

Surface Warfare

SNA 2024
ISSUE



The Fight — The Force — The Future

This issue:

USS Carney Engages Houthi
Missiles and UAVs in the Red Sea

Why the Navy Loves to SWATT
- What You Should Know

Surface Warriors of the Year

Surface Force Embedded Mental Health
- a Roadmap to Mental Readiness

AUTHORIZATION

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CHARTER

Surface Warfare Magazine is the professional magazine of the surface warfare community. Its purpose is to educate its readers on surface warfare missions and programs, with a particular focus on U.S. surface ships and commands. This journal will also draw upon the Surface Force's rich historical legacy to instill a sense of pride and professionalism among community members and to enhance reader awareness of the increasing relevance of surface warfare for our nation's defense.

The opinions and assertions herein are the personal views of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official views of the U.S. Government, the Department of Defense or the Department of the Navy.

Surface Warfare

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Cover: A Standard Missile-2 Block IIIA (SM-2 Blk IIIA) interceptor is launched from the USS CARL M. LEVIN (DDG 120) off the coast of Pacific Missile Range Facility in Kauai, Hawaii, as part of Vigilant Wyvern/Flight Test Aegis Weapon System-48, a joint test of the U.S. Navy Program Executive Officer Integrated Warfare Systems and the Missile Defense Agency.

THE SURFACE FORCE NARRATIVE



LEADERSHIP



Vice Adm. Brendan McLane,
Commander, Naval Surface Forces



Rear Adm. Joseph Cahill,
Commander, Naval Surface Forces, Atlantic



SURFPAC FORCM (SW/AW)
Larry Lynch



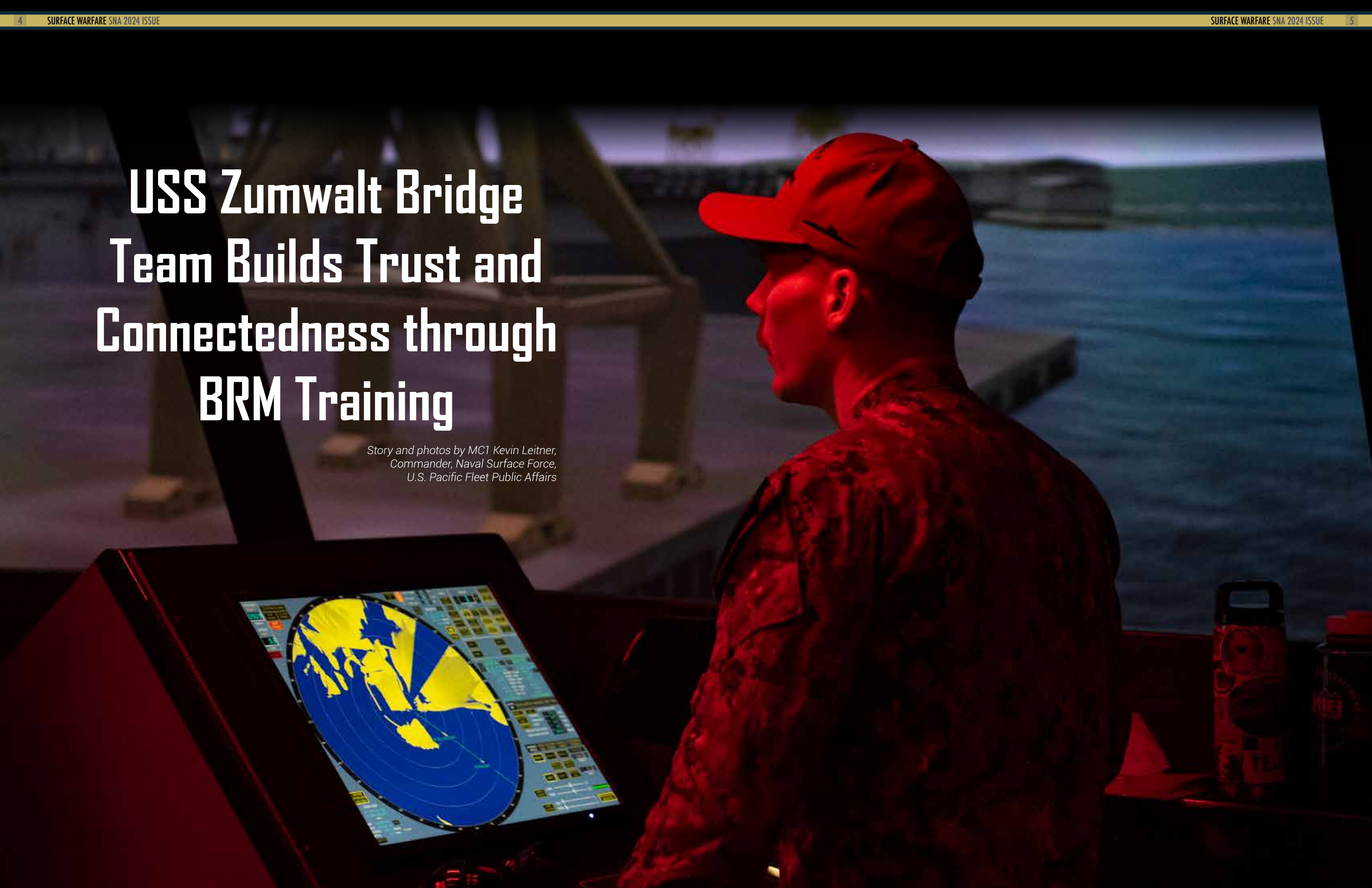
SURFLANT FORCM (SW)
Jon Lonsdale

The Surface Force is the most powerful seagoing force the world has ever known. We are toughminded Sailors with a strong heritage and warfighting culture forged by experience, grit, and tenacity. The Surface Force's reach is global. We are the vanguard of our Navy's forward presence ready to provide combat power at a moment's notice. To maintain a competitive edge, the Surface Force delivers warfighting readiness by building capable and connected teams of Surface Warriors, equipped with the most advanced ships, weapons systems, and tactics. ⚓



USS Zumwalt Bridge Team Builds Trust and Connectedness through BRM Training

*Story and photos by MC1 Kevin Leitner,
Commander, Naval Surface Force,
U.S. Pacific Fleet Public Affairs*



When it comes to navigation teams on the bridge of ships underway, communication, trust, and teamwork are vital skills to have for a successful mission.

Sailors aboard the Zumwalt-class guided-missile destroyer USS Zumwalt (DDG 1000) sharpened those skills while attending the Bridge Resource Management (BRM) course at the Navigation, Seamanship, and Ship Handling Trainer (NSST) in San Diego.

The week-long course gives students the ability to remove themselves from the ship environment and have focused discussions on various topics that will improve their ability to navigate their ship when the time comes.



Sailors assigned to the Zumwalt-class guided-missile destroyer USS Zumwalt (DDG 1000), participate in a simulated ship transit while attending the Bridge Resource Management (BRM) course, at the Navigation, Seamanship, Shiphandling Trainer, on Naval Base San Diego.

“ Communication is key in every single situation you will be in while on the bridge.”

- Lt. j.g. John O'Connell,
USS Zumwalt (DDG 1000), Navigator

“These opportunities are priceless,” said Capt. Matthew Hall, commanding officer of Zumwalt. “To be able to have my navigation teams here for an entire week, focusing on nothing other than this course has been very rewarding. I believe the teams will be stronger, and ultimately make us better at what we do.”

While on the bridge, the navigation teams must be able to communicate efficiently so that they can safely navigate the ship no matter what scenario they encounter.

“Communication is key in every single situation you will be in while on the bridge,” said Lt. j.g. John O'Connell, the Navigator aboard Zumwalt. “Every watch stander on the bridge must be on the same page so that there is no ambiguity and so everyone has the confidence to act when they are needed to do so. BRM helped a lot with improving the communication among our teams. Whether you are an ensign that just checked in, or our commanding officer who has been in for just under 30 years, we are all part of this class having open discussions establishing the ability to communicate with everyone.”



When standing watch on the bridge, face-to-face communication is essential for the teams to get a true understanding of what is really happening during every event while it is taking place.

“While on the bridge, you get that face-to-face dialogue between watch standers, allowing those individuals to be able to look at someone’s face and really engage in whether or not that person truly understands the commands that

they are receiving,” said Chief Quartermaster Martez Smith, the assistant navigator aboard Zumwalt. “BRM gives you the chance to really see how your navigation teams work together and a chance to build solid relationships within your team.”

Along with strong communication, there must be trust within the navigation teams to have safe and successful evolutions.

“
BRM gives you the chance to really see how your navigation teams work together and a chance to build solid relationships within your team.

- Chief Quartermaster Martez Smith
USS Zumwalt (DDG 1000), Assistant Navigator



BRM is a 40-hour course designed to train ships' navigation teams to work together, emphasizing leadership, communication, and teamwork.

“Trust and teamwork are inherently intertwined within these teams,” said Lt. Cmdr. Marina Nanartowich, the plans and tactics officer aboard Zumwalt. “You may have a decent team on the bridge, but without trust among the team, they will not be a high performing team and will not extend beyond the boundaries of that specific team. BRM opens a lot of conversations that allow us to share our perspectives and obtain the wisdom from our commanding officer, as well as the senior mariners that are leading the course. Those

conversations inherently help us build the trust that is needed to have successful teams once we return to the ship.”

Not only do the teams have to trust each other, each team must also have the complete trust of their commanding officer to be successful.

“Trust, based on professional competency and credibility, lies at the heart of what we do,” said Hall. “Effective BRM, for each and every team entrusted with the safe navigation of the ship, is critical to building that competency.”

Having that trust between the crew and commanding officer helps the navigation teams stay focused on the job at hand.

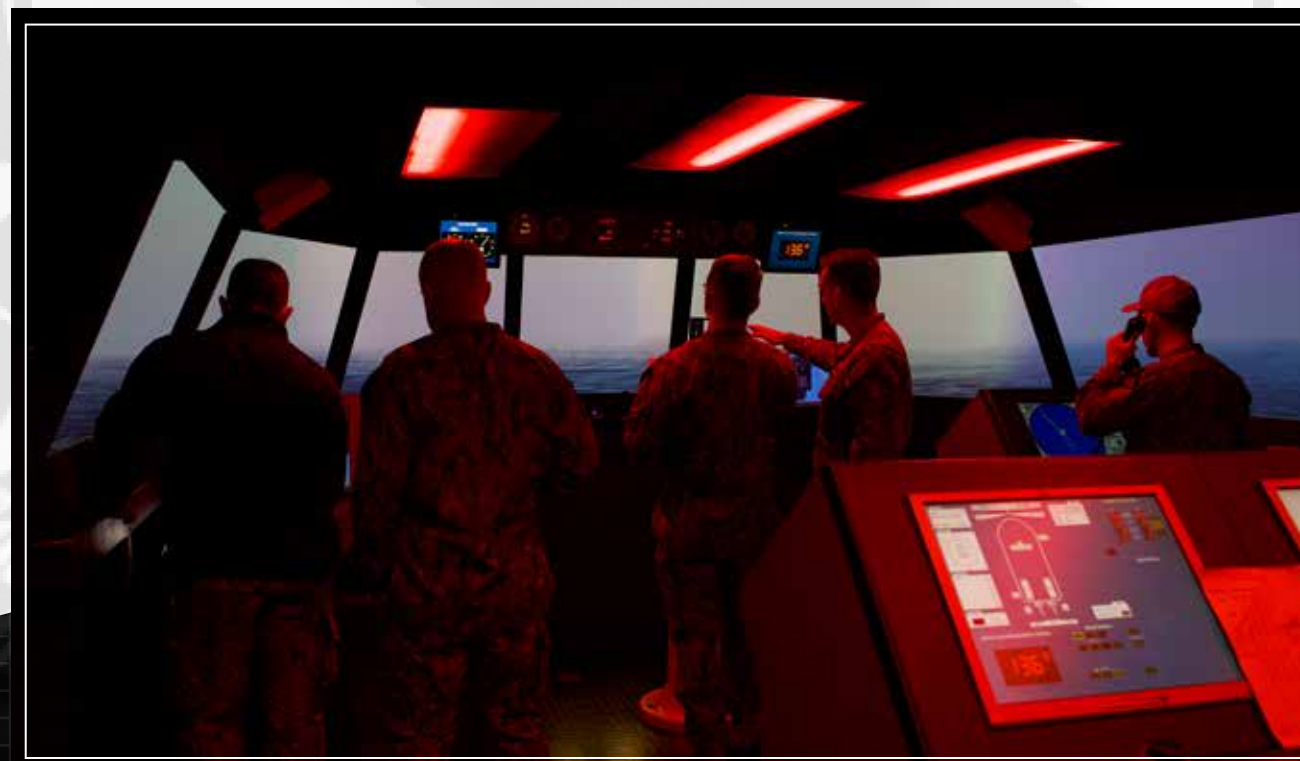
“Without the trust of your commanding officer, sometimes your team may not be able to stay focused on the big picture,” said O’Connell. “If we are unable to keep our focus on the mission at hand, we will be less likely to achieve our goals, big or small. Gaining that trust is critical to completing the overall mission and will, in time, give us the tools we need to win the fight.”

Zumwalt recently conducted several turnovers within the crew and this course came at just the right time for the crew to get acclimated with their new teams.



“Without the trust of your commanding officer, sometimes your team may not be able to stay focused on the big picture.”

- Lt. j.g. John O’Connell, USS Zumwalt (DDG 1000), Navigator



“We just went through a change of command, so we have a new commanding officer, and I am the new navigator onboard,” said O’Connell. “There is going to be a shift in the course of Zumwalt’s future and this class was timed incredibly well to help us build these teams up before we head out on various missions.”

Building connectedness on our ships is imperative, and as the fleet continually builds on teamwork, trust, and communication, this course has become an

invaluable resource for navigation training and ship cohesion.

“Navigation overall is part of what we do and is definitely a high stress job,” said Hall. The BRM course is incredibly important to go through because if you are not working as a team, something can go wrong, and that is when missions fail. BRM gives us the time to build our communication and trust within our teams and set us up for success in the future.” ↓



TEAM CAN DO: CMDR. WILL ASHLEY

*Story and photos by MCC (DV) Mark D. Faram,
Commander, Naval Surface Forces,
U.S. Pacific Fleet Public Affairs*

The day Cmdr. Will Ashley joined the Navy, he never dreamed driving and commanding ships was in his future.

His goal was to be among the best and most qualified welders in the Navy.

Now he's the commanding officer of the Independence-variant littoral combat ship USS Canberra's (LCS 30) Blue crew, leading his crew through the South Pacific.

His ship and crew are on a historic voyage to Sydney, Australia. It's here that the ship, named in part for that country's capital city, will be formally commissioned July 22.

Ashley, like many Sailors, looks back at points along his Navy voyage, marveling at how and why his career's course changed. Though there's passing thoughts of what awaits in his future, his focus now is on building his crew into a team of warfighters.

Ashley calls Woodlake, Texas, his home. That's far from where his life began on a farm near Smithfield, Virginia.

In the Navy shipboard welders are hull maintenance technicians or "HT" for short. One of the Navy's engineering ratings, these skills concentrate on repairing hulls and other metal structures.

"I grew up on a farm and welding is something that I enjoy, making it a natural choice for what I could do in the Navy," he said.

After boot camp at Great Lakes, HT "A" school in Philadelphia and advanced welding school in San Diego, Ashley arrived on board the aircraft carrier USS Nimitz (CVN 68), homeported in Bremerton, Washington. For the next five years he honed his welding skills while advancing to second-class petty officer along the way.

In January of 2000 he transferred to the schoolhouse at Great Lakes, teaching welding to the next generation of Navy HT's. It was there he met Master Chief Hull Technician Joe Lunning, who became a mentor, gently pushing Ashley to look further at what the Navy had to offer – beyond his current career field.

"He recommended that I put in for commissioning programs," Ashley said. "At the time I was applying for the Enlisted Commissioning Program known then as ECP. By the time I had my application completed, the Navy made that part of the Seaman to Admiral (STA) 21 program. So, I applied, got picked up, and in the fall of 2002 I left Great Lakes, entering Old Dominion University in Norfolk, Virginia."



**CMDR.
WILL ASHLEY**

Hometown: Woodlake, Texas
Date Enlisted: Jan. 11, 1994
Commissioned: Aug. 17, 2005
Designator: Surface Warfare Officer

Sea Duty:
 USS Canberra Blue (LCS Crew 227) 05/15/2023
 USS Makin Island (LHD 8)
 USS John P Murtha (LPD 26)
 USS Boxer (LHD 4)
 Coastal Riverine Squadron 3 Detachment, Yorktown, VA
 USS Saipan (LHA 2)
 USS Nimitz (CVN 68)

Featured Awards and Decorations:
 Meritorious Service Medal
 Presidential Unit Citation
 Good Conduct Medal (3)
 Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal
 Iraqi Campaign Medal (2)
 Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal
 Global War on Terrorism Service Medal

TEAM CAN DO



Ashley's bachelor's degree and commission came in 2005. In the 18 years since then, he's served on five ships. As an officer who rose from the enlisted ranks, Ashley looks back and says the perspective of being prior enlisted gave him insight into the frustration and barriers that often exist in a large organization.

But a non-shipboard tour at the Yorktown, Virginia-based Riverine Squadron Three early in his commissioned career left a lasting impact on Ashley and the importance good leaders play in the lives of the Sailors. He and the unit deployed to Lake Thar Thar in the Al Anbar province of Iraq during 2008. This tour and Iraq deployment, Ashley said, were among the toughest of his career.

"You're talking high-stress, intense experiences that give you an appreciation for decision making," Ashley said. "It also was a small, tight-knit unit and to me it really I guess drove home the importance of your Sailors and how much they're willing to do behind good leadership."

Later, he again found another mentor in senior officers who opened the aperture as to how far his career could go.

"I was the operations officer, and the CO and XO, who I consider mentors, gave me a look behind the scenes at the big picture of ship operations," Ashley said. "They allowed me to really get a perspective that I hadn't ever had before which inspired me to want to continue on and become a commanding officer."

Now as the skipper of the Canberra's Blue crew, he's leading his ship and crew on the journey of a lifetime.

"This crew is ready for what's ahead of them and they've worked hard to get themselves and the ship to the point of being able to accomplish a journey not normally attempted by crews and ships at this point in their development," Ashley said. "The first crew of a ship establishes the culture that will last a long time, I just hope I can build on that."

The honor of being a part of this celebration between two long-time allies is much deeper, he said. Its importance is evident by the commitment both countries and his crew have shown to pull this celebration off.

"It's always nice to have something to rally around and we have the rich history of our namesake, both HMAS and USS Canberra, both of those ships were heroes. I think it's a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to celebrate their history while also creating our own history," Ashley said. "I also think it's a good message to both the crew and our Nation about the importance of our allies." †

**I WAS RAISED TO BE PATRIOTIC, TO LOVE MY COUNTRY
AND PART OF THAT IS TO SERVE.**



USS Canberra Commissions Down Under in Sydney

*Story and photos by MCC (DV) Mark D. Faram,
Commander, Naval Surface Force,
U.S. Pacific Fleet Public Affairs*

SYDNEY — The Independence-variant littoral combat ship USS Canberra (LCS 30) commissioned at the Royal Australian Navy's Fleet Base East in Sydney, Australia, July 22.

Canberra departed her homeport of Naval Base San Diego for the first U.S. Navy ceremonial commissioning in Australia June 13, visiting Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, along with American Samoa and the Pacific Island Nation of Fiji prior to arriving in Sydney for commissioning July 16.

It's quite uncommon for a U.S. Navy vessel to travel so far for its commissioning ceremony, but for the ship and crew, the 13,000 nautical mile roundtrip was a significant accomplishment.

"This crew is ready for what's ahead of them and they've worked hard to get themselves and the ship to

the point of being able to accomplish a journey not normally attempted by crews and ships at this point in

their development," said Cmdr. Will Ashley, commanding officer of Canberra's Blue Crew as the journey began. "The first crew of a ship establishes the culture that will last a long time, I just hope I can build on that."

During the ceremony, leaders and distinguished guests from the U.S. and Australia wished the crew of Canberra fair winds and following seas as they brought the ship to life and began its commissioned service.

"This truly is a special occasion for our fleet and our Nation to be here with you in Australia, one of our closest allies, to celebrate the commissioning of our Navy's newest warship that is destined to serve throughout the Indo-Pacific region," said Secretary of the Navy Carlos Del Toro during the ceremony.

"I am confident that wherever USS Canberra is sailing, and whatever challenges her crew may face, they are ready, as reinforced by this warship's motto — 'Can Do!'"



Throughout the week, Sailors from USS Canberra engaged in sporting events, shared meals, and exchanged ship tours with the crew of HMAS Canberra. When the ship came to life during the ceremony, crewmembers from both ships ran up the brow to man the rails in a show of unity.

"Today marks a proud moment which our Royal Australian Navy is privileged to share alongside our allies and friends in the United States Navy," said Australian Chief of Navy, Vice Admiral Mark Hammond. "The connection between our navies, forged in battle during the Second World War, is reflected in the name USS Canberra."

Ashley agreed, calling it the honor of a lifetime to participate in all the events that celebrated the ship's formal entry into the fleet.

"It's always nice to have something to rally around and we have the rich history of our namesake, both HMAS and USS Canberra, both of those ships were heroes. I think it's a once in a lifetime opportunity to celebrate their history while also creating our own history," Ashley said. "I also think it's a good message to both the crew and our nation about how important our allies are."

The crews of both ships were also honored with a visit to their namesake city, Canberra, for a Freedom of Entry march on July 23. The tradition of Freedom of Entry dates to medieval times and is the highest accolade bestowed by a town or city upon a group or individual as a reflection of trust and confidence held by the citizens towards those being honored.

During one long day in the Australian capital city, both crews not only marched through the streets, but also participated in a wreath-laying, and as the day ended were honored at a twilight "Last Post Ceremony" at the Australian War Memorial.

Canberra is the second U.S. Navy ship named for Australia's capital. The first, a Baltimore-class heavy cruiser, was renamed from Pittsburgh to Canberra on October 16, 1942, and was commissioned on October 14, 1943. It was named in honor of the Australian heavy cruiser HMAS Canberra, which was lost at the Battle of Savo Island in World War II. The ship was decommissioned on February 2, 1970, and was stricken from the Naval Vessel Register on July 31, 1978. †



“
TODAY MARKS A PROUD MOMENT WHICH OUR ROYAL AUSTRALIAN NAVY IS PRIVILEGED TO SHARE ALONGSIDE OUR ALLIES AND FRIENDS IN THE UNITED STATES NAVY.

– Vice Admiral Mark Hammond,
Australian Chief of Navy



Navy Authorizes Command at Sea Designation for Qualified O-5 Reserve Surface Warfare Officers

Story by Navy Expeditionary
Combat Command Public Affairs



Photo by U.S. Navy

VIRGINIA BEACH, Va. - For the first time in over a decade, Navy Expeditionary Combat Command's (NECC) Maritime Expeditionary Security Force (MESF) is authorizing O-5 Reserve surface warfare officers command at sea opportunities, and the qualified officers who command Reserve Security Boat Companies will now be authorized to wear the associated insignia.

Previously, the O-5 commanding officer billets did not qualify for the command at sea designation and only O-6 MESF squadron commanding officers were eligible. The Navy established the command-at-sea insignia to recognize the responsibility placed on unrestricted line officers who are in command of, or have successfully commanded, afloat, deploying, and or operational units defined as sea-going commands under the Navy and Marine Corps. NECC Reserve leaders said the

shift recognizes the responsibility and accountability the Navy asks of its leaders regardless of their component status.

"As we continue to prepare our forces to be ready to fight, we must organize, man and train our Reserve warfighting commands for combat. This includes properly screening candidates for command and recognizing the roles and responsibilities of our Reserve leaders who have met these high standards," said Rear Adm. Mark Haigis, deputy commander, Navy Expeditionary Combat Command. "I'm excited for this opportunity to screen and select at-sea commanding officers from our Reserve Component who will lead combat credible naval fighting forces as we prepare for major combat operations in defense of our nation."

The change in designation comes as part of the MESF's force redesign, as they analyze force organization and force generation models to build readiness and competency for major combat operations and look to build new competencies in the Indo-Pacific. †

To be eligible for command at sea of a Reserve security boat company, officers must meet the following requirements:

Must have an 1115 designator (Reserve surface warfare officer)

Must have previously completed a MESF officer-in-charge tour, served at a Navy Reserve Readiness Unit, or have the BX3 qualification, symbolizing successful completion of at least 18 months in an operational expeditionary warfare billet within the NECC Force

Must have the 2N1 qualification, symbolizing successful completion of the Navy Reserve Augment commanding officer/officer-in-charge command qualification process

Must have a nomination/endorsement from reporting senior for the command screening board

Must have the the 2D1 qualification, symbolizing successful completion of the MESF command qualification board

Must pass a rules of the road exam with at least an 80% score



Photo by U.S. Navy

USS Jack H Lucas, First of the Flight III DDG's hits the Fleet



THE JACK H. LUCAS IS BUILT TO FIGHT. IT IS A FAST, MANEUVERABLE, VERSATILE, AND LETHAL SHIP – CAPABLE OF TACKLING ANY MISSION IT IS GIVEN. IT WILL KEEP THE NAVY AND MARINE CORPS ADAPTIVE AND READY, AND ALSO UPHOLD OUR COMMITMENT TO MAINTAINING THE FREE FLOW OF COMMERCE, DETERRING MILITARY AGGRESSION, AND FACILITATING QUICK RESPONSES TO NATURAL DISASTERS ACROSS THE GLOBE.

*– Under Secretary of the Navy,
The Honorable Erik Raven*

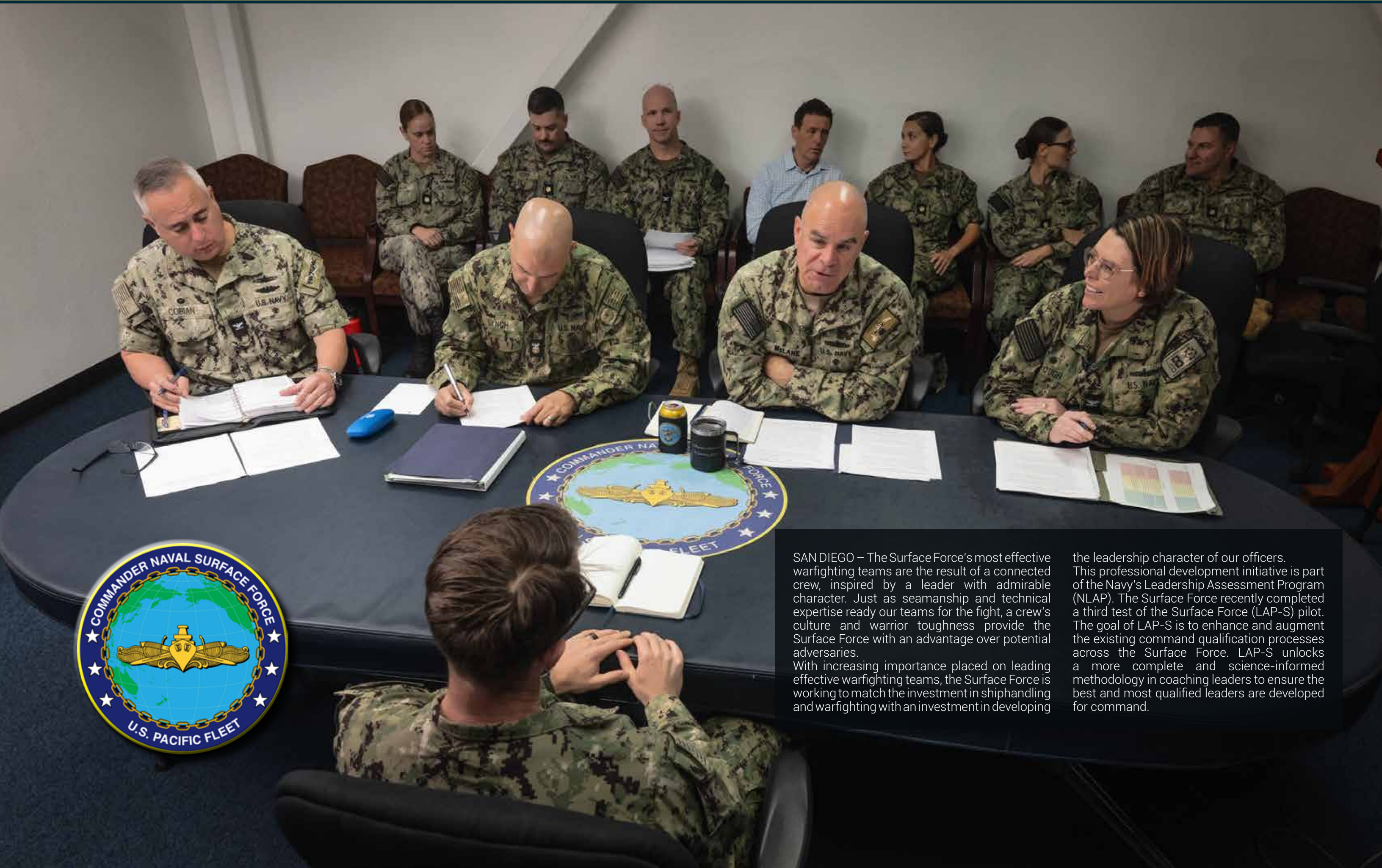
Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyers are the backbone of the U.S. Navy's surface fleet. The Flight III upgrade is centered on the AN/SPY-6(V)1 Air and Missile Defense Radar and incorporates upgrades to the electrical power and cooling capacity.

USS Jack H Lucas is the first AEGIS Weapon System, Baseline 10, to be commissioned. It integrates air and missile defense capability with the new AN/SPY6(V)(1) air and missile defense radar to provide significantly greater detection and tracking capacity among its warfighting capabilities across mission areas. †



NAVY LEADERSHIP ASSESSMENT PROGRAM (NLAP) ENHANCES SURFACE FORCE LEADERSHIP

*Story by MC1 Mark Meredith,
Talent Management Center
of Excellence Public Affairs
Photos by MCC (DV) Mark D. Faram,
Naval Surface Forces, Pacific Public Affairs*



SAN DIEGO – The Surface Force's most effective warfighting teams are the result of a connected crew, inspired by a leader with admirable character. Just as seamanship and technical expertise ready our teams for the fight, a crew's culture and warrior toughness provide the Surface Force with an advantage over potential adversaries. With increasing importance placed on leading effective warfighting teams, the Surface Force is working to match the investment in shiphandling and warfighting with an investment in developing

the leadership character of our officers. This professional development initiative is part of the Navy's Leadership Assessment Program (NLAP). The Surface Force recently completed a third test of the Surface Force (LAP-S) pilot. The goal of LAP-S is to enhance and augment the existing command qualification processes across the Surface Force. LAP-S unlocks a more complete and science-informed methodology in coaching leaders to ensure the best and most qualified leaders are developed for command.



"This (LAP-S) is something we can't afford not to do," said Rear Adm. Brendan McLane, Special Assistant to Commander, U.S. 3rd Fleet, who led in two of the three pilot boards.

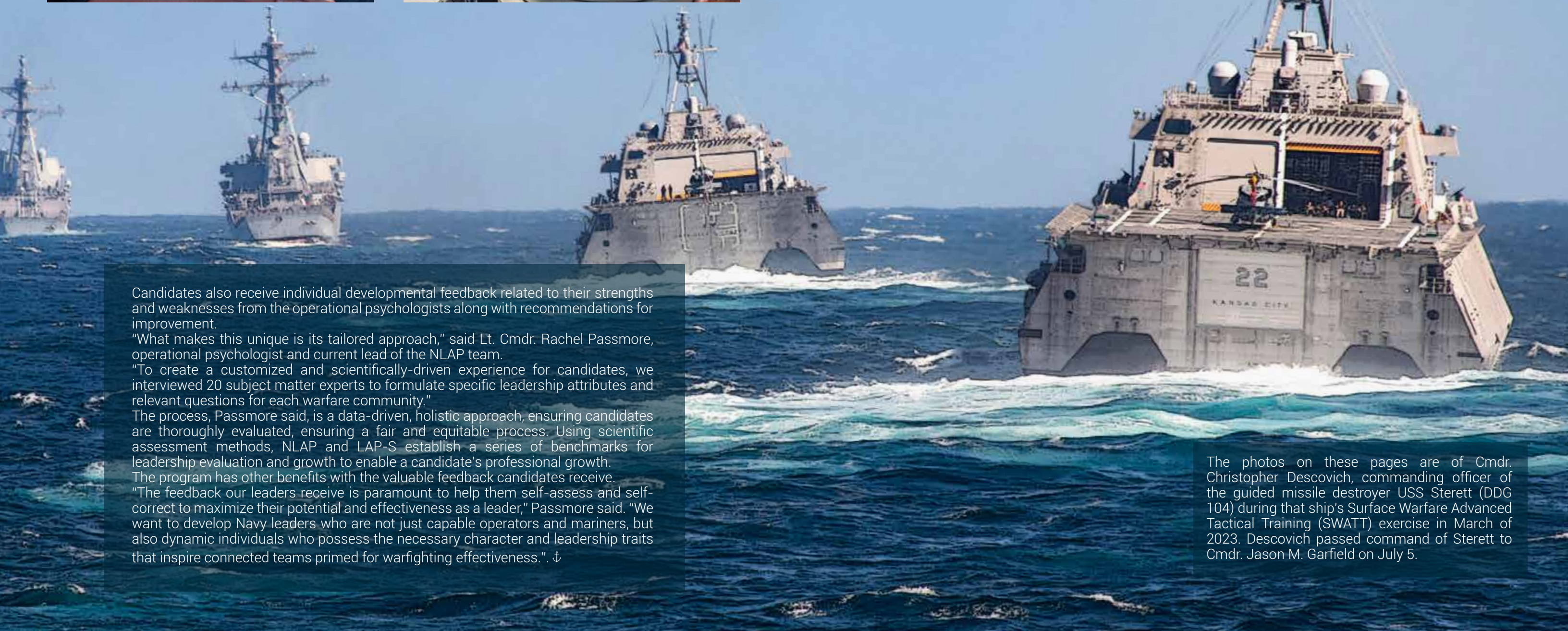
McLane emphasized LAP-S is a significant development for guiding the success of future commanding officers and leaders in the Surface Force.

"I was impressed with the process and the results of this pilot. I'm confident LAP-S is the right investment in our officer development to produce winning and learning teams."

McLane noted the LAP-S initiative represents a significant investment in the Navy's most valuable asset – its people. He praised the focus on character development as a crucial step toward nurturing exemplary leaders. McLane also emphasized the importance of continuous learning and growth throughout the career of a surface warfare officer.

The LAP-S initiative is intended to go beyond the assessments of an officers' technical competence, which SCSTC currently performs, by looking at the character development and the intangible connections that strong leaders build with winning teams.

As part of the LAP process, candidates complete cognitive and non-cognitive assessments that evaluate specific leadership attributes identified by the community as essential for success. Relevant results from assessments are presented to the board to provide a more holistic picture of the candidate's capabilities.



Candidates also receive individual developmental feedback related to their strengths and weaknesses from the operational psychologists along with recommendations for improvement.

"What makes this unique is its tailored approach," said Lt. Cmdr. Rachel Passmore, operational psychologist and current lead of the NLAP team.

"To create a customized and scientifically-driven experience for candidates, we interviewed 20 subject matter experts to formulate specific leadership attributes and relevant questions for each warfare community."

The process, Passmore said, is a data-driven, holistic approach, ensuring candidates are thoroughly evaluated, ensuring a fair and equitable process. Using scientific assessment methods, NLAP and LAP-S establish a series of benchmarks for leadership evaluation and growth to enable a candidate's professional growth.

The program has other benefits with the valuable feedback candidates receive.

"The feedback our leaders receive is paramount to help them self-assess and self-correct to maximize their potential and effectiveness as a leader," Passmore said. "We want to develop Navy leaders who are not just capable operators and mariners, but also dynamic individuals who possess the necessary character and leadership traits that inspire connected teams primed for warfighting effectiveness." ⚓

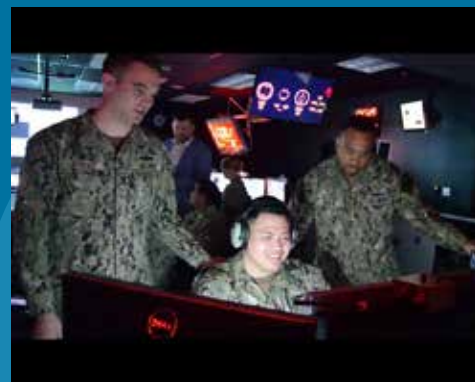
The photos on these pages are of Cmdr. Christopher Descovich, commanding officer of the guided missile destroyer USS Sterett (DDG 104) during that ship's Surface Warfare Advanced Tactical Training (SWATT) exercise in March of 2023. Descovich passed command of Sterett to Cmdr. Jason M. Garfield on July 5.

Surface Warfare Combat Training Continuum (SWCTC)

The Surface Warfare Combat Training Continuum (SWCTC) represents a decisive step forward in increasing warfighting readiness both from a unit and individual standpoint. With its data-driven approach, SWCTC will simultaneously deepen, broaden, and synergize training across the Surface Force.

What is SWCTC:

- The Surface Warfare Combat Training Continuum (SWCTC) is about warfighting readiness. The program focuses on continuous improvement of individual warfighting skills.
- SWCTC establishes and streamlines watch station mastery, developing watch standers who demonstrate proficiency and capabilities to fight and win at sea.
- The syllabus builds and maintains currency, ensuring skills remain sharp through regular performance.
- The SWCTC notional model allows us to conceptualize potential data streams within each category of knowledge, skill, experience, aptitude, and currency.



Why we need SWCTC:

- The SWCTC framework focuses on the individual warfighter's contributions to watch team and unit effectiveness.
- This framework builds on the Surface Force key values of grit and tenacity by formalizing and professionalizing watch stander development.
- We will leverage advanced data analytics to develop metrics for individual Maritime Warfare Proficiency.

SWCTC History:

- SWCTC was conceived in the culmination of a seven-year effort to revitalize tactical training and professional warfighter development in the Surface Force
- Commander, Naval Surface Forces established SWCTC as a dedicated program by signing the instruction in February 2021.
- Commander, Naval Surface Forces approved the SWCTC campaign plan in February 2022.




SWCTC Objectives:

- Develop the analytical tools necessary to support standardized watch stander assessments, individual performance, and experience tracking.
- Implement platform-specific surface tactical training syllabi (STTS) and training and readiness matrices (T&R) for each tactical watch station.
- Align an individual's training efforts, both within a given billet and across a professional career.



The Maritime Warfare Proficiency (MWP) Model:

- The Maritime Warfare Proficiency Model (MWP) establishes and standardizes watch standing skills using advanced data analytics to generate a numerical score as a means of objective performance evaluation.
- MWP is established through the composite metrics from five categories—knowledge, skill, experience, aptitude, and currency.
 - Knowledge is understanding through learning and is established through schools, professional reading, and computer based learning.
 - Skill is translating knowledge into action or the ability to make concepts manifest. Skill is established through the completion of tasks, exercises, scenarios, simulations, etc.
 - Experience is understanding through action and observation. It is the culmination of practical application over the course of a professional career which cannot be replicated through instruction.
 - Aptitude is the innate or natural capacity to achieve a level of mastery. It represents how easily a tactician is able to internalize training.
 - Currency is the continued command of perishable skills through regular performance. It is established and maintained through the frequent demonstration of tactical tasks.



USS BOXER: A FOUNDATION OF EXCELLENCE IN DECK DEPARTMENT

*Story and photos by MC1 Claire DuBois,
Commander, Naval Surface Force,
U.S. Pacific Fleet Public Affairs*

The officers, boatswain's mates (BMs) and undesignated seamen who make up the deck department on Boxer maintain the highest Navy standards because they know their work is essential to the mission.

Boatswain's Mate 1st Class Henry Williams has been assigned to Boxer for a year. He explained that BMs consider themselves a "jack of all trades," responsible for everything from steering the ship while at sea, to managing heavy equipment during underway operations, to constant shipboard preservation.

"BMs are one of the first rates we had in the Navy and we really take pride in that," said Williams.

Williams emphasized that deck department operates like an engine.

"Every functional piece has to work for the engine to actually flow and work. You have to be connected," explained Williams. "The ship can't run without personnel, personnel can't run if they're not committed, and when you take away that connection piece, there's going to be a failure somewhere – and that can be catastrophic."

“
BMs are one of the first rates
we had in the Navy and we really
take pride in that.”

- Boatswain's Mate 1st Class Henry Williams,
USS Boxer (LHD-4)

Catastrophic is no exaggeration. Underway operations are inherently dangerous. Boxer is more than 800 feet long and weighs more than 40,000 tons. Add a contingent of Marines, their vehicles, and all their equipment, and operational risks only increase. Keeping that sense of unity and focus on teamwork helps mitigate risks in complex and arduous underway environments.

This is one example of why professionalism, pride, and discipline are fundamental elements of the concept of readiness. A professional crew working

like an engine is what makes a ship ready to complete any mission it is assigned. This is a mindset professionalism and high performance that creates a culture where crews thrive.

According to Williams, no one knows this better than deck department, as material readiness and shipboard preservation are core to the mission of any ship.

"I think one of the things that a lot of people don't think about is that no matter what you're doing, once you take pride in that responsibility, everything else will just start flowing and aligning," said Williams.



Boatswain's Mate 3rd Class Hugh Jones, left, and Boatswain's Mate 1st Class Aaron Walker, assigned to the Wasp-class amphibious assault ship USS Boxer (LHD 4), tie lines to secure life rafts to the side of the ship while in port in San Diego. Life rafts are removed, inspected and re-certified every five years, then re-installed over the side of the ship to meet safety standards for getting underway.



Underway, Boxer sports 116 life rafts in case of emergency. Every five years, these rafts are removed for inspection and re-packing and then re-installed. With the help of a crane, several safety harnesses, and skilled line handling, the deck department spent a day installing 50 rafts off the starboard side of the ship.

Boatswain's Mate 1st Class Aaron Walker spent most of that day tying lines, giving helpful directions, and ensuring the safety of his shipmates throughout the project. Though it's hard work, the team was all smiles and kept count proudly with each installation.

Walker never took his eyes from his work when he said about the job, "I couldn't see myself doing anything else in the world."

Williams' passion for the job is also clear when he recalls past operations.

"My favorite thing about this platform is the well deck," he said, grinning proudly. "I think it speaks dividends of what our job scope is, the camaraderie that we have with the Marines and the Navy, and how you get those two branches to work together to actually accomplish a mission – it's powerful. And it's fun."



I think it speaks dividends of what our job scope is, the camaraderie that we have with the Marines and the Navy.

*- Boatswain's Mate 1st Class Henry Williams,
USS Boxer (LHD-4)*



Whether in port or at sea, the work never stops to keep a ship in working shape. Shipboard preservation is a priority balanced with operational requirements because a preserved ship is one that can successfully stay on mission. This work takes a mindset of professionalism, discipline, and high performance – and Boxer's deck department embodies these traits.

"I think this community instilled in me a sense of purpose outside of just the scope of my duties," said Chief Boatswain's Mate LV Rosebud, also assigned to Boxer.

Rosebud has served in the Navy for 10 years and transferred to Boxer three months ago.

"Having pride in our job is important because it amplifies the importance of what we're doing and it gives us a sense of ownership," said Rosebud. "It goes beyond just doing the job to also doing it well."

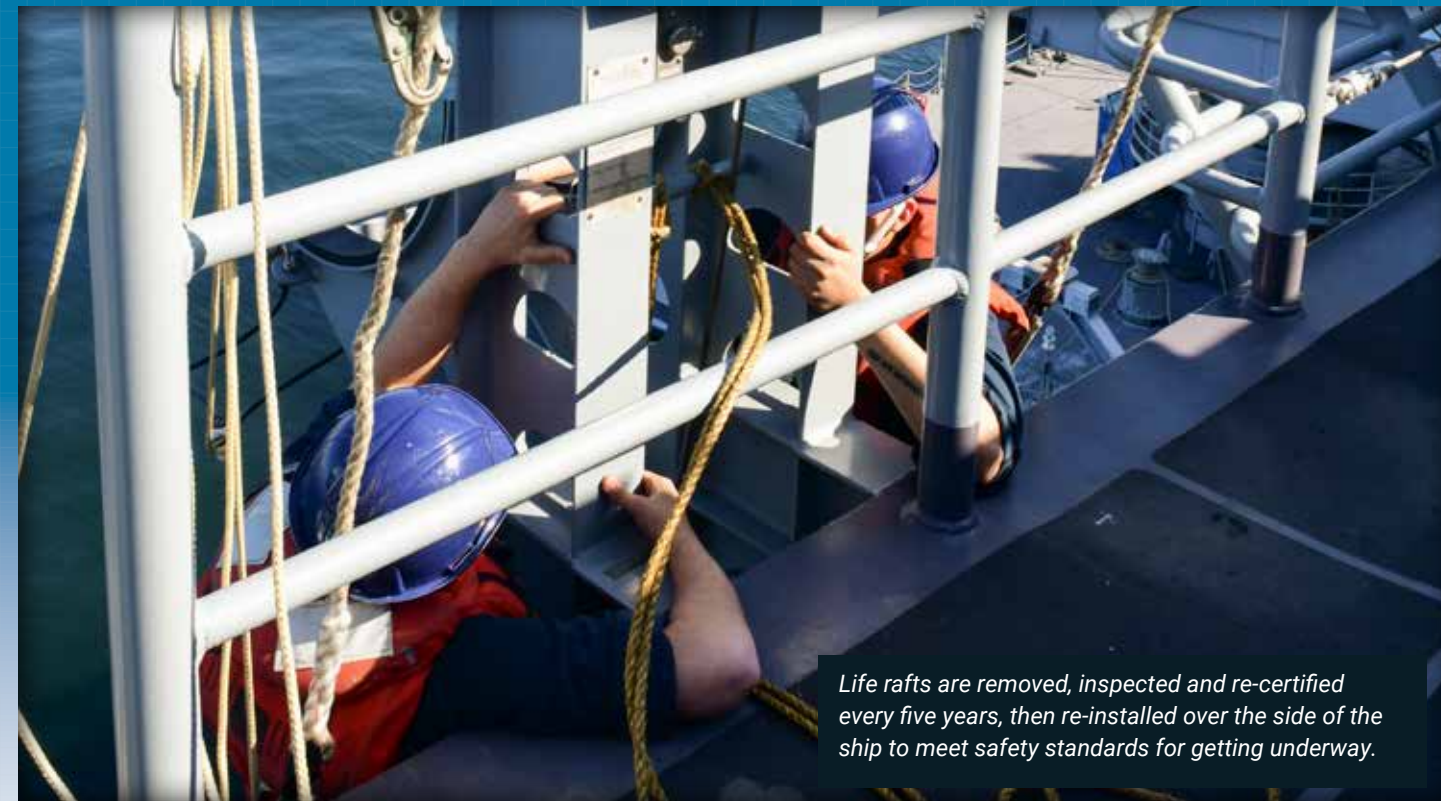
Maintaining a ship is both a sprint and a marathon. Part of the marathon is keeping the crew invested in the importance of readiness. Deck department is a place where that pride begins and can spread across the crew and the whole fleet.

"I think of pride like an overflow," said Williams. "Once you fill that cup, next thing you know you're filling up another cup – and that's how you build great leaders. It's contagious."

U.S. Navy ships deploy for longer periods and more frequently than any other Navy in the world.

As a result, our ships face greater maintenance and preservation challenges. Preservation efforts are constant, even while out to sea. Walking the weather deck of a ship underway, it's common to find deck department working hard to eliminate rust and corrosion. Rust is an unfortunate but normal part of being out to sea, and the crew's efforts to fight it never stop.

"At times it seems like it's not the best job or the most glorified one, but it's definitely vital to movement and vital to mission accomplishment," said Rosebud.



Life rafts are removed, inspected and re-certified every five years, then re-installed over the side of the ship to meet safety standards for getting underway.

“
What made me choose boatswain's mate was that sense of pride that we have when we are getting things done in the major evolutions.

*- Chief Boatswain's Mate LV Rosebud,
 USS Zumwalt (DDG 1000), Navigator*

A shipshape unit means a mission ready unit, but it also means greater speed in identifying safety hazards and equipment failures. The faster problems are identified, the faster they can be solved and the ship can return to its responsibilities.

Every member of the crew makes readiness possible. For Williams and Rosebud, though, they can't imagine doing any other job.

"What made me choose boatswain's mate was that sense of pride that we have when we are getting things done in the major evolutions," said Rosebud. "They're always exciting for me. I like the thrill of it

being inherently dangerous, but also knowing that we have safety measures in place. You have to have a lot of trust, a lot of communication and a lot of rehearsals and time spent together as a team."

"I think the ship will always depend on a boatswain, with everything we do around the ship," said Williams. "That's why I take so much pride in my job and my love for the military. I love what we do and the impact we have on the world. I know when I see a ship out there that's 'haze gray and underway,' it couldn't get underway without the boatswain's mates." ⚓

USS Carney Engages Houthi Missiles and UAVs in the Red Sea

Story by Lt. Zachary Anderson
Commander, Naval Surface Force,
U.S. Pacific Fleet Public Affairs

“
THE SURFACE FORCE MISSION IS
CLEAR—BE PREPARED TO CONDUCT
PROMPT AND SUSTAINED COMBAT
INCIDENT TO OPERATIONS AT SEA.

—Rear Adm. Joe Cahill
Commander, Naval Surface Force Atlantic

The Surface Force is ready to respond at a moment's notice to any threat in the maritime domain. On Oct. 19, in the Red Sea, USS Carney (DDG 64) took the first U.S. military action in defense of our regional allies when the ship shot down missiles and drones fired from Houthi rebels in Yemen. But that was just a start.



Carney, along with USS Mason (DDG 87), and USS Thomas Hudner (DDG 116), and other ships in the region continue to operate forward and respond to threats to allies and partners and international shipping routes.

"These attacks represent a direct threat to international commerce and maritime security," said CENTCOM in a statement. "They have jeopardized the lives of international crews representing multiple countries around the world."

The courageous actions of these ships in the Red Sea and throughout the region are a reminder of the integral importance of warfighting readiness and the centrality of the Surface Force to the defense of the United States and our allies and partners.

We train to fight, and we fight to win. ⚓

“
**THESE ATTACKS REPRESENT A DIRECT
 THREAT TO INTERNATIONAL COMMERCE
 AND MARITIME SECURITY.**

— U.S. Central Command



WHY THE NAVY LOVES TO SWATT – WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW

*Story and photos by MCC (DV) Mark D. Faram,
Commander, Naval Surface Force,
U.S. Pacific Fleet Public Affairs*

Trey Pennington's left index finger was a fraction of an inch above the firing button of his ship's 5-inch, 62 Caliber gun.

Every few seconds, he lifted the finger slightly, curling it toward his palm, then quickly replaced it over the firing button on the touchscreen display of his console.

A fire controlman (FC) 2nd Class aboard the Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS Sterett (DDG 104), Pennington and his shipmate, FC3 Sonny Murray-Davis, were intently tracking an incoming hostile aircraft in an exercise scenario. Their job — shoot the intruders out of the sky if they get too close.

With the targets closing in, tensions were rising. The darkness inside the ship's Combat Information Center (CIC) was punctuated only by the blue light of the warfare consoles illuminating the faces of the operators.

Murray-Davis' right hand gripped a joystick, keeping the large gun trained on the target. The order came for Pennington to shoot, and his finger finally touched the screen. The sound and feel of the weapon's bark were unmistakable — heard and felt throughout the ship.

Within minutes, the pair dispatched ten warheads into the sky, splashing two unmanned aircraft.

"It's a hit," Pennington said, as cheers rose from those watching the action.

This wasn't a video game or static simulation. It was a live-fire exercise in countering unmanned aerial vehicles and the Sterett team had won this fight.

The scenario was one of many dished out over two weeks aboard Sterett and seven other ships from the Carl Vinson Carrier Strike Group participating in Surface Warfare Advanced Tactical Training, known in the fleet as SWATT.

WHY WE DO IT



Established in 2013, the Naval Surface and Mine Warfighting Development Center (SMWDC) officially started training ships and strike groups through SWATT in 2015. Today, it's considered the premier advanced tactical training event for surface ships and a key milestone during the advanced phase of the pre-deployment training cycle, known as the Optimized Fleet Response Plan (OFRP), for carrier strike groups (CSGs), amphibious ready groups (ARGs), and littoral combat ships (LCS).

While it's not a pass-or-fail event, it is required training for deployment. This event has proven to increase unit tactical proficiency, readiness and the ability to integrate into multiple ships task groups.

After completing SWATT, units get feedback on their overall warfighting ability. This can serve as a punch list of what they need to improve before they reach their Composite Training Unit Exercise (COMPTUEX) — the graduation exercise at the end of the OFRP certifying them for deployment.

It was the need to better prepare units for COMPTUEX and the subsequent deployment that led to the creation of SWATT, said Capt. Gil Clark, SMWDC deputy commander and the senior mentor for the Carl Vinson CSG SWATT.

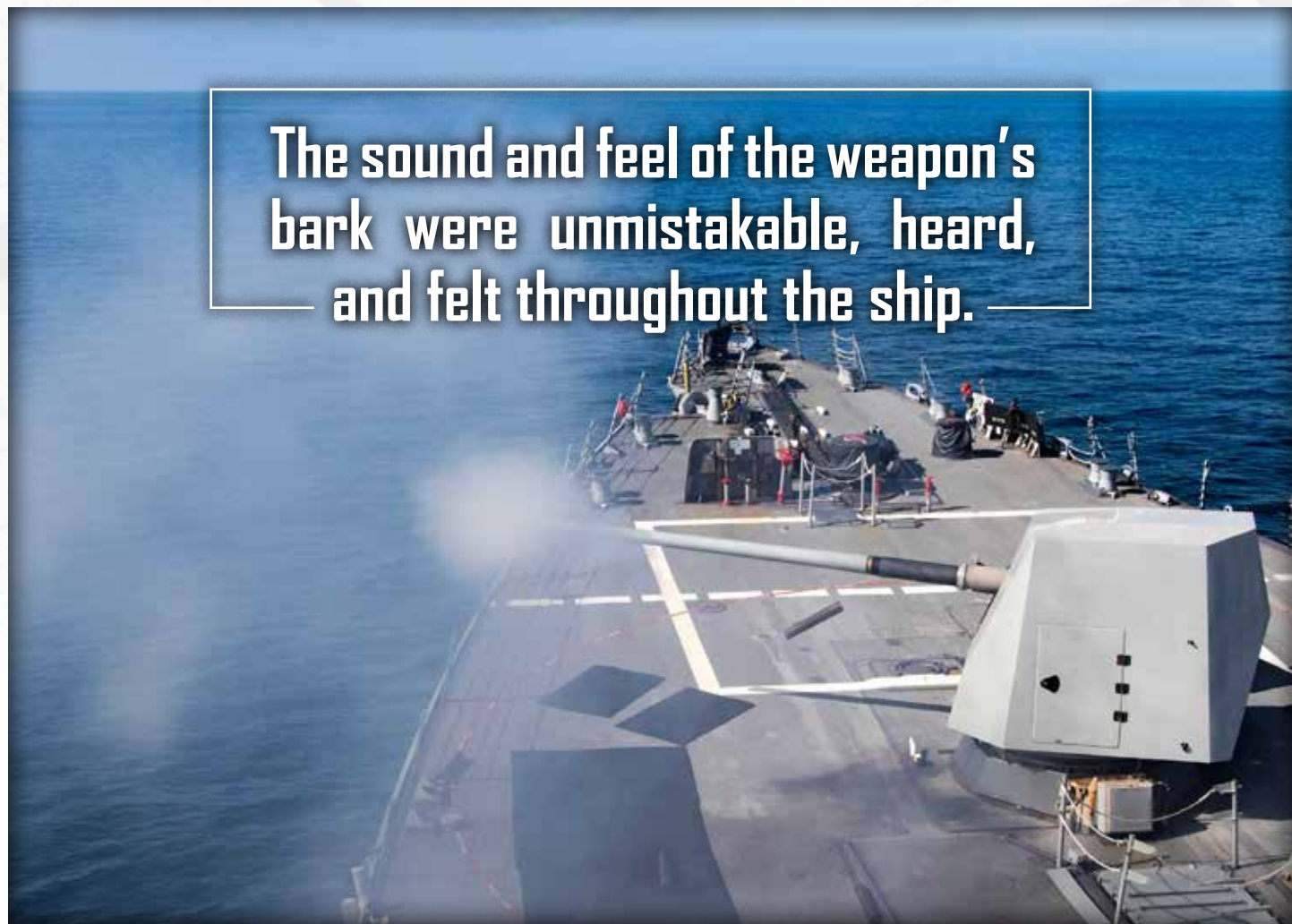
"There was a pretty steep learning curve during that certification — for ships not doing well in working together and communicating with each other," said Clark. "It became evident that we needed a training event that bridged the basic and integrated phases of the OFRP."

In December, 2014, the Navy added an "advanced" phase to the OFRP introducing SWATT as a critical milestone helping commands kick their warfighting planning and tactical skills into high gear.

In the process, SMWDC was given another critical role as the keeper of the tactical standards and publications for the Surface Force. Up-to-date standards are necessary to set the baselines of tactical performance they must train to. These are now all living documents, updated constantly. The result has made SMWDC the hub of warfighting tactics and doctrine of the Surface Force.



The sound and feel of the weapon's bark were unmistakable, heard, and felt throughout the ship.



TACTICAL HEAVYWEIGHTS



The key to the process is Clark's team of tactical heavyweights, a cadre of surface warfare officers (SWOs) who are specially trained in one of four tactical areas. It's these experts who plan and execute SWATT at sea as both evaluators and mentors.

The idea they chose to emulate was naval aviation's "top gun" tactical training process, adapted to fit the surface community.

These top SWOs are called warfare tactics instructors or WTIs. These WTIs come in four flavors: Anti-Submarine and Surface Warfare (ASW/SUW), Integrated Air and Missile Defense (IAMD), Amphibious Warfare (AMW) and Mine Warfare (MIW).

"It's about pulling the best of the best from the fleet and giving them specialized training to become tactical experts who first become instructors," Clark said. "These experts are raising the collective tactical IQ of the force, as these officers migrate back to ships as department heads."

"Developing WTIs starts with giving them the schoolhouse knowledge to be that expert, then you put them in the fleet around their peers to raise their level of knowledge," said Clark.

Eligible officers are those qualified surface warfare officers in pay grades O-1 through O-4 in the 1110 and 1117 designators. Surface nuclear officers, surface limited duty, and warrant officers can apply as well.

There's also flexibility in deciding the entry point into the WTI cadre. While the primary candidates are SWOs on their first or second division officer tours, entry is allowed even after completing both department head tours. Complete details are available by emailing the WTI Management Cell at SWO_WTI@navy.mil.

Training pipelines range from 15 to 31 weeks, and by the end of 2024, all the training will happen on the "dry side" of Naval Base San Diego, Clark said.

"We're building what we're calling the WTI University to further align the presentation and standardization of the courses of instruction," he said. "We're hoping for construction to wrap up later this year so we can start teaching in San Diego early next year."

Once qualified, WTIs receive an additional qualification designator (AQD) and a patch to wear on the right breast pocket of their Navy Working Uniforms. Each specialty area has a unique patch and AQD. Most WTIs then go on to "production tours" in the fleet.

Since the program started, 662 WTIs have qualified, with 230 graduates currently serving on their production tours, and 265 WTIs have returned to the fleet as department heads.

Most WTIs serve their initial production tour at SMWDC. In their day jobs, they update tactical publications and procedures and teach prospective WTIs in training.

"Most importantly, they run SWATT," Clark said.

Other WTIs are at the training strike groups responsible for executing COMPUTEX, in the Pentagon with the Program Executive Office Integrated Warfare Systems (PEO IWS), and fill a few key liaison billets around the fleet.

"The expectation is WTIs at SMWDC will participate in two SWATTs a year, while those not in organic

billets will participate in at least one," Clark said.

Perhaps the lasting benefit of the WTI career path is what they do once they head back to the fleet, where their knowledge, experience, and tactical know-how get reused.

"And the goal we have right now is every ship has at least one department head who is a WTI," Clark said. "We're not there yet."

When the new schoolhouse comes online, he said, they'll be able to regularly produce 115 WTIs a year, up from just over the roughly 90 graduates each year. This year, Clark said, they'll reach their target number of 115 graduates for the first time, setting the stage for achieving the one WTI per ship goal he's seeking.



“It's about pulling the best of the best from the fleet and giving them specialized training to become tactical experts.”

Capt. Gil Clark, SMWDC deputy commander

RAISING THE FLEET'S TACTICAL IQ



"Eventually, within every wardroom, you'll have at least one WTI expert as a department head who can bring that expertise to bear as that ship goes through the entire training cycle and deployment," said Clark.

As the program matures, he said, WTIs will begin to select for executive and commanding officer tours, bringing their tactical expertise to higher levels of command.

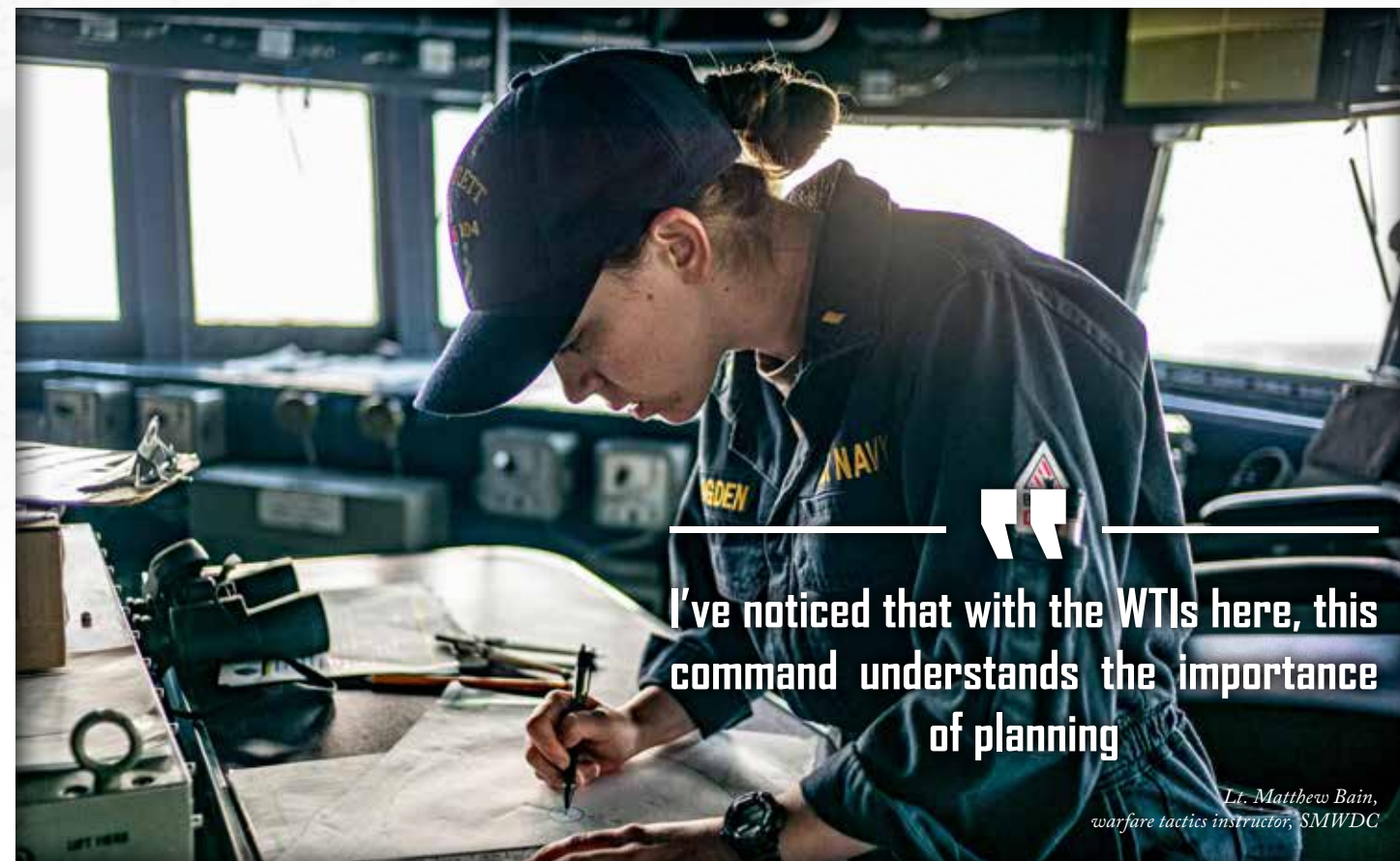
Sterett's wardroom has an embarrassment of riches, with four WTIs serving aboard. Lt. Cmdr. Amanda English and Lt. Jason White are department heads and the ship's chief engineer and operations officer, respectively. Also qualified WTIs are Lt. Rob Lombardo, the weapons officer and Lt.j.g. Jason Dam the ship's anti-submarine warfare officer.

The benefit of their experience and expertise aboard the ship is evident in how the crew approached and performed during SWATT, according to the WTIs embarked to support SWATT execution and provide mentorship to the ship's crew.

"I've noticed that with the WTIs here, this command understands the importance of planning," said Lt. Matthew Bain, an ASW/SUW WTI from SMWDC.

"It's not that non-WTIs don't think planning is important, but I think the level of detail these two were exposed to at SMWDC for operational mission planning benefits the ship."

Also, he said the WTI community is a network of professionals ready to help their shipboard counterparts when needed.



I've noticed that with the WTIs here, this command understands the importance of planning

*Lt. Matthew Bain,
warfare tactics instructor, SMWDC*

"You meet so many people during your time at SMWDC," Bain said. "You can reach out by phone or email, and though they might not know the answer, they probably know someone who does, and they're going to email you back right away – that ability is priceless."

Bain believes the WTI's role is improving crews' ability to fight their ships as they move from an inside the lifelines focus to working with other ships ultimately improving their readiness to deploy.

"In the basic phase, the Afloat Training Group does a good job getting their crew comfortable as a team and the equipment they operate," Bain said. "We are the connective tissue in that crawl, walk, run approach to get you to the integrated phase."

In a nutshell, SWATT is a microcosm of that approach, he said.

"Okay, first event, drive together and report contacts; second event, drive together, but we're going to push you toward a more combative scenario with the third event being all-out war," he said. "Then we follow that up with having you go through your procedures and conduct a live fire coordinated with one other ship."

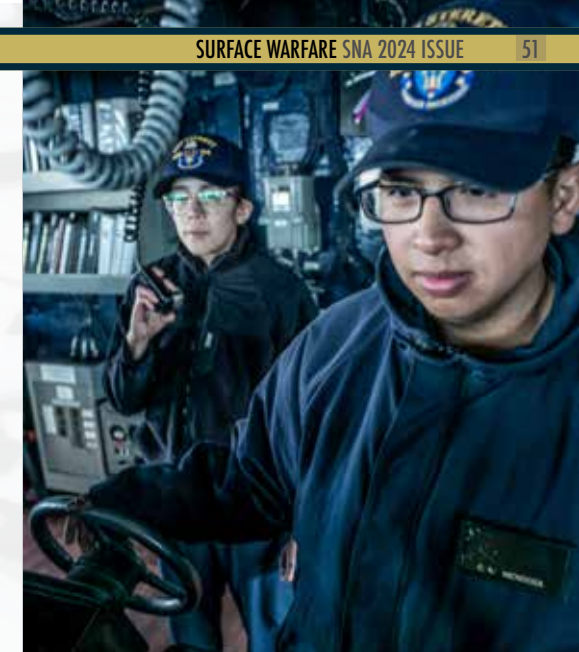
A WTI gets their job satisfaction by seeing those teams they're testing come together and succeed. All through SWATT, these WTIs are "over the shoulder" of watchstanders of all levels sharing their knowledge and providing mentorship.

"I think removing obstacles in front of teams is just so important as sometimes they can't see the forest for the trees," Bain said. "I feel like we can accelerate the progression by sharing best practices that we've seen work well or provide a template to start with that removes that ambiguity of mission planning going into an event where you really don't know what's happening, yet."

Ultimately, Bain and his fellow WTIs were impressed with Sterett's SWATT performance from the start.

"I was satisfied, and it goes to show that if you have a good planning process in place early, that usually results in better execution," said Lt. Hayden Marsh, an IAMD WTI who traveled to San Diego from the Aegis Training Center in Dahlgren, Virginia, for this SWATT.

"We've been embedded with the planning team here, helping them out, and saw a cohesive watch team throughout these events. Usually, the early events can be rough, but this ship has been well put together from the start," he said.



GETTING RESULTS



Scenarios thrown at his crew ranged from executing a simple strait transit to complex wartime situations involving multiple enemy and friendly ships. They crossed naval warfighting areas of surface, subsurface, and air defense combat, with live fire thrown into the mix where possible.

The curriculum also isn't static; each SWATT is custom-built to reflect the current reality of what these ships might face on deployment, with as much realism as possible thrown in for good measure.

"Each group that goes through this course gets instruction based on the fleet commander's desires at that time," Clark said. "It's very likely that some of these ships soon be in the middle of strategic competition."



The margin for error on the tip of the spear, he said, is razor-thin and shrinks more as tensions rise.

"Our adversaries are getting, at times, a little more aggressive than we've seen in the past," he said. "So, we put in a freedom of navigation scenario and brought another big grey ship as the opposing force."

A live close-quarters maneuvering scenario was conducted for the first time in any SWATT exercise, mimicking a dangerously close high-seas encounter with an adversary. Clark said it involved navigation with another ship closer than the US Navy allows typically.

"It was a great event and will allow commanding officers to carry out their obligation to defend the ship in a way that we haven't trained to in the past," he said. "If it happens on deployment, they will already have seen it and know how to handle it."

What SWATT did for the Sterett crew was validate the skills they'd developed through hard work in the basic phase of training, Descovich said.

"This ship went through a longer maintenance phase than usual and came out working hard to get up to speed," he said. "Our goal is to win and keep winning because when you win, you build confidence."

Cmdr. Christopher M. Descovich, Commanding Officer, USS Sterett (DDG 104) has one department head whose primary responsibility is planning and tactics, something he feels was a big part of their success, along with rigorous self-evaluation in the command.

"We've learned that we must always treat ego like the enemy and take responsibility for what we did right and wrong – we'll fix the wrong and keep on winning." ⚓



“We’ve learned that we must always treat ego like the enemy and take responsibility for what we did right and wrong.”

Cmdr. Christopher M. Descovich, commanding officer, USS Sterett (DDG 104)

Surface Warfare Officers of the Year

Story by Lt. Zachary Anderson
Commander, Naval Surface Force,
U.S. Pacific Fleet Public Affairs



A surface warfare officers (SWO) are renowned warfighters, tacticians, and leaders. SWOs are trained extensively to operate the most advanced warships and combat systems and ensure their teams are ready for high-end combat. The Surface Force is built on a warfighting culture of grit, tenacity, and connectedness that enables Surface Warriors to operate in the most austere

operational environments and win decisively. Each year, the Surface Force recognizes one SWO from each coast with the Surface Warfare Officer of the Year award. This award recognizes SWOs who best personify the ideals of the Surface Warrior ethos to include excellence in warfighting, leadership, and mission accomplishment through professionalism and personal example.



*Photo by Mass Communication Specialist
3rd Class Anthony Collier*

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**THIS AWARD MEANS A GREAT DEAL, ESPECIALLY
 AS A NUCLEAR SURFACE WARFARE OFFICER.**

— Lt. Cmdr. Zane MacNaughton

Lt. Cmdr. Zane MacNaughton was selected as the Commander, Naval Surface Force, U.S. Atlantic Fleet SWO of the Year while assigned to Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS Gravely (DDG 107). Serving initially as weapons officer then subsequently as the combat systems officer, MacNaughton earned the award due to superior performance during his tour. He is currently assigned to the Nimitz-class aircraft carrier USS Harry S. Truman (CVN 75) where he is the main propulsion assistant.

For MacNaughton, the award is a testament to his ability to adapt and thrive in new leadership positions. “This award means a great deal, especially as a nuclear surface warfare officer,” he said. “The career path of switching between surface and nuclear communities can be challenging, with the risk of feeling we are not adequately prepared for either.”



For those of us who are placed into challenging leadership roles, it's common to experience discomfort in the unknown, and MacNaughton is no exception. That said, gaining experience in new positions was precisely what allowed him to develop and grow as an officer.

"As a first tour department head, I was finally feeling comfortable as the weapons officer when I was given the opportunity to step up into the second tour job of combat systems officer," MacNaughton said. "This proved quite challenging, but forced me to keep growing as a SWO and a leader, resulting in an even more rewarding time on Gravelly."

His hard work onboard was reflected in the ship's achievements during his tenure. During Gravelly's time at sea in 2022, the crew participated in exercises Neptune Strike 2022, Cold Response, Operation Songwright, Dynamic Manta, Neptune Shield 2022, and Hedgehog 22 with forces from Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Norway, Spain, Sweden, Turkey, and the United Kingdom.

The deployment showcased Gravelly's diverse mission set, highlighting her capabilities while underscoring the importance of interoperability and operational readiness. Gravelly also played a key role in protecting national security interests during 2023 when she sortied for Operation Steel Shadow in response to the deployment of Russian guided-missile frigate Admiral Gorshkov.

Reiterating the themes of former SWO of the Year winners, MacNaughton attributes much of his success to those around him, noting this award would not have been possible without the tireless mentorship of various leaders he worked with during his time in the Navy.

"From my first leading petty officer as a junior enlisted sailor teaching me to be a technician, to my division leading petty officer keeping weapons department running while I found my footing as weapons officer, I've been lucky to learn from outstanding sailors at every part of my career," MacNaughton said. "I've also been blessed with department heads, executive

officers, and commanding officers that pushed me, gave me opportunities, and supported me, even when I've fallen short of the mark."

MacNaughton credits a strong relationship with his spouse, for allowing him to succeed in the demanding profession. He says that without her taking care of their two young children it would be near impossible for him to focus all his attention on missions at sea. One piece of advice the Surface Warrior had for future generations relates back to this idea of being supported and supportive in the wake of mistakes. A valuable character trait is the ability to fail well—learning and growing from a mistake rather than letting it define us.

In his words, "don't take yourself too seriously. We all make mistakes—use them to learn and teach others, and don't be afraid to laugh with everyone if you goof things up. The ability to handle setbacks large and small without losing your composure shows confidence in yourself and your team."

Knowing your team and knowing your role as an officer

is also a key word of wisdom. From MacNaughton's perspective, it's his obligation to set the right conditions for his people to succeed—that given the correct amount of independence, guidance, and responsibility everyone can thrive. Moreover, being technically competent enough to explain to the boss what the team is doing on a daily basis is the best way to provide support. The team is most efficient when the officer can brief the chain of command while allowing the true experts find a solution.

MacNaughton implores future generations to avoid busywork and not waste anyone's time. Our Navy Sailors are among the most driven and capable people our country has to offer. They can accomplish anything when they have their 'why' clearly defined and feel a sense of fulfillment from their work. The Surface Force separates itself as the most capable warfighting force in the world because of its people, and MacNaughton is yet another example of excellence in its ranks.





IT'S A VALIDATION OF THE TEAM'S HARD WORK
OVER THE COURSE OF A VERY LONG YEAR IN
WHICH WE ACCOMPLISHED AN UNREAL AMOUNT,
AND OVERCAME MULTIPLE CHALLENGES.

— Lt. Cmdr. Alex Turner

Lt. Cmdr. Alex Turner was selected as SWO of the Year for Commander, Naval Surface Force, U.S. Pacific Fleet while assigned to the Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS Chafee (DDG 90). Turner currently serves as the executive officer of the Avenger-class mine countermeasures ship USS Devastator (MCM 6). For Turner, the selection of SWO of the Year is a reflection of his team's success. "It's a validation of the team's hard work over the course of a very long year in which we accomplished an unreal amount, and overcame multiple challenges," Turner said. According to Turner, the award is emblematic of "what a diverse group of officers and Sailors can accomplish in an uncertain environment, executing dynamic tasking, and conducting ourselves professionally while also meeting every mission without fail."



During Turner's tour, Chafee was involved in Summer Exercise 2021, during which they became the first U.S. Navy ship to encounter the Russian fleet off Hawaii. Following a 10-month deployment stretching from May 2021 to February 2022, Chafee participated in Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC) 2022, executing six live-fire missile tracking exercises and conducting their own similar missile live-fire Detect to Engage (DTE) with a successful BQM drone engagement. Remarkably, Chafee was out to sea for 315 days during 2021, which not only tested the crew's endurance, but allowed for significant professional development across the board. The Surface Force puts unique emphasis on servant-leadership. Turner embodies these leadership traits, effusive in his praise of the hard working Sailors who enabled his team's success. The recognition for this award, Turner notes, pales in comparison to helping his team succeed and advance in their proficiency, skills, and careers. Over the last year, Turner helped a Sailor

meritoriously advance to first class petty officer, two of his chief petty officers were promoted, and another Sailor earned the Copernicus Award, awarded by the U.S. Naval Institute for recognized superior performance in a cyber or IT related field.

Similar to how this award is a representation of his subordinate's performance, Turner sees his success as a continuation of the high-standard established by his predecessors and ship leadership.

"I am blessed with awesome individuals working with me, above and below the chain of command, and those people deserve the credit for my success," said Turner. "My commanding officers and executive officers were incredible in empowering me as a department head. It was that latitude that helped me fail, get back up, learn, and go on and win."

Turner also credits the inclusion in key decision conversations as invaluable for his personal development. Working through issues with his superiors

gave him the experience and confidence necessary to make the tough calls when similar situations arose. Empowering our people at all levels helps develop Turner's keys to success, the "three C's," of competence, confidence, and comfortability.

In addition to being an accomplished Surface Warrior, Turner is steadfast in his dedication to his family. Despite working in a profession that often requires 100% of your time and effort, Turner found ways to establish a measure of work-life balance. As Turner notes, being successful at sea has as much to do with being supported at home as it does on the deck plates. "My wife and kids are the backbone of my success," he said. "My wife never complained when I came home late or missed my daughter's recital because I was underway unexpectedly. Her unwavering, unconditional support is paramount to me being able to give this job everything. I cannot thank her enough for her sacrifice." Reflecting on what leadership advice he would give to the

next generation of SWOs, Turner emphasized the importance of a growth mindset. The Navy is constantly training, and it's important to recognize that "no one knows everything and everyone is on their own leadership journey." There will be bumps and hurdles along the way, but if we approach decisions with patience and humility, we can ensure a successful outcome. Two other words of advice are to "bloom where you're planted," and to be able to identify "spirit versus energy." For the former, recognition that needs of the Navy come first is vital—even if we find ourselves in an environment that isn't optimal, the no-fail nature of our job requires us to make the best of any circumstance. As for the latter, energy can be refilled with a nap and a cup of coffee, but finding what refills our spiritual cup is equally as important for long-term success. †





FLEET MENTAL HEALTH

Surface Force Embedded Mental Health – a Roadmap to Mental Readiness

*Story and photos by MCC (DV) Mark D. Faram,
Commander, Naval Surface Force,
U.S. Pacific Fleet Public Affairs*

Pete Horn felt like he was losing control of his life and his will to live. Twelve years into his Navy career, he had advanced to chief fire control technician. He reported to his second sea tour on the littoral combat ship USS Independence (LCS-2) after a successful shore assignment teaching at Great Lakes.

To those on the outside, all his ducks were in a row. His future looked bright; only he couldn't see it because inside, he was a mess.

"The main thing going through my head was a sense of hopelessness," he said. "Not long after beginning my tour on the Independence my marriage started going south - I was experiencing depression and not addressing it. I had a complete meltdown, started drinking heavily and my work performance slipped drastically."



Naval Base San Diego's Fleet Mental Health facility is now where Surface Force's Sailors can go and get help.

It was so bad for Horn that he would go to his stateroom on the ship and cry. He wanted to get help but was reluctant because of what he believed were the consequences of self-reporting mental health-related issues in the Navy.

"I had heard all this stuff, you know, I'll lose my clearance, and the Navy can take away my right to be armed," he said. "These things, I believed, would end my career, but frankly, nothing could have been further from the truth."

He had reached his breaking point.

"My depression was out of control," Horn said. "I was honestly afraid I was going to hurt myself and knew I had to do something."

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— Senior Chief Pete Horn, Force Suicide Prevention Program Manager, Commander, Naval Surface Force, U.S. Pacific Fleet

Horn sought out his ship's independent duty corpsman, an enlisted Sailor who is also the senior medical person on the Independence. After a short conversation, she immediately got him the help he needed. Later, she would tell him she'd seen him starting to spiral and was preparing to intervene when he showed up at her door.

"It was the fear of hurting myself coupled with my dedication to being a father that led me to have no choice but to go see her and get help," he said. "I was at the end of my rope, and if it ended my career, then so be it."

Half a decade later, Horn is now a senior chief. He kept his security clearance and his ability to carry arms. He's remarried and says he's the happiest he's ever been.

Now, he works for Naval Surface Forces, U.S. Pacific Fleet. He's the Force Suicide Prevention Program Manager, helping others get out of their dark places and back to work in the fleet. He also works with Command Resilience Teams on the waterfront.

He's been to the edge and back and thanks the Navy for saving his life. He feels he's paying it forward by using his experience and story to get the truth to others in need.

"In the past four years, the Naval Surface Forces has embraced mental health," said Capt. Tara Smith, head of the Naval Surface Forces, U.S. Pacific Fleet's Embedded Mental Health efforts. "We now have embedded mental healthcare into our force – it's care that belongs to and is run by surface forces, not the Bureau of Medicine – we take care of our own."



After getting help, Horn's career turned around and while still on the Independence was advanced to senior chief by then Cmdr. Matt Scarlett, his commanding officer.

Today there are 12 Embedded Mental Health Teams around the globe serving the 75,000 sailors who operate the Navy's more than 160 surface combatant ships. Here, Sailors get help quickly, often the day they walk in the door.

These fleet-based mental health providers are pierside in every fleet concentration area and are advocates for Sailors that guide command leaders on mental health issues. Their mission is to give Sailors fast and quality access to mental health care, enable leaders to care for the crews, and provide training and skills to Sailors to get to the left of destructive behaviors and severe mental illness.

The EMH teams, comprised of licensed mental health providers and enlisted Behavioral Health Technicians, also train shipboard medical personnel and chaplains

in mental health assessment and interventions to provide their crews with life skills training.

"There's no longer a wait for mental health treatment in the Surface Force," Smith said, "Sailors have access to mental health. The wait won't be longer than two weeks, but most often, it's immediate. That's better than in the private sector and most of our supporting Military Treatment Facilities."

The help available is as comprehensive as the needs of each Sailor.

"Many people today equate stress with mental illness," Smith said. The majority of our Sailors do not suffer a mental illness but need support. Services and treatments, she added, cover the range from from life stressors to mental illness."



THERE'S NO LONGER A WAIT FOR MENTAL HEALTH TREATMENT IN THE SURFACE FORCE.

— Capt. Tara Smith, Force Mental Health, Commander, Naval Surface Force, U.S. Pacific Fleet



Lt. Marie B Tracy, the lone chaplain for Littoral Combat Squadron One talks to a Sailor on the mess decks of the USS Montgomery (LCS-8). Sailors get 100% confidential counseling from Navy chaplains.



Capt. Tara Smith, head of Embedded Mental Health for Naval Surface Forces Pacific, talks to Navy deckplate mental health providers at the facility.



The Fleet Mental Health facility isn't only for Sailors. Command Triads regularly meet with providers and EMH leadership there to discuss issues with their crews.

Most of those needing help struggle to adjust to shipboard Navy life. They need to learn life skills to cope and get a rhythm in a tough seagoing life.

Help isn't only at the Embedded Mental Health Facilities. It's now taken directly to the ships where their experts give preventative training and services for everyone, from deckplates to the chief's mess and wardrooms. There's even training to help command triads deal with their stress.

"Not everyone seeking help needs medication or treatment by a psychologist or psychiatrist," she said. "It all depends on the severity of what they are dealing with," Smith said.

One of the most significant barriers preventing Sailors

from seeking treatment is prevailing myths espoused by sea lawyers on social media. Don't trust the Navy. You'll lose your job and security clearance and ruin your career if you self-report mental health issues.

Just not true, Smith said, and she's got the data to prove it.

The truth is that less than 0.001% of all revoked clearances are for mental health reasons. Sailors are encouraged to seek help and use the resources.

Very few will lose their clearance. In the cases of those who do, it's often for failing to use the services to get better. To date, fleet embedded health providers have helped nearly 90 percent of Sailors who get help stay on or return to full duty.

There are multiple avenues and all kinds of help. Guiding Sailors is now an Embedded Mental Health Roadmap, showing what support is available, allowing them to pick their path through the levels and types of care available.

The first level of care is Navy chaplains. The Navy is adding more than 80 new chaplain billets, enough to put one in the ship's company of all guided-missile destroyers.

By 2025, every destroyer will have a chaplain onboard. The exceptions are smaller ships like littoral combat ships and minesweepers, whose chaplains are assigned at the squadron level and help multiple ships and crews.

Visiting a chaplain is 100 percent confidential, with no reporting requirements or health record documentation. No referral from your medical provider is needed.

"I understand the reluctance of Sailors to want to

talk to a chaplain about things like stress or mental health issues," said Lt. Marie Tracy, the sole chaplain assigned to Littoral Combat Ship Squadron One.

"Religion aside, our job is helping Sailors with their spiritual readiness, their ability for their whole mind, body and spirit to be ready for whatever fight is coming down the road."

Her job isn't to push her own beliefs on others but to help Sailors establish and strengthen their own. She calls it a value system that doesn't need to be religion-based.

"Shipboard life is tough, so to survive and thrive, you have to know who you are, where you came from and know that you matter," Tracy said. "For some people, that trends towards the emotional, while for others, it is spiritual or religious. However, many people who come to see me express no faith at all. My role is always to care for everybody."



Capt. Tara Smith talks with Mardi Smith, a San Diego waterfront facility clinical psychologist.



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SHIPBOARD LIFE IS TOUGH, SO TO SURVIVE AND THRIVE, YOU HAVE TO KNOW WHO YOU ARE, WHERE YOU CAME FROM AND KNOW THAT YOU MATTER.

— Capt. Tara Smith, Force Mental Health, Commander, Naval Surface Force, U.S. Pacific Fleet



Chaplains can provide the Sailors with resources while still maintaining confidentiality. If on-board medical professionals think a Sailor needs more help, they can send them to their local embedded waterfront mental health facility.

There, Sailors get individual mental health assessments, diagnoses and treatment. If prescriptions are needed, Sailors' treatments get evaluated and managed locally. All kinds of training is also available, from group therapy sessions to specialized training for shipboard medical teams, chaplains and crews.

Nonmedical counseling is also available on-site. For example, the waterfront facility at San Diego's 32nd Street Naval Base has 12 Military Family Life

Counselors assigned to it. If they're all booked up, the staff can help a sailor call Military OneSource for a referral to another counselor in the local area.

Horn says the Navy has come a long way in the five years since he started getting help, but he still believes there's much misinformation that needs to be tuned out.


"I'd say to Sailors, don't make assumptions and please don't listen to the scuttlebutt," Horn said. "The Navy has put a lot of time and money into these resources to keep people in the Navy and on ships; there's really no interest in ending careers; nobody benefits from that. We as a service are in a better place because this is now available — and it's free — all you have to do is ask." ↓

MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES

Feeling stressed, debating seeking help but don't know where to start?

1 Go here first!

CHAPLAINS




THE best place to start for most issues or if you're unsure of what services you need. What you say will never leave the office without your permission. NEVER!

- 100% confidentiality
- You don't need a referral
- No medical record documentation
- Zero reporting requirements
- More than spiritual counseling

Seeking help early and often prevents needing a higher level of care and impact to career. Most Sailors don't seek help because they want to fix things themselves, they worry about impact to their careers or security clearance or they fear gossip and embarrassment. Taking care of your mental health takes courage and it's a sign of strength!

2




MILITARY & FAMILY LIFE COUNSELING

Most Sailors don't have a mental illness but struggle with life issues. These counselors provide support and tools to help you cope and you can schedule yourself without a referral. They only report risk of harm or abuse. They can be found onboard your ship and nothing goes in your medical record.

- You don't need a referral
- No medical record documentation
- Minimal reporting requirements
- Flexible counseling locations
- Non-medical counseling
- On a big deck, this your DRC

3




FLEET & FAMILY SUPPORT CENTER

Similar to MFLCs/DRCs but at the FFSC buildings on base. They provide counseling and classes to help you and your family manage life issues. You don't need a referral and they only have to report risk of harm or abuse.

- On base individual & family counseling, coping skills, life skills, etc.
- You don't need a referral
- No medical record documentation
- Minimal reporting requirements
- Non-medical counseling

4




MILITARY ONESOURCE

Similar services as MFLCs, DRCs and FFSC but OFF base. You can make the appointment yourself without a referral. These counselors only have to report on suicide and homicide risk or abuse. Nothing goes in your electronic health record. And reporting requirements are limited to risk of harm or abuse.

- Off base Individual & family counseling, coping skills, life skills, financial
- You don't need a referral
- No medical record documentation
- Minimal reporting requirements
- Non-medical counseling

5




IDC / SMO

Your Doc can manage most concerns or refer you to the Navy or network mental health experts. Serious conditions need expert evaluation, need to be documented and your CO may need to know if there are duty limitations. They are mandatory reporters for risk of harm or abuse.

- Just go to sick call, no referral needed
- Can treat most conditions or refer you for higher level care
- Can prescribe mental health meds
- There IS medical record documentation
- May communicate with your CO and medical providers

6




EMBEDDED MENTAL HEALTH (EMH)

These specialists evaluate and treat all conditions and determine if it impacts your tour or career. Most Sailors return to duty and keep their security clearance after seeking help, so don't fear! They may communicate with your CO and your Doc if there are duty limitations or risk of harm or abuse.

- Mental Health specialists directly working with the commands
- Evaluate and treat mental illness with medications and/or therapy
- There IS medical record documentation
- May communicate with your CO and other medical providers
- Make military duty determinations

7



MILITARY TREATMENT FACILITIES (MTF) /Network care

You can refer yourself or be referred by your Doc and receive total mental health services with the same reporting and documentation requirements as EMH. Network care requires a TRICARE referral and authorization or you will pay out of pocket. Network doctors cannot make determinations about military duty.

- Full mental health services, Emergency Room and Inpatient care
- Individual and Group therapy, SARP, Testing
- Military duty determinations (MTF only)
- There IS medical record documentation
- May communicate with your CO and other medical providers

8



Mental health emergency only!

EMERGENCY ROOM

If you're experiencing a mental health emergency or you're afraid you will harm yourself or others and cannot keep yourself safe, this is the place to go. Please don't start here to get a mental health appointment. This is for emergencies.

- Not to get a routine appointment
- For emergencies, such as acute safety risk or grave disability
- Access to inpatient services
- Military duty determinations
- There IS medical record documentation
- They WILL communicate with your CO and other medical providers

SURFACE FORCE

VISION: A Surface Force second to none that controls the seas and provides the Nation with combat naval power when and where needed.

MISSION: Man, Train, and equip the Surface Force to provide Fleet Commanders with credible naval power to control the sea and project power ashore.

Pacific Fleet

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