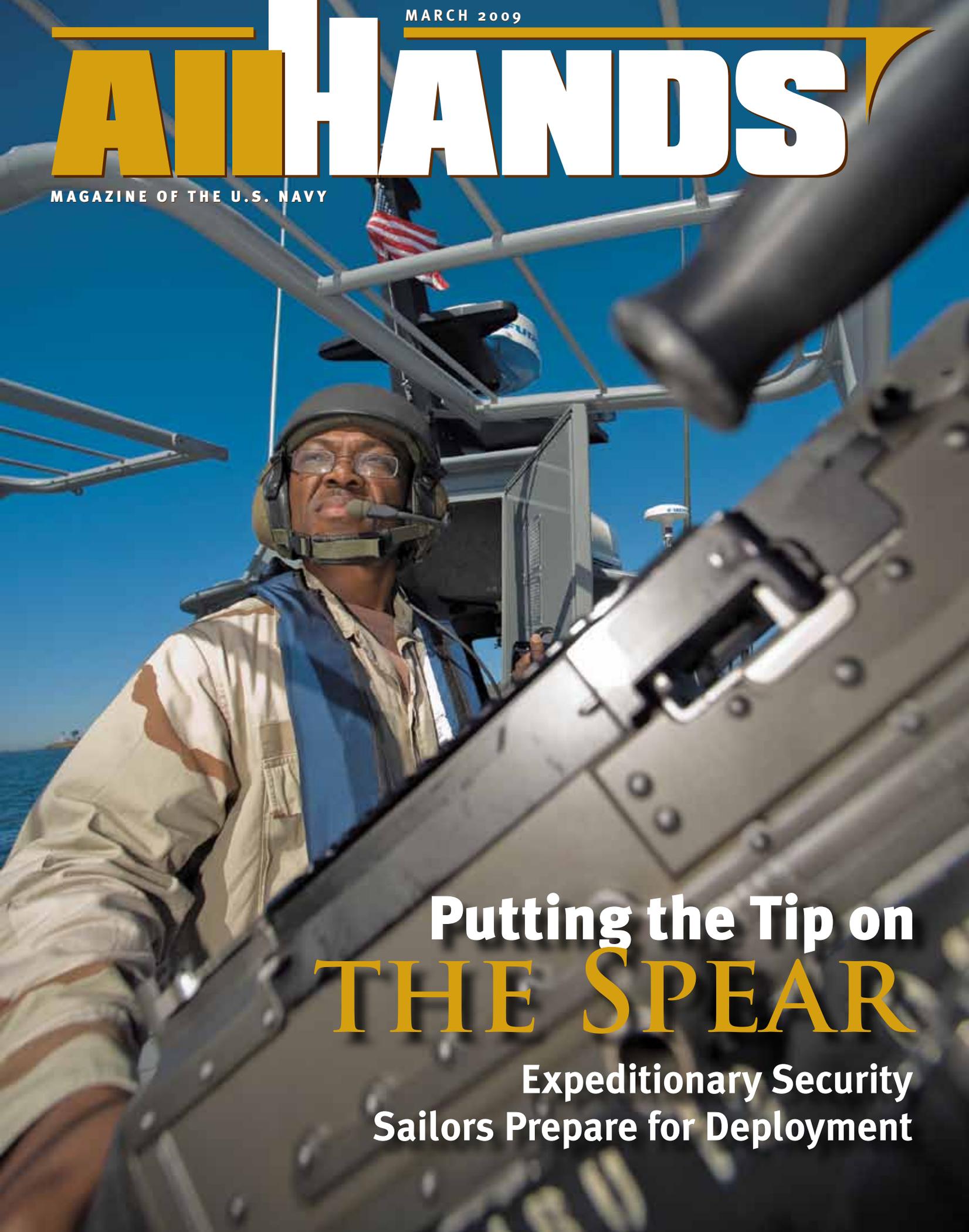


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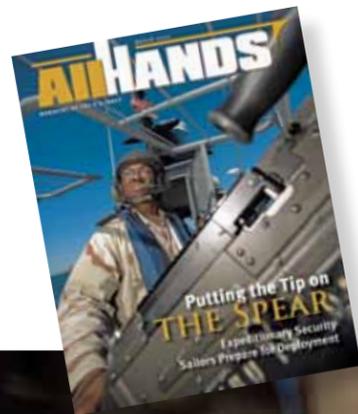
All HANDS

MAGAZINE OF THE U.S. NAVY



Putting the Tip on **THE SPEAR**

Expeditionary Security
Sailors Prepare for Deployment



[On the Front Cover]

EN2 Kpaku Palay, assigned to Boat Division 56, a detachment of Maritime Expeditionary Security Squadron 1, serves as aft lookout during a simulated escort of a high-value asset USNS *Henry J. Kaiser* (T-AO 187) while transiting San Diego Bay.

Photo by MC1(AW) R. Jason Brunson

[Next Month]

USS *Virginia* (SSN 774) is tailored to excel in a wide variety of missions including anti-submarine and surface warfare, special operations support, strike, IST and mine warfare. We recently headed to Groton, Conn., to learn more about the submarine and her crew.

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[Number 1104]



March

16 Putting the Tip on the Spear

In preparation for each mission, crew members of Boat Division 56, a detachment of MESRON 1 conduct safety briefs. Patrol leaders use toy boats to go over each crew's procedures while simulating escorts of high value assets.

Photo by MC1(AW) R. Jason Brunson



12 Taking It To The Seas

The Navy's role, as a global force, has diversified from traditional blue-water operations to maritime surveillance and security in the near coast, harbors and straits of key regions of the world. Fulfilling this role is a dedicated and professional security force capable of meeting these requirements – the men and women from Maritime Expeditionary Security Force (MESF). Within the MESF is Maritime Expeditionary Security Squadron 1 that was recently preparing to deploy. The Sailors quickly learned that practice makes perfect.

Photo by MC1 Michael B. W. Watkins

24 Damage Control Takes Ownership of Navy's Newest Carrier

Being assigned to two of the Navy's newest ships, USS *George H.W. Bush* (CVN 77) and PCU *Makin Island* (LHD 8), is an education in itself. But the development of these plankowners will set the stage for, and determine, the paths of thousands of Sailors in the future.

Photo by MCS1 Nicholas Hall



During a medical training exercise in the Al Jamy'at district of Basra, Iraq, HM3 Wesley Gause, from Wisville, Texas, assigned to U.S. Marines 0731 Military Training Team, demonstrates how to properly aim an M-16 rifle to Iraqi soldiers from the 1st Mechanized Battalion, 36th Brigade, 9th Division.

Photo by Marine Corps Sgt. Gustavo Olgiati



Speaking with Sailors

Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy (SS/SW) Rick West

Hello shipmates. I've been your MCPON for just over three months, and I've had the opportunity to meet with many of you during fleet visits. Already I've begun to understand what my predecessors meant when they told me that nothing prepares you for the pride that accompanies the privilege of leading the greatest enlisted naval force in history.

I felt a degree of that pride as a young chief aboard submarines, then as a chief of the boat and a command master chief of a destroyer. But it's taken up quite a few notches when it's your job to represent all of you.

Describing what you do, how you do it and how well you do it is the easiest job I've ever had. I've never had a problem bragging about the United States Sailor, so that part comes naturally. The difficulty's going to come when I'm dealing with tough decisions that affect you and your families. You have my word that when I'm faced with those, I'll be asking the input of Sailors all over the fleet.

I value that input, and I'll look for it anywhere I can. I'll stop you on the street, in the exchanges, the barracks, aboard our ships, anywhere I can find you and talk to you. That's who I am shipmates. It's how I've done business for a lot of years, and I'm not going to stop now. You and I will be talking. Soon. And I'll be asking for your opinion.

I grew up on submarines. That's where I learned the value of a good shipmate, and it's where I began to understand our Navy. Later on in my career, I found that the Navy is full of great Sailors regardless of what community they serve. And that's something I'll never forget.

My job, as I see it, is to make sure we're doing everything possible to prepare you to do your jobs and to ensure your family is aware of and uses the many programs that the Navy offers for family stability and care. I'm going to do that by emphasizing the importance of some very basic

policies, concepts and programs with what leadership calls "Brilliant on the Basics." Two of those programs center around reporting to a command. As a new Sailor you should have been assigned a sponsor who was engaged early and consistently. That relationship should continue well after you've reported aboard.

Sponsorship is a timeless responsibility and is critical to the quick integration of a Sailor on the deckplates. But just because the idea isn't new doesn't mean we can't make it much better. We will.

Also, when you report aboard a new command the indoctrination program should be so effective that you're ready to hit the deckplates running the minute that program concludes. This program is critical to ensuring our Sailors know what is expected of them as Sailors and also what they should expect from us as leaders. You should be prepared to function as a member of that crew. The new sponsorship and indoc instruction was recently released and has several changes of key importance.

First and foremost, it specifically states that commands are required to ensure every Sailor departing to another unit has been contacted by that unit's representative. That's 100 percent across the board. In keeping with that, the policy creates a new role for those of you looking to make a big difference in the lives of your shipmates: the command sponsorship coordinator.

It's a big job and there are some criteria you'll have to meet to be eligible, but it has great potential to be very rewarding.

I'll be looking for you shipmates. I want to hear about these policies and anything else you have on your mind.

Stay focused and stay sharp!

HOOYAH Warriors!



U.S. Navy photo

ALL HANDS

Number 1104 • March 2009
www.navy.mil

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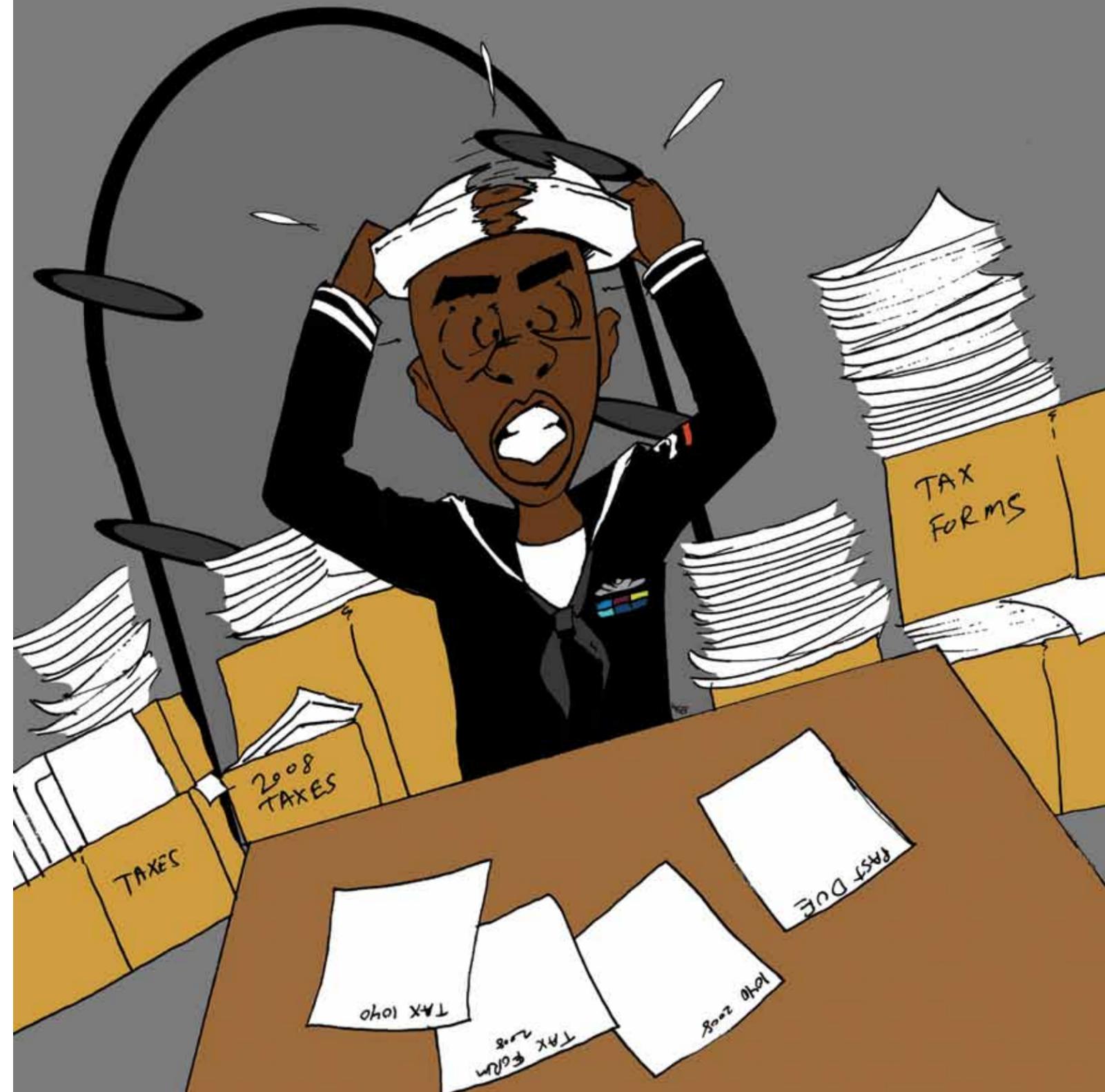
Slice

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Printing
Universal Printing Company
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All Hands (USPS 372-970; ISSN 0002-5577) Number 1104 is published monthly by the Defense Media Activity - Anacostia, Production Department, 2713 Mitscher Rd., S.W., Anacostia Annex, D.C. 20373-5819. Periodicals postage paid at Washington, D.C., and at additional mailing offices. **Subscriptions:** For sale by the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402 or call 202/512-1800. Subscription prices \$45 (domestic)/\$54 (foreign); \$7.50 (single copy domestic)/\$9 (single copy foreign). **Postmaster:** Send address changes to All Hands, Defense Media Activity - Anacostia Production Department, 2713 Mitscher Rd., S.W., Anacostia Annex, D.C. 20373-5819. **Editorial Offices:** Send submissions and correspondence to Defense Media Activity - Anacostia Production Department, ATTN: Editor, 2713 Mitscher Rd., S.W., Anacostia Annex, D.C. 20373-5819. Tel: DSN 288-4171 or 202/433-4171 Fax: DSN 288-4747 or 202/433-4747 E-Mail: allhandsmagazine@navy.mil Message: NAVMEDIACEN WASHINGTON DC //32// **Authorization:** The Secretary of the Navy has determined this publication is necessary in the transaction of business required by law of the Department of the Navy. Funds for printing this publication have been approved by the Navy Publications and Printing Committee.

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Selective Reenlistment Bonus Policy Changes Announced

Sailors will have the opportunity to reenlist with a Selective Reenlistment Bonus (SRB) up to 90 days before the expiration of their active obligated service (EAOS) under new policy set forth in NAVADMIN 006/09.

Sailors may have less than 90 days to reenlist for the bonus to keep the SRB reenlistment in the same fiscal year.

"Under old policy, a Sailor could reenlist anytime in the same fiscal year as their EAOS," explained Jeri Busch, head, military pay and compensation policy branch for the chief of naval personnel. Sailors need to carefully read NAVADMIN 006/09 to understand the many rule changes and exceptions and how this policy will affect any possible SRB awarded for reenlisting.

"By reducing the time frame for SRB reenlistment the Navy can better project and manage end strength while continuing to provide incentive to Sailors with critical skills and valuable experience to stay Navy," said Busch.

The policy change is part of an overall effort to stabilize the force at about 329,000 active-duty Sailors by the end of this fiscal year.

SRB is a targeted, market-based incentive which allows enlisted community managers to strategically adjust award levels as retention needs dictate.

Any Sailor whose request to reenlist has been received by PERS-8 before the release of NAVADMIN 006/09 will have their reenlistment processed under the old policy. Reenlistment requests received by PERS-8 after the



Photo by MC3 Class Aaron Holt

▲ Sailors recite the oath of enlistment during a mass reenlistment ceremony for 117 Sailors aboard USS Ronald Reagan (CVN 76). While the ship was deployed to the U.S. 5th Fleet area of responsibility, a total total of \$2.4 million in selective reenlistment bonuses were distributed among the Sailors.

NAVADMIN's release will fall under the new policy.

Selected NECs will be allowed to reenlist anytime in the fiscal year and are listed in the NAVADMIN. Future changes to the list will be released via NAVADMIN.

Some other requirements under the new policy include:

- All SRB reenlistment requests must be submitted 35 to 120 days prior to the requested reenlistment date.
- SRB requests submitted less than 35 days in advance of the requested date of reenlistment may be rejected.
- Sailors who are eligible for combat zone tax exclusion (CZTE) and have an EAOS that falls in the most current fiscal year are authorized to reenlist anytime within the fiscal year. These Sailors along with command career

counselors must annotate in the remarks section of the pre-certification request whether they are currently CZTE eligible.

All Sailors are encouraged to read the complete NAVADMIN and the frequently asked questions available at www.npc.navy.mil to understand how the policy changes will affect them. **ES**

Story by Sharon Anderson, Chief of Naval Personnel, Washington, D.C.

Navy Revises Short-term Extension Policy

The Navy recently announced a new policy for short-term extensions that will affect Sailors in overmanned ratings, physical

fitness assessment (PFA) failures and some Perform to Serve (PTS) applicants.

According to NAVADMIN 007/09, commanding officers may not authorize short-term extensions for Sailors in overmanned ratings without Naval Personnel Command's (NPC) approval except to obtain obligated service required to complete initial entry training, execute permanent change of station orders or an individual augmentee assignment, to obtain maternity care benefits for a member's wife or pregnant servicewoman, or to meet a Fleet Reserve date.

Under the new policy, short-term extensions for the purpose of passing the physical fitness assessment are not authorized for Sailors who cannot pass the Navy's PFA and have failed three times within a four-year period.

Short-term extensions are no longer authorized for undesignated Sailors, also known as gen-dets, who have not been selected for a rating or converted in the first six months of the 12-month PTS window.

Commands are required to review all short-term extension requests to ensure they are executed for valid program and career management reasons.

Sailors are not authorized to execute short-term extensions to remain on active duty or to complete a college course prior to separation.

Short-term extensions are not authorized for Sailors awaiting examination results or for Sailors awaiting additional quotas for automatic advancement under any automatic advancement program, such as command advancement program.

"The main reasons a Sailor would need a short-term extension is to complete a deployment, match their EAOS [end of active obligated service] to their PRD [projected rotation date] extend to complete training, or for maternity benefits," said Master Chief Navy Counselor (SW/AW) Tom Albert, assigned to NPC.

Short-term extensions are conditional extensions that extend a members enlistment contract anywhere from one to 23 months.

Affected overmanned ratings will be updated quarterly or as needed, and overmanned rating lists will be posted with status of extension requests, procedures, guidance and frequently asked questions at the NPC enlisted career progression Web page.

For more guidance read NAVADMIN 007/09. **ES**

Story courtesy of Navy Personnel Command, Millington, Tenn.

'Perform To Serve' Extended to Second-Term Sailors

Chief of Naval Personnel Vice Adm. Mark Ferguson recently announced plans to expand the Navy's Perform to Serve (PTS) program from first-term Sailors, to all E-6 and below with 10 years or less of service.

"The Perform to Serve program is a vital element of our Navy's total force strategy providing an opportunity to keep our best and brightest Sailors to meet future fleet and manpower requirements," said Ferguson. "The program that empowers our Sailors to perform to serve is now being expanded to include both Zone A and Zone B Sailors."

PTS is a centralized reservation system that helps the Navy manage the reenlistments of Sailors with less than six years of service, or Zone A. While most Sailors are permitted to reenlist in their current rate, Sailors in overmanned ratings may be offered reenlistment in an undermanned rating and Sailors with a poor performance history may not be granted permission to reenlist. Since Feb. 1, 2009, NAVADMIN 017/09 PTS expanded to include Zone B, which includes Sailors with six to 10 years of service.

Also since Feb. 1, all Sailors with an approved PTS application must sign a Page 13 within 30 days of message receipt to accept or decline their PTS reservation.

During 2008, almost 90 percent of Sailors who applied for PTS remained in their current rating, according to statistics from the Center for Career Development.

Controlling the number of Sailors in specific ratings provides

Equipment Operator 1st Class (SCW/FMF) Glen T. Goodwin assigned to Naval Mobile Construction Battalion (NMCB) 4, Naval Base Ventura County, Calif., was recently selected as the 31st Seabee Readiness Group (SRG) 2008 Sea Sailor of the Year.

The award recognizes an outstanding Sailor who demonstrates effective leadership skills, is a role model to junior Sailors and has a positive influence in the Navy and in the community.

"I know there are outstanding first class petty officers throughout the Seabees, including my own command, who are extremely talented and motivated," said Goodwin. "Knowing that my chain of command believes I rate with these Sailors is a huge honor and one that I am thankful for."

In March 2007, NMCB 4 deployed to Ramadi, Iraq, in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom where Goodwin was mission commander for four earthwork projects.

Goodwin is currently assigned to NMCB 4's Det. Horn of Africa for the 2008 battalion deployment. His first assignment was in Sankuri, Kenya, as the water well lead petty officer where he and his crew rehabilitated a 160-foot water well. This provided potable water to more than 10,000 Kenyans in surrounding villages. His team's accomplishments forged lasting relationships with people in Eastern Kenya and helped build security within the region.

Story and photo by MC2(SCW/SW/AW) Ronald Gutridge, assigned to NMCB 4, Det. Horn of Africa.



better advancement opportunities for Sailors, while helping the Navy manage manpower requirements.

"When we started PTS in 2003, there were a lot of Sailors whose promotion opportunities were severely degraded because their rating was overmanned," said Senior Chief Personnel Specialist Ron Miller, PTS Branch, Enlisted Community Management Branch, Navy Personnel Command. "PTS has helped the Navy balance its ratings and where there is more balance, there are better promotion opportunities."

Sailors should consult their career counselors about 15 months before their end of active

obligated service (EAOS) to fill out the paperwork to have the command submit a PTS application, regardless of their intentions to reenlist.

Sailors should read NAVADMIN 017/09 available at the NPC Website for complete details.

For more information regarding the submission process, application format or other PTS issues, visit the NPC Web site at www.npc.navy.mil/ or contact NPC's Customer Service Center by calling 1-866-U-ASK-NPC (1-866-827-5672). **ES**

Story courtesy of Navy Personnel Command, Millington, Tenn.

Around the Fleet

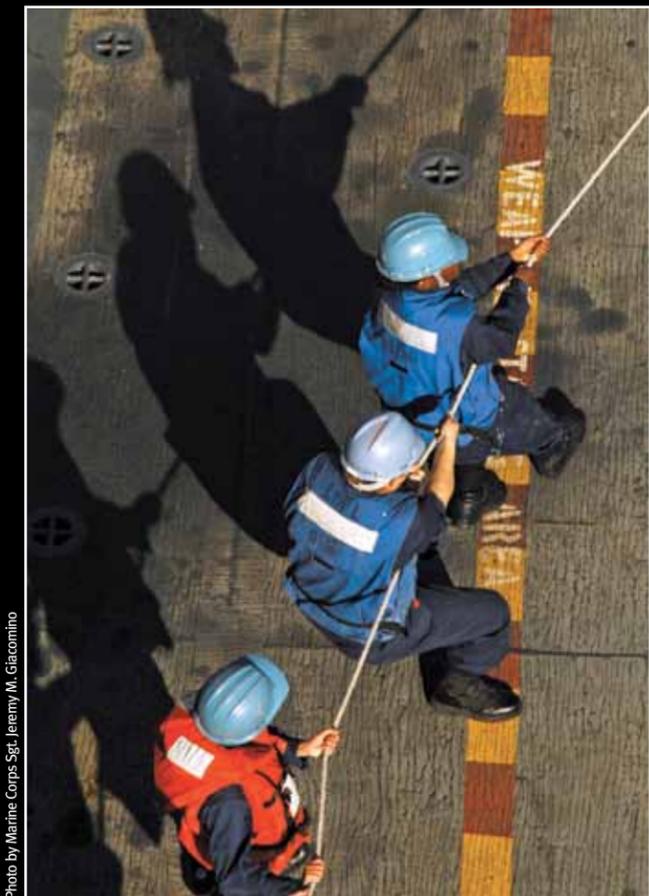


Photo by Marine Corps Sgt. Jeremy M. Giacchino

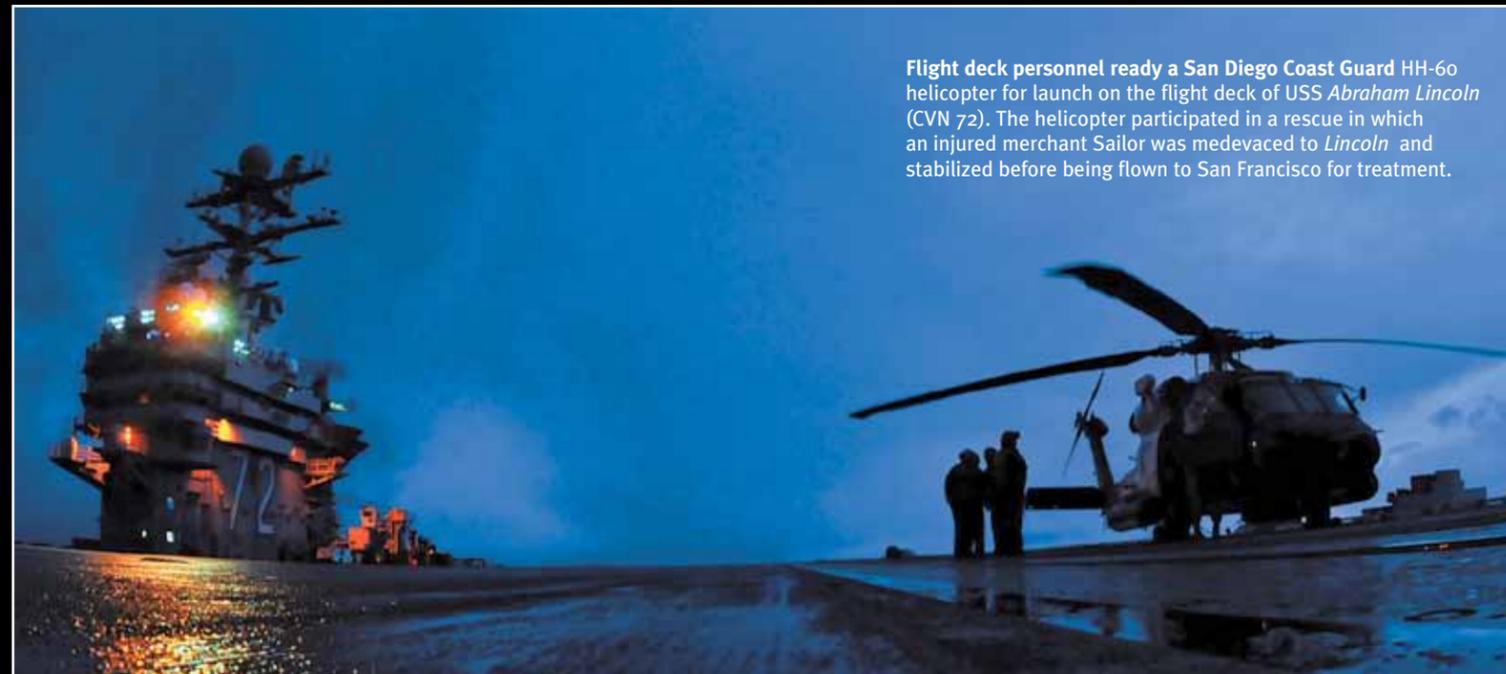
◀ Sailors aboard *USS Iwo Jima* (LHD 7) tend line during an underway replenishment with *USNS Lewis and Clark* (T-AKE 1) in the 5th Fleet area of responsibility.

▼ A U.S. Navy customs agent (left), inspects the personal belongings of a Marine at Al Asad Air Base in Anbar Province, Iraq. Marines are currently in a trial process of departing Iraq from Al Asad Air Base directly to the United States.



Photo by MCSN Chad R. Erdmann

▶ An SH-60F *Sea Hawk* assigned to Helicopter Anti-Submarine Squadron 3 transports supplies to *USS Theodore Roosevelt* (CVN 71) during a replenishment at sea with *USNS Supply* (TAO-E 6) in the Gulf of Oman.



Flight deck personnel ready a San Diego Coast Guard HH-60 helicopter for launch on the flight deck of *USS Abraham Lincoln* (CVN 72). The helicopter participated in a rescue in which an injured merchant Sailor was medevaced to *Lincoln* and stabilized before being flown to San Francisco for treatment.

Photo by MC2 James R. Evans

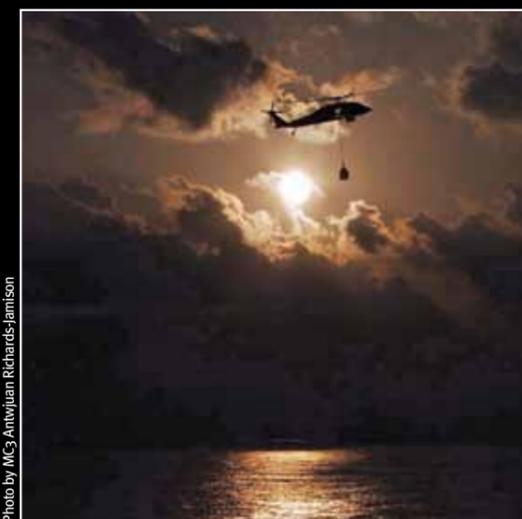


Photo by MC3 Antwan Richardson-Jamison

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Navy Makes Preparing for Selection Boards Easier

A new program recently announced by Navy Personnel Command (NPC) makes reviewing records and preparing for selection boards easier by providing online access to their official military personnel file (OMPF).

Web Enabled Record Review (WERR), announced in NAVADMIN 011/09, allows Sailors to review documents in their OMPF, which are the same documents reviewed by selection board members when considering candidates for officer advancement, selection for chief, senior chief and master chief and other selection boards.

"There's no substitute for empowering Sailors with the benefits of personalized access to their official military personnel file," said Jim Lauder milk, head, Military Personnel Records Management and Policy at NPC.

Sailors can now access their WERR through BUPERs on Line (BOL). All active-duty and selected Reserve personnel with a BOL account and a CAC-enabled computer with appropriate certificates can now view their OMPF online by selecting the WERR option on the BOL main menu page at www.bol.navy.mil. This application also allows Sailors to download and print service-record documents for personal and professional use.

"[It is] very impressive, user friendly and offers easy access. I was extremely pleased with the availability of my personnel files in WERR and my ability to access and [what] I needed," said Lt. Cmdr. Ricky Small, assigned to NPC.

Story by MCC(SW) Maria Yager, Navy Personnel Command, Millington, Tenn.

Continuation Board Allows Navy to Retain Top Performers

The Chief of Naval Personnel (CNP) recently announced the establishment of senior enlisted continuation boards as a means to help shape the force.

"In an effort to stabilize and shape the force, ensure continued advancement opportunity and retain our top performers, a continuation board for enlisted Sailors with more than 20 years of active service will be held for active and FTS [full time support] personnel. The board will focus on retaining top performers serving in our most demanding billets while also ensuring continued advancement opportunity," said Vice Adm. Mark Ferguson, CNP.

The annual board, along with several other force-shaping measures, has been introduced as the Navy strives to meet its congressionally mandated end strength of 329,000 active duty Sailors.

According to the message, the FY10 E-7 through E-9 Senior Enlisted Continuation Board convenes Sept. 21 at NPC. Members not selected for continuation will transfer to the Fleet Reserve or retire no later than June 30, 2010.

The board will review the records of active-duty and FTS E-7 through E-9 personnel with at least 20 years of active service and three years time-in-rate as of Sept. 1, 2009.

Exemptions to the FY10 Senior Enlisted Continuation Board include Sailors with approved Fleet Reserve or retirement dates effective on or before June 30, 2010; those with high-year tenure dates on or before June 30, 2010; frocked personnel; those selected for

Continued on page 11



Photo by MC3 Antwan Richards/Jamison



Photo by MC2 Florelez Valerio

▲ AM3 Fabiola Mongui, assigned to Strike Fighter Squadron 87, cleans the canopy of a F/A-18A+ Hornet on the flight deck aboard USS Theodore Roosevelt (CVN 71) in the Gulf of Oman.

▲ Amphibious assault vehicles from the 26th Marine Expeditionary Unit disembark from the well deck of USS Carter Hall (LSD 50).



Photo by MC2 Joseph Ebalo

◀ Caleb Vietinghoff, a Naval Station Rota Boy Scout from Troop 44, adjusts the visor on a space suit helmet for a volunteer during a visit with the NASA Space Shuttle Response Training Team. A four-person medical training team from NASA, visited with a special group of children in their course classroom during their shuttle preparation mission to Naval Station (NAVSTA) Rota.

▶ Cmdr. Ramona Domen, assistant director of the Naval Medical Center San Diego Medical and Surgical Simulation Center, checks the heart and lungs of the Mobile Adult Trainer mannequin during the center's grand opening. The mannequin was recently featured on the television series "Grey's Anatomy" and is the most advanced human patient simulator available.



Photo by MC2 Greg Mitchell

Continued from page 9

advancement in FY10 boards; personnel selected for command senior chief or master chief programs from the FY10 board; personnel with orders to or serving in the first two years of an overseas or DoD area tours at the time of the board convening date; and Safe Harbor participants.

Additionally, personnel holding a nuclear, SEAL (special warfare boat operator, special warfare operator), explosive ordnance disposal technician or diver enlisted classification code, plus fleet, force and command master chiefs are exempt from the board.

Each eligible member is responsible for ensuring their record is correct and up to date with latest evaluations, awards and other appropriate information. Candidates may communicate with the continuation board by submitting a board package. Packages must be postmarked no later than Aug. 17, 2009. Packages submitted to the E-7 through E-9 advancement selection boards will not be presented to the continuation board.

Commanding officers with personnel not selected for continuation will be notified so they may personally and confidentially notify the members.

For more information read NAVADMIN 030/09 available at www.npc.navy.mil/channels. ❧

Story Courtesy of Navy Personnel Command, Millington, Tenn.

Corps leadership have regarding one of their top priorities — suicide prevention.

Along with the Navy's Life Skills/Health promotions mandatory annual suicide prevention training, region chaplains are providing service members and their dependents with the Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST) program.

"Suicide is one of the most underestimated problems in our culture," said Lt. Jason Hefner, the lead ASIST instructor in the region. "It is the third leading cause of death for 17 to 24 year olds in the United States and the tenth leading cause of death for all age groups."

Hefner added the ASIST program is a great addition to the military's annual training and will provide a new set of prevention tools to service members.

"The ASIST program provides everyday people with the perspective and skills to empower them to provide effective care for others," said Hefner.

Hefner hopes to expand the program to all installations in the regions.

"Right now we have certified instructors at Naples, Sigonella and Souda Bay," said Hefner. "I hope that we can get a certified instructor at every base to increase suicide awareness and develop a strong prevention program." ❧

Story by MC2(SW/AW) Marc Rockwell-Pate, Commander, Navy Region Europe.

Chaplains Offer New Suicide Prevention Training

Navy chaplains across the Europe, Africa and Southwest Asia region are now offering a special suicide prevention program to help address the concerns Navy and Marine

TAKING IT TO THE

SEAS



Sailors deployed with Maritime Security Squadron Forward supporting Commander Task Force 158.1, provide protection for visit, board, search and seizure teams in the Persian Gulf.

Photo by MCS Michael B.W. Watkins

Story by MCC(SW/AW) Katrin Albritton

In recent years the U.S. Navy role as a global force has intensified its maritime surveillance and security near coasts, harbors and straits in key regions of the world. Fulfilling this role is a dedicated and professional security force driven to meet these requirements – the men and women from Maritime Expeditionary Security Force (MESF).

The Navy has more than 6,000 active and Reserve Sailors who make up MESF, a command flexible enough to adapt to new missions in support of maritime security and protection of critical assets.

MESF provides an expeditionary security force, that provides defensive capabilities and conducts joint security missions. Cmdr. Bob Poling, the commanding officer of Maritime Expeditionary Security Squadron (MESRON) 2, Portsmouth, Va., said one of their most important tasks is providing embarked security for Military Sealift Command (MSC) ships and MSC-contracted civilian vessels as part of Operation *Vigilant Mariner*.

“[Embarked security teams] provide force protection because these are ships that have [limited] force-protection capability. The teams stay with the ships throughout their transit,” said Poling.

MSC-owned and chartered dry cargo ships and tankers traverse the world’s oceans carrying equipment, supplies and fuel to U.S. warfighters operating ashore and underway. In FY08, these ships delivered 7 million square feet of cargo and 2.3 billion gallons of fuel. MSC’s ships are crewed by civilians, but are still required to transit the world’s most dangerous waterways.

The Navy fleet commanders are tasked to provide heightened security to MSC ships when necessary, and this is where the Embarked Security Teams (EST) come in. ESTs board MSC ships before they enter dangerous waterways, provide protection and security for the duration of the voyage and leave for another ship when the transit is complete.

On average, 24 MSC ships worldwide carry ESTs every month.

“Embarked security teams are key to the safe transit of MSC ships operating in certain waterways,” said Griff Hume, force protection officer for MSC. “These teams help ensure the safe and timely delivery of critical equipment, fuel and supplies to U.S. warfighters ashore and at sea.”

MESF is broken into two maritime expeditionary security groups, Maritime Expeditionary Security Group (MESG) 1 homeported in San Diego, and MESG 2 in Portsmouth, Va. Their missions are not strictly reserved for embarked security. In addition to the embarked shipboard requirements, MESRONs also participate in waterborne interdiction, protection of high-value asset ships, force protection, rapid response, convoy security escort, port security and harbor defense.

Poling said Sailors, who had recently returned from the Northern Arabian Gulf, spent their deployment riding patrol craft and supporting maritime interdiction operations. Chief petty officer for the HVBSS detachment, Chief Master-at-Arms (SW/AW) Pat Otis, said

the detachment manned positions aboard patrol craft and while embarked on an aircraft carrier.

“On the ship, I had people moving weapons, [and participating in] operations and training, all in one big surface,” Otis said. He also said any time the crew was not actively involved in planning or participating in an a mission, they were going over training they had received from any one of the 15 schools they can attend.

“Perishable skills are something that I think a lot of people miss,” he said. “If you are used to typing every day but get out of the habit of using the QWERTY-home row, you get out of practice. Apply that concept to reloading your 9mm magazine, reloading your M-16 or completing a restraint technique or take-down procedure, anything like that. Those are all perishable skills. You have to teach muscle-memory to reload and reload and be able to do it left or right handed.”

Training for members of the MESF varies by the detachment to which Sailors are assigned. For example, a master-at-arms (MA) Sailor assigned to an EST will attend standard shipboard reaction force school and weapons training. Lt.j.g. Christopher Rupp, Det. 221 security officer with MESRON 2, said the real training starts there.

“There really is nothing established for what we do here, because there is no Navy school that can bring us to our required operations capabilities and projected operating environment,” Rupp explained. “The average MA who checks in here will go through security reactionary force, basic and advanced,

just like on a ship. When they come back, we decide on other schools, such as making them a small arms marksman instructor or a crew-served weapons instructor. The schools bring them to the baseline, and we start their training from there.”

The training MESF is involved in is for their Sailors, Poling said training partner nations comes with the territory – especially when that territory includes Al Basra Oil Terminal and Khawr Al Amaya Oil Terminal – two platforms in the Persian Gulf that serve as the main conduits for exporting Iraqi oil to the world market. Here, U.S. Sailors have a dual mission – providing force protection for the oil platforms while sharing knowledge with the Iraqi marines who share the post.

“They are working hand-in-hand with the Iraqi marines to provide defense to both platforms. Also, at both platforms our security detachments send a sweep team on board the tugs and large tankers, hand-in-hand with the Iraqi marines.”

The training being provided to local assets has helped members of the security teams complete their missions more effectively. During his most recent deployment, Otis boarded more than 30 boats and served as a subject matter expert in the area providing training to other country’s boarding teams. At no time, he said, did the boardings become hostile.

“I think we didn’t meet a lot of resistance because the local area and community are used to seeing the Navy. The shared allied boardings

regularly happen,” Otis said. “We did a lot of cross-training with our allies. I think that, just like when you get stopped for a speeding ticket, if you have an officer who presents himself poorly, you are more apt to think less of his authority. I believe our training provides a firm foundation. I think our training is what led us to have a lower resistance rate.”

The job these men and women sign up for is beyond what they could have expected when placing orders. As a first class petty officer, the responsibility as mission commander is within reach. Poling said the confidence he has in his petty officers, and the responsibility for which they are entrusted, is unique and lends credibility to the training they have received and the trust put in them.



◀ **HM1 Thomas Britt (right)** observes IT1 Chris Tucker, assigned to Maritime Expeditionary Squadron 9 as he treats a mock casualty during a mass casualty exercise at Ford Island, Hawaii. The exercise is part of a three-day tactical combat casualty care course that teaches basic combat trauma care.

Photo by MC2S Dave Nagle



Members of the visit, board, search and seizure team assigned to Maritime Expeditionary Squadron 2 embarked aboard USS Abraham Lincoln (CVN 72) approach USS Nassau (LHA 4) in the Persian Gulf.

Photo by MC1 Rustum Rivera

Leadership within the MESSAGES has found this approach effective and has not elevated the level of seniority within the detachments. MACS(EXW) Chris Long, Det. 221’s senior enlisted advisor, said the men and women who work for him are self-motivated and willing to accept extraordinary responsibility.

“The level of responsibility that we put on our E-5s and E-6s, who are willing to accept that responsibility, is tremendous,” Long said. “It’s a unique opportunity that we can put them out there on these ships as the tactical supervisor, or patrol leader in charge of the boats, providing the waterborne security. There is a lot of responsibility in that. You’re responsible for the weapons [and] weapons release. You’re responsible for the conduct of the crew, the equipment and the people who have been willing to take that responsibility have been successful.”

The life of an MESF Sailor can be exciting and action-packed. But Poling said it’s crucial for people to remember these same Sailors, who ensure the waterways are safe for shipping, do so while living in arduous conditions.

“The Sailors on the oil platforms in particular are restricted to something that is 1,500 yards long, and these guys are going to be out there for six months,” he explained. “They are living in connex boxes. These guys

are out there on the platforms, day and night, in the heat, the cold, the rain, the sandstorms, providing security. It’s not all cool guys, running around, shooting weapons and all day excitement. It’s tough work, and it’s some very tough environmental conditions.”

MESF Sailors serve all over the world. Abroad, they protect high-value assets, perform harbor security in primary ports of debarkation and serve as waterborne security for Navy vessels through choke points like the

Panama Canal. Missions also continuing on the home front, such as providing port security when ex-USS *John F. Kennedy* (CV 67) conducted her final port visit to Boston, as well as augmenting security for the Democratic National Convention in August 2008.

As Poling said, “Those [Sailors] are doing it well and making it look easy.”

Albritton is assigned to Navy Expeditionary Combat Command, Norfolk.



Photo by MC2 Jaton A. Rhinehart

▲ **MA3 James Schnabel** sights in on a target with the Green Beam Dazzler III-C at Cheatham Annex, Va. Maritime Expeditionary Security Group 2 arranged varying scenarios to demonstrate the employment and test the effectiveness of non-lethal weapons a maritime environment.

PUTTING THE TIP

► Crew members of Boat Division 56 return pier side from a simulated escort of high-value asset USNS *Henry J. Kaiser* (T-AO 187). After each mission, training team members debrief the crews. The squadron is in the Unit Level Training Readiness Assessment (ULTRA) phase of preparation for deployment. ULTRA is designed to evaluate the command training team's ability to train its personnel.



ON THE SPEAR

GMSA William Sjulstad assigned to Boat Division 56, keeps watch on a surface contact while serving as forward lookout during a simulated escort of high-value asset USNS *Henry J. Kaiser* (T-AO 187).



Story and photos by MC1(AW) R. Jason Brunson

The exhausted Sailors lined both sides of the pier jutting out toward the Coronado Bay Bridge.

The days spent on the water were long, and sleep ... well, there would be time for that later.

For now they take a break from the endless man overboard drills, first aid training, incident-at-sea scenarios and security maneuvers. During this brief cease-fire from the roar of the boat engines, they sit and enjoy a quiet meal, but not for long.



▲ SCSK (EXW) Ray Jenó, command senior enlisted advisor, Boat Division 56, offers words of encouragement to his Sailors. Jenó said the boat crews worked eight-hour rotating shifts, around the clock, during the six-week training period prior to the deployment, which led up to two weeks of qualifications and testing. "Small boat Sailors are a different breed of Sailor," Jenó said. "They aren't happy if life isn't a little bit difficult."

Eugene, Ore., where he has lived all of his life. However, he said, the talent and diversity of people that the Navy brings together are hard to find elsewhere.

"We have good Sailors who work extremely hard and don't hesitate to step forward when their country needs them," Wofford said. "Most of us are drilling Reservists who have been recalled to active duty for a period of one year leaving jobs and families behind. But we do it, because we see the opportunity and challenge."

In December, more than 400 personnel from MESRON 1 deployed to critical coastal and inshore areas of Iraq and Kuwait to provide seaward surveillance and security forces in littoral areas and harbors.

The process of preparing for a mobilization such as this is not an easy one according to Senior Chief Storekeeper (EXW) Ray Jenó, command senior enlisted advisor, Boat Division 56; but from a chief's perspective, it

was made easier because of the caliber of the Sailors they have.

Jenó said the boat crews worked eight-hour rotating shifts, around the clock, during the six-week training period prior to the deployment, which led up to two weeks of qualifications and testing. They all had to qualify to stand their individual watch positions, and then as a unit.

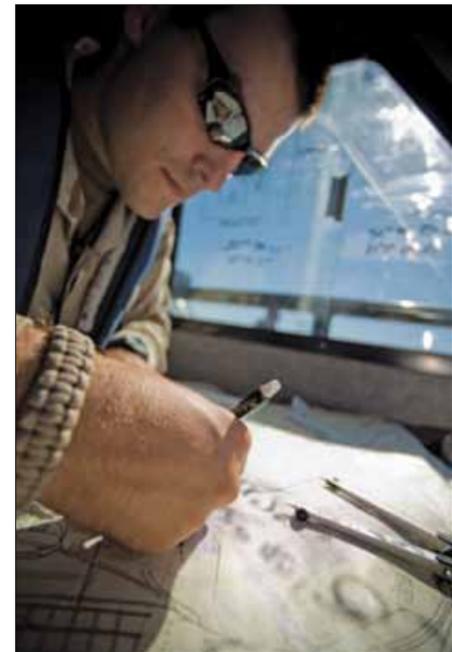
He said as soon as a crew member earns a qualification, it is time to move on to the next. The hours and nature of the job are also physically demanding.

"They do it, because they want to do it. It's kind of addictive, and it's a lot of fun. But to have that fun you have to [do a lot of hard work]," Jenó said. "It is a pleasure to be around these Sailors, because they are so motivated."

Boatswain's Mate 2nd Class Michael Anthony Tredo, from Seattle, has served in the Coast



▲ QM1 (EXW) Kenneth Wofford is a tactical boat coxswain assigned to Boat Division 56. Wofford said getting his job done means representing qualities such as hard work, leadership, commitment and the loyalty to the mission at hand. "I am a small boat coxswain with weapons release authority," Wofford said, "and my job is to provide security for high-value assets and other important missions that the Navy and our government deem necessary."



▲ BM3 Michael Brauer, a navigator assigned to Boat Division 56, plots the boat's course as he and his crew search for simulated suspicious objects reported to be adrift in their vicinity. Evaluators observed as the crew demonstrated their ability to work together and safely conduct various missions similar to what they expect to encounter while deployed.

The seemingly endless days of pre-brief then drill then post-brief and start all over again until everyone gets it right, can take their toll on the most motivated of Sailors.

Preparations for deployment are never easy and no exceptions were made for the men and women of Maritime Expeditionary Security Squadron (MESRON) 1 as they readied for deployment.

The squadron, comprised of Navy and Coast Guard Reserve units from all over the United States had converged in San Diego during September with one goal in mind – assemble a group of dedicated individuals into a single unit ready to handle anything providing harbor security at the tip of the spear could throw at them.

One of those individuals is Quartermaster 1st Class (EXW) Kenneth Wofford of Eugene, Ore. With more than 20 years experience in the Navy Reserve community, Wofford said, getting his job done means representing qualities such as hard work, leadership, commitment and the loyalty to the mission at hand.

"I am a small boat coxswain with weapons release authority," Wofford said, "and my job

is to provide security for high-value assets (HVA's) and other important missions that the Navy and our government deem necessary to fight the war on terror."

He said the role of small boat Sailors is absolutely essential.

"If we deter or stop any attack on our waterborne assets worldwide, then we have succeeded in our mission," Wofford said.

He worked hard to become a coxswain, he said, because it gives him the rewarding opportunity to lead while embracing a great challenge to serve his country in a unique role. It requires a command presence, and authority, and most importantly the ability to put the crew in the best position to carry out the mission.

"Being a small boat coxswain in the United States Navy carries a large responsibility and one that I take very seriously," Wofford said. "It is one of few positions in the military, that an enlisted man, like myself, can command his or her own boat."

Wofford said he loves the work he does in his civilian life. He is a horticulturist and arborist for a Park and Recreation District in



EN2 Kpaku Palay (left) and EM2 (SW) Eric Mend assigned to Boat Division 56, serve as aft lookouts during a simulated escort of a high-value asset transiting San Diego Bay.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY “CITIZEN SAILOR”



One of the many challenges for the crew members of Boat Division 56, during the Final Exercise Problem (FEP) phase of training, was demonstrating their ability to safely navigate under extremely low visibility conditions. The crews simulate these conditions by placing blankets over the windows and using instrumentation to guide them. FEP is designed to evaluate members going forward and ensure battle readiness.

Guard Reserve for 13 years. He is currently assigned to Port Security Unit (PSU) 311, which is attached to MESRON 1 for their deployment.

He qualified as a coxswain in 2001, when he was activated for two years following the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center.

He said his background prior to transferring to PSU was primarily in search and rescue, and law enforcement.

These days he is a coxswain aboard a 25-foot, transportable port security boat (TPSB), outfitted with a .50-caliber Browning machine gun and two M-240B machine guns, with a four-person crew. He and his crew provide part of the 360-degree defensive perimeter to protect HVAs transiting in and out of harbors and inner coastal waterways. As an experienced coxswain, he said, the

challenge wasn't as much how to do his job, as it was adjusting to a different type of mission.

"It's completely different, the search and rescue mindset [was all about assistance and rendering aid]," Tredo said. "Where as now, there is kind of a line [drawn] in the sand 'or water,' and nobody crosses that line."

Tredo said adding the Coast Guard TPSBs to MESRON 1's defensive line enhances its speed

and agility. The Navy boats are better platform for visibility and tactical control.

"You are a better quarterback from the Navy platform," Tredo said.

Tredo works in finance as a civilian, so life changes forms quite drastically between his two chosen career fields. However, he enjoys working with the Navy. He said going into the initial phases of training he was concerned

March 3, 2009, marks the 94th birthday of the Navy Reserve Force. Today, some 67,000 Selected Reservists and nearly 54,000 Individual Ready Reservists have taken up the calling. They serve in all 50 states, drilling from a total of 128 Navy operational support centers (NOSC)

split into five regional Reserve component commands (RCC). They are fully integrated in every aspect of the Navy and often mobilized at the tip of the spear in Iraq and Afghanistan. Mobilization has become even more commonplace for the Reserve force since Sept. 11, 2001. A concept of total force has started forming, integrating the active with the Reserve to increase combat readiness.

The vision of a total integrated force is one that Commander, Navy Reserve Force Vice Adm. Dirk Debbink feels strongly about.

"Our Reserve Sailors are truly dedicated to fulfilling our vision of 'Support to the Fleet, Ready and Fully Integrated.' I feel privileged to be working for each of them," Debbink said. "The focus for our force is three-fold: support to the fleet, support to our Sailors and support to their families."

Reserve Force Master Chief (FMF) Ronney Wright agrees.

"Since Sept. 11, 2001, more than 52,000 mobilization requirements in support of global war on terrorism operations *Enduring Freedom* and *Iraqi Freedom* have been filled by Selected Reservists," said Wright. "On any given day, more than 17,000 of the 68,000 Navy Reservists are providing fully integrated, global operational support to the fleet and combatant commanders. Critical skill sets

Navy Reserve Key Partner to Executing the Maritime Strategy.

include cargo handling, special warfare, customs inspectors, medical support, intelligence, aviation and myriad mobilization assignments."

With a fully integrated Reserve component, there is seamless service provided to the support of the maritime

strategy. At any given time, up to 30 percent of the Navy Reserve is providing global operational support.

Reserve Sailors like Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Gino Flores have had firsthand experience in active-Reserve integration. Flores mobilized to active duty twice; once to Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, in 2008 and once to Kuwait in 2005. He credits his Reserve training in helping him prepare for the tasks he faced during his mobilization.

"In the Reserve, we are constantly reviewing and updating training requirements that may be applicable to real world situations," said Flores, who drills with the Public Affairs Center in Jacksonville, Fla. "In being mobilized to active duty, we have the opportunity to put that training into practice. You become a valuable asset to your unit."

The skills that many citizen Sailors bring from their civilian job make a positive impact to the military mission.

"The integration of the Reserve component with the active component becomes an essential tool allowing the Navy and Defense Department to meet ongoing operational commitments," Wright said.

Story by MC2 Ryan Hill, editor
The Navy Reservist magazine



Communications personnel from MESRON 1 man a simulated maritime operations center, pier side on Naval Amphibious Base Coronado, Calif. From here the C-2 Division, or command and control division houses, as they will when forward deployed, communications and sensor detachments who handle the radar, cameras and mobile sensor platforms vital to supporting inner coastal security forces elements.

that they would have issues bringing the two elements together, but those concerns are long gone now.

“These guys are squared away. Where I thought there might be issues, there really weren’t any,” Tredo said, “so it worked well.”

According to Tredo, in addition to the normal crew development, the coast guardsmen are actually looking forward to being able to earn the Navy’s Expeditionary Warfare qualification while on deployment.

Information Systems Technician 1st Class Mike Kasper of Rathdrum, Idaho, is the leading petty officer in the training department for Boat Detachment 932, which merged with Boat Detachment 562 to form Boat Division 56.

Kasper explained the progression of the final training and qualification for the squadron began in September with the work-up phase. This is where the members are out on the water or standing their watch, going through drills, practicing and learning how to deal with the countless number of scenarios they might encounter.

He said the boat crews get hands-on

experience working with the supporting elements such as the communications personnel, and embarked security teams to bring all of the elements together as a cohesive unit. They encounter any number of situations: swimmer attacks, man-overboard drills and equipment failures. They also conducted multiple HVA escorts.

Kasper said the challenge from the training department’s perspective was bringing all the different units together.

“They all have different training concepts,” Kasper said. “[To integrate the various units into one] you pull in representatives from each of those commands and really work closely with them, ahead of time, to gather ideas. Then you lay out the best training package you can knowing what strengths and deficiencies each unit brings to the table.”

Immediately following the work-up phase, Unit Level Training Readiness Assessment (ULTRA) began. ULTRA is designed to evaluate the command training team’s (CTT) ability to train its personnel. The next step, once ULTRA was completed was the Final

Exercise Problem, which is the method for evaluating members going forward to ensure battle readiness.

In the end, the objective was to equip, train and qualify 24 Navy boat crews, plus 12 Coast Guard boat crews along with all of the support elements.

Kasper said being able to watch the members develop both as individuals and as a crew is very rewarding.

“I get to watch the coxswains mold the crew members individually. They start out green,” Kasper said. “The next thing you know they are pulling up pier-side, throwing lines 25 feet away, hooking the cleat on the first try, tying off the way they are supposed to. You can see the unit cohesion on the boat. It really is a pleasure to witness that because then you know the hard work, and the 18-hour days you are putting in, are paying off.”

Electrician’s Mate 2nd Class (SW) Eric Mend, a qualified crewman, is relatively new to the small boat community. He said the work-up phase started out necessarily slow.

Mend said personnel had to spend some

time making sure they were squared away administratively and medically. Uniforms and gear were issued. They then went into a classroom environment for some basic seamanship to ensure everyone was on the same page before moving out onto the water. It was at that point, he said that the training schedule began to ramp up.

“We have done pretty much everything here that we’ll be doing once we get in country, standing watches, looking out for surface contacts, man-overboard and safety drills,” Mend said. “I’m new to the community. I don’t have much experience. So, everything I’ve learned here has been important for me.”

Tactical Boat Coxswain, Sonar Technician Submarines 2nd Class (SS) Shane Watanabe of Salt Lake City rejoined the Reserves after 9/11. He said he chose small boats because he wanted to serve in a community that would put him out on the front lines.

Watanabe said he could see firsthand why

the training had to be so aggressive. As a coxswain, he is responsible for the safety and success of his crew.

“That’s why we do everything over and over again,” Watanabe said. “This way it becomes second nature.”

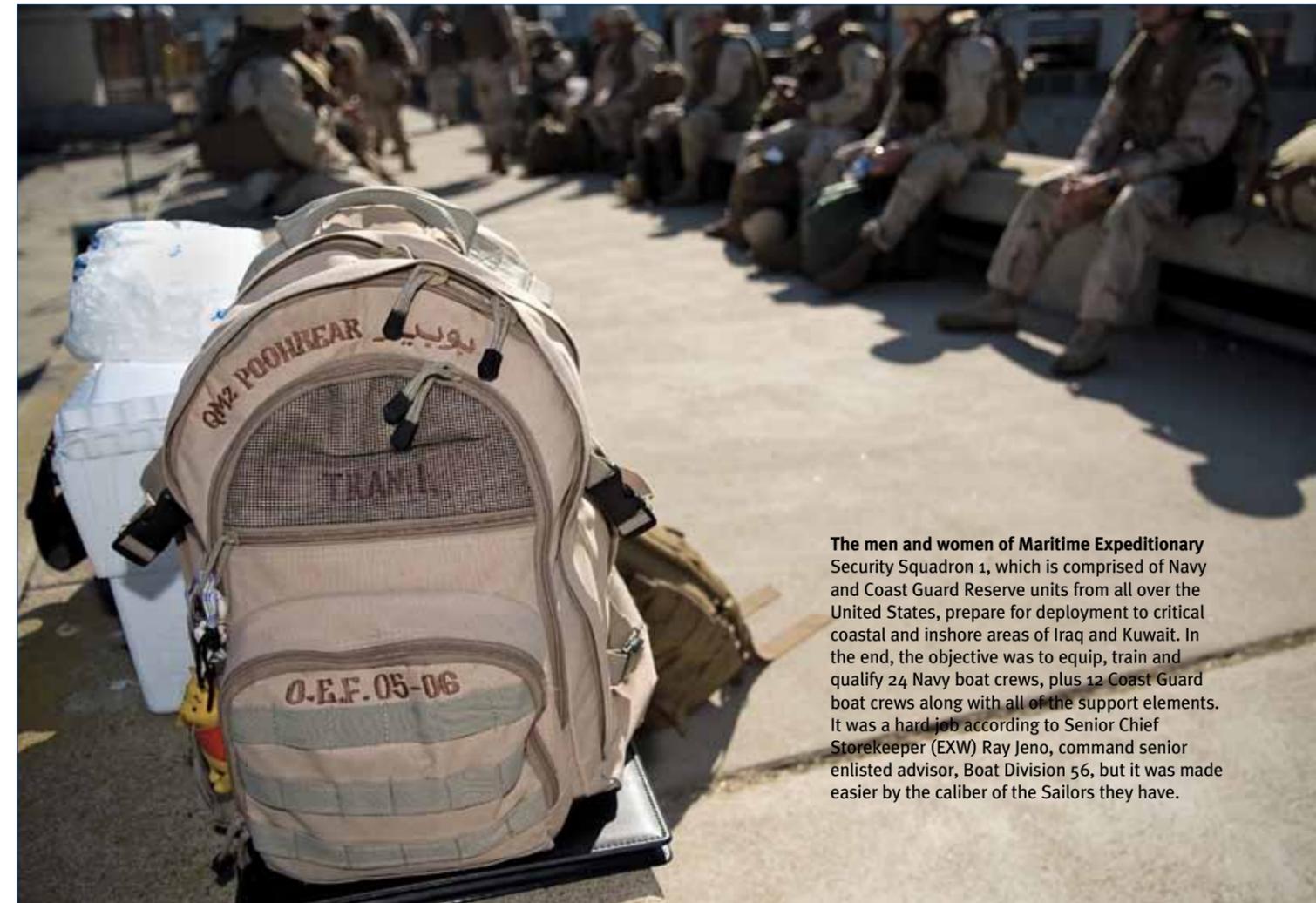
Like Watanabe, Engineman 2nd Class Kpaku Palay of Dallas, was preparing for his second small boat deployment. He said it was a great opportunity for him, because on his last deployment he was able to advance in his qualifications from crewman to engineer and then to navigator. This deployment will give him the opportunity to earn his coxswain qualification.

“On an active-duty mission like this, it could take four to six months,” Palay said, “[and back in a Reserve unit it can take years], only because you aren’t on the water as much.”

Brunson is assigned to Defense Media Activity – Anacostia, Washington, D.C.



▲ EN2 Kpaku Palay relays surface contact information to his patrol leader during a simulated escort of high-value asset training. Palay is currently qualified up to the level of navigator, and is working on his tactical boat coxswain qualification.



The men and women of Maritime Expeditionary Security Squadron 1, which is comprised of Navy and Coast Guard Reserve units from all over the United States, prepare for deployment to critical coastal and inshore areas of Iraq and Kuwait. In the end, the objective was to equip, train and qualify 24 Navy boat crews, plus 12 Coast Guard boat crews along with all of the support elements. It was a hard job according to Senior Chief Storekeeper (EXW) Ray Jenó, command senior enlisted advisor, Boat Division 56, but it was made easier by the caliber of the Sailors they have.



► Sailors assigned to USS *George H.W. Bush* (CVN 77) participate in a firefighting drill in a simulated at-sea environment to prepare for upcoming crew certifications.

◀ DCFN Benjamin M. Vanagen adjusts the first-stage regulator nozzle on a self-contained breathing apparatus in preparation for a training brief aboard *Bush*.

Photo by MC3 Mitch P. Blechner

By MC2 Michael Tackitt

Being a damage controlman (DC) aboard an aircraft carrier means constantly keeping your finger on the pulse of the ship. DCs stand watch at Damage Control Central, maintain repair lockers and are able to respond in a moment's notice to any dangerous situation that threatens not only the ship itself, but the lives of her crew. However for the DCs commissioning a new ship the mission is not only keeping a finger on the ship's pulse, but also being there to help start its heart.



Photo by MC1 Nicholas Hall

Damage Controlmen

Take Ownership of Navy's Newest Carrier

USS *George H.W. Bush* (CVN 77), the Navy's newest aircraft carrier as well as the 10th and final carrier of the *Nimitz* class, was commissioned Jan. 10. The first crew bringing the ship to life is also the crew setting the standard of how the ship will respond to any threatening situation for virtually the remainder of its service life.

Even after the ship was commissioned, the DCs continue the training and preparations while the ship goes through acceptance trials and begins operations in the fleet.

"Not only do you bring everything (damage control related) on to the ship, but you also have to get everybody trained up and qualified to actually take ownership and

then eventually take the ship out to sea," said Damage Controlman 1st Class (SW) Gregory F.M. Greene. "And that basically sets the fundamentals for how the ship is going to be 50 years down the road."

As schedules comprise and checklists expand, a unique set of challenges arises.

"For the DCmen on board it's hard. They're



◀ Flight deck personnel aboard *Bush* receive a training pre-brief. All plankowners throughout the various ships departments undergo intensive training. Every Sailor has a role to play when it's time to respond to an emergency.

Photo by MCSA Joel S. Kozlowski

it because there's a lot of people you have to train. This was the first (completed) locker in the whole ship and it's my locker. Everybody on the ship, whether it's GQs (General Quarters), the at-sea fire party, IETs (In-port Emergency Teams), everybody's been training from Repair Locker Three."

Whether new to the Navy or seasoned Sailors just completing another

unsung heroes, and it's a thankless job a lot of times for these folks," said Chief Warrant Officer 3 James Chavez, the Repair Three Locker officer aboard *Bush*. "They've been putting in quite a bit of overtime. They're showing up early, they stay late. When (other) people are done with general quarters or their training quarters they get to go home. The DCmen stay behind and (perform preventive maintenance) on the equipment that was used and ensure that's ready to go for the next training quarters or an actual casualty."

Aside from bringing all of the ship's repair locker gear on board, they also worked side-by-side with Northrop Grumman shipyard workers readying the carrier's firefighting systems. DCs bear the responsibility of training the 2,000 plus crew on damage control techniques, accomplishing one of their primary missions: transforming every Sailor into a firefighter.

Bringing Sailors up to speed on damage control, Greene explained, is the most important part of his job.

"It's important that everybody's trained up and qualified to fight the ship." Greene said

While assisting the senior DC petty officers with training the crew, the junior Sailors in the carrier's Damage Control division are

primarily responsible for maintaining the 10 repair lockers spread throughout the ship. Each repair locker is responsible for a portion of a ship during a casualty, or an incident where the ship is damaged or Sailors are injured. Repair lockers maintain firefighting equipment such as the self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA), equipment used to remove water in the event of flooding, and shoring equipment used to keep damaged bulkheads from collapsing. While they are less visible to the crew than their senior counterparts teaching basic and advanced damage control courses, they understand their role in the ship's history, which gives them a source of pride.

"It's an honor," said Damage Control Fireman (SW/AW) Edgar Rosa, a custodian for Repair Locker Three. "I feel proud about

chapter in their careers, the Sailors in *Bush*'s DC division understand their place in history and their importance in setting the course for the massive warship for years to come.

"Of course I'm definitely going to take a lot more pride being a plankowner," said Damage Controlman 3rd Class Jerami A. Rathbun, who has been on board since 2006. "At first you just say, 'Oh cool, new ship!' But then when you come here and you see that it's not really put together and you see that you actually have to do things with your own hands to bring the ship to life, your pride definitely goes up. I'm definitely more proud to be on this ship." ❧

Tackitt is assigned to USS George H.W. Bush (CVN 77).

▶ DC2(SW/SC) Javin N. Riley adjusts a piece of damage control equipment before a training brief aboard *Bush*.



Photo by MC3 Micah P. Blechner



Makin Island is the first LHD to get underway on both gas turbine engines and electric propulsion motors. The ship's new hybrid propulsion system is expected to provide substantial fuel savings and increased operational flexibility during the life of the ship.

LHD 8: A New Hybrid Era for the Amphibious Navy

Story and photos by MC2 Justin Webb



▲ EN2(SW) Rebecca Lucero cycles through the alarm summary page while GSM1(SW) William Toten explains the operating parameters of PCU *Makin Island* (LHD 8) reverse osmosis (RO) control unit. The ship's four RO units can produce over 200,000 gallons to supply the ship and provide for any necessary humanitarian mission.

ENgineman 2nd Class (SW) Rebecca Lucero is making history. The things she's doing today will set the stage for thousands of Sailors in the future. And she knows it. "I feel like an asset to the Navy," said Lucero, work center supervisor for Pre-Commissioning Unit (PCU) *Makin Island's* (LHD 8) auxiliaries division's (A-Div) elevators and hydraulics shop. "It's something to be proud of because I am a part of the history of bringing a ship to life."



▲ **Damage Control Training Team member EM1 (SW) Patrick David** assists **EN1(SW) Renato Cordero** put on cotton glove liners for the Advanced Chemical Protective Garment, used to protect against chemical and biological agents. Sailors getting their advanced chemical, biological and radiological 309 qualification must put on this suit to become accustomed to its fit and also demonstrate the ability to properly dress in the suit without exposing any skin.

Lucero has nine years in the Navy and LHD 8 is her third shipboard tour. This assignment is characterized by the development of each Sailor on board as well as the bringing to life of a new chapter in the history of the amphibious Navy.

Makin Island is the eighth and final *Wasp*-Class amphibious assault ship to be built. At the same time it's also the first U.S. Navy ship to house a hybrid gas turbine-electric drive propulsion system (MCS). For engineers, that's the type of on-the-job experience that increases the stakes of being a plankowner.

"As engineers [aboard *Makin Island*] we are required to have a working knowledge of all areas within the department," said Lucero. "We not only hold training within our own divisions, but we also must have a basic understanding of the machinery control system (MCS), mainspaces and other engineering spaces, and equipment throughout the ship."

And there's more.

Lucero spends around 50 percent of her time on board the ship performing quality assurance

(QA) checks and all associated administrative paperwork. The other half of her typical 10-12 hour work day is divided amongst firefighting training, crew familiarization (CREWFAM) courses and other in-rate and general military training (GMT).

"Regardless of rate or rank, the 1,100 Sailors that will make up *Makin Island's* crew will all be proficient in general shipboard firefighting, aircraft firefighting, basic damage control (DC) and 3M [maintenance and material management] by the time the ship is delivered to the Navy," said Senior Chief Navy Counselor (SW/AW) Steve Cullen.

Throughout the construction process, *Makin Island's* crew was divided into two groups of Sailors: one group attending formal schools at the fleet concentration area at Naval Base San Diego and the other comprising a ship-specific training unit at Northrop Grumman Shipbuilding), Gulf Coast, in Pascagoula, Miss. Despite the thousands of miles that separated the two halves, the command as a whole was

able to train and evolve as a cohesive team.

In December, more than 100 *Makin Island* Sailors from both units experienced what most of them called the most significant training they received since reporting on board. These crewmembers were able to go to sea with the ship when the shipbuilder got *Makin Island* underway for the first phase of Builder's Trials.

NGSB personnel used the trials to test the vessel's propulsion, communications, navigation and mission systems, as well as all related support systems. At the same time, *Makin Island* Sailors used the opportunity to gain insight to how LHD 8's transformational systems operate at sea.

"Builder's Trials are the best training platform you can have prior to taking custody of the ship," said Gas Turbine System Technician (Mechanical) 1st Class (SW) William Toten, main propulsion division leading petty officer. "I learned so much those couple of days because I finally got to see everything work together."

The trials, by design, also accomplished the job of identifying discrepancies and areas requiring further attention before the ship is delivered to the Navy. Although some engineering phases of the trials were moved to a second underway period, ship's

company learned some significant lessons about their future warship and advanced systems.

"On the bridge we were observing the plant status on the machinery control console when we had to reduce speed on one shaft," said Capt. Robert Kopas, prospective commanding officer. "This gave us the opportunity to learn

one of the unique features of MCS in that the system automatically brought the other shaft up to compensate and keep the ordered speed. On most other ships you would have to manually order that to happen."

After completion of all Builder's Trials evolutions, the shipyard, along with the supervisor of shipbuilding (SUPSHIP) and the *Makin Island* crew, worked in preparation for a one-week evaluation of the ship by the Board of Inspection and Survey (INSURV) called Acceptance Trials.

"No future engineers will probably ever know as much about this ship as we do."

Simultaneously, the crew continues work on qualifications and ensuring the ship is fully manned, and that all personnel are ready and trained in preparation for the delivery of *Makin Island* to the U.S. Navy. While monitoring the construction and testing of the ship is important, Kopas is

quick to point out that it is only part of the pre-commissioning crew's job. "

There are four pillars of pre-commissioning," he said. "They are manning, equipping, training and production. The pre-commissioning crew has to develop all four pillars for the ship to be ready to join the fleet."

"The crew of *Makin Island* has truly been a valued team member with the SUPSHIP Gulf Coast LHD project office during all facets of *Makin Island's* construction and testing," said Fred Hoffmeyer, Deputy LHD Project

Manager. "They have shown a willingness to get involved, which demonstrates they have an accelerated mindset to be ready to accept ownership of *Makin Island* and all her systems. This hands-on approach by a knowledgeable and enthusiastic crew has substantially helped in getting *Makin Island* ready for sea."

"It's rewarding to know I was part of this experience ... the extra knowledge I gained in my job and about the Navy," Lucero said, reflecting on everything it took to bring a warship from the planning stages to commissioning. "No future engineers will probably ever know as much about this ship as we do."

Lucero and her shipmates aboard LHD 8 have experienced something that few other Sailors in the Navy ever will. On commissioning day, the hundreds of hours of training, CREWFAMs, drills, QA inspections and underway periods will give each crewmember of USS *Makin Island* the right to call themselves 'Plankowner.' ■

Webb is assigned to PCU Makin Island (LHD 8).

► **ENC(SW) Victor Alihan, a native of Calamba, Laguna, Republic of the Philippines,** supervises **EN2(SW) Rebecca Lucero, of Aragon, N.M.,** as she updates a divisional training report in the ship's personnel qualification standards database. Lucero spends about 50 percent of her time aboard the ship performing quality assurance checks and all associated administrative paperwork. The other half of her typical 10-hour work day is divided among firefighting training, crew familiarization courses and other in-rate and general military training.



CNO and MCPON Visit Troops in Afghanistan



Photo by MCSN Tim Newborn

petty officer to the next pay grade. He also introduced MCPON West to the troops and the two held a question and answer session. "The CNO's visit was excellent for morale," said U.S. Navy Chief Hospital Corpsman George Ayala from Pueblo, Colo. "We had a lot of questions that he had the right answers for. For those people who are here for the first time, it's a little scary coming here. It's reassuring that the upper chain of command is concerned about us."

West held a separate chief's call following the all hands call at ISAF HQ. ¶

**Story by MC1 Monica R. Nelson,
International Security Assistance
Force, Kabul, Afghanistan.**

Hawaii Commands Participate in First Middle Pacific Group Sail

Pearl Harbor-based ships and aircraft recently participated in the first Commander, Naval Surface Group Middle Pacific (CNSG MIDPAC) Surface Combatant Group Sail off the coast of Oahu, Hawaii.

USS *Hopper* (DDG 70), USS *Chosin* (CG 65), USS *Paul Hamilton* (DDG 60), USS *Chung-Hoon* (DDG 93) and USS *Russell* (DDG 59), along with assets from Commander, Submarine Force, U.S. Pacific Fleet, Helicopter Anti-Submarine Squadron Light 37 and Patrol and Reconnaissance Wing 2, conducted the two-day evolution.

The sail supports the Pacific Fleet's new Mid-Pacific Surface Combatant Operational Employment program, which calls for nine of the 11 Hawaii-based surface combatants to focus on the Western Pacific by conducting intermediate/advanced training and regular deployments in the Western Pacific.

"As the eight ships of Destroyer Squadron (DESRON) 31 make more frequent team deployments to the Western Pacific, the 7th Fleet commander will have increased level

of surface combatants available," said Capt. William A. Kearns, commodore, Destroyer Squadron (DESRON)31.

The Mid-Pacific Surface Combatant Operational Employment is designed to improve the U.S. Pacific Fleet's warfighting readiness and operational effectiveness of the ships involved. The program also furthers U.S. maritime strategy by posturing credible power in the Western Pacific to protect its vital interests, to assure its friends and allies and deter potential adversaries.

The group sail enabled participants to conduct warfare and seamanship evolutions that enable ships to transition from unit level training to integrated training, exercise in a multiship environment that includes submarine and aviation force, exercise command and control capabilities between CNSG MIDPAC and DESRON 31.

"In addition, in the event of a crisis, they will be able to take advantage of the strategic location of Hawaii and have our ships in the Western Pacific for any type of crisis or contingency," added Kearns.

Normally, Pearl Harbor-based ships would travel to Southern California to conduct their group training with strike groups. Future plans are for the ships to conduct their intermediate and advance

training and support operations in the Western Pacific taking advantage of the strategic location in the Middle of the Pacific.

"The Middle Pacific ships that are homeported in Hawaii have been made to face west more than they have in the past, and by that it means that they're more ready for sea on a day-to-day basis. We focus their maintenance and their training on that readiness for sea," said Adm. Robert F. Willard, commander, U.S. Pacific Fleet.

Capt. Timothy Smith, commanding officer of USS *Chosin* (CG 65), has seen many group sails during his naval career and commented that this sail was an excellent opportunity for the Pearl Harbor ships to train together near their homeport.

"These are always great events because they energize the crew, they are a forcing function for excellence because it demands precision, readiness and having your head in the game and that's exactly what it's about as we deliver combat readiness around the world," said Smith. "It's a great proving ground for us in that every day we're increasing our individual and collective readiness." ¶

**Story and photo by MC2 Michael A. Lantron,
Commander, Navy Region Hawaii, Pearl Harbor.**



Photo by MC2 Michael A. Lantron

▲ USS *Paul Hamilton* (DDG 60), USS *Hopper* (DDG 70) and USS *Russell* (DDG 59) sail in formation during the Commander, Naval Surface Group Middle Pacific Surface Combatant Group Sail. The group sail supports the Pacific Fleet MIDPAC Surface Combatant Operational Employment program, which calls for nine of the 11 Hawaii-based surface combatants to focus on the western Pacific Ocean by conducting intermediate and advanced training and regular deployments in the western Pacific.

Carter Hall Boat Engineers Contribute to MSO

The visit, board, search and seizure (VBSS) team aboard the amphibious dock landing ship USS *Carter Hall* (LSD 50) is an integral part of the ship's overall mission to conduct maritime security operations (MSO) in the 5th Fleet Area of Responsibility (AOR).

To ensure the team is capable of performing MSO, the boat engineers aboard *Carter Hall* provide critical maintenance to keep the team's crafts ready to carry out those missions.

Along with maintaining *Carter Hall's* main engines, boat engineers also preserve, inspect, repair and fuel *Carter Hall's* seven-meter rigid hull inflatable boat (RHIB), 11-meter RHIB and the landing craft personnel large (PL) boats used by the VBSS team as patrol boats.

Chief Engineman (SW) Janet Bennett, from Fort Pierce, Fla., said that the primary duty of a boat engineer is to ensure the boats are in a ready condition at all times.

"We have to maintain the readiness of the boat in order for the ship to fulfill its mission," said Bennett. "Our maintenance inspections consist of checking all components of the boats and liquid levels such as oil level and fuel."

Engineman 2nd Class Daniel Le Vans, from Sperryville, Va., said inspections are important processes to keep the small boats in good working condition.

"We make sure the fluid temperature and pressures stay within the parameters," said Le Vans. "This is to keep the boat in good running condition from full throttle to just idling."

The boat engineers attend a variety of schools, as well as an extensive on-the-job training regimen, to qualify for the work they do.

Engineman 2nd Class Joseph Huckel, from Norwood, Pa., attended additional schooling to qualify in operating the specific type of engines that some of the craft use.

"We go through training and qualifications to learn how to troubleshoot the different engines," said Huckel. "Attending a 'C' School is required to be technically proficient on Cummins and Detroit engines."

During VBSS operations, a boat engineer rides along with the VBSS team in case of emergencies.

"We take our job seriously," said Le Vans. "We ensure that the VBSS team gets to where they need to go and gets back to the ship safely."



Photo by MC3 Michael Stanley

▲ A rigid-hull inflatable boat from USS *Carter Hall* (LSD 50) approaches the multipurpose amphibious assault ship USS *Iwo Jima* (LHD 7). *Iwo Jima* and *Carter Hall* deployed as part of the *Iwo Jima* Expeditionary Strike Group supporting maritime security operations in the U.S. 5th Fleet area of responsibility.

Carter Hall is deployed to the U.S. 5th Fleet Area of Operations with the *Iwo Jima* Expeditionary Strike Group to conduct MSO, that help develop security in the maritime environment. From security arises stability that results in global economic prosperity. MSO complement the counterterrorism and security efforts of regional nations and seek to disrupt violent extremists' use of the maritime environment as a venue for attack or to transport personnel, weapons or other material. ❧

Story by MC2(AW/SW) Flordeliz Valerio, *Iwo Jima* Expeditionary Strike Group.

Navy Announces Decision on Mayport Homebased

Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Installations & Environment, B.J. Penn, recently signed a Record of Decision for the Mayport Homeporting Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

The Navy's decision is to implement the preferred alternative, which is to homeport a single nuclear powered aircraft carrier (CVN) at Naval Station (NAVSTA) Mayport, and to complete associated infrastructure

modifications. These include dredging, infrastructure and wharf improvements, and construction of CVN nuclear propulsion plant maintenance facilities.

"We have studied this issue very carefully and considered multiple factors," said Donald C. Winter, Secretary of the Navy. "This allows the Navy to obtain the benefits of fleet dispersal without negatively impacting our carrier capability or operations. Homeporting a carrier in Mayport best supports the Navy's mission and safeguards our nation's security needs." Homeporting a CVN at NAVSTA Mayport reduces risks to fleet resources in the event of natural disaster, manmade calamity, or attack by foreign nations or terrorists. This includes risk to aircraft carriers, industrial support facilities, and the people that operate and maintain these crucial assets.

Mayport allows for advantages of fleet dispersal and survivability without impacting operational availability. On the West Coast, the fleet accepted some reduced operational availability associated with homeport dispersal. Ships lose operational availability during the additional transit time required to reach operational and training areas from the Pacific Northwest.

By establishing a second CVN homeport on the East Coast, the Navy gains the dispersal

advantage without the increased transit time. The proximity to training areas and transit time to operating areas is about equal from Norfolk and Mayport.

West Coast CVN homeports and maintenance facilities are not viable options in planning for Atlantic Fleet CVN assets in the event a catastrophic event occurs in the Hampton Roads area. The nuclear powered aircraft carriers are too large to transit the Panama Canal, requiring a 12,700 nautical mile voyage around South America to reach the closest CVN homeport on the West Coast in San Diego.

The EIS examined potential environmental consequences of constructing and operating facilities and infrastructure associated with homeporting additional surface ships at NAVSTA Mayport. It assessed 13 alternatives, including a "no action" alternative. The EIS evaluated resources in the Mayport area that may be affected by the proposed action, such as air and water quality, biological resources (such as marine mammals and threatened and endangered species), land use, cultural resources, and socioeconomics. The EIS also accounted for cumulative impacts from other activities in the Mayport area.

Story courtesy of the Navy Office of Information.

Coalition Forces Work to Deter Piracy in Gulf of Aden

Combined Task Force (CTF) 151 is working closely with international navies in the Gulf of Aden to conduct counterpiracy operations and ensure a lawful maritime order in the region.

"We're out here as a force, with the coalition nations, to ensure commerce flows freely throughout the world," explained Rear Adm. Terry McKnight, commander, CTF 151. "We are working to achieve an objective of preventing piracy at sea. Over the past few years, we've learned from many combined operations that working with the coalition is key to our success throughout the world."

The mission of CTF 151 is to prevent and deter piracy operations in the Gulf of Aden. The task force, which has assembled on board the amphibious transport dock ship USS *San Antonio* (LPD 17), has many capabilities which are enhanced by the ship's crew. The personnel currently embarked aboard *San Antonio* in support of CTF 151 counterpiracy operations include a helicopter squadron, fleet surgical team, boarding teams and several elements from the U.S. Marine Corps and U.S. Coast Guard.

"This mission is very important for the maritime strategy of our nation and also to work with our coalition nations," said McKnight. "We are out here to demonstrate that the United States Navy will not allow criminal acts on the high seas and that we want, as best we can, to improve the open trade agreements throughout the world."

Piracy acts spiked in the region in mid-August due to a very aggressive increase in activity by a clan on the north coast of Somalia. In response to the activity, Vice Adm. William Gortney, commander, Combined Maritime Forces, directed the establishment of the maritime security patrol area (MSPA), an area coalition ships and aircraft patrol to prevent destabilizing activity.

"Because of the complexity of the operations, I determined it was necessary to establish CTF 151 to create a task force with a mission and a mandate from the United Nations to conduct counterpiracy operations throughout the area of responsibility," said Gortney during a press briefing at the Pentagon Jan. 15.

Although the Combined Maritime Forces (CMF) do not have a mandate to conduct counterpiracy operations, combined task forces each have a particular mandate under which they operate. Any nation that does not yet have the authority to conduct counterpiracy operations will continue to work in Combined Task Force 150, while those that seek the authority to operate with CTF 151 will bring their collective capabilities together to deter, disrupt and eventually bring to justice the maritime criminals involved in the piracy events.

"It's really a fascinating story to watch unfold as, at this point, 14 nations have sent their navies to work against the destabilizing activity," added Gortney.

CTF 151, with the International Maritime Organization, created the maritime security patrol area as a place to channel the shipping so that they could concentrate naval activity. The task force includes three phases, which outline critical mission goals.

The first phase is focused on bringing more international navies into the efforts to help solve this international problem. The second phase involves working with the shipping industry to develop and share practices that prevent pirates from successfully boarding their vessels. The third phase, once authorized, will allow the task force to deliver suspected pirates to court, where they will be held

accountable for their actions.

"We've had great effects on the first two," explained Gortney. "Fourteen nations are down there. The shipping industry is having the greatest impact. They're doing a terrific job of sharing best practices, speed, maneuver and non-kinetic defensive measures that will prevent pirates from getting aboard the vessel. We have had a great effect on that. In the last six weeks, there have only been four successful piracy attacks."

CTF 151 is working very closely with the U.S. State Department to finalize an agreement with one of the nations in the area that will allow CTF 151 and coalition forces to disrupt, deter, capture and hold suspected pirates accountable for their actions. The task force expects that authority to be granted within the next week.

"We are going to aggressively go after the pirates that are conducting pirate activity," said Gortney. "We have to make it unpleasant to be a pirate."

CTF 151 is a multinational task force conducting counterpiracy operations to detect and deter piracy in and around the Gulf of Aden, Arabian Sea, Indian Ocean and Red Sea. It was established to create a lawful maritime order and develop security in the maritime environment. ❧

Story by MC1(AW/SW) Monique K. Hilley, Combined Task Force 151.



Photo by MC52 Jason R. Zalasky

▲ USS *San Antonio* (LPD 17) is serving as the command ship for Combined Task Force 151, conducting counterpiracy operations in the 5th Fleet area of responsibility. *San Antonio* is deployed as part of the *Iwo Jima* Expeditionary Strike Group.



◀ **AO1 David Steele**, assigned to *USS George H.W. Bush (CVN 77)*, works on his Victory Lap Late Model Series race car in his garage. Steele races the car at Virginia Motor Speedway in Jamaica, Va., during his off-duty hours.

CVN 77 Ordnanceman Lives the Dream of Racing on Weekends

Sailors sometimes joke with each other that they're "livin' the dream, but Aviation Ordnanceman 1st Class (AW) David Steele assigned to *USS George H.W. Bush (CVN 77)*, says he really is living his dream – on the weekends.

Steele, who's been assigned to the nation's newest aircraft carrier since June 2007 as the aviation department G-3 division leading petty officer, races in the Victory Lap Late Model Series at Virginia Motor Speedway in Jamaica, Va., in his off-duty time during the summer fulfilling a dream he's had since he was a child.

His racing is no surprise to anyone in his family, as he has been watching short track racing since he was a child in Mansfield, Ohio.

"I grew up watching this," said Steele. "I've gone to races since I can't remember when."

He bought his car, the No. 22-S Chevy, from a racer in north Georgia last summer for \$15,000 through an eBay auction. After adapting it to Virginia Motor Speedway rules (a few safety additions) and a few tweaks to the car, he was off to the races.

"It's my dream," he said. "Ever since I was a

teenager, I wanted to race on the dirt tracks."

Being a small time circuit, the racers at Virginia Motor Speedway seem to be more out for the love of racing than to make a buck, according to Steele.

"I've had a lot of volunteers help to keep the car going," he said, noting that his fellow racers were quite helpful in giving him advice to make the car run better. "There are a whole lot of variables in getting the car set up just right – tires, shocks and camber (angle at which the tires are suspended from each axle). I've had people from the command, friends and family helping get the car ready."

His wife, son and daughter help. In fact, Steele said his daughter "thinks we're famous" because of his race car.

"Oh, [my daughter is eaten] up with it," he said. "I can be under the car and ask for a wrench, and she knows where to find it and hands it to me. They're [all three] on top of it."

Steele's mother is involved too. "My mom signed for the race car and said 'now you can be race-poor, too!'" Steele said. "But she said to do it. I can't wait for them to see it."

That wasn't the first time he listened to his mom. A retired hospital corpsman, Steele's mom steered him toward aviation ordnance (AO).

"It was an appealing job to me," he said. "I knew I wanted to go into the Navy. My mom told me [AO] was a tight-knit community, and she was right."

Nearly nine years after joining the Navy, Steele gets to live the dream both on and off duty.

Last year, he finished as high as 11th in only a handful of races and never finished last. He finished the season 32nd out of 43 racers in the Late Model Series and said he feels he has a pretty good shot at rookie-of-the-year honors in his first full season next summer. **SS**

Story and photo by MCC(SW/AW) Aaron Strickland, USS George H.W. Bush (CVN 77).

Afloat College Enrollment Soars on Stennis

Nearly 1,000 Sailors aboard the Nimitz-class aircraft carrier *USS John C. Stennis (CVN 74)* enrolled in college classes held aboard the warship during John C. Stennis University's (JCSU) first term of 2009.

The program allows Sailors to work on earning a college degree during their deployment.

"The enrollment for term one is more than double what it has been in the past," said Education Boss Susan Epstein. "I am excited about the Sailors' response and am happy to be part of it all."

JCSU has six instructors to teach 13 courses offered during the first term. Courses range



Photo by MCSz Elliott Fabrizio

▲ **SN Erin Koecke, from Tacoma, Wash.,** takes notes during an intermediate college algebra course aboard the *USS John C. Stennis (CVN 74)*. This class is one of many offered as part of John C. Stennis University, which brings professors aboard to teach college courses. *Stennis* is conducting combat system ships qualification trials off the coast of Southern California.

from basic math and English to advanced history, business and criminal justice.

Epstein credits the large increase in enrollment to the variety of classes offered, the ship's commitment that its Sailors get an education and the individual Sailors' motivation to be productive this deployment.

Having professors aboard motivated some Sailors to enroll because they wouldn't have to deal with the restricted internet access issues presented by taking classes online.

"I don't take internet classes because the internet is inconsistent," said Yeoman Seaman Sheldron Johnston, who plans on taking business management and college algebra. "So, I wouldn't be going to school if I wasn't in JCSU."

JCSU's flexible class schedule allows Sailors to fit school into their daily work and watch schedules.

"When I was in operations, we were given watches at different times of each day, but I was still able to take classes due to a variety of class times," said Operations Specialist 2nd Class (SW/AW) Amanda Taunton,

who will be taking college algebra and English composition two during term one.

Epstein expects these high numbers should stay the same or increase through the next two terms this deployment.

JCSU offers Sailors an opportunity to pursue an education within the Navy and helps them to achieve their educational goals while completing *Stennis'* mission of projecting power and presence around the world. **SS**

Story by MC3 Kevin Murphy, USS John C. Stennis (CVN 74).

Bradley is First U.S. Navy Ship to Visit Bata, Equatorial Guinea

USS Robert G. Bradley (FFG 49) recently became the first U.S. Navy ship to anchor in Bata, Equatorial Guinea, while conducting Africa Partnership Station (APS) initiative.

APS is an ongoing, U.S. Navy-led, multinational effort aimed at strengthening emerging partnerships in West and Central Africa to increase regional and maritime safety and security.

"APS is a year-round ongoing effort, and this is a great opportunity to continue the program and the U.S. Navy's long-term commitment to our partners," said Cmdr. Clinton A. Carroll, commanding officer of *Robert G. Bradley*. "The crew just completed a great visit to Malabo

and is ready to work with other members of the military here in Bata. We're building relationships that are the bedrock of maritime safety and security in the region."

While *Bradley* is the first U.S. Navy ship to pull into Bata, there have been other ship visits to Equatorial Guinea; to include the U.S. Coast Guard Cutter *Dallas (WHEC 716)* and *USS Fort McHenry (LSD 43)* who visited the capital, Malabo, in the first part of 2008.

During the visit, *Bradley* crew members will conduct workshops on damage control, firefighting and automated identification system with local military members promoting maritime safety and security.

In addition to training, the ship will host a flight deck reception for distinguished Equatorial Guinean visitors to develop relationships and promote regional cooperation. **SS**

Story by MC1(SW) Gary Keen, Commander, U.S. Naval Forces Europe Commander, U.S. Naval Forces Africa.

▼ **Sailors assigned to *USS Robert G. Bradley (FFG 49)* teach firefighting techniques to Sailors from the Equatorial Guinean Navy. *Bradley* visited Malabo to conduct familiarization and orientation exercises as part of Africa Partnership Station. APS is an initiative aimed at strengthening global maritime partnerships through training and other collaborative activities to improve global maritime safety and security.**



Photo by Ensign Rajiv Sethi

A GI Bill for the 21st Century

Story by MC2(AW) Jonathan W. Hutto Sr.

Former Presidents Gerald R. Ford and George H. W. Bush served in similar ways. Both were vice president and president of the United States, and were World War II veterans. Not as widely known is they both received their educations with funding from the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944—commonly known as the GI Bill. This bill also helped to educate current U.S. Senator Frank Lautenberg and former Senators Robert Dole and Daniel Patrick Moynihan.

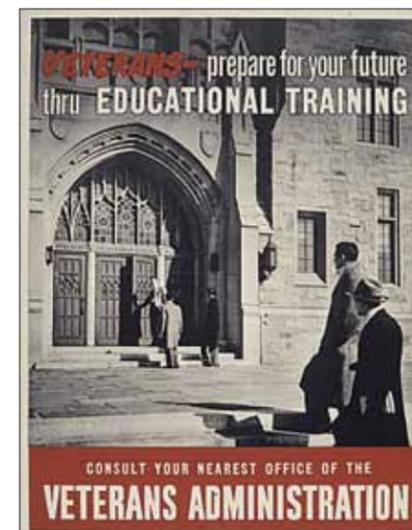
▼ In 1944, President Franklin D. Roosevelt, flanked by members of the House, Senate and President of the American Legion Mr. John Stelle, signs the original Serviceman's Readjustment Act of 1944 commonly known as the GI Bill.

With the increased focus on education, now is the time for all Sailors to have a plan to obtain higher education. The last advancement cycle witnessed Sailors gaining as much as four points for college education. The new GI bill,

coupled with existing programs under Navy College and NCPACE, places higher education within reach for all Sailors.

The new law takes effect Aug. 1, 2009. All post 9/11 veterans having served at least 90 days on active-duty, Reserve or National Guard can qualify for the new benefits. Those veterans serving at least 36 months qualify for the full benefit which includes full tuition not exceeding the highest amount of a public university in their state, a housing and book stipend including reimbursement for those veterans relocating for school from rural areas. The law also gives incentive to private institutions to match dollars with the federal government if their tuition exceeds the highest amount for a public institution in their state. The training approved under this bill includes undergraduate and graduate degrees, vocational and technical training along with reimbursement for approved tutorial assistance, licensing and certification tests.

The benefits also extend to current active duty. For those in active duty having served at least 90 days post 9-11, the benefits can be used to fund their education while serving. The tuition will be paid based on how



long the member has served. Under current guidelines, those serving at least six years and agree to serve at least four more years, may be eligible to grant the benefit to their spouse or family member.

In recent times, the current Montgomery GI bill has been outpaced by the enormous costs of private and public institutions. Thousands of Iraq War vets are seeking higher education with the current benefits. In response to the economic challenge faced by these veterans, former Navy Secretary Senator Jim Webb, served as the lead sponsor of the "Post 9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act." This new GI bill was signed into law by President George Bush in June 2008.

Originally signed into law in 1944 by President Franklin Roosevelt, veterans used the original GI Bill benefits immensely. By 1947, veterans of World War II accounted for roughly half of all college admissions. By the end of the original GI bill in 1956, nearly half of the 16 million World War II vets had participated in an education program with millions taking advantage of the guaranteed home loan provision.

For more information, contact the United States Department of Veterans Affairs at www.gibill.va.gov.

Hutto is assigned to Defense Media Activity – Anacostia, Washington, D.C.

Decisions, Decisions, Decisions— Which GI Bill Is Better?

Military members thinking about or already enrolled in college may have a decision to make when planning for their education.

The Post-9/11 Veterans Education Assistance Act of 2008, also known as the Post-9/11 G.I. Bill or Chapter 33, will take effect Aug. 1. It does not replace the Montgomery G.I. Bill, also known as Chapter 30, but both education benefits cannot be used at the same time.

Members already receiving the Montgomery G.I. Bill can switch to the Post-9/11 G.I. Bill, but they cannot switch back. More importantly, both bills generally provide up to 36 months of assistance. Therefore, any time already used under the Montgomery plan will be deducted from the Post-9/11 plan.

So, which program is best?

"It's not one program fits all," noted Candice Rice, director of the Navy College Office at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. She explained that factors such as the state, school and program affect the overall benefits available.

The Post-9/11 Bill, for example, covers tuition based on the highest public university tuition rate in that state. It also includes basic housing allowance at an E-5 rate for the zip code of the college, as well as a yearly \$1,000 stipend for books and supplies. But, unlike the Montgomery Plan, the tuition coverage is paid directly to the college and not the service member. Also, if the state already provides military veterans with free tuition benefits for in-state schools, the Post-9/11 plan would only offer BAH and the stipend.

"You have to crunch your own numbers," advised Ernest Houston, a Veterans Administration program coordinator. "You'll have to look at this individually."

The new G.I. Bill covers graduate and undergraduate degrees; vocational

and technical school training offered by an institute for higher learning that has been approved for G.I. Bill benefits; tutorial assistance; as well as licensing and certification testing reimbursement. On-the-job training, apprenticeship, correspondence, flight and preparatory courses might also be covered.

Those who qualify for the Montgomery G.I. Bill or the Reserve Educational Assistance Program (REAP) are eligible for the Post-9/11 G.I. Bill. Active-duty service after Sept. 11, 2001 determines the benefit amount for which members are eligible. Individuals who served between 90 and 180 days of active duty, for example, are eligible for 40 percent of total education benefits under the new bill. Those who have served at least 36 months since Sept. 11, 2001, are eligible for 100 percent of benefits. All who qualify are eligible for benefits up to 15 years from the last period of active duty of at least 90 days.

Qualifications for the new G.I. Bill also include honorable discharge; placement on the retired or temporary disabled retired list; transfer to the Fleet Reserve or Fleet Marine Corps Reserve; or discharge due to hardship, condition interfered with duty or existed prior to service.

Other considerations include the \$600 kicker payment made into the Montgomery plan, which is not recoverable if the member transfers to the Post-9/11 plan. Also, if a student loan repayment plan was in force during any of the service member's post-Sept. 11 active-duty time, that time does not count toward the Post-9/11 G.I. Bill eligibility.

Houston cautioned that all the bugs have yet to be worked out of the latest G.I. Bill, and recommends visiting www.gibill.va.gov for more information.

Story by Army Sgt. 1st Class Vaughn Larson, Joint Task Force Guantanamo, Cuba.

Shining **STAR**

Story by MC2 (SW) Elizabeth Vlahos, photo by MC1 (AW) R. Jason Brunson

Taking a bite out of the Recruiter of the Year competition wasn't enough for Electrician's Mate 2nd Class (SW/AW) Curtis Bembow. The enterprising Sailor from Naval Recruiting District Miami went back for seconds as Diversity Recruiter of the Year. "It's an accomplishment, a pinnacle that I have never reached in my life," said Bembow. "I got there [through] a lot of hard work. Everything you put into recruiting, you're going to get out [of it]... the hours, the time."

As much as Bembow looked forward to hometown recruiting, coming home after serving in the fleet presented its own challenges.

"Knowing I could make a difference came in [recruiting] school, because I knew wherever they put me, I could make a difference. When I got home, I didn't know how I was going to make a difference. Things change; the same people aren't the same people.

"It's hard, but you have to go out there and reestablish yourself trust-wise, because they don't know you from Adam. I didn't know I was making a difference until people started talking to me, [saying] 'You're doing great!' When you get that first parent to come and hug you after coming from their child's graduation, when they come and talk to you, you know you're doing something great."

Bembow was quick to acknowledge the way his source rating translated to recruiting duty.

"It's hard work...back breaking, grinding, dirty work, and that's what recruiting is all about. You're not going to get physically dirty, but the work ethic we place in engineering is "Get it done." In recruiting, you may not have a [certain] tool, so you're going to find ways to make recruiting work for you. It's like maintenance; you learn your manual, you become a great recruiter. If I don't learn every thing in this book and everything possible to put someone in the Navy, I can't work. It's the same blood, sweat and tears – you put it in, you get rewarded."

To him, the long hours invested are worth it in the end.

"It's more rewarding [than taxing], because you may not become Recruiter of the Nation, but overall, it makes you a [more well-rounded] Sailor, period. I think it's the hardest job in the Navy. We have to find individuals to bring in that we want to serve with.

"The most rewarding thing is [when] I get a call from one of my shipmates, [and] they ask me questions or they say "Thank you, man, you made a difference." I have a guy that's been in the Navy for two years, and he's already E-5. He called me and told me that he was thinking about going STA-21; he was asking [for] my opinions on his career path. It does something for you as an individual when you change someone's life. That, on its own, is a big accomplishment."

Bembow recognized the importance of diversity in the Navy as a potent recruiting tool.

"Everyone has their own idea of what a military member is," he explained, "so when they see that we're actually human, it helps not only in the Navy but it helps us all in the military. It takes an individual and [shows you that] he's normal. It shows that it's a regular job but it has benefits, and it adds a bigger pride factor into it. It helps overall, especially for the minorities.

"It's kind of hard for the minorities to believe anything that anyone tells them nowadays, and when they see [one of their own] who's actually successful, well-spoken, and carries himself [with pride], it gives [everybody] hope."

Bembow was quick to point out the professional benefits a Sailor can reap from recruiting duty.

"If you love the Navy, and if you want to give back to the Navy as much as they've given to you, then yes, you should come recruiting," he said. "It's rewarding for the Navy, because they're going to get their work out of you. It's also rewarding for you, because it turns you into that 4.0 Sailor. It makes your admin [and] communication skills better, [and] it makes you a better supervisor.

"If you can conquer this beast, when you go back to the regular fleet, you'll be a better Sailor."

"When you get that first parent to come and hug you after coming from their child's graduation, when they come and talk to you, you know you're doing something great."

**Focus on
Service**

Being First Was Not the Goal

Story by MC2 Ron Kuzlik

When Darlene Iskra joined the Navy in 1979, she was by no means the first woman to serve in the U.S. Navy. The first female, Loretta Walsh of Philadelphia, a yeoman, enlisted in 1917, almost exactly 62 years earlier. And it would still be another 11 years after Iskra entered the Navy until she had the chance to make a historic milestone of her own: to become the first female taking command of a commissioned Navy vessel.

On Dec. 27, 1990, Lt. Cmdr. Darlene Iskra assumed command of the Bolster-class rescue and salvage ship USS *Opportune* (ARS 41).

"I never in a million years thought I would be the first woman [to command]," Iskra recalled. "It was just a matter of timing. I was very proud to serve my country and to have command. Being first was not the goal at all."

In fact, when joined the Navy at age 27, she was looking for a job that would provide a new life for her, with opportunities, promotion and good pay and benefits.

"I always wanted to learn to dive. As a child, my father scuba dived, and I thought it sounded exciting. After I decided to join the Navy, my recruiter told me they would ask for volunteers at OCS (Officer Candidate School). Sure enough, they did. I volunteered and passed all the tests, and then I got my orders to the School of Navy Diving and Salvage at the Washington Navy Yard."

"I hadn't thought about making it a career at first, but I loved my first job as diving officer on USS *Hector* (AR 7) and that convinced me to stay for a career."

After her first tour aboard *Hector*, she went to shore duty and feared that she would languish for the remaining 18 years of her career until her eventual retirement. But after seeing an article in "Faceplate"—the Navy's diving magazine—about



Navy changes

"Yes, sir" and "Aye, Captain" aren't synonymous anymore.

The cover of the magazine, volume and page number, is visible. The article title is "Navy changes" and the sub-headline is "Yes, sir" and "Aye, Captain" aren't synonymous anymore. The author is listed as "By Ron Kuzlik".

a new class of salvage ship being built with a mixed gender crew in mind, she called her detailer and asked for orders.

She left shore duty a year early and reported to USS *Grasp* (ARS 51) as the operations officer. It was then that she knew that she would be competing for command with her male counterparts. She detached from *Grasp* to become the executive officer of USS *Opportune*. While she was at prospective executive officer training, her orders were changed. She reported to USS *Preserver* (ARD 7) instead, and was then transferred to USS *Hoist* (ARS 40), also as executive officer.

Even though she was detailed to prospective commanding officer training, getting ready to take command of *Opportune*, she was not slated to become the first woman commanding officer. But due to the needs of the Navy, she took command first.

"My thoughts of getting command were, of course, a fulfillment of a dream," Iskra said. "The fact that the ship was *Opportune* was rather poetic."

During her command tour, *Opportune's* crew served in Operations *Desert Shield/Desert Storm*, and later participated in the clean-up in southern Florida following the devastation of Hurricane Andrew in 1992.

Iskra earned

a master's in National Security and Strategic Studies from the Naval War College in 1996. After 21 years of service, she retired from the Navy in 2000. She later attended graduate school at the University of Maryland, and was awarded a Master of Arts degree in 2003 and a Ph.D. in Sociology in 2007, specializing in Military and Gender, Work and Family. She serves on the Board of the Alliance for National Defense, and is a fellow at the Potomac Institute for Policy Research. Currently, she is the Deputy Director for the Navy's Leadership Education and Development program at the University of Maryland.

"Never stop learning," Iskra advised. "Challenge yourself and never stop trying new things. Keep an open mind and keep your perspective—don't take things personally. And bloom where you are planted!"

Kuzlik is assigned to Defense Media Activity—Anacostia, Washington, D.C.



A World of Possibilities

Navy Lieutenant Gets Settled On The Ground In Afghanistan

Individual Augmentee

Story by the *All Hands* staff

Lt. Ryan Petrosky has spent most of his time in the Navy at sea, but recently, this naval officer went from an afloat experience to a boots-on-the-ground Sailor serving with the Army in Kabul, Afghanistan.

"One of the interesting things about the Navy Individual Augmentation (IA) process is that many times, Sailors don't know what their job will be until they actually arrive at their base. This is due to the dynamic nature of working in a war zone. The needs of the coalition forces serving here change on a daily basis, and as members of the military we understand that it is our job to fill in wherever we are needed," he said in a recent recap of his experience to date.

And filling in where needed is exactly what he's doing. For three years he has served as a logistics and services officer, but now at Camp Phoenix, he works in the police advisory office. This office helps coordinate, plan and track training for the Afghan National Police forces in the entire country.

"Sometimes it can be a challenge gathering all the necessary information from the guys downrange and presenting it to the commanders in charge who make the decisions that largely shape the path of progress here in Afghanistan. Connectivity limitations and overall mission objectives make it very difficult for guys in the field to complete the frequent reporting requirements we push down to them".

Life as an IA with the Army is a bit

different than his shipboard experience. He's gone from replenishments at sea to convoys with ground forces.

"I have to be honest. I was a little nervous and wasn't sure what to expect," he said of his first convoy which requires full body armor, loaded weapons and armored SUVs.

"There are no traffic laws in Afghanistan. I couldn't believe how erratic the locals were driving their cars, bicycles, mopeds, and even carriages pulled by donkeys. The Army major I was riding with seemed completely at ease as we swerved in and out of all the moving obstacles. After an adventurous ride, we made it to our destination. We were there to attend a few meetings to discuss the progress and issues with the police training."

To date, his job entails personnel and equipment reports, capability and milestone tracking (the critical metric for police training progress), and weekly updates to higher command which requires numerous meetings, plenty of work behind a computer and not much time out in the field encountering enemy contact.

"Being stationed on Camp Phoenix, one of the safest bases in country, makes my family happy and allows me to sleep well at night, but at times you do find yourself thinking about all the training we go through prior to coming over here.

"You feel like you owe it to your fellow members of the military to be out there with them doing the dangerous work."

Petrosky will be in Afghanistan until August 2009. After that, he expects to report back to USS *Wasp* (LHD 1) and begin his transition off of active duty and onto graduate studies back in his home state of Illinois.

"I don't know exactly what the future holds for me here, but I do know I am happy to be here, and I know this upcoming year will be one of the greatest, if not the greatest, experience of my life."

▼ Lt.j.g. Ryan Petrosky (right) takes a quick break with Lt.j.g. Luke Tarbi, an IA from USS *Chosin* (CG 65).



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