

THE WOLVERINE

JUNE 2023

FORD PULLS INTO OSLO

THE FIRST AIRCRAFT CARRIER TO VISIT NORWAY IN
65 YEARS FOR THE FIRST PORT CALL OF DEPLOYMENT

MUTTS WITH A MISSION

MEET SAGE, A THREE-YEAR-OLD YELLOW LABRADOR
RETRIEVER, DEPLOYED ABOARD USS GERALD R. FORD

KEEPING SAILORS CONNECTED

HOW STARLINK HAS CHANGED THE WAY SAILORS
KEEP IN TOUCH AND TELL THE NAVY STORY

PHOTOS OF THE MONTH INSIDE!



THE WOLVERINE

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The flagship USS Gerald R. Ford (CVN 78) transits the Oslo fjord for its first port call in Oslo, Norway, May 24, 2023.
Photo by MC2 Brian Glunt

Gerald R. Ford Carrier Strike Group Deploys

Story by U.S. 2nd Fleet Public Affairs

The capital ship of the Gerald R. Ford Carrier Strike Group (GRFCSG), the first-in-class aircraft carrier USS Gerald R. Ford (CVN 78), departed Naval Station Norfolk for a routine deployment, May 2.

“This strike group is the cornerstone of our Navy’s forward operations, capable of meeting any tasking provided by regional combatant commanders to ensure peace and stability at sea,” said Rear Adm. Greg Huffman, Commander, Carrier Strike Group 12. “Our presence at sea throughout the deployment will provide reassurance to our partners and Allies that sea lanes will remain open and our joint operations will demonstrate our commitment to interoperability and maritime stability.”

Ford’s second deployment marks the flagship’s first combat deployment, following its two-month deployment to the U.S. 2nd and 6th Fleet areas of operation in autumn 2022.

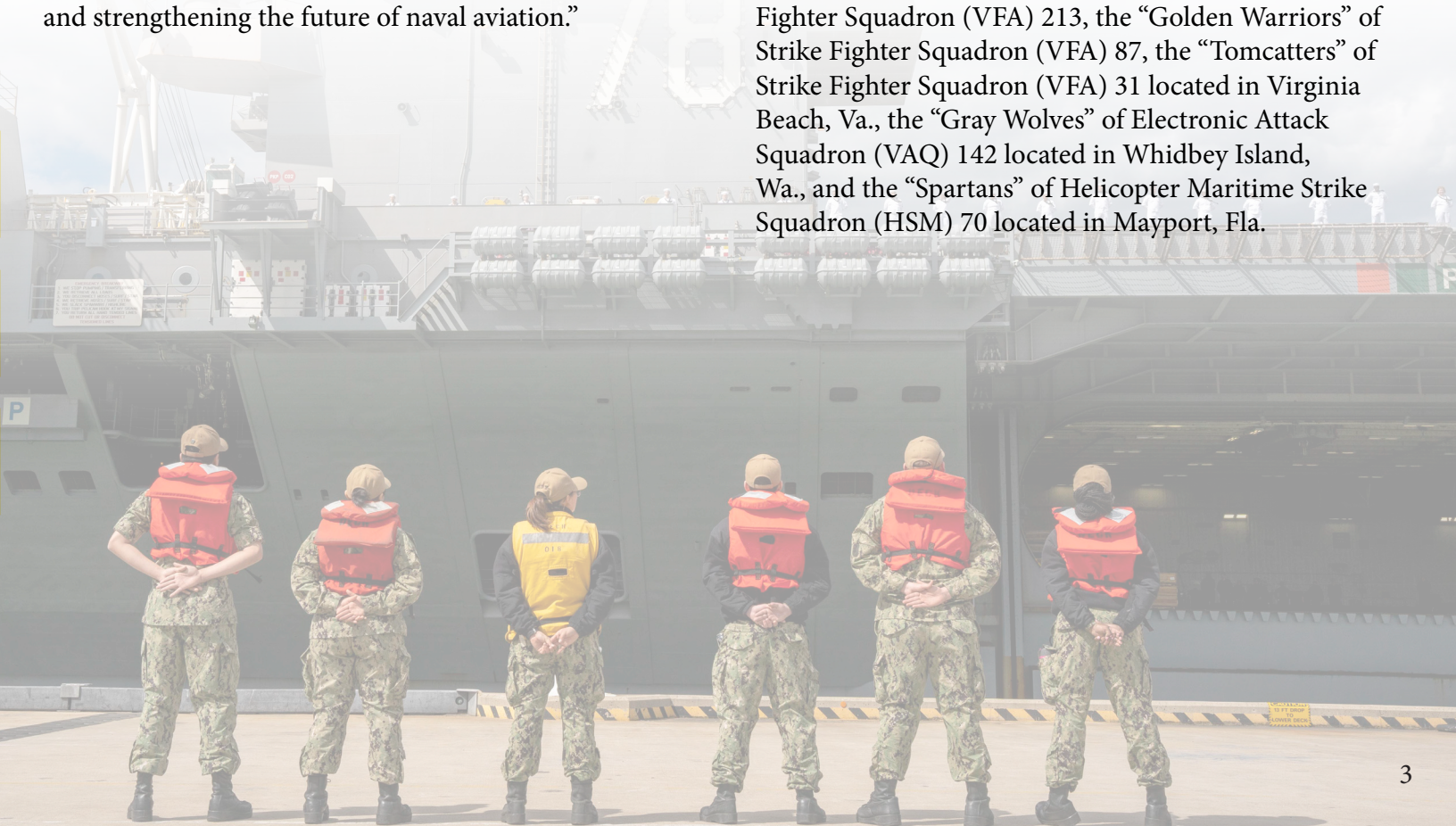
“The Sailors of Gerald R. Ford are ready and able to perform because of the strenuous training they have put in to get this ship ready to deploy, and also in large part to the support of their families and friends,” said Capt. Rick Burgess, Ford’s commanding officer. “This ship and crew are actively reshaping the face of our Navy’s capabilities and strengthening the future of naval aviation.”

The GRFCSG provides an inherently flexible naval force capable of deploying across combatant commands to meet emerging missions, deter potential adversaries, reassure allies and partners, enhance security and guarantee the free flow of global commerce.

The GRFCSG consists of Carrier Strike Group (CSG) 12 staff, Gerald R. Ford, Carrier Air Wing (CVW) 8, Destroyer Squadron (DESRON) 2 staff and units, Ticonderoga-class guided-missile cruiser USS Normandy (CG 60) and the Information Warfare Commander. In total, the GRFCSG deploys with more than 6,000 Sailors across all platforms ready to respond globally to combatant commander’s tasking.

The ships of DESRON 2 are the Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyers USS Ramage (DDG 61), USS McFaul (DDG 74) and USS Thomas Hudner (DDG 116).

The squadrons of CVW-8 embarked aboard Gerald R. Ford are the “Tridents” of Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron (HSC) 9, the “Bear Aces” of Airborne Command and Control Squadron (VAW) 124, the “Rawhides” of Fleet Logistics Support Squadron (VRC) 40 located in Norfolk, Va., the “Ragin’ Bulls” of Strike Fighter Squadron (VFA) 37, the “Blacklions” of Strike Fighter Squadron (VFA) 213, the “Golden Warriors” of Strike Fighter Squadron (VFA) 87, the “Tomcatters” of Strike Fighter Squadron (VFA) 31 located in Virginia Beach, Va., the “Gray Wolves” of Electronic Attack Squadron (VAQ) 142 located in Whidbey Island, Wa., and the “Spartans” of Helicopter Maritime Strike Squadron (HSM) 70 located in Mayport, Fla.







First U.S. Aircraft Carrier to Visit Norway in 65 Years

From U.S. Naval Forces Europe-Africa Public Affairs

U.S. Navy's newest aircraft carrier, USS Gerald R. Ford (CVN 78), arrived in Oslo, Norway, for a scheduled port visit, May 24.

This port visit is the capital ship's first stop while deployed to the U.S. Naval Forces Europe (NAVEUR) area of operations and provides an opportunity to enhance U.S.-Norway partnership, marking the first time a U.S. aircraft carrier has visited Norway in 65 years.

During his visit to the ship Monday, Defense Minister Bjørn Arild Gram said, "This is Norway's security. It is a clear expression of the security guarantees we have through NATO, not least the close cooperation and partnership we have with the United States."

Prior to arriving, the Gerald R. Ford Strike Group (GRFCSG) integrated His Norwegian Majesty's Ship (HNoMS) Roald Amundsen (F311) as the GRFCSG Surface Warfare Commander, building collective operational experience at-sea and showcasing a powerful display of the U.S. Navy and Royal Norwegian Navy's interoperability.

The Royal Norwegian Navy routinely integrates with U.S. Carrier Strike Groups. In late 2021-2022, the HNoMS Fridtjof Nansen (F310) conducted a cooperative deployment with the Harry S. Truman Carrier Strike Group to the NAVEUR area of operations in support of maritime security and stability in international waters.

"Norway is a strategic partner in the continued efforts to maintain a secure and stable Arctic and North Atlantic region that benefits global order," said Rear Adm. Erik J. Eslich, Commander, Carrier Strike Group 12. "We are committed to our NATO Ally and fostering our strong relationship built on a foundation of shared values, experiences, and vision."

During the visit to Oslo, the ship will host local officials and key leaders for a reception to honor the U.S.-Norway relationship. Additionally, Sailors will experience the rich heritage of Oslo through community relations events and have the opportunity to visit popular cultural and historical landmarks around the city.

"It is an honor, joy, and thrill to visit Oslo and show our cherished partner the Navy's newest class of aircraft carriers," said Capt. Rick Burgess, Gerald R. Ford's commanding officer. "The crew is beyond excited for this opportunity to serve on the first U.S. aircraft carrier to make this historic visit to Norway in 65 years."

Gerald R. Ford deployed from Norfolk, Virginia on May 2 and has been conducting joint and combined training, exercises, and operations to help reduce maritime security risks associated with increased activity in the high north. The Gerald R. Ford CSG sailed along-side NATO's Standing NATO Maritime Group One for several days since NATO allies and partners take every opportunity to train together to refine tactics, techniques, and procedures to increase interoperability.



USS Gerald R. Ford (CVN 78) Holds Reception at Oslo Port Visit

By USS Gerald R. Ford Public Affairs

Commander, U.S. Naval Forces Europe, U.S. Naval Forces Africa, Allied Joint Forces Command, Naples, Adm. Stuart Munsch, and the U.S. Ambassador to Norway, Marc Nathanson, co-hosted a reception aboard the first-in-class aircraft carrier USS Gerald R. Ford (CVN 78) while anchored off the coast of Oslo, Norway, May 26, 2023.

Capt. Rick Burgess, USS Gerald R. Ford commanding officer opened the ceremony with a few words, followed by the playing of the U.S. and Norwegian national anthems.

“Welcome to the United States’ capital warship. It is an absolute honor to host in the event tonight, one in which we have the opportunity to share in friendship and comradery,” said Burgess.

The event highlighted the long-standing bilateral alliance between the U.S. and Norway and celebrated the first port visit during Gerald R. Ford’s deployment. Guest speakers included Munsch, and Ambassador Nathanson, and Norwegian Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Støre.

“It is really a great honor to welcome the USS Gerald R. Ford and its crew to Norway and to Oslo,” said Støre. “This is a historical event. I believe it is a show of force, but is also a show of friendship and it is a show of trust.”

Munsch spoke on how this event furthers the trust between the U.S. and Norway.

“This is remarkable that we have 500 wonderful guests aboard this ship,” said Munsch. “What you’re looking at is actually just the tip of the iceberg for the relationship between the American armed forces and Norwegian armed forces.”

Ambassador Nathanson emphasized that NATO is more unified than ever, even in the face of an ever-evolving security environment, and that the evening’s gathering of military and civilians from around the world aboard the Navy’s newest, most advanced aircraft carrier testified to the alliance’s cohesion.

“My wife Jane and I are overjoyed to be here on this gorgeous Norwegian spring evening to welcome the USS Gerald R. Ford to Oslo,” said Nathanson. “This tremendous vessel, the largest and most powerful warship in the world has come to Oslo on her maiden deployment is a testament of the United States commitment to Norway, NATO and European security now and in the future.”

The evening included an opportunity for the more than 500 guests to enjoy food and beverages, as well as a ceremonial toast and cake cutting.



Ford Departs Norway After Historic Port Visit

By Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class David Kolmel

The world's largest aircraft carrier USS Gerald R. Ford (CVN 78) departs Oslo, Norway, after a five-day port visit, May 29, 2023. The ship is the first carrier to visit Norway in more than 65 years when it pulled into port, May 24.

As part of the first port call of Gerald R. Ford's scheduled deployment, the ship and its crew hosted a visit from His Royal Highness Crown Prince Haakon of Norway, a reception and several distinguished visitor tours.

"It was a great honor to show off this great warship to our allies and dignitaries in this region," Capt. Rick Burgess, USS Gerald R. Ford's commanding officer. "Our presence in Norway continues to highlight our commitment to our NATO allies and partners."

Along with events on the ship, Gerald R. Ford Sailors also participated in several community relations events including a restoration project, wreath-laying ceremony and sporting events with the local population.

"We participated in a ceremony to pay our respects to the people who have fought for the country and it meant a lot [to me] to take the time to consider history and the people that lost their lives for their country and families," said Personnel Specialist 2nd Class Alejandra Gonzalez, assigned to Gerald R. Ford's administrative department. "They also walked us around the [Akershus] castle and explained the full history to us from a fortress to where the king and queen lived."

The port visit also provided Sailors a good opportunity for liberty and interaction with the people of Norway.

"It was a nice time off, I got some rest and did a lot of sightseeing," said Retail Services Specialist 2nd Class Yamilet Benavides, assigned to Gerald R. Ford's supply department. "The city was very clean and the people were very friendly and seemed excited to see us and talk to us."

Gonzalez explained that the visit gave her a great opportunity to take time to catch up with her family.

The Sailors aboard Gerald R. Ford left a reputable, lasting impression on the people of Norway.

"The Crown Prince, government officials and U.S. Embassy staff all told us how impressed they were with our Sailors and how much they enjoyed hosting us in their city," said Burgess. "I believe we have paved the way for future port visits here."



Crown Prince on board the USS Gerald R. Ford

Courtesy Story



On Friday morning His Royal Highness Crown Prince Haakon boarded the American aircraft carrier USS Gerald R. Ford, which is currently visiting Norway with an escort of support vessels. In Oslo, the vessel is anchored in the Bunne Fjord, south of the city centre.

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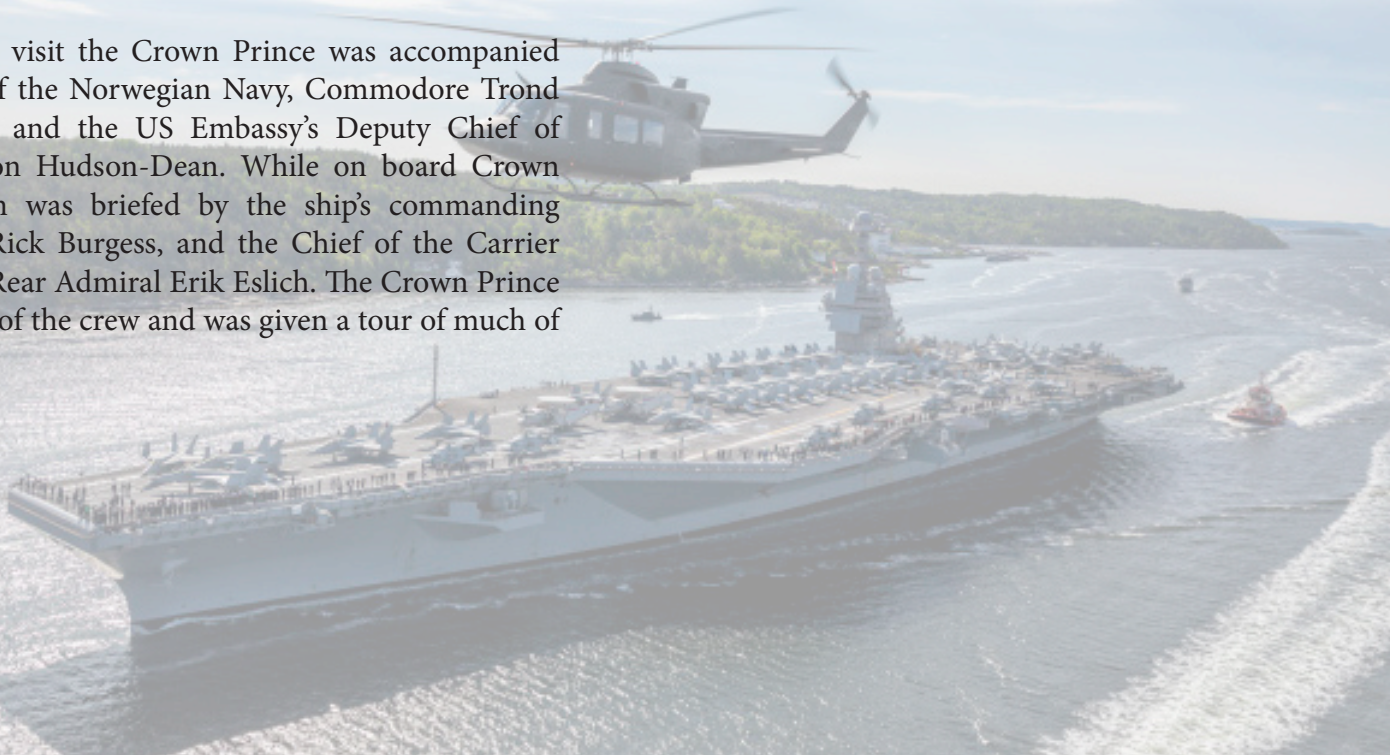
The Crown Prince was invited to visit the aircraft carrier by the U.S. authorities, and travelled out to the USS Gerald R. Ford on the Royal vessel Stjernen.

The US crew followed the established tradition of hoisting a visiting admiral's command flag as the Crown Prince, an admiral in the Norwegian Navy, went aboard. The Crown Prince's flag flew from the bridge's main mast for the duration of his visit on the carrier.

During his visit the Crown Prince was accompanied by the Chief of the Norwegian Navy, Commodore Trond Gimmingsrud, and the US Embassy's Deputy Chief of Mission, Sharon Hudson-Dean. While on board Crown Prince Haakon was briefed by the ship's commanding officer, Capt. Rick Burgess, and the Chief of the Carrier Strike Group, Rear Admiral Erik Eslich. The Crown Prince also met some of the crew and was given a tour of much of the vessel.

The aircraft carrier, named after former US President Gerald R. Ford, is on its first operational voyage and Oslo is the ship's first port of call since departing Naval Station Norfolk in the US state of Virginia. Before entering Norwegian waters, the USS Gerald R. Ford carried out a patrol in the North Sea. Onlookers on boats and along the shore watched as the 333-metre-long ship entered the Oslo Fjord at Færder Lighthouse Wednesday morning on its way to the capital.

The USS Gerald R. Ford belongs to the US Navy's Sixth Fleet, which is responsible for operations in Europe and Africa. The ship has a crew of about 4 600 and carries more than 90 aircraft.



Commander, U.S. Sixth Fleet and STRIKFORNATO visit USS Gerald R. Ford (CVN 78) with Norwegian Distinguished Visitors

By U.S. Naval Forces Europe-Africa /
U.S. Sixth Fleet Public Affairs

Vice Adm. Thomas E. Ishee, commander, U.S. Sixth Fleet and Naval Striking and Support Forces NATO (STRIKFORNATO) embarked the first-in-class aircraft carrier USS Gerald R. Ford (CVN 78), May 22.

Ishee visited the flagship and the supporting staffs of Carrier Strike Group (CSG) 12, while the strike group is underway in the North Sea with the U.S. Ambassador to Norway Marc Nathanson, Norwegian Chief of Defense Gen. Eirik Kristoffersen, the Chief of the Royal Norwegian Navy Rear Adm. Rune Andersen, and members of the Kingdom of Norway's government and military.

“What a great day to be aboard the Gerald R. Ford with our Norwegian Allies, enhancing U.S.-Norway relations,” said Ishee. “I look forward to our joint operations on NATO’s northern flank, which improve interoperability, maintain freedom of navigation in international waters, deter aggression, and prepare us to defend our nations and the Alliance.”

The visit occurs as U.S. Sixth Fleet and STRIKFORNATO execute exercise Formidable Shield 2023 from the High North and North Atlantic Ocean, May 8-26.

Formidable Shield demonstrates allied interoperability in a live-fire joint and combined Integrated Air and Missile Defense (IAMD) environment, using NATO command and control structures. The exercise involves 13 NATO Allied and partner nations, more than 20 ships and 35 aircraft, eight ground units consisting of radars, National Advanced Surface-to-Air Missile System (NASAMS), and High Mobility Artillery Rocket System (HIMARS), and approximately 4,000 personnel from across the Alliance.



For over 80 years, U.S. Naval Forces Europe-U.S. Naval Forces Africa (NAVEUR-NAF) has forged strategic relationships with our allies and partners, leveraging a foundation of shared values to preserve security and stability.

Headquartered in Naples, Italy, NAVEUR-NAF operates U.S. naval forces in the U.S. European Command (USEUCOM) and U.S. Africa Command (USAFRICOM) areas of responsibility. U.S. Sixth Fleet is permanently assigned to NAVEUR-NAF and employs maritime forces through the full spectrum of joint and naval operations.





CO2

PKP

AFF-13B

USS GERALD R. FORD
CVN 78



Carrier Strike Group 12 Holds Change of Command

Story by Ensign Mackenzie Culver

In a time-honored naval tradition, Carrier Strike Group (CSG) 12 held a change of command ceremony aboard the strike group's flagship, the first-in-class aircraft carrier USS Gerald R. Ford (CVN 78) as it anchored outside of Oslo, Norway while deployed, May 24th.

Rear Adm. Erik J. Eslich relieved Rear Adm. Greg Huffman and assumed duties as Commander, Carrier Strike Group 12 in a ceremony attended by strike group leadership and crew.

During the ceremony, Huffman thanked the crew for their hard work, dedication, and service to their country during his time as Commander.

"To the amazing team of Strike Group 12, I am thankful for the incredible effort you put towards your work every single day. It has been remarkable to see all of the achievements of the strike group during the last two years. Your dedication to each other and your unbounded enthusiasm for our mission sets the bar across the waterfront and flight line for every warship and squadron in the Navy. I am excited to see what the strike group continues to accomplish during this deployment and wish the entire team nothing but the best," said Huffman.

Huffman assumed command of Carrier Strike Group 12 in June 2021. He led Carrier Strike Group 12 through the first full ship shock trials for an aircraft carrier since 1986, the on-time completion of the Ford's first planned incremental availability (PIA), strike group and air wing integration, and the completion of the Gerald R. Ford Strike Group's first deployment to the U.S. 2nd Fleet and U.S. 6th Fleet areas of responsibility in fall 2022.

After reading his orders, Huffman thanked his wife and family for their support and announced that he will report for duty as Commander, Joint Region Marianas.

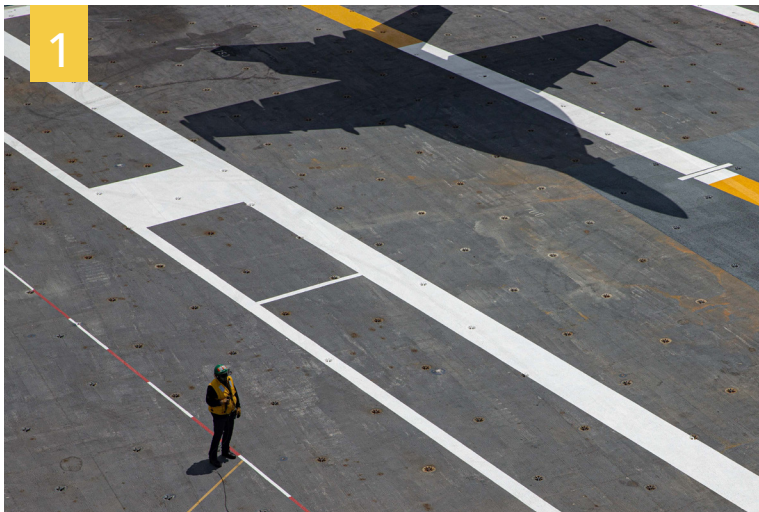
"It is an honor to join this team during deployment as the Commander, Carrier Strike Group 12," said Eslich. "I am excited for the opportunity to work alongside and sail with such an accomplished group of professionals and demonstrate to the world the flexible and dynamic capability that Carrier Strike Group 12 brings to the theater during our deployment."

Eslich reported to CSG-12 and the Gerald R. Ford Carrier Strike Group during the ship's scheduled deployment to the U.S. 6th Fleet areas of responsibility.

As a career surface warfare officer, he served tours aboard USS Lake Erie (CG 70), USS Wasp (LHD 1), USS Oscar Austin (DDG 79), and Commander, Cruiser Destroyer Group Eight. Eslich served as executive officer for both USS O'Kane (DDG 77) and USS Ramage (DDG 61) and he went on to command both USS Ramage and Destroyer Squadron Two (CDS 2), throughout which, he has made multiple deployments in support of training and real world operations.

Eslich served as a U.S. House of Representatives case officer, Office of Legislative Affairs; executive assistant to Commander, Naval Surface Force Atlantic; global requirements officer at the Joint Integrated Air Missile Defense Organization (JIAMDO); surface warfare community manager at the bureau of Navy Personnel (BUPERS-3); executive assistant to the Deputy Commander and Commander U.S. Fleet Forces Command; and Deputy 7th Fleet Commander prior to assuming duties as Commander, Carrier Strike Group 12.





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PHOTOS OF THE MONTH

JUNE 2023

1. Aviation Boatswain's Mate (Equipment) 1st Class Jacob Van, from Miamisburg, Ohio, assigned to Ford's air department, performs duties as landing arresting gear safety during flight operations aboard the ship, May 4, 2023. (Photo by MCSA Tristan Richardson)

2. Sailors assigned to Ford man the rails as the ship departs Naval Station Norfolk for a scheduled deployment, May 2, 2023. (Photo by MC2 Brian T. Glunt)

3. Sailors assigned to Ford's deck department inspect the anchor chain in the fo'c'sle during a sea and anchor evolution, May 5, 2023. (Photo by MC2 Jennifer Newsome)

4. Sailors assigned to Ford conduct small-boat operations in a rigid-hull inflatable boat (RHIB), May 5, 2023. (Photo by MC3 Aaron Arroyo)

5. Sailors assigned to Ford's air department launch an F/A-18E Super Hornet, attached to the "Tomcatters" of Strike Fighter Squadron (VFA) 31, on the flight deck, May 6, 2023. (Photo by MC2 Jacob Mattingly)

6. Sage, a three-year old female Labrador Retriever, deployed aboard USS Gerald R. Ford as part of the Mutts with a Mission program, poses with her Puppy Protective Equipment (PPE) in the hangar bay, May 5, 2023. (Photo by MC2 Jackson Adkins)

7. Senior Chief Aviation Boatswain's Mate (Equipment) Christine Tyler, left, from Onalaska, Wisconsin, assigned to Ford's air department, and Master-at-Arms 1st Class Jimmy Perez, from New York, assigned to Ford's security department, participate in a small arms training event, May 12, 2023. (Photo by MCSN Maxwell Orlosky)

8. Aviation Electronics Technician Airman Nicholas Clements, from Cortland, Ohio, assigned to Ford's aircraft intermediate maintenance department, qualifies on a M9 service pistol on the aircraft elevator, May 6, 2023. (Photo by MCSN Maxwell Orlosky)

9. Aviation Electrician's Mate Airman Ethan Hanke, right, from Weston, Wisconsin, and Aviation Electrician's Mate Airman Mark Cecci, from Blairsville, Georgia, both assigned to the "Blacklions" of Strike Fighter Squadron (VFA) 213, conduct routine maintenance on an F/A-18F Super Hornet in Ford's hangar bay, May 8, 2023. (Photo by MC2 Nolan Pennington)

10. Sailors, assigned to Ford's air department, participate in "Crash Games," a training exercise in which Sailors race to don aircraft fire fighting attire, May 8, 2023. (Photo by MC3 Aaron Arroyo)

11. Fire Controlman 3rd Class Jesse Heard, from Roanoke, Virginia, assigned to Ford's combat systems department, moves a 162D Sea Sparrow missile into position, May 9, 2023. (Photo by MC3 Simon Pike)

12. Chief Naval Aircrewman (Tactical Helicopter) Shane Cozza, from Buford, Georgia, assigned to the "Spartans" of Helicopter Maritime Strike Squadron (HSM) 70, observes Ford steaming in the Atlantic Ocean, May 11, 2023. (Photo by MC2 Jacob Mattingly)

MUTTS WITH A MISSION DEPLOYS WITH USS GERALD R. FORD

STORY BY USS GERALD R. FORD PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Sage, a three-year-old female yellow Labrador Retriever, deployed aboard the aircraft carrier USS Gerald R. Ford, May 2, as part of the Mutts with a Mission program.

military facility working dog as part of the crew throughout deployment, and this will serve as an opportunity to evaluate the efficacy of the program.

Sage is part of Gerald R. Ford's warfighter toughness mental health and resiliency team, and she is specifically trained to help Sailors cope with the operational stress associated with deployment. The intent is for Sage to provide a unique outlet and comfort for Sailors during deployment. Animals are proven to be another form of stress relief and provide a sense of companionship.

Mutts with a Mission, a Virginia-based non-profit organization accredited by Assistance Dogs International, raised and trained Sage, and loaned her to the Gerald R. Ford crew for the ship's scheduled deployment. Gerald R. Ford will be the first U.S. Navy ship to have an operational stress control



Chaplain Genevieve Clark, Gerald R. Ford and Carrier Strike Group 12's Chaplain, serves as Sage's primary handler. In preparation to deploy with Sage, Clark completed 120 hours of handler training with Mutts with a Mission. Three other volunteer handlers aboard Ford also support Clark in Sage's care and mission.

"One of the positives of having Sage aboard the ship is her help in breaking down some barriers to utilizing mental, emotional, and spiritual resiliency resources," said Clark. "Sailors are coming to more warrior toughness events and improving their morale through the vast network of resiliency resources the ship offers with Sage now present at these opportunities."

During deployment, all Sailors will benefit from spending time with Sage, who will be present with Chaplains, Resiliency Providers, and Mental Health professionals thereby having the opportunity to receive counseling sessions. Sage will be available to Sailors during ship-wide Morale, Welfare, and Recreation events. Her daily schedule will also be made available to Sailors for general visitation and morale boosts throughout the day.

Mutts with a Mission sent Sage with all necessary supplies for deployment, including a waste collection mat, proper bedding located in the handler's stateroom, personal protective gear including paw, hearing, and eye protection, and a life vest.

"The Sailors of Gerald R. Ford are excited to welcome Sage to the ship. Mutts with a Mission provides an invaluable service to Sailors, one that will aid in stress relief during the ship's deployment," said Capt. Rick Burgess, Ford's commanding officer. "Sage is one of the many resources aboard the ship to help Sailors build resiliency and enhance morale."



STARLINK, TELLING THE NAVY STORY, KEEP

STORY BY MASS COMMUNICATION SPECIALIST 1ST CLASS WILLIAM SPEARS

Staying connected in the digital age has never been easier. Instant messaging, text messages and video calls have eliminated the need of waiting weeks, and sometimes months for letters from home. These systems have even surpassed email as a primary means of communication, even while out to sea.

For the past few decades Sailors at sea wanting to communicate with their loved ones, make sure a bill is paid on time, or just to check the score of a game had to wait in line to use a Sailor phone or find an available computer to use with limited bandwidth.

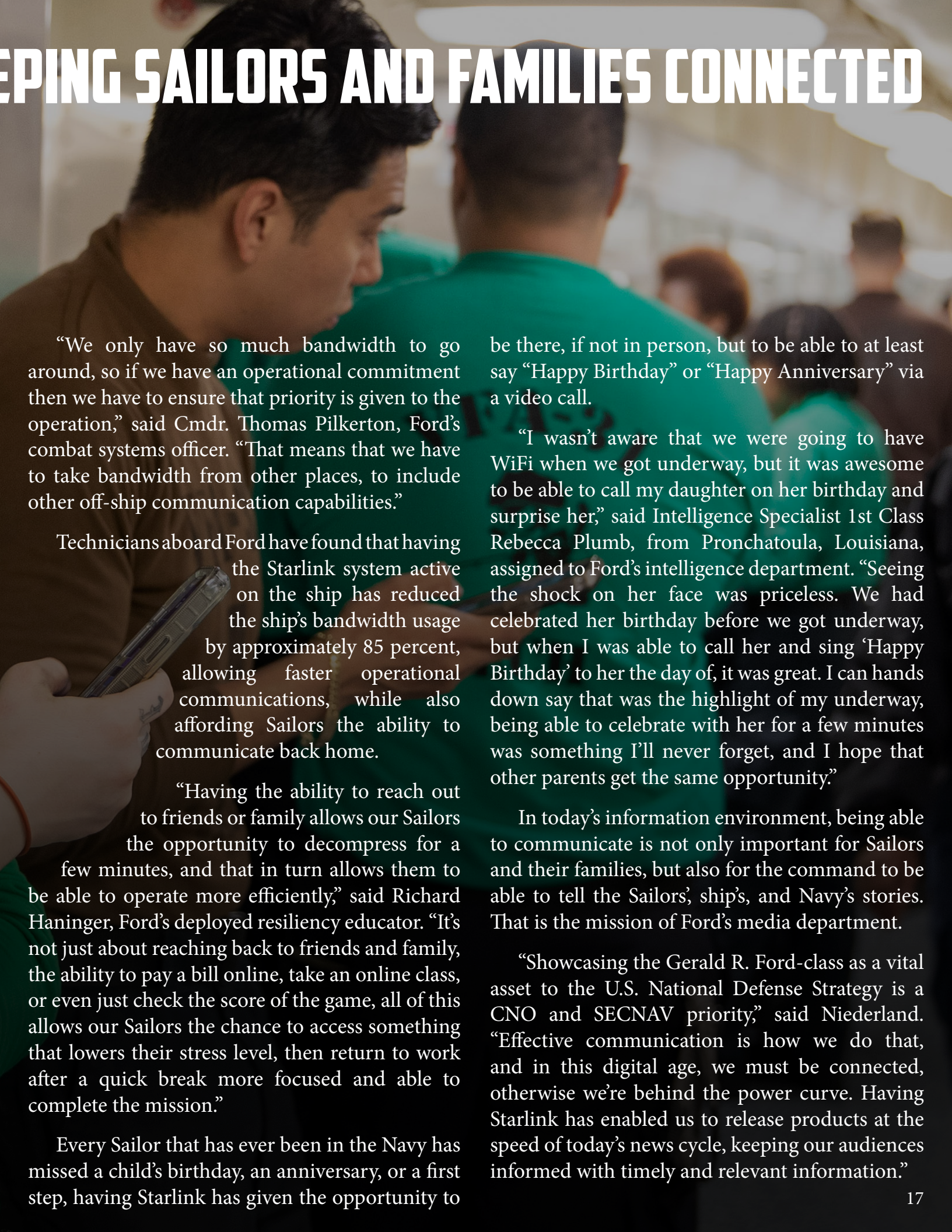
In February 2023, a WiFi-enabled Starlink system was installed aboard USS Gerald R. Ford (CVN 78) allowing the crew that opportunity to quickly and easily communicate with their loved ones.

“In my work center, we have don’t have a lot of computers, but we have a lot of Sailors,” said Aviation Boatswain’s Mate (Equipment) 1st Class Jacob Van, from Miamisburg, Ohio, assigned to Ford’s air department. “Being able to have an alternate means of communication back home makes things so much easier, from being able to just ask ‘How was your day?’ to being able to

answer more important things like ‘Hey, the pipe beneath the sink is leaking who should I call?’ provides not only a better sense of connection but also increases morale.”

Not only has this system allowed for an ease of communication for the Sailors, it has decreased the use of the ships’ operational bandwidth for non-operational communications.

KEEPING SAILORS AND FAMILIES CONNECTED



“We only have so much bandwidth to go around, so if we have an operational commitment then we have to ensure that priority is given to the operation,” said Cmdr. Thomas Pilkerton, Ford’s combat systems officer. “That means that we have to take bandwidth from other places, to include other off-ship communication capabilities.”

Technicians aboard Ford have found that having the Starlink system active on the ship has reduced the ship’s bandwidth usage by approximately 85 percent, allowing faster operational communications, while also affording Sailors the ability to communicate back home.

“Having the ability to reach out to friends or family allows our Sailors the opportunity to decompress for a few minutes, and that in turn allows them to be able to operate more efficiently,” said Richard Haninger, Ford’s deployed resiliency educator. “It’s not just about reaching back to friends and family, the ability to pay a bill online, take an online class, or even just check the score of the game, all of this allows our Sailors the chance to access something that lowers their stress level, then return to work after a quick break more focused and able to complete the mission.”

Every Sailor that has ever been in the Navy has missed a child’s birthday, an anniversary, or a first step, having Starlink has given the opportunity to

be there, if not in person, but to be able to at least say “Happy Birthday” or “Happy Anniversary” via a video call.

“I wasn’t aware that we were going to have WiFi when we got underway, but it was awesome to be able to call my daughter on her birthday and surprise her,” said Intelligence Specialist 1st Class Rebecca Plumb, from Pronchatoula, Louisiana, assigned to Ford’s intelligence department. “Seeing the shock on her face was priceless. We had celebrated her birthday before we got underway, but when I was able to call her and sing ‘Happy Birthday’ to her the day of, it was great. I can hands down say that was the highlight of my underway, being able to celebrate with her for a few minutes was something I’ll never forget, and I hope that other parents get the same opportunity.”

In today’s information environment, being able to communicate is not only important for Sailors and their families, but also for the command to be able to tell the Sailors’, ship’s, and Navy’s stories. That is the mission of Ford’s media department.

“Showcasing the Gerald R. Ford-class as a vital asset to the U.S. National Defense Strategy is a CNO and SECNAV priority,” said Niederland. “Effective communication is how we do that, and in this digital age, we must be connected, otherwise we’re behind the power curve. Having Starlink has enabled us to release products at the speed of today’s news cycle, keeping our audiences informed with timely and relevant information.”

THE MAINTAINER: BM3 LUCILLE DUNCAN

STORY BY MASS COMMUNICATION SPECIALIST 2ND CLASS NOLAN PENNINGTON

Boatswain's mates (BM), one of the U.S. Navy's founding occupational ratings and considered the heart of every ship, are indispensable for many vital roles aboard U.S. Navy ships.

From extending the service life of a ship with their expertise in ship preservation to anchoring, mooring lines, driving the ship, receiving cargo deliveries and assisting the search and rescue of Sailors who fall overboard, BMs are the go-to for many essential shipboard roles.

With only three years of naval service, Boatswain's Mate 3rd Class Lucille Duncan, a native of Weston, West Virginia, assigned to the world's largest aircraft carrier USS Gerald R. Ford's (CVN 78) deck department, is quickly learning the importance of leadership as a standout deckplate supervisor.

"My main responsibilities as a deckplate supervisor is to assign Sailors tasks, guide them, teach them, as well as assist them in completing any task from the daily work list," said Duncan. "Right now, on the work list, we are doing fancy line work down on the stern dock passageway, painting and normal ship preservation."

Gerald R. Ford is the U.S. Navy's newest and most advanced aircraft carrier and is expected to have a service life of at least 50 years. Throughout Gerald R. Ford's service life, the ship will receive never-ending restorations and tune-ups to maintain the ship's combat effectiveness and structural integrity, and boatswain's mates play a crucial role in each of those components with their proficiency in ship preservation.

"It is very important to preserve the ship," said Duncan. "When I walk along the Gerald R. Ford pierside,

I have a sense of pride because I know our deck department puts in long hours of preservation and it shows."

Boatswain mate's tasks range in responsibilities. From handling-line during a sea-and-anchor detail, to managing the anchor brake that keeps the chain from paying out during an anchor drop, to handling steady lines that steady the boat during hoisting and lowering of a boat during a small-boat operation, all require BM's to maintain a work ethic that emphasizes attention to detail in all of their responsibilities.

"Something that has been engrained in me from being a boatswain's mate is attention to detail," said Duncan. "Missing one simple step in a procedure could result in a huge mishap - doing a task the right way should be the only way."

Duncan understands the importance of maintaining a high standard when accomplishing her tasks. One critical function on every U.S. Navy ship that requires a Sailor's full attention is standing watch.

"The most important job on this ship as a boatswain's mate is standing watch," said Duncan. "As a boatswain's mate, I stand a lot of watches. From lookout watches who report any contacts to the pilot house, to standing the ship's helm watch who steer the ship, attention to detail is important to keep the ship and the crew safe."

Another facet of Duncan's job as a BM while at sea is participating in underway replenishments-at-sea (UNREP). During an UNREP, ordnance, stores and materials are transferred by cables from a delivery ship to the Gerald R. Ford, allowing the ship to continue to operate without pulling in to port.

There are many roles BMs execute during an UNREP. From line handler, who helps connect the span wire that delivers the materials, to riggers, whose function is to prepare on-coming and off-going materials to be transferred, to rig captain, who are accountable for all personal and cargo during the evolution, BMs fill almost every role during an UNREP evolution.

“UNREPs happen almost every other week while underway,” said Duncan. “Right now, I operate as a rigger during an UNREP. I want to be a rig captain because they are the knowledge experts, which I aspire to be.”

While UNREPs are scheduled events, BMs are in charge of a lesser known and unpredictable assignment: small-boat operations. Small-boat operations use rigid-hull inflatable boats (RHIB) for a variety of tasks for U.S. Navy ships. Many U.S. Navy ships use small-boat operations for tasks like vessel board search and seizures (VBSS) and stores transfer, but Gerald R. Ford’s small-boat operations focus on search and rescue missions.

“My position for small-boat operations is being a davit captain,” said Duncan. “I am responsible for dropping a boat crew safely in the water and bringing them back. I also direct and command the line handlers and the davit operator on small-boat operations.”

Duncan has demonstrated an exceptional work ethic, proving to her department head that she is a strong and capable leader. Her devotion to her duty has earned her the title as Gerald R. Ford’s Junior Petty Officer of the Quarter for 2nd quarter, 2023.

MAINTAINING A DRIVE TO BE BETTER AVIATION BOATSWAIN'S MATE (EQUIPMENT) 2ND CLASS

LANCE STILLS

By Public Affairs Officer Ensign Mackenzie Culver
Carrier Strike Group 12

A viation Boatswain's Mate (Equipment) 2nd Class Lance Stills, from Shreveport, Louisiana, assigned to the USS Gerald R. Ford's (CVN 78) air department, joined the Navy to experience a challenge and go on an adventure. Stills works in the advance arresting gear maintenance office ensuring the arresting gear wires are ready to catch incoming aircraft. Stills explains that the most challenging part of his Navy career has been learning a new aircraft system. His two month schooling was about a Nimitz-class aircraft carrier so when he received orders to the new class of aircraft carriers, he knew learning was in his future.

Stills checked in October of 2019 aboard Gerald R. Ford and will be stationed here until May of 2025. He shared his experience about learning the new equipment and how being a people person helped him integrate with the crew easily. He feels grateful that he was given Ford orders because "God placed me here for a reason so that I can thrive". His command has recognized his outstanding ethic and can do attitude through the meritorious advancement program (MAP) twice while being stationed on Ford.

While his day-to-day job focuses on maintenance of the wires, making sure there are no fault and that the gear is ready to recover aircraft, Stills believes the best part of his job is the people he works with and the relationship he has built around the V-2 division office. He credits his current success to the people he works with.

When going through his first MAP process his advice was set yourself apart from the group. Stills found a mentor in Chief Aviation Boatswain's Mate (Equipment) Reginald Leonard who took him under his wing and helped him get two warfare pins. Receiving the first meritorious promotion "pushed my career forward, raised the bar and allowed me to create a higher standard for myself," said Stills.


Stills did not stop there. He used his midterm counseling to set a baseline for his goals and do a self-check-in on what he needed to do in order to excel.

"Set yourself apart from the group every day throughout the year" Stills advises junior sailors. "Don't let the foot off the gas and keep pushing yourself to be better."

In February of this year, Stills found out that he was going to be advanced to petty officer second class just 18 months after his last promotion.

"I am very humbled and grateful for this opportunity since it is such a rare occasion." Stills found out about the promotion during morning quarters and got to celebrate with his shop. The love he felt from his peers was overwhelming and he felt thankful that his chain of command fought for him to receive this promotion.

When asked what his favorite memory is so far on the Ford, he shared about his time in Primary Flight getting to interact with Air officer, Cmdr. Michael Simpson and Assistant Air Officer, Cmdr. Richard Rosenbusch. Talking about the Wall Street Journal, investments and finances with both of them was a core

A close-up, profile shot of a man with short, dark hair and a beard, wearing a bright green turtleneck sweater and a large, black, over-ear headset with a microphone. He is looking intently at a piece of equipment, possibly a control panel or a piece of machinery, which is partially visible in the foreground. The background is slightly blurred, showing what appears to be the interior of a ship's compartment with various panels and equipment. The lighting is warm and focused on the man's face and the equipment he is working on.

memory for Stills. This daily chat has lead Stills to be interested in getting his bachelors in economics. He wanted to thank both Cmdr. Simpson and Cmdr. Rosenbusch for taking the time out of their day to make such a big impact on his.

Stills is hoping to become Sailor of the Year before leaving the ship and a long term goal of his is to open a non-profit. He wants to thank Senior Chief Aviation Boatswain's Mate (equipment) Christine Tyler and Senior Chief Aviation Boatswain's Mate (Equipment) Victor Paulino along with Aviation Boatswain's Mate (equipment) 1st Class Gabriel Cooper, Aviation Boatswain's Mate (equipment) 1st Class As-Sabur Logan and Aviation Boatswain's Mate (equipment) 2nd Class Jacinta Woods for always looking out for him, holding him to that high bar and pushing him to become a better Sailor.

Stills is excited for this deployment and hopes to mentor his junior sailors in helping them reach their goals.

DISNEY HOSTS MOVIE PREMIERE UNDERWAY

By MASS COMMUNICATION SPECIALIST SEAMAN MAXWELL E. ORLOSKY

Sailors aboard the world's largest aircraft carrier USS Gerald R. Ford (CVN 78) had the opportunity to watch the premiere of "Guardians of the Galaxy Vol. 3" in the hangar bay.

Sailors from all departments crowded the hangar bay in anticipation as they waited for the 2-hour-and-30-minute movie to start. Popcorn and other refreshments were available for viewers to enjoy.

"It's great to bring to the men and women a great connection to home and show that they are being thought of and that they are heroes in our eyes and that we don't forget," said Mr. Ken Caldwell, executive vice president and general sales manager of The Walt Disney Studios. "The crew is great and it's an unbelievable experience to see everybody smile and enjoy the film. On top of that, everybody I've met takes pride in their work and that's great to see."

Morale, Welfare and Recreation events like these are great for Sailors to blow off steam, relax with their shipmates and feel like they are at home.

Machinist's Mate 3rd Class Brandon Huynh, from Jacksonville, Florida said, "[These events] make being onboard that much better and it brings home here just a little bit."

Those attending the event said it was a great time to watch a great movie.

Aviation Structural Mechanic Airman Dominic Dotavio, from Westminster, Colorado said, "It was a really good movie full of action and it's exactly what you would think coming from a Marvel movie, especially something with Chris Pratt."



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

MCC Gary Prill

DEPARTMENT LPO

MC1 William Spears

PRODUCTION LPO

MC1 David Kolmel

STAFF

MC1 Brian Glunt

MC1 Ryan Williams

MC2 Jackson Adkins

MC2 Jacob Mattingly

MC2 Adonica Muñoz

MC2 Jennifer Newsome

MC2 Nolan Pennington

MC3 Aaron Arroyo

MC3 Triniti Lersch

MC3 Simon Pike

MCSN Maxwell Orlosky

MCSA Tristan Richardson

FOR MORE CONTENT:

Want to see more about USS Gerald R. Ford?

<https://www.dvidshub.net/unit/CVN78>



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USS Gerald R. Ford CVN 78

COMMAND OMBUDSMEN



Kristi Hanzlicek

757-708-5581

FordOmbudsman2@gmail.com



Hiromi DeFranco

757-708-5761

FordOmbudsman3@gmail.com

THIS MONTH IN NAVAL HISTORY

June 1, 1813

HMS Shannon, commanded by Capt. Philip Broke, captures USS Chesapeake, commanded by Capt. James Lawrence off the coast of Boston, Mass. During the battle, Capt. Lawrence is mortally wounded, but as he is carried below deck, he orders the iconic phrase: "Tell the men to fire faster! Don't give up the ship!"

June 6, 1944

Allied forces land troops on Normandy beaches for the largest amphibious landing in history, Operation Overlord (D-Day), beginning the march eastward to defeat Germany.

June 14, 1775

The Continental Congress adopts the design of the present U.S. flag of 13 stripes and 13 stars.

Also on this day, John Paul Jones takes command of the Continental Navy Sloop USS Ranger. While commanding Ranger, the ship receives the first official salute to the Stars and Stripes flag by the French Fleet at Quiberon Bay.

June 17, 2017

The guided missile destroyer USS Fitzgerald (DDG 62) is involved in a collision with the Philippine-flagged merchant vessel ACX Crystal while operating about 56 nautical miles southwest of Yokosuka, Japan. Seven Sailors lose their lives and the ship is damaged on her starboard side above and below the waterline.

BACK COVER GRAPHIC

A graphic celebrating Flag Day aboard the world's largest aircraft carrier USS Gerald R. Ford (CVN 78), June 14, 2023.

Graphic Illustration by MCSN Maxwell Orlosky

USS Gerald R. Ford (CVN 78) Celebrates

Flag Day



June 14, 2023