



A Message From Jack's Collar

PCU BOUGAINVILLE (LHA 8) ISSUE 5 - May 2025

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Captain's Corner



Capt. Harry Marsh
Commanding Officer

Fighting EIGHT.

I would like to extend my sincere appreciation to the entire crew of USS BOUGAINVILLE. When I reported aboard in April 2023, we were a team of just eight. Today, we are mustering over 370 Sailors—and growing steadily each week. Our crew remains committed and focused, sharpening their skills daily through training, schools, and by supporting the Fleet with temporary duty assignments across other commands. We continue to maintain a strong operational presence aboard ships both inport and underway throughout the 5th, 6th, and 7th Fleet Areas of Responsibility. Our team is playing a critical role in helping ships pass inspections and prepare for deployment.

We've made tremendous progress in assembling and developing a crew that will be ready to operate the Navy's newest amphibious assault ship and confidently take her to sea. What was once a small and determined team has grown into a highly capable and mission-focused unit, unified by a shared purpose and strengthened by relentless training, operational readiness, and commitment to excellence. Every advancement we've made—whether in technical proficiency, leadership development, or team cohesion—has been built on a foundation of hard work, sacrifice, and dedication.

However, none of this would be possible without the unwavering support of those who stand beside us: our families, friends, and mentors. You are the unseen force that keeps us grounded and resilient. You are our foundation—our anchors in turbulent seas—offering stability when the demands of service pull us in every direction. Like channel buoys, you illuminate the safest path forward, helping us navigate the complexities of both military life and personal growth. Your encouragement, patience, and strength empower us to face the unknown with confidence and purpose. It is through your love, understanding, and steadfast belief in our mission that we are able to rise each day with the resolve to serve. You are an integral part of this journey, and your support is woven into every success we achieve.

Our priorities remain clear: Take care of our Sailors. Take care of our families. Build warfighters. As we move forward in the days, weeks, and months ahead, we will continue to stand ready—united as one team—to face any challenge and accomplish the mission.

Thank you for everything you do!
Very Respectfully
CAPT Harry Marsh

DH of the Month



Lt. Cmdr. Imran Kamiss
Maintenance Officer

Fighting EIGHT.

It has been an honor to be part of the Bougainville crew. I was the 2nd crew member to check onboard in Oct 2022. As my time comes to an end, I look forward to watching what Bougainville brings to the fight in the future. As one of the first Sailors to check onboard, along with our first SUPPO, CDR Christianson, we had to figure out most things on our own. The ship was still on blocks, prior to launch, we had to climb on wooden ladders to get onto the flight deck. It was like watching my kids build something out of Legos. Looking back the ship is in much better condition, its coming alive little by little and can't wait to see her in action.

I had the privilege of performing many tasks that I normally wouldn't get to experience, including setting up the sponsorship program, contacting the newest crew members and managing their expectations. I had the privilege of starting the MWR program, establishing all the paperwork, purchasing SWAG for the crew, and hosting the first picnics and holiday parties at Norfolk and Pascagoula. Many of those responsibilities have now been turned over to subject matter experts, and I am happy to see these programs continue to grow and improve.

It takes a long time to build an LHA, so keeping knowledge and experience from being lost can be a challenge. Our ship is not just new but has a lot of new technology, so our job is to learn as much as possible and learn from the experience of other Pre-com crews before us.

From the bottom of my heart, I want to sincerely thank you and your incredible families for all that you do. I'm grateful and honored to have stood beside you in this journey.

Very Respectfully,
Lt. Cmdr. Imran Kamiss

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Do you have a story to tell? We would love to feature you or your department in a future edition. Contact the Jack's Collar editorial staff by email at:
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On The Front Cover



MAC Eric Fowler participates in SRF-B as "the red man" while Airman Apprentice Reginald Tapia conducts a takedown. Bougainville's first group of Sailors to attend the in-house SRF-B training completed it earlier this month.

For more photos of SRF-B, see page 3.

A Ship's Beginnings : Final Walkthroughs and Inspections

Article by MCC Nathan Carpenter

Much of the mission at a precommissioning unit is about training and preparing the crew to operate the ship once construction is complete, but Bougainville Sailors also work with Supervisor of Shipbuilding, Conversion and Repair (SUPSHIP) and Ingalls Shipbuilding to ensure the work done aboard the ship aligns with operational needs. To accomplish this, Bougainville Sailors conduct weekly Final Space Walkthroughs, inspecting compartments that have been deemed "final" by SUPSHIP and making sure the space are ready for the Navy to take ownership.

"We want to make sure we receive the highest quality vessel when we take ownership," said Chief Hull Maintenance Technician Josh Blackstone, Bougainville's final spaces coordinator. "We have been able to identify and report discrepancies as a result of our inspections that have either been overlooked or produced by elements of a shipyard environment. During our walkthroughs we are also identifying and reporting safety hazards throughout the ship to

prevent or minimize potential casualties."

Inspectors look at many factors including compartment structure, deck coverings, fittings, equipment, piping, furniture, insulation, paint work, labels, machinery, systems, appliances, electrical cables,

safety issues and cleanliness. Ensuring that each final space meets the Navy standard in these areas is a crucial step in ensuring that when Bougainville begins service as a United States warship, the crew will be ready to accomplish any task or mission that comes their way.



Bougainville Sailors Finish SRF-B Course

Photos by MC2 Nicholas Skyles





Nissan Atoll, Green Islands, South Pacific, 31 January 1944: Inside enemy territory, a recon party lands, senses keyed up for sounds of the Japanese troops known to be present. A perilous fact-finding mission is under way. – COMBAT PHOTO UNIT 9, AMPHIBIOUS FORCE SOUTH PACIFIC

Bougainville History

The Green Island Raiders

Story by MC2 Nicholas Skyles

On 15 February 1944, Operation Squarepeg commenced as New Zealand's largest amphibious operation of World War II. Supported by the U.S. Navy, the 3rd New Zealand Division, led by Major General Harold Barrowclough, landed on the Green Islands (Nissan Islands), strategically located 80 miles northwest of Bougainville. Their mission was to seize the islands from Japanese control and establish a forward airbase to support operations against Rabaul, a key Japanese stronghold.

The Japanese had occupied the islands since January 1942, using them as a critical barge station linking Rabaul to Bougainville. Capturing the islands would complete the encirclement of Rabaul, cut Japanese supply lines, and significantly reduce Allied aircraft flight times when striking enemy positions. Despite limited intelligence and the risk of a Japanese counterattack, Admiral William F. Halsey Jr. approved the invasion plan. A 31 January 1944 reconnaissance raid by New Zealand commandos confirmed the feasibility of the assault.

Led by Rear Admiral Theodore Wilkinson, the invasion force included American Seabees, radar units, and naval construction teams, alongside 14 Brigade of 3rd NZ Division. The force departed from Vella Lavella and Guadalcanal, with a fleet of LSTs, LCIs, destroyers, and cruisers, including the USS St. Louis, which sustained damage from a Japanese dive bomber attack.

On D-Day, 15 February, New Zealand troops landed unopposed on Blue, Green, and Red Beaches. Despite delays in minesweeping, the lagoon entrance was clear, and landing craft proceeded without issue. Throughout the following days, sporadic Japanese resistance was encountered, culminating in a fierce battle at Tanaheran Village on 20 February. The New Zealanders, supported by Valentine tanks, engaged well-hidden defenders in brutal close-quarters combat, eventually overcoming the resistance but suffering casualties.

The last major Japanese resistance ended on 23 February, with over 120 Japanese killed and a few captured. New Zealand lost 10 soldiers, while American casualties included three killed and three wounded. The success of Operation Squarepeg severed Japanese supply lines, further isolating 20,000 enemy troops on Bougainville and Buka.

Following the battle, Seabees rapidly constructed an airfield and PT-boat base, turning the Green Islands into a key Allied outpost. The construction of an Allied airbase on the Green Islands allowed for increased aerial operations against Japanese positions on Bougainville, providing close air support to ground forces and accelerating the eventual defeat of Japanese resistance. By contributing to the encirclement of Rabaul, Operation Squarepeg effectively weakened Japanese operations in the northern Solomons, enabling the Allied forces on Bougainville to advance with less enemy reinforcement.