

# *Change of Command*



*Pier 11 North  
Naval Station Norfolk*

*Norfolk, Virginia*

*February 12, 2021*

*“America now is stumbling through the darkness of hatred and divisiveness. Our values, our principles, and our determination to succeed as a free and democratic people will give us a torch to light the way. And we will survive and become the stronger not only because of a patriotism that stands for love of country, but a patriotism that stands for love of people.”*

- Gerald R. Ford

**USS GERALD R. FORD  
(CVN 78)**

**Change of Command  
Ceremony**

**CAPTAIN JOHN J. CUMMINGS**  
United States Navy

*Will Be Relieved By*

**CAPTAIN PAUL J. LANZILOTTA**  
United States Navy

*Aboard*

**USS Gerald R. Ford (CVN 78)**  
Norfolk, Virginia  
February 12, 2021



**Rear Admiral John F. "Oscar" Meier**  
**United States Navy**  
*Commander, Naval Air Force Atlantic*





Rear Adm. John F. Meier, a native of Export, Pennsylvania, graduated from the United States Naval Academy in 1986 with a Bachelor of Science in General Engineering. He completed flight training in Beeville, Texas, and was “winged” as a Naval Aviator in August 1988.

Meier’s operational assignments include Electronic Attack Squadron (VAQ) 141, Carrier Air Wing (CVW) 2, VAQ-128, and executive officer onboard USS Harry S. Truman (CVN 75), during which the command was recognized with the 2008, 2009 and 2010 Battle “E” and the 2009 Safety “S.” Command tours include VAQ-136, earning the Safety “S” and Battle “E” in 2004 as well as the 2005 Retention Excellence award; USS Gunston Hall (LSD 44), earning the 2011 Battle “E;” and Precommissioning Unit Gerald R. Ford (CVN 78) earning the 2014 and 2015 Retention Excellence awards. Meier most recently commanded Carrier Strike Group (CSG) 10 earning the Humanitarian Service award.

Meier’s shore assignments include tours at VAQ-129, where he was recognized as Instructor Pilot of the Year in 1995; EA-6B placement officer at Navy Personnel Command; senior operations officer and emergency actions officer on the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in the National Military Command Center; requirements officer for EA-18G at the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations (OPNAV) N88; assistant chief of staff force readiness officer at Commander, Naval Air Forces; assistant commander, Navy Personnel Command for Career Management (PERS-4); and commander, Navy Warfare Development Command.

Meier has participated in operations around the world since Desert Storm, lead Southern Partnership Station and built the crew and culture of USS Gerald R. Ford (CVN 78) as the first commanding officer. He has accumulated over 4,000 flight hours and 675 carrier landings. Meier assumed command of Naval Air Force Atlantic on May 1, 2020.

His decorations include the Legion of Merit and various other personal and unit level awards.



**Rear Admiral Craig "Clap" Clapperton**  
**United States Navy**  
*Commander, Carrier Strike Group TWELVE*



Rear Adm. Craig A. “Clap” Clapperton is a native of Pennsylvania and is a graduate of Pennsylvania State University with a Bachelor of Science in Aerospace Engineering. He was commissioned in 1989 and designated a naval flight officer in 1991. In 2008, he earned a Master of Arts in National Strategy and Security Studies from the Naval War College with highest distinction and was a member of the college’s elite Stockdale group. He is a distinguished graduate of the Navy Nuclear Power Training Command and completed nuclear power training in 2010. In May 2020, Clapperton assumed duties as Commander, Carrier Strike Group TWELVE.

Clapperton completed operational flying tours in both the A-6E Intruder and EA-6B Prowler and has amassed over 2,800 hours in the Intruder, Prowler and EA-18 G Growler. His squadron assignments include tours with the Attack Squadron 34 (VA-34) Blue Blasters, Electronic Attack Squadron (VAQ-139) Cougars, and Wizards of VAQ-133.

Clapperton commanded the Shadowhawks of VAQ-141, the U.S. Sixth Fleet and NATO command ship USS Mount Whitney (LCC 20), and USS Theodore Roosevelt (CVN 71). Additionally, he served as executive officer aboard USS Harry S. Truman (CVN 75). During his command tours, his ships and squadron supported Operations Iraqi Freedom, Enduring Freedom, New Dawn, and Inherent Resolve, and operated in the Baltic, Black and Mediterranean Seas and Atlantic, Indian and Pacific Oceans.

During his tours ashore, Clapperton served as aide to Deputy Commander-in-Chief, U.S. Atlantic Fleet; flag lieutenant to Commander, U.S. Second Fleet/Commander Striking Fleet Atlantic; flight instructor, Prowler Fleet Replacement Squadron; on the staffs of the Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe and Commander, Naval Air Force Pacific; and Deputy Director, Operations, J3, U. S. Cyber Command.

Clapperton’s awards include from each of his commands, the Battle E and Chief of Naval Operations Retention Excellence Awards. In September 2007, Clapperton was awarded the prestigious Admiral James Bond Stockdale Award for Inspirational Leadership.



**Captain J.J. "Yank" Cummings**  
**United States Navy**  
***USS Gerald R. Ford (CVN 78)***



Capt. Cummings grew up in Sharon, Massachusetts, graduated from Sharon High School in 1985 and earned a B.A. in physics from Bates College in 1990. In 1986, he enlisted in the Navy Reserves and served as a hospital corpsman attached to Alpha Company, 1st Battalion 25th Marines in Topsham, Maine until 1991.

He completed Aviation Officer Candidate School in November of 1991, earned his wings in October 1993 and completed Fleet Replacement training in the F-14A Tomcat in June 1995.

Capt. Cummings' fleet tours flying the F-14 were with the VF-24 "Fighting Renegades" and VF-211 "Checkmates" on USS NIMITZ (CVN 68). He completed his Training Officer tour in the VF-102 "Diamondbacks" on USS THEODORE ROOSEVELT (CVN 71) and his Department Head tour with the VF-143 "Pukin' Dogs" on USS GEORGE WASHINGTON (CVN 73). After transitioning to the FA-18F Super Hornet in 2007, he served as Executive and Commanding Officer of VFA-11, the "Red Rippers" aboard USS HARRY S. TRUMAN (CVN 75).

Ashore, Capt. Cummings served as SURGRAD with the VT-19 "Attack Frogs" and as an F-14 Instructor Pilot with the VF-101 "Grim Reapers" where he graduated from the Navy Fighter Weapons School (TOPGUN) as a Strike Fighter Tactics Instructor. Additionally, he served in the NATO Logistics Branch at HQ Strategic Allied Command Transformation and as Branch Head for Force Rotation in the Global Force Management Cell at US Joint Forces Command in Norfolk, Virginia. He was selected for training in the Navy's Nuclear Propulsion Program in 2010 and completed nuclear power training in December 2012. In 2016 at Commander, Naval Air Forces, U.S. Pacific Fleet, he served as the Assistant Chief of Staff for aircraft carrier training, F-35C Air Ship Integration and Foreign Military Training.

Capt. Cummings served as the Executive Officer of USS NIMITZ (CVN 68) from May 2013 to May 2015 and as the Commanding Officer of USS ANCHORAGE (LPD 23) from September 2015 to December 2016. He became the third Commanding Officer of USS GERALD R. FORD (CVN 78) on Aug. 10, 2018.

He has a Master of Science in Education from Old Dominion University and a Master of Arts in National Security and Strategic Studies from the Naval War College where he graduated with Distinction as the President's Honor Graduate.

Capt. Cummings has 3,900 total flight hours and 740 carrier landings. His decorations include a Legion of Merit, two Defense Meritorious Service Medals, three Meritorious Service Medals, seven Air Medals (Strike Flight), and five Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medals (two with combat distinguishing devices).







# CHANGE OF COM SCHEDULE

ARRIVAL OF OFFICIAL PARTY

NATIONAL ANTHEM

INVOCATION

*Lieutenant Commander Michael Matson*

INTRODUCTION OF GUEST SPEAKER

*Captain J.J. Cummings*

GUEST SPEAKER

*Rear Admiral John Meier*



# MAND CEREMONY

## OF EVENTS

REMARKS AND READING OF ORDERS

*Captain J. J. Cummings*

READING OF ORDERS AND REMARKS

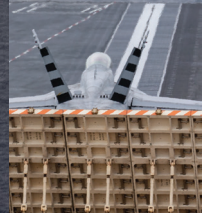
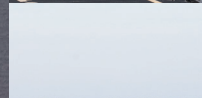
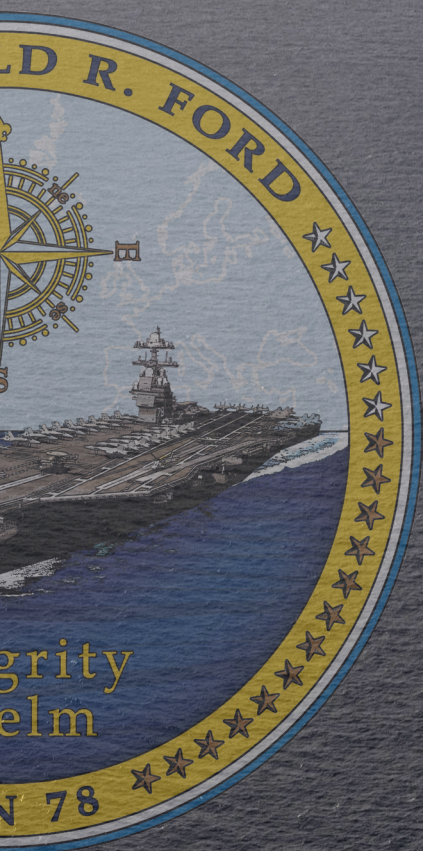
*Captain Paul J. Lanzilotta*

BENEDICTION

*Lieutenant Commander Michael Matson*

CEREMONY CONCLUDES









**Captain “Paulie” Lanzilotta**  
**United States Navy**



Capt. Paul J. Lanzilotta hails from Long Island, New York, and is a graduate of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He commissioned through the Naval ROTC program and earned his wings of gold as a naval flight officer, primarily flying the carrier-based E-2C Hawkeye command and control aircraft. He also earned a master's degree from the Johns Hopkins University in Maryland.

Lanzilotta's assignments at sea include two separate tours with Carrier Airborne Early Warning Squadron (VAW) 121, deploying with John C. Stennis, Dwight D. Eisenhower and George Washington strike groups. He also sailed on USS John F. Kennedy (CV 67) as Flag Lieutenant for Commander, Carrier Strike Group SIX. Lanzilotta's first command tour was with VAW-126, the "Seahawks," deploying with the Harry S. Truman strike group as the squadron's executive officer and then commanding officer. During his tours at sea flying the Hawkeye, he contributed to Operations SOUTHERN WATCH, ENDURING FREEDOM, IRAQI FREEDOM and NEW DAWN. He also served as the ship's executive officer on board USS Ronald Reagan (CVN 76) and deployed in support of U.S 7th Fleet patrols in the western Pacific Ocean. Most recently, Capt. Lanzilotta served as Commanding Officer of USS Arlington (LPD 24), deploying in support of Operation ODYSSEY RESOLVE and other operations.

Capt. Lanzilotta's assignments ashore include the United States Naval Test Pilot School, Fixed Wing Test Squadron (VX) 20, J-35 Lead Planner for HQ European Command, Deputy Executive Assistant to the Chief of Naval Personnel, and commanding officer, VAW-120, the Fleet Replacement Squadron for E-2C/D and C-2A aircraft. After commanding the FRS, he completed the Aviation Nuclear Officer training pipeline.

Lanzilotta is slated to be the Commanding Officer for USS Gerald R. Ford (CVN 78), reporting in January 2021.

Capt. Lanzilotta has logged over 2,600 hours in 22 different aircraft. His personal decorations include the Legion of Merit, Meritorious Service Medal, Defense Meritorious Service Medal, Air Medal, and various other medals, unit and campaign awards.

# USS GERALD R. FORD (CVN 78)

## LEADERSHIP

### **Executive Officer**

*CAPT Jeremy Shamblee*

### **Heads of Departments**

*LCDR Frank Gates, Admin Officer*

*CDR Eric Nagley, Aircraft Intermediate Maintenance Officer*

*CDR John Peterson, Air Boss*

*CDR Ron McCallister, Combat Systems Officer*

*CDR Charles Johnson, Chaplain*

*LCDR Adrian Grey, First Lieutenant*

*LCDR Joseph Carey, Dental Officer*

*CDR Homer Hensy, Engineering Officer*

*CDR Jeffrey Roark, Intelligence Officer*

*LCDR Kevin Loughman, Judge*

*LCDR Desiree Frame, Public Affairs Officer*

*CDR Randy Connolly, Ship's Medical Officer*

*CDR Michael Neilson, Navigation Officer*

*CDR Joe Brogren, Operations Officer*

*CAPT Joe Fals, Reactor Officer*

*CDR Rudolf Hawkins, Safety Officer*

*LCDR Chuck Cranston, Security Officer*

*CDR Carl Koch, Supply Officer*

*LCDR Nicholas Devorak, Training Officer*

*CDR James Fish, Gun Boss*

### **Ship Sponsor**

*Susan Ford Bales*

## **Command Master Chief**

*CMDCM De'Andre Beaufort*

## **Department Leading Chief Petty Officers**

*PSCS Rafael Diaz, Admin*

*AVCM Richard Kirby, AIMD*

*ABECS Carl Higdon, Air*

*ETCM Christopher Neerhof, Combat Systems*

*RPC Trent Clark, CRMD*

*ABECS Corey Hearn, Deck*

*HMCS Janae Smart, Dental*

*MMCM Simon Cleetus, Engineering*

*CTTCS Joshua Lesoken, Intelligence*

*LNC Justin Hood, Legal*

*MCC RJ Stratchko, Media*

*HMCS Phillip JeanGilles, Medical*

*QMCS Jeffrey Brewer, Navigation*

*OSCM Carlos Smith, Operations*

*MMNCM Christopher Foster, Reactor*

*ABHC Bryan Nance, Safety*

*MACM Aurelius Fullilove, Security*

*LSCM Tonya Mccray, Supply*

*ABFCS Cherry Pizzarelle, Training*

*AOCM William Feliton, Weapons*

## **Ombudsman**

*Danni Campbell*

*Jillian Stone*

# GERALD R. FORD



Gerald R. Ford was raised in Grand Rapids, Michigan in a humble household of little means. The family business, a paint and varnish warehouse, suffered during the Great Depression, and young Leslie Lynch King Jr. (President Ford's birth name) had to work from an early age. He was offered scholarships from Michigan State and Northwestern Universities, but turned them down to attend the University of Michigan on his own dime. With no scholarship, he worked at a diner and tutored other students to pay for his tuition. It would be as a Michigan Wolverine that his legacy was born.

During his senior year in 1934, Gerald Ford Jr. (he had legally changed his name to that of his stepfather) would be confronted with a moral dilemma. As a star football player for the Wolverines, he came face to face with racial prejudice when Georgia Tech came to Ann Arbor for a football game.

One of Michigan's best players was Willis Ward, who would become the second Black player since 1890 to letter athletically at the University of Michigan. Georgia Tech refused to take the field if a Black man were allowed to play. Ford was furious at Georgia Tech for making the demand, and at his own team for caving in. He agreed to play only after Willis Ward personally asked him to. Ford led Michigan to a 9-2 win, their only win of the season. Ford received hundreds of letters in the mail regarding his public support of Willis Ward, including several death threats. This was an early indication of his willingness to make hard, even unpopular, decisions. After graduating from Michigan, Ford attended Yale Law, graduated in May 1941 and returned to Grand Rapids to open his own law firm.

Following the attacks on Pearl Harbor, Ford left his firm to answer the call to arms in February of 1942. In North Carolina, Ensign Ford was assigned to train naval officers on gunnery, and in 1943 he reported to the USS Monterey (CVL 26) in San Francisco as a gunnery officer. CVL 26's maiden deployment would see over a dozen battles including Saipan, Guam, Formosa, and Philippine Sea. While on the Monterey, Ford became the Assistant Navigator and was promoted to lieutenant commander before finishing his contract in 1946. The war changed Gerald R. Ford Jr., and when he returned to Grand Rapids he embarked on a new mission -- to serve his nation in politics.

Ford ran for and was unanimously elected as the Fifth District's Congressman in the House of Representatives. He served Michigan with honor for the next 25 years, achieving at least 60% of the popular vote during all of his races. He was known for his down-home style of leadership and an ability to listen to his constituents, guiding him to make decisions he believed to be correct. While in the House,



he voted in favor of the Civil Rights Acts of 1957, 1960, 1964, and 1968, outlawing discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, or national origin, as well as racial segregation in schools, employment, and public accommodations. He also voted for the 24th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, prohibiting the execution of poll taxes, which prevented Blacks and poor whites from participating in national elections; and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 which prohibited racial discrimination in voting.

Ford was highly respected by Democrats and Republicans alike. Due to his high standing in Congress, he was elected to be the Chairman of the Appropriations Committee, one of the most important but unpopular committees in Congress. In 1971, he was elected as the Minority Leader of the Republican Party and continued to work toward either eventual retirement or getting the only job he ever aspired to – the Speaker of the House. In 1973, his life would change dramatically with the Watergate scandal and Vice President Spiro Agnew's resignation for tax evasion. By special election, Ford became the new Vice President, and eight months later, President Nixon resigned. On August 8th, 1974, Gerald R. Ford Jr. was sworn in as the 38th President of the United States. President Ford would become the first sitting Vice President and then President to never campaign for those offices.

Times were extremely turbulent when Ford became President: a major recession; the final days of the Vietnam War; violent protests regarding racial inequality; etc. He was criticized for several major decisions. He attended several summits with the Soviet Union much to the dismay of the Republican Party, pulled all remaining American military forces out of Vietnam to end US involvement in Southeast Asia, gave all 'draft-dodgers' amnesty and pardoned President Nixon for his crimes. The pardon would be his most controversial decision, dropping his approval ratings into the 30s. His cabinet warned him about the pardon but Ford's response was, "I do not need the polls to tell me whether or not I am doing the right thing." Time would show that these decisions were fraught with political risk and alienated him from his own party, but they were what the nation needed to begin healing following Watergate and the Vietnam War.

The legacy Gerald R. Ford leaves is one of clear-eyed conviction and strong moral principles. He was an ardent supporter of the media and free press, understanding the importance of their role in holding government and others in position of power in check. To this day, the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Foundation awards two distinguished journalism prizes, one for reporting on the Presidency and the other for reporting on National Defense.

In 2006, the Armed Services Committee informed him that the newest class of the U.S. Navy's aircraft carriers was to be named the FORD class and that the lead ship in the class would be the USS GERALD R. FORD (CVN 78). Before passing away a month later on December 26th, 2006, President Ford wrote to his family and the Armed Services Committee that the greatest honor any man could receive was to have an American naval aircraft carrier named after him.

President Ford's legacy and American patriotism live on in the crew of CVN 78. He courageously made decisions that, although they hurt his standing in his party and chances for reelection, were in the best interest of the nation. It for this reason that all GERALD R. FORD Sailors proudly wear "Integrity at the Helm" on their uniforms.

# USS GERALD R. FORD (CVN 78)

## SEAL

**Fleur-de-Lis** pointing true north symbolizes the Boy Scouts of America.

**Map of the world** represents USS Gerald R. Ford's (CVN 78) global presence and ties to the chief of naval operations' guiding principle of operating forward.

**Moral compass** represents President Gerald R. Ford's legacy built upon integrity and honesty.

**Azure** (blue) and **maize** (yellow) color scheme represent Ford's undergraduate university, the University of Michigan. The crest also contains Yale University's **blue** and **white**, to represent his graduate school.



**38 stars** represent that Ford was the 38th U.S. president.

**26 shaded stars** represent the hull number of USS Monterey (CVL-26).

**"Integrity at the Helm"** is the Ford Foundation motto, which ties the ship to the Ford Foundation while also highlighting the Navy core values.

*“The Constitution is the bedrock of all our freedoms; guard and cherish it; keep honor and order in your own house; and the republic will endure.”*

- President Gerald R. Ford  
Last State of the Union address, January 12, 1977

**W E A R E  
W A R S H I P**

