

BATARG BEACON

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Women of BATARG's Information Warfare Community

BATARG BEACON

The official magazine for the Bataan Amphibious Ready Group

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Sailors assigned to the amphibious assault ship USS Bataan (LHD 5) and Amphibious Squadron 8 and a Marine assigned to the 26th Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU), all members of the Bataan Amphibious Ready Group information warfare community, pose for a group photo for Women's History Month. Photo by MC2 Anna Van Nuys



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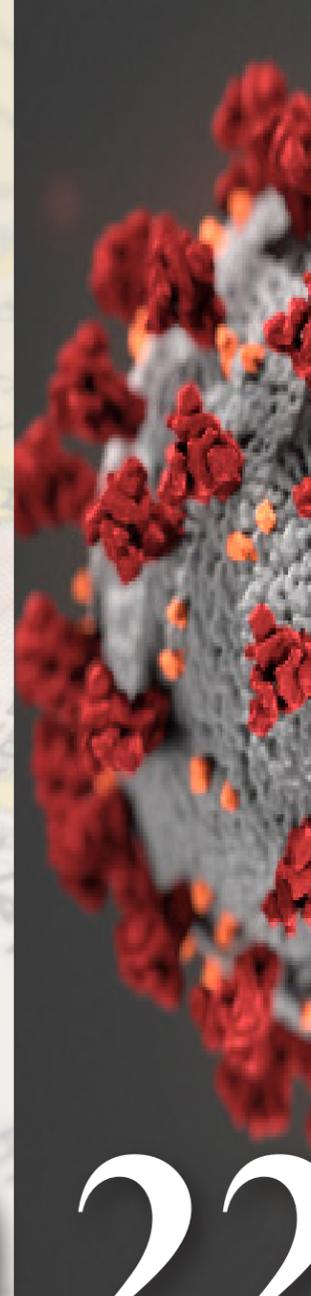
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CNO and MCPON address the fleet on COVID-19. Above image provided by CDC.gov.

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Marine integrates with New York engineers

Story and photo by MC2 Lyle Wilkie

On any naval ship, you might see a variety of Sailors roving the engine rooms. Perhaps the Sailors are there for watch or they're looking to repair a piece of equipment.

In the engine room aboard the amphibious transport dock ship USS New York, you might come across something different; a Marine working hand-in-hand with the enginemen.

"Originally, I started by sorting all the extra parts that maintenance division had in their storage rooms during one of the ship operations before deployment," said Cpl. Alfred Kerswill, a Marine assigned to the 26th Marine Expeditionary Unit. "I volunteered with the intent of eventually working down in the main spaces."

His hope of working in the main spaces became a reality because of his hard work.

"Cpl. Kerswill was looking for employment during (a pre-deployment training) exercise and was interested in working on the diesel engines during the deployment, so we made a deal he would have free reign to the engineering spaces and receive on-the-job training as long as he assisted in the organization and inventory of the storeroom," said Chief Engineman Daniel Quinn, the maintenance division leading chief petty officer. "After a long four weeks, the motivated Marine had the storeroom organized and inventoried."

The enginemen were happy to receive a helping hand from an unlikely source.

"I thought it was pretty cool that a Marine wanted to go to the engineering space to help and be a part of what really keeps this warship operational," said Engineman 2nd Class Skyler Mayo, a maintenance division Sailor. "He's integrated pretty well amongst other engineers."

Soon after, Kerswill was taken under the wing of the enginemen aboard the New York and start learning what it means to work in the ship's engine rooms.

"He integrated very well with [maintenance division] in my opinion," said Engineman 2nd Class Matthew Vance, a maintenance division Sailor. "He is learning how to be an engineman and [learning about] the components and operation of the equipment. He is willing to learn and he gets along pretty well with everyone. He helps out where he is needed and won't say no to anyone's requests."

Kerswill says he has learned that whether in his job in the Marine Corps or being an engineman, there are some basic principles that relate to both jobs.

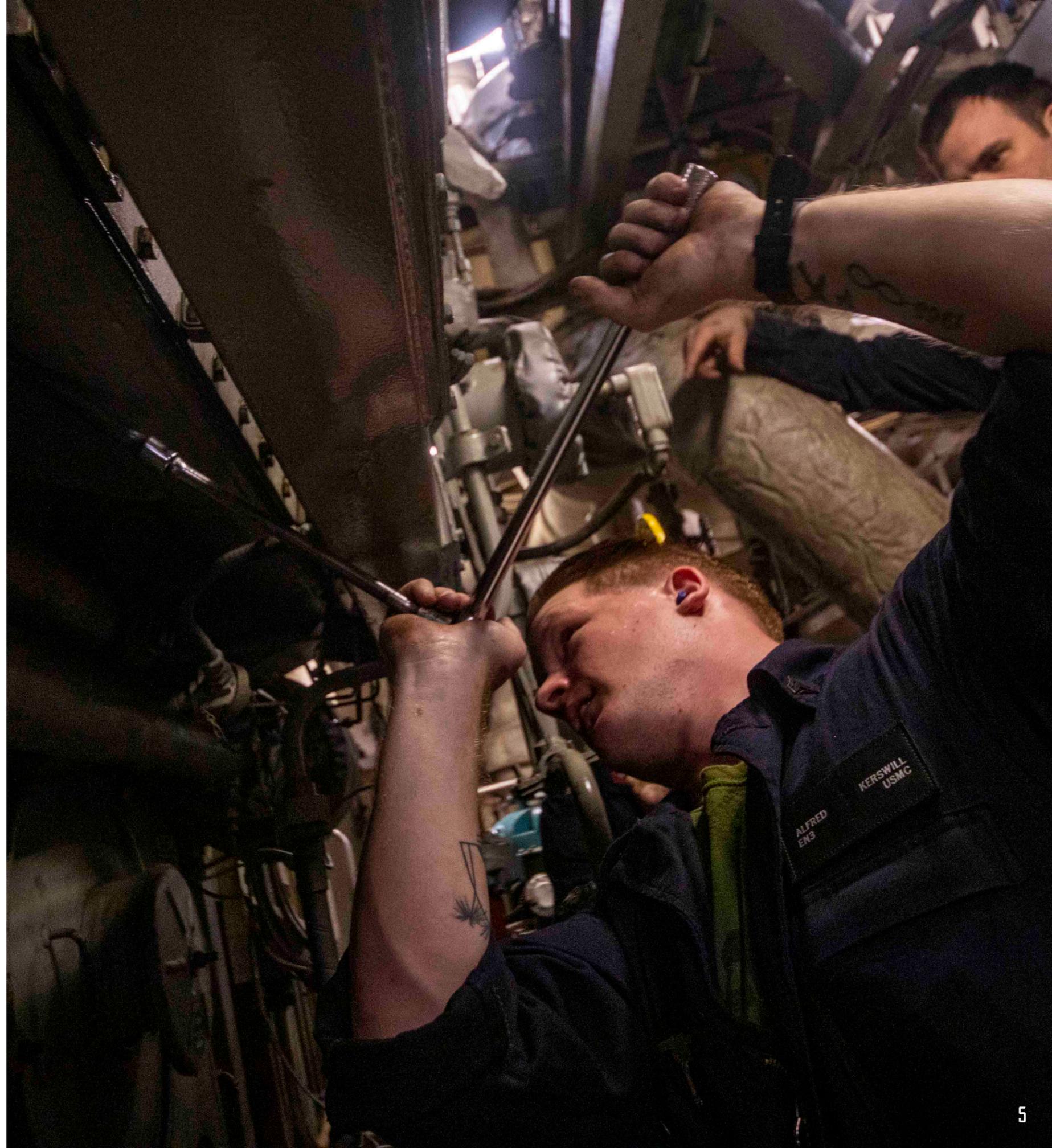
"I can say confidently that in ways the job as engineman does relate to my job," said Kerswill. "We provide indirect fires to maneuvering elements on the battlefield. We have to get rounds down range when the maneuvering element calls for our fires to support their movement to objectives. Working as an engineman is also quick and you have to give your full undivided attention when you are working on a piece of equipment, the same as providing fires in combat."

Although Kerswill admits he didn't know much before setting out on his journey, he is grateful for what he knows now and for the enginemen who taught him.

"I was not mechanically inclined by any means beforehand," said Kerswill. "Now with what I know and what I feel like I will know by the end of deployment, I feel super comfortable with working on engines. Yeah, I may not know nearly everything, but I feel that there is a level of comfort you have to have with engines in order to even want to learn more about them. So it is safe to say considering that I knew absolutely nothing beforehand that everything I know now is because of them."

His contribution to the ship is not unseen even by the ship's executive officer.

"It is always great to see the integration that occurs between the Navy and Marine Corps team when we are on deployment," said Cmdr. Daniel Hollingshead. "This is an example of a highly motivated Marine that wanted to learn something new and help out the force as a whole. We are proud of our brothers in arms and the diverse knowledge that they bring to the fight. The case of Cpl. Kerswill is a beacon of the Blue/Green integration."





Clockwise from top left:

Boatswain's Mate 3rd Class Ingrid Cruz is pinned to the rank of Boatswain's Mate 2nd Class during a meritorious promotion ceremony on the mess decks of the amphibious assault ship USS Bataan (LHD 5), March 1, 2020. Photo by MC1 Zachary Anderson.

The audience cheers during a meritorious promotion ceremony on the mess decks of the amphibious assault ship USS Bataan (LHD 5), March 1, 2020. Photo by MC1 Zachary Anderson.

Aviation Maintenance Administrationman 2nd Class Roylander Wiggins is congratulated after learning he has received a meritorious promotion on the mess decks of the amphibious assault ship USS Bataan (LHD 5), March 1, 2020. Photo by MC1 Zachary Anderson.

Hospitalman Shante Payne is pinned to the rank of Hospital Corpsman 3rd Class during a meritorious promotion ceremony on the mess decks of the amphibious assault ship USS Bataan (LHD 5), Mar. 1, 2020. Photo by MC1 Zachary Anderson.

The audience cheers during a meritorious promotion ceremony on the mess decks of the amphibious assault ship USS Bataan (LHD 5), March 1, 2020. Photo by MC1 Zachary Anderson.

Capt. Pete Kennedy, the commanding officer of the amphibious transport dock ship USS New York (LPD 21), speaks to Sailors on the fo'c'sle during an all hands call Feb. 28, 2020. Photo by MC2 Lyle Wilkie.



Oak Hill's Deckplate Hero

Story and photo by MC3 Griffin Kersting

Each week, one Sailor assigned to the amphibious dock landing ship USS Oak Hill (LSD 51) is recognized as Oak Hill's deckplate hero while the ship is deployed.

Hospital Corpsman 2nd Class Laquesha Jackson was recognized for her hard work and dedication to her division and to the Oak Hill on March 1, 2020.

Jackson, a Pine Bluff, Arkansas, native, has been in the Navy for 10 years and plans to continue to serve for 20 years or more.

"I've been a hospital corpsman for 10 years now and if I had to go back, I would choose the same rate all over again," said Jackson. "I love to help people and make a difference, so this job is perfect for me."

Jackson's primary duty in the medical department aboard Oak Hill is the role of dental assistant, conducting regularly scheduled dental check-ups and performing dental cleanings for Sailors and Marines.

"I was very excited and honored to be chosen for the deck plate hero of the week," said Jackson. "It felt great to be recognized by my chain of command and I look forward to keeping up the hard work."

Jackson said she holds herself to a high standard every day, hoping that she can set the right example for her shipmates and her family as well.

"What keeps me going every day is definitely my family and my son," said Jackson. "I want to be able to show him that the sky is the limit and he can accomplish anything as long as he puts his mind to it."

Oak Hill, a part of the Bataan Amphibious Ready Group and with the 26th Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU), is deployed to the U.S. 5th Fleet area of operations in support of naval operations to ensure maritime stability and security in the Central Region, connecting the Mediterranean and the Pacific through the Western Indian Ocean and three strategic choke points.





Women provide strength to Bataan ARG/MEU information warfare team

Story and photos by Bataan Amphibious Ready Group Public Affairs

As a child, Jen Gruber always knew what she wanted to be when she grew up. “I always wanted to be a scientist when I was a kid,” she said. “My dream was to be a scientist. Now I feel like I’m using my drive to be a scientist every day.” Gruber, now a lieutenant commander in the U.S. Navy, is the meteorological officer onboard the amphibious assault ship USS Bataan (LHD 5), deployed as the flagship of the Bataan Amphibious Ready Group (ARG) to the U.S. 5th Fleet area of operations.

Gruber is one in a large and accomplished group of women working in

the information warfare (IW) community across the ARG and embarked 26th Marine Expeditionary Unit. Information warfare is a wide-ranging community that includes intelligence analysts, cyber defense specialists, weather forecasters, network technicians and communications experts, among many others. About half of the khaki-level information warfare positions – chief petty officers and commissioned officers – on or augmenting the embarked Amphibious Squadron (PHIBRON) 8 and MEU staffs are held by women.

In addition, a number of key leadership positions in the information warfare field

on the flagship USS Bataan are also held by women, including the senior intelligence officer and communications officer. About 19 percent of the personnel across the Navy and about 9 percent of Marines are women, in comparison. In March, units across the U.S. military are recognizing Women’s History Month, including Bataan, which has scheduled a ceremony onboard. “We have a lot of great personalities on this team,” said Lt. Katie Hendrickson, PHIBRON 8 communications and combat systems officer. “We have a lot of cohesion on this team. I’ve never been around as many women in the community as I am

here [in the ARGMEU].” Lt. Cmdr. Ashley McCawley, senior intelligence officer onboard Bataan, grew up in the Navy hub of San Diego and said most of the men in her family served. But she said she’s the first woman and the first officer to do so. Like Gruber, she said she was drawn to some of the work in the Navy’s information warfare community at a young age. “I always liked the idea of trying to figure out what someone is doing based on limited information, and putting the pieces together,” she said. Lt. j.g. Michaela Scudato, intelligence officer for the embarked Tactical Air

Control Squadron 22, said it’s important for junior female officers and younger Sailors to have exposure to women in leadership positions in their community, as the women in the ARGMEU’s IW group currently do. “I think seeing women succeed in a field helps when you’re coming into it,” she said. “I liked having the opportunity to talk to women who have been successful in the field to get their perspectives and talk about their careers.” Gruber said the number of successful women in the IW community made an impression on her early in her career. “I got into this community as an ensign

and thought, ‘This is really cool.’ To be surrounded by women leaders who were awesome at their jobs was really inspiring,” she said. “Almost immediately in this community I was introduced to all these (lieutenant commanders and commanders), and I met these senior leaders who were women and who were all very willing to provide mentorship to junior Sailors. I found that very welcoming. And now I’m reaching a point where I can pass down what I’ve learned as well.” Lt. NaTasha Riley, Deputy Information Warfare Commander for the PHIBRON, was one of the first 36 cryptologic technicians (networks) designated when



the Navy established the rating more than a decade ago. She became a chief petty officer in 2009 and commissioned as an officer in 2011.

She said a mentor convinced her to take an IW job as a junior enlisted Sailor, and she takes pride in providing today's junior Sailors the same type of guidance that made such a difference to her.

"I try to mentor whenever I can and

let others know what possibilities are out there," she said. "I am actively always looking for the next NaTasha Riley. If she's hungry, if she's a young woman seeking to advance, I'm looking for her."

For any team at sea, building chemistry can be key to success. Aerographer's Mate 1st Class Jamie Engleman said it has been easier to build that chemistry working in

the information warfare field, both within the community and across the ARGMEU.

"IW is so integrated into the entire command, we come to all the meetings and we're involved in all the planning," she said. "It's easy to build relationships, because we see each other every day and we work so closely together.

"I think I have six or seven female mentors, from chiefs all the way up through officers," Engleman continued. "Most of them are moms. I think we all work really well together. I feel like we're really willing to help each other, no matter what the challenge is."

Capt. Melissa Heisterberg, communication strategy and operations officer for the 26th MEU, expressed a similar sentiment, saying that building chemistry can help overcome the challenges of working in close quarters with a small group, like with the ARGMEU team on deployment.

"In this environment, it makes a

difference, because the relationships we build on the personal side while forward deployed help us accomplish the mission on the professional side," she said.

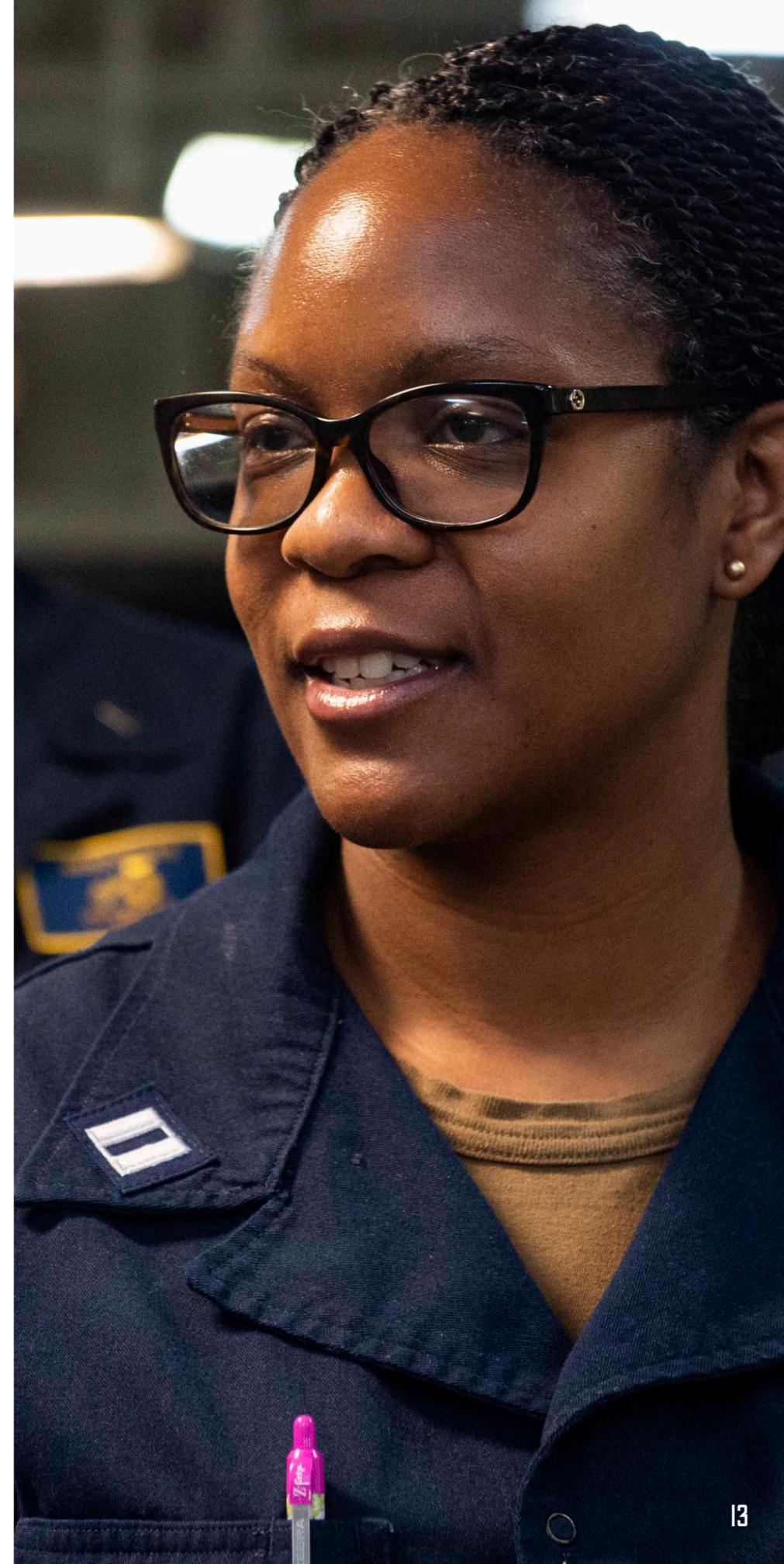
The ARG and MEU are operating in the U.S. 5th Fleet area of operations in support of maritime security operations to reassure allies and partners and preserve the freedom of navigation and the free flow of commerce in the region. In addition to the flagship Bataan, the amphibious ready group also includes the amphibious transport dock USS New York (LPD 21) and the dock landing ship USS Oak Hill (LSD 51).

"With computers, every fix is not going to be the same for every problem, so it's gratifying when we're able to bring the circuit back up for our end users," said Chief Warrant Officer Nkosa Morris, the communications officer aboard Bataan. "To see women dominating in an area in the military like this is almost unheard of. It's a humbling experience to be part of a team that shows how far women have come in the Navy. There are no limiting factors for us."

The U.S. 5th Fleet area of operations encompasses about 2.5 million square miles of water area and includes the Arabian Gulf, Red Sea, Gulf of Oman, Gulf of Aden, Arabian Sea and parts of the Indian Ocean. The expanse includes 20 nations and three critical choke points for global commerce, at the Strait of Hormuz, the Suez Canal and strait of Bab al Mandeb at the southern tip of Yemen.

"The threats can change every day," said Senior Chief Cryptologic Technician (Collection) Lashunda Eady, PHIBRON 8's assistant cryptologic resource officer. "That requires us to always be ready to get smarter on what the latest threats are. We need to be able to shift, regroup and still meet our deadlines.

"The Navy as a whole has grown in that you do see more women in leadership positions," she continued, "and our unit has done a great job embracing that."





Clockwise from top left:

Aviation Ordnanceman 3rd Class Daniel Johnson, assigned to the amphibious assault ship USS Bataan (LHD 5), fires a M240B machine gun, March 7, 2020. Photo by MCSA Darren Newell.

Lance Cpl. Eric Tilson, with Weapons Company, Battalion Landing Team 2nd Battalion, 8th Marine Regiment, participates in a gun shoot aboard the amphibious assault ship USS Bataan (LHD 5), March 7, 2020. Photo by MC2 Kaitlin Rowell.

Sailors, assigned to the amphibious assault ship USS Bataan (LHD 5), participate in a gun shoot, March 7, 2020. Photo by MCSA Darren Newell.

Lance Cpl. Eric Tilson, with Weapons Company, Battalion Landing Team 2nd Battalion, 8th Marine Regiment, fires a .50-caliber machine gun during a gun shoot aboard the amphibious assault ship USS Bataan (LHD 5), March 7, 2020. Photo by MC2 Kaitlin Rowell.

Cpl. Gines Damante, with Weapons Company, Battalion Landing Team 2nd Battalion, 8th Marine Regiment, receives communications during a gun shoot aboard the amphibious assault ship USS Bataan (LHD 5), March 7, 2020. Photo by MC2 Kaitlin Rowell.

Lance Cpl. Anthony Muhlstadt, with Weapons Company, Battalion Landing Team 2nd Battalion, 8th Marine Regiment, participates in a gun shoot aboard the amphibious assault ship USS Bataan (LHD 5), March 7, 2020. Photo by MC2 Kaitlin Rowell.

Lance Cpl. Trevor Strawser, with Weapons Company, Battalion Landing Team 2nd Battalion, 8th Marine Regiment, fires a .50-caliber machine gun during a gun shoot aboard the amphibious assault ship USS Bataan (LHD 5), March 7, 2020. Photo by MC2 Kaitlin Rowell.



STEEL BEACH



Clockwise from top left:

Sailors assigned to the amphibious transport dock ship USS New York (LPD 21) and Marines assigned to the 26th Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU) pour water on Cmdr. Daniel Hollingshead, the executive officer of New York, to raise funds for the Navy and Marine Corps Relief Society during a steel beach picnic on the ship's flight deck, March 7, 2020. Photo by MC2 Lyle Wilkie.

Machinist's Mate 1st Class Raymond Hinnant, assigned to the amphibious assault ship USS Bataan (LHD 5), plays cornhole during a steel beach picnic aboard Bataan, March 1, 2020. Photo by MC2 Anna Van Nuys.

Sailors assigned to the amphibious transport dock ship USS New York (LPD 21) and Marines assigned to the 26th Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU) serve food to Sailors and Marines during a steel beach picnic on the ship's flight deck, March 7, 2020. Photo by MC2 Lyle Wilkie.

Sailors assigned to the amphibious assault ship USS Bataan (LHD 5) and Marines assigned to the 26th Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU) play basketball during a steel beach picnic aboard Bataan, March 1, 2020. Photo by MC2 Anna Van Nuys.

Pfc. Joshua Gregis, assigned to Fox Company, Battalion Landing Team 2nd Company, 8th Marine Regiment (BLT 2/8), 26th Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU), plays frisbee during a steel beach picnic aboard the amphibious assault ship USS Bataan (LHD 5), March 1, 2020. Photo by MC2 Anna Van Nuys.

Cpl. Dalton Harris, assigned the 26th Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU), plays golf off the fantail of the amphibious assault ship USS Bataan (LHD 5), March 1, 2020. Photo by MC2 Anna Van Nuys.

Lt. Akil Lett, assigned to Fleet Surgical Team (FST) 4, cooks hot dogs during a steel beach picnic aboard the amphibious assault ship USS Bataan (LHD 5), March 1, 2020. Photo by MC2 Anna Van Nuys.

Marines, assigned to the 26th Marine Expeditionary Unit, pose for a photo during a steel beach picnic, March 1, 2020. Photo by MC3 Alan Robertson.





At any moment aboard the amphibious transport dock ship USS New York (LPD 21), you may hear the call to man the boat deck. When that call comes, Sailors run as fast as they can to get to man their stations.

Time is of the essence for the team that mans the New York's rigid-hull inflatable boats (RHIB).

"To put the ready life boat in the water, it takes about five to 10 minutes from start to finish," said Lt. j.g. Kyle Coia, a boat officer. "Recovering crew members quickly is very important. Rigid hull inflatable boats are meant to provide small command control outreach for the ship they are embarked on. They are also used for search and rescue (SAR); visit, board, search and seizure operations; navigation and depth verification operations; personnel transfers; and logistics operations."

The RHIB team is made up of five personnel. That team includes a boat officer, a coxswain (who drives the boat), a boat engineer, a bow hook operator (who assists in launching and recovering) and a SAR swimmer. All five roles are essential to the operation and the Sailors who are manning the RHIB may be called upon to stay on station for hours at a time.

"I have stayed in the RHIB for roughly 10 hours," said Boatswain's Mate 3rd Class Austin Burns, the New York's primary SAR swimmer.

As part of a RHIB's crew, the boat engineer is counted on to keep the RHIB running to ensure safe travel to and from the ship.

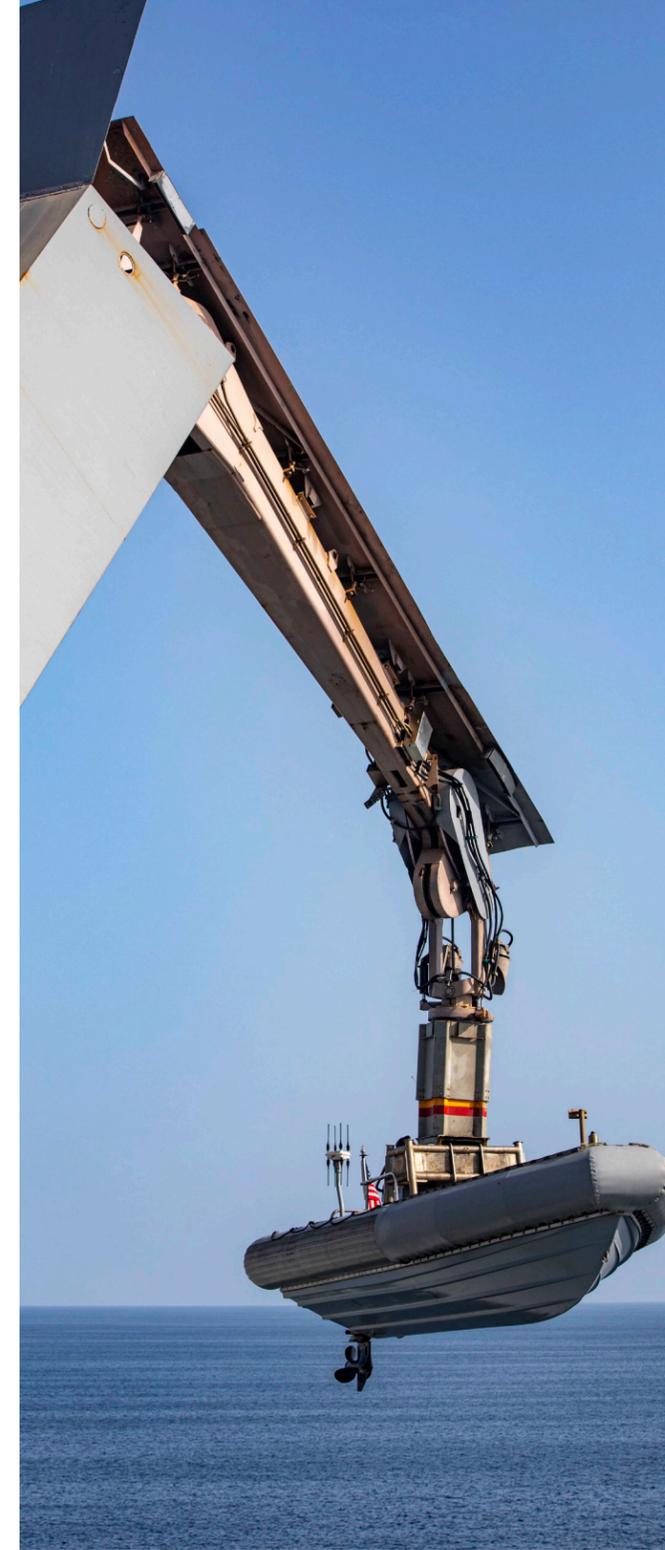
"I am responsible for responding to any equipment failures that may occur on the boat," said Machinist Mate 2nd Class Christopher Smudzinski, the New York's primary boat engineer. "I will do anything in my power to make sure that anyone in the boat will make it back to their family safely."

Everyone on the RHIB team is ready in a moment's notice and is prepared to do whatever the mission entails.

"I always get a rush when it's time to get in the boat," said Boatswain's Mate 2nd Class James Thomas, the New York's primary coxswain. "Something about being in a small boat out on the open ocean just feels so exciting to me. This is why I signed up and why I took an oath to protect my country."

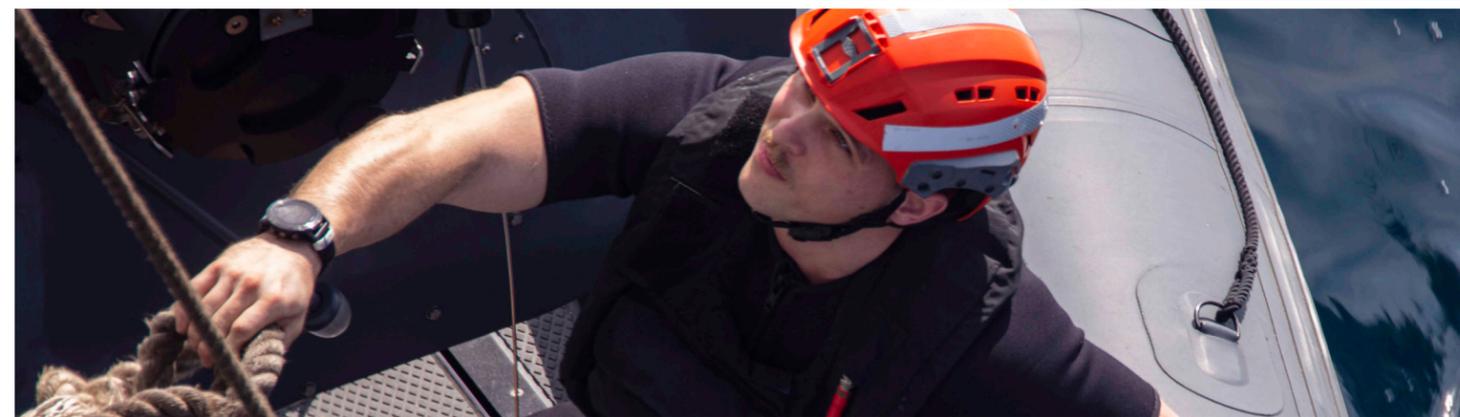
When the call over the New York's one main circuit comes to "man the ready life boat," each Sailor is ready at all times to get the job done.

As part of the Bataan Amphibious Ready Group, with the amphibious assault ship USS Bataan (LHD 5), amphibious dock landing ship USS Oak Hill (LSD 51), and embarked 26th Marine Expeditionary Unit, the New York's RHIB team is prepared to assist in any mission while deployed to the U.S. 5th Fleet area of operations.



Racing the Clock for small-boat operations

Story and photos by MC2 Lyle Wilkie



Lone Sailor Recognized for service aboard New York

Story and photos by Seaman Katelyn McClain



Being the only Sailor in a rate aboard the Harpers Ferry-class amphibious transport dock ship USS New York (LPD 21) can prove challenging, but that does not stop Mass Communication Specialist (MC) 2nd Class Lyle Wilkie from taking that challenge head on.

Wilkie was chosen as the Sailor of the Week for not just doing his job, but also being a valuable leader and mentor to the Sailors and Marines aboard the New York.

“MC2 Wilkie does a lot of hard work behind the scenes that Sailors and Marines see,” said Chief Personnel Specialist Michael Simpson, administrative department leading chief petty officer. “What they don’t see is the leadership example he sets and the hard work he does when no one is watching.”

As an independent MC aboard New York, Wilkie attends almost every evolution shooting photos and videos to document the work of the Sailors and Marines aboard New York. He is also the Junior Enlisted Association’s (JEA) public affairs officer, executive department work center supervisor, Ship Nautical or Otherwise Photographic Interpretation and Exploitation (SNOOPIE) team lead and the Coalition of Sailors Against Destructive Decisions (CSADD) president.

“MC2’s job impacts the command in numerous ways,” said Navy Career Counselor 1st Class Stephanie Biggs, administrative leading petty officer. “First, he oversees the [presentation] of the ship to the nation. He is the [connection] between the Sailors and their families, keeping everyone left at

home informed and a part of the ship’s evolutions from afar. His consistent documentation of equipment ensures that the ship is provided required parts and maintenance availabilities, as well as the technical expertise required to fix any malfunctions, allowing the ship to be battle ready to respond to the nation’s call. His oversight of the ship’s SNOOPIE team maintains constant vigilance in the event of a threat. His documentation of all ship events boosts the morale of the ship and showcases the expertise and professionalism of the ship’s crew.”

Biggs isn’t the only Sailor aboard New York that noticed Wilkie’s devotion to his craft. Lt. j. g. Dane Kozlosky, the administrative officer onboard New York, offered a similar sentiment.

“Look at any second class [petty officer] onboard. Yes, you will find

hard workers, but never will you find someone as selfless and hard working as MC2,” said Kozlosky.

Wilkie joined the Navy Nov. 3, 2010. After meeting with his recruiter and finding out he would have had to wait a year to go to boot camp under most other rates, his recruiter recommended he consider the MC rate, and he accepted it. In the years since, he has completed tours aboard the Nimitz-class aircraft carrier USS Harry S. Truman (CVN 75) and at Defense Media Activity (DMA).

“I would not change anything about my time in the Navy,” said Wilkie. “It has been a great ride and there is more to come. It’s good to be known for not just doing your job but making an impact that affects the whole command is even better.”



COVID-19

A MESSAGE FROM CNO AND MCPON

From Chief of Naval Operations Mike Gilday and Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy Russel Smith

Shipmates,

The spread of the coronavirus is something that we are taking very seriously. While many of you may be anxious, worried, or wondering what happens next, leadership at every level is actively engaged on this issue.

Our number one concern is the health and the safety of you, our Sailors – active and reserve, uniformed and civilian – as well as your families. We're suspending official, personal, and PCS travel for the next 60 days both IN-CONUS and to designated locations OCONUS, as well as encouraging flexible work schedules and the use of telework -- all designed to slow the virus' spread.

For now, we must use an abundance of caution. Keep an eye on your Sailors and continue to follow the guidelines of health officials – which includes washing your hands more often, avoiding public gatherings, and staying away from others if you're sick. Don't be a hero.

Our understanding of the coronavirus is rapidly evolving, and we may have to implement further measures to combat the spread of this virus.

America depends upon us to help provide security and stability to this nation, and that's exactly what we will continue to do. Stay safe Shipmates. Our nation depends on you.

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STOP THE SPREAD OF GERMS

Help prevent the spread of respiratory diseases like COVID-19.

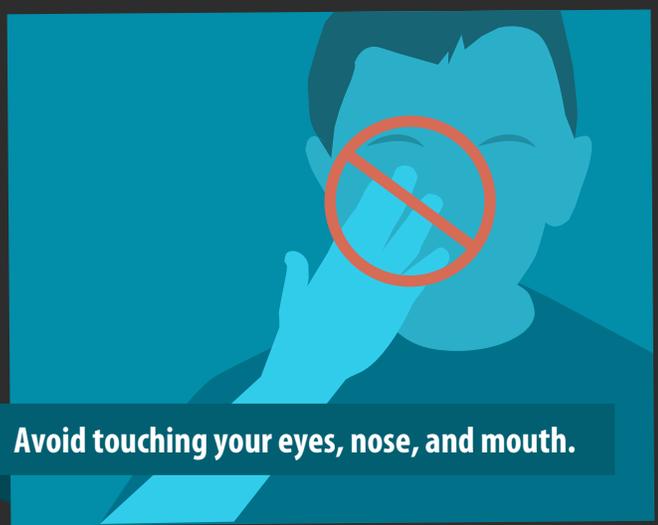
Avoid close contact with people who are sick.



Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.



Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.



Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.



Stay home when you are sick, except to get medical care.



Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.



For more information: www.cdc.gov/COVID19