

THE WOLVERINE

SEPTEMBER 2023

GERALD R. FORD VISITS ANTALYA

SAILORS VISIT THE NATION'S TOURISM CAPITAL
FOLLOWING BILATERAL TRAINING WITH TÜRKİYE

SAILOR HIGHLIGHTS

READ ALL ABOUT REACTOR AUXILIARIES DIVISION, AIR
TRAFFIC CONTROLLERS, RESCUE SWIMMERS, AND MORE!

PHOTOS OF THE MONTH INSIDE!



THE WOLVERINE

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FRONT COVER PHOTO

GM3 Anna Hawkins, from Selma, Oregon, assigned to weapons department, fires a messenger line on the flight deck, Aug. 17, 2023.
Photo by MCSN Maxwell Orlosky



50 YEARS OF MENTORSHIP AND GUIDANCE

STORY BY MASS COMMUNICATION SPECIALIST 1ST CLASS WILL SPEARS

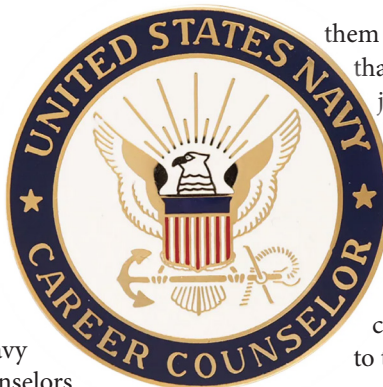
In 1972, Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Elmo Zumwalt issued Z-Gram #113, directing the establishment of full-time enlisted career counselors to ensure that Sailors have the knowledge to make informed decisions about their future, in or out of the Navy. The following year the new rate of Navy Counselor (NC) was officially established and since 1973, NCs have been providing guidance to junior and senior Sailors throughout the Navy.

USS Gerald R. Ford's (CVN 78) team of three Navy Counselors and 126 departmental and divisional counselors continue a 50-year legacy of providing mentorship and guidance to Sailors.

"Personally I love being a mentor, especially how you can truly connect and impact someone's life by offering a simple ear for them to speak into," said Navy Counselor 1st Class Jason Williams, from Sacramento, Calif., assigned to Gerald R. Ford's administration department. "Professionally I love to see people succeed at their jobs and in the Navy. Even if the Navy isn't for them, I hope that through our talks and guidance they will go out and make astute decisions on whatever endeavor they decide to get themselves into."

Navy Counselors provide information not only to Sailors, but also to command and Navy leadership helping to shape retention efforts.

"Everything that we do as counselors helps to shape the Navy's retention efforts," said Williams. "The biggest is being able to guide, mentor provide accurate information to Sailors on decisions about their career. As an NC, the easiest way to retain a Sailor is to provide



them with all of their resources. Once A Sailor can see that you truly care about them and not look at them as just a number, the retention numbers will take care of themselves."

Organizing information sessions and processing reenlistments for all of Gerald R. Ford's 4,200 Sailors can't be done by the rated NCs alone. Each squadron, department and division has collateral duty career counselors who are the front line providing information to their Sailors.

"Being able to help a PACT [Professional Apprenticeship Career Track] Sailor striking that rate that they wanted, a senior Sailor closing the Naval career chapter in their life, or something as simple as a reenlistment or a separation to pursue their dreams and aspirations, as counselors we feel our Sailors' accomplishments," said Aviation Boatswain's Mate (Handling) 2nd Class Kyle Lilly, from Plano, Texas, one of air department's career counselors. "I get supreme enjoyment in seeing these successes happen knowing I had a part to play in all of it. I don't make these Sailors shine, they do so themselves. I just provide the avenues and information that they need to travel to their destination. So at first, the job of being air department's career counselor chose me, but in the end, it's the job that I get satisfaction and enjoyment from that I keep pursuing."

Every Sailor faces the decision to stay Navy, or not, and there are approximately 780 Navy Counselors throughout the fleet ensuring that Sailors have all the information necessary to make a sound, well-thought-out decision.



Gerald R. Ford's Color Guard to Receive the Honorary Title

*By Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Aaron Arroyo,
USS Gerald R. Ford Public Affairs*

USS Gerald R. Ford's (CVN 78) command color guard will soon be getting an upgrade to its name and repertoire. The 12-member guard obtained its M14 rifle qualification, Aug. 10, 2023, through the ship's weapons department.

The qualification pertains to the use of live fire arms for the purpose of rendering gun salutes during naval ceremonies. Earning this qualification also means that henceforth the guard will bear the name Gerald R. Ford Command Honor Guard.

Aviation Boatswain's Mate (Handling) 2nd Class Gernell Burt, from Jacksonville, Florida, the command color guard's leading petty officer, says the qualification allows the guard to represent the Gerald R. Ford to the best of their ability.

"It's extremely important because it expands our performance expertise to a wider array of events that may require a rifle team," said Burt.

According to Burt, the guard may be called upon to perform at a number of events, including funerals and



burials at sea, retirement and commissioning ceremonies, sporting events, and receptions, which strengthen relations between the United States and its allies.

No longer used by the Navy for armament, the M14 rifle is carried by the honor guard during naval ceremonies. The training held by Gerald R. Ford's weapons department instructed the guard on the use of the rifle.

"Weapons department is responsible for giving the training, sustaining the qualifications, and teaching practical use of the weapon," said Chief Gunner's Mate Dechaun Dobson, from Philadelphia. "Any Sailor that will be using the rifle has to show that they have a standard level of knowledge and proficiency in order to be trusted with the weapon."

According to Dobson, the training that the weapons department provided to the color guard is sufficient for the execution of gun salutes. "The training provides a foundation for the Sailor to become proficient with the M14 while adhering to all safety guidelines," said Dobson.

Aviation Boatswain's Mate (Handling) Airman Jasmine Frazier, a member of the guard, from Arizona City, Arizona, says she is looking forward to performing with the rifle.





“It’s a big jump from color guard to honor guard because we are dealing with live ammunition,” said Frazier. “We are implementing the 21-gun salute for funerals and practicing weapons safety like we learned in weapons training.”

The guard has begun practicing their motions and drill sequences preparing for the day when they will be called upon to perform the gun salute. According to Aviation Boatswain’s Mate (Handling) 3rd Class Marchello Calhoun, from Jacksonville, Florida, it is special thing for Gerald R. Ford to have a command honor guard.

“We have enough riflemen now that we won’t need assistance for our ceremonies that require a gun salute. We can also perform for other commands as well as civilians on a ship or on the shore.”

Calhoun, who has been a part of the guard for two years, says that achieving the honorary title is how we prove that we are the biggest and baddest warship in the Navy fleet. “It brings the team together and improves morale when we work towards a common goal together,” said Calhoun.



NATO ships train alongside world's largest warship, the USS Gerald R. Ford, in Mediterranean Sea

Story by SNMG2 and Public Affairs Office at MARCOM

Central Mediterranean Sea – A NATO task group engaged in a series of dynamic maritime training exercises with the US Navy's most advanced warship during Exercise Sage Wolverine in the central Mediterranean Sea, 2 – 11 August 23.

The exercise was the perfect opportunity for Standing NATO Maritime Group 2 (SNMG2) and the US Navy's Gerald R. Ford Carrier Strike Group to hone their advanced warfighting skills and interoperability. Reaffirming their shared commitment to collective defence and security in the region, several NATO nations contributed forces to the exercise, including Greece, Italy, Türkiye, the United Kingdom and the United States.

“NATO's greatest strengths are its warfighting competence and interoperability, however these do not just occur automatically. They require constant, dedicated hard work and exercises of this nature to endlessly practice and refine a myriad of common tactics, techniques and procedures, and thus maintain readiness”

Three of SNMG2's ships participated - Turkish frigate TCG Gokceada (F-494), Hellenic Navy frigate HS Elli (F450), and British Royal Navy destroyer HMS Duncan (D37). The ships were joined by an Italian submarine, a

US cruiser and a destroyer, Hellenic Air Force F-16 jets, US maritime patrol aircraft and a variety of maritime helicopters. At the heart of the exercise was the world's largest and newest aircraft carrier, USS Gerald R. Ford, with its air wing of F/A-18 jets and airborne early warning aircraft. She demonstrated her formidable capability by launching up to 20 aircraft at a time at the height of the exercise.

All ships and aircraft went through rigorous testing via a diverse range of complex, multilayered tactical scenarios, proving the two different NATO task groups could operate seamlessly together. These included air defence, long-range maritime offensive strike, anti-submarine warfare, electronic warfare, communications, replenishment at sea and medical response scenarios.

Commander SNMG2, Royal Navy Commodore Paul Stroude, said, “NATO's greatest strengths are its warfighting competence and interoperability, however these do not just occur automatically. They require constant, dedicated hard work and exercises of this nature to endlessly practice and refine a myriad of common tactics, techniques and procedures, and thus maintain readiness.

“Thanks to Exercise Sage Wolverine,” he added, “and the superb co-operation with the Gerald R. Ford Carrier Strike Group, we remain very well placed to perform our core mission of reassurance, deterrence and, if necessary, the defence of NATO.”

SNMG2 is one of four Standing Naval Forces that operate under NATO Allied Maritime Command, headquartered in Northwood, United Kingdom. SNMG2 is a multinational integrated task group that projects a constant and visible reminder of the Alliance's solidarity and cohesion afloat. This continuous maritime capability performs a wide range of tasks, including exercises and real-world operations in periods of crisis and conflict.



USS Gerald R. Ford arrives in Antalya



TÜRKİYE

The U.S. Navy's newest aircraft carrier, USS Gerald R. Ford (CVN 78), and embarked staff from Carrier Strike Group (CSG) 12, arrived in Antalya, Türkiye for a scheduled port visit, Aug. 25, 2023.

This port visit is the capital ship's fourth stop while deployed to the U.S. Naval Forces Europe (NAVEUR) area of operations, and provides an opportunity to enhance the strong partnership between the U.S. and Türkiye.

Prior to arriving in Antalya, the Gerald R. Ford Strike Group (GRFCSG) 72s conducted a series of coordinated events with Turkish Navy ships (TCG) Anadolu, Goksu, Gediz, Imbat, Meltem, Burakreis, and Turkish Air Force F-16s, KC-135s, and P-72s to enhance partner interoperability and demonstrate commitment to security in the Mediterranean.

"The Gerald R. Ford Carrier Strike Group operated with our partners in the Turkish Navy and Air Force executing a series of multi-domain exercises prior to our arrival in Antalya," said Rear Adm. Erik J. Eslich, Commander, Carrier Strike Group 12. "The exercises strengthened the bond we share with Türkiye and enhanced our common understanding of maritime tactics and procedures advancing interoperability objectives. Additionally, our collective efforts reinforce our shared goals of promoting peace and stability in the region."

The U.S. Navy routinely operates with its Turkish Allies, and Ford's visit to Antalya comes shortly after the U.S. Sixth Fleet Command Ship, USS Mount Whitney (LCC 20), visited Istanbul, and while the guided-missile cruiser, USS Normandy (CG 60), visits Aksaz.

Before arriving in Antalya, Gerald R. Ford hosted key government and military leaders aboard to observe the first-in-class aircraft carrier's operations at sea. Guests experienced Gerald R. Ford's capabilities firsthand, witnessing the launch and recovery of embarked Carrier Air Wing (CVW) 8 aircraft from the flight deck, touring the ship's aircraft maintenance repair facilities, and meeting with GRFCSG Sailors and leadership.

Gerald R. Ford is anchored off the coast of Antalya and will again host local officials and military leaders for a dinner to celebrate the strong, extensive alliance between the U.S. and Türkiye. The port call also provides Gerald R. Ford Sailors the opportunity to experience Türkiye's rich history and culture.

"This visit is a great opportunity for the Sailors of USS Gerald R. Ford, Carrier Strike Group 12, Carrier Air Wing 8, and Destroyer Squadron 2 to engage with a key ally on a personal level and experience Turkish culture," said Gerald R. Ford Commanding Officer Capt. Rick Burgess. "Our crew is excited to enjoy a beautiful nation and sightsee in a city so rich in history."



USS Gerald R. Ford Sailors Tour Antalya

By Mass Communication Specialist Seaman Tajh Payne
USS Gerald R. Ford Public Affairs

Sailors assigned the Gerald R. Ford Carrier Strike Group (GRFCSG) participated in a Morale, Welfare and Recreation tour of the city of Antalya, Türkiye, Aug. 29, 2023.

During the tour, Sailors explored the east side and west side of Old Town Antalya, including visits to the Duden Waterfalls, the Art: Leather and Fur Clothing Outlet, a bazaar, a mosque and the Antalya Archeological Museum. The tour also included a boat ride that took Sailors around the coastline of Antalya.

Lt. Christopher Lee, assigned to Gerald R. Ford's air department and the ship's recreation services officer, chaperoned the tour.

"I was expecting an in-depth tour from a local guide along with some delicious Turkish cuisine, and that is what we got to experience," said Lee.

Sailors learned historical facts about not just Antalya, but Türkiye as a whole. For example, the country was classified under 22 regions, though modern Türkiye is classified under seven mainland regions, including Antalya.

The first stop, the Duden waterfalls, gave Sailors the opportunity to view and experience one of the most treasured and serene natural landmarks of Antalya.

Immediately after, Sailors were taken to the Art: Leather and Fur Clothing Outlet, where they were treated to a fashion show and a variety of authentic, upscale leather and fur clothing. Walking through a bazaar, a boat ride around the shore of Antalya was provided, giving way to views of seaside housing and activities the local community engages in.

Traveling through the same bazaar as before, where some Sailors purchased Turkish tea and other wares, they removed their shoes as they visited a mosque, which included its own rich history.

"It was interesting to see how the architecture and dwellings changed over the years from caves, to close-quartered living," Lee said. "Then to the buildings and aqueducts that the Romans erected, and advancements since then."

The history of the mosque was directly intertwined with the final stop, the Antalya Archeological Museum, which housed archeological artifacts and statues that portrayed Turkish, Greek and Roman historical figures, some of which had been present at that same mosque.

The museum was an idyllic setting that held rustic tools, Islamic scriptures engraved into stone, many faces and figures ingrained in the rich history of the area and stone tombs adorned with hand-chiseled art.

After the tour concluded, Sailors took it upon themselves to explore Antalya further.

When asked for his takeaways from the tour, Aviation Electronics Technician 1st Class Jerry Defranco, from Copiague, New York, assigned to aircraft intermediate maintenance department (AIMD), was more than satisfied.

"I didn't want to miss out on anything from the city and I was afraid that if I didn't take this tour then I would have missed out on something cool," Defranco said. "It was a great experience. I came to Türkiye with a list of things I wanted to do and the tour hit 90 percent of it."





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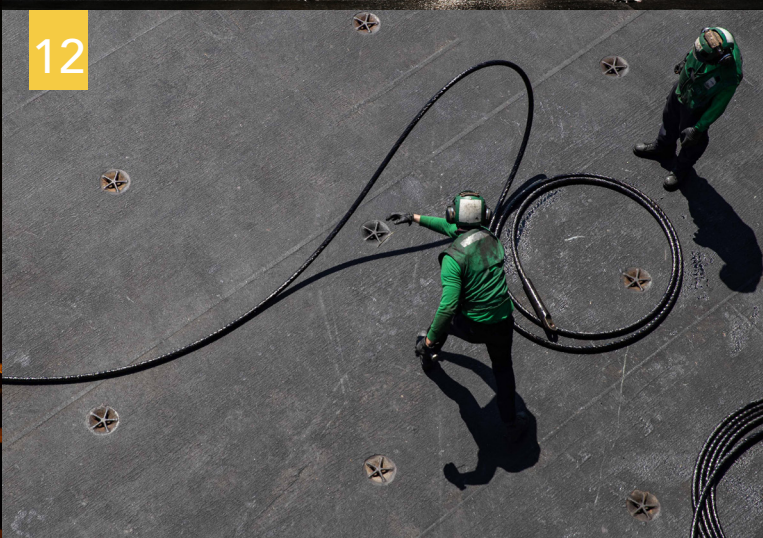
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PHOTOS OF THE MONTH

AUGUST 2023

1. Sailors assigned to the "Tridents" of Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron (HSC) 9 simulate an at-sea recovery from an MH-60 Sea Hawk, attached to HSC-9, during a search and rescue exercise, Aug. 10, 2023. (Photo by MC2 Jacob Mattingly)

2. Sailors assigned to the "Golden Warriors" of Strike Fighter Squadron (VFA) 87 move ordnance on the flight deck, Aug. 16, 2023. (Photo by MCSN Maxwell Orlosky)

3. Boatswain's Mate Seaman Jacob Parnell, from Mitchell, Georgia, assigned to deck department, conducts preservation maintenance on the ship, August 22, 2023. (Photo by MC2 Jennifer Newsome)

4. An MH-60 Sea Hawk, attached to the "Tridents" of Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron (HSC) 9, transports cargo from USNS Leroy Grumman (T-AO 195) to USS Gerald R. Ford (CVN 78) during a vertical replenishment, Aug. 6 2023. (Photo by MC2 Jackson Adkins)

5. An F/A-18E Super Hornet, attached to the "Ragin' Bulls" of Strike Fighter Squadron (VFA) 37, prepares to launch from the flight deck, Aug. 8, 2023. (Photo by MC2 Adonica Muñoz)

6. Boatswain's Mate 3rd Class Nicholas Allen, from Boston, assigned to deck department, prepares a fueling station for a refueling-at-sea, Aug. 21, 2023. (Photo by MC3 Aaron Arroyo)

7. Aviation Boatswain's Mate (Equipment) 2nd Class Christopher Soard, from Radcliff, Kentucky, assigned to air department, holds a safety line on the flight deck, Aug. 20, 2023. (Photo by MC2 Nolan Pennington)

8. Sailors assigned to air department transport an F/A-18E Super Hornet, attached to the "Tomcatters" of Strike Fighter Squadron (VFA) 31, on the flight deck, Aug. 20, 2023. (Photo by MC2 Nolan Pennington)

9. Sailors assigned to security department fire an M240B during a live-fire exercise on the fantail, Aug. 13, 2023. (Photo by MCSA Marcus Lewis)

10. Sage, a three-year-old female Labrador Retriever, deployed aboard USS Gerald R. Ford (CVN 78) through Mutts with a Mission, wears her Puppy Protective Equipment (PPE) in the hangar bay, Aug. 15, 2023. (Photo by MC2 Jackson Adkins)

11. An F/A-18E Super Hornet, attached to the "Tomcatters" of Strike Fighter Squadron (VFA) 31, lands on the flight deck, Aug. 11, 2023. (Photo by MCSN Tajh Payne)

12. Sailors assigned to air department feed out an arresting wire on the flight deck, Aug. 23, 2023. (Photo by MC3 Simon Pike)

THE BACKUP

STORY AND PHOTO BY MASS COMMUNICATION SPECIALIST 3RD CLASS
SIMON PIKE

“We’re the backup; when all else fails, we’re there to supply power so the plant can get back up and operational when we need to have propulsion,” said Machinist’s Mate 1st Class Maxwell Caldwell, from Columbia, Tennessee, assigned to the world’s largest aircraft carrier USS Gerald R. Ford’s (CVN 78) reactor auxiliaries (RA) division. “We may not be in the limelight of reactor, but we’re there. We’re always there and ready for the event where something goes wrong. When the lights turn out, we turn them back on.”

Reactor auxiliary is made up of non-nuclear mechanics who take care of the emergency diesel generators that provide backup power to the whole ship.

“The diesel generators are these huge engines that commercial ships use for propulsion,” Segura said. “On this ship, they’re backup power.”

They also take in all of the oily waste, oily fuel and oily water off the ship to process and separate.

“We’re able to discharge clean water overboard while at sea, and maintain the dirty pure oil to discharge to shore facilities for them to take care of it,” said Machinist’s Mate 1st Class Brandon Segura, from Lititz, Pennsylvania, also assigned to Gerald R. Ford’s reactor auxiliary division. “It helps the environment a lot in that regard.”

Reactor auxiliary on the Gerald R. Ford is also responsible for supporting the shaft components that make up the propulsion plant.

“After the reactor spins the shaft, we take care of the components, the bearings and the seals at the bottom of the ship,” said Segura.

For Segura, the personnel that make up reactor auxiliary are top notch, even if they’re younger.

“It’s a bunch of highly-trained Sailors in their early twenties, operating one of the most important pieces of equipment on the ship,” Segura said. “[The Navy] entrusts young people with a year and a half to two years of training to operate this reactor safely, even in foreign countries and around large amounts of people. It’s very important to highlight because not everyone gets that kind of responsibility.”

Segura finds that this idea only reinforces the capability of the Sailors that the Navy is training.

“It says a lot about the trust that the Navy has in these Sailors and the training that has to be done,” he said. “Even in our division; we’re not nuclear trained, perse, but we are entrusted to upkeep emergency diesel generators and the shafting components too. We use the shafts on everyday propulsion. The training and the knowledge of this department is at a very high level.”

Gerald R. Ford is outfitted with the first reactor plant redesign for an aircraft carrier in over 40 years, improving power production, monitoring technology and refining established design principles of its predecessor, the Nimitz-class aircraft carrier.

GERALD R. FORD'S REACTOR AUXILIARY DIVISION

"On this ship, they took operational stuff and day-to-day tasking into consideration to make things easier for us," Segura said.

"This ship has a lot of valves that can be operated electronically from a remote station. Those kinds of things add to our quality of life, where we don't have to go to a space to operate a valve, we can do it remotely, and remotely monitor a lot of things as well.

Something our chiefs harp on when we come into the division is that back on their previous ships, they had to manually look at every single gauge on the diesels, on the propulsion plant.

Here, everything is electronic; we can look at a screen and assess the health of our equipment pretty easily. That, air conditioning, valve manipulation, training: all of that's possible with the new plant."

These improvements also mean being able to do the same job more easily and with less Sailors.

"On a conventional ship, you might have a group of 20 people on watch, monitoring and manipulating valves and controlling the system," said Caldwell. "Here, a person can control that system from a monitor."

By reducing the workload, the improved capabilities of Gerald R. Ford

allow RA Sailors to engage in other pursuits that make them an even more valuable asset to the ship.

"Being able to not have to stress about operating and monitoring equipment as much, and now with electronic logs, allow us as a division to give our guys the opportunity to actually qualify outside of reactor and help with engineering: high-pressure air compressor, low-pressure air compressor, refrigeration. It's a challenge, since our job is outside of what we'd normally do as a machinist's mate, but there's other things that we have an advantage of – people can get more qualified and be better overall."

Gerald R. Ford's BIGGEST. RAS. YET.

By Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Adonica Muñoz,
USS Gerald R. Ford Public Affairs

The world's largest aircraft carrier USS Gerald R. Ford (CVN 78) successfully completed its largest replenishment-at-sea (RAS) with dry cargo and ammunition ship USNS Medgar Evers (T-AKE 31) in the Mediterranean Sea, Aug. 17, 2023.

During the RAS, Gerald R. Ford received 144 pallets of mail, 161 pallets of general stock, 297 pallets of provisions and 17 pallets of store merchandise.

"I enjoy everybody coming together from all parts of Gerald R. Ford to help us get resupplied and help improve everyone's quality of life onboard," said Logistics Specialist 2nd Class William Swan, from Virginia Beach, Virginia, assigned to Gerald R. Ford's supply department. "It's something that we logistics specialists study and train for when we go to school and it all comes together to something similar to getting presents on Christmas day."

A RAS allows Gerald R. Ford to stock up on repair parts, supplies and goods necessary for daily operations and quality-of-life while deployed.

"Receiving supplies while we operate at sea ensures that our crew can continually execute the mission,"

said Lt. Cmdr. Wanda Colon, Gerald R. Ford's principal assistant for services. "Not only are we receiving mail, but we are also restocking our food stores, and more importantly any material parts that are needed. RAS days are long, but they truly show that our crew comes together contributing with working parties on the flight deck, in the hangar bay, and below decks."

Sailors assigned to Gerald R. Ford's deck department helped receive 116 pallets via connected replenishment (CONREP) while the "Tridents" of Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron (HSC) 9 simultaneously helped transport the remaining 505 pallets via vertical replenishment (VERTREP). A 250-man working party made up of Sailors from each department was formed to help move stores as they were received onboard.

In addition to the over 600 pallets of goods received, Gerald R. Ford also off-loaded 124 pallets of used supplies, outgoing mail, and waste.

"The effort that was put forth in this RAS ensures that we are restocked and continue to be the biggest and baddest carrier in the fleet," said Colon.

CONTROLLING THE SKIES

BY MASS COMMUNICATION SPECIALIST SEAMAN MAXWELL ORLOSKY,
USS GERALD R. FORD PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Amidst the vast expanses of the open ocean, the world's largest aircraft carrier USS Gerald R. Ford (CVN 78) stands as a testament to human engineering and naval prowess.

Situated deep within the skin of the ship, a dimly lit room filled with advanced radar systems and cutting-edge communication technologies Chief Air Traffic Controller McClellan stands watch over air traffic controllers that manage the flow of airspace around the ship.

"To answer the question that people usually ask on if air traffic control is pretty stressful, yes there's stress to it," said McClellan. "However, I consider it healthy stress, the stress of paying attention and staying focused at all times from the moment the aircraft is up in the sky to when they're back on deck."

An average day for an air traffic controller begins with them briefing their operations for the day's events, reviewing weather conditions, flight schedules, and any other potential challenges that may arise. The ever-changing conditions at sea make each day unique in this dynamic environment. More than 20 years of combined of experience throughout the division ensures the team remains calm under pressure and adapts swiftly to any situation that may arise.

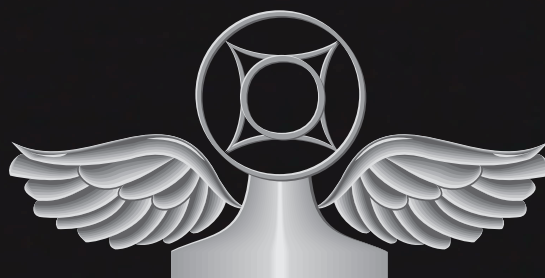
"The main rule for us getting these guys back on deck is to do it in the most safe, orderly, and expeditious way," said Air Traffic Controller 1st Class Rhett James.

When asked about the hardest and most stressful part of their job, the consensus isn't issuing directions, but training new controllers to do that.

"Once you qualify, then you have to train other people, you're in the shoes of the people who trained you and now you have to train new people," said James. "In a sense, you have to watch them work while you have to work at the same time."

As the sun sets, the never-ending cycle of launching and recovering aircraft in the unpredictable skies above the open ocean never ends. Carrier Air Traffic Control Center (CATCC) is operating and providing radar, navigational, and advisory services until the moment the wheels on the aircraft land on the deck.

Each day, the Sailors in CATCC are ready to face new challenges and guide the skies once more on the mighty Gerald R. Ford.



From Volunteer to Qualified Leader

*By Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Nolan Pennington,
USS Gerald R. Ford Public Affairs*

As a teenager, growing up in Marion, North Carolina, walking the halls of McDowell High School, a young 15-year-old Blaine Williams, became fascinated with his high school peers who would wear a unique uniform that he thought set them apart from the other students.

Williams' curiosity drove him to learn the significance of these uniforms and that they represented a high school program that educated and certified students on firefighting and as emergency medical technician (EMT), and he wanted one for himself.

"What initially got me into firefighting as a kid was seeing the uniforms the guys would wear at my high school," said Williams.

A close friend of Williams noticed his interest for firefighting and helped open the doors to begin his firefighting journey.

"I was always intrigued by firefighting, but I didn't know how to get started," said Williams. "In high school, I got into the junior programs through my high school's Career Technical Education (CTE) program that offered firefighting and EMT. At the same time, I received training and education with the fire department, and from that point forward, I just fell in love with firefighting and became fully certified before my 18th birthday."

Williams continued his new passion for firefighting by volunteering at McDowell County Rescue Squad in Marion, North Carolina.

"I volunteer because it's a great call to honor," said Williams. "It's something that everyday I'm learning something new. It's something I feel I can give back to my community, and I learned it's a great responsibility to uphold a title as a firefighter."

Over the years, Williams volunteered at many fire stations and eventually he would obtain a full-time position as a firefighter engineer with Glenwood Volunteer Fire Department in Marion, North Carolina.

"As a firefighter engineer, I was

responsible for doing all of the truck checks every morning, station duties, maintaining equipment and training," said Williams. "But my main responsibility was to drive the fire truck to the call and from there, assess the call. I could do anything from operating the truck to being hands-on and actually fighting fires, and nine times out of 10, I was the first person on the scene."

During the early hours of a late December morning in 2020, just before Christmas, Williams responded to a call that would forever remind him of the importance of being a firefighter.

"I received the initial call," said Williams. "I drove the truck and I could see the plume of smoke while driving there and my initial thought was 'wow, this is a legitimate fire.' When I arrived on scene, there were two other fire trucks pulling up with me and there was a fire crew already going to work. I asked the chief on scene what he needed. He told me to go inside and assist his guys. I went back to the truck and established the gear and the equipment that I needed and I assisted in helping put out the initial fire and complete the overhaul."

While the homeowners lost their home to the fire, Williams and the responding fire crews helped recover some of the Christmas presents.

"At the end of the day, their house might not have been saved," said Williams. "But it's very wholesome to know that we were able to save their Christmas packages - they still had something to look forward to."

Williams, now an enlisted Sailor in the U.S. Navy as an Aviation Boatswain's Mate (Handling) Airman, assigned to the world's largest aircraft carrier USS Gerald R. Ford's (CVN 78) air department, hangar bay division (V-3), joined the crew January 2022, and quickly became certified in many in-rate firefighting qualifications, adopting new firefighting methods and leadership skills along the way.



“The main thing I am learning here on the ship is how to be a better leader and how to hold myself accountable for my actions,” said Williams. “When I was younger in the fire service, everything was learned quickly on the fly, but now, I can study and learn the things I should be practicing to keep myself safe. That’s something I’m going to try and instill and pass on to my Sailors as I train them.”

Firefighting is a continually evolving practice. New equipment and lessons learned bring quicker and safer approaches to best combat fires and save lives. While Williams is eager to learn all aspects of firefighting, he likes to focus his firefighting training on perfecting the basics.

“You have to learn how to crawl before you can walk,” said Williams. “So for me, the simple stuff is the most important stuff to teach. Everybody wants to learn the coolest and most difficult stuff first, but if you don’t understand the basics first, then how are you going to keep yourself safe?”

Some of the basic training points Williams emphasizes is the importance of understanding their personal protective equipment (PPE), what it is, why it’s there, and what the equipment can tolerate to best avoid preventable casualties.

“When an actual emergency happens, you don’t have time to sit and guess and question your abilities, it’s time to react,” said Williams. “Know your equipment because that could be the difference in saving your life and others.”

With William’s real-world experience fighting fires prior to the military and his continued dedication to learning all aspects



of firefighting, his peers realize he has gained an abundance of firefighting knowledge and that he holds himself to a high standard, which has garnered Williams a respectable nickname among his peers.

“They call me ‘the fire marshal’ in V-3,” said Williams. “It’s not to poke fun at me, they know I’m very passionate when it comes to firefighting. They all know I get very aggravated if something is not correct because I know it is life-saving equipment.”

“The fire marshal aboard the ship has a great responsibility when it comes to damage control,” said Williams. “So they kind of honor me with that nickname because they know how passionate I am when it comes to firefighting.”

Williams is currently deployed with the Gerald R. Ford in the U.S. Sixth Fleet area of operations. When he returns to his homeport, he plans on picking up where he left off, volunteering with the local fire station, Carrollton Volunteer Fire Department, in Carrollton, Virginia. Williams is recruiting and encouraging other Sailors to follow his footsteps and volunteer for their local community fire stations.

“Firefighting is something I don’t get bored with,” said Williams. “I learn something new every day, and even after 6 years, I still enjoy the challenges, and that’s what keeps me volunteering.”

So Others May Live: The Aviation Rescue Swimmer Rate

By Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Jacob Mattingly,
USS Gerald R. Ford Public Affairs

In the skies above the Gerald R. Ford Carrier Strike Group (GRFCSG), a select group of Sailors patrol the seas, they are the Naval Aircrewmen assigned to the “Tridents” of Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron (HSC) 9 riding in their ‘steel war horse,’ the MH-60S Sea Hawk helicopter. From logistical transport to at-sea life saving, the Naval Aircrewman (Helicopter) rate acts like an effective and vital asset for Carrier Air Wing (CVW) 8.

Around 30 Sailors fly with HSC-9 24 hours a day, seven days a week to execute the GRFCSG’s rigorous tasking. An aircrewman assigned to HSC-9 is typically tasked with moving passengers and cargo between ships, medical evacuations, search and rescue operations, and perform joint exercises with NATO allies and partners.

Naval Rescue Swimmers may find themselves working in a number of environments over both land and sea as they man the cabin of an MH-60S Sea Hawk. Their tasking may depend on the mission, but all crews will be led by a crew chief and there will always be a crewman kitted out for search and rescue. An aircrewman may find themselves jumping out of an aircraft to the bitter cold ocean to save a survivor or assisting in transporting special forces operators.

“As an AWS, we provide search and rescue assistance as well as search and rescue for the Gerald R. Ford while the ship is deployed. We also provide logistical services by transporting personnel and cargo back and forth between ships throughout the strike group,” said Naval

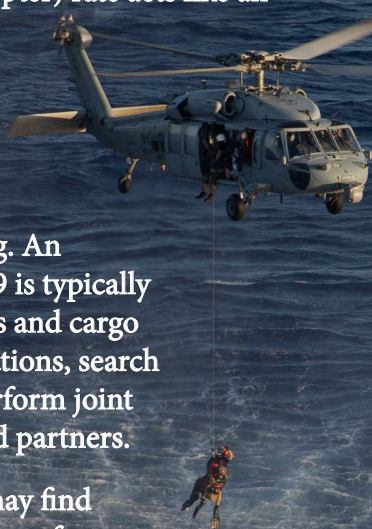
Aircrewman (Helicopter) 2nd Class Joshua Gabriele, from Wiscasset, Maine, assigned to HSC-9. “We are involved in replenishments-at-sea, moving pallets to the Ford from supply ships and we are always on the alert just in case there is a scenario where somebody falls in the water.”

Being an aircrewman is not an easy job however, to achieve the privilege of flying with a squadron, Sailors must accomplish an intense series of trials and tasks that take over two years to receive orders to their units and gain the coveted role of Naval Rescue Swimmer.

“Rescue swimmers go through three schools while we are down in Pensacola, Florida: an initial selection school, aircrew school and then our rate specific training. After that is all done we will go to a training squadron to work towards our wings,” said Gabriele. “We do a lot of cardio and we do a lot of swimming as you can imagine, it is absolutely essential that we stay fit.”

Once their training is accomplished AWS Sailors enter into a close-knit community of enlisted men and women who all stand the watch for the GRFCSG while they are in the air. The rate is not an easy one to receive, but the memories and experiences each Sailor gains is something that sticks with people like Gabrielle for the rest of their lives.

“I always had an interest in helicopters and I wanted to fly, one of my favorite flights was my first long distance flights from Fallon, Nevada,” Gabriele remarked. “We saw a ton of really cool sights like the Hoover Dam and the Grand Canyon from an angle that nobody ever gets see and it’s something I’ll never forget.”





NAVY ENTERTAINMENT UNDERWAY

*By Mass Communication Specialist Seaman Apprentice
Tristan Richardson,
USS Gerald R. Ford Public Affairs*

Sailors aboard the world's largest aircraft carrier USS Gerald R. Ford (CVN 78) had the opportunity to happily decompress Aug. 18 as entertainers came aboard to perform in the hangar bay.

Sailors from all departments gathered in the hangar bay to watch the freestyle rap group Free Daps and the Street Drum Corps perform their respective arts. Popcorn and other refreshments were available for viewers to enjoy.

"We make up everything on the spot, that's why our jokes are stupid" said Isaac Knox, a member of the freestyle rap group Free Daps. "This has been so cool to see. We've done a couple of carriers and the morale here, the energy here, has been the best that I've ever seen."

Organizing entertainment events and creating the schedule for all of Gerald R. Ford's 4,200 Sailors to come participate is not a simple task, and still requires Sailors to join in on the set-up, maintenance, and clean-up of big events such as this. Morale, Welfare and Recreation (MWR) events like these, however, are a great way for Sailors to relieve stress, get away from their workload and spend time laughing with their shipmates.

Those attending the event said it was a hectic time and very funny. Seaman Perry Young, from Milwaukee said he thought it was cool to see a musical event scheduled aboard the ship after work.

"On the flight deck we work really hard and just look forward to the next port visit," said Aviation Boatswain's Mate (Handling) Airman Apprentice Ikechukwu Onyemauwa,



from San Antonio. "When they showed up, they were really energetic and messed with the audience. Everyone liked that. It was cool to have a little break from our work."

Stress relief is a continuous evolution in the U.S. Navy. Regular events, activities and outlets create a variety of ways for Sailors to blow off steam. It is known by enlisted and officers alike that mental wellness facilitates physical toughness and military readiness. Having periods of rest and recreation is an ongoing mission and involves more than just the performers.

"None of this would have been possible without the crew here onboard and MWR's help," said Bobby Alt, a member of Street Drum Corps. "We're sad to leave. There were a lot of people in the crowd who showed their passion for music and I'm happy we were able to show our appreciation for everything our service members are doing out here."



THE WOLVERINE

USS GERALD R. FORD (CVN 78)

MEET THE TRIAD

COMMANDING OFFICER

CAPT Rick Burgess

EXECUTIVE OFFICER

CAPT Matthew Mulcahey

COMMAND MASTER CHIEF

CMDCM Bryan Davis

MEDIA DEPARTMENT

PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICER

LCDR David Gardner

ASSISTANT PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICERS

ENS Paula Niederland

ENS Mackenzie Culver

DEPARTMENT LCPO

MCCS Ryan Wilber

PRODUCTION LCPO

MC1 William Spears

EDITOR

MC2 Adonica Muñoz

STAFF

MC1 Brian Glunt	MC3 Aaron Arroyo
MC1 David Kolmel	MC3 Triniti Lersch
MC1 Ryan Williams	MC3 Simon Pike
MC2 Jackson Adkins	MCSN Maxwell Orlosky
MC2 Jacob Mattingly	MCSN Tajh Payne
MC2 Jennifer Newsome	MCSA Marcus Lewis
MC2 Nolan Pennington	MCSA Tristan Richardson

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USS Gerald R. Ford CVN 78

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THIS MONTH IN NAVAL HISTORY

September 2, 1945

More than two weeks after accepting the Allies' terms, Japan formally surrenders, marking the end of World War II. The ceremonies, less than half an hour long, take place on board the battleship USS Missouri (BB 63), anchored with other United States and British ships in Tokyo Bay.

September 7, 1797

USS Constellation, the second of the original six frigates, is launched. Notable service includes the battles between the French frigate L'Insurgente and Vengeance, during the Quasi-War with France; participation in the Barbary Wars where she helps capture the Algerian frigate, Mashuda, in 1815; and service in the West Indies Squadron against piracy and slavery.

September 11, 2001

American Airlines Flight 77 is hijacked by terrorists and hits the Pentagon, causing 184 fatalities. Specific to the Department of the Navy, the fatalities are: 33 military personnel, six civilians, and three contractors. American Airlines Flight 11 and United Airlines Flight 175 hit the Twin Towers at the World Trade Center, New York City. United Airlines Flight 93 goes down in Shanksville, Pa., after passengers engage the hijackers.

September 17, 1787

The Continental Convention signs the Constitution of the United States at Philadelphia, Pa., replacing the Articles of the Confederation. Named in honor of the Constitution, USS Constitution is launched in 1797 and to date is the oldest commissioned U.S. Navy ship in service.

September 27, 1955

A P2V-5 Neptune patrol plane of Early Warning Squadron 4 is lost with nine crew members and two journalists while tracking Hurricane Janet over the Caribbean Sea.

BACK COVER PHOTO

Sailors assigned to the "Golden Warriors" of VFA-87 prepare to move ordnance on the flight deck, Aug. 16, 2023.

Photo by MCSN Maxwell Orlosky

