and Policy Division in Washington DC. He commanded one of the training squadrons, VT-4, at Whiting Field in 2001. The unit was named best Navy Primary Training Squadron during his tenure. In 2003, he was made executive and operations officer of Fleet Air Keflavik in Iceland. Two years later, he was designated chief 6<sup>th</sup> Fleet liaison officer with NATO Strike and Support Forces in Naples, Italy.

He has received numerous awards and decorations, in a career that’s already spanned over 30 years, including the Defense Meritorious Service Medal, two Meritorious Service Medals, four Navy Commendation Medals, Navy Achievement Medal and Good Conduct Medal, as well as various unit awards.

Before leaving Whiting Field to go to NSA Bahrain, Capt. Sadsad was honored by his community in Milton, Florida. In thanksgiving for his service to the community, the Santa Rosa County Commission declared Oct. 22 as “Capt. Rick Sadsad Day.”

“Your leadership, your passion about caring for people, has been seen all over this county,” Commission Chairman Don Salter told the captain. “Even though you’ll be leaving us, your footprints are everywhere.”

Donna Tucker, executive director of the Santa Rosa County Chamber of Commerce, said she’s glad to know that Sadsad will be making Milton his home upon retirement.

“He’s the kind of people we want here. He gets involved and makes a difference,” Tucker said. “I’ve been at the chamber for nine years, and I’ve worked with several (Whiting commanding officers), and I don’t think I’ve ever heard as many people have the respect for a C.O. that they have for him. He’s so approachable and so down to earth. Everybody just loves him.”

Capt. Rick Sadsad and his wife, Yvonne, have four adult children.