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## **Naval Diving and Salvage Training Center Kicks off Year of the Military Diver**

PANAMA CITY, Fla. – The Honorable Gwen Graham, Congresswomen representing Florida’s 2<sup>nd</sup> Congressional District and a member of the House Armed Services Committee, toured Naval Diving and Salvage Training Center (NDSTC) and helped kick off the Year of the Military of Diver (YOMD) Feb. 18.

Graham was visiting area commands to become familiar with programs, personnel and readiness issues. While at NDSTC, Graham and her staff toured the facilities, observed the full range of students in dive training, including the hyperbaric recompression chamber and a dive-tender boat used to conduct offshore dives.

NDSTC kicked off the Year of the Military Diver with a celebratory cake cutting, with the help of Congresswomen Graham, handing out the first piece of cake to the youngest diver present, Army Pvt. Timothy Sparks.

“It was an honor to meet the congresswomen and be part of this celebration as I start my new career as a diver,” said Sparks.

Representative Graham repeatedly stated how impressed she was with the training and expressed her gratitude for those military members and civilians for their service. She received some “hands on” training as she donned a military KM-37 dive helmet used for salvage and saturation dives.

“I’m honored to be here and to be in a position to recognize all that you do here,” said Graham.

NDSTC Commanding Officer Cmdr. Hung Cao said military diving has a rich and storied history.

“The purpose of celebrating 2015 as the Year of the Military Diver is to bring awareness to the rich history of our nation’s men and women who have bravely served in times of need, forging the way for professional and recreational diving practice as we know it today,” said Cao. “The military diver has always been an invaluable asset and often an unsung hero to our nation.”

Naval Diving and Salvage Training Center (NDSTC) will recognize 35 years of training this year and the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Mark V Dive helmet to commemorate the Year of the Military Diver.

The Mark V diving helmet, nicknamed the “Copper Collar,” is the most recognizable symbol of Navy diving. Originally designed as a firefighting tool, it was adapted for deep sea diving in 1915 according to the Diving Historical Society. The helmet went on to be the workhorse of the Navy deep sea diver for 65 years. Later models like the Mk21 and later the Km 37 reduced weight and created a more ergonomic fit, while also providing contamination control. Other countries around the world still use the Mark V today.

Commissioned in 1980, NDSTC is the largest diving facility in the world and trains more than 1,200 divers from all services in the Department of Defense, allied partners, and other government agencies.

For additional information on the Naval Education and Training Command, visit the NETC website: <https://www.netc.navy.mil>.

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