

JUNE 2025

NEPTUNE HAS SPOKEN

WELCOMING A NEW ERA OF SHELLBACKS Page 8



6 TIMES OF AMERICA

Magazine of the USS America

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TIMES OF AMERICA

COMMANDING OFFICER

Capt. E. M. Rule

EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Capt. M. T. Plageman

COMMAND MASTER CHIEF

CMDCM S. J. McQueen

USS AMERICA'S PAO

Lt. Carolina Fernandez

MEDIA LCPO

MCC Byron Linder

CREATIVE DIRECTOR

MCSN Nicholas Douglass

CONTRIBUTORS

MC2 S. Anita Wallace
MC2 Cole Pursley
MC2 Amy Mullins
MC3 Darian Lord
MC3 Kenneth Melseth
MCSN Jeadan Andre
MCSN Sam McNeely

PRINT EDITOR

MC2 S. Anita Wallace

TIMES OF AMERICA

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CAPTAIN'S CORNER

A MESSAGE FROM THE COMMANDING OFFICER

Team of Teams,

It's been an absolutely jam-packed month out at sea, and we're only just getting started. Bringing aboard the 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit, the Strike Group Staff, TACRON, and Fleet Surgical Team for the final time while simultaneously conducting a 100-pallet stores onload in less than two days required a whole-ship effort. It's a testament to the caliber of professionalism inherent aboard AMERICA that we were able to execute this.

As we departed Okinawa, we went straight back to it—executing flight operations with the Air Combat Element to get them qualified to execute the missions ahead of us. We also experienced the challenges of an extended emissions control (EMCON) period that tested a core capability of what we would be called to do in a kinetic confrontation with adversarial forces—communicate inside and outside our ship across our America Strike Group. Across the ship, the departments worked diligently to make voyage repairs and ensure AMERICA was Combat Ready.

As we approached the equator, we put a pause on the daily operational cycle that comes with being a warship at sea, and got to have some fun by ceremoniously Crossing the Line into King Neptune's domain. After a day of "testing and trials," we turned Wogs into shiny Shellbacks. Now that everyone has crossed the equator, we are all proud Shellbacks transiting to our next mission set!

On a related note, I want to take a moment to emphasize proper use of our CATNIP WiFi. It's an amazing capability that ten years ago I couldn't have fathomed being available. Please use it responsibly—use it to communicate back home with friends and loved ones. We have nearly 2,500 warfighters aboard all trying to use a small number of receivers. Please only use it in the designated spaces—the mess decks, the Chief's Mess, and the Wardroom—and respect the time you're actively using it.

In closing, I want you to enjoy the port visits in the land down under and stay laser focused on the many taskings before, during and after those port visits. Liberty itself is a mission and your conduct as part of these port visits is a direct reflection of not just yourself, but the ship that bears our country's name and all who serve aboard—Sailor and Marine alike. We have a great team of teams here, representing multiple commands, and I'm consistently impressed with your ability to welcome newcomers into the AMERICA fold.

Let's continue to KEEP THE MAIN THING THE MAIN THING and TAKE CARE OF EACH OTHER! See you on the deckplates.



With utmost respect and admiration,

CAPT Ethan M. Rule

Commanding Officer, USS AMERICA

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink.



HAPPY BIRTHDAY HOSPITAL CORPS!

BY HM1 RASTALL

June 17th will mark the 127th birthday of the Hospital Corps, and I've been around to celebrate 17 of them, so far. Early in my career it was just another function I was made to attend, my only wish being we had a good year of fundraising to allow an open bar. Why would I care about all of medical when I was just another disgruntled pharmacist? Then I grew up.

The gravity of the honor I shouldered didn't begin coming to me until my second duty station when I realized how important being a Hospital Corpsman was. Everyone is more at ease when "Doc" is around, they feel better. I was told things that they wouldn't share with their best friend. When there was no other way to make a determination, I was immediately the most responsible person in the room by default. It certainly wasn't because of my rank, it was my rating insignia because everyone else around me understood far better than I did what it meant. Corpsman deal with life and death, and this isn't an exaggeration. It does not seem apparent during the mundane trips to Sick Call or those annoyingly routine PHAs or audiograms, but every Corpsman is trained and bred to run into the fire if the call is made. When the scene gets red and faces start turning either green or white, it is the Corpsman who is looked to solve the problem. It is the Corpsman who will be there when you need someone the most. It is the Corpsman who will use themselves

as the shield and put your life in front of their own.

Whether it be at the bottom of the sea, or high in the air, a Corpsman is present. If it is on a bullet-swept field of battle or on the high seas, a Corpsman can be counted on. If Hell on Earth reined upon this ship, our submarines, or the Marine Corps, Doc will be around to patch you up, lift you up, or save your life. Then they'll go back to act like nothing happened.

I've been blessed in my career as a Corpsman. I've done some cool things, scary things, and passionate things. I've been to Afghanistan, and had friends who never came home. I've had friends who did come home, but never left Afghanistan. I've pounded chests in the back of ambulances, attended funerals, celebrated births, carried dead bodies up ladder wells and cried more than once. I've held the hands of countless people enduring the worst suffering, provided the antibiotics that saved their lives, and still dream about the ones I couldn't get to in time.

It took me a long time to appreciate what wearing my Caduceus meant. Although I still hope for open bars during the Corpsman Balls across the fleet, each drink is a little reminder that it really wasn't free. It has a bittersweet tang as an aftertaste, but in the twilight of my career, I'm a pharmacist now, and I hope that I can somehow inject the same kind of pride I do now unto others.



SPIRITUAL READINESS FOR COMBAT READINESS

BY CDR CRAIG, CHAPLAIN AMERICA

On Memorial Day, I sat on the mess decks surrounded by many of you, Sailors and Marines from Team AMERICA. As we sat there, one after another walked up to the microphone to read the heroism of Medal of Honor recipients who bravely went into harm's way to give their lives for their buddies. We learned the backstory of some of these heroes, many from small-town America, how old they were, who they left behind. We stood at attention as we read some of their citations, marveling at the bravery and determination these heroes exhibited, knowing the inevitability of their death.

After eating the cake and chatting with some of the Sailors, I found myself walking around thinking about what makes a person do what these Medal of Honor heroes do. What drives a person to jump on a grenade, or run into a rain of gunfire to save a fellow soldier, or fight until the very end? Would I do that? Do I have it in me?

As I reflected, the one common theme that stood out to me amongst all these heroes is that they lived for something greater than themselves. They saw the bigger picture. They saw themselves as part of a larger mission. They lived—and died—for something higher than their own life.

To be combat-ready is more than simply being physically ready. To be combat-ready is more than merely being mentally ready. To truly be combat-ready takes grit, takes purpose, takes sacrifice, and, for many, takes an unwavering trust in an unshakable God.

To be combat-ready is to be spiritually ready.



WHAT TO LOOK FORWARD TO IN AUSTRALIA

BY MCSN MCNEELY

CS3 POINTDUJOUR



“Sightseeing and the museum and I heard about the zoo.
I look forward to touching the wildlife;
I want to see the monkeys.”

ACAN XIONG



“In Australia I’m definitely looking forward to a different variety of food, also I really want to explore, see what they have, I heard Sydney is a pretty big city so I want to take a look around, I also definitely want to attend the opera house, maybe not go in but definitely look around.”

HN BATES



“What I’m looking forward to the most in Sydney is the different culture and seeing how different it is than Japan and the United States, because those are the only other countries I’ve been.”

HM3 DAVIS



“What I look forward to most in Australia is conducting the Talisman Saber exercise, it’ll be a lot of fun, a lot of different countries involved not too sure what it will entail, but we have been training very hard for it.”



CPL JENKINS

“In Australia I’m looking forward to spending time with my marines, and sailor counterparts, exploring the city and integrating with foreign defense forces.”



LT GETTE

“I am looking forward to seeing the Sydney opera house, I have a ticket to actually see an opera in the opera house, fun fact: The inside of the opera house is shaped like the inside of the mouth to help with acoustics so thought that would be really cool because I’m a dentist, to see that.”



CAPTAIN GERMAN

“So, I’ve been to Australia several times but this is my first time going to Sydney so I’m excited to go to the botanical garden, to the zoo, I’m interested in the opera house, and I’m looking forward to eating some great food.”



HMSCS SPEED

“I’m looking forward to sightseeing, going to the zoo possibly, and getting some souvenirs.”



CSCM McCORMICK

“What I’m looking forward to in Australia, definitely better Wi-Fi so I can talk to my family and actually see their face instead of a blurry image, definitely looking forward to trying new and different foods and seeing new things, because I have never been to Australia.”

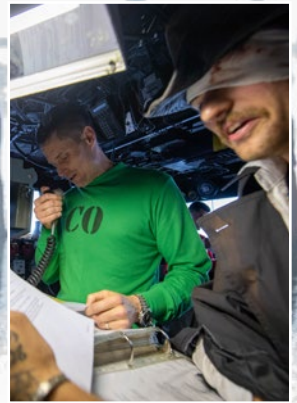
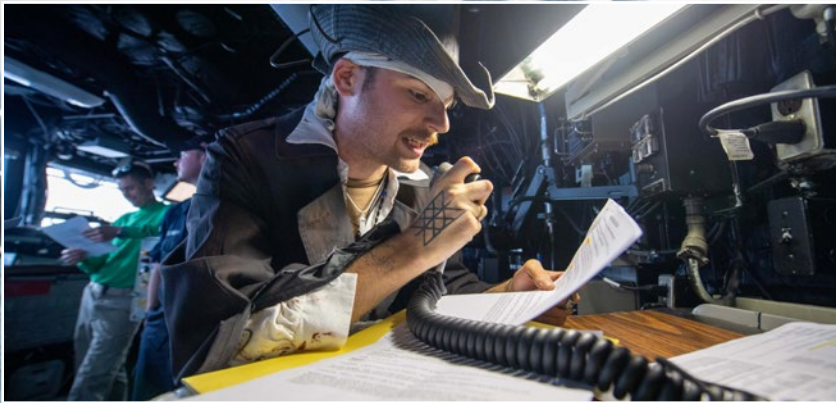
NEPTUNE HAS SPOKEN FROM POLLYWOG TO SHELLBACK

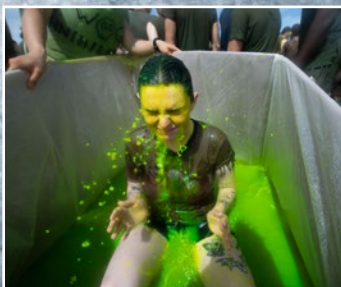
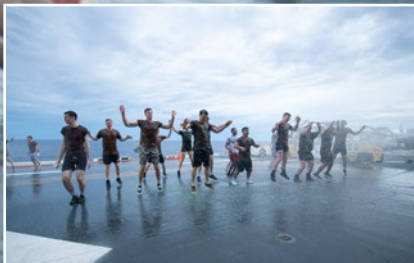
BY MC2 MULLINS

The “Crossing the Line” ceremony in the U.S. Navy is a time-honored maritime tradition marking a Sailor’s first crossing of the equator. The origins of this ritual trace back centuries, with early European naval fleets using it as a rite of passage to initiate sailors into the mysteries of the sea. The ceremony was adopted by the U.S. Navy in the 19th century and has since evolved into a boisterous event filled with theatrics, pranks, and symbolic challenges. At its heart lies the transformation of “Pollywogs”—those who have never crossed the equator—into “Shellbacks,” loyal servants of King Neptune, the mythological god of the sea.

Traditionally, the event begins with a dramatic appearance by King Neptune and his royal court, often portrayed by senior Sailors or officers. Pollywogs are summoned before the court to account for their lack of nautical experience and are put through a series of playful, sometimes humiliating tasks meant to test their spirit, teamwork, and sense of humor. These include mock trials, physical challenges, and the infamous “truth serum” made of questionable galley leftovers. Though the ceremonies can be intense, they are meant to build camaraderie and a shared sense of identity among the crew.

Over the years, the U.S. Navy has worked to ensure the ceremony maintains its light-hearted and voluntary spirit, discouraging any forms of hazing. Official guidance emphasizes respect, safety, and consent, while preserving the sense of adventure and tradition. The crossing of the equator remains a memorable milestone in a Sailor’s career, celebrated with certificates, Shellback cards, and often cherished stories of a day when order gave way to myth and mirth in the open sea.





STEEL BEACH THE AFTER PARTY

BY MCSN DOUGLASS





THE BATTLE OF THE CORAL SEA

BY MC3 MELSETH

In May 1942, the USS Yorktown (CV-5) and USS Lexington (CV-2) sailed through the Coral Sea. Their quarry: the Japanese carriers Shōkaku and Zuikaku. These two ships were part of the fleet that attacked Pearl Harbor, and now they lurked somewhere beyond the horizon. A Lexington scout plane spotted the enemy through a break in the clouds. At almost the same time, a Japanese scout located the U.S. carriers. The first carrier-versus-carrier battle in history was about to begin.

Since the attack Pearl Harbor, the Japanese had almost finished wrapping up their campaigns in the region. The vast majority of the western Pacific basin was now under their direct control. British forces had collapsed in Hong Kong, Malaya, and Singapore. The Philippines had fallen, with 75,000 American and Filipino troops captured. Australia now loomed as the possible next target.

Both sides launched massive air strikes. Yorktown struck first, followed by Lexington. As the U.S. carriers raced toward the enemy to shorten return flight times, American dive bombers located the Shōkaku and the Zuikaku. The latter of which was obscured by a rain squall, as a result the other was targeted. The attacks scored three bomb hits, crippling Shōkaku's flight deck and knocking her out of the fight.

The Japanese responded fiercely. Yorktown took a bomb hit and a near-miss that ruptured her hull. Lexington suffered more: two torpedo hits ruptured fuel and water lines, setting up a deadly chain reaction. Though damage control initially restored order, a later internal explosion sealed her fate. After the crew evacuated, destroyer USS Phelps scuttled the burning carrier.

Of 69 Japanese aircraft launched, only 46 returned—many damaged beyond repair. Believing they had sunk both American carriers, the Japanese turned north, ending the engagement.

Though the U.S. lost Lexington, the battle was a strategic victory. Shōkaku was heavily damaged, and Zuikaku's air group was devastated. Neither could participate in the pivotal Battle of Midway. As it would develop, temporarily losing the services of these two carriers at Midway was probably much more important than permanently losing Lexington, because it deprived the Japanese the opportunity of wiping out America's remaining carriers at a stroke.

Coral Sea marked the end of unchecked Japanese expansion and proved that American carriers could—and would—stand their ground. Coral Sea also was the first carrier battle fought in proximity to the then unknown island of Guadalcanal; it would not be the last.



THE END OF LEXINGTON ON 8 MAY 1942.



USS YORKTOWN (CV-5) BOMBING SQUADRON FIVE (VB-5) SBD-3 DAUNTLESS SCOUT BOMBERS



JAPANESE AIRCRAFT CARRIER SHOKAKU UNDER ATTACK BY YORKTOWN AIRCRAFT

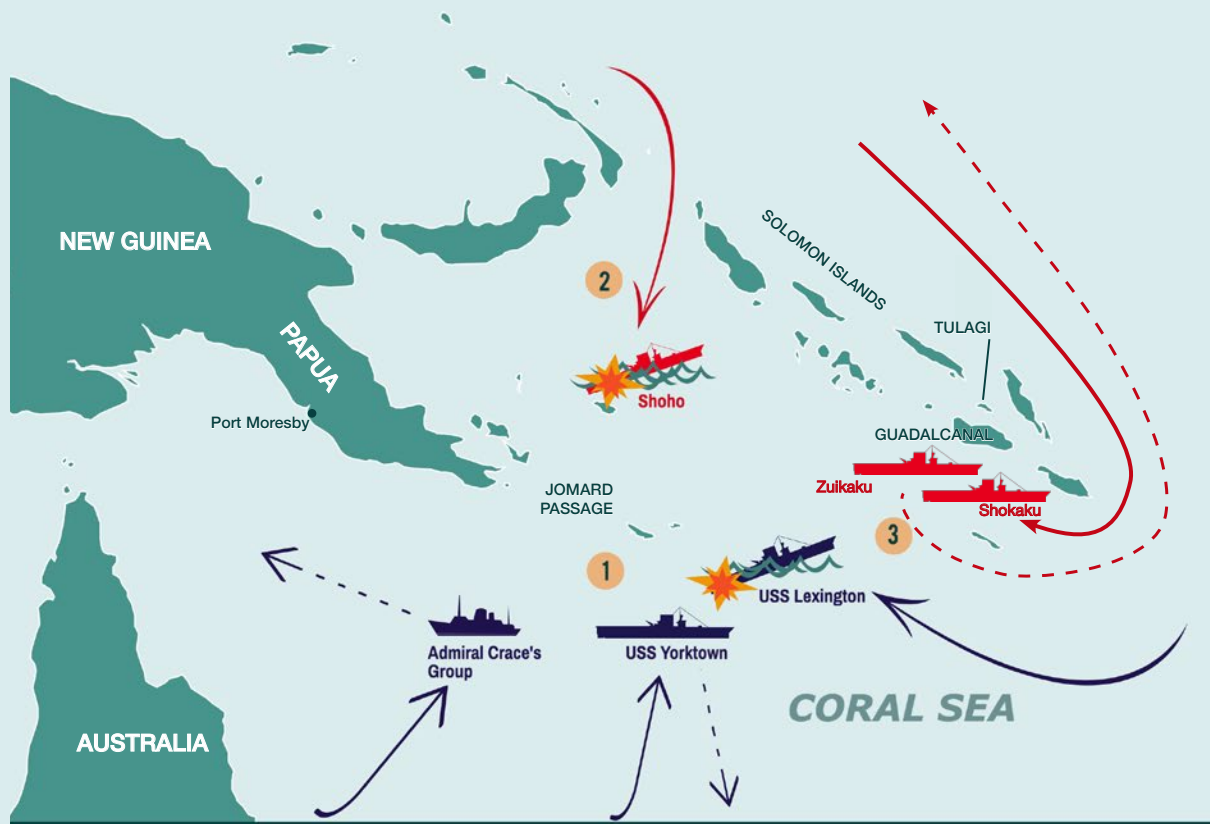


www.history.navy.mil/CoralSea

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE

BATTLE OF THE CORAL SEA

The first air-sea battle in history shows how this strategic victory of World War II inspired the spirit of innovation that continues today and gives the U.S. Navy its competitive edge.



The Battle of the Coral Sea was the first time in history where combat between two fleets took place solely by carrier plane. Furthermore, the Japanese advance in the Pacific was halted for the first time since the outbreak of war on Dec. 7, 1941.

1

MAY 1-6, 1942

- Adm. Fletcher's Task Force 17 of USS Lexington (CV 2), USS Yorktown (CV 5), and an attack group meet in the southeast Coral Sea to make day and night attacks on enemy surface craft.

- Australian allies of Rear Adm. Crace's ANZAC Squadron join Task Force 17.

- May 4: USS Yorktown (CV 5) launches an air attack on a Japanese naval base on Tulagi Island.

2

MAY 7, 1942

- Adm. Fletcher detaches the support group of cruisers and destroyers under Rear Adm. Crace to intercept the Japanese Port Moresby invasion force as it departs from the Jomard Passage.

- American planes hit the Port Moresby Covering Group, sinking the Japanese small carrier Shoho and one cruiser.

3

MAY 8, 1942

- The carrier battle ensues.

- The Japanese strike quickly, scoring hits on both Lexington and Yorktown.

- Lexington cannot sustain the damage she takes and sinks in the Coral Sea.

- Zuikaku and Shokaku are damaged but able to return to Japan.

RESULTS

- Port Moresby remains in Allied control.

- Shokaku and Zuikaku cannot recover in time to fight in the Battle of Midway, reducing the Japanese carrier strength by a third.

- The Southwest Pacific front is stabilized.

- The U.S. Navy sees its first strategic victory at sea against the Imperial Japanese Navy.

AMPHIBIOUS INTEGRATED TRAINING/CERTIFICATION

BY LT FERNANDEZ

USS America, USS San Diego and USS Rushmore will train with the 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit during AIT/ CERTEX to develop and demonstrate their ability to work together in the rapid planning and execution of amphibious operations.

Navy and Marine Corps teams will be testing amphibious capabilities such as humanitarian assistance operations, noncombatant emergency evacuations, flood and earthquake responses, tactical recoveries of aircraft and personnel, counter-piracy and strike operations, as well as various support operations in service of our partner nations.

CERTEX is a biannual 10-day certification exercise, which tests the ARG-MEU's ability to jointly maintain a constant level of readiness in response to emergent situations.

AIT/CERTEX will require the coordinated implementation of the skill-sets and training. Each person aboard can enable the smooth execution of complex amphibious operations - just remember, as our Captain says to "KEEP THE MAIN THING, THE MAIN THING!"





MWR JUNE CALENDAR

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1	2 <i>Super Smash Tournament</i>	3 <i>America Social Night Chess Club</i>	4 <i>Harry Potter Trivia</i>	5	6	7
8	9 <i>Tekken Tournament</i>	10 <i>Book Club Paint Night</i>	11 <i>Fathers day Cards America Social Night Chess Club</i>	12 <i>Spades Tournament</i>	13 <i>Find the Rock</i>	14
15 1	6 1	7	18 <i>America Social Night Chess Club</i>	19 <i>Juneteenth Deal or No Deal</i>	20 <i>Fathers Day Find The Rock</i>	21 <i>Ice Cream Social Karaoke</i>
22 2	3	24 <i>Book Club Connect 4 Tournament</i>	25 <i>America Social Night Chess Tournament</i>	26 <i>Dominoes Tournament</i>	27 <i>Find The Rock</i>	28 <i>BINGO</i>
29	30 <i>NBA 2K Tournament</i>			Wanna Join MWR? Come to the MWR Meetings every Wednesday in the Rec Room at 1000!		

Super Smash Bros. Tournament: Mess Deck 2000-2200. Registration is taken at 2000. Do not be late. America's Social Night: Mess Deck 2000-2200. Come play board games, D&D, Yu-Gi-Oh, Magic the Gathering, Video Games or Art & Crafts | Chess Club: Mess Deck 2000-2200. Learn how to play chess. Tournament will be the 25th 2000. Harry Potter Trivia: Mess Deck 2000. Teams of 4. Tekken Tournament: Mess Deck 2000-2200. Registration is taken at 2000. Do not be late. Paint Night: Mess Deck 2000. Spades Tournament: Mess Deck 2000-2200. Find The Rock: Clues will be posted on the board outside the MWR office and Mess Deck board by 1200. Connect 4 Tournament: Mess Deck 2000-2200. Karaoke and Ice Cream Social: 2000 Mess Deck. Deal or No Deal: Mess Deck 2000 | Dominos Tournament: Mess Deck 2000-2200. Registration is taken at 2000. Do not be late. BINGO: 2000 CCTV. Tickets will be sold during lunch and dinner. NBA2K Tournament: Mess Deck 2000-2200. Do not be late.

THE MIDSHIPMEN EXPERIENCE

WRITTEN BY MC2 MULLINS



MIDN
Jacob Onedera



MIDN
James Isenhower



MIDN
Paul Colgan



MIDN
Rory Smith



MIDN
Christopher Schneider

Aboard the USS America (LHA 6), the presence of midshipmen represents both a continuation of centuries-old naval tradition and a critical phase in the development of the Navy and Marine Corps' future leaders. These young men and women, hailing from the United States Naval Academy, the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy, and Naval Reserve Officers Training Corps (NROTC) programs, are immersed in an experience that bridges classroom theory with real-world application at sea.

The rank of midshipman is the lowest commissioned officer rank in the U.S. Navy, yet it carries significant weight as it marks the beginning of an officer's journey. Distinct from the term "cadet" used in other branches of the military, "midshipman" has its roots in the Royal Navy of the 1600s. Originally, it referred to experienced deckhands who worked amidships—the central part of a vessel—and were promoted to positions of leadership. The U.S. Navy adopted this term before the founding of the United States Naval Academy in 1845, reinforcing its connection to longstanding maritime tradition. Today, midshipmen are students engaged in rigorous academic and military training programs designed to shape them morally, mentally, and physically. The most prominent of these institutions, the United States Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland, refers to its student body as the Brigade of Midshipmen. The Academy offers a four-year undergraduate curriculum focusing on engineering, naval science, military leadership, and physical fitness. Upon graduation, midshipmen receive a Bachelor of Science degree and commissions as

Ensigns in the Navy or Second Lieutenants in the Marine Corps. The purpose of the midshipman program is to prepare these students for the challenges of military service and leadership. This involves cultivating the highest ideals of duty, honor, and loyalty through academic rigor, character development, and intense physical training. Aboard vessels like the USS America, midshipmen gain firsthand exposure to fleet operations, learning from experienced officers and enlisted personnel while participating in shipboard routines, navigation, engineering, and combat systems exercises.

This hands-on experience is vital. Embarking midshipmen on active-duty ships allows them to internalize what it means to serve, lead, and uphold the values of the Navy and Marine Corps in real-world conditions. It also builds camaraderie and fosters respect for the demands and rewards of life at sea.

As Midshipman 1st Class James Eisenhower shared, "My experience onboard the ship extends beyond just a cruise; it has helped me to gain perspective of the entire ship. It truly takes every individual doing their part in order to make the ship run smoothly." This reflection underscores the deeper understanding and appreciation these future officers gain during their time aboard.

As the USS America sails forward in defense of the nation, so too do the midshipmen aboard her move steadily toward becoming the leaders who will one day command such vessels. Their time embarked is more than training—it is a rite of passage, steeped in history and purpose, preparing them to carry the Navy's proud legacy into the future.

CO'S VIRTUAL SUGGESTION BOX

This virtual Suggestion Box is your opportunity to share your thoughts and concerns with leadership at your command.

https://usnavy.gov1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_9FiQbwnfgRgfXRr?UIC=20103



Need to Talk?

If you've been sexually assaulted,
anonymous help is available.

safehelpline.org
877-995-5247



SEXUAL ASSAULT RESOURCES

SAPRVAS@LHA6.NAVY.MIL | Duty SAPR dial: 2999

SUBSTANCE ABUSE SUPPORT

DAPA@LHA6.NAVY.MIL | AOCs Shackleford dial: 2850

SPEAK WITH A CHAPLAIN

JAMES.HARPER@LHA6.NAVY.MIL | CDR Harper dial: 2737

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