I am proud of SMWDC's efforts over the past two years to increase the lethality and tactical proficiency of the Surface Force across all domains. Our Team, partnered with the TYCOM, NWDC, fellow Warfighting Development Centers (WDCs), schoolhouses and waterfront training commands, and the technical community have made positive progress conducting advanced tactical training at sea; developing and revitalizing TTP; providing operational support to forces operating forward; and informing the requirements generation process with warfighting assessments and experimentation efforts. Key to all our effort at SMWDC is the imperative to rapidly iterate and learn faster.

Warfighting readiness is a function of our weapons systems, the TTP we use, and the proficiency of our personnel. Our ability to fight—and win—is based on this simple calculus.

We already know the maximum capability of our weapons systems – they are designed meticulously to defeat the enemy and they are tested exhaustively. Our engineers deliver the weapons systems and tell us what “Probability of Kill” (Pk) they’re capable of—but there’s a major BUT here.

These weapons systems can only achieve their max Pk when they are employed 100% effectively. This is where tactics and personnel proficiency come into play. If we can’t achieve optimal performance in our tactics and through our people, we’re lowering our overall Pk and leaving capability on the table. In an era of intense competition, we can’t afford to do this!

In order to extract maximum benefit from precious training opportunities, we must know how good we are today, how good we need to be tomorrow, and work continuously to improve for the future fight. This means we have to LEARN with greater depth, insight and speed than we have in the past.

If you think this sounds like High-Velocity Learning, you’re right—and at SMWDC our approach to learning is centered on three fundamental themes that we believe are essential.

First, we have to learn from ground TRUTH, which is to say we must understand what really happened in our environment in order to remove the “I felt” and “I thought” from the learning equation. Second, we must establish a culture where no-holds-barred after action reports are the norm, where ego is disarmed and our teams are eager to identify failure so they can learn faster. Lastly, our findings must be informed by a DATA-driven analysis, which makes our findings more forceful and useful.

Plan, Brief, Execute, Debrief (PBED) is the vehicle for bringing ground TRUTH into the learning process among our shipboard teams. Through PBED, we espouse rigorous, no-holds-barred debriefs that provide the opportunity for individual watchstanders and watch teams to LEARN together and with speed.

One of the ways we use DATA to inform our learning is the partnership we share with the Naval Surface and Undersea Warfare Centers. Through these relationships, we are able to use portable replay tools during advanced exercises (i.e. Surface Warfare Advanced Tactical Training—SWATT, MISSILEXs, Submarine Commander Courses, etc.) that expose the ground TRUTH of the performance of systems, TTP, training, and human performance. This gives us a more complete operational picture during training, which also feeds our Data Analysis Working Group; an intense ‘post-game’ analysis which helps us understand the ‘Why’ of training outcomes – Are there training shortfalls? Are our TTPs effective or do they need to be updated or made more user-friendly? Is there a system issue?

With SMWDC’s growing capacity we are now able to work closely with training community stakeholders when we find a gap / seam. We’re improving TACMEMOs, TTP, and Doctrine. And, these new products—informed by our DATA-driven approach - are immediately included in the training process, closing the circle of rapid learning. We’re also providing operator informed requirements documents to the TYCOM, Fleet and Resource Sponsor so that the technical community can improve systems for the future. SMWDC’s WTIs and subject matter experts are interacting at all levels as the connective tissue between organizations that just three years ago had no way to easily coordinate and work toward the common goal of maximizing the combat capability of the Surface Navy.

The bottom line is that we’re driving a culture of rapid learning, which is a teachable skill that optimizes the capability of our weapons systems. Having a culture founded in TRUTH, DATA, and LEARNING and driven by performance will help us maintain our advantage and widen margins to ensure we outpace the competition.
SHAREM, the Ship Anti-Submarine Warfare (ASW) Readiness Effective Measuring program, is a Chief of Naval Operations-directed ASW assessment program. The program is sponsored by OPNAV N96, managed by Program Executive Office Integrated Warfare Systems, and executed by Naval Surface and Mine Warfighting Development Center (SMWDC).

SHAREM has operated for 48 years and has transitioned from SWDG to SURFDEVRON, SURFDEVRON to STDG, and finally STDG to SMWDC, where it now resides. SHAREM is highly effective at informing future ship builds, releasing tactical memos (TACMEMOs) for future integration into tactics, techniques and procedures, and maintaining a database of all data collected.

SMWDC Warfare Tactics Instructors (WTIs) are now integrated in SHAREM events, from planning through the reporting phase. This sharpens the tactical focus of planning, enhances event observation and onboard feedback, and tightens the feedback loop. It also ensures that these highly trained junior officers use their new skills in a practical manner so that they can improve the Fleet.

An example of this practical experience being made available to WTIs is my ride aboard USS Benfold (DDG 65) in August for a SHAREM with our Republic of Singapore Navy allies. The exercise was going smoothly, events were occurring as scheduled, and we were collecting excellent data. One of the events we planned put Benfold in the position of Surface Action Unit Commander (SAUC). During the events, I took a detailed timeline, wrote down my observations and filed it away to debrief later. Benfold’s senior leadership was enthusiastic supporters of the Plan, Brief, Execute, Debrief (PBED) process and previously instituted watchteam debriefs - honest discussions between Sailors on how to improve the next evolution. However, they were even more excited to have a WTI-led debrief.

One of the main components of WTI-led courses of instruction is the PBED process. A standard WTI-led debrief begins with overall goods (things that went well), others (things that didn’t go well) and alibis (things outside the crew’s control). After the overalls are discussed, a breakdown of the timeline occurs, and this is where it is especially critical that the debriefer gets the watchteam’s involvement.

While Benfold did very well during the event, there were areas of improvement to debrief. It was amazing to see the watchteam not take feedback personally, but discuss the “others” amongst themselves, and come up with solutions to ensure the lessons were learned and behavior changed. I couldn’t have been more proud to be a WTI during that underway.

USS Benfold had another opportunity to be the SAUC the day after the debrief, and while we are still analyzing and reconstructing the data gathered, from my observation they had improved leaps and bounds from their first event. WTI-led debriefs are a huge benefit to the Surface Navy, and this is just one of several ways that WTI involvement in the SHAREM program is making an already impressive and valuable program even better.
Naval Surface and Mine Warfighting Development Center (SMWDC) led the inaugural Littoral Combat Ship (LCS) Tactical Action Working Group (TAWG) at Naval Amphibious Base Coronado, Oct. 25-26. The event was the result of months of collaborative effort between SMWDC’s Sea Combat Division and Littoral Combat Ship Squadron ONE, bringing together more than 100 key Navy stakeholders.

The two-day event allowed key stakeholders in the LCS program to begin the process of developing new tactics, techniques and procedures that will ultimately delivering fleet commanders increased capability.

“The TAWG is an example of why the warfare development centers like SMWDC were introduced in the Navy. We are taking the lead on defining tactical employment of LCS with key leaders not only from the Surface Warfare community, but also from the Information Warfare Development Center, Special Warfare, and the Expeditionary Warfare communities,” said Rear Adm. John Wade, commander, Naval Surface and Mine Warfighting Development Center (SMWDC). “We have yet to discover the full capacity of these warships, and we anticipate the results of the TAWG will allow warfare commanders, commanding officers and watch teams to tactically employ LCS in the short- and long-term.”

With ten ships of the class already in the Navy inventory, another 12 under construction, and four in the pre-production phase, LCS are quickly becoming a large proportion of the fleet, operating in roles previously held by larger surface combatants.

“LCS is already being deployed and is in high demand by fleet commanders,” said Cmdr. Michael Brasseur, the director of tactics and doctrine at SMWDC’s Sea Combat Division. “LCSs are currently being tested and outfitted with new weapons systems, as well as unmanned systems. This TAWG gives us an opportunity to develop disaster response during typhoon Haiyan relief operations in the Philippines, searching for Air Asia Flight 8501 in the Java Sea, counter piracy operations in the Sulu Sea, and Maritime Interdiction Operations in the South China Sea, Philippine Sea, Andaman Sea, and the Straits of Malacca and Singapore.

“As LCS employment forward continues to expand, it is critical that tactics used in their employment evolve with the constantly changing operational environment,” said Capt. Jordy Harrison, commodore of Littoral Combat Ship Squadron ONE. “The modular nature of the Littoral Combat Ship makes them ideally suited to rapidly field new, cutting edge technology that spans the warfighting spectrum. The TAWG will not only develop and refine the tactics used in the employment of the LCS today, but will inform the future evolution of the platform.”

This was the first of several tactical working groups that will develop the future employment of LCS throughout the Navy. The next LCS working group is scheduled for January at Naval Station Mayport, Florida.
Twenty surface warfare officers graduated from Naval Surface and Mine Warfighting Development Center’s (SMWDC) Integrated Air and Missile Defense (IAMD) Warfare Tactics Instructor (WTI) course of instruction during a ceremony held at the Aegis Training and Readiness Center (ATRC) at Naval Support Facility Dahlgren, Dec. 1.

The event marked a significant milestone as it brought the total number of IAMD WTIs to more than 100 patched officers in the Fleet, since the course’s inception in 2013.

“It’s a great program and I’m not just saying that,” said Lt. Melissa Avidano, a newly-patched WTI who will complete her production tour at the IAMD Division following graduation. “I almost think that every SWO should have the opportunity to go through the course. I had plenty of underway time prior to arriving, but this was the first time in my career I’ve been able to engage tactically – even in a simulated environment – and it was exciting.”

WTIs are junior surface warfare officers, ideally selected for the program in between division officer tours or immediately thereafter, who go through a WTI Baseline Course through SMWDC’s San Diego Headquarters, followed by an advanced course of instruction.

WTIs take pride in holding themselves to a higher standard of tactical and doctrinal coherence; and in turn, systematically institutionalizing higher standards and implementing a culture of high-velocity learning to defeat the Navy’s near-peer competitors.

“The WTI program is making serious progress toward a tougher, and more tactically proficient junior officer talent pool that will pay dividends for years to come,” said Capt. Jim Jones, SMWDC IAMD division director. “The WTIs who just earned their patches are joining a cadre who make a difference throughout the Fleet every single day.”

SMWDC’s IAMD Division in Dahlgren, Va. is one of three SMWDC divisions responsible for training and developing the Navy’s top junior officer talent in IAMD, Amphibious Warfare, or Surface Anti-Submarine Warfare/Surface Warfare (SuASW/SUW). They plan, manage, and deliver the rigorous 19-week instructional program that includes classroom instruction, tactical training, mission planning, and instructional program that includes classroom instruction, tactical training, mission planning, and personnel exchanges with the Naval Air Warfare Development Center (NAWDC) and various Army and Air Force commands. The program is focused on the application of the Navy’s most cutting-edge tactics and technologies.

While the number of WTIs in all three warfare areas continues to grow, Fleet demand for WTIs shows no sign of abating soon.

“Congratulations on your achievements individually and as a class team,” said Rear Adm. John Wade, commander of the Naval Surface and Mine Warfighting Development Center (SMWDC), headquartered in San Diego. “But as you take a deep breath before moving onto your next assignments, know that we are counting on each of you. We compete in a complex security environment where the only constant is change. The insatiable demand from our Numbered Fleet Commanders for WTI talent speaks for itself. You must continue to learn and grow as individual warfighters, as well as developing the talented men and women you lead on your teams.”

SMWDC was formally established in 2015 to increase the lethality and proficiency of the surface force in response to emerging and evolving near-peer threats. The WTI program is a central element of SMWDC’s efforts, and it is developing a new generation of expert surface warfare tacticians who are returning to the fleet as force-multipliers for watch teams, ships, and afloat staffs.

The WTI curriculum is designed to develop each element of the WTI “Warrior, Thinker, Teacher” model through an emphasis on tactical simulations and the Plan, Brief, Execute, and Debrief (PBED) Process; immersion in tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTPs); and, instructor skills.
When Roman military power dominated Europe, North Africa and the Middle East, their primary instrument was the Roman Legion. The primary tactical unit of the Legion was called the Century - 100 superbly trained “tactical athletes” whose level of training and discipline set them apart from their adversaries, and gave Romans an unequaled record of success in combat.

Integrated Air and Missile Defense (IAMD) Warfare Tactics Instructor (WTI) Class 17020 graduated in Dahlgren, Virginia on Dec. 1, 2017, and among their number is the 100th officer to earn and wear the black-and-red IAMD WTI patch, completing the first “Century” of IAMD WTI tactical athletes serving on staffs, schoolhouses and ships around the world in defense of the United States. Class 17020 is the tenth convening, and the course itself has continuously evolved over the past four and a half years.

TOPGUN stood up in 1969 with a mandate to improve the combat skills of naval aviators fighting in the skies over North Vietnam. To that end, instructors were given great freedom to innovate, first ensuring that their students were “brilliant at the basics” before leading them on to develop deep and specific knowledge of Navy avionics and weapon systems in addition to the flight characteristics, tactics, capabilities and limitations of enemy aircraft. In effect, Top Gun implemented an early version of what the Chief of Naval Operations (CNO) calls “High Velocity Learning” - a system based on dynamic discovery, “swarming and solving” problems to find new solutions, sharing new knowledge throughout an organization, and leading by developing capabilities in others.

Even today, TOPGUN graduates are expected to not only be superb combat aviators, they are also expected to be able to teach their exceptional combat skills to others. The IAMD Warfare Tactics Instructor Program is no different, and has consciously followed this model from similar humble beginnings in our own trailer classroom. IAMD WTI Candidates are trained from Day 1 to work together in order to successfully complete the course. They understand that in-depth technical knowledge of every Aegis Baseline, the characteristics of the battlespace in every AOR worldwide, and the weapons, platforms and sensors of our adversaries, is NECESSARY, but not SUFFICIENT for their success in earning the WTI Patch. They each must be able to take “brilliant at the basics” knowledge, and build on it through independent thought in order to enable the key High Velocity Learning process of “dynamic discovery.”

The ability of IAMD WTI candidates and patch wearers to use these skills has directly led to a steady stream of new tactical publications from SMWDC, which both break new ground and mitigate existing tactical challenges. IAMD WTIs have been directly involved in the development, testing and promulgation of clear, concise and relevant tactical documents.

In the fleet and on the waterfront, IAMD WTIs continue to spearhead High Velocity Learning. Patch wearing lieutenants led installation, testing and training efforts to implement SeaRAM hard-kill capability and Quick Reaction soft-kill capability against advanced cruise missiles for the four DDGs forward deployed to Rota, Spain in support of vital missions in 6th Fleet.

Following Navy combat operations in the Red Sea in October 2016, many of these same officers traveled to the 5th Fleet area of operations to gather technical data and provide essential training in SPY radar management, while developing and implementing the essential elements of Aegis Threat Centric Planning. IAMD WTI lieutenants briefed the results of SWMDC analysis at the highest levels of the Navy, the Department of Defense and the intelligence community. Lessons from the Red Sea are already being implemented in Navy Live Fire exercises on both coasts, with IAMD WTIs directly involved to validate the tactical relevance of these events, and to prepare deploying units and staffs.

As Warriors, Thinkers and Teachers, IAMD WTIs live by the principles of High Velocity Learning every day. They are curious, humble, forceful, tactful and credible. By working together to pass a difficult course of instruction, they earn the WTI Patch and in so doing, show that they understand CNO’s intent when he writes “…one clear implication of the current environment is the need for the Navy to prepare for decentralized operations guided by Commander’s Intent. The ability to achieve this end is reliant on the trust and confidence that is based on a clear understanding, among peers and between commanders and subordinates, of the risk that can be tolerated. This trust and confidence is enhanced by our actions, which must reflect our core values of Honor, Courage, and Commitment.” The CNO is now able to call upon a “Century” of IAMD Warfare Tactics Instructors, on duty around the world.
I recently ran into one of my co-workers in the hallway of our San Diego office after travelling to Guam, Japan, and New Zealand.

“Welcome back!” he said with a smile. “We should just scrapbook your last few months of Facebook posts for our WTI roadshow presentations!”

Later that day I looked at the pictures and realized he was right. My Warfare Tactics Instructor (WTI) production tour at the Naval Surface and Mine Warfare Development Center’s (SMWDC) Sea Combat Division has allowed me to travel to some pretty amazing places - Singapore, Japan, New Zealand, Guam, Washington, D.C., and Hawaii. A production tour is a WTI’s chance to bring what we learn in the training pipeline to the warfighter in a substantive way.

During the trip that my friend said I should scrapbook, I provided advanced tactical training and capability assessments, experimentation, and future requirements around the world. In Guam and Japan, I provided training and helped to plan Ship Anti-Submarine Warfare Readiness/Effectiveness Measuring (SHAREM) Program exercises. In New Zealand, I supported the Maritime Warfare Centers Forum (MWCF) at Devonport Naval Base. The MWCF brought together five allied nations - the United States, United Kingdom, Canada, Australia and New Zealand – to improve maritime interoperability and combat effectiveness.

One of my favorite duties is being the day-to-day manager of SHAREM at SMWDC. SHAREM identifies and develops solutions to tactical problems, informs future SONAR requirements for the Fleet, collects and analyzes high quality data to improve the effective employment of weapons and sensors, and improves overall surface ship ASW readiness and effectiveness.

It’s an interesting program which has run for 48 years, operates out of several numbered fleet commands, and recently started incorporating WTIs for support. I help the cadre of civilians who plan the exercises, observe events, and provide feedback to both the ships and SMWDC. The opportunity to influence a major program that has been occurring for nearly half a century is one of the things that make being a WTI fun and rewarding for me.

While my fellow WTIs and I are busy when we’re on travel, we usually have enough downtime to explore and meet up with old friends and shipmates. For me, the WTI program has mirrored the well-known Navy marketing campaign, “Join the Navy, See the World!”

The rest of the Navy has started to learn about what we do at SMWDC, and the demand for WTI support around the world has increased. And while travel and global experiences has been an amazing perk of the WTI program for me, it can often be a tough sell for potential WTI applicants. Thankfully, we don’t have to deal with the standard underway routines of staff meetings and watch schedules underway. We do provide wardroom training and on-station training in combat, keep underway training events on track, provide reachback support to school houses and our HQ to provide up-to-date guidance to the Fleet, and lead watch team debriefs to increase watch team effectiveness.

Without hesitation, my decision to apply to be a WTI has been completely worth it. I have the ability to make an impact as a lieutenant that I wouldn’t get in any other position in the Navy. Underway, I am asked to review battle orders for accuracy and give tactically relevant training to warfighters. I lead debriefs which spark discussion about tactics and improve watchstanding. In-port, I help guide working groups among U.S. Navy stakeholders and foreign allies on advanced tactics. Experiences like these will only benefit both me and the Navy when I take on positions of greater responsibility in the future.
Vice Adm. Tom Rowden, commander of Naval Surface Forces, congratulated 19 surface warfare officers on becoming Warfare Tactics Instructors (WTIs) at a graduation ceremony at Naval Amphibious Base Coronado, Nov. 9.

The event marked the officers’ completion of Naval Surface and Mine Warfighting Development Center’s (SMWDC) Sea Combat Division Anti-Submarine Warfare/Surface Warfare (ASW/SUW) WTI course, and each of the graduates received the distinctive red WTI Patch.

The WTIs completed 14 weeks of rigorous classroom instruction, mission planning, and scenarios focused on the application of the Navy’s most cutting edge tactics and technologies. The WTI curriculum is designed to develop each element of the WTI “Warrior, Thinker, Teacher” model through an emphasis on tactical simulations and the Plan, Brief, Execute, and Debrief (PBED) Process; immersion in tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTPs); and, instructor skills.

"The course you just completed is setting up a foundation of a great career of both learning and application," said Rowden. "As you take in the lines and wake up one day to find yourself in combat, we’re depending on you to do the right thing. It’s a huge responsibility, but we’re going to put you on the front line, and I know you'll rise to the occasion."
The course included lectures from subject-matter experts from across the warfighting community; instruction provided by SMWDC’s Sea Combat Division staff with guest lectures from the Naval Aviation Warfighting Development Center (NAWDC), Office of Naval Intelligence (ONI), Naval Undersea Warfare Center (NUWC) and other commands.

Upon graduation, most of the newly patched WTI’s will commence production tours delivering tactical instruction at commands including Surface Warfare Officers School (SWOS), the Center for Surface Combat Systems (CSCS), the Undersea Warfighting Development Center (UWDC), and SMWDC. Several graduates will be stationed on ships immediately, including three officers who completed the course between their first and second division officer tours.

“The seeds of victory in battle are sown long before the war is started. SMWDC has sown those seeds, but not just any seeds. We have the fortune to be blessed by the acorns of live oaks. When the winds of war break upon our Navy, these WTI’s stand ready to sink ships and submarines, be victorious in combat at sea and control the seas for the United States Navy,” said Capt. Thomas Williams, the SMWDC Sea Combat Division Director.

WTIs are a key element for accomplishment of SMWDC’s mission to increase lethality and tactical proficiency of the Surface Force across all domains. From updating TTPs to providing afloat training through Surface Warfare Advanced Tactical Training (SWATT) events similar to exercises, WTIs are shaping doctrine and its implementation in the fleet.

“The part of being a WTI I am most excited about is applying the tactical training I received to the execution of Fleet exercises at sea, and then being able to take the results back to the lab to improve tactical doctrine,” said Lt. Cmdr. Robert Burke of SMWDC’s Mine Warfare Division. “In this way WTIs have an opportunity to make an impact at each phase of the tactical development process.”
The Surface and Mine Warfighting Development Center (SMWDC) Mine Warfare (MIW) Division participated in one of the largest military exercises in the world in August 2017.

Rear Adm. John Wade, the commander of SMWDC who also serves as the Navy's Global Mine Warfare Commander, led a team of MIW representatives to the South Korean peninsula for the annual Ulchi Freedom Guardian (UFG) exercise, Aug. 21-31.

UFG is the second of two annual joint exercises held in South Korea, following the annual spring-time Key Resolve/Foal Eagle exercise. The joint participation of U.S. and Republic of Korea (ROK) navies builds on the partnership between the two nations, and maintains peace in the region, as outlined in the ROK and U.S. Mutual Defense Treaty signed Oct. 1, 1953.

A total of 48 personnel deployed with the SMWDC MIW Division, and they worked alongside their counterparts with ROK Mine Warfare Squadron 52 and Component Flotilla Five commands. United Nations Command forces from Australia, Canada, Columbia, Denmark, New Zealand, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom, also participated.

The primary focus of UFG is to simulate a warfighting environment and refine the organization and execution of joint command and control between U.S. and ROK forces. By working through two scenarios - “road to conflict” and “offensive action” scenarios - forces from each nation gained a more in-depth understanding of the MIW plans, procedures, and the coordination necessary to ensure a successful military operation. The end-result was stronger ties with the Republic of Korea, and the identification of key strengths and areas requiring improvement.

“When we get to work side-by-side with our ROK counterparts, each party walks away with a better understanding of their role in the operation. It’s a huge benefit to me when I know how ROK forces are going to respond to specific events that may happen during conflict, and vice versa. Through repeated practice of scenarios in a joint setting, execution becomes second-nature should a real-life crisis actually occur,” said Marine Maj. Joseph Easterling, the Korea plans officer of the SMWDC MIW Division.

While on the Korean Peninsula, U.S. Sailors were provided the opportunity to explore Korean culture by visiting local Buddhist temples, markets, the largest shopping complex in the world, and other tours sponsored by Morale, Welfare, and Recreation. One particular tour of interest was the Korean Demilitarized Zone (DMZ). The DMZ is a buffer zone between North and South Korea, and Sailors were able to visit observatories allowing them to look inside North Korea, and even temporarily step foot in North Korea while transiting the Joint Security Area.

UFG was a successful exercise that highlighted the longstanding military partnership, commitment and enduring friendship between the U.S. and South Korea. Exercises like these help to ensure peace and security on the peninsula, and reaffirm the U.S. commitment to the alliance.
The Navy’s Mine Counter Measures (MCM) mission is a crucial element to ensure continued freedom of navigation and the free flow of maritime commerce around the globe. The Navy’s center of gravity for MCM is the Naval Surface and Mine Warfighting Development Center (SMWDC). SMWDC continues its commitment to maintaining the best-trained mine countermeasures (MCM) force in the world. One way SMWDC helps keep the mine warfare (MIW) community proficient is through the Surface Warfare Advanced Tactical Training (SWATT) MCM program, which partners mine warfare subject matter experts (SMEs) with fleet MIW operators to mentor and instruct at sea.

SMWDC recently completed a SWATT MCM exercise in Manama, Bahrain with USS Gladiator (MCM 11) in support of U.S. 5th Fleet mine countermeasure forces. SMWDC senior MIW subject matter experts, augmented by the Mine Warfare Training Center and Afloat Training Group Pacific, and one post-MCM commanding officer, executed the tactical training visit on board USS Gladiator (MCM 11). SMWDC trainers gave junior operators the opportunity to get hands-on training with subject matter experts in a learning environment that promoted the development and fine-tuning of their skills.

“It’s important that Sailors know we are there to mentor and train them. Our goal isn’t to evaluate them with a pass-fail mentality, but to ensure they feel comfortable and astute in their duties,” said Chief Mineman Henry Estrella, a trainer from SMWDC’s MIW Division.

With one chief petty officer or senior chief petty officer for every two or three personnel, SMWDC’s MIW SMEs trained the crew on maintenance, planning, briefing, and hunting and sweeping of mines. The post-MCM commanding officer provided mentorship to the MCM leadership team, who orchestrated and executed the overall MIW at-sea mission.

During the 10-day training, six SMWDC personnel provided three days of in-port education and assistance, followed by seven days of realistic underway scenarios. The hands-on approach allowed the SMWDC trainers to correct deficiencies on-the-spot and reinforce good practices.

“SWATT allowed the SMWDC subject matter experts to gain knowledge of good practices that can be carried forward to other MCM crews. Oftentimes, Sailors may be conducting their MCM mission duties in more efficient ways we hadn’t considered. We can take these good practices forward to other crews as we conduct future SWATTs,” said Estrella.
Rear Adm. John Wade, commander, Naval Surface and Mine Warfighting Development Center (SMWDC), met with Republic of Korea (ROK) Navy Rear Adm. Kim, Jong Sam, commander, ROK Flotilla 5, and other U.S. and ROK service members for mine warfare staff talks Nov. 7-11.

The meeting between ROK and U.S. mine warfare commanders and staffs provides a venue for to review areas of interoperability between the forces and identify opportunities for increased cooperation.

These meetings not only improve coordination and cooperation between the forces, but they also provide a platform from which both sides can provide feedback and review lessons learned from previous exercises.

“These talks are an essential part of both of our Navy’s ability to work together in a cooperative way to enhance security and stability in a complex operating environment,” said Wade, who is also the U.S. Navy’s Global Mine Warfare Commander. “It is critical that we continue these efforts to protect the U.S. and her allies from attack, ensure freedom of the seas, and preserve our strategic influence in the region.”

At the conclusion of the week-long discussions, Wade and Kim formally signed the annual staff talk’s minutes which highlight this year’s discussion topics and outline goals for the upcoming year that will strengthen the US-ROK Navy alliance.

At the conclusion of the week-long discussions, Wade and Kim formally signed the annual staff talk’s minutes which highlight this year’s discussion topics and outline goals for the upcoming year that will strengthen the US-ROK Navy alliance.

Before returning to SMWDC headquarters in San Diego, California, Wade and his staff visited the Joint Security Area (JSA) for a tour of the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) Nov. 11 in Seoul to better their understanding of the Korean Theater.

SMWDC is one of the Navy’s five Warfighting Development Centers and fills an integral role in the Surface Force Strategy: Return to Sea Control. SMWDC’s mission is to increase the lethality and tactical proficiency of the surface force across all domains.
Naval Surface and Mine Warfighting Development Center’s (SMWDC) Amphibious Warfare (AMW) Division provided operational support to Combined Task Force (CTF) 51/5th Marine Expeditionary Brigade (MEB) at Naval Support Activity Bahrain from Sept. 1-Oct. 7.

Lt. Alex Schneider, AMW Warfare Tactics Instructor (WTI), spent six weeks supporting 5th Fleet amphibious theater objectives while engaged in exercise Alligator Dagger, a joint interoperability subject matter expert exchange (SMEE) with the Royal Navy of Oman. He also supported the USS America Amphibious Ready Group (ARG) for its first 5th Fleet deployment.

Schneider’s AMW expertise supported high velocity learning objectives, accelerating tactical discussions and learning, and creating an environment that values unique perspectives and solutions.

Alligator Dagger is a sustainment exercise for 5th Fleet ARGs that focuses on ARG integration with non-organic assets and practicing anticipated missions in theater. Schneider supported in a variety of locations for a ten-day period to include the CTF 51/5 Forward Command Post at Camp Lemonnier, Djibouti, underway aboard USS America (LHA 6), USS Pearl Harbor (LSD 52), and USS Lewis B. Puller (ESB 3) in the Gulf of Aden. He provided tailored small group training to Pearl Harbor officers on AMW topics, such as types of amphibious operations, phases of an amphibious operation - Planning, Embarkation, Rehearsal, Movement, Action/Embark, Movement, Plan, Rehearsal, Assault (PERMA/EMPRA), Amphibious Ready Group/Marine Expeditionary Unit (ARG/MEU) composition, wet well operations, and Ship Self-Defense System (SSDS) capabilities. He also discussed AMW tactics with the Amphibious Squadron THREE Commodore and staff embarked aboard America. His engaging dialogue provided America ARG leadership with a unique tactically focused perspective on improving existing processes.

“As an AMW WTI, I was able to positively impact America ARG ships in a way that was unique to each particular command based upon my assessment of what they needed at that time,” said Schneider. “WTIs act as an absolute force multiplier to the ARG’s operational acumen by discovering where shortfalls exist and assisting in turning those weaknesses into strengths.”

He also participated in a one-week interoperability SMEE with the Royal Navy of Oman on Said Bin Sultan Naval Base. The engagement involved approximately 50 officers of the Royal Oman Navy, Army, Air Force, and Police, as well as the Royal Marines.

This event marked the first AMW WTI operational support with partner navies in 5th Fleet. Participants were divided into several groups with representatives from each service branch and of varying rank and seniority. The groups discussed and developed operational plans to execute Foreign Humanitarian Assistance (FHA), amphibious raids, and amphibious assault scenario vignettes. Each group benefited from their diverse experiences enabling them to create operational plans based on their joint capabilities. Schneider supported the planning as an amphibious warfare SME, facilitating group discussion and collaboration.

“The Royal Armed Forces of Oman SMEE experience was overwhelmingly positive on all accounts, and I was extremely impressed by the attitudes and work ethic of the Omanis as they worked jointly to develop viable solutions to the complex amphibious operational scenarios they were presented,” said Schneider.

5th Fleet’s dynamic environment offers abundant opportunities for SMWDC’s WTIs and high velocity learning techniques within the amphibious community. Schneider’s operational support to CTF 51/5 embodied these efforts by engaging a wide range of personnel and encouraging them to share their perspectives for rapid problem resolution. AMW Division looks forward to finding these opportunities to apply tactically motivated AMW WTIs in environments that require relevant and creative solutions to a wide variety of amphibious problem sets.
Fourteen service members earned their red Warfare Tactics Instructor (WTI) patches from Naval Surface and Mine Warfighting Development Center (SMWDC) in a ceremony held at Joint Expeditionary Base Little Creek-Fort Story, Oct. 20.

SMWDC was formally established in 2015 to increase the lethality and proficiency of the surface force in response to emerging and evolving near-peer threats. The WTI program is a central element of SMWDC’s efforts, and it is developing a new generation of expert surface warfare tacticians who are returning to the fleet as force-multipliers for their watch teams. After earning their patch, WTIs return for a production tour in order to bring their skills to bear through advanced tactical training, tactics and doctrine development, operational support, and capability assessments and experimentation.

SMWDC’s Amphibious Warfare Division in Little Creek, Va. is focused on increasing the lethality and tactical proficiency of the surface force, particularly the amphibious fleet. Students in their 13-week program learn the intricacies of bringing the power of the Navy-Marine Corps team to the shore.

"Today is a celebration, congratulations on what you have achieved," said Rear Adm. Jesse A. Wilson, Jr., commander, Naval Surface Force Atlantic and guest speaker at the ceremony. "You are now leaders in amphibious warfare. Share your knowledge with your shipmates and "lead-up" to superiors; demonstrate toughness; maintain a questioning attitude; continue to innovate and develop cutting edge tactics that will keep us a step ahead in a complex and ever changing environment."

"There is no better training for a junior officer," said Lt. j.g. Megan Barron, who will be serving as an AMW WTI on USS Germantown (LSD 42). "The past 13 weeks have been both extremely challenging and amazing. From the two week baseline course in Coronado, to the Fleet Immersion experience in Camp Lejeune, to the several different lectures, vignettes, and hands on projects in the classroom and simulator; going into my second tour with this level of training under my belt is truly invaluable and will allow me to help train other junior officers in ways I never would have been able to had I not gone through this course."

With a goal of 110 graduates per year, the WTI program has continued to grow since its inception. SMWDC maintains a goal of placing a WTI at every surface ship and staff in an ongoing effort to sustain maritime supremacy and a culture of high-velocity learning.

"The WTI program is taking a serious look ahead to the future of Naval Warfare and taking time to invest in developing sound tactics for ever-evolving threats," said Lt. Cmdr. Chris Petersen, who is remaining at SMWDC AMW Division to train future WTIs. "I am excited to be part of a program that is developing the Navy of the future and moving on from past assumptions that we have held too long."

As WTIs graduate and return to the fleet, regardless of their rank, they are viewed as the experts in their field, a concept which was relatively uncommon among the surface warfare community prior to this program. WTIs take pride in holding themselves to a higher standard of tactical and doctrinal coherence; and in turn, systematically institutionalizing higher standards and implementing a culture of high-velocity learning to defeat the Navy’s competitors.
We live in a dangerous and complex world. The security interests of the United States and those of our allies are increasingly challenged. The maritime domain is growing in importance -- becoming more heavily used, more stressed, and more contested than ever before. The purpose of our Navy is to protect the United States from attack, ensure freedom of the seas, and preserve our strategic influence in key regions of the world. Warfighting, learning faster, strengthening our Navy and Joint team, and building partnerships are priorities established by the CNO. To get after these, the Surface Force has established a framework composed of four pillars: Tactics, Talent, tools, and Training. SMWDC plays an integral role in each.

Mission (Why we exist): Increase the lethality and tactical proficiency of the Surface Force across all domains.

Vision (What we want to be): We aspire to be an elite organization that thoroughly understands our mission, its importance and impact, and is enthusiastic, innovative and always learning.

Values (What we believe in):
- We are a TEAM ... All SMWDC personnel have an important role and are valued equally.
- Ship crews and Warfare Commander Staffs are the “center of the universe” ... we will do everything possible to give them the confidence & competence to fight and win.
- Teamwork and effective communication are critical to success ... we will adhere to these principles within SMWDC and amongst all stakeholders we support or are supported by.

Lines of Operation (How we will align and synchronize our actions):
- Advanced tactical training.
- Doctrine and tactical guidance development
- Operational support to COCOMs, NFCs, and CTFs.
- Capability assessments, experimentation and future requirements
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