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# TIMES OF AMERICA



March  
Patrol 25.1







## TIMES OF AMERICA

COMMANDING OFFICER  
Capt. E. M. Rule

EXECUTIVE OFFICER  
Capt. M. T. Plageman

COMMAND MASTER CHIEF  
CMDCM S. J. McQueen

USS AMERICA PAO  
Lt. Carolina Fernandez

USS AMERICA MEDIA LCPO  
MCC Byron Linder

CREATIVE DIRECTOR  
MC3 Darian Lord

CONTRIBUTORS  
Lt. Terence Viernes  
MC2 Cole Pursley  
MC2 Amy Mullins  
MC2 Sade Wallace  
MCSN Kenneth Melseth  
MCSN Sam McNeely  
Lance Cpl. Victor Gurrola  
Pfc. Skilah Sanchez

PRINT EDITOR  
MCSN Jeadan Andre

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# CAPTAIN'S CORNER

Team of Teams,

The hard work and professional acumen of our Sailors and Marines has been once again been recognized with a fifth consecutive Battle Effectiveness Award, or “Battle E.” This award is more than another hash-mark painted on the ship or another ribbon on your rack, it is a reflection of Team’s commitment to AMERICA and all who serve aboard. We look forward to the formal presentation of the award in a few months, but this codifies the effort you all have put in.



As an example of that hard work, we’ve continued to crush it through joint training exercises. Just through the last week before we pulled into Okinawa, we hit nearly 250 launches and recoveries, conducted more than 180 aircraft elevator runs moving aircraft, shot more than 10,000 rounds of ammunition, transferred more than 250,000 gallons of jet fuel, and attended to countless simulated medical casualties (or “cherry pickers,” as you probably heard over the 1MC at all hours). The Engineering and Combat Systems Departments continued to work through and ultimately correct system casualties to include depot-level repairs on one of our diesel generators, sea water pipes and communication systems.

This is just a brief overview of the efforts every one of you put in every day – before we return to Sasebo, there’s still much to do. We’ll have several high-ranking international visitors coming aboard in support of exercise Iron Fist, and our Tiger Cruise committee has been putting in significant hours to ensuring our Tiger Cruise is executed safely and successfully – two big opportunities to show off our ship and our capabilities at sea to what will be a combined audience of more than 150 visitors. When you add that with the three in-port tours we conducted in Okinawa that will be more than 260 total people who have visited AMERICA in less than three weeks!

As we return to our homeport of Sasebo for the last time, our days in-port will be incredibly busy with Homeport Change Preparations, 5A1 Maintenance Period, Total Ships Readiness Assessment, topside preservation, Fleet Synthetic Training-Joint exercise, and multiple other evolutions ensuring AMERICA is Combat Ready. Please take this time to ensure you are prepared for the voyage!

All that said, as we draw Patrol 25.1 to a close, my main focus is ensuring SAFE execution of operations – we cannot afford to have personnel or equipment damaged. Slow is smooth, and smooth is fast. Let’s continue to KEEP THE MAIN THING THE MAIN THING! See you on the deckplates.

With utmost respect and admiration,

CAPT Ethan Rule

Commanding Officer, USS AMERICA

# AMA HIGHLIGHTS

## Networks, Teamwork, and Hard Work: How Tactical Action Officers Fight the Ship

LT Terence Viernes

Last month’s article explored how the modern Combat Information Center (CIC) was brought about by early naval defeats against the Imperial Japanese Navy. The CIC, in turn, enabled the U.S. Navy to leverage its technological advantage and emerge victorious during World War II. This evolution in warfare introduced a new problem for naval tacticians; how can commanding officers (COs) avoid becoming overwhelmed with all of the data CIC provided while still retaining the ability to make well-informed and timely decisions in the heat of battle?

Enter the Tactical Action Officer (TAO). TAOs are tasked with employing all weapon and sensor systems available onboard to defend the ship against an ever-expanding range of threats. By allowing TAOs to “fight the ship” in accordance with predetermined battle orders and doctrine, COs are not bogged down by self-defense actions. They can instead commit more energy towards understanding the proverbial bigger picture and plotting a course to victory. But in order to best support the CO, TAOs must grapple with two fundamental challenges of 21st-century naval combat.

One such challenge is the immense scale of situational awareness required of any tactical watch station on a modern warship. There are countless possible vectors for enemy attack since missiles can be launched from hundreds of miles away from air, surface, and subsurface platforms. To help prepare for this, TAOs must track contacts across hundreds of square miles of ocean by

drawing information from satellite systems, remote radar stations, and even open-source websites.

However, once a threat is identified and inbound to the ship, TAOs must then face another challenge: the blistering speed at which naval combat unfolds. Supersonic missiles (those that can reach speeds over 1,000 miles per hour) are prominent threats.

For U.S. Navy ships deployed to conduct a variety of missions worldwide, the difference between victory and defeat at sea is but a few seconds. Therefore, TAOs must be able to quickly recognize the incoming threat, determine the most effective countermeasure, and launch it at the precise moment to maximize the chance of success.

Fortunately, TAOs are not alone in this noble pursuit. They are supported by a team of Sailors trained in a range of disciplines. Operations Specialists, Cryptologic Technicians, Fire Controlmen, Information Systems Technicians, Intelligence Specialists, and Electronics Technicians each provide the necessary expertise that enable TAOs to make the right tactical decisions during both routine and combat operations.

Unlike the military heroics often seen in film and television, the success of real-world military operations does not rely on just one person. Winning the war at sea requires a coordinated effort both within ships (CO-TAO relationship, Sailors in vital supporting roles) and across fleets (leveraging CIC’s networking resources) that maximizes our fighting potential. If you’re interested in learning more about how USS AMERICA fits into the complex modern battlefield, don’t hesitate to engage with the TAOs and Sailors who stand watch in CIC when you see them out on the deckplates!





# PATROL HIGHLIGHTS





# BLUE AND GREEN AS ONE TEAM

MCSN Jeadan Andre

Sailors and Marines aboard the forward-deployed amphibious assault ship USS America (LHA 6) train to respond to casualties of all grades, in war and peace. USS America's medical department integrates and serves Sailors and Marines alike. As part of a joint effort, the Sailors of the ship and those assigned to the 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit (31st MEU) participate in medical drills to ready their proficiency in trauma care.

"The integration of green and blue side corpsmen is very different, but I like it because you see how everybody's roles come together," said Hospital Corpsman 2nd Class Jalen King, assigned to the 31st MEU. "We're going through our fundamentals with one end goal. To get our patient to the next higher echelon of care."

One aspect of medical readiness is training for mass casualty treatment. Integrated drills serve as a vital training for both blue and green side corpsman alike. Mass casualty drills are a simulated scenarios that tests the capabilities of the integrated Navy and Marine Corps medical team aboard USS America, preparing the providers to treat a strenuous number of inbound casualties. A large influx of patients all at once tests, refines and enhances their current medical capabilities while improving the corpsmen's abilities to triage a variety of inbound casualties from the battlefield.

"The purpose of the mass casualty drill is always to test your skills. You have to do this to refresh your muscle memory and medicine is always changing," said Chief Hospital Corpsman Benjamin Guinto, assigned to the 31st MEU. "You need to be updated on the latest instructions, the best way of treating a patient, and all possible medical interventions."

It is very important that the corpsman go through these drills as they are very important to the mission of the Amphibious Ready Group in the 7th Fleet as it creates cohesion and efficiency amongst all those involved. It also allows for the sharpening of the basic skills of new and returning Sailors as there is a constant flow of Sailors leaving and arriving to the ship, each with new knowledge to be gained and given.

"It is a growing and a learning process, but it is definitely getting better," stated Hospital Corpsman 3rd Class Dyanna Keiji, assigned to the USS America. "I get more confident in our ability to work together as a team if we ever had to actually deal with an actual emergency or mass casualties."

Each side have different set of skills, such as field medicine with green side corpsmen and bedside medicine for the blue side corpsmen, which takes time to understand and process each respective branch's equipment and techniques. There come some learning curves for the green side corpsman as most are not used to being on a ship, even some of them being their first time aboard a ship.

"Working with the blue side corpsman during the mass casualty drills has been going pretty well. Having not been on a ship before, I am learning where things are and the process on how they do these drills,"



stated Hospital Corpsman 2nd Class Jomari Cruz, assigned to the 31st MEU. "I am learning a lot from them and it is uplifting."

There are difficulties as well for blue side corpsman, despite being more familiar with the ship and the equipment aboard, such as fluid communications with the green side or understanding their equipment. Sailors who may have only been a blue side corpsman may come across a certain experience or situation that is more familiar to their green side counterpart, so gaining more insight on how to approach and handle a new situation gives greater awareness and overall familiarity with the potential unknown that comes with the overall job of being a corpsman.

"It is pretty empowering working with the green side corpsmen because they bring a different skill set that blue side is used to and I feel that we have different backgrounds when we are working together," said Hospital Corpsman Guadalupe Beech, assigned to Fleet Surgical Team Seven (FST7). "It always feels like a safe environment to ask questions if there is something that I do not know, but green side might know."

According to Naval, the mass casualty drills help the corpsman train and expect what could come, but it is also informative to the surrounding Sailors who are not directly involved with the drill. The drills display a possible reality at any moment to those who could have a chance to be a helping hand at any given moment.

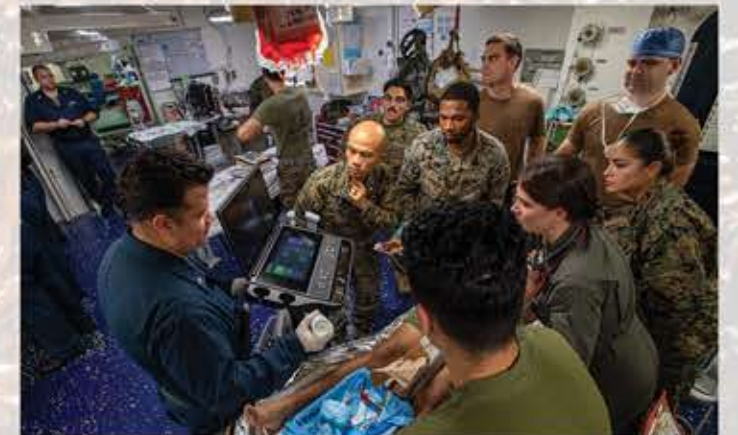
"From the people that just watch us do the drills, I think it opens their eyes that this is not just practice, this might happen and what will you do when this happens," said Chief Hospital Corpsman Alexander Naval, assigned to FST7. "As a bystander, what part can you play if the medical team is busy? From stretcher bearers to directing the traffic or controlling the crowd, we need everyone to not just watch, but help the medical team."

No matter the situation, green and blue side corpsmen continue to work together to grow and evolve their skill set prior to coming together for the drills. The medical world is ever growing and corpsmen continue learning new things every day to help those in their time of need, even if they do not know when that may be.

"The greatest takeaway is that we are learning every day, as someone who has done this multiple times and with this being my fourth patrol," said Naval, "For the junior Sailors, this is the biggest learning experience they can get because we are looking at real world scenarios that could happen in the near future, so we are making them ready and learn everything, and we are here to guide them on what to do and what to expect in case something like this actually happens."

On this 25.1 patrol, the corpsmen of the America and the 31st MEU have worked together endlessly to strive to improve, grow together, and above all else, be prepared and ready for any situation. The combined forces of the blue and green medical team have seen the self-improvement amongst each other and within themselves, feeling more ready than ever as they continue to keep America safe.

"The integration between green and blue side has been the best that I have ever seen. I have been in FST7 since 2022 and I have never seen it this good," Beech stated, "We communicate daily, we see each other's patients, which has not been not before, and I feel that our morale is good as well."





DIVISION OF THE ISSUE.

**G3** IYADYAS

**MAG RATS**



**A03 WILLIAMS**



**A0AR AND A03**



**HANDLING ORDNANCE**



**GBU-12**



**GROUP PHOTO**



**G3 DIVISION**



**MOVING BOMB**



**A03 KINGSLEY**



**HOISTING ORDNANCE**



**MOVING ORDNANCE**



**HOISTING BOMB**





# FACES OF AMERICA





# READY, AIM, FIRE.

MC2 Sade Wallace

As the flagship of the America Amphibious Ready Group, USS America (LHA 6) equips watch standers to develop and refine their small arms skillsets, ashore and at sea. Small arms training shoots are a regular evolution for Sailors and Marines aboard USS America. Each participant must shoot with regular periodicity in order to remain qualified as in port sentry watch standers.

“The purpose of small arms gun shoots is to develop dexterity on the weapons systems required for the performance of duties as security watch standers,” said Lt. Zachary Bixby, the ship’s security officer. “We train for proficiency and to be ready for the unexpected.”

Roving security watches are vital to ensuring the safety of all personnel on the ship. “Requalification helps us to maintain our security force posture,” said Chief Gunner’s Mate Jace Jones, the leading chief petty officer of the ship’s armory division. During live fire evolutions, Jones serves as the primary range safety officer responsible for the oversight of personnel safety and range operations.

Jones and his team of Gunner’s Mates (GM) and Aviation Ordnancemen (AO) work behind the scenes during patrol, planning for the safe execution of gun shoot training to ensure each evolution goes smoothly. During the gun shoots they maintain the safety of the range to assist shooters in fundamental skill building and provide overall range supervision to monitor the safety of the evolution.

While weapons training occurs routinely underway, fitting a gun shoot into the ship’s scheduling becomes a challenge due to the many other evolutions taking place daily. “We’re out here with other ships and everyone has a mission,” said Gunner’s Mate 1st Class Dinobadele Mandley, a Small Arms Marksmanship Instructor and secondary range safety officer. “We’re making sure that we are getting time in between other things that need to be accomplished as a unit.”

In addition to coordinating proper zoning with nearby ships in order to maintain a safe distance during live fire, the armory division also plans evolutions around regularly scheduled flight operations aboard America.



This patrol, small arms qualifications are conducted at midnight on the hangar bay’s starboard aircraft elevator. Space is limited due to essential aircraft maintenance nearby, but the armory team works to ensure necessary equipment is available and all personnel involved have what they need to be safe and focus on the target.

Before each evolution, participants must conduct two hours of sterile training as a requirement in accordance with OPNAV 3591.1G Small Arms Training and Qualification. Also known as dry fire training, the sessions are conducted in an environment free of live ammunition. Lessons include presentations, live handling of unloaded weapons, how to assemble and disassemble weapons and establishing the proper shooting stance. “As long as you focus on what you need to do, safety-wise, and follow procedure, you will be good to go,” Aviation Ordnanceman 2nd Class Evin Santana, a line coach, explained.

While many participants are simply renewing their qualification, others are completing their qualification for the first time in order to join America’s armed watch stander team. Being qualified for a sentry watch provides the chance to work with various small arms for target engagement, like the M-18 Sig Sauer, M-4 Carbine and M500 shotgun. Sailors earn the small arms qualification even if it is not a skill directly related to their assigned rate.

“It’s a challenge to brush off the dust after not shooting for so long,” said Intelligence Specialist 2nd Class Alyssa Hutchings, who will become newly qualified once completing the



evolution’s requirements. When comparing the experience to boot camp, she said, “It’s similar, but there is definitely a lot more coaching and assistance in the fleet when you need it.”

America’s Sailors and Marines are given hands-on instruction from a team trained to coach people with a range of experience levels. In addition, the improvised live fire range created by Jones offers the opportunity for embarked Marines, assigned to the 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit, to practice their target acquisition skills while at sea.

“It’s basically set up the same way as it would be on land, but just in a different environment,” said Lance Cpl. Garrett Viscomi, assigned to the 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit. “It’s a good way to get some reps in.”

Whether blue or green, weekly live fire evolutions aboard USS America are guaranteed to keep everyone battle-ready.





# FACES OF 31ST MEU

