

# THE AVENGER



Volume 5

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## IN THIS ISSUE:

Command Assessment of Readiness and Training II

BUSH completes first vertical replenishment

CVW 8 comes on board for the first time

Warrior Transition Group

## ON THE COVER:

A Sailor from Air Department directs an MH-60S Seahawk assigned to Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron (HSC) 9 during a vertical replenishment May 18. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist Seaman Daniel S. Moore)

## IN THIS MONTH'S ISSUE:

Command Corner	Pg. 2
CART II	Pg. 3
CVN 77 conducts first vertical replenishment	Pg. 5
BUSH Sailor earns EAWS in hospital	Pg. 7
Warrior Transition Group	Pg. 8
CVW 8 comes on board for first time	Pg. 9
Photo Story	Pg. 11
Photo Story	Pg. 13
June Calendar	Back Cover

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## From the Executive Officer



Greetings Shipmates, Families, and Friends! This has been a very busy month and I'm extremely pleased with all that we've accomplished in such a short time. Our recent short underway period reaped a huge harvest of firsts for our warship including our first vertical replenishment at sea, the first embark of our air wing team mates from Carrier Air Wing Eight, the first acceptance, testing, and loading of live aviation ordnance, and the first ever cyclic flight operations aboard USS GEORGE H. W. BUSH.

To this point in our short history, our only experience was with carrier qualification of new pilots. Cyclic flight operations place an entirely different stress on the ship and crew and are what we will be asked to do on deployment. The capstone event for the underway period was a flawless air-to-air missile shoot that truly captured the essence of CVN77/CVW8 teamwork and integration. Virtually every department on the ship and every squadron in the air wing played key roles in this event that culminated with 8 live missiles destroying 8 airborne targets. Simply awesome!

We earned the right to designate 73 Sailors as Enlisted Aviation and Surface Warfare Specialists and inform 202 of our Shipmates that they had been selected for advancement to higher rank. Our Reactor Department successfully completed a very demanding assist visit in preparation for the annual Operational Reactor Safeguards Exam next month. It is hard work, but the tireless professionals aboard USS GEORGE H.W. BUSH continue to set a new standard for the fleet.

Despite our sustained success, much work remains and we must we continue to confront the challenges that await us. We will be quite busy through the summer and into the fall. Please plan ahead and make time for family vacations and leave. Long term success is dependent on strong families and personal quality of life.

Memorial Day ushers in the "101 Most Critical Days of Summer." This is more than a pithy catch phrase. More off-duty-related mishaps and fatalities occur during this time of year more than any other. Sadly, nearly all of these incidents

are preventable and occur in connection with the irresponsible use of alcohol and poor operational risk management.

Take advantage of any liberty or leave opportunity you can and enjoy some much-deserved rest and relaxation. Plan each event thoroughly and assess, then mitigate, any risks. How far can you safely drive in a day? Is your car ready for that journey? Have you packed enough water and sun block for the trip to the beach? Have you completed motorcycle safety? Do you fully understand the capabilities and limitations of your Jet-Ski?

Misuse of alcohol is the root cause of most Sailor difficulty – summer or otherwise. If you are of age and elect to consume alcohol, it is critically important that you drink responsibly. NEVER drink and drive. ALWAYS employ a designated driver. When confronted with the temptation to sit behind the wheel after a few drinks ask yourself the following: Can my career afford a trip to NJP with a virtual guarantee of maximum punishment? Can I afford jail time? Can I afford \$10,000 in legal fees to plead my case in civil court? What will I tell the family of the victim I hit while driving drunk? Can I live with permanently injuring or killing another human being? All things considered, a call to your chain of command asking for help, exercising the Safe Ride Card that you should have in your wallet, or a \$40 cab ride home are the best courses of action.

That's all for now. Thanks to our Sailors for their absolutely superb work. Thanks also to our families for their continued support. Stay focused at work and on liberty. Have a great summer!

Sincerely,  
Cmdr. Will Pennington  
Executive Officer

# CART II

## CVN 77 focuses on readiness

### Command Assessment of Readiness and Training

Story by MCSA Michael Smevog

USS GEORGE H.W. BUSH (CVN 77) successfully completed its Command Assessment of Readiness and Training (CART) II during the week of May 3-7, furthering the ship's readiness for deployment.

CART II is part of the ship's "work-up" period, which also includes crew certification, fast cruise, flight deck certification, Tailored Ship's Training Availability (TSTA), and Final Evaluation Problem (FEP).

The evolution serves as an assessment of a ship's training program to find out what areas need more attention. Various departments aboard the ship performed routine drills while inspectors critiqued the performance of the Sailors and their instructors. These drills gave Afloat Training Group (ATG) and Immediate Superior In Command (ISIC) inspectors a chance to provide feedback through three elements conducted over a five-day period.

"Overall we did very well. We had some minor discrepancies that we need to fix, but there were no major or restrictive discrepancies," said Lt. Cmdr. Leon A. Higgins, Training Officer aboard GEORGE H.W. BUSH, who was responsible for the execution of the schedule of events and drills during CART II.

Days 1-2 included administrative checks used to examine the ship's training programs, the Sailors' ability to prepare administratively for drills, and their ability to prepare gear and to assess the readiness of the gear. Ship-

wide drills began on Days 3-5, and included two general quarters drills and a mass casualty drill. These drills were used by ATG to evaluate both watch standers and the ship's training teams.

CART II evaluated the command's Damage Control, Medical, Seamanship and Navigation, Combat Systems, and Integrated Training Teams throughout the various drills. Inspectors assessed both the effectiveness of the training teams and the performance and knowledge of the Sailors actually involved in the training scenarios.

Representatives from ATG, ISIC and the ship assessed any discrepancies and will use them for training during TSTA, which takes place a few months after CART II. Higgins explained that

ATG applies training to the command's weaker areas during TSTA in order to make the training cycle more efficient.

"We can avoid training on the things we are already good at and concentrate on those that need more work," he said.

Higgins said CART II was a ship-wide evolution aboard GEORGE H.W. BUSH, which included all departments and hosted 20 inspectors.

After the unit level phase of training is successfully completed, the ship will move into the integrated phase of training with other members of Commander, Carrier Group 2, which includes seven aircraft squadrons, six destroyers, three cruisers and one frigate. †



Photo by MCI Michael Tackitt

Air Department Sailors play "dead" during a general quarters drill (GQ) in the ship's hangar bay May 7.



Photo by MCSN Kevin J. Steinberg

Sailors from Air Department's Crash and Salvage Division participate in a mass casualty drill on the ship's flight deck May 6.



Photo by MC3 Brian M. Brooks

Sailors from Air Department transport a casualty to one of the ship's elevators during a mass casualty drill on the flight deck May 6.



Photo by MCI Michael Tackitt

Sailors assigned to different repair lockers participate in a general quarters (GQ) drill inside the ship's hangar bay, May 7.

# CVN 77 conducts first vertical replenishment

Story by MCSN J. Scott St.Clair  
Photo by MCSA Leonard H. Adams

USS GEORGE H.W. BUSH (CVN 77), the Navy's 10th and final Nimitz-class aircraft carrier, conducted her first vertical replenishment with the dry cargo and ammunition ship USNS LEWIS AND CLARK (T-AKE 1) while underway in the Atlantic Ocean, May 18.

According to Aviation Ordnanceman 1st Class (AW/SW) Chris J. Morrison of Weapons Department and Aviation Boatswain's Mate (Handling) 1st Class (AW) Joe A. Zavala of Air Department, the

evolution involved more than 350 Sailors and approximately 36 tons of ammunition and ordnance, valued at more than \$6 million.

Although BUSH has completed multiple underway replenishments, this was the first vertical replenishment the ship had attempted. Morrison said that the onload was a perfect example of how far the aircraft carrier's crew has come.

"We're definitely improving," said Morrison, the ammunition accountant leading petty officer. "With each

evolution we get better and better, but we're keeping in mind that we still have a long way to go. This replenishment was great practice for the major onload we will be doing in the following months, in preparation for our maiden deployment."

The onload took 79 aerial lifts, provided by MH-60S Seahawks from Helicopter Combat Sea Squadron (HSC) 9, and was completed in roughly two and a half hours, which Zavala said was faster than all the previous replenishments, despite this being the

first vertical replenishment the Sailors have done.

"The evolution went according to plan," said Zavala, of V-2 Division. "Considering this was the first time the crew had attempted a vertical replenishment, their performance was excellent. I'm extremely proud of the way

the flight deck crew took charge of the evolution," he said.

In addition to this being BUSH's first vertical replenishment, it is also the first time the aircraft carrier has embarked with its entire complement from Carrier Air Wing (CVW) 8.

Zavala noted that the operation was a great opportunity for the crew and air wing personnel to gain experience working together.

"With the new addition of the air wing, it's all starting to click together," he said. "That is why the evolution went so well."

Morrison attributed the success of the operation to extensive training and to the command's leadership.

"The success of the evolution came down to training, drills and good planning," he said. "Our leadership set us up for success." †



# Bush Sailor earns EAWS pin in hospital

Story by MCSN J. Scott St.Clair

Aviation Electronics Technician 1<sup>st</sup> Class (AW) Timothy L. Gillespie, a USS GEORGE H.W. BUSH (CVN 77) Sailor assigned to the Aircraft Intermediate Maintenance Department (AIMD), recently earned his Enlisted Aviation Warfare Specialist (EAWS) pin in a Norfolk hospital, May 10, while recovering from injuries sustained in a motorcycle accident.

Gillespie, an experienced motorcyclist, has completed all the mandatory motorcycle safety courses and qualifications, and is even a motorcycle safety instructor for the command. The day of the accident, he was wearing his helmet and personal protective equipment when two deer crossed the road in front of him on his way to the ship.

Gillespie has only been on board the aircraft carrier for seven months and already had the EAWS scheduled for that day prior to the motorcycle accident. This is the first time Gillespie is eligible for consideration by the chief petty officer selection board, and earning the pin was the last requirement he needed. Five BUSH chief petty officers visited Gillespie at the Sentara Norfolk General Hospital to administer the EAWS board.

According to Senior Chief Aviation Administrationman (AW) Robert L. Montague, Gillespie's leading chief pet-



From left: Aviation Electronics Technician 1st Class (AW) Timothy L. Gillespie, Senior Chief Aviation Machinist's Mate (AW/SW) Scott A. Pistella, Chief Aircrew Survival Equipmentman (AW) Robert E. Colgan, Chief Logistics Specialist (SW/AW) Gregory D. Bell, Chief Aviation Maintenance Administrationman (AW/SW) Harry E. Milner, and Senior Chief Aviation Structural Mechanic (AW/SW) Virgilio J. Esteves.

ty officer, taking the board to him at the hospital was his chain of command's attempt to set him up for success.

"Everyone wanted him to succeed," he said. "We wanted to make sure he got the pin, but first we had to make sure he had the opportunity to get it."

According to Senior Chief Aviation Machinist's Mate (AW/SW) Scott A. Pistella, command EAWS coordinator, the decision to board Gillespie during his recovery required serious contemplation and he had his reservations, but Gillespie's

tenacity convinced everyone.

"The idea of boarding (Gillespie) in the hospital was mentioned, while taking into consideration the impact of his injuries and surgery," Pistella said. "Despite obvious concerns and with the determination of a true warrior, he wanted to continue with the board; and with that I approached the Command Master Chief."

Pistella noted that despite his injuries, Gillespie's performance during the board was outstanding and served as a testament of commitment to others.

"(Gillespie) boarded very well," he said. "He had obviously been preparing for the board long before the accident. His motivation is remarkable and inspires others to overcome any challenge to achieve any goal."

Montague said that Gillespie's success is indicative of his work ethic and offered his congratulations to the Sailor.

"He doesn't let anything get in the way of getting his job done," he said. "He got the pin because he earned it, and I'm glad an accident didn't take that away from him."†

# WARRIOR TRANSITION GROUP

Story by MCSA Michael Smevog

Graphics by MCSN J. Scott St.Clair

Individual Augmentees spend six to 12 months in a war-torn environment under constant threat of improvised explosive devices, mortar attacks and snipers. After doing jobs on the other side of the world very different from their Navy job, they return to their arduous under-way schedule with 30 days off at best, with a Soldier-to-Sailor culture shock included.

Approximately 35 Sailors from USS GEORGE H.W. BUSH (CVN 77) are currently serving as individual augmentees (IA) around the world.

With the misconception that seeking treatment will give a Sailor a negative stigma and a dampened career, the Sailor may not want to talk about his or her worries.

However, Sailors aboard George H.W. Bush are creating a Warrior Transition Group aimed at assisting IA returnees by providing social support and advice from previous IA members. This group will be facilitated by the ship's psychologist, Lt. Brandon M. Heck, and command chaplains.

When Heck arrived to the ship in January, he noticed a few of the IA returnees he met shared similar feelings of frustration and disconnection. Many IA returnees he had worked with at Naval Medical

Center Portsmouth also shared these feelings. After talking with the ship's commanding officer and chaplains, the idea of a Warrior Transition Group was solidified.

"We're looking at starting in June," Heck said.

Heck explained that he and a chaplain would be at the meetings, but it is designed for the Sailors with IA experience to run it. Those who have already been through the "adjustment phase" will help those going through the same situations.

Heck said that it's not because Sailors are vulnerable, but that IA life can be difficult to recover from and the best chance of a good transition to a healthy life is social support.

"The great people we have on this ship and in the military are very resilient. I don't think they necessarily come home broken, but just need a little help. The support is what allows us to use our natural coping abilities to get through what we're capable of overcoming," he added.

With many caring Sailors and many that will need help on this ship, it will work well to assist those who have endured challenges on the crew's behalf, said Heck.

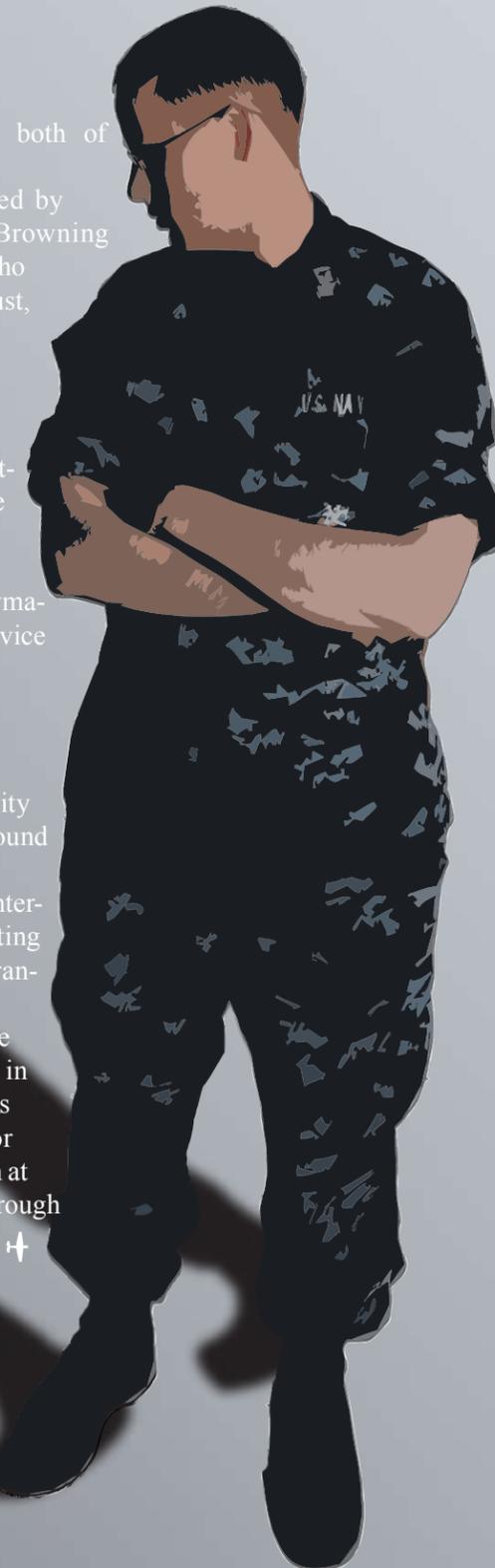
"Like everyone else on this ship I'm concerned with our readiness and effectiveness, and by helping our Sailors out

we are boosting both of those," Heck said.

Heck concluded by quoting Robert Browning who said, "He who did well in war just, earns the right to be doing well in peace."

According to Heck, the Department of Defense recently changed regulations about background information so that a service member's combat related psychological treatment no longer must be reported for security clearance background checks.

If anyone is interested in participating in the Warrior Transition Program, has IA experience and is interested in facilitating, or has any questions for Heck, contact him at J-dial 5736 or through the ship's e-mail. †



# USS GEORGE H.W. BUSH, Carrier Air Wing 8 team up for the first time

Story by MC3 (SW) Dominique J. Moore  
Photo by MCSN Daniel S. Moore

As USS GEORGE H.W. BUSH (CVN 77) was underway in the Atlantic Ocean May 17-27, the ship's air wing, Carrier Air Wing (CVW) 8, was embarked on board for the first week of the aircraft carrier's underway to conduct Carrier Qualifications (CQ) and initial Cyclic Operations.

The first four days of the air wing's embark were referred to as CQ, and the last three days were referred to as Cyclic Operations.

CQ is conducted to give new pilots and experienced pilots the opportunity to gain or maintain the number of landings required to stay current on their flight qualifications. This was the first time BUSH and its air wing came together and conducted Cyclic Operations while testing out the Navy's newest aircraft, the EA-18G Growler, which has already started to replace the EA-6B Prowler, an aircraft that has been in service since the 1960s. (CVW) 8 will be the first air wing to deploy with the EA-18G.

During Cyclic Operations, Weapons Department used dummy loads to test out the ship's missile system while conducting a Vertical Replenishment at sea for the first time. Another first for the ship was when BUSH transferred, uploaded and launched eight guided missiles from planes in the air wing,

successfully hitting all targets safely and in a timely manner.

"This was a huge accomplishment and could not have been done without the help of every department on board the ship and equal support from the ship's air wing," said USS GEORGE H.W. BUSH (CVN 77) Executive Officer, Cmdr. Will Pennington.

According to Commander, CVW 8, Capt. Pat Cleary, pilots are required to maintain a certain currency in their landings on the ship. Cleary said the currency is based on the last time a pilot had a night landing. The longer a pilot is out of currency, the more night landings they need to get current once again. Once the pilots are current in their flight hours, they must have one night landing every seven days to stay current.

Cyclic Operations refers to the launching and recovering of aircraft in groups or cycles. The cycles are generally about one and a half

hours long, but because BUSH only had half of its air wing on board, the cycles ran in shorter times with less airplanes.

The full air wing consists of approximately 75 aircraft. However, CVW 8 only brought 34 aircraft with them this time around, which enabled them to cut down on the cycle times during cyclic operations.

Cleary said that CQ is important for both the air wing and the ship.

"If you have never had an air wing embarked on the ship, or it's been awhile, the deck crews get rusty just like the pilots get rusty," he said. "Bringing the pilots and the deck crews together in an operational environment such as carrier qualifications allows everyone to get the training they need to do their job better and safer."

Some of the challenges the air wing is faced with during CQ is the weather, sea state and the number of aircraft they have participating

in flight operations.

"Primarily, we need a competent flight deck. One that can move airplanes from the wires to the catapults to the fueling stations, back to the catapults quickly and efficiently, but more importantly safely," Cleary said. "And that is what the BUSH does."

Both GEORGE H.W. BUSH's Commanding Officer, Capt. "Chip" Miller, and Cleary felt it would be a great idea if BUSH assimilated some of the training the carrier and its air wing will be tested on later this year. This way any problems they found can be addressed long before the big inspection.

Cleary said that the CQ was a very successful evolution for both CVW 8 and the BUSH crew.

"Anytime we are able to come out on such a wonderful ship we enjoy it," Cleary said. "The BUSH has done an outstanding job of making us feel like we are part of the crew." †



# Weld Done

Photo story by  
MC3 Brent Thacker

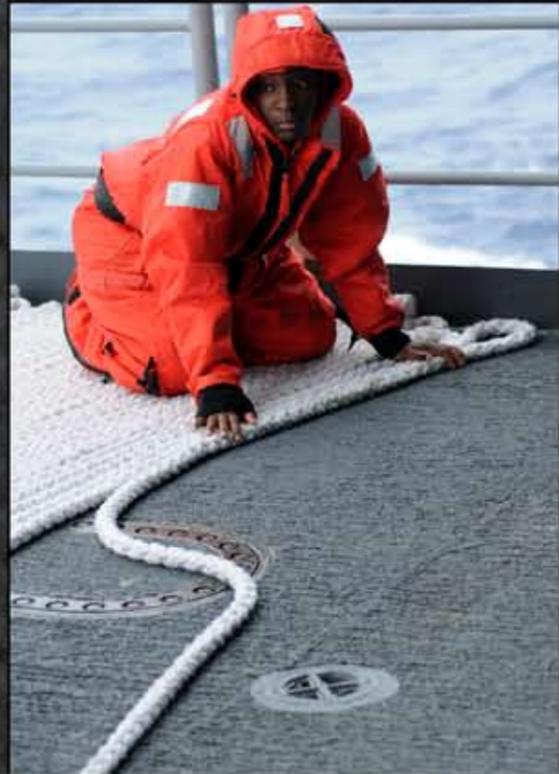


Hull Maintenance Technician 3rd Class Joseph L. Vornbrock of Engineering Department's Repair Division, welds wall mounts in the ship's sheet metal shop. Vornbrock, a Nebraska native, is a huge fan of Corn Husker football and country music. He wishes to some day visit Germany to trace his ancestry. He has been stationed on board the ship since 2006.

# USS GEORGE H.W. BUSH'S DECK DEPARTMENT AT WORK

Photo story by MCSA Leonard Adams

Sailors assigned to USS GEORGE H.W. BUSH (CVN 77) Deck Department keep their line handling skills sharp by faking mooring line out on the ship's fantail, May 17.



# June 2010 Fleet and Family Support Center Calendar

Monday

Tuesday

Wednesday

Thursday

Friday

	<b>1</b> Career Planning FFSC Little Creek 1-4 p.m.	<b>2</b> Federal Employment System FFSC Norfolk 8:30 a.m.-11:30 a.m.	<b>3</b> Interview Techniques FFSC Norfolk 8:30 a.m.-11:30 a.m.	<b>4</b>
<b>7</b>	<b>8</b> Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Advocate Basic Training FFSC Little Creek 8 a.m.- 4 p.m.	<b>9</b> Car Buying Strategies FFSC Norfolk 10-11:30 a.m.	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b> Developing your Spending Plan FFSC Oceana 8:30-9:30 a.m.
<b>14</b> Retirement Planning FFSC Oceana 8:30-10 a.m.	<b>15</b> Million Dollar Sailor FFSC Yorktown 8 a.m.-4 p.m.	<b>16</b> TSP Your Key to Financial Independence FFSC Norfolk 10-11:30 a.m.	<b>17</b> Couples Workshop FFSC Norfolk 4-6:30 p.m.	<b>18</b>
<b>21</b>	<b>22</b> Art of Money Management FFSC Little Creek 4 p.m.	<b>23</b> Career Planning FFSC Oceana 9 a.m.-noon	<b>24</b> Home Ownership FFSC Little Creek 8:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m. (Tu&W)	<b>25</b>
<b>28</b>	<b>29</b> Identity Theft Protection FFSC Little Creek 1-2:30 p.m. (Tu&W)	<b>30</b> Car Buying Strategies FFSC Oceana 2:30-4 p.m. (Tu&W)		

To Register, contact: FFSC Oceana: 443-2923, FFSC Norfolk: 444-2102,  
FFSC Yorktown: 887-4606, FFSC Northwest: 421-8770, FFSC Little Creek: 462-7563