A NOTE FROM
THE EDITOR AND STAFF

Every month, we focus on the Navy’s mission-focused people and technologies. As we survey how our naval forces continue to train, fight and equip the world’s toughest Sailors, we look at our advantage at sea and the capabilities of Sailors deployed around the world.

It is our mission to reach Sailors, so please share this issue, scan the QR codes, and follow our social media channels for the latest information for Sailors by Sailors.

This month, we are highlighting our back-to-school tips for all Sailors and the importance of our Navy’s nuclear and dive programs.
“As we look to the horizon and prepare for the challenges that lie ahead, I will act with a sense of urgency to ensure our Sailors have everything they need to maintain our warfighting edge. For the past 247 years, the U.S. Navy has stood the watch. We, along with the Marine Corps, are America’s Away Team around the world and around the clock. As we look to the future, our mission continues, undisrupted and unabated. We fly, sail and operate wherever international law allows, so that others can too.”

-Adm. Lisa Franchetti
Vice Chief of Naval Operations

NAVAL STATION NORFOLK

FLEET FEST
IS BACK!

SATURDAY
OCTOBER 21
10 AM - 5 PM

FREE ADMISSION
OPEN TO THE PUBLIC
RAIN OR SHINE

2023

ACTIVITIES
COAST GUARD SEARCH AND RESCUE DEMO
WORLD’S LARGEST BOUNCE HOUSE
NAVY DIVE TANK
LANDING CRAFT AIR CUSHION FLY IN DEMO
CHILI COOK-OFF
TEAM PARTIES
OF LONG ISLAND CAR SHOW
FOOD TRUCKS
CRAFT BEER
KIDS AREA
LIVE ENTERTAINMENT
STATIC AIRCRAFT DISPLAYS
FLEET FEST ITEMS FOR SALE

GUIDED TOURS ONBOARD
USS GEORGE WASHINGTON (CVN 73)
USS MAHAN (DDG 72)
COAST GUARD CUTTER SENECA
COAST GUARD FAST RESPONSE CUTTER

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GENERAL INFO: 757-322-2788 | CHILI COOK-OFF: 757-322-2316
UNITAS LXIV KICKS OFF

Secretary of the Navy Carlos Del Toro attended the opening ceremony for UNITAS LXIV, a multinational maritime exercise that brings together 20 nations from all over the world to train forces in joint maritime operations that enhance tactical proficiency and increase interoperability.

Participating nations include Belize, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, France, Germany, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Panama, Peru, Paraguay, Spain, South Korea, United Kingdom, United States, and Uruguay.

The Colombian Navy hosts this year's UNITAS, which will feature 26 warships/vessels, three submarines, 25 aircraft (fixed wing/helicopter), and approximately 7,000 people from 20 partner nations. Forces will conduct operations off the coast of Cartagena, Colombia, and ashore in Covenas and Barranquilla, Colombia, through July 21.

"I am honored to help kick off UNITAS LXIV," said Del Toro. "This is the world's longest-running multinational maritime exercise in the world. The partnerships we share among the 20 nations participating in this exercise are critical to realizing the peace and security we desire in the Western Hemisphere."

Following the UNITAS LXIV Opening Ceremony on July 12, the in-port phase of the exercise will feature subject matter expert exchanges, professional symposia, ship rider exchanges, and operations meetings. During this time, Marines and Sailors will conduct expeditionary training events in Covenas to include riverine operations and diving and salvage operations.

"Economic security is national security," said Del Toro. "We must continue to work together to counter the common maritime challenges that threaten our way of life, and that run contrary to the rules-based international order."

During the UNITAS LXIV Underway Phase, forces will participate in events testing all warfare operations, to include live-fire exercises such as a SINKEX and an amphibious ship-to-shore landing and force retraction.

As part of the U.S. Navy's future hybrid fleet, the Chief of Naval Operations has tasked U.S. 4th Fleet to scale unmanned platforms to the fleet level. An addition to this year's UNITAS will include the integrated operations of unmanned air, surface, and subsurface systems into the exercise. UNITAS' challenging training addresses key aspects of multinational and combined operations such as technology standardization and common operating procedures.
USNS BURLINGTON HOSTS LAUNCH OF USV

U.S. Navy Sailors partnered with Military Sealift Command civilian mariners and civilian contractors in a collaborative effort to successfully launch a Wave Glider unmanned surface vehicle (USV) from expeditionary fast transport ship USNS Burlington (T-EPF 10).

The launch took place during the Burlington's transit to Cartagena, Colombia, ahead of the start of UNITAS LXIV. Colombia is this year’s host for UNITAS, the longest-running annual multinational maritime exercise in the world, scheduled to start on July 11, 2023.

“UNITAS is so unique and full of opportunities for innovation, providing an ideal location to experiment with service concepts and conduct combined training while close to home and in a permissive environment,” said Burlington’s Military Detachment officer in charge, Cmdr. Michael Fleck.

Wave Glider is one of the unmanned systems in operation during the exercise as part of the U.S. Naval Forces Southern Command/U.S. 4th Fleet (USNAVSOOUTH/FOURTHFLT) Unmanned Integration Campaign. The campaign’s goal is to deploy and integrate unmanned systems and artificial intelligence tools into operations, which will bolster the Navy’s Marine Domain Awareness (MDA), counter-narcotics (CN) efforts and information sharing with partner nations.

“UNITAS is an outstanding avenue to introduce emerging naval concepts for multinational exercises and operations in the region,” said Burlington’s Military Detachment senior enlisted leader, Senior Chief Information Systems Technician Anthony Davis.

The Wave Glider USV runs on wave power, meaning the vertical wave motion is converted into forward thrusts. During UNITAS LXIV, the Wave Glider USV will provide MDA in the exercise operations area during the underway portions of UNITAS.

The overall objective of the USNAVSOUTH/FOURTHFLT Unmanned Integration Campaign is to ultimately scale unmanned platforms to the fleet level while developing tactics, techniques and procedures resulting in the U.S. Navy's Hybrid Fleet of the 2030s.

UNITAS, Latin for Unity, is the longest-running multinational maritime exercise in the world. A U.S.-sponsored joint exercise, UNITAS was conceived in 1959, with the first UNITAS (UNITAS I) taking place in 1960.
From Aviation Ordnanceman 3rd Class Samayaah Smith

This summer, Naval Air Station (NAS) Sigonella had the distinct honor of becoming the first installation outside of the United States to introduce the USO (United Service Organizations) Canine Therapy Program. 

"With emotional and mental health listed as some of the top issues that face active-duty military families today, utilizing therapy dogs to help service members struggling with the challenges of military life is just another creative way in which the USO is supporting the military community," said Danielle DeSimone, USO content marketing manager. Although the NAS Sigonella USO is the first to institute the USO Canine Therapy Program overseas, the organization's already well-established, successful program framework in the U.S. put the USO team here at ease.

"I think it could be extremely successful overseas because this is where service members are most often separated from their pets and families," said Margaret McCullough, USO center manager at NAS Sigonella. The USO team at NAS Sigonella believes the new program will help fill the void many service members face when it comes to permanent change of station moves and other life stressors.

"There will be more canine therapy programs throughout Europe, the Middle East and the Africa region," said Sabrina Pulido, USO area director at NAS Sigonella. The benefits of pet therapy have proven to be so beneficial to service members that the USO wants it to be accessible wherever we are.

Therapy dogs are known to lower blood pressure, reduce stress and release oxytocin and phenyl ethylamine, an antidepressant. The USO started the program as a way to assist service members with navigating the stresses of military service. The Canine Therapy Program falls within the USO’s mission to support service members and military families. "Dogs bring happiness, they bring joy and they connect you to things you love," said Luisa Mazzella, area manager at USO Italy Spain. "People are going to have that connection when they come into the USO, being able to pet the dogs will provide that time away from the stressors. Allowing them to recharge, reconnect and regroup!"

NAS Sigonella's Canine Program will be open to service members, military families and anyone who has access to the USO. The plan is to keep this program running for as long as possible, and open the opportunity for individuals to get their animals certified and volunteer for the program.

"My personal goal is to make the program as successful as possible in terms of it bringing a lot of joy," said McCullough. "I want this program to exist long past its start." Canine Therapy will be advertised via NAS Sigonella USO's calendar, and there will be weekly meet and greets with the pups. Service members should refer to the USO’s monthly program flyers, banners and AFN radio announcements for more information on Canine Therapy.
**What is the USNCC?**
The United States Naval Community College is an online education option for active-duty Sailors that provides a five-course Naval Studies Certificate that counts as 15 of the 60 credits required for an associate degree.

**What is the difference between USNCC and TA?**
The USNCC program is separate from tuition assistance and voluntary education programs, which means the lifetime limit on TA/VOLED credits for service members can be applied toward a bachelor’s or/master’s degree. This helps set active duty enlisted Sailors, Marines, and Coast Guardsmen and Coast Guard Reservists on a path of lifelong learning.

**What degree programs are available through USNCC?**
USNCC offers a number of associate degree pathways that are relevant to our Sailors, Marines and Coast Guardsmen, regardless of their rating or MOS, and cover both technical fields (e.g., nuclear, engineering, cyber) and generalist programs (e.g., organizational leadership, military studies).

**What is needed to apply?**
To apply you must meet these standards:
1. Be in a good standing with your command.
2. Be active-duty Sailor, Marine, or Coast Guardsman or a Coast Guardsmen Reservist and must not be within three months of separation (EAOS/EAS).
3. Have adequate off-duty time to complete coursework (we recommend 10 - 12 hours per week to be successful).
4. USN and USMC service members cannot participate in USNCC programs simultaneously with TA/VOLED related courses within the same given term.

**Advanced Education Voucher**
For E-7 and above personnel only, the Advanced Education Voucher is used for Sailor’s to obtain a Navy funded master’s degree during off-duty hours.

Visit [https://www.usncc.edu](https://www.usncc.edu) for more information

**Tuition Assistance**
Navy tuition assistance pays for both classroom and independent study or distance learning courses. Associate, bachelor’s and master’s level courses must be offered in semester hours or quarter hours (NAVADMIN 105/10).

**How to Apply:**
1. Inform your command.
2. Complete the required training.
3. Receive education counseling.
4. Submit education plan.
5. Submit TA application in MyNavy Education.
6. Generate class voucher and send to enrolled institution.

For more information visit [https://usmap.osd.mil/requirements.htm](https://usmap.osd.mil/requirements.htm)

Visit [https://www.navycollege.navy.mil/common-resources/education-voucher-programs.htm](https://www.navycollege.navy.mil/common-resources/education-voucher-programs.htm) for more information.
Tips on utilizing the G.I. Bill after getting out

Determine Eligibility: Check eligibility for the G.I. Bill based on the length and type of military service, discharge status and any service-connected disabilities.

Choose an Approved Program: Select an educational program at a qualifying institution (college, university or vocational school) that is approved for your G.I. Bill benefits.

Apply for Admission: Apply for admission to the chosen educational institution and ensure they are aware of your intention to use your G.I. Bill benefits.

Apply for G.I. Bill Benefits: Submit the appropriate application for your G.I. Bill benefits. This is typically done through the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) website.

Provide Necessary Documentation: Provide any required documents, such as military transcripts, service records and other supporting paperwork, as requested by the VA or the educational institution.

Plan Finances: Understand the G.I. Bill's coverage, including tuition, fees, housing allowance and books stipend. Be aware of any additional costs that may be incurred and plan finances accordingly.

Utilize Yellow Ribbon Program (if applicable): If attending a private institution with higher tuition, check if the school participates in the Yellow Ribbon Program for additional financial support.

Monitor Attendance and Progress: Maintain full-time student status (as required) and make satisfactory academic progress to continue receiving G.I. Bill benefits.

Explore Additional Financial Aid: Consider other sources of financial aid (e.g. FAFSA), scholarships or grants to complement G.I. Bill benefits if needed.

Keep VA Updated: Notify the VA of any changes in enrollment status, program changes or other relevant updates to avoid interruptions in your G.I. Bill benefits.

For more information visit https://www.va.gov/education/about-gi-bill-benefits/how-to-use-benefits/

Level up your knowledge, college awaits!

National Coloring Book Day August 2
NAVADMIN 166/23 – FACT SHEET

**NAVWIDE APPRENTICE (E-1 TO E-4) ADVANCEMENT CHANGES**

Starting July 1, 2024, junior enlisted Sailors will now be advanced from E-1 to E-4 based on their time in service (not time in rate). This change will facilitate a more solid foundation for billet-based advancements as Sailors move toward the journeyman ranks (E-5 and E-6). It also provides a more predictable and transparent advancement path to E-4 for all Sailors, ensuring every Sailor can be in a position to make a re-enlistment decision as an E-4 before the end of their initial obligated service.

Time in service requirements for advancement:
- E-1 advances to E-2 at 9 months time in service
- E-2 advances to E-3 at 18 months time in service
- E-3 advances to E-4 at 30 months time in service

This policy does not include nuclear, advanced technical, and electronic field sailors who already obligate for additional service in order to advance to E-4.

**NWAЕ GUIDANCE FOR AC/TAR CYCLE 250 AND MODIFICATION TO SELRES E-4 CYCLE 113**

- All Active-duty, TAR and SELRES E-5 and E-6 candidates will take exams to compete for advancement.
- All Active-duty, TAR, and SELRES E-4 candidates will complete for advancement via a modified alternative final multiple score, with longer time in rate being heavily weighted in the modified alternative FMS calculations.
- There will be increased quotas for ratings with historically slower advancement.
- No requirement to complete PMK-EE for E-4.

**THE BRANDON ACT – SELF-INITIATED REFERRAL PROCESS FOR MENTAL HEALTH EVALUATIONS OF SERVICE MEMBERS**

NAVADMIN 166/23 – FACT SHEET

The major change in NAVADMIN 166/23 is that any service member serving on active duty with a Navy command who specifically requests a Mental Health Evaluation from a Supervisor E-6 and above must be scheduled for an appointment with a local military mental health facility or closest military treatment facility, and be provided the opportunity to attend. This is not the same as a command-directed MHE.

**SPECIAL LEAVE ACCRUAL (SLA) POLICY CHANGES**

NAVADMIN 166/23 – FACT SHEET

Effective Jan. 1, 2023, Sailors eligible for SLA may only accrue a maximum of 90 days. Leave days in excess of 90 days earned after Jan. 1, 2023 will be lost on Sep. 30, 2023. Sailors who carried a balance of more than 90 days on Jan. 1, 2023, will be authorized to retain the excess leave until Sept. 30, 2026.

**BASIC NEEDS ALLOWANCE UPDATE ONE**

NAVADMIN 155/23 – FACT SHEET

NAVADMIN 155/23 details updates to the basic needs allowance for active duty service members with dependents whose gross household income falls below 150% of federal poverty guidelines.

**FY-24 RTC CHIEF PETTY OFFICER SELECTEE BACK-TO-BOOT CAMP TRAINING WEEK**

NAVADMIN 154/23 – FACT SHEET

NAVADMIN 154/23 announces the Chief Selectee Back to Bootcamp program, which will allow a group of fleet-selected Chief Selectees and mentors to return to Recruiting Training Command for a week of training. The Chief Selectees will engage in training reinforcing where their careers began.

**UPDATE TO PRIOR SERVICE RE-ENLISTMENT ELIGIBILITY - RESERVE (PRISE-R) POLICY**

NAVADMIN 174/23

This NAVADMIN provides updated policy guidance for administration of the PRISE-R program.
The Naval Service—forward deployed and capable of both rapid response and sustained operations globally—remains America’s most persistent and versatile instrument of military influence.
Diving capabilities are not solely restricted to the Navy Diver rating as many other ratings receive specialized dive training to complete their missions including Seabees, special operators, explosive ordnance disposal technicians, engineers, medical personnel, and mass communication specialists.

Navy divers support a number of missions in the Navy including mobile diving and salvage, ship husbandry, research and development, submarine operations and underwater rescue missions, special warfare, expeditionary mine countermeasures, anti-terrorism and force protection, and underwater photography and videography.

While this year’s commemorative events will be celebrated locally at individual commands, the diving community is focused on planning a global event for 2024 that will encompass Navy diver participation from across the world.

“I’m honored to be a part of this community and look forward to advancing our capability with all service and international partners, along with welcoming new leaders of tomorrow into our fold as we honor our historic roots each year,” said Wittman.

For more information about becoming a Navy Diver, click here.
From Mass Communication Specialist Chief Patrick Gordon

Naval Air Station (NAS) Patuxent River’s vision is simple – to sustain the Naval Aviation Enterprise’s combat edge over our adversaries. The mission partners at NAS Patuxent River are hard at work, every day on the research, development, test and evaluation that ensures our warfighters have the necessary equipment to safely and reliably take the fight to the enemy.

Safely maintaining ordnance and monitoring the denotation is the job of Kim Williams, NAS Patuxent River explosives safety officer.

The responsibilities of the explosives safety officer (ESO) for NAS Patuxent River are ensuring that all personnel on board the installation, including all tenant commands and activities, who handle or store arms, ammunition, and explosives (AA&E) material are properly trained and in compliance with all Department of Defense (DoD), Department of the Navy, and other federal, state, or local regulations.

These regulations are varied and include explosives safety site approvals; review, validation, and approval of standard operating procedures; periodic inspections of AA&E storage facilities, which includes compliance with physical security requirements, lightning protection and ground systems; verification that ordnance handling equipment, weight handling equipment and transport vehicles are properly maintained, and weight tested as required, and ammunition accounting.

On any given day at Pax River you can find Williams on inspection tours or in conference with mission partner explosives safety representatives ensuring the safe handling, maintenance, and storage of the most volatile materials at Pax. His approach is meticulous, and relies on a two-fold approach of adherence to instruction and trust in his team of tenant command representatives.

“I work with the various tenants, including several DoD contract companies, by hosting monthly meetings to provide training and discuss any new or revised requirements, including changes to any manuals or directives,” said Williams. “I also conduct a couple of explosives safety self-assessments for each command, activity, and contractor companies during the year. These assessments are basically internal explosives safety inspections, and I use various personnel from different commands and activities to get as comprehensive an assessment as possible.”

This approach led to NAS Patuxent River receiving the highest grade possible of “Satisfactory” on the recent explosives safety Inspection in June, with only 25 total discrepancies, down from the 75 received in 2013 prior to Williams becoming the ESO; an impressive feat given the scope of the explosives safety program at one of the largest aviation test locations in the DoD.

“We had a few discrepancies against some of the older explosives safety site approvals, primarily in the documentation as loaded in a new database, and some documentation discrepancies in a few of the other programs,” said Williams. “There are the 10 programs that we are inspected to: explosives safety administration and management, facility certification/master planning, ammunition and explosives qualification/certification and training, standard operating procedures, ammunition and explosives facilities and operations, lightning protection/grounding/emissions control, material potentially presenting an explosive hazard/ranges, AA&E transportation & equipment, AA&E physical security, and ammunition and explosives inventory management.”

Williams’ experience in explosives safety, and encyclopedic knowledge of instruction, seems natural, but it was honed over a 30-year Navy career that saw him rise to the heights of the Navy’s aviation ordnance community. And he credits his time in uniform with teaching him the importance of knowing instruction and how to work with different communities to ensure an effective safety program.

“My active-duty experience has been invaluable in not only understanding requirements and knowing how to interpret them but more importantly in how to train personnel and how to assess command capabilities.”

It is this experience that has led him to the role he serves in today. Williams said that while explosives safety may not be on the minds of most in their day-to-day lives, the importance of his program ensures that those in charge of AA&E materials don’t have to worry about the “what ifs” on his watch.

“One of my favorite quotes is, ‘One second after a mishap, leadership and all persons affected will be asking two simple questions: what could we have done to prevent this, and why didn’t we do it,’” said Williams. “Explosives safety is a world where you don’t normally get a second chance if something goes wrong, so lives literally depend on doing it right the first time, every time.”
Aug. 4 marks the birthday of the Naval Nuclear Propulsion Program, a joint Department of Navy and Department of Energy organization responsible for all aspects of the Navy’s nuclear propulsion, including research, design, construction, testing, operation, maintenance, and ultimate disposition of naval nuclear propulsion plants.

In 1946, shortly after the end of World War II, Congress passed the Atomic Energy Act, which established the Atomic Energy Commission to succeed the wartime Manhattan Project and gave it sole responsibility for developing atomic energy. At this time, Capt. Hyman G. Rickover was assigned to the Navy Bureau of Ships, the organization responsible for ship design.

Rickover recognized the military implications of successfully harnessing atomic power for submarine propulsion and knew it would be necessary for the Navy to work with the AEC to develop such a program. He and several officers and civilians were sent to the AEC laboratory at Oak Ridge, Tennessee, for a year to learn the fundamentals of nuclear reactor technology.

Rickover returned to Washington and used every opportunity from his post at Navy Bureau of Ships to argue the need to establish a Naval Nuclear Propulsion Program. On Aug. 4, 1948, the Navy created the new Nuclear Power Branch (Code 390) with Rickover as its head within the Bureau’s Research Division.

Just seven years later, Rickover and his team put the world’s first nuclear-powered submarine, the USS Nautilus (SSN 571) to sea. Three years later, on Aug. 3, 1958, Nautilus accomplished the impossible when the ship reached the geographic North Pole, 90 degrees North. Cmdr. William Anderson was in command and had a crew of 116 Sailors aboard.

“Such a journey was previously unthinkable,” said Adm. Frank Caldwell, director of the Naval Nuclear Propulsion Program. “But this single event demonstrated the awesome, asymmetric advantage that nuclear power afforded our submarines and America’s national defense. The Nautilus could go to any ocean in the world, anytime, and remain there virtually as long as desired.”

Ten years after the program started, the Navy was sailing four fully-operational nuclear-powered submarines and building the first nuclear-powered aircraft carrier, the USS Enterprise (CVN 65), with eight reactor plants. In the next two years, the first strategic ballistic missile submarine, the USS George Washington (SSBN 598) went on its first strategic deterrent patrol.

Over the last 75 years, Naval Reactors has operated 273 reactors plants, taken 562 reactor cores critical including 33 different designs, and steamed more than 171 million miles with over 7,500 reactor years of safe operations. The Naval Nuclear Propulsion Program and the Navy’s nuclear-powered warships have demonstrated clear superiority in defending the United States – from the Cold War to today’s unconventional threats and strategic competition – Naval Reactors ensures the American Sailor and the nuclear-fleet are ready to fight and remain an effective deterrent.

There is no substitute for presence and nuclear-powered aircraft carriers remain the most survivable and versatile airfields in the world, while nuclear-powered fast attack and large payload submarines hold adversaries at risk in both contested seas and open oceans. Today, the Navy operates 99 reactors and 79 nuclear-powered warships – including the largest, most capable warship ever built, the USS Gerald R. Ford (CVN 78) which is on its maiden deployment in European waters, underway on nuclear power.

“It’s an exciting time in the Naval Nuclear Propulsion Program; we are fully embracing our responsibility to continue powering maritime dominance for the next 75 years,” said Caldwell.
THE POWER OF WORDS IS UNSTOPPABLE