

THE GREAT

ISSUE #3

# COMMUNICATOR

WHO IS IN THE SPOTLIGHT?

BETTER MAINTENANCE FAST!

20 YEARS OF WAR



UNDESIGNATED  
HARD WORK, ENDURANCE, DRIVE

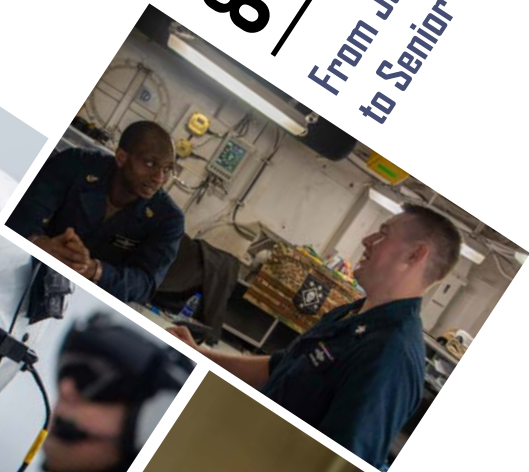


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## LEADERSHIP

CO	CAPT Fred Goldhammer
XO	CAPT Matthew Ventimiglia
CMC	CMDCM Chris King
PAO	LCDR Dawn Stankus
DLCPO	MCC Matthew White
APAO	LT Alyson Hands
LPO	MC1 Sylvia Nealy
ALPO	MC1 Jackie Hart

## MEDIA DEPARTMENT

MC2 Reina Delgado	MC2 Jillian Grady
MC2 Cameron Edy	MC3 Gray Gibson
MC2 Michael Jarmiolowski	MC3 Santiago Navarro
MC2 Quinton Lee	MCSN George Cardenas
MC2 Thomas Leishman	MCSN Matthew Mitchell
MC2 Jason Tarleton	MCSN Eric Stanton
MC2 David Warren	
MC3 Oswald Felix Jr.	



# Kendra Stonehocker FROM DENVER, COLORADO

*It's not always easy balancing the gym and work, but what you make a priority, you will find time for. I found that I prefer going to the gym after work, when I have no place to be but right there in the moment.*

*My goals are constantly changing, but for the moment my goal is to get my numbers up in what I can push, pull, and carry. I want to be able to compete in more "Strong Women" competitions and challenges.*





**STRIVE FOR PROGRESS, NOT PERFECTION.  
PERFECTION IS THE PROOF OF STANDING STILL.  
PROGRESS IS THE PROOF OF GROWTH.  
- EM3 STONEHOCKER**



# FROM JUNIOR SAILOR TO SENIOR LEADER

Story by MCSN Eric Stanton

On Feb. 1, 1942, **Aviation Machinist's Mate 1st Class Bruno Gaido**, assigned to aircraft carrier USS Enterprise (CV 6), shot down a Japanese aircraft intended to crash into Enterprise's flight deck. For his initiative and bravery, he was promoted from petty officer third class to petty officer first class on the spot. Gaido posthumously received the Flying Cross after taking part in the Battle of Midway.

**Cook 3rd Class Doris "Dorie" Miller**, while serving aboard battleship USS West Virginia (BB 48), distinguished himself by courageous conduct and devotion to duty during the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. Afterward, he was awarded the Navy Cross for his actions.

Near the waters of Guadalcanal, **Messman 1st Class Charles French** swam six to eight hours in shark-infested waters while towing a raft with 15 survivors of destroyer USS Gregory (DD 82). He received a letter of commendation for this action.

The Navy creates leaders – its history is filled with characters standing for greater ideals, risking life and limb to stand by their oath. They may be born with determination, but Navy training forges that honorable streak, and it doesn't shine through overnight. USS Ronald Reagan (CVN 76), the Navy's only forward deployed aircraft carrier, is continuing the tradition of forging new leaders. There is one important puzzle piece in turning a civilian with determination into a Sailor demonstrating our core values: Sailorization.

"I learned to be more confident in myself as well as to do things the Navy-way," said **Quartermaster 1st Class Matthew Lenerville**, leading petty officer of Navigation department.

That "Navy-way" is Sailorization at its core. Taking civilians and molding them into sea-going warfighters doesn't stop at boot camp, but lasts throughout their career. For Lenerville, the at-sea indoctrination came naturally, he said. He reported to his first duty station aboard aircraft carrier USS Kitty Hawk (CV 63).

"I knew that I wanted to do this for a career," said Lenerville. "For that to happen, I told myself that I had to prove to everyone that I can do my job and I can be depended upon."

By learning the importance of military bearing and earning qualifications, junior Sailors begin to learn that it isn't just about themselves, but those they work beside.

"[Sailorization] is essential due to the fact that we are a team," said



QM1 Lenerville mentors QMSN Devin Baker

Lenerville. "The main part of building your team is through training and qualifications. Everyone has to be qualified and proficient to conduct any operation effectively and safely."

For junior Sailors to succeed in their careers within the Navy, they must come together as a team rather than as individuals. They are able to learn from each other and can pass their knowledge down to the next generation. This passing of knowledge naturally lends itself to mentorship, and eventually, leadership.

"Leadership is very important to me," said **Chief Culinary Specialist Anthony Scott**, leading chief petty officer of general mess food production and a 16-year Navy leader. "It's the ability to guide, mentor, train and inspire the next generation of Sailors that will, at some point, take your place."

He continued to explain qualities

of good leadership, such as setting and being an example, and not just training Sailors on naval regulations, but building their character skills. One of the leadership skills he stressed was the maxim "Praise in public, counsel in private." With leadership comes responsibility, and giving junior Sailors a valuable lesson, and training them to be better. A method for doing so is counseling, giving them guidance and a chance to improve.

"I look at counseling as an opportunity to train and for somebody to learn something," said Scott. "Counseling can be for something good, and you want to let them know they're doing something good – but it can also be used in the negative to turn a bad aspect into a positive aspect."

Scott went further, emphasizing how negative counseling isn't punitive, but constructive.

"Leaders counsel people for

different reasons," said Scott. "To train [a Sailor], if they're doing something ... I look at it as a training opportunity, whether good or bad."

Through the guidance and experience of other leaders, junior Sailors can learn what leadership means and find inspiration to be better.

Scott's mentor, **Master Chief Culinary Specialist Willie Person**, always took this job seriously.

"At the time I thought there was no better technical expert, no better communicator – there was no problem too big or too little for him to handle," said Scott.

By learning from leaders who inspire them, junior Sailors can create their own leadership style and pass it on through mentoring, pushing those around them to be great leaders.

"Being a Sailor is about [a few] key basic things – doing what you're supposed to do, being where you're supposed to be, being on time and being accountable," said **Senior Chief Aerographer's Mate Abdul Kasimcarew**, the senior coordinator for a leadership program known as Sailor 360. "On the leadership side, it comes with time, experience and the willingness to fail - because you don't just become a leader overnight. In combining those, just be accountable and just learn the leadership skills as you go on."

Through Sailor 360, junior Sailors develop skills for the future and grow in leadership, he said. Naturally, Kasimcarew didn't just



CSC Scott mentors CSSN Nicolas Headley

become a leader overnight either, he began to understand leadership and Sailorization through his own experiences.

"It took me a bit longer to learn how to be a Sailor because I was hard-headed, but leadership came with time and listening," said Kasimcarew. "You've got to be holding yourself accountable. Sailorization helped me know how to hold the standard, be who I need to be and what I need to do. Our leadership skills just continue to develop by meeting different types of leaders, good and bad, and learn from those lessons. Try to continue to develop your leadership skills every day, because it's never going to be perfect."

Emphasizing this, **Chief Aviation Ordnanceman Yamilka Carvajal** explained how Sailor 360 develops Sailors from any pay grade and teaches them these skills once they

leave boot camp or Officer Candidate School. For Carvajal, she owes thanks to previous leaders who helped guide her as well.

"When I was younger ... I messed stuff up, but without that leadership from my prior chain of command, I wouldn't be where I am today," said Carvajal.

The more junior Sailors learn about Sailorization and leadership the better they will grow and develop as Sailors.

"It's like an investment," said Kasimcarew. "We invest in the Navy's future from the junior Sailors to junior officers. So, the earlier you start it, the less time you have to spend on it in the future."

Leaders on Ronald Reagan are cultivating the next Gaido, Miller, and French, by setting an example for young Sailors to follow and embodying the navy's core tenants of Honor, Courage, and Commitment.



AGCS Kasimcarew mentors AG1 Nathaniel Linn and AG3 Michael Dooley



# The Navy Runs on Un-des

Story and Graphics by: MC3 Gray Gibson, MCSN George Cardenas



Undesignated Sailor  
Unlimited Possibilities

“THERE IS NOT MUCH YOU CAN DO TO PREPARE YOURSELF FOR UNDES,  
BUT UNDES DOES A LOT TO PREPARE YOU FOR EVERYTHING ELSE.

-SEAMAN JOHN MACIEL, DECK DEPARTMENT



If you ask random people on the street to close their eyes and imagine a United States Sailor, more likely than not, the image that pops into their head is of an undesignated Sailor, commonly called “undes.” Young kids, fresh out of high school aimlessly painting the hull of a ship, monotonously swabbing a deck, or on their hands and knees cleaning heads. If you ask those Sailors why they joined the Navy, they might tell you “I didn’t know what job to pick,” or “The job I wanted wasn’t available,” or maybe it was just the only option they had.

While the outer shell of this image may have some truth to it, after all undes Sailors do find themselves painting, swabbing, and cleaning relatively often – the image does not show the hard work put in every day, the drive to succeed in an environment that makes it hard to stand out, and the ability to endure what is affectionately known as “the suck.” These attributes are what define an undesignated Sailor, and help mold them into the Navy’s leaders of tomorrow.

Whether rated or undesignated, the journey of every enlisted Sailor starts with a recruiter. “Get paid to travel the world while learning practical and applicable skills to use later in life” is what they say to entice future Sailors. However, this comes with the first big decision every Sailor

***“I didn’t know which rating to pick, so I chose undes.”***

needs to make – what rating to choose. There are over 90 ratings to choose from, ranging from culinary specialists who make food for the crew to fire controlmen who operate the various weapon systems on the ship. This choice can be overwhelming, especially for an 18-year-old coming out of high school.

“I didn’t know which rating to pick, so I chose undes,” said Seaman John Maciel, an undesignated Seaman aboard aircraft carrier USS Ronald Reagan

(CVN 76).

The Professional Apprenticeship Career Track (PACT) program gives undesignated Sailors three years to try out any rating they are interested in without having to commit to it until they are positive it is what they want to do.

“I have been able to participate in a bunch of cool evolutions, such as line-handling and [underway replenishments],” said Maciel. “People think being able to drive the ship is really cool and I get to do that pretty much every day.”

But with every decision comes a bit of give and take. The Navy gives undes Sailors the chance to experience everything the ship has to offer, but everything the ship has to offer includes doing the less glamorous jobs as well. Someone needs to chip the paint and swab the deck, as they are vital jobs that need to be done and that is where undes Sailors come in.

“The recruiter and detailer tell you that you can do this job or that job, but it’s a bit of a double-edged sword,” said Chief Religious Program Specialist Joshua Selvidge. “You can do it; you just have to be

proficient as a deck Sailor first, which takes a lot of work.”

Selvidge started his Navy career with a special warfare contract but in boot camp decided to no longer pursue special warfare. He realized he wanted to become a hospital corpsman – his true passion was helping people. However, when he went to speak with the detailer he was told undesignated was his only option. Even though being undesignated was not ideal, Selvidge soon found out how he could take advantage of the opportunity to continue his passion for helping others.

“Pick a career you are interested in. I wanted to help people so I tried to be a corpsman. That didn’t work out, so I found a career that allows me to help people spiritually and morally.”

Being a religious program specialist has allowed Selvidge to follow

his passion, but it wasn’t an easy road to get there.

“It’s not easy being an undes Sailor. You are worked hard and expected to meet the ship’s mission first before working on your personal career.”

The ship’s mission is the No. 1 priority for

***“As an undes Sailor the most important thing you can do is figure out how to contribute to the ship’s mission.”***

all ratings in the Navy, but it is especially important for the undesignated Sailors. Their contribution to the ship’s mission is not as stringently defined as it is for other Sailors, which means each undes Sailor needs to actively search out and find a way to contribute to the overarching goal of the ship.

“I learned how to get qualified quickly. As an undes sailor the most important thing you can do is figure out how to contribute to the ship’s mission – and that means being as qualified as you can be.”


Since Sailors are only allowed to be undesignated for three years and they cannot advance past the E-3 pay grade, getting qualified not only sets them up for success later in their careers, but is also one of the few ways they can separate themselves from their peers. “If you build yourself as a great undes Sailor first, you will find success in any rate you end up in,” said Selvidge.

Since undes Sailors work all over the ship for many different departments, they end up experiencing more leadership styles than most Sailors experience during their entire career in the Navy. Selvidge attributes some of his

Seaman John Maciel

RPC Joshua Selvidge



A close-up profile shot of Lt. Ilia "Rock" Reyes wearing a flight helmet with blue and white patterns and a communication system. He is looking forward with a focused expression.

success in the Navy to characteristics and leadership traits he picked up early on in his career as an undesignated Sailor.

"As an undes Sailor, you will experience significantly more leaders than those Sailors that are just in a single department," said Selvidge. "That allows undes Sailors to see leadership traits that they like and take with them, or see traits they don't like and they can make sure they don't make those mistakes when they are in a leadership role."

***"I took a gamble going undesignated..."***


This system of cherry-picking traits and qualities allows undes Sailors to develop a solid leadership foundation for later on in their careers if they become chief petty officers, or apply to be warrant or commissioned officers.

Lt. Ilia "Rock" Reyes is currently a pilot for Helicopter Marine Strike Squadron (HSM) 77 attached to Ronald Reagan, but he started his career as an undesignated airman. Ever since Reyes joined the Navy, he knew that he wanted to be a pilot, but when he was coming out of college the available pilot slots were slim to none. Instead of tossing in the towel and giving up on that dream, he took the risk of going undesignated to improve the strength of his officer package.

"I took a gamble going undesignated because everyone knows you could end up anywhere; I got lucky and ended up with a squadron," said Reyes.

Even though Reyes was only undesignated for a short time before being picked up for Officer Candidate School (OCS), he believes that his experience allows him to appreciate what the undesignated Sailor contributes to the ship in a different way than other Sailors.

"Officers that haven't been undesignated before tend to only see the result of the work. They don't know about the blood, sweat and tears that go into keeping the ship running because they didn't get to experience it firsthand," said Reyes.

A group of Sailors in bright yellow safety gear and helmets are walking away from the camera down a long, straight wooden plank on a ship's deck. The ocean is visible in the background under a clear sky.

Someone could easily see a Sailor chipping paint and think that their job is non-essential; however, Reyes sees every contribution, no matter how small, as an essential one to the ship's mission.

"The job of undes is incredibly important to the overall mission," said Reyes. "Look at the line shack. Some people just see Sailors washing a helicopter. I see Sailors preventing corrosion and keeping my helicopter mission-ready so I can fly each and every day."

Even if some tasks may feel small or inconsequential, Reyes makes sure to go out of his way to let his undesignated Sailors know that

everything they do is not only recognized, but is also vital to allowing him fly every day.

"For undes, it is all about the little victories," said Reyes. "Daily tasks may seem unimportant, but they all add up. So, I make sure to thank them whenever I can for letting me go up and fly."

***"I see Sailors preventing corrosion and keeping my helicopter mission-ready so I can fly each and every day."***

While the life of an undesignated Sailor is not glamorous – or particularly easy – it does offer incredible opportunities for the Sailors willing to put in the extra work and take advantage of

their unique situation. Maciel summed it up best, "There is not much you can do to prepare yourself for undes, but undes does a lot to prepare you for everything else."



# 3M

## MAINTENANCE

The junior Sailor conducts the maintenance. The supervisor plans the maintenance. The khaki inspects the maintenance. The coordinator sets the standard. Each agent in maintenance plays a critical role in extending the life of the ship and the life of its crew.

## MATERIAL

If followed properly and given the priority and critical eye it requires, maintenance effectively and efficiently prolongs the years a ship can spend at sea. From CO2 bottles, float coats and MOBI's to AFFF stations and steam catapults - maintenance covers the material condition of all equipment on a ship.

## MANAGEMENT

Instead of operating equipment until it breaks and reacting with corrective maintenance, the planned maintenance system establishes a consistent schedule for preventative maintenance, inspection of maintenance and equipment, and a long-term plan to increase the ship's operability.

Hours Spent On  
**PER** **72,840** MONTH  
**2,428** DAY  
**874,080** YEAR  
**MAINTENANCE**

NUMBER OF  
MAINT. CHECKS  
PERFORMED WEEKLY  
**20,140**



NUMBER OF  
SPOT CHECKS  
DONE EACH YEAR  
**7,680**

SPACES  
MAINTAINED  
BY SHIP'S FORCE  
**2,639**

## PREVENTATIVE MAINTENANCE

Actions taken to prevent or discover functional failures, such as changing oil, cleaning filters, calibrating, etc.



# MEETING OR EXCEEDING?

## -USS RONALD REAGAN TACKLES INSURV.

By MC2 Cameron C. Edy

Most inspections aboard aircraft carrier USS Ronald Reagan (CVN 76) target specific warfare areas. Sea Trials looks at operational capability; Maintenance, Material, Management Inspection (3MI) assesses the shipboard 3M program; and carrier qualifications evaluate the ship's ability to launch and recover aircraft safely and effectively. But the Board of Inspection and Survey (INSURV) is a keel-up material inspection of the ship covering every warfare area,

from damage control to navigation. Large-scale programs are analyzed, broken down into the minutiae, and further analyzed – at some point, inspectors will verify the height of berthing hooks and the inches of photoluminescent tape on hatches. The nuts-and-bolts level of inspection is all geared toward one mission – ensuring the ship is mission ready throughout its intended 50 year career.

"[The inspectors] need to make

sure our gear is functional, and that we know how to operate it," said Lt. David Wiley, Ronald Reagan's 3M officer. "Even if we have a piece of gear that is functional and operates, if the Sailors assigned to that check are unfamiliar with the equipment, the overall check will be [a fail]."

INSURV is an open-book test. The INSURV inspection guides (IIGs) and references detail exactly how the equipment is intended to function, and how that equipment is meant to be operated. The difficulty at INSURV's core is the coordination.

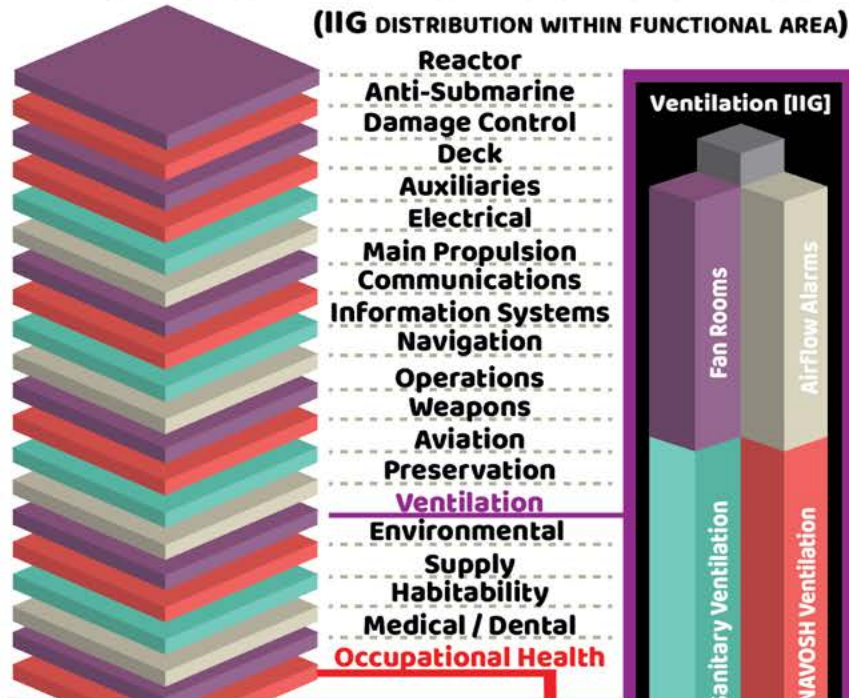
"We made IIG coordinators," said Wiley. "Instead of writing [IIG's] by department, they're written by functional area. For instance, damage control (DC) has fire and flooding alarms. Fire and flooding [periodic maintenance] is conducted by interior communications electricians (IC). But there are also fire and flooding alarms in all of the Weapons [department] magazines. We [end up] with this weird trifecta of an inspection point being a DC check, conducted by ICs, in a weapons magazine. If you can imagine the coordination that has to happen for that to be successful – that's what INSURV is all about."

That level of detailed coordination might seem overwhelming, but the inspection is greater than the ship, the Fleet, or even the Navy – the seaworthiness of each ship is reported directly to congress for review and evaluation. But the quality of life for individual Sailors is not forgotten in the INSURV preparations.

"I remember when I was a junior Sailor and went through inspections like this," said Wiley, who joined the Navy as a gas turbine system technician (mechanical). "The biggest lesson I learned is that the long, drawn out preparation for INSURV is a lot better, with more time off, than trying to squish all of that into a very short timeframe and trying to execute the requirements immediately before the inspection. The fact that we are getting ahead of this, training and preparing early, will give us more time back when we're in [Yokosuka, Japan]."

### 20 FUNCTIONAL AREAS

(IIG DISTRIBUTION WITHIN FUNCTIONAL AREA)



### Occupational Health



# TOP PHOTOS





Airpower from the Sea Maintaining Readiness at all Times  
Able to Adapt to any Environment Warfighting at its Finest  
USS Ronald Reagan





# 20 YEARS OF WAR

STORY AND LAYOUT BY  
MC2 MICHAEL B. JARMIOLOWSKI

On the clear morning of Tuesday, Sept. 11, 2001, nobody expected the United States was hours away from entering its longest war, with 19 al-Qaida terrorists hijacking four planes bound for the west coast and intent on carrying out the worst terrorist attack in American history.

At 8:45 a.m. local time, American Airlines Flight 11 crashed into the North Tower of the World Trade Center in New York City. The impact spanned across multiple upper floors of the 110-story building. Eighteen minutes later, as live coverage captured what was initially thought to be a freak accident, United Airlines Flight 175 deliberately crashed into the South Tower of the World Trade Center, showering burning rubble and debris over downtown Manhattan. One hour after the first impact, the third jet, American Airlines Flight 77 circled Washington, D.C. and crashed into the west side of the Pentagon – the headquarters for the U.S. Department of Defense. The South Tower collapsed into a pillar of dust and smoke less than 15 minutes after as the fourth plane, United Airlines Flight 93, was over the skies of western Pennsylvania. Because of a delay on takeoff, the passengers of Flight 93 were aware of the horror unfolding and are suspected to have resisted the hijackers, bringing the plane down in a rural field near Shanksville, Pennsylvania. The North Tower stood for another 20 minutes, eventually collapsing at 10:30 a.m. In just 102 minutes the skyline of New York City and the future of the United States was permanently changed. Nearly 3,000 people from 78 countries lost their lives on 9/11.

America was under attack.

The administration of President George W. Bush and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) immediately recognized the attacks as an act of war, which forced the United States into the “Global War on Terrorism” in Afghanistan and Iraq. The immediate response, named Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF), formally began Oct. 7, 2001. American and coalition military operations within Afghanistan quickly devastated the Taliban and al-Qaida networks. By December, most campaign goals had been met and isolated al-Qaida and Taliban forces fled to a mountainous region of Afghanistan known as Tora Bora.

Naval forces played an integral role in the opening phases of OEF. The U.S. Navy placed six aircraft carriers on station in the Middle East, consisting of 60,000 active-duty Sailors and Marines. Without any direct land access

to Afghanistan, carrier-based aircraft and ship-based missile strikes played an important part in initial operations. Fighter aircraft from the Navy’s carriers flew more than 70% of all strike missions between the formal start of OEF and the end of December. The Navy’s forward-deployed aircraft carrier at the time, USS Kitty Hawk (CV 63), left port in Yokosuka, Japan with only part of Carrier Air Wing (CVW) 5 to assist as a staging platform for joint special operations forces (SOF) preparing to conduct raids and other missions into Afghanistan. Carrier-based F-14 Tomcats and F/A-18 Hornets and Super Hornets demonstrated the advanced capability of naval strike aviation using GPS and laser-guided munitions to hit their designated targets – showcasing the capability to adapt to a changing mission. In the beginning of OEF, targets consisted of airfields, air defense sites, bunkers, command and control nodes, military barracks and training camps in or near key cities such as Kabul, Kandahar, Herat, and Mazar-i-Sharif. Within 10 days, the attacks shifted to targets of opportunity such as al-Qaida leaders, Taliban vehicles and troops on the move against allied Northern Alliance forces. After the conclusion of Operation Anaconda, excursions shifted from a consistently-flowing force over Afghanistan to more sporadic, policing sorties in support of the Hamid Karzai’s emerging provisional government in the

country. The U.S. Navy projected a force from the sea using CVWs, cruise missile attacks and integrated operations with Marine Corps expeditionary units based from amphibious ready groups. The al-Qaida network in Afghanistan had been brought down just 102 days after the 102 minutes that changed America.

By November 2002, reconstruction started in Afghanistan and by the middle of 2003, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld declared an end to “major combat,” and Bush’s declaration of “mission accomplished” in Iraq coincided with the declaration. Rumsfeld said Bush, U.S. Central Command Chief Gen. Tommy Franks, and Afghan president Hamid Karzai “have concluded that we are at a point where we clearly have moved from major combat activity to a period of stability and stabilization and reconstruction and activities.”

NATO then assumed control of the International Security Forces (ISAF) in Afghanistan, expanding their role across the country and eventually placing around 65,000 troops from 42 countries in Afghanistan. Shortly after the new Afghan government agreed on a constitution and Karzai was democratically elected to be the country’s first president, Osama Bin-Laden reemerged. He took responsibility for the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, and in a pre-recorded video aired on

## RP1 HENRY SHOEMAKER, CRMD

Religious Program Specialist 1st Class Henry Shoemaker was part of International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) operations in Afghanistan. Today he serves as the leading petty officer of the Command Religious Ministries department (CRMD) aboard Ronald Reagan.

“I deployed with the Marine Corps to the Helmand Province in Afghanistan during January of 2013 and stayed through August in support of International Security Assistance Force operations,” said Shoemaker.

In Afghanistan, Shoemaker provided force protection, security and medical care – in addition to supporting services for chaplains.

“Our primary step-off point was Camp Leatherneck,” said Shoemaker, “and while there we traveled throughout the southwest region, providing care to Marines and Sailors and assisting the wounded.”

Shoemaker said serving in that role was challenging, but rewarding. As a result, he was able to witness the results of his work firsthand – the ways that his duties directly helped Sailors and Marines stationed throughout Afghanistan.

“The most satisfying thing about being down range was the mission impact the chaplains and I were able to provide,” said Shoemaker. “We saw Marines and Sailors at some of their darkest moments and were able to help or give them something to make it through those times. It’s those types of moments that make all the different

kinds of sacrifices worth the cost.”

Today, he can still see similarities between his duties in Afghanistan and his duties aboard America’s Flagship. The RPs in CRMD still have to go from place to place to provide religious services, and as a Medical Training Team member, Shoemaker can pass on the knowledge he honed while serving in Helmand province.

“The experiences I gained in Afghanistan are the things that have shaped my leadership philosophy and fortitude in life,” said Shoemaker. “We use a similar scheme of maneuvering in the carrier strike group by sending chaplains to places of needs. Now, instead of traveling FOB (forward operating base) to FOB, we travel ship to ship.”

By experiencing something so life-changing early in his career, Shoemaker brings a unique perspective to leading his Sailors. Though he does not do as much work on the ground level now, his guidance and mentorship are tools he uses to forge a legacy.

“It’s different being on the leadership side now vice the operating side, but I’ve seen firsthand how building a strong team can lead to improved endurance and resilience in individuals,” Shoemaker said. “People will endure ... when they feel part of something larger than themselves. That’s the type of team we’ve built in CRMD and the team we continue to strive for aboard Reagan.”





the news outlet Al-Jazeera, Bin-Laden stated, "We want to restore freedom to our nation, just as you lay waste to our nation."

In 2005, Bush and Karzai announced a strategic partnership between the U.S. and Afghanistan, giving access to the Afghan military in an effort to fight international terrorism. This partnership was made just before a reemergence of the Taliban in Afghanistan. Fighting continued, and during a NATO Summit in 2007, some differences between NATO countries caused problems for coalition forces. NATO Secretary-General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer proposed a 2008 deadline for the Afghan National Army to take control of security; however, with violence increasing against non-governmental aid workers, U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates criticized NATO countries for not sending more soldiers, claiming that progress was being made even though it may have seemed fragile at the time.

In 2009, President Barack Obama took the oath of office as the second U.S. president since the 9/11 attacks. He reaffirmed the American-Afghanistan commitment, believing Afghanistan to be the most important front in the war on terrorism, and instituted a "surge" of forces by adding 30,000 troops to the 68,000 already in the fight. The additional personnel, Obama said, "will increase our ability to train competent Afghan security forces, and to partner with them so that more Afghans can get into the fight. And they will help create the conditions for the United States to transfer responsibility to the Afghans." The president, on top of the

temporary surge, placed a 2011 timeline for a force drawdown. In 2010, NATO countries signed a resolution to hand over full responsibility for security in Afghanistan to Afghan forces by the end of 2014, with the transition process starting in tandem with the U.S. drawdown timeline of 2011.

In May 2011, the U.S. located Osama Bin-Laden at a compound in Pakistan. A U.S. Navy SEAL team entered the facility during a covert operation, killing Bin-Laden on scene. His body was transported to Afghanistan to be identified, and then taken to aircraft carrier USS Carl Vinson (CVN 70) to be buried at sea in accordance with Islamic tradition. In June, Obama announced the troop drawdown - 33,000 troops to be withdrawn from Afghanistan by the summer of 2012. As the war in Afghanistan neared its 10th anniversary, about 100,000 troops were deployed to Afghanistan, with a plan to withdraw all combat troops by 2014. By this time, the U.S. military had suffered 1,800 casualties and spent approximately \$444 billion on the war. After peace talks with the Taliban failed, U.S. Defense Secretary Leon Panetta announced the Pentagon's plan to conclude combat missions as early as mid-2013 and shift to a primarily security-assistance role in Afghanistan.

In 2014, Obama announced a delay to the troop drawdown and proposed a timetable for a withdrawal of 9,800 U.S. service members by the end of 2016. The U.S. forces still in Afghanistan were to maintain presence there solely to train Afghan forces and conduct small operations against the remnants of al-Qaida. Ashraf Ghani, the newly-elected

president of Afghanistan, signed a power-sharing agreement with Abdullah Abdullah, his opponent, after protests began challenging the voting results. The split of power caused dysfunction over their respective powers - specifically regarding appointments to security posts. That happened at a time when the Taliban was again making gains in the countryside. Over the following years, the security situation increased in Afghanistan, causing Obama to slow down the withdrawal and announcing that 8,400 troops were going to remain in Afghanistan.

In 2017, President Donald Trump took the helm as the third U.S. president to combat the War on Terror. In 2017, the U.S. military dropped its largest non-nuclear bomb on self-proclaimed Islamic State (ISIS) militants in eastern Afghanistan. The strike highlighted the emergence of ISIS in Afghanistan and the continued Taliban activity in the country. Trump outlined his Afghanistan policy in a speech to troops in Arlington, Virginia - stating that although his original instinct was to pull out, government officials were making an open-ended military commitment to Afghanistan and his decision to pull out would be based on the conditions on the ground, not timelines.

In January 2018, the Taliban launched further attacks against Afghan forces as troops were deployed to advise Afghan brigades and air strikes targeted opium factories, attempting to decimate the Taliban's economy. Security assistance - factored at billions of dollars - was cut off to Pakistan for what Trump stated were "lies and deceit" in harboring Taliban militants. In 2019, the U.S. and the

Taliban reached their most successful peace talks, meeting and discussing an agreement centered on removing U.S. forces and a cease fire between the Taliban and Afghan government, as well as the Taliban rejecting terrorist organizations operating within its territory. After a Taliban attack killed a U.S. Soldier, Trump called off a meeting with the Taliban and Ghani at Camp David. Despite that, in February 2020, the U.S. and Taliban brokered a deal stating Taliban-controlled areas would not be used for terrorist activities and intra-Afghan negotiations should begin the following month - which didn't actually occur until September 2020. Both sides expressed eagerness for a peaceful Afghanistan after the U.S. withdrawal, and in November the U.S. announced the plan for only 2,500 troops by mid-January 2021.

President Joe Biden took office in 2021 as the fourth U.S. president since 9/11. He announced that the U.S. would not meet the deadline set by the U.S.-Taliban agreement and a new deadline was set to withdraw all troops from

Afghanistan by Sept. 11, 2021, 20 years after the attacks that started the U.S. intervention.

The forward-deployed aircraft carrier USS Ronald Reagan (CVN 76) was sent to the Middle East from Yokosuka, Japan with CVW-5 to assist and cover the drawdown operations until the very end, the first time the forward-deployed aircraft carrier operated in the Middle East since Kitty Hawk almost 20 years before. The average age of a Sailor aboard Ronald Reagan is 20 years old, some of whom can only remember images of 9/11 being taught in school, and only know of the World Trade Center because of the terrorist attacks. Others were not born yet and only know a post-9/11 America, growing up with an ongoing war. The U.S. and NATO withdrawal from Afghanistan is a historic moment for the future of America, but U.S. forces are not gone completely. They will continue providing financial assistance and training, while supporting a way forward for the Afghan government and the Taliban, hopefully ushering in a new era of peace and prosperity.

## LT. CMDR. KEVIN GULDNER, VFA 102

Lt. Cmdr. Kevin Guldner, an F/A-18F Super Hornet pilot assigned to the "Diamondbacks" of Strike Fighter Squadron (VFA) 102, flew missions over Afghanistan on the last day of drawdown operations of U.S. and coalition forces.

"We flew missions in support of Operation Freedom Sentinel and Resolute Support over Afghanistan," said Guldner. "We were available in a position to respond rapidly in case things went sideways."

While his role in the drawdown is impressive as-is, the way things came full circle for him makes it even more so. Guldner was born and raised in New York, and at the age of 15, he witnessed the attacks of 9/11 unfold at his father's workplace.

"I was in a foreign language class in high school. I just remember hearing the news there," said Guldner. "...my dad worked at the World Trade Center. My first reaction was, 'This is extremely bad news.' Fortunately, he was not in the building at the time; he was actually not in New York City at the time. I do have family that lives down in the city, so it hit close to home."

As far as military aspirations go, Guldner used to draw planes and jets as a child. He recalls deciding at a very young age that he wanted to be a pilot, and seeing terrorists take aim at his country and the very place he called home only fueled his desire.

"I had already personally decided at a young age that I wanted to be a pilot and 9/11 [cemented] that decision," said Guldner.

2021 wasn't the first time that Guldner flew over Afghanistan providing support to troops on the ground, though. While serving on aircraft carrier USS John C. Stennis (CVN 74) in 2018 and 2019, he flew the same types

of missions in an earlier phase of the same operations.

With his knowledge, he was able to provide some familiarity and train the team of aviators that accompanied him on missions in country. They were then able to put that training to the test in real-life situations while performing these missions.

"As a naval aviator, you want to validate all the training you've been doing and you want it to be used for something good," said Guldner. "When you can take the investment that the American people have put into you - the training and what you've spent your life doing - and produce something from it, even if that is just support overhead, that's extremely satisfying."

Satisfaction also came from his ability to watch his brothers and sisters in arms on the ground complete their missions.

"Watching U.S. personnel board airplanes and get to a region of safety where you know - 'Cool, they're going to see their loved ones; they're going to come home and see their family' - that's something special," said Guldner.

Although Guldner flew overhead on the last day, he believes the role he played is only a small piece of a much larger puzzle.

"There is a lot more to the spear than just the tip," said Guldner. "We don't fly in country without the support of the rest of the team. This is 100% a team sport - from the people feeding us to the people who turn the lights on so we can mission plan, the power source that supplies the computer, the guys running the reactor, driving the ship, loading the ordnance, giving the intel briefs. Absolutely everyone on the carrier is playing some role and that support goes along with us in the aircraft. Without that, we wouldn't be able to operate."





# PORCELAIN PARADISE

*A porcelain throne sits surrounded by sparkling steel – the marbled tile immaculately scrubbed, the trappings of the throne well-stocked and neatly arranged, while a fresh scent of lavender wafts through the air. The king (or queen) on their throne takes a breath, and another, and realizes for the first time - in quite a while - that they are somewhere resembling tangible peace.*

This luxury of absolute cleanliness is something oft-removed from a Sailor’s life. True cleanliness, the kind that fills you with peace, is almost impossible to achieve on an aircraft carrier – no fault to leadership or Sailors, but a ship sailing through one of the hottest and most humid seas is a foundation for natural disarray. Add to that the close proximity of personnel, the grime of an airport, and the sludge of an engine room, and you have a perfect spell for a dirty world. But somehow the Sailors of aircraft carrier USS Ronald Reagan (CVN 76) combat this.

A treasured few go so far they achieve that moment of fleeting tranquility – a quiet, melancholy place where some may go and take a momentary break from the wild world of a city-at-sea. This space that so many on the ship take (but never for granted) is – miraculously – a bathroom. The one-of-a-kind, clean and kept Combat Systems head, aft and starboard.

“I wish my head was like this, you know?” said Culinary Specialist Seaman Gisaiah Willard. He was not talking down his head up forward – only espousing how great the aft head felt. “Using the bathroom is the most important thing – and when there is foul stuff everywhere, it makes you feel nasty.”

Cleanliness should come down to ownership – owning the space and ensuring it is correct and proper is the equation that earns a clean result. However, the team that keeps it clean disagrees.

“There’s ownership, and then there’s onus,” said Electronics

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Technician 1st Class Timothy Watson, the leading petty officer of Combat Systems External Communications (EXCOM) division. “Anybody can own something, but taking onus and saying ‘that’s all me – that’s my process, and I am totally responsible for it.’”

A quick synonym search links ownership to possession and title, something to have and hold but not necessarily to share. Onus, however, is a responsibility, a duty, an obligation and sometimes, a burden.

“Everyone goes to the ‘broken windows’ premise; [a philosophical dilemma best summed up as ‘The window is already broken, so who’s going to care if we break another?’]. But a window is still a window regardless of the glass, and a head is still a head – and you have to maintain the head, scrutinize every inch of that place to make it better ... It’s also how our department is. Most of Combat Systems is customer service – we don’t utilize the gear for the most part – we provide a service, [and it is exemplary service.]”

The everyday cleaning – in and out of cleaning stations – has Sailors on the ship astonished by the diligence. One cleaner in particular (an unfair title, considering his primary job consists of processing, troubleshooting, and assisting with every Hydra radio aboard Ronald Reagan) often catches the eye of the casual user – Electronics Technician 2nd Class Rudy Picardo. A telling sign of his



character is his answer to “But why the head?”

“My name is on the head. I’m responsible for cleaning the head. It’s my job.”

Simple and straightforward. But when it came to who made the head great, his enthusiasm rose.

“With that head, it’s not just me cleaning it, or my team cleaning it – I have a lot of other people pulling their weight. Whenever there’s something broken, I put in a priority three trouble call, [low priority, one should assume] because it’s not a big deal. Repair division makes it a big deal. Without them, it doesn’t matter what I’m cleaning if the toilet, shower, or sink is broken. I have [petty officers first class] giving me parts that they know I need. I can’t make those things work without everyone else doing their job.”

Admittedly, the emphasis on his humility is a tangent, but it is important – it is not his show. It is a team effort, and while the broken window philosophy isn’t the intention – doing right for right’s sake is the purpose and point – windows end up playing their part as well.

“When I see [Picardo], I wipe the sink down,” said Damage Control Fireman Joseph Burns. “One time after using the head, I was washing my hands. He pulls up and says ‘I got you man’ and wipes it down for me, and I thought, ‘Okay, after this I’m going to wipe it down every time.’ I even wipe down the stall I’m using. Picardo is so nice and he takes pride in that head, so I feel like I have to take responsibility and clean up after myself.”



There it is again, onus over ownership. The mindset spreads.

“We have people who specifically clean the head, and seeing him in [the head] three to five times a day breeds ownership in the rest of us,” said Electronics Technician 3rd Class James Canaday, letting ‘ownership’ fly seconds before his LPO countered it. “We’re going to have to continue that ownership and pride. It’s a highly visible part of the rest of the second deck, and I think it means something out here.”

The worst part of the space, surprisingly, is not the gunk, the grime, or the nastiness that usually accompanies a dirty job. It is the disrespect.

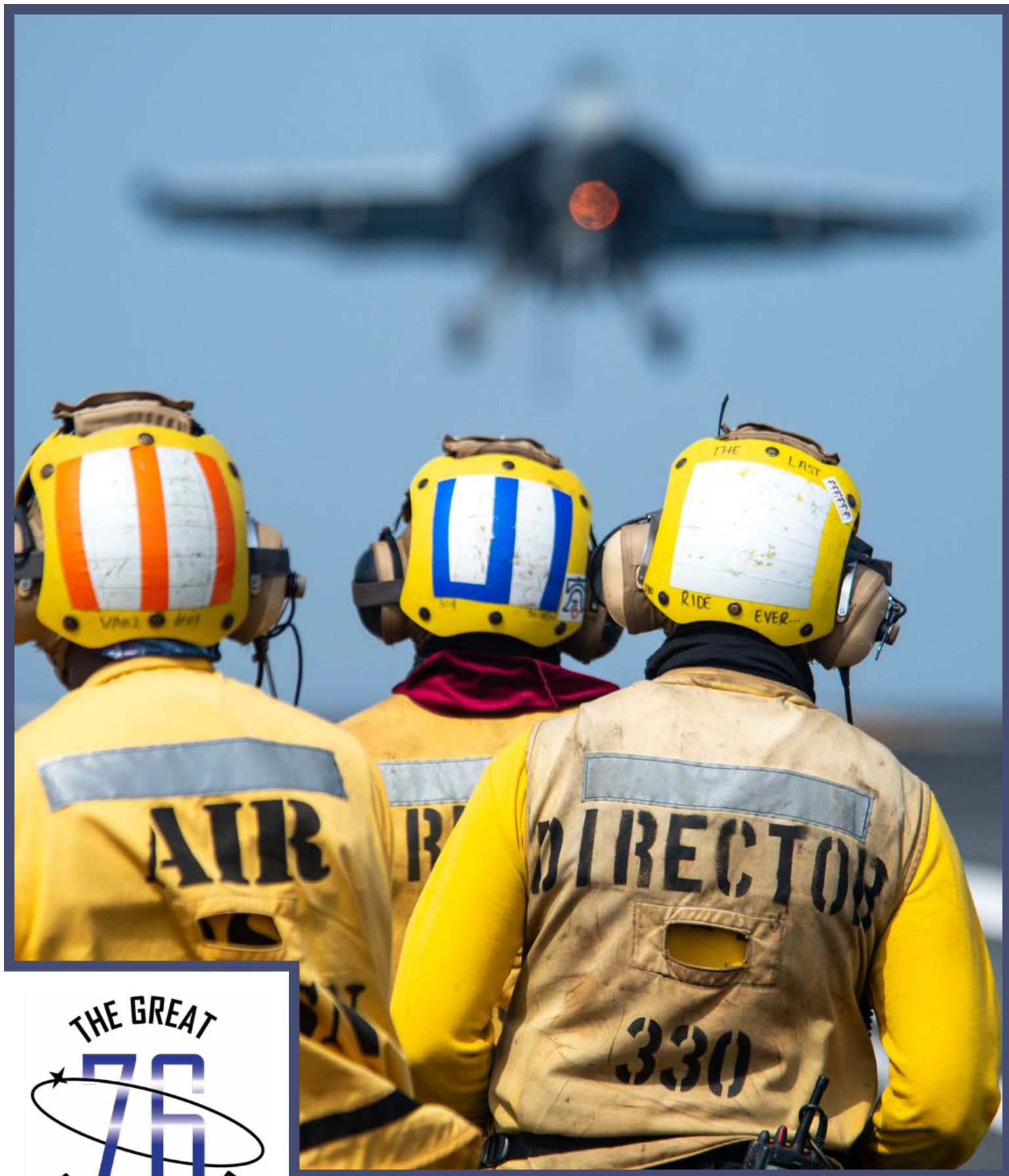
“When you have a mess in there where you know somebody just didn’t care, that’s worse than the gross messes,” said Canaday. “It just shows a wanton disregard.”

Whether it is ownership or onus, the broken window philosophy at work, or a true team effort incorporating otherwise strangers on the ship, the head is strangely enough a uniting factor. Not to knock it, but Ronald Reagan is a floating aircraft carrier with advanced radar systems, enough firepower to sink a small island, and enough machinations to make a small city blush. Why is there any focus at all on a head?

“People have to get away from work,” said Picardo. “It’s a morale thing – when you got to deal with all the hardships of ship life, going to [the head] is a way to wash away all those things, and get away for a few minutes of your day.”







USS RONALD REAGAN

Sailors observe an F/A-18F Super Hornet fighter jet, attached to VFA 102, land on the flight deck of aircraft carrier USS Ronald Reagan (CVN 76) during flight operations in the Arabian Sea, July 19. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist Seaman Gray Gibson)