



ABRAHAM LINCOLN CARRIER STRIKE GROUP PENNY PRESS

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Smoke on the Water

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PACIFIC OCEAN — On an average Tuesday afternoon aboard a ship, Sailors are eating lunch in the forward mess decks. One notices a strange smell and haze coming from their forward galley, and upon investigation, they find that it's smoke. As the old adage goes, where there's smoke, there's fire. The Sailor calls in the fire, and over the 1MC a voice echoes out, "White smoke, white smoke, white smoke reported in the forward galley. Flying Squad respond from repair locker 1-Bravo."

A team of dedicated individuals immediately spring into action, not only to prevent further damage to the ship, but to save lives. Suited up in heavy protective gear and ready to fight the fire, the team heads out, without a clue as to what they would discover, knowing only that they're about to enter the inferno.

Damage Controlman 1st Class Anisah Frasquillo, leading petty officer for USS Abraham Lincoln's (CVN 72) damage control division, deals with these dangerous situations as part of her career. Her day-to-day routine consists of leading a team of Sailors in performing routine maintenance, but on certain occasions, she suits up with the rest of her team to combat major casualties as part of Abraham Lincoln's at-sea fire party, better known as Flying Squad.

"Flying Squad is the team that goes in to fight a number of emergencies that can occur on a warship at sea," said Frasquillo. "The team, which is mainly composed of engineers, but can include

any rate, is called upon to fight casualties such as fires, flooding, toxic gas leaks and more.

Essentially, we're the team that goes in to fight the ship."

Frasquillo, who has taken part in combatting a number of casualties herself, has worn many hats on her way to becoming leading petty officer for the damage control division. She knows that, like all other major evolutions, it takes a group of individuals working together as a team to get the job done.

"From the bottom up, Flying Squad is built around teams of people," said Frasquillo. "You may start out as a boundaryman, work your way up towards hose team leader and then on-scene leader and above. Our on-scene leader is in charge of the entire casualty scene, and manages hose teams by making sure they are properly dressed in personal protective equipment and combatting the casualty in the most efficient manner. They also serve as a vital communications link between the hose teams and the damage control locker."

Damage control lockers serve as the forward base for damage control efforts. They not only equip the members of Flying Squad, but also pass orders from Damage Control Central to those who are currently fighting the casualty at the scene. These orders, and coordination for the entire effort, comes from those who have spent years in this career path and have advanced to the role of Damage Control Assistant, or DCA. It is the DCA who calls away Flying Squad and, when needed, sets General Quarters.

"I serve as the DCA aboard the ship, and I coordinate all damage control efforts," said Cmdr. Valon Walker, DCA aboard Abraham Lincoln. "I work with the Chief Engineer, Flying Squad and the entire crew to ensure that any casualties are quickly and safely dealt with. I issue the orders, but it takes the whole team to get the job done."

Living and working aboard a ship tends to create close social bonds between Sailors, but nowhere is this more evident than on Flying Squad. Trust, both in one's training and their teammates, is essential.

"Everyone on the team knows that when we go to combat a casualty, it could be our last," said Frasquillo. "This means that we need to know what we are doing, and we also need to be able to trust each other with our lives, because we're going into life and death situations. It's a very tight-knit group, and it has to be, when you know that during the casualty, your life is genuinely in someone else's hands."

Damage Controlman Fireman Ryan Bonomo serves as the team leader for hose team one on Flying Squad aboard Abraham Lincoln. When it comes to battling raging fires, he knows the importance of being close to your shipmates more than most.

"Entering into such dangerous situations definitely strengthens the bond you have with the others on your team," said Bonomo. "Especially on the hose teams, where you're literally holding onto each other's backs as you enter into rooms full of toxic gasses or flames. You might have to crawl on the ground to escape a compartment, following a hose that was placed by other members of your team. Without that trust, you could end up in a dangerous situation very quickly."

During a recent casualty that Bonomo battled, he recalled how his training and fellow Sailors helped him keep his cool and accomplish the mission.

"A casualty that immediately comes to mind is a fire aboard the Lincoln," said Bonomo. "Being in the presence of the fire, surrounded by smoke so thick that I could barely see my own hands, was the most intense experience that I've had as a Damage Controlman. Everyone on the team had to rely on their training and the Sailors around them to ensure the casualty was quickly and safely defeated."

Frasquillo, who directs and manages members of Flying Squad, understands that only a very particular sort of person is capable of their mission. She relies upon Sailors like Bonomo to get the job done, and needs to trust that they'll work as a team.

"Flying Squad is not for the faint of heart," said Frasquillo. "You must handle yourself well in exceedingly difficult situations. You have to care not only about yourself, but your teammates as well. Being selfish or reckless can easily result in someone getting seriously hurt. That is why team players are so essential. To put it bluntly, these are life and death situations."

As the ship's DCA, Walker understands the critical role that teamwork plays in defeating dangerous events. For every casualty, he has to coordinate with thousands of Sailors in order to stop the threat at its source.

"I work with the crew to ensure that everyone knows the role they play in defeating the casualty, especially when general quarters is called away," said Walker. "This includes training on how to prevent casualties, as well as what to do when they occur. The whole ship saw how well our training served us during that casualty, and I couldn't be more proud of how all of the Sailors came together to fight the ship."

At the center of all damage control efforts aboard Abraham Lincoln is Flying Squad, and Frasquillo takes great pride in being a member. She explains that not everyone is fit to join, but those who do are certainly a different breed.

"I'm incredibly proud of my fellow Flying Squad members," said Frasquillo. "We rely on the whole crew, because damage control is an all-hands effort, but you have to be a unique kind of individual to join Flying Squad. I have great respect for the Sailors on the team, especially because of the severity of the issues they face and the bonds they forge. We're always looking for qualified

hands, so if you're motivated, and if you love that adrenaline rush, but can still keep your cool in a fire, come talk to us and we'll see if you're a good fit."