Battle Group in the Sand

Wallops Island houses two fully operational ship replica facilities, which are regularly used in training and battle group interoperability testing. Both facilities have control centers that can support test and training operations on their own or in conjunction with each other to form the “Battle Group in the Sand.”

Photo by MC1(AW) R. Jason Brunson

The Portrait of Family Readiness

When a Sailor deploys, two parallel stories are created in the same space of time. The Sailor’s story is about taking on America’s challenges abroad, while never ceasing to be brothers, sisters, fathers and mothers to the loved ones they must temporarily leave behind. For military family members on the homefront, the story is about overcoming the daily challenge separation brings and dealing with the stress of having a loved one in harm’s way.

Photo by MC3(AW/SW) Jhi Scott
AOA8 Jessica Jefferson attaches cables to a crate of ammunition as a helo lifts cargo off the flight deck of USS George Washington (CVN 73) during a weapons transfer with the USNS Shasta (T-ACS 33).

Photo by MCSN Anthony R. Martinez
Speaking with Sailors

Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy (SW/FMF) Joe R. Campa Jr.

Shipmates,

I’ve reached the end of my Navy career. After nearly 30 years wearing the uniform of a United States Sailor, I’ve decided the time has come to go ashore one last time. As I do, I want you to know what an honor it has been to serve you as the Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy.

The memories I’ll take with me are not those of personal achievements or accomplishments. What I’ll remember most are the friendships forged at sea and in some of the world’s most dangerous places. I’ve visited you in Iraq, Afghanistan and the Horn of Africa, and I’ve seen you take on jobs none of us could have imagined you’d be doing 10 years ago. I’ve sat across from Army generals and sergeants major who told me they never had much use for the Navy until a Sailor reported to their unit, and now they want more.

You’ve introduced a Navy culture and a Sailor’s spirit to our sister services. They find that when a Sailor reports aboard their command, what they’re getting is a leader and a professional. They’re learning what we’ve known for more than 200 years. Give a Sailor a job and they’ll find a way to get it done.

Shipmates, there is no greater honor than leading men and women in service to their country. I’ve had the privilege to do that and I’ll be forever grateful. You are the reason I took this job and the reason I’ll look back on as one that changed the face of our Navy.

A great leader told me something when I took this job. He said, “be bold.” I would pass that on to all of you. There is no limit on the potential of a United States Sailor. You belong to a generation that history will look back on as one that changed the face of our Navy. The opportunities you have in front of you are endless. But you can’t sit back and wait for them. Be bold. Lead your fellow Sailors to success.

I’ve had the privilege of visiting you at sea and in some of the world’s most dangerous places. I’ve visited you in Iraq, Afghanistan and the Horn of Africa, and I’ve seen you take on jobs none of us could have imagined you’d be doing 10 years ago. I’ve sat across from Army generals and sergeants major who told me they never had much use for the Navy until a Sailor reported to their unit, and now they want more.

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**Equal Opportunity and Diversity Key for Navy Success**

The theme of this year’s Navy Equal Opportunity Advisor (EOA) and Diversity Training Symposium, held in Memphis, Tenn., “Accentuate the Positive: Pathway to a Healthier Command Climate,” promoted the concept that a healthy organizational climate is critical to mission readiness.

Near Adm. Scott Hoeber, assistant commander, Navy Personnel Command for Career Management, spoke to an audience of approximately 300 EOAIs, command managed equal opportunity (CMEO) officers, command master chiefs and civilians, during this event.

“Equal opportunity and diversity are both very important elements of our Navy total force and are an absolute necessity as we go forward to continue to remain highly competitive with the private sector workforce,” said Hoeber.

“Everyone is different. Diversity is based on the concept of recognizing and embracing these differences. We must respect and encourage these differences to further our mission and to remain the best.”

The primary goal of the symposium was to conduct professional development training for command-level EOAs, CMEOIs and other leaders who address equal opportunity and diversity issues.

“We are way more diverse now than we were when I was on my first ship,” said Cmrdr. Bill Harren, executive officer, Huey D. Inches Recruiting District (NRE) Atlanta, a prior-enlisted limited duty officer who has served more than 30 years in the Navy.

**Around the Fleet**

The Navy continues its commitment to equal opportunity and diversity through continued training extended to its Sailors and civilians.

“There have been some great speakers including the CNO’s advisor for diversity, who shared the CNO’s guidance,” said Chief Electrician’s Mate (SN/AW) Jeffrey Simpson, CMEOI for NRD Atlanta.

The CNO’s guidance on diversity includes driving toward a Navy that reflects the face of the nation.

“An area that’s of great interest to me, of great focus to me, is the issue of diversity within our military. The military of the United States must reflect the nation. We have to work today to put in place the demographics of 40 years from now,” said Chief "It has been a vision Adm. Gary Roughead, earlier this year. For more information about equal opportunity and diversity in the Navy visit www.npc.navy.mil/CommandSupport/ Diversity or www.npc.navy.mil/CommandSupport/EqualOpportunity.

**Naval Announces Updates to IA/GSA Assignment Policies**

The Navy announced updates to the Individual Augmentee Management (IAMM) and Global War on Terrorism Support Assignment (GSA) programs, the two programs used for managing the Navy’s joint training mandate requirements.

“Our efforts are focused on meeting our operational and GOWT support requirements, while providing our Sailors and their families the support they deserve,” said Vice Adm. Mark Ferguson, III, Chief of Naval Personnel.

“Our goal remains to move the majority of GOWT assignments into normal PCS rotation window, increase predictability and stability for our Sailors and their families; and improve training stability at the unit level,” added Ferguson.

NANDM NAVADMIN 276/08 provides updates on following on the IA advancement rates, suitability screening, enlisted and junior officer IA/GSA assignments, and it also discusses the effect of Status of Forces Agreements on GSA Sailors whose families wish to remain overseas.

Advancement data show that IA/GSA Sailors have a higher overall average advancement rate than Sailors who have not served an IA/GSA. In the most recent chief petty officer selection board, IA/GSA Sailors had a higher-than-average selection rates to chief. Selection boards are directed to give favorable consideration to those candidates displaying superior performance while serving in direct support of GOWT.

The NAVADMIN lists detailing guarantees for junior officers in pay grades 0-1 to 0-3 who complete an IA or GSA tour from shore stations. Guarantees include choice of fleet concentration area or homeport upon completion of a GSA/A1 tour, and dating credit, which ranks an officer who has completed an IA/GSA above peers with similar qualifications and family reports.

The NAVADMIN discusses options for Sailors who wish to have their families remain overseas while serving on the GSA. In those instances where a Sailor is disadvantaged by GSA, and the overseas commander agrees to host family members while the Sailor is on the IA, IA management module (IAMM) may be allowed in lieu of GSA orders. Requests for IAMM vice GSA orders from overseas Sailors must be made to detailers during the ordaining process and must be positively endorsed by the command indicating the special interest for the assignment.

Sailors interested in serving an IA or GSA must complete NAVADMIN 276/08 in its entirety. The NAVADMIN can be found using the message number at www.npc.navy.mil.

Additional guidance is also available in NAV ADMIN 003/18 Individual Augmentee Management Business Rules and 003/18 GSA Detailing Business Rules.

**DOD Authorizes Adult Family Members to Return to Bahrain**

Commander, U.S. Navy Forces Central Command (NAVCENT), in cooperation with the GSA Abu Sham sucker in Bahrain, announced that DOD personnel permanently assigned to Bahrain are authorized to be accompanied by adult family members.

“This decision marks a change to the DOD policy that has been in place since July 2014 when families were required to relocate following security concerns.

“We are extremely pleased with the policy change,” said Vice Adm. Bill Gortney, commander, U.S. Navy Forces Central Command. “The return of our adult family members reinforces the security and stability of the region, demonstrates our enduring commitment to Bahrain, and will make the quality of life for our service members and DOD civilians even better.

School-age dependents and below school-age dependents will be considered at a later date, after the DOD Education Activity completes its supplemental support review.

Personnel currently serve 12-month unaccompanied tours in Bahrain, with some assignments designated as 18-month tours. This authorization will return accompanied tours to 24 months.

**Physical Readiness Program Updated**

According to NAVADMIN 277/08, the Navy made significant strides to the Navy Physical Readiness Program (PFP). The new NAVADMIN provides detailed information about the PFP changes announced in NAVADMIN 277/08.

**Story by MCM(SW) Mary Yager, Naval Personal Command, Millington, Tenn.**

**Physical Fitness Assessment (PFA)** failures have decreased more than 50 percent during the past four years. We’re really seeing a change in culture and change in lifestyle. Better fitness ultimately leads to better quality of life, better performance and better readiness,” said Rear Adm. Daniel P. Holloway, Jr., commander, Manpower, Personnel, Training and Education, (N-13).

In recent years, the Navy has promoted fitness through programs and policies. The addition of elliptical and stationary bike options for the cardio portion of the PFA was welcomed by many Sailors. A general portion of the PFA was welcomed by many Sailors. A general portion of the PFA was welcomed by many Sailors.

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**Story by MCM Wendy Hamanroth, Fleet Public Affairs Command Atlantic, Norfolk.**

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Fleet Voyage in 1907, when President Theodore Roosevelt sent out 16 battleships for Columbus Day celebration. This year’s festivities commemorated the Great White Fleet voyage aboard USS Constitution and USS New Jersey in New York City during the 64th Annual Columbus Day Parade.

MU2 Carlton Shippee plays the trombone as he marches up 5th Avenue (LHD 3), conduct a cooperative surgery with medical personnel. Kearsarge’s anesthesiologist with the Dominican Republic navy, embarked aboard USS New Orleans (LHD 3), conducted a cooperative surgery program while deployed, saving as much of 900 gallons of fuel daily.

The firing detail aboard USS Indianapolis (CA 35) in the Philippine Sea, July 30, 1945. BM2 Eugene Stanley Morgan, one of the 316 survivors of the sinking of USS Indianapolis (CA 35) in the Philippine Sea, July 30, 1945. Morgan died June 18, 2008. His body was interred with full military honors at the Manila American Cemetery.

BM2 Eugene Stanley Morgan, one of the 316 survivors of the sinking of USS Indianapolis (CA 35) in the Philippine Sea, July 30, 1945. Morgan died June 18, 2008. His body was interred with full military honors at the Manila American Cemetery.

The fitting detail aboard USS Ohio (SSGN 726) fires three volleys as part of a memorial service in the Philippine Sea for World War II veteran BM2 Eugene Stanley Morgan, one of the 316 survivors of the sinking of USS Indianapolis (CA 35) in the Philippine Sea, July 30, 1945. Morgan died June 18, 2008.

The firing detail aboard USS Indianapolis (CA 35) in the Philippine Sea, July 30, 1945. BM2 Eugene Stanley Morgan, one of the 316 survivors of the sinking of USS Indianapolis (CA 35) in the Philippine Sea, July 30, 1945. Morgan died June 18, 2008. His body was interred with full military honors at the Manila American Cemetery.

Chief Warrant Officer 2 Jeffrey Lindaman steadies the fuel probe before it’s hoisted to USS Naseby (DDG 67) during a refueling at sea aboard USS Enterprise (DDG 108). Halsey implemented a fuel conservation program while deployed, saving as much of 900 gallons of fuel daily.

Dr. Eliecer Cruz Alvarez, right, a general surgeon with the Dominican National Police, and Lt. Cdr. Velozes Andries Salas Cabrera, an anesthesiologist with the Dominican Republic navy, embarked aboard USS Kearsarge (LHD 3), conduct a cooperative surgery with medical personnel.

To be considered for the “Around the Fleet” section, forward your 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_submitt.html

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

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

The Navy will discontinue the processing of administrative separations due to multiple PFA failures. The Navy will discontinue processing of administrative separations due to multiple PFA failures.

Additionally, there are references to assistance provided by other governmental and non-governmental agencies and organizations.

**DOD Develops Compensation & Benefits Handbook**

DOD recently announced it has developed a comprehensive handbook describing compensation and other benefits service members and their families would be entitled to upon separation or retirement as a result of serious injury or illness.

The Compensation and Benefits Handbook is the one source of information that covers everything a seriously ill and injured service member will need during his or her recovery, rehabilitation and reintegration,” said Ronald A. Winter, principal deputy assistant secretary of the Air Force for manpower and reserve affairs.

The handbook was compiled in cooperation with the Departments of Veterans Affairs, Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education and the Social Security Administration. Additionally, there are references to assistance provided by other governmental and non-governmental agencies and organizations.

“The handbook describes the disability eligibility process, various program qualifications, application procedures, and numerous resources with associated contact information,” said Sharon Gunselman, policy and resource analyst for the Department of Defense.

Web sites and toll-free numbers are provided, and the electronic version includes hyperlinks. The electronic version of the handbook will be updated frequently and the hard copy of the compensation and benefits
Around the Fleet

continued from page 9

handbook will be updated annually.
The electronic version of the handbook can be found on the five Web sites listed below:
http://turbotap.org
https://www.nko.navy.mil
http://www.npc.navy.mil
https://www.aw2.army.mil

Story courtesy of DOD, Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense.

Pacific Fleet Commander Addresses Motorcycle Safety

In his latest edition of the “Rat-Pac Report” podcast and blog, posted Oct. 15, Commander, U.S. Pacific Fleet joined Pacific Fleet Master Chief in discussing motorcycle safety and the responsibilities of those who ride such vehicles.

“The Fleet Master Chief and I had a recent discussion regarding motorcycles and the impact that they’re having on our Navy,” said Adm. Robert F. Willard.

“We recently experienced four Sailor deaths in two weeks due to motorcycle accidents. This has been a particularly bad year for motorcycles and motorcycle safety.”

According to Navy Safety Center, personal motor vehicles (PMV) accidents resulted in 111 deaths in FY2008. Of those, 58 occurred on motorcycles and 31 were on sport bikes. Sport bikes differ from standard motorcycles in that many weigh less than 450 pounds, come with engines 600cc and higher, are tuned for racing and are highly maneuverable.

“We are still not doing our part as Sailors in ensuring we are adhering to the rules and regulations governing this extremely important safety matter,” said Fleet Master Chief Tom Howard. “If you own a motorcycle of any sort, it is your responsibility to have the proper personal equipment (PPE) and the proper training to operate that bike. Whether you ride the bike on base or off, PPE and training are required.”

Riders are required to take a Motorcycle Safety Foundation safety course in order to ride on or off base. Additionally, the Navy and Marine Corps have teamed with the foundation and developed a course tailored specifically for sport bikes. The goal is to reduce the risk of injury and death.

“This is something that we must contain, and you have to help one another do it,” said Willard. “I need every Sailor that operates a motorcycle and every Sailor that knows a Sailor that operates a motorcycle, to support one another to ensure that we’re adhering to all of the training.”

The Basic Rider Course (BRC) is a three day course required for all military service members riding a motorcycle on or off base. Military Sport-bike Rider Course (MSRC) is a one-day course designed specifically for sport bike riders.

For more information on these courses contact your local safety office or visit http://www.safetycenter.navy.mil.

A new “Rat-Pac Report” is scheduled to appear on the site weekly.

Inside the Navy’s helicopter community, there are several distinct squadron classes, each with specific missions and capabilities. These squadron classes add their own unique warfare capabilities to the Navy’s total arsenal.
The men and women of Helicopter Squadron Light (HSL) 44 are a breed apart. They aren’t limited to any specific mission or skill set. They carry out missions that run the gamut of SH-60B capabilities that take them across the globe at a moment’s notice and demand a constant state of readiness for the Sailors assigned there. In the helicopter community, HSL-44 is the jack-of-all-trades.

“One of the challenges we have that we really enjoy is having to train for an extremely diverse range of missions,” said HSL-44 Commanding Officer, Cmdr. Mike Patterson. “Our sister communities focus on one mission, guys do carrier operations and submarine community really focuses on VERTREP; the jet guys do attack and sea combat community really focuses on one of the challenges we have that we really enjoy is having to train for an extremely diverse range of missions,” said HSL-44 Commanding Officer, Cmdr. Mike Patterson. “Our sister communities focus on one mission, guys do carrier operations and submarine community really focuses on VERTREP; the jet guys do attack and sea combat community really focuses on one mission. Our community is really diverse, and that is unique in the Navy helicopter community because we have secondary [missions] that span all kinds of operations.”

HSL-44 deploys in very small numbers. When a mission is announced, a detachment is quickly established from the men and women at the squadron’s headquarters at Naval Station Mayport, Fla. “HSL is a [different] community because we don’t go with the typical interdeployment readiness cycle, where the command works toward a deployment as a unit,” said HSL-44’s Command Master Chief (AW/SW) Mark Dubiel. “Most squadrons work up together with an [air] wing or a ship, and the whole squadron develops that way. HLSs, on the other hand, work on what we call a detachment concept. We’re constantly in flux. We have Sailors in each phase of a deployment cycle, so we have to place a priority on properly managing our Sailors. It’s a leadership challenge, and it can also be tough on Sailors.”

HSL-44 is approximately 350 Sailors strong, Patterson said the small detachments that deploy eventually become a very tight group that depends on every detachment member to carry their own weight. "One of the challenges of an HSL squadron is that we’re not all together as a unit in the training and deployment cycle," said Patterson. "HSL-44 is approximately 350 Sailors strong, and our detachments are made up of 25 to 28 people and are a mini-squadron. They have an OIC [officer in charge], maybe four or five pilots, a maintenance chief is usually the LCPO (leading chief petty officer), three first class petty officers, and the rest are all maintainers. They live, breathe and fight as a one or two-plane detachment. They do everything that a squadron does within that little group." Four HSL-44 squadrons are currently deployed to missions across the globe. "We go to frigates, destroyers and cruisers – all small boys," said Patterson.

The day, we’re shooting Hellfire missiles, then we’ll turn around and do a VERTREP or an emergency medical evacuation, and the next day we’ll be doing a personnel transfer [for] an admiral. Our community is really diverse, and that is unique in the Navy helicopter community because we have secondary [missions] that span all kinds of operations.”

As an HSL-44 Det. 8 Sailor is lowered from an SH-60B helicopter during search and rescue training.

A HSL-44 Detachment 8 is deployed aboard USS McInerney (FFG 39). They just got underway for seven weeks for a joint-warrior exercise in the Northern Atlantic.

Dubiel said some of the same things that make life in an HSL squadron so challenging are the very same things that develop unmatched leaders for the Navy. "Of all of the communities I’ve been in, I think HSL is a great opportunity for midgrade Sailors to develop their leadership skills," said Dubiel. "They go out to a ship or a detachment, and they’re thrown into leadership responsibilities earlier than maybe they [would’ve been] in other communities. When our guys go to sea, they deploy in a very small detachment – usually only around 18 enlisted in the det," said Dubiel. "You have to be a performer. Everybody is key. You’re either in your rack or you’re up working on an aircraft. In a traditional squadron, where everyone goes to sea together, you may have three or four airmen from each rate on a shift, but in an HSL squadron, it’s..."
my shore-duty guys is that it’s like you’re on sea duty,” said Dubiel. “My responsibility is ensuring the success of the detachments that are deployed so that means that if one of our detachments needs help on a Saturday, we don’t wait until Monday morning. We’ll bring somebody in; we’ll ship them something; we’ll look up the information they need; and we’ll communicate with them. In terms of focus and dedication, my shore personnel have a sea-duty mentality.”

According to their commanding officer, the Sailors turning wrenches and making sure the birds are able to perform their missions at sea are the backbone of HSL-44.

“The real story is the guys who get the aircraft ready to fly,” said Patterson. “They work 12 on and 12 off, every day while they are underway. It’s because of their commitment first and foremost that we’re able to accomplish our mission time after time.”

McCammack is assigned to Defense Media Activity - Anacostia, Washington, D.C.

One of the most unique missions HSL-44 supports as the wings for small boys is the counternarcotic operations in the Caribbean and Eastern Pacific Ocean.

“We’ve seen a lot of success in counternarcotics terrorism missions. With the recent stand-up of 4th Fleet, we now have an increased focus on what is going on in that area of the world. Our det’s are deploying with night-vision goggles and forward-looking infrared things that make it easier to detect drug-carrying vessels. We had a det that returned about five months ago, and they had four busts during their time in the southern area of operations. That’s $250 million of drugs that were kept off our streets as well as a number of people who were detained for eventual prosecution. That mission is awesome, and it’s emerging as it continues to grow, and it’s an exciting place to be.”

Working in conjunction with the ship crew, embarked Coast Guard law enforcement detachments and other agencies, HSL-44’s SH-60B helicopters are used to track and detect drug-runners before their cargo can be sold on American soil.

“When we deploy to the Caribbean or off the coast of South America and focus on anti-drug, counternarcotics operations, we track fast boats and fast movers with cocaine or other narcotics. We work in conjunction with our ship and the Coast Guard,” said Bintz.

The squadron also plays a pivotal role in support of the combatant’s commander mission in the Central Command theater.

“We have involvement in the [war on terror], particularly in the 5th Fleet area of operations,” said Patterson. “We do lots of patrols and maintain the safety and security of Iraqi oil platforms.”

The squadron also plays a vital role in force protection as HSL-44 helicopters are used to guard military personnel and assets as they traverse some of the most dangerous maritime straits and channels.

“Whenever we make a critical strike group transit, like through the Strait of Hormuz or the Strait of Gibraltar – any vulnerable position – our aircraft are either flying or ready to respond if there is a threat to the strike group.”

The squadron has both sea and shore duty billets, but the personnel assigned to HSL-44 on a shore rotation are expected to contribute every bit as much as their sea-rotation counterparts.

“When you come to an HSL squadron on shore duty, it’s challenging. What I tell my shore-duty guys is that it’s like you’re on sea duty,” said Dubiel. “My responsibility is ensuring the success of the detachments that are deployed so that means that if one of our detachments needs help on a Saturday, we don’t wait until Monday morning. We’ll bring somebody in, we’ll ship them something, we’ll look up the information they need, and we’ll communicate with them. In terms of focus and dedication, my shore personnel have a sea-duty mentality.”

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FOR SAILORS, THE SIGHT OF ANOTHER SHIP PASSING ON THE HORIZON IS A FAMILIAR AND OFTEN WELCOME SIGHT, BUT THE LAST THING A SAILOR EXPECTS TO SEE WHEN LOOKING TOWARD LAND IS THAT FAMILIAR SILHOUETTE OF A U.S. NAVY SHIP’S MAST COMPLETE WITH SWEEPING RADARS JUTTING OUT OVER THE SEA WALL.

Though many Sailors may never have heard of Wallops Island or the “Battle Group in the Sand,” its impact on the fleet and the way we equip and fight our ships is enormous.

Wallops Island houses two fully-operational ship replica facilities, which are regularly used in training and battle group interoperability testing.

One is an AEGIS facility, which currently replicates all the AEGIS cruisers and destroyers active in the fleet today and can support four independent combat systems laboratory configurations.

The second is the Ship Self-Defense (SSD) Facility, which replicates the MK-1 Ship Self-Defense System (SSDS) deployed aboard LSD 41-class ships and supports development of the MK-2 SSDS planned for aircraft carriers, amphibious transport docks and amphibious assault ships. The SSD Facility can simultaneously support two lab configurations.

Both facilities have control centers that can support test and training operations on their own or in conjunction with each other. These form the “Battle Group in the Sand.”

Surface Combat Systems Center (SCSC) former Commanding Officer, Capt. Michael D. Anderson, said Wallops Island is much more than just an unusual sight. The men and women of SCSC employ a powerful combination of geography, airspace, combat systems equipment and know-how to provide a broad range of direct support opportunities to the Navy’s current and future warfighting capabilities.

The facility’s unique location on a barrier island of Virginia’s Eastern Shore – just 150 yards from the ocean - gives them the capability of radiation or the ability to track live targets on and above the water, which is a capability other facilities around the United States do not have.

“We can simulate every CIC environment in the fleet, so we can cater to what they need,” said Fire Controlman 1st Class (SW) Scott Roane, the leading petty officer for the AEGIS Weapons System division. “We can go as far as to simulate any location in the world. If you are [operating] in the Middle East or off the coast of Korea, we can simulate that.”

Roane noted it’s not just their ability to “go live,” but also the various partnerships they have on board and the connectivity they can achieve with other assets, that allows them to be very versatile.

“We work directly with the customers to test and install new [Combat Information Center] environment in the fleet, so we can cater to what they need,” said Fire Controlman 1st Class (SW) Scott Roane, the leading petty officer for the AEGIS Weapons System division. “We can go as far as to simulate any location in the world. If you are [operating] in the Middle East or off the coast of Korea, we can simulate that.”

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“We work directly with the customers to test and install new
Wallops Island facilities are located just 350 yards from the ocean. This allows them to easily track live targets.

The Fleet Perspective

The place where every minute of this training translates into faster, more precise responses is CIC, the ship’s brain. Here, each piece of information converges to provide the picture of the battle space, and every command must be executed with precision to ensure mission accomplishment.

The training at Wallops Island is difficult if not impossible to duplicate at the unit level.

Everyone is qualified but it gets us to the next level of understanding on both the weapon system and the means in which to apply it in defense of the ship. The training honed the skills of Ronald Reagan Sailors as they prepared to deploy. "Through the training, I learned how to optimally use the system I operate. This includes proper configuration to combat an anticipated threat. There was a lot of information regarding system capabilities and operation," said Fire Controlman 2nd Class (SW/AW) Robert Hanman, an NSC (NSSMS)
Building Capabilities

According to Anderson there are three key elements from the Chief of Naval Operations’ priorities that are embodied in the command’s mission and carried out through the hard work his crew at Wallops Island do every day. He said the first is to build the future Navy. “We need to build 313 ships. We do that here two ways, one is by helping to deliver the new systems that will go onto the ships of the future,” Anderson said. “The second way you get the 313 ships is by keeping what you have.”

He said working in ship modernization, helping to bring the new combat systems baselines forward, certifying them, getting the products associated with them, solving fleet problems and providing distance support are all part of the daily work at Wallops that helps keep ships out there working well on the waterfront, so they will stay around longer.

“We support surface combat systems at the platform level, at the battle group level and are now looking forward to the joint task force and coalition level,” Anderson said.

Anderson said having exposure to the civilian workforce, who have been working on these systems their entire lives, working directly with the developers and engineers, gives the Sailors at Wallops Island a broader insight and more expertise to carry back to the fleet with them.

Anderson said they will fight, as a unit with live radars, tracking live targets. “Obviously there is a lot of training that goes on in house with the students who come through,” Anderson said. “But there is also a lot of professional development that happens with our own Sailors here.”

Anderson said having exposure to the civilian workforce for the first time, which keeps the Sailors sharp and on the edge, is also something they take very seriously. The objective is to develop the 21st century workforce.

“We make sure these systems are really ready for the fleet before they get there,” Anderson said. “On the training side, Anderson said, they provide the same kind of beginning and beyond support. It starts with the arrival of a new capability. Then, the very first training packages get validated. Subsequently, the trainers provide feedback to the developers on what works and what doesn’t work; what the displays need to look like; and how the fleet intends to operate these systems. Next, they move from working at the requirements level through impacting design and maturing the training products.

From this point, Anderson said, they begin training pre-commissioned personnel and fleet training, supporting the console operator courses and the replacement crews as they start to cycle through.

He added supporting the training pipelines to the fleet, which keeps the Sailors sharp and on the edge, is also something they take very seriously. The objective is to develop the 21st century workforce.

Anderson said: “We support surface combat systems at the platform and battle group level and is pursuing joint force and coalition level support possibilities.

Wallops Island supports combat systems from development to deployment and beyond. For example, developers and organizations like Johns Hopkins University’s Applied Physics Laboratory (APL) come here with new mathematical algorithms, which they connect to a radar signal processor. This helps the developer determine how they will design the next generation of Navy radar,” said Anderson.

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The crew of the combat information center aboard USS San Antonio (LPD 17) work with civilian and military subject matter experts conducting battle scenario training. Because the scenario is held in the Ship Self Defense System, team training facility at Wallops Island, Va., the crew can train as they will fight, as a unit with live radars, tracking live targets.

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The Portrait of Family Readiness

Story by MC2(SW) Elizabeth Vlahos, photos by MC3(AW/SW) Jhi Scott

The deployment of a Sailor creates two parallel stories, each unfolding in the same space of time. The Sailor’s story is about taking on America’s challenges abroad, while never ceasing to be a brother or sister, father or mother to the loved ones temporarily left behind. For military family members on the homefront, the story is about overcoming the daily challenges and dealing with the stress of having a loved one in harm’s way.

For Hospital Corpsman 1st Class (EXW/SW) Fealofani Peau and his family, another chapter of parallel stories is to be revealed in the coming months.

Fealofani’s unit, Riverine Squadron (RIVRON) 1, is deploying to Iraq in a matter of days. He’s not too worried about the challenges he may face on the job, since this is his second deployment. He knows what to expect as a professional Sailor.

His greatest concern is the well-being of his family while he’s away, so the family is doing everything they can to prepare for his deployment before it begins.

Fealofani’s wife, Jessica, a former Navy hospital corpsman, and two children, Vianca and Jonathan, must each step into roles usually filled by Fealofani.

For him to be able to fully concentrate on his impending mission, Fealofani needs to be certain his family can tackle any curveball thrown their way while he’s gone.

“Fortunately, my wife is an incredible multi-tasker,” said Fealofani. “But it’ll be difficult for her, [especially] the first month because it takes a little time to adjust and get everything in balance.”

With their mother attending school and a younger brother requiring supervision, Fealofani’s 15-year-old daughter Vianca said she’s ready to take on more responsibility and help out her mom around the house.

“With my mother going to school now, my brother and I have to be more dependent on each other. My mom needs her space to get her homework done. I need to take more responsibility for everything that needs to be done in the house. With [my dad] gone, there’s more pressure, and I guess I just have to step up more.”

Even though she’s prepared for her larger role, Vianca said nothing can replace everything her father does while he’s deployed.

“I don’t like the fact that he’s leaving,” said Vianca. “My dad is always there for me, pushing me to do better. He’s the one I go to when I have problems – my teenage problems … Emotionally, it’s just ups and downs. One day, I’m like, ‘Oh, my God, my dad’s gone. I miss him so...
Family readiness directly affects mission and warfighting readiness. The old, worn-out attitude of “a wife wasn’t issued with the seabag” has given way to more enlightened attitudes concerning family readiness.

"If Sailors are not able to focus on their jobs when deployed because their [families] are suffering at home, it’s inevitable that the quality of their service will suffer,” said Hinson.

In effect, family readiness fleetwide serves as the very keel of the Maritime Strategy.

"Family readiness is part of every Sailor’s responsibilities," said Hinson. "Our forces are in high demand, and the flexibility required to provide commanders credible combat power whenever needed, requires Sailors to sustain a high level of family readiness.

Hinson was quick to stress that family readiness should not be solely reserved for “known” deployments, taking into consideration recent deployments to carry out unexpected missions such as humanitarian assistance and disaster relief.

"In today’s environment, family readiness must be maintained consistently."

Are they ready?

Before a ship leaves the pier, the crew spends months getting ready for the inevitable upheaval. Sailors work hard readying the ship through extended maintenance programs. They train long and hard, readying themselves through work-ups, qualifications and inspections. But what about the families and the loved ones they’re leaving behind?

The Navy has a variety of programs to help Sailors like Peau and their families. The programs that assist these families helped position the Navy as a Top 50 employer.

"The Top 50 initiative [recognizes] all that the Navy does in this and other arenas for our total force. The Navy strives to provide our workforce a career that is both professionally and personally rewarding, [and] part of that is through our life/work programs," said Cmdr. Lisa Truesdale, from the office of the Chief of Naval Personnel. “Some of those programs include, but are not limited to: 12 months operational deferment for new mothers; child care centers; IVF reimbursement; telecommuting; paternity leave (new in

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Jonathan Peau rides his skateboard in the front yard of his house while his father watches.

▲ HM1 (EXW/SW) Fealofani Peau spends time with his children, Vianca and Jonathan, as he prepares for his upcoming deployment.

FY09), career intermission (new in FY09).

Additionally, the Navy provides an incredible number of benefits that is on par with or better than most corporate institutions.”

These types of programs allow the Navy to recruit and retain talented people and their families, but when it’s time to pack the seabag, Fleet and Family Support Center (FFSC) has a whole menu of services and support to get Sailors and families through deployments.

With classes focusing on how to get ready for a deployment, how to cope when a parent is away; and what to expect when that parent is away; and what to expect when that

▲ HM1 (EXW/SW) Fealofani Peau gets a steady hand from his son Jonathan as he tries to mount the skateboard in their driveway.

The official TLC kit contains a DVD story featuring Elmo and his friends. In the DVD, Elmo’s dad has to get ready to go away to do “important work.” While Elmo’s dad’s job isn’t explicitly described, the nature of his departure mirrors that of a military deployment.

“Elmo’s sad; he’s a little scared, but with the help of his friends and his mom, he’s able to go through it.” Chwatsky explains. “Then Elmo’s dad comes back, so they go through the whole deployment cycle.”

The DVD also features live-action footage of military families going through the deployment cycle to augment Elmo’s story.

“[The families] talk about how they cope with the challenges of deployment,” said Chwatsky.

In the summer of 2006, the Sesame Workshop produced 400,000 TLC kits that were distributed worldwide to military families and supporting organizations. The project was successful – not only were families happy to receive the materials, but the materials themselves were working. The kits gave military parents the tools to discuss deployments with their young children.

“We’ve seen the movie, and I think it’s really going to help a lot in preparing them because it’s so surreal to them that their dad is somewhere else,” said Marguerite Carroll, a military spouse.

“Who better than Elmo to model [the behaviors of a deploying parent’s child]?” said Chwatsky. “When he was upset, he went to talk to his mom and his friends. He was able to communicate with his dad using the computer, sending him letters, looking up at the moon. Not only were the kids doing better, but [so were the parents].”

In April 2008, after speaking again with their advisors and with military families, Sesame Workshop released the second phase of TLC, called “Deployments, Homecomings, Changes.”

The second-phase kit contained not only Elmo’s initial deployment story, it also dealt with the adjustments a family has to make when the deployed parent comes home. In the second story, Elmo’s family has to adjust to his dad’s presence at home after his extended absence. Also, Elmo’s dad gets word that he has to leave again sometime in the near future.

This kit also addresses the sensitive topic of an injured parent. In the third story, “Changes,” Elmo’s friend Rosita has to adjust to a “new normal” when her dad is injured on the job and is confined to a wheelchair.

continued on page 31

The road that ombudsmen play in family readiness cannot be overstated. They are often instrumental in helping to resolve family issues before the issues require extensive command attention, and they can provide resource referrals when needed. Navy Reserve ombudsmen are fully trained to assist both activated and non-activated families.

Family readiness groups (FRGs) are also an invaluable resource to families of deploying Sailors. FRGs usually consist of fellow military spouses, parents, siblings, relatives and approved friends of military personnel. They are generally organized through a unit before a deployment. They help each other and their children adjust to their Sailors’ absence. They also provide a helping hand should a fellow spouse or child suffer a hardship of any kind.

Another program, United Through Reading (UTR), enables deployed parents aboard Navy ships, at air stations abroad and in tents throughout the Middle East to share their love and support with their children by reading books aloud on DVDs. The readings are recorded, then DVDs of the sessions are delivered to their homes along with the book.

This program is unique in that, while in the past military personnel have been able to write letters, e-mail and send audio casettes, UTR offers children a chance to see their parents’ faces, listen to their voices and read along as their
families felt isolated because the rest of their parent command was not on the same type of deployment,” he said. “IA families had very little information about what an IA deployment was like and what they could expect.

“As the IA process has evolved and improved for the IA Sailor, the Navy has promoted education and information about the process with more emphasis on command

Individual Deployments
The challenges that individual augmentees (IA) and their families must tackle are also being addressed by the Navy. “Family Readiness for the IA process is no different than family readiness for the rest of the Navy,” said Capt. Jeffrey McKenzie, commanding officer of Expeditionary Combat Readiness Center, Norfolk. “The Navy has support and resources in place to assist all Navy families during deployment as well as plans and processes to provide assistance for families in the event of a natural disaster.” McKenzie was quick to clarify that the IA process faced many obstacles in its infancy. “When the IA process first started, some families felt isolated because the rest of their parent command was not on the same type of deployment,” he said. “IA families had very little information about what an IA deployment was like and what they could expect.

“As the IA process has evolved and improved for the IA Sailor, the Navy has promoted education and information about the process with more emphasis on command

story deals with challenges and emotions children may face when a parent comes back from a deployment with a significant change or injury, such as paralysis, an amputation, depression, post-traumatic stress or traumatic brain injury.

“The feedback has been incredible,” said Chwatsky. “We went into this with high hopes, and I think we have exceeded beyond our expectations.

“First, the appeal factor. Elmo is just loved and adored, and for these families, to know that Elmo is there for them … they are so thrilled and so happy. Second, the materials are working. We’re showing from the assessment work that these materials are giving parents feelings of hope, and that they have the tools available to communicate with their children. We’re seeing kids develop fewer negative behaviors through all these difficulties. We have had this wonderful partnership with [DoD], and they are so grateful that they have these tools for their families.”

The kits are distributed through Military OneSource at no cost to families. Print resources for adults and children, in addition to the TLC material, are available at www.sesamestreet.org/tlc.

In June, Sesame Workshop and the USO announced “The Sesame Street Experience for Military Families,” a touring live-action extension of the TLC initiative. The tour, which started in July and ran through November, brought smiles to service members, spouses and children at 43 military installations nationwide.

“The Sesame Street Experience for Military Families brings the TLC DVD and materials to life and directly to the families who face the challenges of military life each day,” said Gary E. Knell, president and CEO, of Sesame Workshop. “Our partnership with the USO further extends this initiative, visiting installations across the nation, to help these families bond through emotionally difficult times, by providing an educational and entertaining show and other outreach activities they can share.”

Military families who attended the experience were treated to a live character performance and received giveaways and outreach materials from TLC and other partners.

“I think it brings family together; it’s something for the family to do. The kids love it, and it’s quality time together,” said Dusten Rivera, a military spouse. “I’d like to thank USO for putting this on … I think the kids are going to enjoy it. I really appreciate it.”

According to Chwatsky, the office of the Chief of Naval Operations recently ordered the production of 100,000 more of the original TLC kits to be distributed to deploying Sailors’ families.

“These kits will be ready by the end of December, and they will be shipped all over the world,” she said. “We are thrilled about that, and we’re grateful that the CNO sees the value in these materials.”

Chwatsky had some final thoughts on the TLC project.

“The more I think about the title of this project – Talk, Listen, Connect – the more powerful I think these three words are, and that’s why I am so proud that is the title. Talk to your children. Children, talk to your parents. Parents, be able to listen to your children. They may not be able to verbally tell you that they are stressed or sad, but be able to listen to some cues they may be exhibiting, whether verbally or nonverbally. Connect not only with your loved ones here with you but also connect to your loved ones that are away. If that is the total takeaway package that families can get, then we have really done the job that we set out to do.”

Vlahos and McCammack are assigned to Defense Media Activity - Anacostia, Washington D.C.
The Paper Trail

Before a Sailor deploys, he or she must make sure all important paperwork is in order. This applies to both married and single Sailors. Single Sailors often overlook this formality when their families – whether parents, siblings or grandparents – could be the most affected should an emergency arise and their paperwork is not in order.

Sailors should have a current will on file, designate someone to hold power of attorney in their absence, designate beneficiaries in writing, ensure that Servicemember Group Life Insurance (SGLI) coverage and beneficiary information is current and consider drafting a pre-deployment checklist. Before a Sailor deploys, he or she must update their Record of Emergency Data (Page 2), which lists the next of kin that should be contacted in an emergency, and the Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System (DEERS) and review SGLI elections and beneficiaries as necessary.

Sailors need to know that updating one system does not automatically update the other. “Most Sailors assume that changing their Record of Emergency Data will automatically update their DEERS status,” said Pamela Thomas, who works for Naval Personnel Command’s customer service center. “[Unfortunately for them, it doesn’t.]” Since enrollment in DEERS is necessary for life-insurance and TRICARE benefits, a good practice is to stay on top of their status – if they don’t update DEERS properly, they could erroneously receive double insurance benefits, creating a steadily mounting debt each month.

Peau learned a few lessons about legal and financial readiness from his first deployment. “The last time around, I had some financial issues where something wasn’t properly taken care of prior to leaving,” he said. “I’ve learned a lot from my last deployment. I’ve ensured that our credit card bills and direct deposits are in order, and I have allotments placed. I’ve ensured that any of the bills dealing with credit are as low as possible, so I don’t have any issues with that this time around.”

For Sailors not wishing to learn these lessons firsthand, a pre-deployment checklist is available at www.nffsp.org and can help provide a good head start. The list includes items such as insurance coverage, and arrangements to pay taxes, bills and emergency expenses.

RIVRON 1’s administrative department was proactive in dealing with any legal issues Peau and his fellow Sailors had. “They were on top of us in ensuring that all powers of attorney were completed,” Peau recalled. “I’ve ensured that our credit card bills and direct deposits are in order, and I have allotments placed. I’ve ensured that any important that a Sailor take care of this if his wife is expecting a child. Neglecting this can result in loved ones being denied insurance payments and benefits.

Dual-military couples have good reason to stay on top of their status – if they don’t update DEERS properly, they could erroneously receive double insurance benefits, creating a steadily mounting debt each month. Peau learned a few lessons about legal and financial readiness from his first deployment.

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This Just In

SECNAV Names New Zumwalt-Class Destroyer USS Michael Monsoor

Secretary of the Navy, Donald C. Winter announced Oct. 29 at a Navy SEAL Warrior Fund Benefit Gala at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel in New York City, the name of the newest Zumwalt-class destroyer will be USS Michael Monsoor. Designated as DDG 1001, the name honors Master at Arms 2nd Class (SEAL) Michael Monsoor, who posthumously received the Medal of Honor for his heroic actions in Ramadi, Iraq, Sept. 29, 2006. Winter discussed the qualities, values and dedication to duty that Navy SEALs exemplify, including the extraordinary acts of Michael Monsoor.

“Tonight I would like to single out one of those heroes from the community of Navy SEALs,” Winter said. “Those who served with Michael Monsoor will remember him always as a consummate professional who faced terrorist enemies with aplomb and stoicism. The full extent of Michael’s courage, gallantry and selflessness were revealed on the 29th of September, in Ramadi. When his team was surprised by an enemy grenade, Michael could have escaped and saved himself,” Winter said. “But he chose a different path, a path of honor that embodies the way of a Navy SEAL. For having chosen that path, Petty Officer Michael Monsoor joined the ranks of those who have earned our nation’s highest distinction, the Medal of Honor.”

Winter concluded that Michael Monsoor’s heroism and self-sacrifice for his teammates and his nation epitomize the Navy’s core values of excellence, honor, courage and dedication to duty that Navy SEALs received the Medal of Honor for his heroic acts.

Head is one of many projects in which DOD is investing to revitalize the bay,” said Donald Schregardus, environmental deputy assistant Secretary of the Navy. “The project also represents a significant long-term investment in the Indian Head facility and community.” At an average annual erosion rate of 1.5 feet per year, approximately 12,000 cubic yards of sediment per year was entering the surrounding waterways. NSF Indian Head developed a shoreline management plan in 2002 that surveyed shoreline erosion along the installation’s waterfront.

With the support of the Southern Maryland Resource Conservation and Development Board and the Charles Soil Conservation District, work began in November 2007 with the construction of a series of breakwaters and sills along approximately 3,500 feet of the eastern shore of the Potomac River. These stabilization efforts will greatly reduce or eliminate impacts of wave action on the shoreline. As a result, approximately 2,900 feet of shoreline will naturally stabilize. In addition, extensive erosion along a 600-foot section of the stabilized shoreline required bank grading to stabilize the slope and protect two office buildings within 35 feet of the shoreline. Remedied the breakwaters and sills, an area of nearly 11 acres was backfilled to create more than an acre of intertidal wetland habitat suitable for scrub-shrub, riparian floodplain forest and upland trees and shrubs.

The National Aquarium in Baltimore, through a partnership with NSF Indian Head, mobilized volunteers for two field planting events to begin the path of the shoreline project. For the first event in July 2008, more than 40 participants spent two days to place 10,000 wetland plants along approximately 1,300 feet of Potomac River shoreline. Plantings occurred in the intertidal wetland zone created by placing sediment behind the sills and breakwater that have been constructed in the initial phase of the shoreline restoration project.

In a second planting event that spanned four days this month, more than 70 volunteers from communities throughout Maryland participate in stabilizing native plant communities on an intertidal zone created by sand placement in the shoreline project. The project has been undertaken with a goal of planting nearly 3,000 square feet of wetland with 30 species of marsh plants.

“Many of these species are only found in the Chesapeake Bay,” said Donald Schregardus, environmental deputy assistant Secretary of the Navy. “This project is good for the Chesapeake Bay, the surrounding environment, the Indian Head community and the coastal ecosystem. The Chesapeake Bay is one of the country’s most productive estuaries and is the nation’s most visible and admirable for our Sailors. The project also exemplifies our nation’s most visible

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Winter concluded that Michael Monsoor’s heroism and self-sacrifice for his teammates and his nation epitomize the Navy’s core values of excellence, honor, courage and dedication to duty that Navy SEALs received the Medal of Honor for his heroic acts.

Head is one of many projects in which DOD is investing to revitalize the bay,” said Donald Schregardus, environmental deputy assistant Secretary of the Navy. “The project also represents a significant long-term investment in the Indian Head facility and community.” At an average annual erosion rate of 1.5 feet per year, approximately 12,000 cubic yards of sediment per year was entering the surrounding waterways. NSF Indian Head developed a shoreline management plan in 2002 that surveyed shoreline erosion along the installation’s waterfront.

With the support of the Southern Maryland Resource Conservation and Development Board and the Charles Soil Conservation District, work began in November 2007 with the construction of a series of breakwaters and sills along approximately 3,500 feet of the eastern shore of the Potomac River. These stabilization efforts will greatly reduce or eliminate impacts of wave action on the shoreline. As a result, approximately 2,900 feet of shoreline will naturally stabilize. In addition, extensive erosion along a 600-foot section of the stabilized shoreline required bank grading to stabilize the slope and protect two office buildings within 35 feet of the shoreline. Remedied the breakwaters and sills, an area of nearly 11 acres was backfilled to create more than an acre of intertidal wetland habitat suitable for scrub-shrub, riparian floodplain forest and upland trees and shrubs.

The National Aquarium in Baltimore, through a partnership with NSF Indian Head, mobilized volunteers for two field planting events to begin the path of the shoreline project. For the first event in July 2008, more than 40 participants spent two days to place 10,000 wetland plants along approximately 1,300 feet of Potomac River shoreline. Plantings occurred in the intertidal wetland zone created by placing sediment behind the sills and breakwater that have been constructed in the initial phase of the shoreline restoration project.

In a second planting event that spanned four days this month, more than 70 volunteers from communities throughout Maryland participate in stabilizing native plant communities on an intertidal zone created by sand placement in the shoreline project. The project has been undertaken with a goal of planting nearly 3,000 square feet of wetland with 30 species of marsh plants.

“Many of these species are only found in the Chesapeake Bay,” said Donald Schregardus, environmental deputy assistant Secretary of the Navy. “This project is good for the Chesapeake Bay, the surrounding environment, the Indian Head community and the coastal ecosystem. The Chesapeake Bay is one of the country’s most productive estuaries and is the nation’s most visible
Home (And Safe) For the Holidays

Story by MC2(SW) Elizabeth Vlahos, graphic by MC2(SW) William E. Blake

"A few things at Christmas that are such a pain to me…"

“Christmas Story” reruns,
Drunken chefs with knives,
Five weeks in traction!
Snowball fights gone south,
Cars stuck in a snowstorm,
Returning recalled toys,
Candles burning curtains,
"A few things at Christmas that are such a blessing that his house was still standing afterward.
Fire has three places in the holiday season: candles, the fireplace and under the roasting chestnuts… nowhere else. Here’s how to keep it that way:
• If you’re starting a fire in a wood stove or a fireplace, use smaller branches and old newspapers for kindling, never use gasoline to start a fire.
• Never leave a burning candle unattended. If you’re lighting candles around a crèche, a menorah for Hanukkah or a kinnara for Kwanzaa, keep an eye on it. Also, while a candle in the window may create an inviting glow outside, you don’t want to risk the curtains catching fire.
• Everyone loves a holiday feast, but not so much if the cook burns the kitchen down in the process. Keep potholders and dishcloths away from the burners, and keep a large pan lid handy should the entrée du jour spontaneously flambé itself. Speaking of which…
• Exercise caution with turkey fryers always used them outdoors at safe distance from buildings and other materials that can burn. Place the fryers on a flat surface, but not on wooden decks or in garages or under eaves or overhangs. To prevent overfilling the fryer, test it out using water before heating the oil.
• Electrical fires are also a hazard this time of year, especially with Christmas lights. Make sure the lights you buy to put outdoors or on the tree are UL (Underwriters' Laboratories) listed. If not, put them back on the shelf.
• Don’t try to plug too many lights into one socket – you don’t want the whole mess to overheat and spark a conflagration.
• If you have a live tree, water it daily to keep it healthy. You know what you call a tree with pretty lights and no water? Firewood.
• Speaking of trees, if you decide to get a live tree, go to a Christmas tree farm and skip the forest. You don’t want to find out the hard way how a squirrel can get when his home is chopped down.

"You’ll Shoot Your Eye Out!"
Anyone who’s seen “A Christmas Story" knows that toy safety is not a new concept. Always consider potential risks such as choke hazards, lead paint and harmful chemicals. Who can forget Dave Barry showing David Letterman how to set a pair of boxers on fire with Rollerblade Barbie?
When you’re doing your holiday shopping, keep the following in mind:
• Go to the Consumer Product Safety Commission site at www.cpsc.gov/ and check the recall site before you go shopping. You’ll feel a lot safer knowing what toys not to buy.
• Use common sense. Certain toys with small parts present a choking hazard and should be avoided by those under the age of five. Supervise older children with these products and make sure the parts don’t end up in the children’s mouths.
• Choose age-appropriate toys. For a three-year-old, a “Tickle Me Elmo” doll would be appropriate; an “Acme P-36 Flame Thrower”, probably not. (Actually, you should probably learn from the numerous mishaps of Wile E. Coyote, and never trust anything from Acme, period.)
• Supervise your children as they play with their new toys. Continue to keep an eye on the Consumer Product Safety Commission recall site just in case one of your child’s gifts does end up on the recall list. If your child’s new toy does end up presenting a hazard, you’ll be well informed.

These guidelines should give you some peace of mind around the holidays.

"Stupid is as Stupid Does"
Alcohol has never been proven to ever make anyone one who consumes it smarter. This hazard never goes away… it just takes a different form with each season. The beers and shots of tequila have been sidelined for the season in favor of hot toddies, mulled wine and eggnog. While there is nothing wrong with enjoying these holiday libations in moderation, it starts to become a problem when certain variables such as automobiles, sharp objects or fire are factored in.
Here are some points to keep your good time from going bad:
• DON’T DRINK AND DRIVE. Cars, motorcycles, snowmobiles — anything if you’ve had even one drink. It’s not worth it.
• Use a designated driver — a buddy who has not had any alcohol at all.
• Have the number for a cab service or your command’s Tippy Taxi service handy just in case your driver slips up and has even one. Cabs are cheaper than a night in jail.
• Never drink if you’re working in the kitchen. Alcohol will make you unsteady with a chef’s knife, which is just plain unsafe. Also, do not try to prepare the flambé dish mentioned earlier if you yourself are lit.

Bottom line: Eat, drink, and be merry — just be smart about it.

"That’s What Christmas Is All About, Charlie Brown"
I don’t want to put a damper on the holiday spirit, because this is the time of year that you should have visions of sugar plums dancing in your head rather than figures of holiday season fatalities. Let me say this, though. Each potential mishap is just as likely to end in tragedy as it is in embarrassment. As ruthless as the Friday Funnies are, their “Not-so-Funnies” section is pretty grim.

Vlahos is assigned to Defense Media Activity - Anacostia, Washington, D.C.
America is a nation of immigrants. Whether they arrived before the Revolutionary War in the Colonial days, at Ellis Island in the 1890s or just yesterday, American immigrants share a special bond—and a unique appreciation for their new country.

Aviation Structural Mechanic 3rd Class Markland Grant, Helicopter Squadron Light (HSL) 44 line shack night supervisor is living his own American dream. “I moved to Orlando, Fla., from Jamaica in 2005, and I would see interviews with military guys on television, and I watched the commercials,” said Grant. “I was always drawn to the military and wanted to become a pilot. I found out that the military trained the best pilots, so I did my research to see which service would be right for me.

“It didn’t take long before Grant would make two things his top priorities—joining the Navy and becoming an American citizen.” I went to the recruiting office, and I told them I wanted to join, but they told me only officers are pilots and [to become an officer I have to be a citizen],” said Grant. “So I knew what I had to do. I joined and immediately started working on my citizenship papers.”

The immediate eligibility for service members to become naturalized citizens is based on Executive Order 13269, signed by President George W. Bush on July 3, 2002. The order authorized expedited citizenship during periods in which the United States is engaged in armed conflict with a hostile foreign force. For example, service members who have served honorably for any period of time beginning on or after Sept. 11, 2001, are eligible to apply for expedited U.S. citizenship.

“Grant’s citizenship ceremony was Sept. 16, 2007. It was awesome. There were more than 1,000 people, and we were all so happy and congratulating each other. What I love about America is that no matter where you are from you can come here and they’ll receive you with open arms.” Grant said the lessons he learned while studying to become an American citizen gave him a greater appreciation for his new country and instilled in him a great sense of pride.

“When you’re studying American history to become a citizen, you realize what America really went through to become this great nation. You understand the reasons why they fought. America didn’t just suddenly become this great nation. People worked for it. They did all this, and now I can come here and live free, so I really appreciate what it means [to be an American].” Working in the HSL-44 line shack, Grant has developed a reputation as a leader with a bright future. “You don’t even have to ask him to do stuff,” said Lt.j.g. Adam Shreders, line shack division officer. “He seeks out tasks and is always looking for the hard jobs. He trains our newer guys. He’s a junior guy himself, but that doesn’t stop him from being a leader. He believes in what we’re doing. He’s really a credit to himself and the Navy. He doesn’t just look to get his qualifications and advance his career, he also spends a lot of time with other junior guys helping them get their qualifications. Even though he’s a junior Sailor, he performs at the level of a first class [petty officer].”

Grant remains focused on his dream of becoming a pilot. He is working toward a commission through the Seaman to Admiral-21 program and is taking college courses. His major is professional aeronautics with a minor in management. “I would love to fly the P-8s, the new upgrade for the P-3s, but I’ll fly whatever the Navy wants me to fly,” said Grant. “That’s my philosophy. Wherever the Navy needs you, that’s where you’re going. You’ve just got to man-up.”

“Grant can do anything he puts his mind to,” said Shreders. “I can’t wait to see what he’s going to accomplish—whether he’s an officer or a chief. That guy is going to be an incredible leader.”

Grant said he is extremely proud to be serving in the Navy, and that sense of pride is evident in the way he carries himself. “He has such a sense of pride about him,” said Shreders. “Just look at his uniforms. Everything’s creased up, crisp, and his boots are always shiny. It’s not like he has an easy job in an office. He’s got a dirty job out there climbing all over planes. He’s the real thing. He looks the part, and he acts the part. There’s a reason he’s our best guy.”

Grant is assigned to Defense Media Activity - Anacostia, Washington, D.C.
How the Rough Rider Revived Army-Navy Rivalry

Story by MC2 Geraldine A. Hawkins

Baseball may be our national pastime, but the Army-Navy game is the sports event in which we love our country and its military traditions is concentrated. Throughout the fleet, even the most "sports-uninterested" individual sits up and takes notice of one of the longest running rivalries in college football.

Every year, seniors from both academies summon all that is in them – mentally, spiritually and physically - for this last game before launching their military careers.

At the first Army-Navy game Nov. 29, 1890, Navy won 24-0. This must have been especially galling to Army, as the game was played at West Point.

At the turn of the century, football was not the same game we know today. In those early years, the public was appalled by the wrecked backs, twisted knees and even fatalities involved; even spectators got into brawls. After Navy's 1893 victory, a dispute between a brigade general and a rear admiral nearly led to a duel.

That was enough for then-President Grover Cleveland, who called a cabinet meeting in February 1894. This resulted in a decree that Army and Navy were prohibited from playing each other.

It took Theodore Roosevelt – the champion of “the strenuous life” – to see in football fundamental life lessons and a laboratory for the development of character. In 1897, as Assistant Secretary of the Navy, Roosevelt wrote to Secretary of War Russell Alger: “I should like very much to revive the football games between Annapolis and West Point. … If the authorities of both institutions agree to take measures … to prevent any manifestation of an improper character.”

The games were resumed in 1899, and they were as brutal as ever. But by 1905 Theodore Roosevelt was president and rather than prohibit the game as Cleveland had done, he characterizedly decided to reform it. He invited leading players and commissioners to a White House conference to set some ground rules for playing the game “on a thoroughly clean basis.”

This led to the establishment of the Intercollegiate Athletic Association of the United States, now known as the NCAA. It was decided that Philadelphia was a neutral spot for the contest, although it must have been especially galling to Army, as the game was played at Municipal Stadium.

At last year's 108th Army-Navy game, held in Baltimore, the midshipmen won their sixth straight Army-Navy game with a score of 18-3.

Some of Roosevelt’s actions were unique to him. In 1901, he was so excited after a Navy touchdown that he ran to the team’s sideline and slapped the players on the backs. In 1905, he walked up and down each sideline, cheering on both teams.

Since then, the game has been canceled five times, 1909, when an Army cadet was killed during a match with Harvard; 1917 and 1918, following orders from the War Department, and 1928 and 1929 when Army and Navy could not agree on eligibility standards for players.

Other commanders-in-chief have attended periodically. Woodrow Wilson came his first year in office (1913) but stayed in his box seat; Calvin Coolidge came in 1926, the only president to have his photograph on the event’s program cover. In 1930, during the Depression, Herbert Hoover requested that the game be played to raise money for the Salvation Army.

The encouragement of the commander-in-chief can be crucial to the success of the team. Harry Truman seemed to be good luck for Army, he attended the game four times, and Army won three games out of four. Eisenhower is the only president to have actually played for Army, but Army lost 6-0 in 1912 when he was a linebacker.

Navy veteran John F. Kennedy was present in 1961 and 1962 and established the tradition of the pre-game coin toss. Just a few days before the 1963 game was scheduled, Kennedy was assassinated.

The players were stunned, and the game was canceled, but the President's widow, remembering how devoted Kennedy was to the team, said that for Army and Navy to play would help the nation and serve as a "fitting tribute" to the President. The game was rescheduled for December 7. Navy won 21-15. It was indeed a fitting tribute. The next year, Municipal Stadium in Philadelphia was renamed John F. Kennedy Stadium.

President George W. Bush set a precedent of his own in 2004 when he visited both teams’ locker rooms before the game and thanked them for choosing careers of service to their country.

Hawkins is assigned to Defense Media Activity - Anacostia, Washington, D.C.
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