

# Surface Warfare

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DIGITAL FEATURE



## USS Zumwalt Bridge Team Builds Trust and Connectedness through BRM Training

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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.*



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- 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.

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







"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.





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"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." †