CAREERS & PARENTING
BALANCING 2 JOBS
[On the Front Cover]

HM1(TM) Christopher Barraclough comforts his two-year-old son Owen at the Joint Expeditionary Base Little Creek - Fort Story Child Development Center before reporting to work at Portsmouth Naval Hospital as his wife, ACC(AW/SW) Shirley Barraclough watches. The Barracloughs are balancing professional careers with parenting duties in an operational environment.

[Something to Think About]

The Mediterranean: Phoenix Express 2010 Returns to Crete

Just as it was to ancient Greeks, Egyptians and Phoenicians, the security and freedom of maritime sea lanes in the Mediterranean is vital to the 17 different countries that participated in Exercise Phoenix Express 2010, one of the largest annual Mediterranean Sea exercises.

Photo by MC2(SW/AW) Felicito Rustique

Frontier Sentinel: Getting to Know our Northern Neighbors

To combat maritime terrorist threats in North American waterways, the U.S. Navy’s 2nd Fleet, headquartered in Norfolk, the Canadian Maritime Forces Command or the Canadian Navy and other agencies recently participated in Exercise Frontier Sentinel 2010, an exercise that focuses on coastal defense procedures.

Photo by Cpl. Rick Ayer

Balancing Two Jobs – Careers and Parenting

With the traditional family structure shifting from what was previously the norm, and Sailors accepting more non-traditional roles in support of ongoing contingency operations, the importance of ensuring a family’s needs has become increasingly more important throughout the U.S. Armed Forces.

Photo by MC1 Bruce Cummins
Sailors on the bow of USS New Orleans (LPD 18) catch some sea spray as they stow gear away during a replenishment at sea. New Orleans and embarked Navy and Marine Corps units are participating in Southern Partnership Station 2010, an annual deployment of U.S. military training teams to the U.S. Southern Command areas of responsibility.

Photo by MC1 Brien Aho
On-line Tools Ease Career Management

Shipmates,

I may not seem so, but managing your career today has never been easier. Navy Personnel Command (NPC) has a wealth of information and tools available to help you make informed career decisions. With the abundance of online tools, you have greater control of the information that affects your career.

We have the world’s finest Navy manned with the best Sailors. But we can only maintain that position by having the right Sailor in the right job. That’s what the Perform to Serve (PTS) program does – it’s designed to retain highly skilled and motivated Sailors and provides guidance, application information, conversion quotas and opportunities for Sailors in grades from E-1 to E-6.

Recent changes to the PTS policy make it more important than ever for Sailors to understand the PTS process. NAVAD-MIN 126/30 provides a timeline when PTS applications should be submitted – commands can submit applications up to 13 months prior to a Sailor’s or Enlisted active obligated service (ELOS) or project rotation date (PRD). Sailors should consult their career counselor and submit a PTS application NO LATER than 13 months prior to their ELOS/PRD.

If you’re an overmanned rating and have not been approved to stay in rate, look for an undermanned rating into which you can convert. Remember, your ASVAB score determines what rate you qualify for, but you can always retake it to improve your score and become eligible for more ratings. Your career counselor can tell you what ratings you qualify for in Fleet Ride.

For more information on any PTS issues, ask your chief and speak with your career counselor. If the CCC isn’t available, contact the NPC Customer Service Center at 1-866-U-ASK-NPC (827-5672) or visit the knowledge base located through the NPC website at www.npc.navy.mil.

Remember, we’re here to help you navigate a course for a successful career. We all work together toward that one common goal.

ONE TEAM, ONE FIGHT.
Around the Fleet

Prepare Key to Weathering Hurricanes

The annual hurricane season is in full swing, and the Navy recognizes the importance of proper preparedness. With a myriad of hurricane preparations required, the Navy's approach is to ensure all our Sailors receive the same opportunities to complete their required time in rate for Sailors in EGA-GSA categories. The seasonal preparations and the participant’s role in an IA assignment, according to NAVADMIN 215/10.

It's important for us to recognize the performance and contributions of our Sailors who are serving as IA's, said Jim Price, Navy Personnel Command (NPC) performance and advancement eligibility.

Min 215/10.

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San Diego, Norfolk, Naval District Washington, D.C. and 50 independent locations in CONUS. Sailors interested in Respite Care can visit the National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies website at www.naccrra.org/MilitaryPrograms/navy.php for more information or to be put on the waiting list for care.

For more information about EFMP, visit their website at www.nps.navy.mil/CommandSupport/ExceptionalFamilyMember or call the NPC Customer Service Center toll-free at 1-866-827-5672.

Story courtesy of Navy Personnel Command, Millington, Tenn.

Shipmates Looking Out for Shipmates Key To Suicide Prevention

According to the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, more than 33,000 people in the United States commit suicide every year. Suicide is the fourth leading cause of death for adults between the ages of 18 and 65.

According to Capt. Gerald D. Seely, chaplain for Navy Region Southwest, the Navy is trying to get a handle on why Sailors take their own lives and how the amount of suicides can be decreased.

Seely explained that suicide prevention is everyone’s responsibility.

“It’s not just the mental health advisor’s, the chaplain’s or the commanding officer’s job to watch out for Sailors. It’s fellow shipmates looking out for each other,” said Seely. “These are the folks you work with day in and day out. We have to stay engaged and alert. If we can do that, we could get a real handle on this issue.”

“There are many warning signs that may indicate one of your fellow Sailors is at risk for suicide. Change in behavior, personality, irritability and low energy levels could be a red flag,” said Seely.

“Some of the symptoms are a direct result of stressors in someone’s life. Relationships and deployments are big ones,” said Seely. “It’s usually not just one thing, but a combination of stressors piled on top of someone. The more stress, the more at risk a Sailor could be.”

According to Seely, if you know one of your shipmates may be thinking about suicide or is at risk of committing suicide, the response is the acronym ACT.

- "A" Ask. Don’t be afraid to ask the question, “Are you thinking of suicide or of harming yourself?” It is a myth that by asking these questions one gives the person at risk the idea to harm themselves. The reality is that someone who is at risk for suicide has already experienced high levels of stress or may be suffering from depression, and, as a result, may not be able to see and understand all of their options to resolve their problems. So, asking the question does not trigger the idea of suicide. Instead if triggering the idea of suicide, asking a person at risk let’s them know you are concerned and their symptoms are being noticed.

- "C" Care. Let them know you care and want to help. It sometimes takes commitment and courage to show someone you care about them and are willing to get involved. You may be met with resistance but, sometimes we must go through this to get healing. Empathy for another is paramount and firearm education and training is no exception.”

- "T" Treat. Get help. There are many resources such as a chaplain, your chain of command, medical, Fleet and Family Service Centers and hospitals. According to Seely, Sailors need to get away from the stigma that if they are depressed or have other mental health issues, they will get in trouble.

“The military has become better at treating mental health issues,” said Seely. “There is nothing wrong with going to talk to a trained professional at one of the many facilities the military offers. There is a lot of help out there.”

For more information about suicide prevention, visit www.nps.navy.mil/CommandSupport/SuicidePrevention.

Firearm Policy Update Aims to Reduce Accidental Discharges

The Navy recently updated the personal firearms policy, effectively consolidating the regulation for storing firearms on base to combat the increase in accidental discharges and injuries related to firearms. The NAVADMIN, updates Chief of Naval Operations Instruction 5530.14E, the Navy Physical Security and Law Enforcement Program. It provides guidance for the possession of personal weapons aboard Navy installations whether in Navy housing areas or base armories and state’s installations. Commanding officers are responsible for control and accountability of personal firearms aboard Navy installations.

“Firearm safety should be paramount and firearm education and training should be increased,” said Hull Maintenance Technician 1st Class Jarod Gumbelton, of the Southwest Regional Firearm Program Center, master-at-arms department. “I have more than 10 years of experience teaching firearms safety during my military service, and I believe this policy will help reduce accidental discharges… and help to protect family members and minors.”

Navy officials reported 28 acts of Sailor misconduct or suicide involving firearms occurred on board Navy installations in FY08, while
Dwight D. Eisenhower Super Hornet from Strike Fighter Squadron 143 aboard USS Kitty Hawk (CVN 69).

Above from left—Lt. Cmdr. Dorey Harlan, a pediatrician assigned to the Military Sealift Command; Navy College counselor and liaison to the installation’s education support office; HM2 Charity Sibal, a lab technician assigned to Navy Environmental and Preventive Medicine Unit 6 Entomology Division, Pearl Harbor; and AHM2 Oluyinka Adefisan, the Vice Chief of Naval Operations Sailor of the Year, examine a praying mantis at the Damril Clinic in Kampong Cham, Cambodia.

ASE2 Stephen Bessette installs a wire harness on a replacement canopy for an F/A-18E Super Hornet from Strike Fighter Squadron 74 aboard USS Dwight D. Eisenhower (CVN 69).

Another 111 incidents occurred off base, resulting in 26 deaths.

The policy now states Sailors may store personal firearms in certain locations aboard Navy installations under controlled circumstances and with prior written approval of the installation’s commanding officer.

“I think the key things Sailors need to know are they must have prior approval to transport or store personal firearms on an installation, and can obtain the forms used and the processes and rules for bringing a personally-owned firearms onto the installation by contacting the installation security office,” said Dave Lee, a public affairs specialist at Commander Navy Installations Command.

The revised policy instructs Sailors who own firearms to take their responsibilities seriously and comply with all regulations. Navy officials say violators of these regulations may be subject to administrative or disciplinary action under the Uniform Code of Military Justice.

Navy personnel must also comply with federal, state and local laws and regulations, as well as applicable Status of Forces Agreements and host nation laws when overseas concerning firearm ownership, possession, registration, transportation and use.

The revision, outlined in NAVADMIN 196/10, is expected to be in effect after installations review and revise their current operating procedures, according to Commander Navy Installations Command.

DANTES Modifies VOLED Testing Rules

To ensure that service members adequately prepare for college credit examinations, the Defense Activity for Non-Traditional Education Support (DANTES) will only provide funding for initial testing for exams taken after May 20, 2010. If a retest is required, it will be at the expense of the service member.

The mission of DANTES is to support the off-duty, voluntary education programs of DoD and conduct special projects and development activities in support of education related functions of the DoD. DANTES programs include providing various examinations, such as high school equivalency, college admissions and college credit, and an extensive number of certification and licensing exams. Funding for retesting had previously been provided by DANTES.

Effective immediately, DANTES will only fund a service member’s initial examination fee for each College Level Entrance Program (CLEP) exam, DANTES Subject Standardized Tests (DSST) and Excelsior College Examinations (ECE). Retests will continue to be funded through DANTES for service members who took a test prior to May 20 and take the retest before Dec. 11, 2010.

“The initial pass rates for military on CLEP, DSST and ECE exams are lower than the statistical average and more than half of those who try the same exam again, don’t do much better,” said Dr. Carol Berry, DANTES director. “With funded retesting, service members may have taken exams with little or no preparation. With the prospect of having to pay for a retest, we anticipate more studying before the tests, and better scores.”

“The new retesting rules will not only save the Navy money, but will save the service members quite a bit of time,” said Ann Hunter, voluntary education chief for the Chief of Naval Personnel. “If you fail a CLEP, DSST or ECE exam, you have to wait 180 calendar days to retake the exam. Ensuring that you’re ready for the test and can qualify for college credits immediately after taking the exam gives a service member a head start on their voluntary education goals.”

“Service members need to remember that these exams equate to a final course exam and should be treated as such,” added Hunter. “Navy College counselors will be advising Sailors who desire to take a CLEP, DSST, ECE exam to prepare first. Group study and preparation sessions will be particularly helpful before attempting the exams.

Free exam study sheets are available at the Navy Knowledge Online (NKO) Web site under the learning tab, or on the DANTES website.

“This policy goes hand-in-glove with our latest tuition assistance management control that requires new-accession Sailors to be at their first permanent duty station one year before using Tuition Assistance (TA),” continued Hunter. “Although DANTES-funded exams are not under the same one-year restriction as TA, Sailors can use this time to prepare for the DANTES-funded exams.”

For more information about DANTES, visit www.dantes.doded.mil.

Story by Ed Barker, Naval Education and Training Command, Pensacola, Fla.

To be considered for the “Around the Fleet” section, forward your high resolution images with full credit and outline information, including full name, rank and duty station to navyvisualnews@navy.mil.

Mail your submissions to: Navy Visual News Service 2200 Navy Pentagon, Rm. 8B54 Washington, D.C. 22350-8000

Click on the Navy’s home page, www.navy.mil, for fresh images of your shipmates in action.
Somewhere off the coast of Greece, a Sailor stands watch aboard a warship and notices an unidentified vessel travelling toward the ship. The Sailor, calling on training received throughout years at sea, sounds the alert, all the while observing the vessel and preparing for what could be an adversarial encounter—anything from a ship from a rival empire or a vessel smuggling weapons.
Tunisian Maritime Interdiction Operation (MIO) team lead officer.

**This scenario has played in the waters of the Mediterranean Sea for more than 3,000 years.** The cradle of ancient maritime trade, the Mediterranean has served as the crossroads of the European, African and Middle Eastern civilizations. Some of the first sail designs are depicted in Egyptian drawings from 1,250 B.C., while along the coast of modern day Lebanon, Syria and northern Israel, Phoenicians developed an enterprising maritime trading culture that spread across the Mediterranean during the first millennium. Just as it was to the ancient Greeks, Egyptians and Phoenicians, the security and freedom of maritime sea lanes in the Mediterranean is vital to the 17 different countries that participated in Exercise Phoenix Express 2010 (PE 10), one of the largest annual Mediterranean Sea exercises.

Involving sailors and soldiers from Africa, Europe and the United States, the annual two-week multinational exercise and multicontinental partnership coordinates the efforts of numerous military interdiction operations (MIO) teams in maintaining maritime safety while enhancing maritime regional partnerships.

"Phoenix Express is important to Naval Forces Europe, Naval Forces Africa and 6th Fleet (COMNAVEMEUROPE/NMIOTC)," said Rear Adm. Gerard Hueber, U.S. Naval Forces Europe-Africa, deputy chief for strategy, resources and plans. "It helps us work on our interoperability and develop the capability of our European and African partners as we approach maritime security in the Mediterranean together," said Rear Adm. Gerard Hueber, U.S. Naval Forces Europe-Africa, deputy chief for strategy, resources and plans. "We focus on illicit trafficking whether it’s personnel, arms and any other type of activity."

Now in its fifth iteration, PE 10 has historically provided a training mechanism designed to serve as a long-term effort to improve regional cooperation and maritime security; to increase interoperability between participating countries; and to promote friendship and mutual understanding, something exercise participants said has been successful and is evidenced through the increasing number of participants from area countries.

"Five years ago, there were six nations participating in this exercise," said Capt. Martin Beck, commander, Naval Expeditionary Task Force Europe and Africa and Commander, Task Force 68. "The exercise has grown to 17 nations. They have 11 ships participating in the exercise this year. It shows tremendous growth, participation, interoperability and mutual exchange."

Participants in PE 10 included representatives from Algeria, Croatia, Greece, Italy, Malta, Morocco, Portugal, Senegal, Spain, Tunisia, Turkey and the United States, with other nations sending observers to various events.

"We’ve had observers from Kenya and Nigeria aboard the ship," said Lt. William Philips, an assessment analyst, COMNAVEMEUROPE/ CNE/CNA-C6F. "They have an important function as a continuous span for intelligence gathering, MIO planning, boarding team psychology, suspect vessel crew psychology and crew control, medical training, boat handling and fast rope, all of which proved valuable to participating service members.

"I think what [starts] here at this training facility in Souda Bay at the NATO Maritime Interdiction Operations Training Center (NMIOTC) in Souda Bay, Crete, where participants built their education in two phases, the first of which was the pre-sail or port phase series of events which occurred at the NATO Maritime Interdiction Operations Training Center (NMIOTC) in Souda Bay. Courses at the NMIOTC included inspection detection techniques, intelligence gathering, MIO planning, boarding team psychology, suspect vessel crew psychology and crew control, medical training, boat handling and fast rope, all of which proved valuable to participating service members."

"What we have here at this training facility in Souda Bay at the NATO Maritime Interdiction Operations Training Center is a process for at sea where we’re able to develop our boarding skills and our maritime interdiction operations as we approach this maritime security collectively," Hueber said.

Participants said the pre-sail series of events significantly enhanced their ability to perform their missions.

"My guys have learned many things about boarding, how to come alongside the ship, how to board a ship, how to inspect a ship, how to take a suspect, how to look for something and to suspect many things," said Lt. j.g. Youssoubh Ly, a Senegal Navy liaison.

Although PE 10 officially began May 10, some teams from North Africa had pre-exercise training April 19 – May 7 in Rota, Spain, with Maritime from Fleet Anti-terrorism Security Team (FAST) Company Europe. This pre-training focused on tactics, techniques and procedures for military interdiction operations (MIO) teams, and covered live fire, helicopter rope suspension techniques, close quarters battle and Marine Corps Martial Arts Program classes.

The main portion of the exercise took place in Greece, around Souda Bay, Crete, where participants built their education in two phases, the first of which was the pre-sail or port phase series of events which occurred at the NATO Maritime Interdiction Operations Training Center (NMIOTC) in Souda Bay. Courses at the NMIOTC included inspection detection techniques, intelligence gathering, MIO planning, boarding team psychology, suspect vessel crew psychology and crew control, medical training, boat handling and fast rope, all of which proved valuable to participating service members.

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The training scenarios during the PE 10 pre-pair events provided participants a springboard into the next phase of the exercise, something Armed Forces of Malta Capt. Edric Zahra said is crucial. “This is my third year being here, and it is a really good exercise,” he said. “First of all, they go through the basics and they prepare you for operations at sea.”

Once the first phase was completed, exercise participants boarded ships, setting sail in the Mediterranean in an effort to hit the skills learned, with several MIO teams participating aboard other country’s vessels. Gunston Hall hosted Moroccan, Senegalese, and Tunisian service members, and while several exercise participants remained involved in the tactical aspect of the exercise, others had departed earlier to establish the communications center in the combined maritime operations and coordination center (CMOCC) in Kenitra, Morocco, from where the scenario was coordinated and monitored.

Underway events were focused on increased maritime safety and security through maritime domain awareness (MDA) and the automatic identification system (AIS) including interaction between forces afloat and the CMOCC ashore. Other training included conducting integrated maritime patrol aircraft (MPA) operations and practice surface exercises and maneuvers to include search and rescue (SAR) and replenishment-at-sea (RAS).

Combined maritime forces conducted training scenarios in force protection and MIO to include VBSS and replenishment operations. During this phase of the exercise, USNS Laramie (T-AK 200), a container ship, and USNS Lassen (T-AO 203), a replenishment oiler, played a crucial role as target vessels.

“We consider it part of our job to support the Navy with their training,” said Capt. John Mattfeld, commanding officer of USS Gunston Hall. “We try and provide realistic experience for the participants to train in a role that they’re going to deal with in a real life situation. Because for the most part the training platforms are not really similar to a commercial vessel as we much as the Bay Watch is similar to a commercial vessel.”

To offset the bigger ships and round out MIO teams experience, Landing Craft Utility 1660 provided a smaller platform for search and seizure training, something exercise participants said was important.

“I think this kind of exercise is a real opportunity of training because we don’t have too many ships of training,” said 2nd Lt. Doris Fonseca, a Portuguese Navy VBSS boarding officer. “In this situation we can train with many different cultures and many types of situations so I think this is really good opportunity of training.”

While U.S. Navy assets provided the training areas for several of the exercise scenarios, other nation’s provided both leadership and tactical guidance. The surface action groups (SAG) working with CMOCC were Moroccan and Turkish, with both countries leading the underway portion of PE 10 and dividing participating vessels into two groups. SAG A Command was led by Turkey and the SAG B Commander was from Morocco. Having various leaders also strengthens partnerships, according to Gunston Hall’s commanding officer.

“I am happy to see that we are allowing the Moroccan CO to be the leader of the SAG instead of the United States always taking a role because it’s important that the issues we are dealing with like piracy, drug trafficking and trafficking human persons that’s really a global issue and the United States can’t be everywhere at once,” said Cmdr. Fred Wilhelm. “So the more nations that form in the coalition and take a real role in this, the easier it’s going to be to knock down the issues that we are facing out in maritime domain.”

Although not leading their SAG, Gunston Hall contributed in other ways. Their crew was responsible for supporting visiting MIO teams by providing crew members to manage 11-meter rigid hulled inflatable boats and to get the teams to their target vessel. This portion of the partnership was seen as an eye-opening experience for many of the young Sailors.

“It was an experience. It was neat watching other countries board and see how they do what they do,” said Seaman Katherine Spoonmore of 2nd Division, deck department aboard Gunston Hall. “It’s important in that it shows everyone is concerned with maritime security and different countries can come together to react.”

Although it was only hosting a portion of the MIO teams, USNS Laramie was seen as an eye-opening experience for many of the young Sailors.

“The training scenarios during the PE 10 mission was seen as an eye-opening experience for many of the young Sailors. "It’s important in that it shows everyone is concerned with maritime security and different countries can come together to react."

While deck department was assisting in one way, the medical department took time to work with the 6th Fleet medical team to do some partnership training, too. They worked together with doctors, nurses and medics from various countries who trained daily on different medical procedures. Training topics ranged from very basic first aid to other technical topics like implementing a combination airway device.

“The training opportunity is one of the most intensive trainings I’ve participated in,” said Lt. Megan Brelsford, Gunston Hall’s senior medical officer. “I love to teach and learn how they do things differently; medicine is my passion.”

This was the first time a host ship medical team had a chance to get involved with PE 10. However, the medical training wasn’t only for the doctors
Spanish Navy Marines MIO team members verify ship documents on board USNS LCPL Roy M. Wheat.

and nurses. Medical casualties were made part of the MIO trainings as they were doing VBSSs. Teams were judged on how they handled situations like a heavy bleeding, shock, head wounds and fractures to name a few. During a VBSS, the Portuguese were given the scenario that one of their team members was hurt and had fractured his leg.

“They adhered to the scenario all the way back to their ship where they actually put that member in sick call,” said Chief Hospital Corpsman (SCW) Terry Garrett, senior enlisted medical planner for PE 10. “They took their medical training very seriously.”

On the final day of underway training, Gunston Hall had a mass casualty drill which peaked interest of all visitors. The training evolution started with a mock helicopter accident and nine injured people with various kinds of wounds, some very serious. Stretcher-bearers were brought out to the scene to move two people. Crew members impressed the visitors by handling so many aspects at one time.

“Although they were well-trained, [visiting medical personnel] may have not been familiar with how it’s done on a U.S. ship,” said HM2 (SW) Mercedes Sawin of the medical department. “I think it was a good experience for them to see how the whole ship gets involved for a mass casualty, to see how much is involved from other departments.”

Another corpsman spent the drill translating information to many of the medical visitors in French.

“Their response was great in the training center, but they did not understand the whole story, so having this was great,” said SGR1 Davey Leppry.

PE 10 participants not only trained hard and accomplished a lot but also were able to take a day off for a little friendly competition in between the two phases of the exercise. PE 10 was invited to compete in games of soccer and basketball. This provided a backdrop for everyone to mingle and get to know each other. Lots of patriotic spirit could be found during games while supporters waved their own country’s flags. Each country was invited to bring a cultural dish for a potluck style picnic after the games. Foods like paella, grilled chicken, beef, rice, fruit drinks and hamburgers and hot dogs were some of the popular fare.

Many enjoyed the sports day event because it gave everyone an opportunity to make friends and be around more than one group of people. Sailors enjoyed tasting the different foods.

“We were talking with the Greek team that we played earlier today; they’re a bunch of cool guys. And we talked to a couple of Portuguese; they’re pretty cool too,” said Quartermaster Seaman Joseph Johnson, a soccer participant from Gunston Hall.

“Hard work and hard play at PE 10 helped to create new friendships and seal partnerships, which is important for the future. Some of the visiting medics were getting addresses from the hospital corpsman so they could keep in touch and continue discussing medical issues.

“The other thing is you make friends,” said Zahra. “So whenever you are out there on an operation, maybe a friend of yours is doing something similar, and he can give you support so it’s not only the training but the friendship with the people — that really, really helps.”

F Hueber echoed Zahra’s thoughts. “I think PE is a great opportunity where we bring together our African and European partners for a collective bond and a collective goal of maritime security in the Mediterranean.”

So the scenario that can easily become a situation could end like this thanks to opportunities presented at PE 10.

While you wait on heightened alert, the captain prepares to make his move. A few minutes go by as he communicates with a Greek captain on the bridge-to-bridge radio. Their team has boarded the ship and has cleared the unidentified boat. You notice the boat is changing its course.

No hero-making today, but there is a friendly reminder of regional cooperation, maritime security training and the value of partnerships.  

**Spanish Navy Marines MIO team participate in a medical boarding incident scenario.**
EN1(SW/EXW) Juan Gonzalez, an instructor at the Center for Naval Engineering, plays with two-year-old Nathan Wheeler, the son of friend EN1(SW) Cheryl Wheeler, before she leaves for USS Bulkeley (DDG 84) for the day.

Whether aboard a ship destined for waters unknown, on a regularly scheduled deployment or on an individual augmentee assignment supporting the U.S. Army, Air Force or Marines Corps in overseas contingency efforts around the world, one of the most difficult aspects of their job isn’t the hours of bridge watch or manning a .50 caliber machine gun mounted on a Humvee.

Story and photos by MC1(SW) Bruce Cummins
The battle they fight is seen only through photos or trinkets affixed inside a rack or locker aboard ship, a randomly scribbled crayon drawing folded up and carried in a wallet or inside a body armor vest.

With an unparalleled operational schedule that could see service members engaged in training evolutions, maritime security operations or serving in non-traditional roles in areas thousands of miles from where they call home, U.S. Navy Sailors have to make decisions in the event you'll know anything could happen.

That's my little boy, my best friend.” Wheeler said. “My son is the most important thing for me, I miss him all day, talk about him all day – I know he's taken care of because I've taken the proper steps to ensure he's covered.”

Wheeler said it is absolutely crucial to thoroughly read and understand the family care plan (DoD Instruction 1342.19). The instruction and guidelines represent an effort to standardize family care requirements through identifying three basic guidelines – short-term care providers, long-term care providers and care provision details.

While each of these items in the family care plan are designed to ensure family members receive the care they require, said the program also serves to assist service members in recognizing potential gaps or problem areas in their plan and fixing them.

Single parents and dual-military couples with children are required to designate a non-military person, who will agree in writing, to accept care of the service member's child at any time in the event the service member is called to duty or deployed with no-notice. The regulation further states that the individual who accepts this responsibility cannot be another service member, but the person can be a military spouse and must reside in an area near where the service member is stationed. The short-term care provider must sign the family care plan.

In addition to the short-term care provider, single parents and military couples with children must also identify a long-term care provider, a non-military person, who agrees to provide long-term care for their children in the event the service member is deployed for a significant period, or in the event they are selected for an unaccompanied overseas tour or assigned to a ship at sea.

The long-term care provider does not have to live in the local area, but the family care plan must contain provisions to transfer the child from the short-term care provider to the long-term care provider in the event a no-notice deployment turns into a long-term deployment. The long-term care provider must sign the family care plan.

Master-at-Arms 1st Class (SW/AW) Esslin Joiner, a fellow Sailor aboard Bulkeley, agreed with Wheeler’s appraisal of the significance of the family care plan. Raising two daughters aged 9 and 14, Joiner, a 13-year Navy veteran, stressed the importance of the plan and how it has affected her.

“The family care plan is the most important thing,” she said. “It kind of pushes you to make sure you have all the things you’ll need in place. It really details what you’re going to need as far as being deployable.”

But despite ensuring her 2-year-old son, Nathan, is cared for during her upcoming deployment aboard Bulkeley, Wheeler, along with Joiner and countless other Sailors, confronts another issue facing parents on active duty, something for which all the preparation in the world cannot prepare those leaving what they know as home.

“I have my family care plan in place, so I am ready,” said Wheeler. “All the pieces I need are in place, so the only struggle I’ll have is the emotional battle of leaving Nathan. That’s my little boy, my best friend.”

This is an emotional battle faced by mariners since the age of sail. But according to Kathy Korth, Family Readiness Program Manager, situations such as this, while necessary are combated by a variety of courses and classes offered through the Fleet and Family Support Center.

“We cover everything from parenting and finances to managing stress and anger,” Korth said. “We meet with Sailors and family members individually, in the classroom, even over the phone or Internet if they live too far from the base to come in. We’re flexible to their needs, and its all free. Fleet and Family Support Centers strive every day at preparing spouses and family members to meet the unique challenges of military life.”

Despite the courses and preparation service members can take, the variety of counseling services available to ease the transition for both parents and children, a deployment still represents a significant change.
after a shift aboard USS Oak Hill (LSD 51).

24	 A L L 	 H A N D S 	 | 	 A U G U S T 	 2 0 1 0 w w w . n a v y . m i l

Rock, Ark., native. “We were on deployment I knew what to expect,” said Johnson a Little old son, Jordan Jr., while he is deployed aboard our best to keep in touch, send-

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Schedules are the most difficult thing,” said Danielle. “It’s hard to balance, you’re able to work through the family issues, you’ll perform better at work because you won’t have that extra stress.”

Child Care

AC2 Robin Betts leaves her two-year-old daughter, Ciani, with Naval Station Norfolk Child and Youth Program 24/7 Child Development Group Home Education Technician Dally Hicks before going to work at Naval Station Oceana Air Det. Norfolk.

something Electrician’s Mate 3rd Class Jordan Johnson said he accepts by finding ways to keep in touch with his wife and nearly 2-year-old son, Jordan Jr., while he is deployed aboard USS Oak Hill (LSD 5). “Going underway, going on deployment, is the hardest thing, but I signed up for it, and I knew what to expect,” said Johnson a Little Rock, Ark., native. “We were on deployment last year and we were trying to stand up and begin to walk, and I missed all of that. We did our best to keep in touch, send-

that children frequenting the CDC can easily find comforting.

“I bought a camcorder to take videos for my wife to show him while I’m gone, so he’ll have something to look at while I’m underway,” he said. “We’ll send e-mails and photos, and when in port we’ll use whatever technology possible to keep in touch.”

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While the U.S. Navy’s role defending national interests and conducting operations to foster stability and security abroad is well known, the role it plays in defending the nation’s coast line is perhaps less publicized but just as crucial.
In recent years, terrorism has moved to the forefront of the American conscience due to attacks on North American interests, infrastructure and ideologies. To combat this situation, numerous agencies are partnering to ensure borders and airports are protected.

To combat a maritime terrorist threat, the U.S. Navy’s 2nd Fleet (C2F), headquartered in Norfolk, the Canadian Maritime Forces Command, or the Canadian Navy, and other agencies annually participate in Exercise Frontier Sentinel 2010 (FS2010) that focuses on coastal defense procedures in North American waters.

According to Vice Adm. Mel Williams Jr., Commander U.S. 2nd Fleet senior representative for FS2010, the cooperative efforts of more than 2,500 U.S. Sailors, U.S. Coast Guardsmen, Canadian forces and other U.S. organizations showcased how the U.S. Navy can jointly function with other entities to protect shipping lanes and harbor security efforts against waterborne threats.

“Frontier Sentinel is a series of exercise tests that validate the ability of U.S. forces, Canadian forces and civilian agencies to jointly respond to mutual maritime threats to North America,” said Williams. “We have plans and procedures in place with Frontier Sentinel, to test joint operational planning and execution for North American security. As a result, we strengthen our ability as allies for continental defense.”

FS2010 was staged off the coast of Virginia to evaluate existing plans for a bilateral response to maritime homeland defense and security threats to North American maritime security.

The seventh iteration of the C2F/Joint Task Force Atlantic Area-sponsored exercise used numerous U.S. Navy mine-hunting and amphibious assets, Explosive Ordnance Disposal Mobile Unit (EODMU) 1 Sailors, the Navy’s rapidly deployable Marine Mammal Company and several elements of the Maritime Command Element of the Canadian Navy. Scenarios included identifying potential ships of interest, visit board search and seizure (VBSS) and numerous mine-hunting and mine-countermeasure efforts, from identification to simulated detonation of underwater explosives marking the entrance to the Chesapeake Bay.

Cmdr. David Givens, a C2F operations plans and policy planner, said the joint exercise was developed as a result of the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. Previous joint ventures designed to combat aerial terrorist threats existed with Canadian elements, but FS2010 specifically addresses maritime security of coastal areas, said Givens.

“These are live events and actions in which we can increase our continental defense posture,” Givens noted. “Frontier Sentinel allows us to look at our existing plans and improve our cross-border relationship for homeland defense and homeland security. This allows us to work with other agencies and the Coast Guard for a more complete defense. Part of this exercise is to see how we can create better (operability) between our inter-agency partners, our local law enforcement agencies, customs and border patrol and strengthen our partnership with Canada by integrating a more combined defense plan.”

FS2010 focuses on leveraging the unique capabilities and strengths of combined forces as it refines the ways they can operate together in response of crises of mutual interest.

“This is an incredibly complex exercise drawing on the expertise of more than a dozen American and Canadian agencies, joint assets and an integrated command team,” said Cmdr. Rob Green, Coastal/Mine Warfare Operational Test and Evaluation officer at the Canadian Forces Maritime Warfare Centre in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada.

“Widespread terrorism is a global problem, and we are always finding new ways to respond to it,” Green added. “This exercise is one of those things where we can work together to develop better ways to respond.”

FS2010 is a series of events that will run for two weeks, with the final live event expected to take place Aug. 23-25 in Halifax, Canada.

The Canadian Maritime Forces Command’s coastal defense vessels HMCS Glace Bay (MM 701) and HMCS Goose Bay (MM 707) were instrumental in partnering with U.S. Navy
amphibious assets in numerous mine-hunting and mine-countermeasure efforts.

The two multipurpose vessels’ capabilities include coastal surveillance, sovereignty patrols, route survey and training, but during FS2010 they were used to search for possible explosive devices.

The unique attributes of the Canadian ships significantly enhanced mission effectiveness because Glace Bay carried a route survey payload that allowed significant ocean mapping and identification of potential mines, while Goose Bay transported a six-man combat dive team that could dispose of any mines located.

According to Green, the importance of the exercise could not be understated, citing that shared borders and coastlines between Canada and the United States are a direct reflection of the military and economic partnership the two countries enjoy.

“We’re hand-in-hand in this together,” said Green. “This is a very important scenario. Approximately 90 percent of all Canadian and U.S. trade across the world comes by ocean. Any threat to shutting down our ports is very serious, and we train to counter that.”

The interoperability included the use of unmanned underwater vehicles (UUVs) during the largest maritime homeland defense exercises, with a handful of technical experts using the devices to ensure exercise success.

One of the UUV organizations that participated in FS2010 was EODMU 1’s UUV platoon from San Diego. They tracked, identified and collected information about underwater objects of interest posing a simulated threat to vessels transiting the Chesapeake Bay.

“The UUV system is a vehicle we program to run a certain mission,” said Chief Aerographer’s Mate (AW/EXW) David Elliott, EODMU 1 UUV leading chief petty officer. “The [sonar] UUV goes down and completes the mission using side scan to help locate objects as small as a basketball. This can help in mine location and salvage, something critical in an effort like this exercise.”

The joint perspective FS2010 was crucial in allowing the EODMU 1 UUV platoon to accomplish their tasking.

“We wouldn’t be able to do what we’re doing without the Coast Guard being here running pickets for the very busy channel, and the Canadian ships also locating underwater objects of interest,” said Elliott. “It’s one big collaboration – we’re working together getting lessons learned so that if a real-world maritime homeland defense situation arises we would be able to draw not only on our assets, but we can rely on our allies to get the job done and bring everyone back safely.”

The Naval Oceanography Mine Warfare Center’s (NOMWC) UUV Platoon from the John C. Stennis Space Center, Miss., was tasked with sending the platoon’s UUVs into the areas of Little Creek and Thimble Shoals to locate underwater objects of interest, relay and verify that information to other minehunting entities.

AG2 Jason Fisher, an NOMWC UUV Platoon UUV operator, said the vehicles represent a shift in the way mine warfare is waged.

“These are cutting-edge technology,” said Fisher. “I feel these vehicles represent the future of the Navy’s mine countermeasure force. A fleet of UUVs could clear the way for amphibious beach assaults, SEAL teams and EOD. Our motto is ‘taking the man out of the minefield,’ and when I look at a UUV, I imagine the lives we will be able to save.”

EODMU 1 Marine Mammal program relied on nearly 30 years of research that proved vital to FS2010.

“This is the only program of its kind in the Navy – we use the only organic asset in the world that can hunt mines and take them down,” said Chief Navy Diver (DSW/EXW) Brandon Ghan, the leading chief petty officer for EODMU 1 Marine Mammal company. “We’re using bottlenose dolphins for mine hunting operations, and our role in Frontier Sentinel is to hunt and find (simulated) mines in the harbor, to clear a path for ships to exit the Chesapeake Bay.”

Ghan said the reason behind the program’s involvement in FS2010 stems from the very real concept of a waterborne threat in a heavily trafficked harbor, something mitigated by the unique capabilities brought to the table by the animals with the Navy-Marine Mammal Program.

“Homeland defense has become more prevalent in what we do,” said Ghan. “The threat of having one of our own harbors mined has become a real threat, and these mammals are perfect assets for this.”

While the threat is very real, FS2010 ensures that the expertise and resolve of those working to protect the waters and harbors of North America remains unrivaled. 

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Something to Think About

What Are Your Numbers?

What’s your number? No, not your phone number. It’s the numbers that show how hard your heart is working and how healthy you are — blood pressure, heart rate, cholesterol — those numbers.

Let’s face it, your body is a machine — if it were a car, your heart would be the engine that keeps it running, and if you don’t take care of your car, it will eventually break down and stop running. The same is true of your heart, but if it breaks down and stops running for good … you’re dead.

Blood Pressure 101

Anyone who’s had their blood pressure taken is probably scratching their head over what those numbers mean. 112/75? What the heck does that mean? Let’s break it down.

The diastolic number is the lower number — or minimum pressure — on your blood pressure reading, which measures arterial pressure between heartbeats.

Now that we’ve covered that, here are the numbers to aim for and the ones to avoid, according to the Mayo Clinic.

Normal: Below 120 systolic and 80 diastolic, but doctors recom-

mend keeping it below 115/75.

Pre-hypertension: 120 to 139 systolic, 80–89 diastolic. This condi-
tion tends to get worse over time, within four years of being diagnosed

as pre-hypertensive, roughly one-third of adults aged 35 to 64 and roughly half of adults aged 65 or older develop high blood pressure.

Stage 1 hypertension: 140 to 159 systolic, 90 to 99 diastolic.

Stage 2 hypertension: 160 or higher systolic, 100 or higher diastolic.

The more pressure put on the arteries, the higher the blood pressure, which can represent a higher likelihood for serious health problems. High blood pressure can put individuals — including those 20-year-old Sailors who think they’re invincible — at risk for artery damage, heart failure, aneurysms, stroke, organ damage and vision loss.

Know Your Cholesterol

Hypercholesterolemia would be a killer in a game of Scrabble, so let’s just stick with “high blood cholesterol.”

Every cell in the body contains cholesterol, which the body uses to build healthy ones and vital hormones. Cholesterol is important in the formation of sex hormones, vitamin D and the sex hormones.

But, too much cholesterol can be a bad thing. There are three types of cholesterol in the blood, and knowing what they are and what they do is important. Keep in mind, just shows up on nutrition labels as “cholesterol” without differentiation.

Low-density lipoprotein (LDL) is commonly known as “bad” cho-

lesterol. LDL transports cholesterol particles throughout the body, leav-
ing it on the walls of the arteries. Think of LDL as a garbage truck with trash flying out the back as it rolls down the road, because that’s exactly what it does to arteries.

Very-low-density lipoproteins (VLDL) or “really bad” cholesterol, act as “litterbugs,” so to speak. VLDL makes LDL cholesterol particles larger, causing the blood vessels to narrow. Avoid saturated fats and cut out trans fats to lower your LDL and VLDL levels.

High-density lipoproteins (HDL) are commonly known as “good” cholesterol. HDL cholesterol picks up excess cholesterol from the arter-

ies and returns it to the liver for metabolism. Think of HDL cholesterol as the arterial janitorial staff. The higher the number, the better for you.

High blood cholesterol can cause myriad problems for the body including heart attacks, coronary artery disease and blood clots. part of the brain stops, a stroke could occur.

Either way, the prospects are not good.

Get to the Heart of the Matter

Heart rate is another word for pulse, and it’s pretty simple to explain. Taking the pulse for 15 seconds and multiplying that number by four will give you an approximate heart rate.

A low resting heart rate means the heart doesn’t have to work hard to pump blood through the arteries. But, a high resting heart rate, can in-

dicate the heart may be working harder than it should. Your doctor can tell you what a healthy range is, but it varies between men and women.

Don’t Let Your Number Be Up

Some causes and risk factors of high blood cholesterol and hyperten-
sion are beyond individual control. Age, race, and family history aren’t something you can change on a whim.

But an overweight, sedentary smoker who subsists on potato chips and beer on a regular basis may be tempting fate.

And feeling like you’re consistently in a pressure cooker in a pressure cooker doesn’t help — too much stress is bad for your heart.

Here are some measures medical professionals often recommend to keep your numbers manageable:

Save the hot dogs for the World Series. Eat a variety of lean meats, whole grains and heart-healthy fats, such as olive oil and canola oil. Load up on fruits and vegetables as well.

Eliminate trans fats. Trans fats can raise LDL, and you want to lower HDL cholesterol — wherever possible. Read food labels and watch what you eat when dining out.

Put down the salt shaker. Excess sodium is a key culprit in hyper-
tension, and since you aren’t a deer, your food doesn’t need to taste like silt lick.

Get off the recliner and move! Exercise can be one of the best tools to regulate cholesterol levels and blood pressure, as well as keep weight under control. Losing even five to 10 pounds can do wonders in reducing overall cholesterol levels. Medical professionals recommend 30 minutes of cardiovascular exercise three times a week. And don’t forget the strength training, either.

Put the smoking lamp out for good. Tobacco injures the walls of blood vessels and speeds up hardening of the arteries. For those who use tobacco, the Navy has numerous resources when it comes to tobacco cessation, so take advantage of them! For those who don’t use tobacco, don’t start. Your heart and lungs will thank you.

Chill out, man! Practice techniques such as deep breathing, muscle relaxation and meditation to help you relax. Also, get plenty of sleep — it works wonders with stress management.

Treatment. For the causes beyond individual control, medical pro-

fessionals can prescribe medications to help regulate blood pressure and cholesterol levels. That said, it’s the individual’s responsibility to take an active part in his or her own care — medication can’t do it alone.

Managing numbers isn’t just for accountants — blood pressure and cholesterol levels are the numbers on which people should concentrate to improve the quality of life.

Vlahos is assigned to Defense Media Activity – Anacostia, Washington, D.C.
The contribution of the DoN civilian workforce as pillars of continuity and organizational memory is increasingly expanding beyond the traditional man, train and equip roles to the operational arena.

As the nation’s military forces pull together to support war-time missions in Iraq and Afghanistan, hundreds of Navy civilians have also volunteered to fill global expeditionary augmentation requirements.

To lead this effort, the DoD Civilian Expeditionary Workforce (CEW) was created in January 2009 to provide a deployable work force trained and equipped to support military missions. Under the program, DoD civilians – in careers ranging from engineers to contract specialists - deploy for about a year to Iraq and Afghanistan, but also serve in some capacity in Europe and Africa.

For Ralph Gootee, a senior intelligence specialist with Explosive Ordnance Disposal Technology Division, Indian Head, Md., who recently completed an 11-month deployment assigned to Joint Psychological Operations Task Force (JPOFT), Doha, Qatar, volunteering for a civilian individual augmentee deployment was an opportunity to support troops in combat missions.

“My primary reason for volunteering was to gain a better understanding of the intelligence requirements in Iraq and Afghanistan so I could better support Joint Service EOD,” said Gootee. “During the meetings [with EOD unit] I realized that most of the intelligence officers and enlisted had served a combat tour. Although I had many more years of intelligence experience, training and a tremendous understanding of the intelligence community, I had never directly supported combat troops.”

The CEW process involves applying for the positions via the their website HYPERLINK www.cpms.osd.mil/expeditionary www.cpms.osd.mil/expeditionary. The applicants’ resumes are reviewed and matched to the position(s) for which they applied or other available positions that match their qualifications. For those selected, the preparation for deployment involves medical screenings, legal and financial arrangements and a combination of online and practical training.

“My training was at CONUS Replacement Center, Fort Benning, Ga. All the trainers there had recently returned from either Iraq or Afghanistan and understood the requirements,” said Gootee.

In addition to the CRC in Fort Benning, a joint, pre-deployment training program at the Indiana National Guard Camp Atterbury Joint Maneuver Training Center, and Muscatahuck Urban Training Center for employees deploying to Iraq and Afghanistan began in January 2010. The 10-day training is a one-stop, fully integrated training and pre-deployment platform. This training consists of an intense mix of classroom and field exercises, providing a learning environment where the austere setting simulates the conditions of deployment and helps strengthen emotional and mental resilience.

Once in theater, the true potential of the experience really starts to pan out. As a member of the JPOFT, Gootee not only collected and analyzed information to inform the coalition efforts in the region but also strengthened his professional philosophy.

“One of the major professional gains from the deployment is that it reaffirmed my core intelligence analyst’s belief – that an intelligence analyst must know his subject matter thoroughly, develop wide and deep network of contacts, and share his knowledge everyday,” said Gootee.

“I have a quote from Lt Gen. (William) Boykin over my desk ‘Intelligence is for Sharing.’

As he learned the ropes and figured out the nuances of this joint environment, Gootee also referred to a quote from Maj. Gen. Michael Flynn as a source of guidance and inspiration. “Flynn, captures the heart of the Intelligence Analysts when he states, ‘Analysts must absorb information with the thoroughness of historians, organize it with the skill of librarians, and disseminate it with the zeal of journalists.’”

The experiences of this deployment also deepened his understanding of the uniformed men and women with whom he serves.

“Hands down the most most rewarding part was the professional and dedicated men and woman I met. The experience was truly amazing. Although I did not like being separated from my family for one year – it is after the six month mark you truly gain an understanding of the job and who and where to go to accomplish the mission,” Gootee said.

“I now have that understanding, and I have a much greater respect for the military members many of whom have served two or three tours deployments."

Civilian expeditionary workforce

Story by Defense Media Activity – Anacostia
Ships from 14 nations are in port at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, Hawaii, for the 2010 Rim of the Pacific exercise. This phase exercised the ability of each nation to conduct robust command and control operations with multinational players and enhances each unit’s operational capabilities.

Phase III, the Tactical Phase of the exercise, was scenario-driven and took place July 25 through July 30. The intense training during this phase allowed participating nations to further strengthen their maritime skills and capabilities and improve their ability to communi- cate and operate in simulated hostile scenarios. This phase concluded with the ships’ return to Pearl Harbor, where participating nations will reconvene to discuss the exercise and overall accomplishments.

The theme of RIMPAC 2010 was “Combined Agility, Synergy and Support,” and marked the 22nd exercise in the series that originated from 1967 to 1988. INSURV is responsible for inspecting ships prior to their deployments. It’s known to be a rigorous inspection, but one that is needed to prevent mishaps. For more information on afloat safety and mishap reduction, visit www.safetycenter.navy.mil.

In August, the USS Essex (LHD 2) recently earned the inaugural VADM Bulkeley Award for Afloat Safety Culture. Rear Adm. Arthur J. Johnson, commander, Navy Safety Center (NSC), presented the ship’s Commanding Officer, Capt. Troy Hart and Safety Officer, Lt. Cmdr. Phillip Aramburu with the award in a ceremony on board the Essex, Japan, based amphibious ship. Johnson said the award recognizes the importance transparency and enhances each unit’s operational capabilities.

Ships from 14 nations are in port at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, Hawaii, for the 2010 Rim of the Pacific exercise.
**Story by Sarah Fortney, National Naval Medical Center, Bethesda, Md.**

**USS George H.W. Bush Conducts First Missile Launch**

USS George H.W. Bush (CVN 77) successfully fired two evolved NATO Sea Sparrow missiles and two Rolling Airframe Missiles (RAM) for the first time, to conclude its recent first combat systems ship’s qualification trials (CSSQT). CSSQT is part of the series of qualifications and certifications the aircraft carrier must undergo in preparation for its upcoming maiden deployment.

According to Cmdr. John B. Vliet, combat systems officer, CSSQT is a combined effort between the combat systems, operations and weapons departments to test the carrier’s self-defense systems. “It’s an end-to-end testing of the combat systems suite, to include tactics, techniques and procedures,” Vliet said. “It’s an operational verification of the ship’s war-fighting and self-defense capabilities. Combat systems and operations department have worked around the clock for the last 6 months, grooming personnel and training for this exercise. More than 200 personnel have directly or indirectly supported this evolution.”

Of those 200-plus personnel, two of the most directly involved were Fire Controlman 2nd Class (SW/AW) Ezekiel S. Ramirez, work center supervisor for the Ram system and FC2(SW/AW) Ryan P. McWilliams, work center supervisor for the RAM system. “It’s a lot of work for one launch, but when we deploy we will have to load a total of 58 missiles,” Ramirez stated.

Ramirez stressed the significance of the successful missile fire, which was the first launch for the small group of 14 Sailors directly involved with operation of the missile systems. “It’s a pretty a big accomplishment,” he said. “We are the aircraft carrier’s first and last line of defense. This test is the way we prove that the self-defense systems work. We’re going to be ready.”

Directing the crew in the Combat Direction Center (CDC) were the Blue and Gold Team tactical action officers (TAO), Lt. Chris Caton and Lt. Jeff Moen of the operations department. CDC Officer, Cmdr. Les Spanheimer credits proactive tactical leadership and outstanding teamwork with the successful missile test. “Lt. Caton began training our tactical watchstanders with live aircraft during the training exercise,” Spanheimer said. “He’s proactive in his role and understands the depth of the scenario.”

According to Caton, the test involved two watch teams made up of four members of the Gold Team, said the readiness for two watch teams was to create two unique scenarios for each missile system. They said that the watch teams acted as the communications link between combat systems and the weapons systems.

The lengthy systems certification process, which involved weapons, multi-function radars, two rigid-hull inflatable boats, two MH-60R Sea Hawk helicopters, and seconded non-crew members from 13 departments was “a combined effort between the combat systems, operations and weapons departments,” said Spanheimer. “It’s a lot of work for one launch, but when we deploy we will have to load a total of 58 missiles.”

Ramirez reaffirmed the team’s readiness with confidence. “We’re fully trained and capable to handle misfires,” he said. “We’re ready no matter what happens. We are here to defend the ship. We’re ready and willing to do our job.”

**USS San Jacinto Excels at Counter-Piracy Mission**

During the first five months of her deployment, USS San Jacinto (CG 56) has interdicted several skiffs, captured pirates and played a key role in keeping sea lanes free of piracy.

Capt. John Cordle, commanding officer. “As an independent deployer, we are capable of plugging into any strike group or task force. This requires a great deal of flexibility and a good grounding in the basics.”

The intense training was crucial to the San Jacinto’s primary duties have changed to support CTF 151. “Recently, Aegis cruisers have been tasked with visit, board, search and seizure (VBSS) and anti-piracy operations,” said Fire Controlman 1st Class Christopher Ladera, a member of USS San Jacinto’s VBSS team. “With the changing threat in the world, I think we play an important role in helping suppress piracy.”

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Despite the ship’s record of success in countering piracy and the upcoming end of the ship’s deployment cycle, the crew remains at the ready for the next attack. “We knew before we deployed that we would largely be focused on the mission of counter-piracy, but it’s impossible to accurately predict what the level of piracy activity will be or when and where an attack will take place,” Williard noted.

**Story and photo by MC2 J. Morrison of Weapons department, the certification involved every equipment or missile casualty,” Morrison said.

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When Iraq invaded Kuwait, Aug. 2, 1990, U.S. Ross G. Bradley (FFG 49) was patrolling the Persian Gulf about 50 miles off the coast of Kuwait when the alarm sounded.

"We heard pleas for help from Kuwait over the bridge-to-bridge radio over and over again," said Lt.j.g. Ted Anderson, Bradley’s combat systems officer. "It made us realize just how real it was.

The first message about the Iraqi invasion propelled Bradley into general quarters. All Sailors manned their battle stations to guard against possible airborne and waterborne attacks.

Along with the shelving barrage into Kuwait, Iraqi forces threatened Saudi Arabia by positioning themselves near one of the principal invasion routes. This prompted Saudi Arabia to ask the United States for assistance in the form of military presence. Then-President George H.W. Bush responded by authorizing Operation Desert Shield.

Within 48 hours of the initial invasion, Military Sealift Command (MSC) ships steamed out of Guam, Saipan and Diego Garcia toward the Middle East with the necessary supplies and equipment to begin enforcing the sanctions.

U.S. ships vigilantly scanned the horizon for merchant vessels transiting the shipping lanes. Their mission was to stop the oil from flowing through Middle Eastern waters into Iraq. Battle group and destroyer squadron commanders in the Red and North Arabian Seas controlled the operations directly as thousands of merchant vessels were tracked, challenged, identified, warned, then – if found to be in violation of sanction guidelines – boarded and diverted.

Warships averaged 10 challenges a day in a process that intensified following the approval of military force to ensure merchant vessels complied with the sanctions.

Even though the United States cut off oil and supplies to the Iraqis, they needed the same things themselves to maintain readiness on station. A solid foundation of maritime strategic planning and sealift pre-positioning enabled the United States to dispatch the MSC ships to the Middle East with the necessary supplies and equipment. The sealift for Desert Shield became, with no prior buildup – the largest and fastest sealift to a single operating area in any day.

"The mission is difficult at times and there are definitely obstacles to overcome," said Lopez, a physician assistant from Phoenix.

"But with help from the dedicated Afghani people, little by little, we can provide them with stability and improve their quality of life.

Lopez added that while his daily tasking includes a variety of administrative and other crucial jobs, direct interaction with the people of PRT Paktika takes the lion’s share of his mission.

"I spend a lot of my time meeting and mentoring the Afghani medical health leadership team," he said. "I have meetings with them about once a week on average. These meetings usually consist of discussions about provincial public health care needs. We also discuss issues regarding malnutrition, clean water, medical training, clinic construction and midwife programs. I visit the provincial clinics and meet the local medical staff as part of our PRT mission. One of the main purposes is to serve as a liaison to the director of public health as he is unable to visit some of these clinics due to the imminent danger.

Lopez and the PRT Paktika medical team also operate a daily sick call and receive patients as first responders to insurgent attacks or improvised explosive devices (IEDs) that might happen any day.

"I could have stayed a civilian physician’s assistant but felt compelled – again – to serve in the Navy. Initially joining in 1991, Lopez spent five years as an active-duty hospital corpsman, earning Field Medical Service School (FMSS) qualification at Camp Lejeune, N.C. He subsequently accepted an honorable discharge, but pursued further medical training, eventually becoming a physician’s assistant through a program at Stanford University, Stanford, Calif.

Lopez returned to an active-duty status in 2008, and sought out the PRT Paktika Global War on Terrorism support assignment.

Historically, the MSC ships to the Middle East with the necessary supplies and equipment were tracked, challenged, identified, warned, then – if found to be in violation of sanction guidelines – boarded and diverted.

The mission of PRT Paktika entails assisting the stabilization and security of Paktika province, a large province on Afghanistan’s eastern border near the Pakistan tribal areas. Lt.jg. Vincent "Doc" Lopez currently serves with PRT Paktika as the team’s lead medical officer, and liaison to residents of Paktika province.

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"I wanted to be a Navy officer," said Lopez. "I wanted to come to Afghanistan. I knew I’d deploy. That’s why I signed up – I knew there were people I’d be able to help and I wanted to help them."

In Paktika province, medical facilities and equipment are scarce and Afghani citizens don’t have guaranteed medical care. But with more than three years of experience with Level-I trauma care, and having worked at several clinics prior to his current assignment, Lopez’ experience and expertise in difficult situations reflects directly in his ability to work within and guide a team.

"Measuring success can be difficult here," he said. "I measure my success directly from comments from my troops and my medical providers around the province. If they feel more capable of performing their job, then I know I’m doing my mine correctly."

Lt.jg. Vincent "Doc" Lopez

Photos by Air Force Master Sergeant Demetrius Lester