

THE WOLVERINE

JULY 2023

FORD VISITS CROATIA

FORD HOSTS LOCAL OFFICIALS AND KEY LEADERS
AND STRENGTHENS INTERNATIONAL TIES THROUGH
COMMUNITY RELATIONS

UNDERWAY ON FATHER'S DAY

MILITARY SERVICE, SACRIFICE, AND BEING AWAY
FROM FAMILY ON DEPLOYMENT

125 YEARS OF CORPSMEN

FORD'S MEDICAL DEPARTMENT CELEBRATES THE
BIRTHDAY OF THE HOSPITAL CORPSMAN RATE

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THE WOLVERINE

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The world's largest aircraft carrier USS Gerald R. Ford (CVN 78), Italian frigate Alpino (F 594), and the Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS Roosevelt (DDG 80) transit the Strait of Gibraltar, June 15, 2023.
Photo by MC2 Jackson Adkins



USS Gerald R. Ford Hosts Danish Officials at Sea

Story by USS Gerald R. Ford Public Affairs

Senior Danish government and military officials, including Acting Minister of Defense Troels Lund Poulsen, visited onboard the Ford-class aircraft carrier USS Gerald R. Ford (CVN 78) with the U.S. Ambassador to the Kingdom of Denmark Alan Leventhal while underway in the Norwegian Sea, June 10, 2023.

While aboard, the visitors met with Gerald R. Ford Carrier Strike Group (GRFCSG) leadership to discuss partnership between the two countries and observed firsthand the capabilities of the first-in-class aircraft carrier during a ship tour.

“Happy and humbled to set foot on the USS Gerald R. Ford today. Our visit is a testimony to the strong security cooperation between Denmark and the United States, which is growing even stronger these years,” said Poulsen. “Denmark is proud to support the U.S. in increasing our collective security both at sea and elsewhere.”

The visit included a tour of Ford’s flight deck to witness aircraft launch and recovery using Ford’s state-of-the-art Electromagnetic Aircraft Launch System (EMALS) and Advanced Arresting Gear (AAG).

“It is always a pleasure to host one of our NATO allies aboard the ship, especially while underway in the North,” said Rear Adm. Erik Eslich, GRFCSG, Commander Carrier Strike Group 12. “The visit is sure to strengthen the Denmark-United States partnership and increase interoperability between Allied navies while promoting peace and stability in the region.”

Before his departure, Ambassador Leventhal remarked on the professionalism he witnessed from the officers and crew of the world’s largest warship.

“Seeing the advanced technology used aboard the Gerald R. Ford is truly impressive,” said Ambassador Leventhal. “And we value the opportunity to welcome our Danish partners on board with us today as the Ford Strike Group operates in this area of the world, exercising and further strengthening interoperability among NATO Allies.”

Ford and the GRFCSG are operating in the U.S. Naval Forces Europe-Africa (NAVEUR-NAF) area of operations on a scheduled deployment as part of a regular rotation of forces that support maritime security operations, provide a crisis response capability, and assure our NATO allies and partners by providing credible deterrence and defense options in the maritime domain. 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. In total, the GRFCSG is deployed with more than 6,000 Sailors across all platforms ready to respond globally to combatant commander tasking.



Ford's Fitness in the Fjords: How MWR Pumps Up the Training on a Deployed Carrier

BY MASS COMMUNICATION SPECIALIST 2ND CLASS JACOB MATTINGLY
USS GERALD R. FORD PUBLIC AFFAIRS

In the frigid waters of the Norwegian Sea, Sailors assigned to the world's largest aircraft carrier USS Gerald R. Ford (CVN 78) can still find numerous resources to assist in building their physical health and improving quality of life.

The ship's Morale, Welfare and Recreation (MWR) department hosts a 5K event at least twice a month along with daily fitness classes to provide various physical training opportunities to Sailors, helping the crew uphold and exceed the U.S. Navy's physical fitness standards.

"Our goal right now is to allow Sailors the opportunity to run on the flight deck at least twice a week or whenever the air wing isn't flying," said Diqun Williams, Gerald R. Ford's Fit Boss. "Ford's MWR wants to give Sailors the opportunity to get some sun and some fresh air while also promoting health and wellness while we are deployed."

Williams is the head fitness instructor aboard the Gerald R. Ford responsible for coordinating and organizing command-wide fitness events and classes for Sailors aboard the ship who are looking to relieve stress and improve their health.

"My top priorities as Fit Boss is to give people an outlet to release stress and to improve and maintain their physical self," said Williams. "We work tirelessly to host training sessions for large groups and individuals, and we also ensure that Ford's gyms are up to date with the best equipment in the fleet so that they stay open 24 hours a day, seven days a week."

Logistic Specialist 2nd Class Casey Darrigogolz, from Portsmouth, Virginia, assigned to Gerald R. Ford's supply department, is one of many Sailors onboard who utilizes MWR's running opportunities to help improve her physical health.

"My best friend, LS3 Ariel Watts, inspired me to start running and working out while we were underway together when she came up to me and needed a running partner, so we started running in events hosted by MWR and used the gym facilities onboard," said Darrigogolz. "Since then, I have been inspired to run more and I have run in every 5K the ship has organized on the flight deck. I also use Ford's MWR gym facilities up to six times a week to help maintain my physical fitness and use them to help decompress after I finish working."

Darrigogolz recommends MWR as a resource to her junior Sailors who are in search of hobbies that help opportunity to create a separation between work and leisure.

"MWR provides so much more than places to exercise, there are countless events that they schedule like game nights and movie showings," said Darrigogolz. "It's an amazing resource that provides numerous things that assist in making our lives as Sailors better."

In total, MWR maintains and offers 5 gym facilities in various locations around the ship in addition to offering pre-scheduled tours for port calls, trivia nights as well as various sports tournaments and gatherings where the crew can socialize and relax while being deployed.

125 Years of Medical Excellence

Story by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Jackson Adkins

'I dedicate my heart, mind, and strength to the work before me. I shall do all within my power to show in myself an example of all that is honorable and good throughout my naval career.' – The Hospital Corpsman Pledge.

The world's largest aircraft carrier USS Gerald R. Ford's (CVN 78) medical department celebrates the 125th birthday of the hospital corpsman (HM) rate. President William McKinley established the HM rate on June 17, 1898.

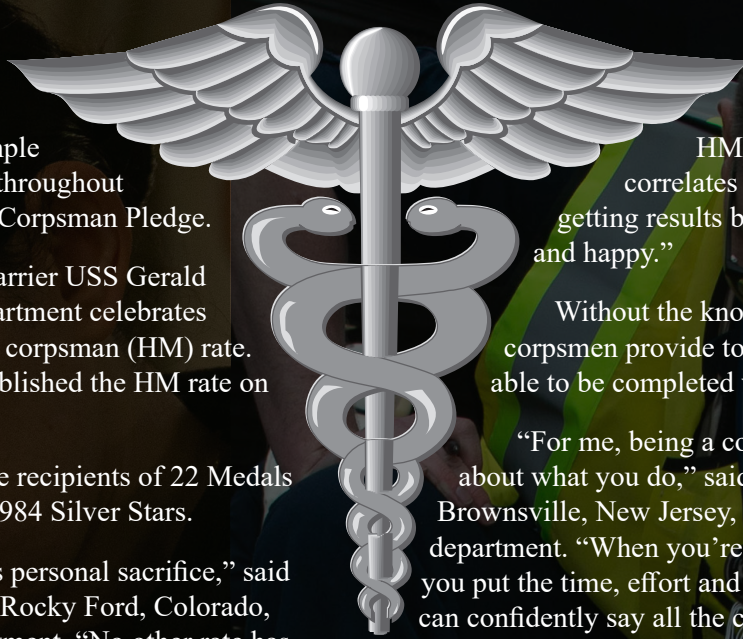
Navy corpsman have been the recipients of 22 Medals of Honor, 199 Navy Crosses and 984 Silver Stars.

"To be a corpsman, embodies personal sacrifice," said HM3 Raymond Rodriguez, from Rocky Ford, Colorado, assigned to Ford's medical department. "No other rate has more Medal of Honor recipients than the corpsman rate, which to me explains that we give our everything for our patients, no matter what."

The rich and highly decorated history of the corpsman rate breeds a community of excellence, demonstrating why they joined their field: to help others in need.

"What I love about the corpsman rate is the rich heritage that we have and that we share with one another and the ability to constantly be in service to our brothers and sisters in the Navy," said HM1 Devin Tanner, from Tucson, Arizona, assigned to Ford's medical department.

Since the establishment of the rate, corpsman have been there to keep the Navy's Sailors and Marines in the fight. From annual check-ups to emergencies, corpsmen are there for service members.



"I have a very direct impact on our fleet's readiness as well as our fleet's health," said HM3 Rodriguez. "Everything I do correlates with providers and doctors, getting results back, as well as keeping us healthy and happy."

Without the knowledge and dedication the Navy's corpsmen provide to the fleet, no mission would be able to be completed without them.

"For me, being a corpsman means being passionate about what you do," said HM3 Sarah Chinquee, from Brownsville, New Jersey, assigned to Ford's medical department. "When you're passionate about what you do, you put the time, effort and critical thinking into your job. I can confidently say all the corpsmen here are very passionate about their jobs."



The hospital corpsman rate focuses on the most important aspect of the Navy: the Sailors.

"We're here for you. While we have worth, we are not more worthy than any other rate. But the value that we bring to the Navy team is vital," said Tanner. "Day or night, around the world there is always a corpsman there, to respond to our brothers and sisters in need."

'I solemnly pledge myself before God and these witnesses to practice faithfully all of my duties as a member of the Hospital Corps,' – The Hospital Corpsman Pledge.





SPLIT, Croatia

The World's Largest Aircraft Carrier Arrives in Split, Croatia

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

The U.S. Navy's newest aircraft carrier, USS Gerald R. Ford (CVN 78) and embarked staff from Carrier Strike Group 12 arrived in Split, Croatia, for a scheduled port visit, June 26.

This port visit is the capital ship's second stop while deployed to the U.S. Naval Forces Europe area of operations and provides an opportunity to enhance the strong partnership between U.S. and Croatia.

"U.S. Navy units frequently visit Croatia for maintenance, mutual security training opportunities, and liberty, and the Sailors of the Gerald R. Ford Carrier Strike Group are excited to continue the tradition," said Rear Adm. Erik J. Eslich, Commander, Carrier Strike Group 12. "It is a welcome opportunity for our crews to enjoy a beautiful country and experience the Croatian culture, but also for us to engage with a crucial ally and build upon the strong U.S.-Croatia relationship that is founded on our shared values."

Gerald R. Ford is anchored off the coast of Split and will host local officials and key leaders for a reception to celebrate the strong, extensive alliance between the U.S. and Croatia. The port call will provide Gerald R. Ford Sailors the opportunity to experience the rich culture of Croatia.

"The Sailors of USS Gerald R. Ford, Carrier Strike Group 12, Carrier Air Wing 8, and Destroyer Squadron 2 have been looking forward to visiting Split since we deployed nearly two months ago," said Capt. Richard Burgess, Gerald R. Ford's Commanding Officer. "Many of our Sailors joined the Navy with aspirations to see the world, and this port visit provides a cherished opportunity for them to experience the rich history and culture of Croatia."

Gerald R. Ford deployed from Norfolk, Virginia on May 2 and has been conducting joint and combined training, exercises, and operations to support maritime stability and security, and defense of U.S., Allied and Partner interests. 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.

Gerald R. Ford is the U.S. Navy's newest and most advanced aircraft carrier. As the first-in-class ship of Ford-class aircraft carriers, CVN 78 represents a generational leap in the U.S. Navy's capacity to project power on a global scale. Ford-class aircraft carriers introduce 23 new technologies, including Electromagnetic Aircraft Launch System, Advanced Arresting Gear and Advanced Weapons Elevators. The new systems incorporated onto Ford-class ships are designed to deliver greater lethality, survivability and joint interoperability with a 20% smaller crew than a Nimitz-class carrier, paving the way forward for naval aviation.

The Gerald R. Ford Carrier Strike Group (GRFCSG) is conducting a scheduled deployment in U.S. Naval Forces Europe-Africa/U.S. Sixth Fleet area of operations, demonstrating the commitment and power projection capability of the Navy's globally deployed force. 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. In

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“Many of our Sailors joined the Navy with aspirations to see the world, and this port visit provides a cherished opportunity for them to experience the rich history and culture of Croatia.”

- Capt. Rick Burgess

total, the GRFCSG is deployed with more than 6,000 Sailors across all platforms ready to respond globally to combatant commander tasking.

The Gerald R. Ford Carrier Strike Group consists of Carrier Strike Group 12, Carrier Air Wing 8, Destroyer Squadron 2, USS Normandy (CG 60), USS Ramage (DDG 61), and USS Thomas Hudner (DDG 116).

Headquartered in Naples, Italy, U.S. Naval Forces Europe-Africa/U.S. Sixth Fleet operates U.S. naval forces in the U.S. European Command (USEUCOM) and U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM) areas of responsibility. U.S. Sixth Fleet is permanently assigned to NAVFAC, and employs maritime forces through the full spectrum of joint and naval operations. Our persistent presence in Europe is in accordance with our international commitments and agreements and is necessary to reassure our Allies and Partners of our commitment to collective defense.





USS Gerald R. Ford Hosts Reception upon Arrival to its Second Port Call in Split, Croatia

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

U.S. Charge d'Affaires ad interim to Croatia Mark Fleming, Deputy Prime Minister of Croatia Davor Bozinovic, Rear Adm. Erik Eslich, Commander, Carrier Strike Group (CSG) 12, and Capt. Rick Burgess, commanding officer of the world's largest aircraft carrier USS Gerald R. Ford (CVN 78), co-hosted a reception aboard Gerald R. Ford while anchored off the coast of Split, Croatia, June 27, 2023.

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

"To our friends, allies, and partners, welcome to Gerald R. Ford, it is an absolute honor to be with you today at our first port in the Mediterranean, and we are absolutely excited to be here," said Burgess. "The locals have been extremely friendly and welcoming, and it has been amazing to give the crew some time to thaw out after being in the Arctic."

The event highlighted the long-standing bilateral alliance between the U.S. and Croatia and celebrated Gerald R. Ford's second port during its deployment to the Atlantic Ocean. Guest speakers included Fleming, Bozinovic, and Burgess.

"It is an honor and pleasure to address you from this impressive aircraft carrier [in celebration of] the Independence Day of the United States of America," said Bozinovic. "I would like to take this moment to thank all American citizens and those serving aboard the Gerald R. Ford for their dedication and taking the time of joining us here today."

Bozinovic said events such as Gerald R. Ford's visit to Split strengthens the bond between the U.S. and Croatia.

"The American idea of freedom and democracy has repeatedly proven its leadership in some of the most decisive moments of world and European history," said Bozinovic. "In today's world of constant geopolitical change, the United States is once again playing a key role in standing up for our shared interests and values, reminding us of the importance of our partnership based on your trust, support, and consent."

Fleming 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.

“When we at the embassy reflect on the past year we are so proud of what we accomplished and we can truly say without hyperbole [that] the United States and Croatian friendship is simply stronger than ever,” said Fleming. “The foundation of this relationship is our shared values, it always has and always will be, as long as we stay the course and stay true to our values we will never, ever be separated.”

The afternoon included an opportunity for the more than 400 guests to enjoy food and beverages, as well as a ceremonial toast and cake cutting.



*“The United States
and Croatian friendship is
simply stronger than ever.”
- U.S Charge d’Affaires ad
interim to Croatia
Mark Fleming*



Creating Ties through Community Relations

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

Maintaining positive relationships and strengthening ties with host nations is an essential part of any deployed naval vessel's mission. Sailors assigned to the world's largest aircraft carrier USS Gerald R. Ford (CVN 78) volunteered their time at a community relations event at Park-šuma Marjan in Split, Croatia, June 28, 2023, in support of this mission.

Thirty-two Sailors participated in the park clean-up event, arranged by Gerald R. Ford's command religious ministries department (CRMD). As part of the volunteer event, the group removed branches and debris, clearing the way on the Put Babe Marte (Path of the Grandmother Marta) trail.

"A primary concern for the managers of Park-šuma Marjan is forest fires," said Lt. Benjamin Pitre, CRMD's division officer and one of Gerald R. Ford's chaplains. "A recent survey counted the presence of several hundred species of plant life, and the park's managers wish to maintain and expand that number. Our efforts helped to minimize the destructive effect that fires might have on the park's plant life."

Often referred to as the "lungs of the city" due to the hundreds of species of plant life, Park-šuma Marjan is also home to an array of historic monuments and cultural institutions.

Projects like this help the command to form strong bonds with the communities that Gerald R. Ford visits.

"Community relations projects provide an opportunity for American Sailors to interact personally with the citizens, both civilian and military, of our allies. Sometimes, we are able to provide a service to the local community of our host nation, and other times, our presence allows for a sharing of culture," said Pitre. "In either case, both groups learn about the other first-hand, thereby producing personal, cultural, and national bonds that reach beyond international military objectives. Forming these bonds through shared experiences instills in both nations a true allied spirit and friendship."

Sailors are eager to volunteer at any port Gerald R. Ford pulls into. To date, CRMD has arranged community relations events in each foreign port Gerald R. Ford has visited. Pitre says that Gerald R. Ford Sailors will have more volunteer opportunities to look forward to in future port calls.

"On this deployment, we've had 60-90 Sailors in total sign up at each port call," said Pitre. "Community relations are an integral part of the larger mission for Ford's deployment."





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PHOTOS OF THE MONTH

JUNE 2023

1. The Gerald R. Ford Carrier Strike Group sails in formation with NATO allied ships during an integrated sailing event in the Norwegian Sea, June 5, 2023. (Photo by MC2 Jacob Mattingly)

2. The Italian Navy Frigate ITS Alpino (F 594) observes flight operations while sailing next to USS Gerald R. Ford (CVN 78) in the Adriatic Sea, June 24, 2023. (Photo by MCSN Maxwell Orlosky)

3. An MH-60S Sea Hawk attached to HSC-9, sits on a landing area in Ramsund, Norway, during a training event, June 3, 2023. (Photo by MC2 Jackson Adkins)

4. Sailors assigned to USS Gerald R. Ford (CVN 78) observe the ship's transit through the Strait of Gibraltar from the flight deck, June 15, 2023. (Photo by MC2 Jacob Mattingly)

5. AN Valerie Zepeda, from Long Beach, California, assigned to air department, participates in a small arms shoot on aircraft elevator one, June 13, 2023. (Photo by MC3 Simon Pike)

6. ADAN Noe Cardenas, from Houston, assigned to the "Tomcatters" of VFA-31, conducts preflight checks of an F/A-18E Super Hornet, attached to VFA-31, on the flight deck, June 16, 2023. (Photo by MC2 Nolan Pennington)

7. ABHAN Detrion Harris, from Fayetteville, Arkansas, assigned to air department, uses a naval firefighting thermal imager (NFTI) to assist in a firefighting overhaul exercise during a mass casualty drill on the flight deck, June 12, 2023. (Photo by MC2 Nolan Pennington)

8. Capt. Nicolas Molitor, commanding officer of the French Navy's Horizon-class Anti-air frigate Foprbis (D620), observes flight operations from the island, June 21, 2023. (Photo by MC2 Nolan Pennington)

9. BM3 Damaldavin Hodge, right, from Martinsville, Virginia, trains BMSN Chris Bustos, from Lyons, Colorado, both assigned to deck department, on standing lookout watch on the fantail, June 3, 2023. (Photo by MC2 Adonica Muñoz)

10. An NH90 NATO frigate helicopter lands on the flight deck, June 19, 2023. This NH90 frigate helicopter landing was the first time an Italian helicopter landed on a Ford-class aircraft carrier. (Photo by MCSA Tristan Richardson)

11. GMSN David Thompson, from Chicago, assigned to weapons department, prepares to fire a shot line on the flight deck, June 17, 2023. (Photo by MCSN Maxwell Orlosky)

12. AD3 Ricardo Ulloa, from Anaheim, California, assigned to aircraft intermediate maintenance department (AIMD), prepares an F/A-18 Super Hornet engine to be transported into the engine bay, June 14, 2023. (Photo by MC2 Jackson Adkins)

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A BOATSWAIN'S MATE'S PIPE & LANYARD:

A Connection to the Past

Photos & Story by MC3 Aaron Arroyo

Three years ago aboard the Harpers Ferry-Class Amphibious Dock Landing ship USS Carter Hall (LSD 50), an undesignated Sailor struck boatswain's mate (BM) and almost immediately after, received his boatswain's pipe. When an undesignated Navy Sailor strikes into a rating, it means that a job assignment has been chosen after apprenticing among various different jobs.

"That first pipe was given to me by my chief the day I struck into the rate," said Boatswain's Mate 2nd Class Wyatt Ridlon, from Kent,



BM2 Wyatt Ridlon displays the black lanyard his mentor BM3 Jose Valencia made.



The center of the black lanyard Valencia made and handed down to Ridlon.

Washington, assigned to the world's largest aircraft carrier USS Gerald R. Ford's (CVN 78) deck department. "That was also the day I got assigned the boatswain's mate of the watch qualification."

Soon after, like most boatswain's mates on their first ship, he began the tradition of making his own lanyard to carry that pipe.

"Every knot that I've tied into a lanyard was taught to me by someone. I do my best to carry on their memory."

"I went to BM3 Jose Valencia, and asked him to teach me everything he knew about fancy-work," said Ridlon, who describes fancy-work as a form of decorative knot tying. "After I finished mine, he passed down his lanyard to me."

Ridlon still wears that all-black lanyard, which has a braided cross for its centerpiece. He has kept it intact as it was when it was given to him. "Valencia taught me all the knots, I haven't changed it since because I consider him a mentor," said Ridlon.

Now as a second class petty officer, Ridlon enjoys the creativity behind turning a piece of line into a complex design and makes his lanyards as a meditative hobby while underway.

Traditionally each lanyard contains seven different knots – one for each of the seven seas. However, Ridlon says when he is making an elaborate design, he'll use up to 20 types of knots.

“Ninety percent of the lanyard’s job is to hold the pipe, the other ten percent is showing off our fancy-work skills,” said Ridlon. He added that the boatswain’s mates’ lanyards are worn with dress uniforms to show pride in the rate and also as attribution to the Sailors who helped them progress in their careers.

“Every knot that I’ve tied into a lanyard was taught to me by someone, I do my best to carry on their memory,” said Ridlon, who has adapted Valencia’s taste for elaborate centerpieces into his own work.

According to Ridlon, a lot of lanyard making is about learning the individual knots for each transition.

His mentor Valencia’s lanyard used a three-strand braid for the neckpiece that was braided into the square knot, and is then woven into Turk’s heads. Next is the cross centerpiece Ridlon has yet to decipher the construction of, transitioning into the spiral, also known as the DNA braid, which goes into coach whipping and ends in cross points.

The art of working with line is called “marlinespike seamanship,” and the experts at working with line are the Navy’s boatswain’s mates. Boatswain’s mates represent the keepers of tradition in the modern Navy, carrying forward the heritage and traditions from the days of wooden ships and iron men.

“Boatswain’s mates use the lanyard to support their boatswain pipes during watch or ceremonies,” said BM1 Richard Woodland, from Columbia, Maryland, assigned to Gerald R. Ford’s safety department. “The pipe, the lanyard, it’s all connected to the past.”

Boatswain’s mates can be seen wearing an all-white lanyard in their dress blue uniforms, or an all-black lanyard in their dress whites.

During an honorary quarterdeck ceremony, the honors boatswain’s mate wearing their lanyard with pipe attached will sound a call as the sideboys salute to render honors to a distinguished visitor arriving or departing the ship.



BM2 Wyatt Ridlon, from Kent, Washington, and BMSA Jacob Parnell, from Mitchell, Georgia, both assigned to deck department, practice marlinespike seamanship.



BM3 Lucille Duncan, from Weston, West Virginia, assigned to deck department, wears an all-black lanyard to support her boatswain pipe in the dress white uniform.

USS Gerald R. Ford's Women in Engineering:

Photos & Story by MC1 Brian T. Glunt
USS Gerald R. Ford Public Affairs

It's the credo that reinforces the iconic image of 'Rosie the Riveter' bearing her arm, asserting the notion that women are just as capable to perform in job fields predominantly filled by men. This image has inspired generations of women to pursue careers in professions, specifically engineering, that have been historically reserved for men.

Approximately 30 women, assigned to the 180-person engineering department aboard the world's largest aircraft carrier USS Gerald R. Ford (CVN 78), continue to make strides for future generations of female Sailors in the engineering field.

As Gerald R. Ford's damage control assistant (DCA), Cmdr. Amanda Miller, from Willis, Texas, is responsible for overseeing damage control efforts in the event of a casualty, as well as making preparations for and maintaining the damage control readiness throughout the ship. Serving more than 10 years of her 25-year Navy career in the engineering field, she now supervises five work centers consisting of repair lockers, all self-contained breathing apparatuses (SCBAs) onboard, damage control suppression systems, chemical, biological, and radiological defense (CBRD), list control systems, and damage control petty officers (DCPOs), among many additional responsibilities.

"The accomplishments I am most proud of within the engineering field have been on this tour," said Miller. "On previous tours, you go in, learn the systems, maintain and operate. Day-in and day-out. The unique thing about this tour is that [Gerald R. Ford] is new, so we have had to make sure that our damage control integrity, the integrity of the damage control program and its systems, stay intact as the modernization efforts are made."

Miller further explains her biggest accomplishment as DCA has been the modernization and implementation of the digitized Advanced Damage Control System (ADCS) into the newest aircraft carrier's infrastructure. As the Navy's newest class of aircraft carrier, the Ford-class reduced the amount of legacy communication tools needed during damage control efforts in favor of the ADCS. Furthermore, CVN 78 has the same amount of real estate to maintain and the same amount of fire protection needed, all while operating with 20 percent less personnel than a Nimitz-class carrier.

"To go computerized with plotting has been an effort for more than a decade within the Navy. When I got here a year and a half ago, [the ADCS] didn't work and people were trying to do legacy damage control plotting and phone talking and trying to make it work. So, in the last year we've had four software updates and multiple visits all the way up to the program office, getting ADCS up to par to meet our damage control needs. It was super vital that this system worked and it's working wonderfully. This system is now being implemented and is going to be used in the future because we made it work."

Along with the employment of the ADCS, Miller also noted the Joint Qualification Requirement (JQR) for the system, an extensive training and qualification standard prepared by CVN 78's damage control division, to be utilized throughout the rest of the Navy.

With Gerald R. Ford's crew of approximately 2,400 Sailors (sans air wing), women make up



We Can Do It!



roughly 21 percent, or approximately 500 of CVN 78's personnel.

Another woman setting the bar in engineering while assigned aboard Gerald R. Ford is Chief Warrant Officer 2 Angela Cruz, from Santa Maria, California. Cruz serves as the auxiliary technical assistant, or Aux Tech, and is responsible for the mechanical operability of equipment from the ship's anchor to the rudder that supplies potable water, air conditioning and hydraulics. Beginning her 17-year naval career as an electrician's mate fireman recruit (E-1), she knew she wanted to be a chief warrant officer (CWO) early on because she wanted to be as "salty" and as "gritty" as the ones at her first command. She eventually worked up the enlisted ranks to chief petty officer when she made the decision to continue working with her hands as a chief warrant officer, rather than continue on a more administrative path as a senior enlisted leader.

"I would have kind of been going away from the engineering aspect and more so toward the management and leadership of Sailors, which I do like," said Cruz. "But, troubleshooting has always been my heart. Engineering, working with equipment, working with my hands, I've always loved that, so the warrant officer route was best for me."

For some, small accomplishments have huge impacts on how they view their careers. For Cruz, one of her most memorable accomplishments was as simple as fixing a light as a young Sailor.

"I was a fireman recruit and knew nothing of electricity. I knew nothing of nothing," said Cruz. "I had never even changed a car battery before. So when I tested the lights and they came on, I was so proud. But other than that, the accomplishment I'm most proud of was recovering my [previous] ship from a main space fire, which allowed us to make it home from deployment after we were stuck overseas."

Engineering isn't always as innovative as implementing groundbreaking damage control systems or as heroic as mending a ship in order to return home after major casualty. Often times, engineers go unnoticed and without thanks for the modern conveniences they maintain, like the vacuum collection holding transfer (VCHT) onboard maintained by Hull Maintenance Technician 2nd Class Jondanae Garza, from Las Vegas. It's a dirty job, but someone has to take care of the VCHT, or in layman's terms, the ship's sewage system. But hull maintenance technicians (HTs) aren't always fixing the plumbing. These engineers are also responsible for

Story continued on next page



fabricating anything the ship needs for repairs. They are the welders, braziers and manufacturers of parts needed to maintain the ship's hull integrity.

"I really like working with my hands. HT-wise, the engineering field interested me because of the welding. I didn't know I was going to be dealing with sewage when I first started. But the majority of the first half of my career, all I did was welding, but then I got stationed aboard [Gerald R. Ford] and was taught the sewage part, which was fun."

Before her six years in the Navy, Garza started her mechanical career by learning to fix cars with her dad.

"I've always been interested in this stuff since I was little," said Garza. "I would go with my dad whenever he was going to fix cars or doing stuff around the house and I would just watch him. I always thought it was cool."

After being sent to an advanced hull maintenance technician training school in welding, Garza is now one of the most qualified advanced welders onboard.

"Being able to learn something I'd never thought I'd be able to be good at, which is welding, has been one of my biggest accomplishments," said Garza. "Never in my life would I have thought that I'd be welding. Me being able to graduate that school, which is one of the hardest schools in our trade, is probably one of the biggest accomplishments I've ever made."

The accomplishments of these three women could not have happened without the years of hard work, inspirational guidance and dedication they have put forth into their career field. So if there are any women out there reading this who are interested in an engineering career, pay close attention to these engineers' words of wisdom:

"Sometimes a girl isn't going to have the physical strength that a guy would use to move something, so they're going to, perhaps, use other ways to accomplish tasks," said Miller. "So I think we can capitalize on different experiences and different backgrounds to come up with more solutions than just the easy ones. Don't give up. It's not always easy. Things get better. Believe in yourself and remember why it is – what it is – you're doing, your driving force or motivation. So when things get difficult, go back to that."

"Honestly, it's physically and mentally challenging," says Cruz. "Just because you come in already doubted. You come in underestimated. So if you have to work twice as hard to prove yourself, then go for it. But if you are coming in expecting not to get dirty, then don't come in to engineering."

"My [job] is not female dominate whatsoever, but a lot of the female engineers I've met are some of the hardest workers I've ever seen in my entire life," said Garza. "It just shows that women can do this too. I've known a ton of female welders who never thought they could do it and yet here they are in the Navy proving people wrong and that we can do it."



Burning and Turning Below Decks

- USS Gerald R. Ford's Machine Shop at Work

Story and Photo by MC2 Jackson Adkins

When people think of aircraft carriers, they picture jets being launched and recovered, Sailors conducting deck evolutions, or interactions with foreign partners and allies; big picture evolutions. What isn't always top of mind very often are the Sailors who work below decks - the Sailors who keep the ship moving, fix one-off parts, and keep the ship afloat.

The world's largest aircraft carrier USS Gerald R. Ford's (CVN 78) engineering department's machine shop helps fabricate and fix vital parts for the ship as well as the entire strike group, upkeep the vacuum collection holding and transfer system (VCHT), and oversee all piping systems across the ship.

Ford's machine shop can take a piece of stock or scrap metal and turn it into nearly anything. Their potential is unlimited when it comes to fabricating tools needed for specific jobs or creating parts for ship systems aboard Ford or other ships attached to the Gerald R. Ford Carrier Strike Group (GRFCSG).

The machine shop is comprised of two different rates: hull technicians (HT) and machinery repairman (MR). The shop itself is broken down into four different work centers.

Each work center provides different trades or skills depending on what type of work needs to be done.

"We're here for all emergent repairs that have to deal with the hull of the ship or repairs that have to deal with brazing or welding throughout any of the piping systems or hull of the ship," said Hull Technician 1st Class Remigio Davila, from Houston, assigned to engineering department's repair division. "We also deal with any repairs on the VCHT system, and we fill in wherever we are needed as well."

Sailors in the machine shop are given on-the-job training in certain trades that are critical on a ship. This includes the upkeep of the VCHT system, which allows Sailors to use the restroom or shower in a sanitary manner.

"The VCHT system, that is a very vital system. Everyone has to use the restroom and we are in charge of the disposal [of waste] and upkeep of those systems," said Hull Technician Fireman Josiah Donato, from Elmwood, Wisconsin, assigned to Ford's engineering department. "It's a dangerous system, but we're trained on how to repair any component of it such as a gas leak or spill."

In addition to ensuring Sailors have unclogged toilets and hot showers, Sailors in the machine shop are part of the ship's damage control team.

"We are also secondary damage controlmen. When they ring those bells, we're the guys running through the ship to fight whatever casualty," said Davila. "First ones in, last ones out, there to save it."

The HTs and MRs are a prime examples of being damage control professionals as well as honing the crafts of their assigned rates.

The craftsmanship of the machine shop is what makes it special. In certain situations, a very specific part may be needed and shipping it to the aircraft carrier in a timely manner may not be an option. This is where their expertise comes into play.

"We can't always order parts to the ship. So, if we get into a pinch and we don't have the part on-hand, it needs to be made from scratch," said Machinery Repairman 2nd Class Bowen Kincaid, from Battle Creek, Michigan, assigned to Ford's engineering department. "So without us, there's no way to fix those one-off parts."

Kincaid enjoys the aspect of his job where he can craft specific parts needed across the ship.

"My favorite part of the job is watching raw material getting turned into something," said Kincaid. "Having a chunk of metal that is absolutely worthless, machining it down, cutting it, and running it through different processes, until it is now a piece that is going to go into a multimillion dollar system."

Just like most professions, there's a plan and set finish point. Donato enjoys getting to see his work from the beginning point until the end where it's used to repair a vital ship system.

"When you're done with a job, it's complete," said Donato. "You've made something or repaired something and I really enjoy the tangibility of that."

The next time you see a ship, think about the Sailors you can't see. The ones who work below the waterline. The ones burning and turning in the machine shop.



Underway on Father's Day

By Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Simon Pike,
USS Gerald R. Ford Public Affairs

Military service and sacrifice: for some, these two concepts go hand-in-hand, but what does sacrificing for military service actually entail? For many Sailors serving aboard the world's largest aircraft carrier USS Gerald R. Ford (CVN 78), sacrifice means being away from family. On Father's Day, this means fathers being apart from their children, and children from their fathers.

For Electronics Technician 3rd Class Matthew Kauffman, assigned to Gerald R. Ford's combat systems department, being there for his two kids while he's underway is important. One of the biggest things helping him get through deployment is the moments he gets to spend with his children utilizing Gerald R. Ford's email and Starlink-enabled WiFi systems.

"It's pretty hard," Kauffman said. "I check on them. I email my wife, I have pictures of them. Whenever I'm on the phone, I hear them in the background laughing. The WiFi really helps. I get pictures and updates. They're my motivation to keep on keeping on."

Kauffman faces the challenge of being away while his children are still very young. He still remains optimistic about the situation, saying it was one of the better periods of their lives he could have been away, while they still do not fully understand that he is gone.

"One of them is about to turn three, the other one is about to turn two," he said. "So they're young. They don't really understand anything yet. My wife says they notice that I'm not there and they shout my name and look for me every day. Saying bye was hard, but it's just something that I have to do."

Kauffman sees deployment as an opportunity to create a better future for himself and his kids.

"In my mind, I'm doing this for them," he said. "It's hard being away, but I feel like doing this is bettering myself, to better their quality of life and set them up for the future."

Kauffman related his experience of being away on Father's Day with his own father, who also was in the military.

"He was in the Army," Kauffman said. "He was deployed for 18 months, so he was gone for two Father's Days at one time. He was kind of worried [for me], but he knows the kind of person I am, that I've got a good head on my shoulders. He knows that I'll be fine. He's more proud than worried."

Kauffman has found that while it is difficult to be away from his kids, it also allowed him to develop the right attitude to work hard, get through deployment and reunite with his family.

"It's hard being away from your kids," he said. "Some days are harder than others, but if you get in the right mindset, and every day you think, 'I'm doing this for them,' it's going to go by a whole lot faster. Keep your mind occupied, stay busy. Deployment's going to fly by."



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

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ENS Mackenzie Culver

DEPARTMENT LCPO

MCCS Ryan Wilber

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USS Gerald R. Ford CVN 78

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THIS MONTH IN NAVAL HISTORY

July 4, 1776

The Second Continental Congress unanimously adopts the Declaration of Independence, which announces the colonies' separation from Great Britain.

July 12, 1990

Cmdr. Romsemary B. Mariner becomes the first woman to command an operational aviation squadron, Tactical Electronic Warfare Squadron (VAQ) 34. She is one of the first women to become qualified as a Naval Aviator in 1974 and one of the first women to fly light attack aircraft. Mariner attained the rank of Captain before retiring in 1997.

July 14, 1952

The keel to the Navy's first supercarrier, USS Forrestal (CVA 59) is laid down.

July 23, 2017

After a two-year restoration at historic Dry Dock 1 at Charlestown Navy Yard, Boston National Historical Park, America's oldest commissioned warship afloat, USS Constitution is refloated. Since entering dry dock on May 18, 2015, ship restorers from the Naval History and Heritage Command Detachment Boston, and teams of Constitution Sailors have worked to bring Old Ironsides back to her glory.

July 30, 1942

President Franklin D. Roosevelt signs the act establishing WAVES (Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service). During World War II, more than 80,000 officers and enlisted women serve in the WAVES.

BACK COVER GRAPHIC

A graphic celebrating Independence Day aboard the world's largest aircraft carrier USS Gerald R. Ford (CVN 78), July 4, 2023.
Graphic Illustration by MCSN Maxwell Orlosky



CELEBRATES

4th of July

