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San Diego hosts Red Bull Air Races

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Fleet Public Affairs Center, Pacific

Launching from Naval Air Station North Island, high performance aerobatic aircraft dominated the skies over San Diego Bay on May 3 during the Red Bull Air Races for the second year in a row.

Capt. Anthony Gaiani, commanding officer of Naval Base Coronado, said this was the first year that the air races fell in conjunction with Fleet Week. "It took months of work between several different entities, a partnership between the base, Air Forces, 3rd Fleet, and Red Bull," he said. "But the real glue to this puzzle was Fleet Week". Staging the races from North Island meant free seating for military personnel and family members who wanted to witness the precision, skill and speed of some of the best racing pilots in the world attempt to beat the clock in a motor sports competition. Aviation Machinist Mate 2nd Class Aaron Ammazalorso, who is in naval school for aviation mechanics aboard North Island, said he always loved planes as a child.

"That's why I joined the Navy, so I could work on them," he said. Ammazalorso said he saw the significance of his job as an aviation machinist's mate as the planes maneuvered throughout the sky.

The event began with a legacy flight of an F/A-18 Hornet, a Grumman F4F Wildcat and a Hawker Typhoon circling the bay and leaving the crowd in awe and anticipation for the upcoming races. Taking off from Naval Air Station North Island, twelve pilots raced in the second leg of a 10-city international flying competition. The pilots navigated a winding low-level course reaching speeds of 400 kilometers per hour while withstanding forces of up to 10 Gs. By making the air races a part of Fleet Week this year, there was a mutual benefit for the Navy and the community. The contributions made by military personnel and their families, as well as the support to the Navy from the community, was evident throughout the events. Vice Admiral Tom Kilcline, Commander, Naval Air Forces, commented on the advantages of the concurrence of both events taking place at North Island, the birthplace of naval aviation. "Red Bull is important to us because the tie of aviation and San Diego together is a fascinating piece you don't normally see in Fleet Week," he said. "The fly by of the older planes that kicked off the Red Bull races represented the aviation side of the Navy's heritage.



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