

# THE WOLVERINE



AUGUST 2023

## FORD PORTS IN PIRAEUS

SAILORS TAKE IN THE GREEK CULTURE AND  
VOLUNTEER TIME AT GLYFADA SEA TURTLE RESCUE

## NEPTUNE STRIKE

GRFCSG TRANSFERRED COMMAND AND CONTROL  
TO NATO FOR NEPTUNE STRIKE 2023-2

## OH BROTHER!

SIBLINGS SERVING TOGETHER ABOARD FORD  
SHARE THE SAILOR'S LIFE

PHOTOS OF THE MONTH INSIDE!





# THE WOLVERINE

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### FRONT COVER PHOTO

An E/A-18G attached to the "Grey Wolves" of Electronic Attack Squadron (VAQ) 142, sits chocked and chained to the flight deck of the world's largest aircraft carrier USS Gerald R. Ford (CVN 78), July 9, 2023.  
Photo by MC2 Jackson Adkins

# USS GERALD R. FORD HOSTS STEEL BEACH PICNIC IN HONOR OF INDEPENDENCE DAY

BY MASS COMMUNICATION SPECIALIST 3RD CLASS SIMON PIKE,  
USS GERALD R. FORD PUBLIC AFFAIRS

“It’s hard being away from your family,” said Aviation Maintenance Administrationman 3rd Class Alyssa Huerta, from El Paso, Texas, assigned to the “Golden Warriors” of Strike Fighter Squadron (VFA) 87. “But I’m glad I’m out here serving my country.”

Sailors aboard the world’s largest aircraft carrier USS Gerald R. Ford (CVN 78) celebrated Independence Day with a steel beach picnic on the flight deck, July 4, 2023.

The event gave Sailors aboard Gerald R. Ford a day to relax and the opportunity to commemorate July 4, 1776, when the Declaration of Independence was first ratified and established the United States of America. Sailors celebrated the occasion with a day out of uniform and in the sun, enjoying hamburgers and hot dogs grilled by the ship’s chiefs mess and mustang association.

“We had two crews work together really well,” said Chief Aviation Support Equipment Technician Josh Hensman, from Van, Texas, assigned to Gerald R. Ford’s aircraft intermediate maintenance department. “We served the whole crew for lunch and dinner. We always come together, no matter what it is. It’s one of the best

messes I’ve ever been in. It’s been fun being out here with them.”

Gerald R. Ford’s morale, welfare and recreation (MWR) division hosted basketball, tug-of-war, cornhole and steak-grilling competitions to help Sailors de-stress by giving them fun activities to participate in.

“It’s really nice to see everyone come together,” said Seaman Nacolette Carr, from Miamisburg, Ohio, assigned to Gerald R. Ford’s MWR division. “Even if they’re just viewing and watching [the events,] they’re still smiling. They’re still enjoying what’s going on. It’s awesome to see everyone happy and come together.”

The day ended with a big bang as Gerald R. Ford’s crew watched from the flight deck as the guided-missile destroyer USS Ramage (DDG 61), part of the Gerald R. Ford Carrier Strike Group (GRFCSG), fired tracer rounds from the MK-45 5-inch/54 caliber gun into the sunset in lieu of a traditional firework show.

“It’s been fun, we’ve seen a lot of events happen,” said Huerta. “It’s different, but I’m glad that I have the people that I do on this ship to make it feel home-like.”







USS GERALD R. FORD ARRIVES IN

PIRAEUS

GREECE

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# MARITIME FORCE MEETS

## MARITIME ANIMALS

By Mass Communication Specialist Seaman

Maxwell Orlosky,

*USS Gerald R. Ford Public Affairs*



Engaging and creating new ties with host nations is an integral part of the Navy's mission of promoting peace and unity wherever it sails. Sailors assigned to the world's largest aircraft carrier USS Gerald R. Ford (CVN 78) volunteered their time at a community relations event at the Archelon Sea Turtle Rescue Center in Glyfada, Greece, July 29, 2023.

Forty Sailors participated at the rescue center, arranged by the Gerald R. Ford's command religious ministries department (CRMD). As part of the tour, volunteers with the Archelon Sea Turtle Rescue Center educated Sailors on how the center provides treatment and rehabilitation for over 70 injured or sick sea turtles each year.

Eirini Kasimati, the rehabilitation and rescue network officer at the Archelon Sea Turtle Rescue Center, said, "I'm in charge the moment a sea turtle has been found sick or injured and I start the coordination of the transportation and care of the animal until they are released."



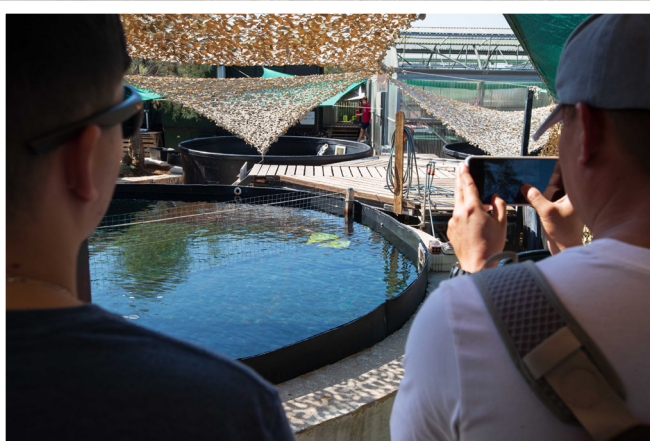




“At the moment, sea turtles have not been listed as an endangered species but as vulnerable,” says Kasimati. “Of course there’s a lot of threats still out there, however, our volunteers have been able to bring up population numbers.”

The center was founded in 1983 and has continued to operate as a nonprofit organization under the Greek law and is active all over the nation. Other activities that the center provides include the monitoring, protection, and raising public awareness of sea turtles.

Gerald R. Ford’s CRMD continues to provide volunteer opportunities for Sailors at every port call. These community relations events provide an opportunity to connect with the local population and further give back to the communities that host the ship.





# NEPTUNE



The Gerald R. Ford Carrier Strike Group (GRFCSG) participated in exercise Neptune Strike 2023-2, July 10-14, while under NATO command and control.



# NEPTUNE STRIKE



During this seventh iteration of Neptune Strike led by U.S. Navy's Sixth Fleet and NATO's Naval Striking and Support Forces NATO, allied forces executed a variety of evolutions in support of enhanced vigilance activity objectives throughout European airspace, waterways, and territory.



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# PHOTOS OF THE MONTH

JUNE 2023

1. ABH2 Justin Dickerson, from Sanger, California, assigned to air department, directs an aircraft elevator operator to raise the elevator in the hangar bay, July 1, 2023. (Photo by MC2 Nolan Pennington)

2. ABHC Saleema Massey, from New York, assigned to air department, directs an F/A-18E Super Hornet, attached to the "Golden Warriors" of Strike Fighter Squadron (VFA) 87, on the flight deck, July 2, 2023. (Photo by MC2 Nolan Pennington)

3. LS2 Marcelina Woods, from Phoenix, assigned to supply department, reviews a parts log in the forward storeroom, July 3, 2023. (Photo by MC3 Simon Pike)

4. RSSN Edwin Alberto Cruz, left, assigned to supply department, gives a haircut to Carrier Air Wing (CVW) 8 Command Master Chief Alan Carmona, from Wakulla, Florida, in the barber shop, July 3, 2023. (Photo by AO3 Luis BravoCopado)

5. Italian distinguished visitors observe flight operations on the flight deck, July 12, 2023. (Photo by MCSA Tristan Richardson)

6. BM3 Britney McMahon, from Lewistown, Pennsylvania, assigned to deck department, operates a gypsy wench on a fueling sponson during a refueling-at-sea with USNS Leroy Grumman (T-AO 195), July 19, 2023. (Photo by MC2 Jennifer Newsome)

7. ABHAN Mason Kuntz, from Columbia, Missouri, assigned to air department, attempts to catch a football on the flight deck during a steel beach picnic to celebrate Independence Day, July 4, 2023. (Photo by MC1 David Kolmel)

8. Lt. Thomas Kenner, from Sumter, South Carolina, assigned to the "Tomcatters" of Strike Fighter Squadron (VFA) 31, prepares for flight operations on the flight deck, July 1, 2023. (Photo by MC3 Aaron Arroyo)

9. An E/A-18G Growler, attached to the "Gray Wolves" of Electronic Attack Squadron (VAQ) 142 prepares to launch from the flight deck in the Adriatic Sea, July, 8, 2023. (Photo by MC1 William Spears)

10. ABHAN Javien Yearling, from Dallas, assigned to air department, directs an E/A-18G Growler, attached to the "Gray Wolves" of Electronic Attack Squadron (VAQ) 142, on the flight deck, July 8, 2023. (Photo by MC2 Adonica Muñoz)

11. The world's largest aircraft carrier USS Gerald R. Ford (CVN 78) steams in the Adriatic Sea, July 12, 2023. (Photo by MCSN Maxwell Orlosky)

12. Capt. Rick Burgess, right, commanding officer, briefs Rear Adm. Michael Wosje, Chief of Staff, Strike Force NATO, on flight deck capabilities in the pilot house during a ship visit, July 14, 2023. (Photo by MC2 Jackson Adkins)



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# OH BROTHER!

## FORD SIBLINGS SHARE THE SAILOR'S LIFE

By Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Aaron Arroyo

“The worst part about being on a ship with my older brother is that I have to see a shiny head going through the p-ways, it’s not hard to miss, it’s like a bullseye,” said Aviation Boatswain’s Mate (Equipment) 3rd Class Darion Thornton, assigned to the world’s largest aircraft carrier USS Gerald R. Ford’s air department. At 20 years old, Darion is the youngest of his three brothers from Charleston, South Carolina.

His oldest brother, the one with the shiny head, is 29-year-old Intelligence Specialist 1st Class Jered Thornton, assigned to the USS Gerald R. Ford’s intelligence department. Jered and Darion Thornton have been serving at the same command since March 2022.

According to Darion, the inspiration to join the United States Navy came to him while in high school after seeing Jered achieve his independence through enlistment.

“It was my senior year and I was trying to figure out if I wanted to go to college,” said Darion. “My brother came down for Christmas leave that year and sat down and talked to me. The next morning, I told him to take me to the recruiting station to start the process.”

Jered is Gerald R. Ford’s intelligence division leading petty officer acting as an operational intelligence analyst. This July, he will have reached 10 years of service in the Navy. He explains he recommended his younger brother consider the military because of what it did for him as a young man.

“The thing that it gave to me, that I really needed, was standardization and a firm direction,” said Jered. “That really helped me to get on track when I was 18.”

In February of 2021, while stationed at the Naval Aviation Warfighting Development Center in Fallon, Nevada, Jered found a billet that would place him aboard Gerald R. Ford. After already serving a tour on the West Coast, the job would bring him closer to his hometown, and at the same command as Darion. According to Jered, it was a good career move and a unique chance to serve alongside Darion and impart upon his brother his life lessons.

“When I first left the nest, I was striking out on my own and I didn’t have anyone to reach out to that could relate to what I was going through,” said Jered. “When the opportunity came along for me to apply for these orders, it was a no brainer. I would be able to be there in person to see what my brother was going through and to share those experiences with him and be able to provide guidance.”

Darion says the advice is the best thing about having his brother on the same ship, and that his presence helps strengthen his resolve to complete his mission while deployed.

“I am able to go to him and ask for advice, de-stress from work and joke on him a little bit,” said Darion. “It helps when I can pick his brain about certain things about my job and Navy career, and just to have him here.”





The Thornton brothers agree that serving at the same command with a family member has its benefits. For them, it has also come with its share of fond memories. On June 2, 2023, Darion was promoted to the rank of third class petty officer. He chose his older brother to pin his collar device on his uniform.

“When my older brother pinned me, it was a surreal experience due to the fact that not many people get to

serve at the same command with their family members or loved ones,” said Darion. “I was very overjoyed to have my older brother pin me, to have somebody who I looked up to as a kid growing up, who helped take care of me, it brought tears to my eyes.” Darion says his goal is to be able to be there, like Jered was there for him, to pin the anchors on his brother when he makes the rank of chief petty officer.



# IMPRINTS OF A SEAFARER

## THE STORY BEHIND THE NAVY'S TATTOO TRADITIONS

PHOTOS AND STORY BY MASS COMMUNICATION SPECIALIST 2ND CLASS JACKSON ADKINS

“The universality of tattooing is a curious subject for speculation...” according to Captain James Cook’s journal, third Pacific Voyage (1776-80). Traditions are at the core of daily life in the Navy, from the ringing of bells to signify time, or the boatswain piping someone aboard. Another tradition that stays true to the Navy is one that is skin deep – tattoos, that to this day, make the Navy stand out. Some of these tattoos convey the Navy’s past and present story.

Sailors aboard the world’s largest aircraft carrier USS Gerald R. Ford (CVN 78) recognize International Tattoo Day, July 17, 2023.

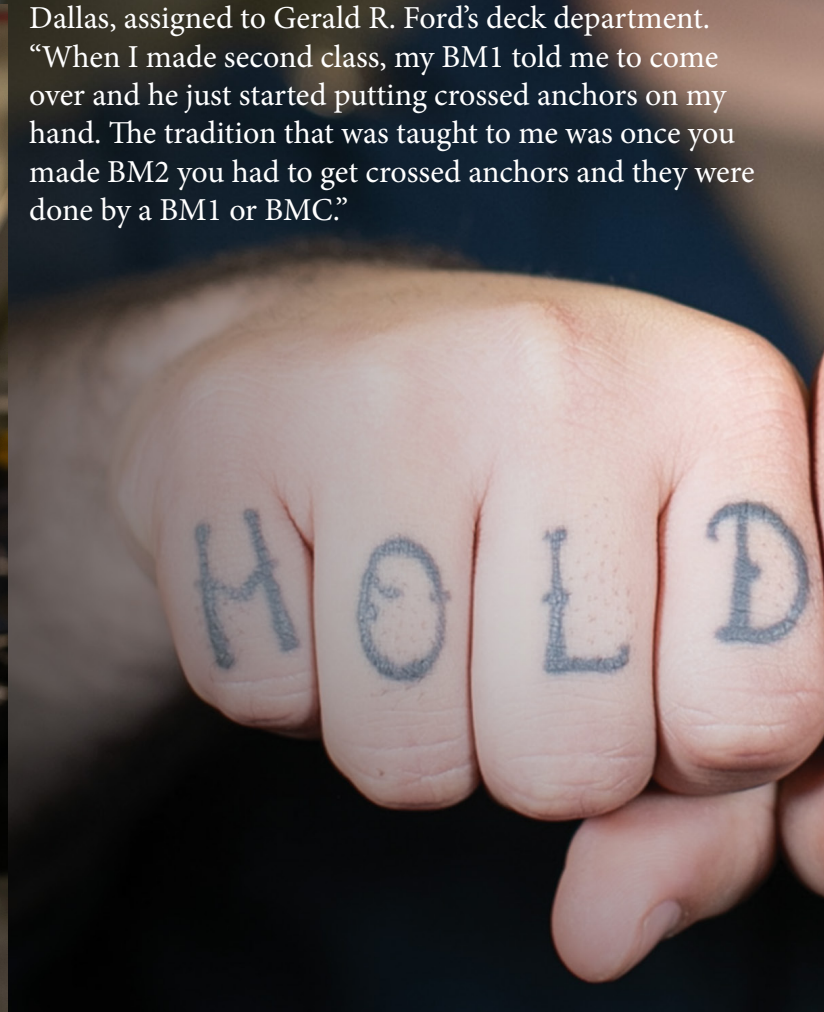
The story begins with the British Royal Navy – their travels brought them to Polynesian lands where they encountered the culture of body art. The traditional tattoos

those Sailors encountered identified the travels of the Polynesian people. Soon, they would share their body art with seafarers in Europe and eventually America.

These traditions are still alive in U.S. Navy Sailors to this day. Certain traditions and customs can only be found within the Navy’s ranks. From individual rating insignia to common phrases and images that commemorate significant events, tattoos are synonymous with Sailors.

For example, boatswain’s mates (BM) in the Navy have the famous crossed anchors on their hands, which they receive after becoming a seasoned petty officer in their rate.

“I got my BM rating insignia when I was promoted to BM2,” said Chief Boatswain’s Mate Mario Maradiaga, from Dallas, assigned to Gerald R. Ford’s deck department. “When I made second class, my BM1 told me to come over and he just started putting crossed anchors on my hand. The tradition that was taught to me was once you made BM2 you had to get crossed anchors and they were done by a BM1 or BMC.”





Boatswain's mates carry on this naval tradition and stand out within this custom by having their own tattoo specific to their rate.

"BMs are the most traditional rate there is in the Navy," said Maradiaga. "It's good to have that tradition going because some junior Sailors get motivated and find a purpose to want to get their crossed anchors."

These tattoos can mean almost anything, but one commonality between them all is the patriotism of the service inscribed on their body. A memory they will forever remember and a reminder of their service.

"I got a [Sailor] Jerry style shellback tattoo on my shoulder after I crossed the equator for the first time," said Boatswain's Mate 1st Class Richard Abreu, from New York City, assigned to Ford's deck department. "Becoming a 'shellback' was something I was pretty proud of doing."

Crossing the equator isn't as simple as just sailing over the 0 degrees latitude. With it comes a ceremony each Sailor must complete to be become a "shellback." To some Sailors, the memory of becoming a shellback is significant enough of a tradition to get a tattoo to commemorate the ceremony.



"I've crossed the equator three times in my career," said Maradiaga. "So, I got a shellback tattooed on my forearm as a way to remember those parts of my life."

Just as Sailors have imprints of the history of their career, so do ships themselves. With authorization, Sailors sometimes paint Navy-related images on the bulkheads.

"I do my own paintings and sketches around the ship," said Abreu. "When Sailors see paintings around the ship, it increases their morale and gives them pride and a sense for what they do. I like to spread that positivity"

Abreu enjoys leaving a lasting imprint on the ship he serves on as a way to keep the Navy's traditions alive.

"I think tradition is important to the Navy, especially in regards to tattoos because a lot of the things we do are based on tradition and it's important to pass those things on," said Abreu.

There is a story behind every naval tattoo. One of which only the holder can explain its value. One of which only a Sailor serving or has served in the United States Navy can tell.

"They tell a history of what I've been through and what I've had to overcome throughout my naval career," said Maradiaga. "Every time I look at my tattoos it reminds of how I got to where I'm at."





# ***Flying Squad***

*By: Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Jennifer Newsome*

Whether out to sea or ported at home, the Navy must be prepared for any threats to the ship and its crew — one of the biggest threats is fire. Sailors never let their guard down and train regularly to combat fire, floods, and any other casualties that could compromise the ship or its crew.

The world's largest aircraft carrier USS Gerald R. Ford's (CVN 78) At-Sea Fire Party, also known as the Flying Squad, is the ship's first line of defense against shipboard casualties.

"The responsibility of the Flying Squad is to respond to any and all bells, if there is an emergency on board," said Lt. j.g. Jeremy Luallen, Gerald R. Ford's fire marshal. "Specifically fires, floodings, ruptures, and anything that the ship would need emergency response from, the team is ready to go."

Simulated or actual casualties require the flying squad members to respond within minutes and seconds.

"When they ring those bells, we're the guys running through the ship to fight whatever casualty," said Hull Technician 1st Class Remigio Davila, from Houston, flying squad member. "First ones in, last ones out, there to save it."



In the event of a casualty, time is of the essence. Every second counts when trying to keep a casualty from becoming a ship-wide disaster.

"Our goal is to contain and stop a casualty from spreading, before it affects anyone else," said Senior Chief Damage Controlman Kristina Gonzales, Gerald R. Ford's fire chief. "When you're out to sea, there's no one else to call, it's our responsibility to respond and restore the ship to its fighting condition."

The Flying Squad consists of volunteer members who are highly trained in damage control response by the Damage Control Training Team (DCTT). The team is made up of multiple roles, including: team leader, attack team, scene leader, repair locker leader, rapid response team, investigators, phone talker, rapid plotter, hose team, dewatering team, de-smoking team, boundarymen, electrician and a corpsman.

"I chose to join the flying squad because I feel like it's the most important role you can hold on the ship," Machinery Repairman 3rd Class Prisila Simpson, dewatering team member from Houston. "Knowing how to fight fires and stop floods can save people and prevent people from getting hurt on my watch."







Being a member of the flying squad team teaches Sailors to take charge and builds confidence and resiliency. They are the first responders to any casualty day or night. Without their quick response and action, every casualty could turn into something more serious.

“The flying squad team onboard the ship is extremely driven, you give them a challenge and they are going to meet it every single time no matter what,” said Gonzalez. “They take criticism very well and they correct it. They very rarely make the same mistake twice. They are one of the best flying squads I’ve ever had the opportunity to work with.”

In the event that the casualty becomes larger than the capabilities of the flying squad, general quarters may be set. General quarters is a condition of readiness and hearing the alarms notifies Sailors around the ship to man battle stations and prepare to combat casualties. All Sailors aboard the ship are trained in firefighting and stopping floods. Sailors will immediately report to their battle stations at the announcement of general quarters and begin damage control assessments and efforts.

While at sea, there are no outside emergency responders to come save the day.

The Sailors of Gerald R. Ford and the flying squad are the responders. The integrity of the ship and the lives of shipmates rely on every single Sailor, which is why training is so imperative. No matter who they are or what their rate is, every Sailor knows how to combat casualties in order to save the ship and all of the Sailors onboard.







# USS Gerald R. Ford's Culinary Specialists Compete to be Best of the Mess

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

Nineteen culinary specialists, assigned to the world's largest aircraft carrier USS Gerald R. Ford's (CVN 78) supply department, competed in a slider cook-off while underway in the Adriatic Sea, July 14, 2023.

This cook-off marks the second monthly "Best of the Mess" competition held by Gerald R. Ford's supply department during their 2023 deployment. These competitions aim to show off culinary specialists' creativity and boost morale among the department.

During the competition, the six teams were tasked with producing enough sliders for the three judges plus crowd samples entirely from scratch.

"I was blown away at the creativity of all the plates and even more so with the sauces that were made from scratch," said Cmdr. Michael Collins, Gerald R. Ford's supply officer and one of the judges for the competition. "All of the judges were the true winners as we got to enjoy some crazy good sliders and fries."

The panel of judges included Collins, Capt. Matthew Mulcahey, Gerald R. Ford's executive officer, and Capt. David Dartez, Carrier Air Wing (CVW) 8 deputy commander. Each team was graded on presentation of the plate, overall taste, texture, and use of ingredients, according to Collins.

The second- and third-place runners-up were the jerk chicken and waffle sliders prepared by the "Gentlemen & the Sassies" team and the cultural sliders prepared by the "Hawaiian Me Crazy" team. Taking home the title of the "Best of the Mess" were Culinary Specialist 1st Class Kelly Chappell, Culinary Specialist 2nd Class Katelyn Loughran, and Culinary Specialist 2nd Class Shawn Campbell, who created the western sliders for the "Under Dogs" team.

"Our team wanted to come up with something simple but flavorful," said Chappell. "We created a western-style burger which included a deliciously created beef patty, pickles made from scratch, brown sugar bacon crumbles, freshly made onions, American cheese and a freshly made Cajun sauce on potato bread."

The winners of this month's competition not only won bragging rights, but also a duty-free port call the next time Gerald R. Ford pulls into port – a well-deserved break from their everyday task of feeding over 4,200 people, four times a day, every day.

"It is very demanding yet rewarding to be able to race the clock to put out a nutritious meal," said Chappell. "However, we love what we do."





# 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

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MCCS Ryan Wilber

### PRODUCTION LCPO

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MC1 Ryan Williams

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MC2 Jacob Mattingly

MC2 Jennifer Newsome

MC2 Nolan Pennington

MC3 Aaron Arroyo

A03 Luis BravoCopado

MC3 Trinité Lersch

MC3 Simon Pike

MCSN Maxwell Orlosky

MCSN Tajh Payne

MCSA Marcus Lewis

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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@USSGeraldRFord



USS Gerald R. Ford CVN 78

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## THIS MONTH IN NAVAL HISTORY

### August 7, 1782

The Badge of Military Merit, now known as the Purple Heart, is established by Gen. George Washington.

### August 10, 1831

The U.S. flag gains the nickname of Old Glory from William Driver, master of the brig USS Charles Daggert.

### August 13, 1952

While serving in combat with a 1st Marine Rifle Company during the Korean War, Hospitalman John E. Kilmer exhibits great heroism moving from one injured man to the next, administering aid under intense enemy fire. While administering aid to a fallen Marine and using his own body as a shield, Kilmer is mortally wounded. For his "conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity" at that time, he is posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor.

### August 17, 1959

Adm. Arleigh A. Burke is reappointed as Chief of Naval Operations for his third two-year term, serving the longest as Chief of Naval Operations.

### August 31, 1862

The daily rum issued to U.S. Navy Sailors onboard vessels is abolished. On July 14, by an Act of Congress, the spirit ration ceases Sept. 1. Secretary of the Navy Gideon Welles issues a further order requiring captains of naval vessels to remove all distilled liquors from their ships except those that serve as medical stores. Ale, beer, wine, and other liquors not distilled are exempted from the provisions act of July 14.

## BACK COVER GRAPHIC

The observance recognizing Women's Equality Day was established by Joint Resolution of Congress in 1971. Women's Equality Day is observed on the 26th day of August and commemorates the 1920 passage of the 19th Amendment to the Constitution, which gave women the right to vote. The observance has grown to include focusing attention on women's continued efforts toward gaining full equality.

Graphic Illustration courtesy of Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute



FIRST ALL-FEMALE TEAM OF  
NAVAL AVIATORS FOR  
A SUPER BOWL FLYOVER

SUPER BOWL LVII  
FEBRUARY 12, 2023



AUGUST 26  
**WOMEN'S EQUALITY DAY**  
CONTINUING TO MAKE HISTORY

