

UNCLAS //N05350//

ALCOAST 408/12

COMDTNOTE 5350

SUBJ: NATIONAL HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH

1. The theme for this years' commemoration of the National Hispanic Heritage Month is Diversity United, Building Americas Future Today. From September 15th through October 15th, this country will celebrate the rich history and cultural background of individuals whose ancestors originate from Spain, Mexico, Central and South America, and the Caribbean.

2. Our services history is rich with the contributions of our shipmates of Hispanic heritage. From GM2 Joseph Tezanos, a native of Spain who was awarded the Navy and Marine Corps Medal for distinguished heroism during World War II to Heriberto S. Hernandez, who was posthumously awarded the Purple Heart and Bronze Star with Combat "V" device for his actions under enemy fire in Vietnam. Others include BM1 Carlos Valdivia Molina, who was awarded the Coast Guard Medal for extraordinary heroism in saving the life of a fellow shipmate who had been washed overboard, and Valentin R. Fernandez, who was awarded a Silver Lifesaving Medal for bringing a Marine landing party ashore under fire during the invasion of Saipan. In just over a month, we will commission the newest Fast Response Cutter, the WILLIAM FLORES. All of our Fast Response Cutters will be named for Coast Guard enlisted heroes, and SN Flores is no exception. SN Flores was on his first underway trip when the Coast Guard Cutter BLACKTHORN was stuck by the motor vessel CAPRICORN and capsized. Ignoring the order to abandon ship, SN Flores remained aboard to assist other crewmembers who were injured or trapped. He went to the locker where the ships lifejackets were stored and used his belt secure the door open so that lifejackets would float to the surface for his shipmates as the vessel sank. He gave his life that night so that others might live, and was posthumously awarded the Coast Guard Medal, our highest award for heroism not involving combat. His family selected Sept. 16, Dieciseis de Septiembre, for the medal ceremony because it is a day of honor for Hispanics, commemorating the beginning of Mexicos fight for independence from Spain.

3. During this observance, the Coast Guard pays tribute to these and many other members of Hispanic heritage for outstanding contributions made to our service and nation. The Coast Guards commitment to Hispanic heritage preservation is epitomized by the historical research and documentation effort known as Project Hernandez. Since its establishment, Project Hernandez has collected extensive historical data from Coast Guard members, veterans, and the public. Exhaustive research by the LANTAREA historians office has discovered great accounts of Hispanic and Latino American involvement throughout the Coast Guards 222-year history. A traveling exhibit and accompanying booklet will be produced to highlight this rich history. Points of contact for Project Hernandez are Dr. William Thiesen,

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4. This observance also provides an opportunity to reflect on recent noteworthy achievements by military and civilian members of Hispanic descent this year. ME1 Ximena Johnson and Mr. Richard Lopez received the League of Latin American Citizens (LULAC) Excellence in Service Award. YN3 Andres Valverde and Mr. Miguel Flores received the National Organization for Mexican American Rights (NOMAR) Meritorious Service Award. LT Stephanie Young received the Nation Image Meritorious Service Award, and LCDR Martha Rodriguez was the recipient of the Latina Style Meritorious Service Award
5. Throughout National Hispanic Heritage Month, commands are encouraged to recognize and celebrate the accomplishments of Hispanic and Latino Americans in service to the Coast Guard and our Nation.
6. ADM Bob Papp, Commandant, sends.
7. Internet release authorized