

# THE AVENGER

September 2022





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from the CO



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# ★ Suicide Prevention and Mental Health ★



Avengers,

This magazine features resources available to you and your families in support of Suicide Prevention and Mental Health Awareness month. Resilience is one of the attributes we talk about aboard the ship, and is a significant part of total health. Our individual resilience comes from our mental and emotional health.

Each of you is a critical part of our mighty warfighting team. It is important to me and the leadership that you know what resources are available and that you connect to the team on a personal level. Healthy interpersonal relationships support total fitness. Never underestimate the power of kindness and a smile!

I am incredibly proud of the work that Team Jackpot is completing as a team to support the George H.W. Bush Strike Group.

September was a busy month, I want to highlight a few of the things we accomplished as a TEAM:

## NATO Operations

1. We have and will continue to support GHWBCSG Enhanced Vigilance Activity/Enhanced Vigilance Patrols in support of NATO. Our entire team has been focused on providing 24/7 airborne early warning capability from our E-2D squadron in support of the NATO alliance.
2. Carrier Air Wing (CVW) 7's intelligence team working aboard the ship have been directly supporting the war in Ukraine.
3. We completed our work with Italian Navy ship Caio Duilio, culminating in a photo exercise.
4. We came alongside the Italian ship Amerigo Vespucci to recreate a photo it took with another U.S. Navy aircraft carrier decades ago.
5. We worked with the Spanish Expeditionary Strike Group to enhance interoperability among NATO allies and hosted their Commander along with commanding officers of multiple Spanish Navy ships including the Juan Carlos I.

## Ship Events

6. On Patriot's Day (9/11) we held a Remembrance Ceremony in the ship's fo'c'sle to honor those who were lost that day and those who paid the ultimate sacrifice in service as the result of the attack.
7. We held an incredible event on the Mess Decks called, "Straight Outta Norfolk," which was part of a larger Sailor 360 effort. The event was spirited, sparked great discussion among the crew, and laid an incredible foundation for team growth and development.
8. Across Team Jackpot – CVN 77 and Carrier Air Wing 7 and its squadrons (12 commands) we learned that 84 of our Sailors selected to Chief Petty Officer. This is the MOST CPO selectees in our history. Chief Selects are already well on their way through six weeks of dedicated leadership training. The training culminates in a Chief Petty Officer Pinning Ceremony on Oct. 21, 2022.

## Distinguished Visitors

9. We hosted Vice Adm. Ishee, our new Fleet Commander for his first visit to a ship underway since he took command.

Each of you are making an impact and are a crucial part in completing the mission. Thank you for bearing the burden and blessings of freedom, leaving a legacy for future generations to emulate. We are here to support you and we are proud of you! Keep making a difference.

D. T. M. Pollard



**PR**



**SEPTEMBER IS**

**SUICIDE**

**PREVENTION**

**MONTH**



# Are you or someone you know on a path to suicide? Know the **WARNING SIGNS!**



**I**

**Ideation**

Thoughts of suicide (expressed, threatened, written).



**S**

**Substance Abuse**

Increased or excessive alcohol or drug use.



**P**

**Purposelessness**

Seeing no reason for living, having no sense of meaning or purpose in life.



**A**

**Anxiety**

Anxiousness, agitation, nightmares, inability to sleep or excessive sleeping.



**T**

**Trapped**

Feeling as though there is no way out of current circumstances.



**H**

**Hopelessness**

Feeling hopeless about oneself, others or the future.



**W**

**Withdrawal**

Isolating from friends, family, usual activities, society.



**A**

**Anger**

Feelings of rage or uncontrollable anger, seeking revenge for perceived wrongs.



**R**

**Recklessness**

Acting without regard for consequences, excessively risky behavior.



**M**

**Mood Change**

Dramatic changes in mood, unstable mood.

## What to do:

### ASK

Ask your shipmate questions that will help you get help: "Are you thinking about killing yourself? Do you have a plan to kill yourself?"

### CARE

Tell your shipmate that you are concerned about him or her. Without judgment, express why you're concerned. They may not show it, but they likely appreciate that someone cared enough to say something.

### TREAT

Take your shipmate to get help immediately by seeking a Navy chaplain, medical professional or trusted leader. Call 911 if danger is imminent.

**You don't have to see every sign to ACT.**

Help is always available through the Military Crisis Line.

Call 1-800-273-TALK (press 1), text 838255 or visit

[www.militarycrisisline.net](http://www.militarycrisisline.net)



#BeThere for Every Sailor, Every Day.

Follow Navy Operational Stress Control online



## Mission: Crew Health and Warfighter Resiliency

USS George H.W. Bush (CVN 77) Public Affairs



In preparation for deployment, Dr. John Cordle joined leaders aboard the Nimitz-class aircraft carrier USS George H.W. Bush (CVN 77) to discuss the values of circadian watch bills aboard the ship, and to discuss similarities and challenges presented by aircraft carriers as opposed to cruisers and destroyers.

Cordle, the human factors engineer for Commander, Naval Surface Force Atlantic (COMNAVSURFLANT), is a retired Navy captain who held command of two ships during his career. He continues to dedicate his professional life to helping Sailors even after he took off his uniform. Today, he is a subject matter expert in crew endurance, surface ship safety, and the use of circadian watch rotation to improve operational performance. His priority is to find the most human-friendly way for Sailors to complete a mission.

George H.W. Bush reactor department and Cordle looked at the ship's use of the circadian watch bill to find what works and what needs to be improved, and also what the surface and aviation community can learn from each other.

"This is about three things: the Navy and making it better, the George H.W. Bush, and it is about you," said Cordle. "You are the only person that knows how tired you are. Better sleep will make you a better Sailor, it will make you a better person, it will help your physical and mental health, and understanding that this is a lifetime investment is another thing. As a leader I have a level of responsibility to you to not use you up and throw you away, it's irresponsible."

During his time aboard the George H.W. Bush – a command he served aboard during his career - Cordle recounted his failed first attempt at a circadian watch bill. The biggest issues he had were meal hours and unequal distribution of qualifications between the rotations.

"Another thing I didn't do the first time was solicit input from the crew, I was the good idea fairy," said Cordle. "If the Captain says so, you do it. That never works, but I didn't know that. So I learned to listen to my people."

Cordle acknowledged that George H.W. Bush has additional considerations as a surface platform with aviation and nuclear communities that are required to accomplish specific departmental missions that support both the ship's and the carrier strike group's missions. He remarked that what is good for one community on the ship, often has impacts on another so planning and teamwork are required to balance requirements.

"Crew endurance and resilience programs like circadian watchbills are not only important because they're the right thing to do for our team, but they also make us a more lethal warfighting team," said Capt. David-Tavis Pollard, commanding officer of George H.W. Bush. "The planning effort and

commitment to work toward healthy solutions for Sailors and for command performance are not easy, and I am proud of the work our leaders are putting into these initiative."

Below the deck plates, the nuclear community is known for long hours to ensure the carrier is able to complete the mission. On George H.W. Bush, reactor department is leading the charge on circadian based watch bills. Capt. Jason DeBlock, who leads the department, and Lt. Cmdr. Kara VanSice, the ship's reactor training assistant, work diligently with the rest of their team to create a schedule that is centered on sleep.

"This has been a significant team effort, and I am impressed not only with the work but with the results," said DeBlock. "We continue to make incremental changes here and there since there is always room for improvement, though the feedback we are getting from our Sailors is that this has been a success for their quality of life and shows through team performance."

One of the biggest challenges to the department's schedule are mandatory drills. To build a watch bill that works for their crew, DeBlock and VanSice began their watch bills with a foundational period of protected sleep, followed by scheduled meetings, and finally they arranged watch times. After they implemented their changes, most Sailors alternate between standing one or two watches every day. That allows all watch teams to participate in the drills and remain ready.

"It was very exciting to have Dr. Cordle on board," said VanSice. "His experience and interest in our revolutionized circadian rhythm is beneficial for our reactor Sailors and is paying dividends underway."

The reactor department also worked closely with the ship's training and supply department leadership, and the command triad to remove remaining boundaries to execute their plan.

"Your approach of taking a whiteboard and throwing down the protected sleep as the building block is totally upside down to anything anyone is saying in the surface force," said Cordle. "I've been focusing on the watch bill, so to see it done like that is pretty cool."

The biggest takeaway for the ship as a whole was to listen to each other and to question everything.

"Break the paradigms," said Cordle. "Take things like meal hours. I don't care if you are officer or enlisted when it comes to where you eat, as long as you eat. What are the barriers because it is a rule, law or regulation and what is a barrier because 'that is the way we have always done it'? That is the most dangerous phrase in the Navy."

Embracing a culture of quality sleep in the Navy will lead to a more effective Navy and more genuinely satisfied Sailors.

## I Struggled With Thoughts of Suicide. Vulnerability and Connection Kept me Alive.

By LCDR Matthew Stroup - Reprinted From Task & Purpose Article published on Nov. 24 2020



Before I deployed to western Afghanistan in 2012, I warned my wife Jenny Lynne I might come back a different man. “If there’s something off, or you can just tell that I’m different, get me help.” I knew what it was like to be in the middle of a mental health crisis and to not be able to see the forest for the trees. At that point in our lives together I had a few years of sobriety under my belt and knew how scary that place could be – and how hard breaking down walls of illness and defense could be to get into healing and recovery. “I’m sure I will fight you tooth-and-nail,” I said. “I may even hate you for it, but I know what it’s like and I won’t be able to see it...But I’m sure that that won’t happen.” I don’t remember what she said, but I knew she would help me. Still, years later I realize how unfair it was for me to ask that of her. Overall, our team’s deployment went well. Every member came home with ten fingers and ten toes. Our disparate hodgepodge of Army, Navy, Department of State, and USAID personnel executed our mission well in austere western Afghanistan, and in general, saw less direct fighting than U.S. units in the southern and eastern parts of the country. As members of the Provincial Reconstruction Team Farah our mission was one of governance and development, and while it wasn’t all roses, we weren’t “clearing” houses either.

When it was all over, the team I trained, lived, fought, worked, and experienced life with for that year was gone in the blink of an eye. Instead of redeploying as a unit like a warship or battalion, we began to disband in theater. For example, my fellow Navy individual augmentees and I took a pre-planned pit stop in Germany before we took flights to our primary duty stations across the U.S. A month later, I moved from Virginia to New York City for a new assignment. It was a jarring shift of realities from western Afghanistan to a midtown office building. I took solace in long runs in the crisp fall air and tree-lined streets of our Glenbrook neighborhood in Stamford, Ct. It reminded me of past fall seasons in my home state of Michigan, and gave me a space to seek the peace and calm I was looking for. The candy-laden care packages eaten in Farah didn’t help me conquer the pavement, but the extra pounds they led to provided a new challenge to focus on as I tried to control my breathing and ignore my achy knees and ankles. These runs gave me time to process the breakneck pace of the past three-plus years: marriage; first child born; promoting to second class petty officer; officer candidate school; aircraft carrier deployment; meeting child two on the pier; Afghanistan deployment; first time on shore duty as a family; first time spending more than a month with my children; first time living in the northeast. I was having a tough time squaring it all away, especially when it all looked great on paper. Having difficulty adjusting did not make sense to me. On one of the runs in our new neighborhood, I struggled to move from step one. My legs felt like my toddler wet noodling in the grocery store when he didn’t get his way, and the only thing that kept my spirit up was Michael Franti’s song *Life is Better With You*. “...I’m not afraid to be alone, but being alone is better with you. Life is better with you.” While my feet moved down the sidewalk, my mind focused on finding a higher gear and

completing the run. Just then, I noticed my face was wet. I began to cry. What the hell? Where’d that come from? It was surprising and concerning.

When I got home, I told Jenny Lynne. At the very least she’d be intrigued. After all, I’m not one for crying over things large or small. A bit uncertain, I posted a quick comment on social media about the run. My usually responsive feed was quiet, save for the freaked-out notes calls from worried loved ones. Last time I’ll do that, I thought to myself. Still, life overall seemed good. My Facebook feed was the envy of friends. From my Midtown Manhattan perch, I supported outreach efforts for the Navy. It was a great job with tons of social engagement. I attended meetings and social events. Though I sometimes felt out of place, I tried to fit in by focusing on the mission. And it was exhilarating to explore the city that never sleeps. In our first few months there, we visited the *Intrepid* as a family, celebrated the Navy’s birthday with the NYPD, welcomed the USS *New York* in town for a port visit during the week of Veterans Day, and met with the Port Authority at the top of One World Trade before construction came to completion. New York was, is, and will always be a Navy town.

In no time, I made friends with members of the small active-duty community in the city, the veterans organizations I worked with, and most importantly within local recovery fellowships I’d relied on for years. But even as the horizon of post-deployment life took on New York proportion on the outside, it became clear that something was off inside my head and chest. My legs were often fidgety, and I had difficulty sleeping. The smells from street food carts reminded me of Farah City. And my mind was often on edge. As I walked with Jenny Lynne to Grand Central to catch a train at Christmastime, I noticed someone following us on a quiet stretch of sidewalk out of the corner of my eye. I casually ushered the boys’ stroller and Jenny Lynne into a restaurant foyer “to see what was on the menu.” It was just long enough for a perceived threat to slide by. So I kept running. It was my outlet. It grounded me in a world that was all new. My soles pounding the pavement were my first steps in working through the confusion and challenges swirling inside. And as much as I liked running in the Connecticut suburbs, I reveled in taking time at lunch to run through Midtown and up around Central Park. Best yet, I even lost a few pounds and felt good about it. The Big Apple assignment was going well.

But there was tension at home. We argued a lot, and I couldn’t understand why she was upset when I tried talking about my experience with the team on deployment. I wanted to look at pictures from deployment with Jenny Lynne while regaling the team’s accomplishments and challenges. I was desperate for an outlet, yet the awkwardness, frustration, and Jenny Lynne’s tears that usually concluded my best attempts to communicate with her were failing miserably. What was I missing? Why was she afraid? Then there was the stress of fatherhood. One night my oldest son wouldn’t go to bed. The little bugger just could not get it. We went up the stairs. He came down the stairs. We went up. He came down. I finally lost it, ran to the steps, picked him up, and not so gracefully tossed him in his bed. I returned to a look on Jenny Lynne’s face I’ll never forget. She was disappointed and frightened. I was ashamed. What happened to the guy who was great with kids and had all the patience in the world for them? Not long after, I underwent an annual military physical. Near the end, I completed a questionnaire about how I felt after deployment. Did I have any issues reintegrating? Recurring nightmares? How are you sleeping? Any thoughts of harming yourself? I wrote my answers with all the honesty of someone who was not going to stay in that office any longer than required. After filling out the form, I met face-to-face with a doctor to go over my responses. I mentioned the minor chest pains, some minor readjustment challenges, and alluded to my years of experience in recovery. I reassured the doctor that I was on the road to good health. The truth was that less than halfway through the questions I was fighting back tears. But the doctor didn’t press, and I wasn’t going to do anything that would keep me from going home that night to see my family. I’ve got this. I’ve been in a hole before and I know the way out, I told myself. There was life to live and work to be done.

At this same time, things were going well professionally, which bolstered my rattled nerves from the physical. However, my personal life was in a not-so-steady decline. Some days were great, and some days were awful, as residual anger, anxiety, and frustration mounted as I tried to sort it all out – largely on my own. And so I kept running. The runs were cathartic...most of the time. But, I could no longer ignore the underlying feelings. I was angry. Pissed. Unsure of what was going on and afraid of the storm brewing under the surface. I could not stop arguing. I couldn't find relief. Even the group of people that saved me before in recovery, didn't seem safe. I kept showing up to recovery rooms, but couldn't let my guard down. I knew the right things to say to keep up appearances, but the wheels started coming off. My fuse got shorter. Fights with my wife got worse. Darkness settled in. And my mind raced. Eventually, it became more than my body could take. On Sept. 11, 2014 I was with my boss traveling back to New York City from a meeting at the Pentagon when I asked him if he would take over driving because my chest started to hurt. By the time we neared Manhattan, I curled up on the passenger seat in the fetal position feeling like I was going to die. It was the first of many debilitating panic attacks, though I didn't recognize it at the time. Around that time, I noticed something on a well-worn running path through our Stamford, Connecticut neighborhood. Most intriguing was the Exit 9 overpass over I-95. Not only did it provide a view of the WWE headquarters, but there was also no barrier to keep someone from jumping onto the interstate. I ran past it many times and thought, "Jumping would take all of this pain away, and JL wouldn't have to deal with my bullshit anymore." A few times I even stopped to take a hard look at the whizzing cars below. Thankfully, I let that thought bounce around my head long enough to realize I needed to play the tape all the way through. As it did, three thoughts stopped me from jumping:

1. Being hit by a vehicle would be very unpleasant.
2. I could hurt someone else and their family when they hit me.
3. My behavior would put my family through additional hell – perhaps worse than the one we were in.

While I played the tape through frequently, it did not stop the ruminating thoughts. On other runs, train rides, or car trips I daydreamed about driving into something very solid, rationalizing I'd be the only one hurt. Another lie. I didn't want to die. I had a great wife, beautiful kids, and numerous opportunities in the city, but I couldn't reconcile that and living in pain and confusion anymore. I was determined to find my own way out. I just wanted to take a long nap and have it all disappear. I'd like to tell you that's what happened. That I took a magic pill, woke up one day, and life was good. That wasn't what happened. What did happen was connection. It saved my life. Even though I couldn't find regular mental health treatment near my office residence, I found a new sponsor and started working with him. I laid it all on the table. We worked on the basics — honesty, open-mindedness, and willingness to take stock of what was going on. He didn't give me a lecture, a list of things I screwed up or tell me that I was weak. Quite the opposite. He gave me hope that things would get better. Hope that if I just did what I needed to do one day at a time to be a better husband, a better father, and a better man by getting help, things would get better. Though even with help and wisdom, the residual issues of post-traumatic stress required more specific treatment. I became willing to seek that treatment after a series of panic attacks, one of which left my dress uniform soaked in sweat and me lying prone on a cab floor in the city. Thankfully, I came across a pamphlet at work for a clinic a short walk from the office not long after. And while my village helped me pull back from the edge, the work of true recovery hadn't started. In the middle of treatment at Steven A. Cohen Military Family Center at NYU Langone Health and settling into the work with my sponsor we moved to California where I started 10 months of graduate school. It was awful personally yet professionally rewarding. My classes and classmates were great, but 12 or so hours a day of commute, class, and homework on top of trying to get treatment was nearly impossible for me and my family and it showed.

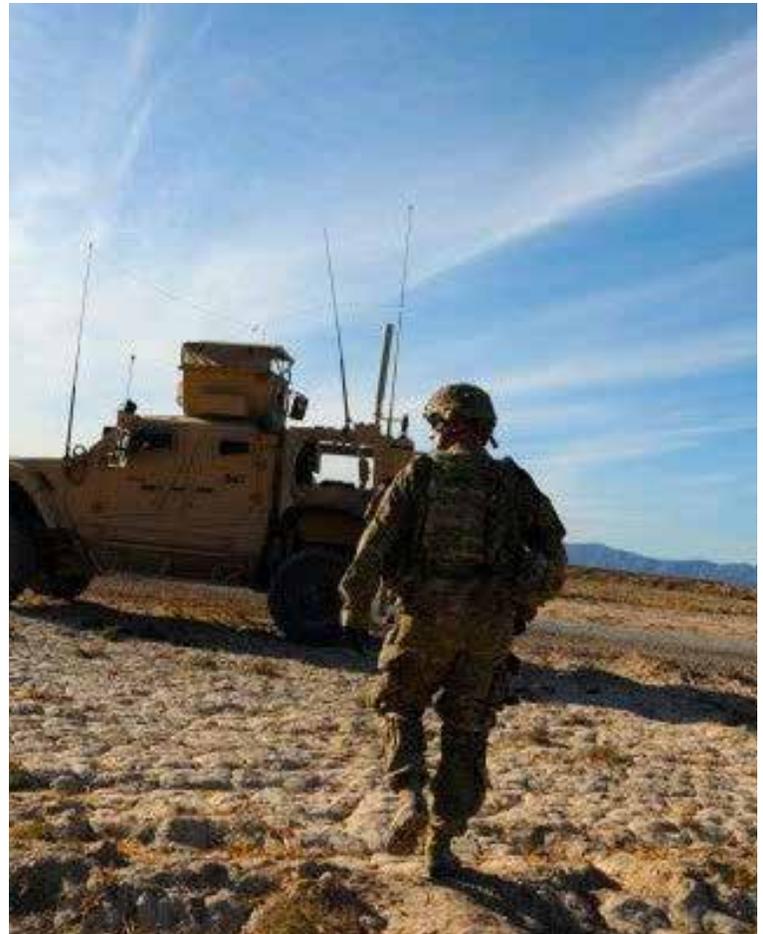
I was late for everything, irritable, and generally frustrated. Despite some improvements from NY, I was still in extremis. The dark thoughts came back as we fought to stay afloat as a family, and on one occasion – even though I pretended I was joking – I

told my wife, "I should've jumped off of the Exit 9 overpass when I had the chance." Yet, I am convinced that were it not for my wife and kids, sponsor, friends in recovery, understanding leadership, and cognitive processing therapy, I would have taken my own life. The hard truth is that untreated post-traumatic stress injuries, military sexual trauma, mild-traumatic brain injury, anxiety, and depression for anyone – especially someone with a history of alcohol issues – can lead to poor outcomes.

In my experience, the solution to improving those outcomes comes in two parts; 1. An individual's willingness to be vulnerable and 2. The attentiveness and willingness of those around them to connect. Vulnerability and connection. Both are simple and neither are easy. Both words and actions are enough to make my skin crawl and threaten to engage my gag reflex as I type. But, I know it's in picking up the thousand-pound phone to chat with an old shipmate or battle buddy, grabbing coffee with someone, or looking someone in the eye as you tell him or her you care is when the real work of suicide prevention begins. If you're thinking about suicide, are worried about a friend or loved one, or would like emotional support, the Lifeline network is available 24/7 across the United States.

“**Looking someone in the eye as you tell them you care is when the real work of suicide prevention begins.**”

**- Matthew Stroup**



**Call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 800-273-TALK (800-273-8255) to reach a trained counselor. Use that same number and press "1" to reach the Veterans Crisis Line.**

# MENTAL HEALTH

Feeling stressed, debating seeking help

1

**Go here first!**

## CHAPLAINS

**THE best place to start for most issues or if you're unsure of what services you need. What you say will never leave the office without your permission. NEVER!**



- 100% confidentiality
- You don't need a referral
- No medical record documentation
- Zero reporting requirements
- More than spiritual counseling

Seeking help early and getting a higher level of care are good things. Sailors don't seek help for things themselves, they seek help for their careers or security clearance and embarrassment. Seeking mental health takes courage and

3

## FLEET & FAMILY SUPPORT CENTER

Similar to MFLCs/DRCs but at the FFSC buildings on base. They provide counseling and classes to help you and your family manage life issues. You don't need a referral and they only have to report risk of harm or abuse.



- On base individual & family counseling, coping skills, life skills, etc.
- You don't need a referral
- No medical record documentation
- Minimal reporting requirements
- Non-medical counseling

- Off base Individual & family counseling, coping skills, life skills, financial
- You don't need a referral
- No medical record documentation
- Minimal reporting requirements
- Non-medical counseling

MILITARY  
**ONE**  
SOURCE



6

## EMBEDDED MENTAL HEALTH (EMH)

- Mental Health specialists directly working with the commands
- Evaluate and treat mental illness with medications and/or therapy
- There IS medical record documentation
- May communicate with your CO and other medical providers
- Make military duty determinations

These specialists evaluate and treat all conditions and determine if it impacts your tour or career. Most Sailors return to duty and keep their security clearance after seeking help, so don't fear! They may communicate with your CO and your Doc if there are duty limitations or risk of harm or abuse.

7

## MILITARY TREATMENT FACILITIES (MTF) /Network care

You can refer yourself or be referred by your Doc and receive total medical health services with the same reporting and documentation requirements as EMH. Network care requires a TRICARE referral and authorization or you will pay out of pocket. Network doctors cannot make determinations about military duty.

# HEALTH RESOURCES

Need help but don't know where to start?

often prevents needing a referral and impact to career. Most Sailors seek help because they want to fix the problem or they worry about impact to their appearance or they fear gossip. Taking care of your mental health is a sign of strength!



## MILITARY & FAMILY LIFE COUNSELING

2

Most Sailors don't have a mental illness but struggle with life issues. These counselors provide support and tools to help you cope and you can schedule yourself without a referral. They only report risk of harm or abuse. They can be found onboard your ship and nothing goes in your medical record.

- You don't need a referral
- No medical record documentation
- Minimal reporting requirements
- Flexible counseling locations
- Non-medical counseling
- On a big deck, this your DRC

4

## MILITARY ONESOURCE

Similar services as MFLCs, DRCs and DFCs but OFF base. You can make the appointment yourself without a referral. These counselors only have to report on suicide and homicide risk or abuse. Nothing goes in your electronic health record. And reporting requirements are limited to risk of harm or abuse.

5

## IDC / SMO

Your Doc can manage most concerns or refer you to the Navy or network mental health experts. Serious conditions need expert evaluation, need to be documented and your CO may need to know if there are duty limitations. They are mandatory reporters for risk of harm or abuse.



- Just go to sick call, no referral needed
- Can treat most conditions or refer you for higher level care
- Can prescribe mental health meds
- There IS medical record documentation
- May communicate with your CO and medical providers

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- Full mental health services, Emergency Room and Inpatient care
- Individual and Group therapy, SARP, Testing
- Military duty determinations (MTF only)
- There IS medical record documentation
- May communicate with your CO and other medical providers



Mental health emergency only!

8

## EMERGENCY ROOM

If you're experiencing a mental health emergency or you're afraid you will harm yourself or others and cannot keep yourself safe, this is the place to go. Please don't start here to get a mental health appointment. This is for emergencies.

- Not to get a routine appointment
- For emergencies, such as acute safety risk or grave disability
- Access to inpatient services
- Military duty determinations
- There IS medical record documentation
- They WILL communicate with your CO and other medical providers



reaching out

**STAR**

**Thoughts of giving up and suicide can  
Not taking these kinds of thoughts se**

**An estimated 1 in 5 adults experience a  
mental health disorder each year.  
Many of these conditions are treatable,  
but many suffer in silence because  
of stigma or shame.**

**Contact Medical De  
located at**

It is a sign of

# STRENGTH

It can be frightening.

It can have devastating outcomes.

Suicidal thoughts are a symptom,  
just like any other -  
they can be treated, and  
they can improve over time.

Department at J-5727,  
at 2-105-1-L.

Help is always  
available.



# 21<sup>ST</sup> ANNIVERSARY

SEPTEMBER 11, 2001



# NEVER FORGET



## Commander, U.S. Sixth Fleet & STRIKFORNATO visits USS George H.W. Bush (CVN 77) Carrier Strike Group 10 Public Affairs



Vice Adm. Thomas E. Ishee, commander, U.S. Sixth Fleet and Naval Striking and Support Forces NATO (STRIKFORNATO), embarked the Nimitz-class aircraft carrier USS George H.W. Bush (CVN 77), Sept. 22.

Ishee visited the flagship and the supporting staffs of Carrier Strike Group (CSG) 10, George H.W. Bush Carrier Strike Group (GHWBCSG) while the strike group was underway in the Adriatic Sea.

“Your warfighting spirit shines through the material condition of this ship and the way I see your team operate together,” said Ishee. “Our nation, the NATO alliance, and our other allies and partners around the world continue to rely on the high level warfare capability that George H.W. Bush Carrier Strike Group brings to maintain freedom of navigation in international waters, deter aggression, defend our nation, and the alliance, support our partners in Europe and Africa.”

During the visit, Ishee hit the deckplates to meet the crew and recognize exceptional Sailors of GHWBCSG.

“You are making a worldwide impact. I am very proud of the operations conducted thus far,” said Ishee. “In the coming months, you will continue to work with our allies and partners in the region as we work to improve stability and security, while being prepared to fight tonight to defend our nation and Allies if called to do so.”

CSG-10, GHWBCSG, is on a scheduled deployment in the U.S. Naval Forces Europe-Africa (NAVEUR-NAVAF) area of operations, employed by U.S. Sixth Fleet to defend U.S., allied and partner interests.

“Our team worked diligently to prepare for

this deployment, and were fortunate to train with our NATO allies and friends aboard the Italian ship Caio Duilio during that time,” said Rear Adm. Dennis Velez, commander, CSG-10, GHWBCSG. “The trust we built across our Strike Group, with our allies and partners both in training and now on deployment is our competitive edge. We are stronger when we work together, and we look forward to working with our Spanish and French allies aboard ESPS Juan Carlos I (L-61) and FS Charles de Gaulle.”

While in the NAVEUR-NAVAF area of operations, ships within CSG-10 have had port visits in Split, Croatia and Jijel, Algeria, increased interoperability with Italian ship ITS Caio Duilio, and Carrier Air Wing (CVW) 7 participated in combined operations with Spain and Greece.

“As the flagship of CSG-10, Team Avenger – the warriors who are the leaders, teachers and ambassadors of our nation – are performing brilliantly with our partners and allies,” said Capt. David Pollard, commanding officer of George H.W. Bush. “They are representing our families, our communities, and our nation by exemplifying

our namesake’s legacy of service, grit, humility, and resilience. It is a tremendous responsibility, and one we carry with great pride.”

The Nimitz-class aircraft carrier George H.W. Bush is the flagship of CSG-10, GHWBCSG. CSG-10 is comprised of George H.W. Bush, CVW-7, Destroyer Squadron (DESRON) 26, the Information Warfare Commander, and the Ticonderoga-class guided-missile cruiser USS Leyte Gulf (CG 55).

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# George H.W. Bush's Newest Little Avengers



*Frazier Harris Beyer*

*Carter Cordova*

*Lyla Duncan Thibodeaux*

*Kai Mateo Gully Ramos*

*Mia Lathan*

*Dante Alexander Elerson*

*Emilia Osorio*

*Leilani Fetterhoff*

*Liam Jacob Yerkey*

*Jackson Major Sommerfeldt*

*Milo Jay Wann*

*Grayson Steve Martinez*

## *Congratulations to*

*CDR Dylan Beyer and Emily Beyer*

*AO3 Mathieu Thibodeaux and Ariana Mariscal*

*AOAN Kaoni Lathan and Jerine Lathan*

*AT2 Valentin Osorio and Brenda Aguirre-Rosales*

*AO2 Yerkey and Makayla Roney*

*MA2 Wann and Melissa Wann*

*AOAN Cordova and Desirae Cordova*

*DC3 Matthew Gully and Lizbeth Ramos*

*MM3 William Elerson and Sara Sepulveda- Santiago*

*AO3 Spencer Fetterhoff and Deborah Gonzalez*

*FC2 Brendan Sommerfeldt and Matilyn Sommerfeldt*

*ABHAN Roy Martinez and Sarah Pounds Martinez*

# CVN 77 Milestones

**2006** FORMER PRESIDENT GEORGE H.W. BUSH ATTENDS THE CHRISTENING CEREMONY OF USS GEORGE H.W. BUSH (CVN 77) BECOMING THE FIRST PRESIDENT IN HISTORY TO PARTICIPATE IN THE CHRISTENING OF THEIR NAMESAKE SHIP.

**2009** USS GEORGE H.W. BUSH IS COMMISSIONED AT NAVAL STATION NORFOLK. APPROX. 15,000 PEOPLE ATTEND THE CEREMONY INCLUDING SITTING PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH AND HIS FATHER.

**2009** FORMER PRESIDENT GEORGE H.W. BUSH, BARBARA BUSH, AND DORR BUSH KOCH, THE SHIP'S SPONSOR, GET UNDERWAY TO OBSERVE FLIGHT OPERATIONS.

**2011** CVN 77 IS ASSIGNED TO CARRIER STRIKE GROUP TWO UNDER THE COMMAND OF REAR ADMIRAL NORA TYSON. THE SHIP DEPARTS FOR ITS FIRST DEPLOYMENT.

**2013** GEORGE H.W. BUSH CONDUCTED AT-SEA TESTS FOR THE X-47B UNMANNED DRONE IN THE ATLANTIC OCEAN, MARKING THE FIRST TIME THAT AN UNMANNED DRONE WAS LAUNCHED AND RECOVERED VIA ARRESTED LANDING ABOARD AN AIRCRAFT CARRIER AT SEA.

**2014** GEORGE H.W. BUSH IS ORDERED TO THE PERSIAN GULF TO PROTECT U.S. INTERESTS IN IRAQ IN LIGHT OF THE MILITANT GROUP ISLAMIC STATE OF IRAQ AND THE LEVANT'S (ISIL) OFFENSIVE AND TAKEOVER OF SEVERAL MAJOR CITIES IN THAT COUNTRY. THEY RETURNED TO NORFOLK NINE MONTHS LATER.

**2017** FOLLOWING A 14-MONTH SHIPYARD AVAILABILITY AT NORFOLK NAVAL SHIPYARD, AND A COMPRESSED TRAINING CYCLE, GEORGE H.W. BUSH AND CARRIER AIR WING EIGHT DEPARTED NORFOLK ON 21 JANUARY FOR ITS THIRD DEPLOYMENT.

**2021** FOLLOWING THE LONGEST NON-REFUELING MAINTENANCE AVAILABILITY IN NIMITZ-CLASS HISTORY, GEORGE H.W. BUSH DEPARTS THE SHIPYARD TO BEGIN PREPARATIONS FOR DEPLOYMENT, INCLUDING THE FIRST AT-SEA TESTING OF THE MQ-25 STINGRAY.

**2022** CARRIER STRIKE GROUP 10, GEORGE H.W. BUSH CARRIER STRIKE GROUP EMBARKED ABOARD GEORGE H.W. BUSH AND DEPARTED NORFOLK WITH THE SQUADRONS OF CARRIER AIR WING 7, DESTROYER SQUADRON 26, AND USS LEYTE GULF (CG55) FOR THE CARRIER'S FIRST DEPLOYMENT SINCE 2017.

"Let future generations understand the burden and the blessings of freedom. Let them say we stood where duty required us to stand."

- President George H.W. Bush





# George H.W. Bush's Life of Service



**1942** GEORGE HERBERT WALKER BUSH BEGINS A DISTINGUISHED MILITARY CAREER. HE ENLISTED IN THE U.S. NAVY AS SEAMAN 2ND CLASS. LESS THAN ONE YEAR LATER HE BECAME THE YOUNGEST PILOT IN NAVAL HISTORY WHEN HE RECEIVED HIS WINGS AND COMMISSION.

**1944** ENSIGN BUSH FLEW THE GRUMMAN TBF AVENGER, A THREE-MAN TORPEDO/BOMBER OFF THE USS SAN JACINTO (CVL 30) DURING WORLD WAR II. IN 1944, WHILE FLYING A MISSION HE WAS HIT BY ANTI-AIRCRAFT FIRE. HE WAS FORCED TO BAIL OUT OVER THE SEA. HE WAS RESCUED BY THE SUBMARINE USS FINBACK AFTER A SHORT TIME ADRIFT.

**1945** HE MARRIED BARBARA PIERCE OF RYE, NEW YORK, WHOM HE MET IN 1941 WHILE STILL A STUDENT AT PHILLIPS ACADEMY. THEY SETTLED IN MIDLAND, TEXAS, AND BECAME THE PARENTS OF FIVE CHILDREN: GEORGE, JOHN (JEB), NEIL, MARVIN, AND DOROTHY. THEIR SECOND CHILD, ROBIN, DIED VERY YOUNG FROM LEUKEMIA.

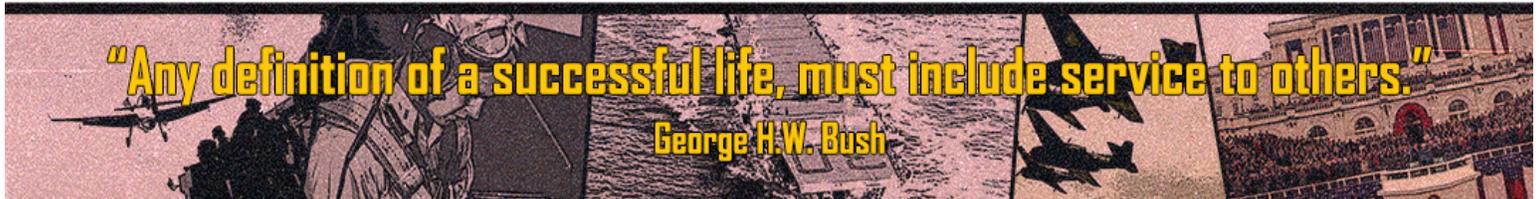


**1980** RONALD REAGAN SELECTED GEORGE H.W. BUSH TO BE HIS RUNNING MATE. BUSH WAS SWORN IN FOR THE FIRST OF TWO TERMS AS VICE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES ON JANUARY 29, 1981.

**1989** HE SERVED AS UNITED STATES PRESIDENT FROM 1989 - 1993. HIS GREATEST CHALLENGE CAME WHEN IRAQI PRESIDENT SADDAM HUSSEIN INVADDED KUWAIT. VOWING TO FREE KUWAIT, PRESIDENT BUSH MARSHALED A 30-NATION COALITION AND SUCCESSFULLY OPPOSED IRAQ'S INVASION OF KUWAIT.

**2009** BUSH ATTENDED THE COMMISSIONING CEREMONY OF THE U.S. NAVY SHIP NAMED AFTER HIM, THE AIRCRAFT CARRIER USS GEORGE H.W. BUSH (CVN 77).

**2018** ON NOVEMBER 20, 2018 BUSH PASSED AWAY AT THE AGE OF 94 AND IS SURVIVED BY HIS FIVE CHILDREN, 17 GRANDCHILDREN AND FOUR GREAT-GRANDCHILDREN.



**"Any definition of a successful life, must include service to others."**  
George H.W. Bush

## A Lot Of Miles On Those Shoes

### Carrier Strike Group 10 Public Affairs



More than 1,000 feet in the air above the water of the Adriatic Sea in an MH-60S Nighthawk helicopter, Lt. Cmdr. Miles Alvarez reflected on more than 25 years of service in the U.S. Navy alongside Rear Adm. Dennis Velez, commander, Carrier Strike Group (CSG) 10, George H.W. Bush CSG (GHWBCSG). It was the culmination of 26 years of dedicated service to the country for Alvarez and his family, and one that featured a pair of shoes whose soles are long worn with service.

As a young man and native Los Angelino, Alvarez worked tirelessly at dead-end jobs to pay his way through community college. He struggled to make ends meet and save for the future simultaneously, and eventually the demanding pace took a hit on school work. Staring down college costs and a stagnate income that barely left him afloat, the search began for something that would get him out of Los Angeles and onto more stable ground. He looked to examples in his life for guidance, and he didn't have to look far.

As a child, Alvarez lived with his grandfather, a Korean War-veteran and U.S. Army paratrooper who was a life-long example of focus and discipline for the fledgling student.

"He was in his sixties when I lived with him, and he was still doing a regular workout routine before bed of push-ups, sit ups, squats, and dumbbells," said Alvarez. "He walked to and from breakfast almost every morning. He shined his shoes, always ironed his clothes, shaved and made his bed daily, and always kept his room very orderly. He attributed his discipline to the Army and I liked that, even as a kid."

From that early, lived experience with his grandfather, Alvarez saw that military service offered a secure income, abundant opportunities for personal and professional growth, and a purpose that came from serving something greater than itself. His mind was made up. He enlisted in the Navy – a similar but slightly different path than his grandfather.

Alvarez joined the Navy in November 1996 as an E-1, and became a Cryptologic Technician (Collection). It wasn't long until he learned about the opportunities presented through earning a commission, and so he set his sights on achieving that goal.

"Earning a commission had always been a goal of mine ever since I first learned that it was an option," said Alvarez. "The opportunities for positions,

the responsibility inherent with those positions, and where I saw myself being able to have the most influence was through a commission, which is why I continued to apply. I was confident I could do the job that the junior officers on the watch floor, in SSES [Ship's Signal Exploitation Space], or around the command were doing."

Alvarez' path to a commission was not an overnight success story. While some take a single shot at a promotion or a commission before moving on, Alvarez was unwilling to let setbacks deter him from his pursuit of a commission.

He first applied to the Enlisted Commissioning Program (now the Seaman-to-Admiral Program) as a second class petty officer and was unsuccessful. As a first class petty officer he applied for Officer Candidate School (OCS) after completing a bachelor's degree. He was rejected again. After multiple applications for a commission, then-Chief Alvarez applied for a commission through the Limited Duty Officer (LDO) program. It was only then - after more than a decade of sustained superior performance while facing setbacks head on - that his steadfastness paid off. On Nov. 1, 2008, Alvarez earned his commission as an LDO.

Since then, Alvarez served in myriad roles. He was a SSES division officer aboard the Wasp-class amphibious assault ship USS Essex (LHD 2), the operations officer at Navy Information Operations Command (NIOC) Whidbey Island, Wash., the Cryptologic Warfare LDO/Chief Warrant Officer Detailer at Navy Personnel Command, and the executive officer of the Fleet Survey Team, Stennis Space Center. Today, he serves as the Integrated Fires Officer for CSG-10, GHWBCSG aboard the Nimitz-class aircraft carrier USS George H.W. Bush (CVN 77).

The journey from being a student struggling to balance academic expectations and financial needs, to a U.S. Navy seaman recruit, to Chief Petty Officer, to U.S. Navy commander is a testament to Alvarez's commitment to service. Of course, it was not lost on anyone at the command that more than 1,000 feet above the Adriatic when Alvarez repeated his oath of office on his promotion to commander that he was wearing the same, black polished shoes issued to him at Recruit Training Command Great Lakes 26 years earlier.

Alvarez' grandfather would most certainly be proud.

## Strengthening Partnerships, Recreating History: George H.W. Bush Sails Alongside Amerigo Vespucci

### USS George H.W. Bush (CVN 77) Public Affairs



On July 12, 1962, the Forrestal-class aircraft carrier USS Independence (CVA 62) operated in the U.S. 6th Fleet area of operations when it sailed past the ITS Amerigo Vespucci in the Mediterranean Sea.

Just more than sixty years later, Amerigo Vespucci recreated the moment with the Nimitz-class aircraft carrier USS George H.W. Bush (CVN 77) in the Adriatic Sea, Sep. 1, 2022.

“This was an amazing opportunity to honor and reinforce the partnership between our two navies, our countries, and the legacy of U.S. Navy aircraft carriers in maritime diplomacy,” said Capt. David-Tavis Pollard, commanding officer of George H.W. Bush. “The Avengers are warriors who are the teachers, leaders, and ambassadors of America. We are honored to represent our families, hometowns, states and the nation abroad.”

According to Naval History and Heritage Command (NHHC) website, when Independence encountered the full-rigged ship in 1962, the carrier signaled to ask the vessel to identify itself, “training ship Amerigo Vespucci, Italian Navy,” was the response.”

The Independence reportedly signaled back, “You are the most beautiful ship in the world.”

An old black and white photo highlighted by NHHC in recent years, as well as on the Amerigo Vespucci’s website, marks the encounter six decades ago.

“I am grateful to USS George H.W. Bush and the whole US Navy for accepting my invitation to recreate history after 60 years, celebrating the anniversary of the sail past between USS Independence and ITS Amerigo Vespucci, that delivered the iconic label of ‘the world’s most beautiful ship’ to the vessel that I have the privilege to command,” said Italian Navy Capt. Max Siragusa, commanding officer of Amerigo Vespucci. “This ship brought me to U.S. for the first time in my life in 1992, as a midshipman; six years later I had the opportunity to work for two weeks on board USS Abraham Lincoln, deployed in the Persian Gulf, while performing a one year Personnel Exchange Program with the US Navy; today, in my last fortnight of Command at Sea I am delighted to put together three significant chapters of my professional life.”

When George H.W. Bush hailed Amerigo Vespucci she replied, “This is

Italian Navy Ship Amerigo Vespucci, senior national vessel in active duty.”

**George H.W. Bush replied, “Amerigo Vespucci, you are still the most beautiful ship in the world!”**

Vespucci responded, “We are flattered and with you and the Avenger team fair winds and following seas for your deployment. May your ceiling and visibility remain unlimited.”

Carrier Strike Group (CSG) 10, George H.W. Bush CSG, is on a scheduled deployment in the U.S. Naval Forces Europe-Africa area of operations, employed by U.S. Sixth Fleet to defend U.S., allied and partner interests.

George H.W. Bush is the flagship of CSG-10 and the George H.W. Bush CSG. CSG-10 is comprised of George H.W. Bush, Carrier Air Wing (CVW) 7, Destroyer Squadron (DESRON) 26, the Information Warfare Commander, and the Ticonderoga-class guided-missile cruiser USS Leyte Gulf (CG 55).

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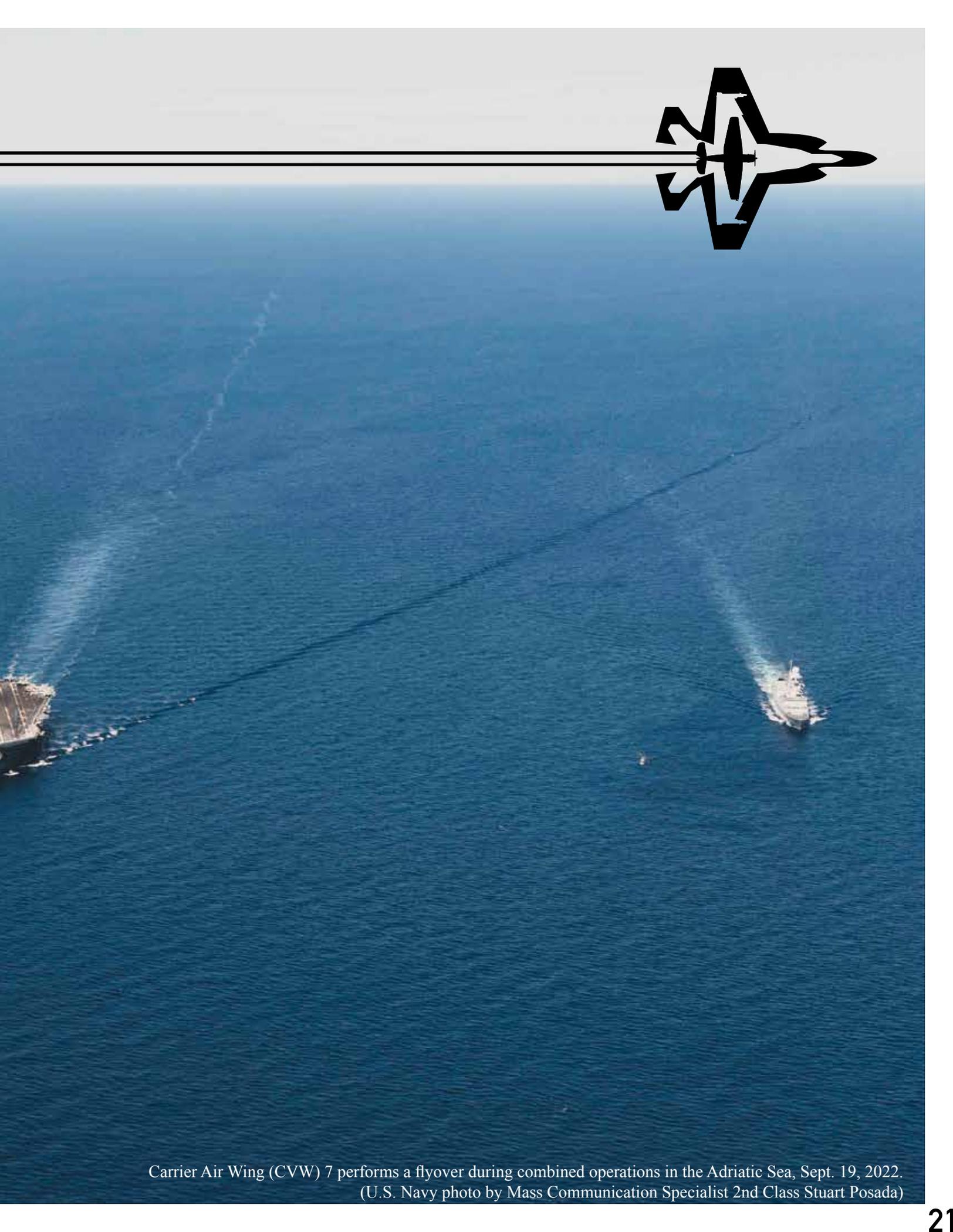
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# *PHOTOS OF THE MONTH*

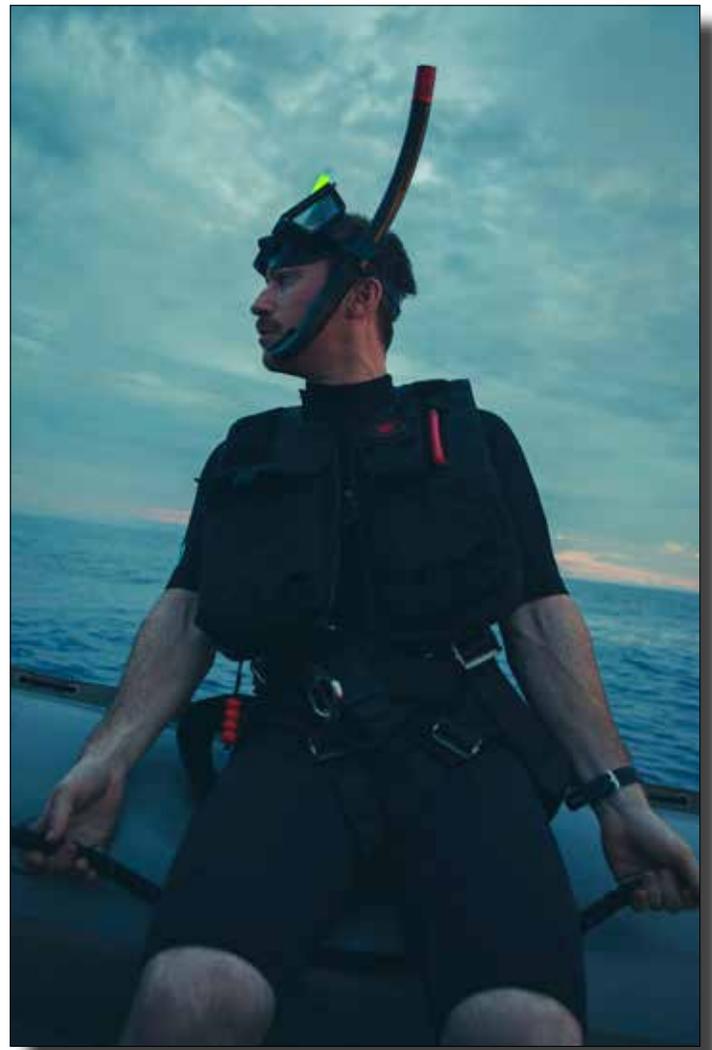
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Carrier Air Wing (CVW) 7 performs a flyover during combined operations in the Adriatic Sea, Sept. 19, 2022.  
(U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Stuart Posada)













## Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron (HSC) 5 Changes Command Carrier Strike Group 10 Public Affairs



Cmdr. Erik “Gus” Gustafson relieved Cmdr. Thomas “Princess” Van Hoozer as Commanding Officer of Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron (HSC) 5 during an in-flight change of command Sept. 1, 2022. Capt. Tomas Bodine, commander, Carrier Air Wing (CVW) 7, presided.

“Cmdr. Van Hoozer is leaving HSC-5 a better, more lethal fighting force,” said Bodine. “I have no doubt Cmdr. Gustafson will further his predecessor’s progress, and make the Dippers, Team Freedom, and the entire strike group a far more capable combat weapon system in the process. HSC-5 is in good hands.”

“**Working alongside the men and women of HSC-5 and supporting their development has been the most rewarding tour of my career.**”

Van Hoozer graduated from the United States Naval Academy in 2003 where he earned a Bachelor of Science in Systems Engineering. He assumed command of HSC-5 in July 2021 and led the ‘Nightdippers’ of HSC-5 into their 2022 deployment with CVW-7 aboard the Nimitz-class aircraft carrier USS George H. W. Bush (CVN 77).

“Working alongside the men and women of HSC-5 and supporting their development has been the most rewarding tour of my career,” said Van Hoozer. “The ‘Nightdippers’ are strong, resilient, and lethal. With Gus at the helm, I know they stand ready to rescue, protect, and deliver on any mission our nation asks.”

Gustafson graduated with merit from the United States Naval Academy in 2005, where he earned a Bachelor of Science in Systems Engineering. He joined the ‘Nightdippers’ of HSC-5 in July 2021 as their executive officer.

“Princess prepared us through a challenging workup cycle, and we wish him fair winds and following seas,” said Gustafson. “I’ve had the privilege of growing alongside our truly impressive team as we’ve coalesced into the combat-ready squadron we have today. I look forward to deepening our bond throughout what will certainly be an exciting and fulfilling deployment.”



## USS Farragut (DDG 99) Arrives in Djen, Djen, Algeria Carrier Strike Group 10 Public Affairs



The Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS Farragut (DDG 99) arrived in the commercial port of Djen Djen, Algeria near the city of Jijel, for a scheduled port visit, Sept. 18, 2022.

Farragut's arrival in Algeria follows a previous visit by the Sentinel-class fast response cutters USCGC Clarence Sutipin Jr. (WPC 1147) and USCGC John Scheuerman (WPC 1146) to Algiers in July. These visits, along with Algerian and U.S. participation in exercise Phoenix Express 2022 earlier this year, demonstrate the close bond between the two countries and their mutual commitment to security and maritime partnership in the region.

While in port, the ship and crew will host Algerian civilian and military leaders, providing an opportunity to continue building on the strong and enduring relationship between the United States and Algeria, as well as other partners and allies in the region.

"Our crew is looking forward to conducting operations with the Algerian military," said Cmdr. Nicholas Gurley, commanding officer of Farragut.

**"My crew intuitively understands our role as military ambassadors, and we appreciate the opportunity to work together to build on our relationship and maintain security in the region."**

Farragut Sailors will also be able to participate in cultural events hosted by the Algerian military to strengthen interpersonal rapport with the local Algerian population.

Since departing Naval Station Norfolk in August, Farragut has operated in the U.S. Sixth Fleet area of operations with the George H.W. Bush Carrier Strike Group (GHWBCSG), as well as NATO allies and partners in the region.

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USS GEORGE H.W. BUSH (CVN 77)  
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