Sailors Who Practice What They Teach

Relief comes to Bangladesh
The United States offered humanitarian assistance and disaster relief efforts after Tropical Cyclone Sidr slammed into Bangladesh late last fall with winds in excess of 156 miles per hour. Sidr devastated one of the world’s most densely populated countries, but the forward-deployed Navy and Marine Corps Team arrived on scene to offer immediate support.

Rescuers From Above

The naval aviation rescue swimmer executes search and rescue operations from rotary-wing aircraft. A rescue swimmer is physically conditioned to perform demanding rescues in all operational environments, and they have the expertise to provide fleet commanders with the ability to assist DOD and civilian personnel in distress. They do this day after day—“So others may live.”

14 Sailors Practice What They Teach

Recruit division commanders (RDC) operate at the heart of Recruit Training Command, Great Lakes’ mission. They are the mold from which recruits shape their image of what it means to be a Sailor. RDCs take the helm every day, shaping today’s civilians into tomorrow’s Sailors. But, what makes an RDC the right person for the job? Where do they hone their skills before donning the red-robe—RDC “C” School.

Operation Sea Angel II

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28 Rescuers From Above

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February
Brad Keselowski (left), the driver of NASCAR’s No. 88 Navy “Accelerate Your Life” Monte Carlo SS, watches as Lt. Cmdr. Ed Rohrbach demonstrates how to negotiate one of the many challenges in the obstacle course at Naval Special Warfare Command, Naval Amphibious Base, Coronado.

Photo by MC2 Kevin S. Beauchamp
Speaking with Sailors

Two topics we’ve discussed as a Navy during the last year have been the importance of leadership and the value of our heritage. We’re going to continue to emphasize them both, and I’m relying on every community within our service to help me with that.

On the deckplate level, there’s one specific group that I expect to continue to hammer those messages home to—our Navy’s first class petty officers mess. No group of leaders within our Navy has a degree of access or level of influence on our junior Sailors comparable to our first class petty officers. And I’ve seen first-hand the positive results of their impact.

Very few things are more impressive than walking across a quarterdeck and seeing a squared-away first class standing officer of the deck. There is no question that while that he’s on watch, nothing is happening on that ship without his knowledge or permission. Look at the watchstanders—alert and vigilant. Watch the entire team when activity slows. Training is taking place.

Our first class petty officers take ownership of opportunities to lead, and they inject life into them. Our Sailors recognize that and feed off that energy, that drive to tackle more. We need to leverage the abilities of those leaders even more.

One of the most vital relationships in our service is that of the chief and division officer. If they are working together, communicating and leading their Sailors, there’s very little that division couldn’t accomplish. The Navy first class petty officer is reaching well beyond our lifelines. I’ve seen the respect they’ve earned in Iraq, Afghanistan and the Horn of Africa. They are taking the Sailor spirit and Navy culture with them as they operate in a joint environment; and they’re succeeding. They’ve shown the ability to blur service lines, moving seamlessly in and out of a Marine or Army Corps unit, back to the Navy without missing a beat.

As this year progresses, I’ll be placing even more emphasis on the expectations our Navy has of this group of leaders. It starts with the Deckplate Triad but there will be much more. It’s going to be a challenge, but I know they can handle it. And I’m certain they look forward to more opportunities to succeed.

That is a deckplate triad: the divo, the chief and the first class. They rely on active communication and they share the same priorities: mission accomplishment and Sailor development. Division officers and chiefs are trained within their own communities to effectively interact with one another. It’s ingrained in our culture that they do so. We must ensure, as a Navy, that the third critical piece is just as involved as the other two.

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CNO Testifies Before HASC on Global Maritime Strategy

The Cooperative Maritime Strategy for 21st Century Seapower represents "unprecedented collaboration between our Navy, Marine Corps and Coast Guard, both in the formulation of the strategy and in its implementation."

"That all three maritime service chiefs have signed this strategy and appear before the committee today is a testament to our commitment to integrating our efforts..."

Roughead testified that his guidance to the fleet is to execute our strategy, "The Cooperative Maritime Strategy that would address the changing and increasingly integrated global environment..." and promote greater collective security, stability, trust and prosperity. "Vital national interests while promoting greater principles of sea power in a manner that protects and capacity that can apply the enduring challenge for the Navy is to remain a balanced..." which he described as the execution order for the Navy on the maritime strategy.

"My guidance to the fleet is to execute our strategy," he said. "The imperative and challenge for the Navy is to remain a balanced Navy with the force-structure and capability and capacity that can apply the enduring principles of sea power in a manner that protects vital national interests while promoting greater collective security, stability, trust and prosperity." During testimony Roughead talked about why a new strategy was needed and the premise of the strategy, which is the belief that U.S. national security interests are best served by forward deployed maritime forces capable of preventing and deterring conflict in the global maritime system. He explained that the strategy was also shaped by the American public and their ideas on what the strategy should include.

"Without our 'Conversations with the Country,' I heard firsthand the demand of the American people to remain strong and to also cooperate internationally to secure our national interests," he said. "This solidified my conviction that the Navy needed a new strategy that would address the changing and increasingly integrated global environment while securing our prosperity through the seas and protecting our homeland." Story courtesy of the public affairs office, Chief of Naval Operations, Washington, D.C.

Navy Invests in Protecting Marine Mammals

No injuries to marine mammals have been attributed to sonar use since the Navy began taking additional steps to minimize harm to such animals, a Navy official said Dec. 19.

"Right now, the Navy employs 29 mitigation measures to assure that we don't hurt marine mammals when we're out doing our sonar exercises," said Rear Adm. Lawrence S. Rice, director of Naval Operations Environmental Readiness, in a conference call with online journalists and "bloggers." Navy officials said the 29 additional measures were put into place in January 2007. Rice acknowledged there's legitimate concern over sonar causing marine mammals to "beach" themselves. However, the ability to detect enemy submarines is essential to national security, and active sonar is the only existing technology capable of tracking modern diesel-electric and fuel-cell submarines, he said.

"Imagine if al Qaeda got their hands on a submarine and started sinking tankers exiting their ports," said Rear Adm. John E. Stier, commanding officer of E-4 or returning from operations in Southwest Asia, and returning from operations in Iraq, Afghanistan or the Horn of Africa.

"These changes are made as we learn how to best support our Sailors fighting the global war on terrorism," said Vice Adm. John C. Harvey, Chief of Naval Personnel.

NAVADMIN 336/07 supersedes a previous message NAVADMIN 139/07, which also affected Sailors' ability to take advancement exams while in these regions.

Some of the guidance listed in the message includes:

- All chief and limited duty officer candidates who are eligible, meet the requirements of the new message and have the commanding officer's approval are waived from the advancement examination.

NAVADMIN 139/07 did not include candidates going up to E-6 are recommended to take the advancement examination.

The research focuses on the locations and abundance of marine mammals, physiological and behavioral effects of sonar, and protective tools the Navy can use to manage its impact, he explained.

The Navy has also taken action through NAVADMIN 139/07 to extend worldwide its 29 mitigation measures.

"We gave those 29 mitigation measures to NAVADMIN, and there's a move to incorporate those in the NATO planning document," Rice said. Story by Kristen Noel, American Forces Press Service, Alexandria, Va.

Navy Waives Advancement Exams for Select GWOT Sailors

A NAVADMIN, released Dec. 19, provides guidance for administering Navywide advancement exams to Sailors who are deploying, deployed to or returning from operations in Iraq, Afghanistan or the Horn of Africa.

"Sailors taking the exam up to E-6 are recommended to take the exam before they are deployed to those regions," said "Shiloh" Haentzel, head of examination administration division at Naval Education and Training, Professional Development and Technology Center, Pensacola, Fla. "You won't be able to take it during training, and you may not get to take it while you are on deployment." The NAVADMIN also provides detailed instructions for E-4 to E-6 candidates in theater who are unable to participate in an advancement exam. It should be read in its entirety due to the specifics.

"The flexibility provided in the NAVADMIN is in no way intended to disadvantage any Sailor. Every effort shall be made to provide Sailors the best opportunity to perform well on the test," according to Harvey. For more information read NAVADMIN 336/07 or visit the Navy Personnel Command Web site at www.npc.navy.mil.

Mesa Verde Commissioned Newest Navy Ship

More than 300 Sailors and a platoon of Marines manned the rails of USS Mesa Verde (LPD 19), the newest San Antonio-class ship, bringing her to life during the commissioning ceremony recently held at Port Panama City, Fla.

The ship is named in honor of Mesa Verde National Park in southwestern Colorado. Congress established Mesa Verde as its first cultural park in the National Park System in 1906. It is the first U.S. Navy ship to be named Mesa Verde.

Ben Nighthorse Campbell, a former U.S. Senator from Mesa Verde.
Around the Fleet

Cruise Officials Recognize Ronald Reagan and HS-4 for Successful Medical Evacuation

Princess Cruises honored the crew of USNS Ronald Reagan (CVN 76) and Helicopter Anti-Submarine Warfare Squadron (HS) 4 during a press conference and recognition ceremony Jan. 6 aboard the cruise ship Dawn Princess.

According to Princess Cruise officials, the ceremony was held to bring together the officers and crew from Ronald Reagan, the Dawn Princess and U.S. Coast Guard officials who played major roles in the recent successful medical evacuation of a 14-year-old Laura Montero who was suffering from a ruptured appendix while aboard the cruise ship.

Montero, who attended the press conference and recognition ceremony with her mother Trudy Lafeld, was traveling with her family aboard the 2,000 passenger cruise ship when she became ill.

Captain Marco Fortezze of the Dawn Princess issued a distress call to the U.S. Coast Guard who then contacted Ronald Reagan, the closest ship in the vicinity with an on board surgical facility. “I am delighted that Laura Montero is here with today with her mother and that she looks so good,” Fortezze told the group of attendees.

“The ship will support amphibious, special operations, and expeditionary warfare missions in keeping with the new maritime strategy that postures the sea services to apply maritime power to protect U.S. vital interests in an increasingly interconnected and uncertain world,” Fortezze said.

Story by MC3 Gina Flores, Fleet Public Affairs Center Southeast, Mayport, Fla.

Successful Medical Evacuation

Medical Evacuation was able to bring together the officers and crew from Ronald Reagan, the Dawn Princess and U.S. Coast Guard officials who played major roles in the recent successful medical evacuation of a 14-year-old Laura Montero who was suffering from a ruptured appendix while aboard the cruise ship.

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To be considered for the “Around the Fleet” section, forward your high-resolution (7” x 9” at 300 dpi) images with full credit and cutline information, including full name, rank and duty station to: navyvisualnews@navy.mil

Directions on how to properly submit photos can be found at www.navy.mil/photo_submit.html

Mail your submissions to: Navy Visual News Service, 1200 Navy Pentagon, Rm. 4B514, Washington, D.C. 20350-1200

Click on the Navy’s home page, www.navy.mil, for fresh images of your shipmates in action.

Colorado, addressed ship’s company, family members and several thousand guests reflecting on the tradition of Native Americans building a strong bond with the military.

“The relationship between our native people and the U.S. military indeed has become stronger and stronger with each passing decade,” said Campbell. “We have the highest per capita rate of enlisted of any ethnic minority!”

Campbell’s wife, Linda Price Campbell, the ship’s sponsor, gave the order to, “man our ship and bring her to life.”

Cmdr. Sharon W. Lobree became the first commanding officer of the ship and will lead a crew of approximately 360 officers and enlisted personnel and three Marines.

“With this ship the United States will take the fight to the enemy forward from the sea with capabilities never seen before,” said Lobree. “The crew before you today – they are aggressive, dedicated, salty, engaged, educated, physically and mentally fit, and most of all, ready to go to sea.”

As a critical element in future expeditionary strike groups, the ship will support the Marine Corps mobility triad, which consists of the landing craft air cushion vehicle, the Expeditionary Fighting Vehicle and the Osprey tilt-rotor aircraft (MV-22).

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A dramatic medical evacuation Dec. 15 that drew national media attention, an HH-60H helicopter from HS-4 was dispatched for the mission. Because the helicopter could not land aboard the Dawn Princess, a basket was lowered and the patient was lifted onto the helicopter. Montero was then transported to Ronald Reagan where life-saving emergency surgery was performed.

"Some people have stated that they are amazed and pleased that we would divert an aircraft carrier to rescues a single 14-year-old girl," said Kraft. "What I would submit is that these kinds of things happen all the time and all over the world in our Navy. The spectrum of operations we’re ready to execute range from disaster relief to full combat operations and everything in between."}

Also attending the recognition ceremony were Rear Adm. James P. Wisecup, commander of the Ronald Reagan Strike Group; Capt. Charles Strangfeld, commander of Coast Guard Sector San Diego; George Wright, senior vice-president of marine operations for Princess Cruises; Cmdr. Paul Penushene, commanding officer of HS-4; and Cmdr. Theron Toole, Ronald Reagan’s senior medical officer.

"It was a very happy day for Laura," added Kraft. "And although the Dawn Princess is a beautiful ship, we very much enjoyed having Laura and her mom as our shipmates for a few days."

Story by MC3(AW) Christopher Blachly, assigned to USS Ronald Reagan (CVN 76).

**Truman, Arctic Assist Stranded Sailors**

USS Harry S. Truman (CVN 75) and fast combat support ship USNS Arctic (T-AOE 8) recently rescued seven mariners adrift in a raft in the central Persian Gulf.

While conducting a replenishment-at-sea with Truman, Arctic received a bridge-to-bridge radio call from the British-flagged cargo vessel MV British Courage requesting assistance in rescuing the stranded mariners.

The ships performed an emergency break away, Arctic, dispatched two MH-60S helicopters to the scene and put a rescue swimmer in the water who recovered the four Pakistanis and three Indian mariners.

The helicopter crews brought the mariners to Harry S. Truman for medical treatment, food and water. All were later transported back to the United Arab Emirates.

The mariners had been transporting cargo from Dubai when their dhow sailed into rough seas and broke its keel.

When the vessel started taking on too much water to remain afloat, the mariners abandoned ship into a life raft where they remained for two days before the rescue.

Harry S. Truman and Arctic are currently deployed to the 5th Fleet area of operations as part of the ongoing rotation to support Maritime Security Operations in the region.

Story courtesy of USS Harry S. Truman (CVN 75).
A crew of four was dispatched under the mutual aid agreements signed with local authorities. Command Navy Region Northwest sent six firemen and two structural fire engines to assist. A helicopter coordination center (HCC) was established on Naval Air Station North Island, Calif., as a single point of contact for Navy and Marine Corps operations related to helicopter evacuations, search and rescue, bucket brigade, fire-spotting and fire-mapping.

“We wanted to provide a focal point for helicopter operations here at North Island,” said HCC Director, Lt. Cdr. Joe Amarel. “If there wasn’t this sort of communication in place, there would be no way for a firefighter on the ground, who needs airborne assets, to get the assistance in a timely manner.”

The HCC tasked local helicopter squadrons to provide assistance.

“We’re experienced aviators, and we’re able to adapt quickly, but it helps to have their expertise,” said Lt. Cdr. Brian Wilderman, a seasoned aviator with the HSC-85. “It’s tough out there, but by us being out here we’re adding another dimension by providing air support,” said Wilderman.

On the ground, Navy firefighting efforts augment their efforts.

Colorado came to the aid of local units to provide assistance and counseling. Doctors from the NMCSD worked alongside civilian doctors at the Qualcomm Stadium shelter to provide 24-hour medical care for evacuees. When the fires subsided, the Navy immediately coordinated efforts to begin the healing process, such as offering financial assistance and counseling.

Sailors, Marines and DOD families throughout San Diego County and the surrounding areas received quick-assist loans (QAL) from the Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society to keep those in financial hardship from using payday loan lenders. Sailors also volunteered to clean up Qualcomm Stadium after the evacuees left to help prepare the stadium for a much-anticipated Chargers football game.

In the end, the recent wildfires touched many Sailors and Marines’ lives personally; 3,172 Sailors and family members were evacuated from their homes to 22 of their fellow shipmates. As a result, Sailors can’t imagine what it is like to lose everything, but they know what it is like to lose homes to 22 of their fellow shipmates. I am extremely proud of my fellow shipmates.

“The entire team came together from the afloat units to the shore establishment to the tenant commands,” said Rear Adm. Len R. Hering, commander, Navy Region Southwest. “Everyone pitched in and worked well together in a very, very difficult situation always making sure we were focused on accommodating and taking care of our folks.”

FEBRUARY 2008 • ALL HANDS
“It’s 0530. I’m sleeping soundly, and... ‘Outta your raackks, let’s go, let’s go, let’s gooooooh!’ he yells. I jump out of my rack and as my feet hit the deck I see him approaching from the corner of my eye.

“His was the last voice I’d heard the night before and now here he is again. His face and those razor-sharp creases are the first thing I’m seeing today. He is clean-shaven, squared away and full of motivation. When does this man sleep?

“It’s 0535, and I’m clean-shaven, squared away and full of motivation. I wonder what my RDC has in store for us today?”

Recruit division commanders (RDC) operate at the heart of Recruit Training Command, Great Lakes’ mission. They are the mold from which recruits shape their image of what it means to be a Sailor. RDCs are hard-charging, highly motivated and highly qualified individuals. These exceptional petty officers and chief petty officers take the helm every day, shaping today’s civilians into tomorrow’s Sailors.

But, is it enough to be an exceptional Sailor? What makes the RDC the right person for the job? Where do they hone their skills and learn the Navy’s teaching objectives before donning the red-rope of an RDC?

RDC “C” School is a 13-week long, physically challenging, intensive hands-on training course that prepares prospective RDC “blue ropers” with the skills, perspective and physical readiness to be a recruit division commander.
Upon reporting, RDC school students are assigned a seasoned mentor and class.

Senior Chief Storekeeper Jeffery Kirby, the Recruit Division Commander “C” School, leading chief petty officer, said the school currently has 12 instructors who teach classes year round. There are four groups of students operating simultaneously, in different phases of training. At any given time there are approximately 40 to 50 students in the curriculum.

He said this training is important because it prepares the students to do their jobs. They are taught exactly how and what they will be doing as RDCs. It prepares the students to do their jobs. They are taught all of the managerial functions and processes of an RDC. The next phase is the star phase of training where students learn “The House,” Kirby said.

Chief Machinist’s Mate (SS) Nathan Battle came to RTC after 11 years in the Navy. Battle, in his fifth week of training, said the class was working on things like folding and stowing compartment and personnel inspections as well as dynamic material inspections. This includes the lockers and the way the gear is folded and stowed.

“‘In our class we have to do things the same way the recruits do. Our instructors come through and inspect us the same way we will inspect the recruits, so we know exactly what we are looking for when we become RDCs. This way we aren’t blind sided by surprises, and we are better able to help our recruits,’” Battle said. According to Battle, the course is intense – there is pressure – almost like going back to boot camp. For those who have been out in the fleet for a while, it may have been a few years since they have had to recite a general order while going through a really detailed uniform inspection.

He said nervousness comes from the fact that it has been so long since they have experienced scrutiny like this. Students, (not unlike recruits) want to be successful, so when the inspectors have them under a microscope they get nervous.

“You start thinking to yourself, ‘Man, I thought I checked everything. I know I checked my gig line, or I thought my creases were straight,’” Battle said. “It’s a valuable part of the training because it reminds the students of how the experience will affect their recruits.” The training program at Recruit Division Commander “C” School is designed to mirror that of the boot-camp experience.

“‘But, learning this in training serves as a reminder that it’s not just about yelling all the time. You have to be creative and able to come up with different approaches. If recruits get too nervous to retain what you are trying to convey, they shut down. You have to find ways to reach them and motivate them,’” Battle said. He said the instructors and the other RDCs provide examples of various things they do in those kinds of situations and remind students to set the example for their recruits.

“It may have been a while for me, but these kids have never been through it,” Battle said. “I’m big into Navy history, so I like to break that out whenever possible. That’s one of my tools. It gets them interested in the ‘why’ we do things this way,” Battle said. “It sparks that flame, or gives them motivation.”

Battle had recently conducted an inspection of the recruits.

“All of our instructors were straight,’” Battle said. “It sparks that flame, or gives them motivation.”

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According to Kirby, learning how to develop leaders greatly enhances an RDC’s ability to train and lead their divisions. A sound recruit chain of command is important to the RDCs, helping them stay focused on training and keeping the division on point.

Kirby said the shadowing phase is one of the most effective ways of instilling the lessons learned at RDC School. After the first six weeks of in-classroom curriculum, the perspective RDCs “blue ropes” go out on the streets with a “red rope” (RDC). They follow them through their daily life seeing first hand the different situations, how they arise and how the facilitators deal with them.

According to Nail, it’s the little unexpected things that pop up when dealing with a large group, and these little things can take the division off course if the RDC isn’t prepared to handle them.

“You deal with just about every single leadership obstacle here. Recruits show up here and they all have different problems. If a recruit has a personal problem – the spouse is having a baby, or a death in the family – you have to know how to handle these situations on the fly,” Nail said. “How do you do the right thing, and get that recruit the help they need?”

According to Nail, the recruit’s well-being is the most important thing to think of, because if their mind is on their problems at home and they aren’t able to deal with them, they can’t train. “They will shut down and you will not be able to get through to that recruit,” Nail said. “No amount of yelling or push ups and sit ups will bring them back.”

According to Kirby, learning how to develop strong recruit chief petty officers and section leaders is probably why I enjoy it, because it keeps me on my toes. I’ve never seen a more professional and dedicated group of instructors.”

Battle decided to be an RDC because he really wants to help mold future Sailors. He takes a lot of pride in what he has done throughout his career, and enjoys helping people.

“This is the beginning for these recruits. I like the fact that I can build them up and see the results right away,” Battle said. “That’s an awesome thing and it’s a large part of the reason I came here. I want to train these young people, send them out to fleet ready to go.”

Training is tailored to RDCs. The training is specific to situational leadership, which is different than that of a typical Sailor. Nail added this is where blue ropes learn how the facilitators deal with them.

“RDCs are taught to be intense, because their leadership situation is different than that of a typical Sailor,” Nail added this is where blue ropes learn how the facilitators deal with them.

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“Hopefully that adds new tools to their toolbox for when they become RDCs,” Kirby said.

It’s definitely like being on the other side of the mirror. You have to know everything they need to know before they get here,” said Operations Specialist 2nd Class (SW) James Maudsley, a blue rope in the shadowing phase.

He added that interacting with other RDCs who have one to six pushes (clases) under their belts, gives them visual access to different aspects and experiences while going through “C” school.

Nail said the idea is to pair the blue ropes with a good RDC, someone who can show them things that can’t be taught from a book, and how to turn lessons from the book into action. “Shadowing is where you begin to learn how to wake up 80 individuals, get them shaved, dressed in a height line and ready for chow in 30 minutes, while dealing with some recruits who have to go to medical or various other issues,” Nail said. “That’s stuff you can’t learn from a book. A learning experience like that is very rewarding.”

Nail said he enjoys having blue ropes shadowing him, because they are also an asset to the division, and because he likes to share his successes and failures with them.

“You can show them - ‘this is how to inspect a recruit’ or ‘if you look from this angle you can see this’ … It enables them pick up different little ways to get the job done quicker,” Nail said. “That’s how I was trained.”
Kirby said the intensity level of the school for the staff mirrors that of the boot-camp experience. It’s thought of as, “taking Sailors out of their fleet mentality.” It’s how staff members (E-5 and above) come to understand the perspective their recruits will have.

“You have people coming here who have been told their entire career that they are a top 10 percent Sailor. When they stand personnel inspections and get hit for their ribbons, gig lines and things like that, it wakes them up. It makes them think about things like attention to detail,” Kirby said.

According to Maudsley, stepping out of the comfort zone is another part of the challenge for many of the blue ropers.

“You might be an EP Sailor in your rate, but when you come here you aren’t in your rate anymore. You are a blue rope,” Maudsley said. “So, you step out of your environment and into a new one, which you really don’t know much about.”

“For example,” Maudsley said, “If I check into a new command as an operations specialist, I know what my job is. I know how to get better at it. I know how to break out amongst my peers. Here, whether you are a second class, first class, or a senior chief, everyone is pretty much starting from scratch.

Nail said the instructors at RDC School constantly emphasize the goal is to send quality Sailors out into the fleet.

“It’s our responsibility to do that,” Nail said. “When the recruits arrive here they have no clue how to wear a uniform, what a chief is or what teamwork is. They show up as 88 individuals, and to see them struggle to find themselves, struggle to come together and complete boot camp as a team I feel like a proud parent.”

The blue ropes are ready to become red ropes when they have passed the academic portion, and completed the shadowing phase of the 13-week training curriculum and passed two physical fitness assessments, scoring at least good or better.

Chief Aviation Warfare Systems Operator (AW) Todd Deal is the special programs screening liaison at RTC. He screens all the packages from applicants wanting to become RDCs. Last year he received approximately 270 packages, 75 percent of which were approved.

He said the primary traits they are looking for are Sailors with strong leadership traits, are physically fit and have no history of getting into trouble or problem areas with family advocacy or alcohol-related issues.

Deal noted this is not an easy job. It can be extremely demanding. Red ropes generally push four divisions before being given what is called a “hold job,” such as teaching RDC school or performing inspections. The hold job typically lasts nine to 12 months, with more regular working hours (7 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.). After the much-needed break in tempo, RDCs resume pushing divisions until the end of their tour.

He added, “Sailors who come here want to give back for the experiences they’ve had in the Navy or perhaps they [want to improve] the quality of Sailors. They want to be part of the solution. They want to roll up their sleeves and get to work, training the Sailors of the future Navy.”

Brunson is a photojournalist assigned to Naval Media Center, Washington, D.C.
Relief comes to Bangladesh

Operation Sea Angel II: Brings Help and Hope to Those in Need

When Tropical Cyclone Sidr slammed into the country of Bangladesh late last year with winds in excess of 156 miles per hour, it devastated one of the world’s most densely populated countries. The storm left more than 3,200 people dead, more than 1,000 missing and several hundred thousand homeless.

While the initial destruction caused by the tropical cyclone was catastrophic, the lingering effects, sustained most heavily in the country’s southern coastal regions, proved to be the most challenging to overcome. The United Nations estimated the cyclone affected more than 6.7 million people in 30 of the country’s 64 districts, causing severe economic losses. Sidr also washed out roads, making remote villages inaccessible and supplies extremely difficult to deliver. As a result, the need for emergency water, medical care, food and other supplies became more pressing each day after the storm hit for those left homeless.

The United States offered its support and prepared to help in humanitarian assistance/disaster relief (HA/DR) efforts if asked to do so by the Government of Bangladesh. During a visit to Dhaka, Bangladesh, soon after the cyclone, Adm. Timothy J. Keating, commander, U.S. Pacific Command, rallied support when he met with Gen. Moeen I. Ahmed, the chief of Bangladesh’s defense forces, Gen. Paul, U.S. Chargé d’Affaires in Bangladesh, Denise Rollins, Director, U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), Marine Brig. Gen. Ronald L. Bailey, 3rd Marine Expeditionary Brigade (MEB) commanding general and Rear. Adm. Carol M. Pottenger, commander, Task Force (CTF) 76. Bailey served as the on-scene commander for Operation Sea Angel II, the name given to HA/DR efforts in Bangladesh, and Pottenger directed all U.S. relief efforts afloat.

“We are here to help the people in their time of need,” said Keating, after meeting with Bangladesh Army officials in Dhaka. The Bangladesh Army’s chief of general staff, Maj. Gen. Snu Bhal Jamali, said American forces were invited to help distribute aid swiftly to areas that needed it most. They will be working with us, uniform and uniform,” he said.

At the request of the Government of Bangladesh, USS Kearsarge (LHD 3) began providing emergency aid and conducted HA/DR operations until USS Tarawa (LHA 1) arrived on station. To do this, Kearsarge steamed more than 3,000 miles from off the coast of Somalia in less than six days, arriving in the Bay of Bengal ready to execute air, ground and sea operations.

Tarawa, en route to 5th Fleet from 3rd Fleet, steamed more than 6,600 miles to relieve Kearsarge in the Bay of Bengal and continued to carry out relief efforts until the military assistance element of disaster relief operations ended in early December.
Additionally, a team from 3rd MEB, worked at the U.S. Embassy in Dhaka, to help coordinate relief efforts conducted by U.S. naval forces along with the U.S. Department of State, USAID and Bangladesh government.

Amphibious ships like Kearsarge and Tarawa are inherently flexible and designed to conduct operations across a wide spectrum of mission areas, both ashore and afloat. To military commanders, government officials and international relief organizations, Kearsarge’s arrival brought the ability to purify water, transport relief supplies ashore by air and sealift and provide medical treatment to Bangladeshis by mobile medical teams stationed aboard the ship.

“We provided a unique mix of capabilities including airlift, logistics support and the ability to support the humanitarian relief efforts already in place,” said Col. Doug Stilwell, commanding officer of the 22nd MEU (SOC). “Our goal was to assist the Bangladesh government, Bangladesh military and non-governmental organizations in reducing further loss of life.”

Once operations began in full force aboard Kearsarge and then on Tarawa, the ships fully executed the mission they were tasked with. Both flight decks were full of life as CH-46E Sea Knight and CH-53E Super Stallion helicopters made multiple trips to deliver aid to cities in Bangladesh such as Barguna, Barisal, Patuakhali, Kalapara, Dohlarchar and Zia.

While Marine helicopters on board Kearsarge and Tarawa did most of the heavy lifting, Navy SH-60 Seahawk helicopters transported personnel to and from both ships. Three Landing Craft Air Cushion (LCAC) from Assault Craft Unit (ACU)
A CH-46E Sea Knight assigned to the 22nd Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable) lands as Bangladeshis watch during a humanitarian aid mission after Tropical Cyclone Sidr passed through the area.

“I am extremely proud of the entire Navy-Marine Corps team that participated in the humanitarian efforts here,” said Pottenger. "Countless lives were saved, and a face to the world’s generosity and compassion was shown through teamwork and efforts of these extraordinary Sailors and Marines. This was the epitome of a Blue-Green effort.”

One Bangladesh man, treated by Kearsarge doctors, said, “In the eyes of my village, you are the face of the world. Your presence here shows us that the world cares.”

In short, Operation Sea Angel II was about people helping people: Despite religious, ethnic and language differences, Sailors and Marines demonstrated the world’s compassion to the people of Bangladesh and unequivocally brought help and hope to those in need. Christensen is assigned to CTF76.

“None of the Sailors and Marines did an outstanding job,” he said. “I know everyone on board was glad to be able to help provide disaster relief to the people of Bangladesh.”

Pottenger said she was grateful for the work Sailors and Marines had done: “I am extremely proud of the entire Navy-Marine Corps team that participated in the humanitarian efforts here,” said Pottenger. “Countless lives were saved, and a face to the world's generosity and compassion was shown through teamwork and efforts of these extraordinary Sailors and Marines. This was the epitome of a Blue-Green effort.”

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photo by Marine Corps Cpl. Peter R. Miller
RESCUERS from ABOVE

Story and photos by MC1(AW) Brien Aho

You surface, gasp for air and try to figure out how you got onto this roller coaster of water. At the crest of the next wave, you notice your ship is speedily vanishing against the horizon as it sails away without you.

What happened? Where am I? Who’s going to save me? Will I die here?

Minutes, which feel like hours pass, and you start to wonder, “How long can I tread water?” Then you hear it—a familiar, thumping sound in the distance. Your heart begins to race, you kick faster and you’re suddenly awash in sea spray. As the salt water stings your eyes, a smile crosses your face because you know that in minutes there will be a fellow Sailor who has spent years training for this moment entering the watery chaos around you.

While this scenario may only take a moment in time, for the courageous Sailors who attend Rescue Swimmer School (RSS) in Pensacola, Fla., it can take months or years of training to save a life.

“Even though the training here at RSS is five weeks long, we continue to train when we get to our next command,” said Aviation Warfare Systems Operator 2nd Class (AW/SW) Roger Richards, an RSS instructor. “I’ve been a rescue swimmer for more than nine years and even though I have not made a rescue yet, I train for when the day comes where someone’s life is in my hands.”

The mission of the naval aviation rescue swimmer is to execute search and rescue (SAR) operations from rotary-wing aircraft.
A rescue swimmer is physically conditioned to routinely perform demanding rescues in all operational environments, and they have the expertise to provide fleet commanders with the ability to assist personnel in distress. “So others may live” is the motto that rescue swimmers live by. It means putting their life in danger for their shipmates.

“So others may live” is the motto that rescue swimmers live by. It means putting their life in danger for their shipmates. “Someone has to [have] put themselves in danger for us to have a job” said AW1 (AW/AC) Waylon Wolf, RSS Instructor. “Lucky for us Sailors are listening to safety warnings and mishaps have gone down.”

It takes a strong-willed person to make it through RSS and the other schools a candidate must go through before they serve in the fleet. The numbers are few but the quality that rises to the top is what the Navy is looking for.

“You tell the students when they first arrive here that you have to be strong mentally, physically and that you need heart and motivation to make it through,” said Richards. “They have to have pride and we can see that in their eyes; we know for the most part who will make it through.”

A rescue swimmer travels a training pipeline between a minimum of three states and four schools. As RSS candidates, the Sailor will leave boot camp in Great Lakes, Ill., and then travel to Florida where they will attend Aircrew School aboard Naval Air Station Pensacola. Once they have finished school they go directly to Rescue Swimmer School.

After completing that portion of training, the Sailors will head to Aviation Warfare (AW) “A” school. From there they have to attend other schools like Survival Evasion Resistance and Escape school before hitting the fleet.
The Rescue Swimmer School attrition rate is 35 to 40 percent. This means the Sailor jumping into danger to save a life is one of the best at what they do.

In today’s world climate, the Navy rescue swimmer is being asked to fill more roles. As the U.S. Navy responds to global humanitarian needs such as Bangladesh, the tsunami in Indonesia, or domestic crises like the wildfires in San Diego and Hurricane Katrina, a rescue swimmer must think and respond quickly to accomplish different tasks beyond saving a person in the water. Delivering food by helicopter or rescuing someone off the roof of their home has been a common scenario played out time and time again on the nightly news.

“There were Navy rescue swimmers working with the other services during Katrina,” said Richards. “We never know from day to day what we will be called up to do.”

At RSS, students go through a rigorous schedule that requires endurance and a strong will. Students are pushed to their limits. As they go through the process, they begin to understand how much the body can take.

“All the training we do here is considered ‘high risk’ training,” said AW1 Ryan McCartney. “We push our students and do a lot of physical training outside and in the pool. In Florida we push up to the limit of the temperature conditions.”

Most students come to RSS already in good physical condition. They have already finished Aircrew School and have met the physical requirements which consist of the following in order; two pull-ups, 50 sit-ups, 35 push-ups, a 1.5 mile run in under 12 minutes and a 400-meter swim in under 11 minutes.
Someone has to put themselves in danger for us to have a job.”

— AW1(AW/AC) Waylon Wolf

The course provides students with hands-on experience in first aid, cardio-pulmonary resuscitation, rescue equipment, waterborne lifesaving techniques, day/night water entries, parachute disentanglement, search and rescue tactics and helicopter operations.

Rescue swimmers go through these rigors because mishaps usually occur when the conditions are bad.

“It’s [on] the worst days when we are called upon, and that is why it is so important to be physically fit. We must maintain long after we leave here,” said AW2 Terra Lathrop, an RSS instructor.

And, as the rescue swimmer approaches you he yells, ‘I’m a Navy Rescue Swimmer and I’m here to rescue you.’

The firm grip around you is reassuring, and as you are being hoisted into the bay of the helicopter you feel lucky knowing that there are brave men and women willing to put their lives in danger to make sure you make it home.

Women also attend RSS and must go through the same test as the men go through. Upper body strength is usually the biggest obstacle, because it’s necessary for buddy towing individuals.

“I grew up swimming and feel very comfortable in the water,” said Airman (AW) Soonja Tyrell, an RSS student. “Having to tow a much heavier person has been a challenge, but it’s more of a psychological thing of mind over matter - because I will pass.”

“We keep them busy in the pool trying to build their endurance by swimming sprints,” said McCartney. “Once we feel comfortable that they are ready to move forward, we allow them to advance into the [third] phase where they begin disentanglement procedures.”

Once classes start, students continue their physical training three times a week striving to reach required levels of fitness before being allowed to move ahead in class.

The additional physical training the students endure consists of 90 minutes of extensive calisthenics and a three mile run daily. Strength training, swimming 800 meters in less than 20 minutes, 400 meter buddy tows in 16 minutes or less; followed by a 500 meter swim in 13 minutes or less. After all that, they swim an additional 2,000 meters in less than 50 minutes.

“These guys have to be comfortable in the water at all times,” said Richards. “We push them and push them until they think they can’t go any longer. But once they realize how far the body can go, we allow them to move on.”

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The firm grip around you is reassuring, and as you are being hoisted into the bay of the helicopter you feel lucky knowing that there are brave men and women willing to put their lives in danger to make sure you make it home. Aho is a photojournalist assigned to Naval Media Center, Washington, D.C.
Voting Residency Guidelines for Members of the Uniformed Services and Their Family Members

Keep in mind that uniformed service personnel and their family members may not arbitrarily choose which state to declare as their legal voting residence without meeting the state’s residency requirement. The following are basic guidelines to follow in determining residency for military personnel and their family members:

- You must have or had physical presence in the state and the intent to remain or make the state your home or domicile.
- You may only have one legal residence at a time, but may change residence each time you are transferred to a new location. You must make a conscious decision to change residence; it cannot be done accidentally.
- There must be certain specific actions which may be interpreted as conscious decisions, e.g., registering to vote, registering a car, qualifying for in-state tuition, etc.
- Once residence is changed, a person may not revert to the previous residence without re-establishing new physical presence and intent to remain or return.
- *Home of Record* should not be confused with legal residence. *Home of Record* is the official military service address and is used to identify an entry into the system. It does not change *Home of Record* and legal residence may be in the same address and may be the same legal residence. A person may change his or her residence at any time. A person’s legal residence is the state, or location, as a legal resident, including the person’s physical presence and intent to remain or return.

What can I do to ensure my ballot gets counted?

(a) Return your absentee ballot as soon as you receive it.
(b) Visit the Federal Voting Assistance Program’s Web site at www.fvap.gov for information on the absentee registration and voting process.
(c) Be sure to notify your local election official of your new address, and that you will be voting absentee.
(d) Be sure to complete all requested questions on your FPCA form. Use clear, legible handwriting and fill out all sections. If the questions are not completed, your FPCA form will be rejected.
(e) Fill in all blank spaces on the form, or FVAP directly to complete your FPCA form.
(f) Mail your FPCA form back to your State voter registration office by the deadline date. If a FPCA form is returned late, your registration and ballot may be rejected.
(g) Be sure to register to vote and request your absentee ballot as soon as possible. Your registration and right to vote will expire if you fail to vote in any election in which you are entitled to vote. Keep in mind that exercising your right to vote in elections for federal offices only does not affect the determination of your residence or domicile for purposes of state and local tax laws. If you register to vote for federal offices only, you must be registered to vote in your state for state and local tax purposes. Consult your local election official for specific questions or situations.

If a military member changes legal residence after entering on active duty, he/she may not claim the state of birth as legal residence without re-establishing physical presence and intent to remain or return to that state. Family members of active-duty military personnel may each have a different legal residence. A spouse does not automatically assume the legal residence of the active-duty member upon marriage. The spouse must either establish his or her own physical presence and intent to remain or return. Guardians typically assume the legal residence of their parent, and when they become 18, they also have the option of establishing their own legal residence which can be different from either parent, assuming they have met the guidelines of physical presence and intent to remain or return. These are general guidelines for determining your legal residence for voting purposes. Consult your local election official for specific questions or situations.

- Questions regarding the above which cannot be answered locally may be referred to the Director, Federal Voting Assistance Program, Department of Defense, Washington Headquarters Services, Defense, Pentagon, Washington, DC 20303-1505. Reach the FVAP via e-mail at voterfap@navy.mil or call (202) 588-1585, toll-free 1-800-438-8683, or DSN (military) 424-1584.

Compiled from information at www.fvap.gov.
Taking the helm of the wave-piercing, aluminum-hulled, high-speed vessel HSV 2 Swift is not uncommon for the Sailors who serve on the 321-foot ship to do once or twice while stationed on her. But for Hospital Corpsman 1st Class (SW/SS) Timothy Shaeffer an independent duty corpsman on board, standing watch on the bridge is almost an every day occurrence. There are not many opportunities for an E-6 and below Sailor in the U.S. Navy to be the Navigator of the Watch (NOW) much less the Officer of the Deck (OOD) of a large vessel, but aboard Swift with her crew of 45, that chance opened up for Shaeffer. “We all have to pitch in and do extra duties,” said Shaeffer. “Once I picked up Navigator of the Watch I was asked by the CO if I would like to get my OOD qualification and I jumped at the opportunity.”

Besides taking care of the crew, Shaeffer is also responsible for any guests who travel along. Shaeffer must keep track of each person on board, to determine if they have been briefed about the different medical conditions they might encounter while visiting one of the eight or nine countries along the way. Much like any watch stander Shaeffer is on a rotational schedule on the bridge, but as a corpsman he is on call full time. Standing OOD aboard Swift can have its challenges but the latest technology allows it to run smoothly with less than six Sailors. “Driving the ship is actually kind of boring because it’s done mostly with computers,” said Shaeffer. “Once we navigate out of port, we set it on auto pilot and as long as the three lookouts are doing their job, the crew on the bridge can sit back and monitor the gauges.” Swift is propelled by four jet-powered engines that allow for smooth running even if one of those engines goes down. “Driving this thing is like playing a video game. We use jets to walk the ship side to side while maneuvering in port or we can turn on a dime and it’s all done using a joy stick,” said Shaeffer.

For Shaeffer, filling the role of corpsman, NOW and OOD on board Swift keeps him on his toes and puts him always on call.
The battleship USS Maine arrived on station in Havana Harbor, Cuba, Jan. 25, 1898. American authorities hoped that her presence in the area would be seen as a goodwill gesture and stabilizing influence on the Spanish control of the colony. They also hoped to curtail guerilla activities. Maine’s Commanding Officer Capt. Charles Sigsbee also had the mission to evacuate American citizens from Havana if necessary.

At 9:40 p.m. on the evening of February 15, 1898, a terrible explosion on board USS Maine shattered the stillness in Havana Harbor, Cuba. Investigations would reveal that more than five tons of powder charges for the ship’s six and 10-inch guns ignited, obliterating the forward third of the ship. The remaining wreckage quickly settled at the bottom of the harbor. More than half the ship’s complement of 353 officers and men lost their lives as a result of the disaster.

The U.S. Navy immediately formed a board of inquiry to determine the reason for Maine’s destruction. But due to the condition of the submerged wreckage and the lack of technical expertise, the board was not as thorough as later investigations would reveal. They concluded that a mine had detonated under the ship, but did not fix any blame for placement of the device.

Later investigations indicated the explosion was likely caused by a fire in a coal bunker which ignited an adjacent magazine.

The American public responded to the tragedy with outrage. During the four weeks it took the Navy to investigate the Maine disaster, many prominent American newspapers were feeding the public a steady diet of inflammatory articles blaming Spain for the disaster. William Randolph Hearst is the newspaper owner most strongly identified with publicizing the supposed Spanish conspiracy. The war-mongering newspaper style became known as “yellow journalism.”

Maine’s destruction did not cause the United States to declare war on Spain (as it did on April 25, 1898), but it served as a catalyst, accelerating the approach to a diplomatic impasse. In addition, the ship’s sinking and deaths of U.S. Sailors rallied American opinion more strongly behind armed intervention.

Today, you can find visit the memorial for USS Maine in Section 24 of Arlington National Cemetery, Arlington, Va. The memorial’s mast is the ship’s actual main mast. The mizzen mast is located at the U.S. Naval Academy, Annapolis, Md.

According to Arlington Cemetery records, the base of the mast represents the turret of a battleship. Upon that “turret” are inscribed the names of all those who lost their lives that February day. The remains of 229 Maine casualties that were brought to Washington, D.C., are buried just north of the memorial.

McCammack is a photojournalist assigned to Naval Media Center, Washington, D.C.
Do your Part
Leave your Mark.

Check with your command’s Voting Assistance Officer on everything from registering to obtaining an absentee ballot.

For further voting information visit: www.cnic.navy.mil